



PLACES OF WELCOME

Snapshot Survey Results

www.placesofwelcome.org.uk

2023



Places of Welcome is a growing network of local community groups providing neighbourhoods with places where all people feel safe to connect, belong and contribute.

At Places of Welcome we have seen the difference community can make for individuals. We are dedicated to growing a network of diverse and accessible venues across England and Wales with volunteers who are committed to creating a welcoming space for all in their neighbourhoods.

Places of Welcome are united by 5 Ps which are our core values. Many venues also incorporate a range of activities that reflect the skill, interests and personalities of those who run and participate in them.

Place

An accessible and hospitable building, open at the same time every week.

People

Open to everyone regardless of their circumstances or situation, and staffed by volunteers.

Presence

A place where people actively listen to one another.

Provision

Offering free refreshments (at least a cup of tea and a biscuit) and basic local information.

Participation

Recognises that every person coming to a Place of Welcome will bring talents, experiences and skills that they might be willing to share locally.

We are open to applications from venues to join the Places of Welcome Network, and we are grateful to our regional coordinators who play a central role in supporting Places of Welcome in their areas.



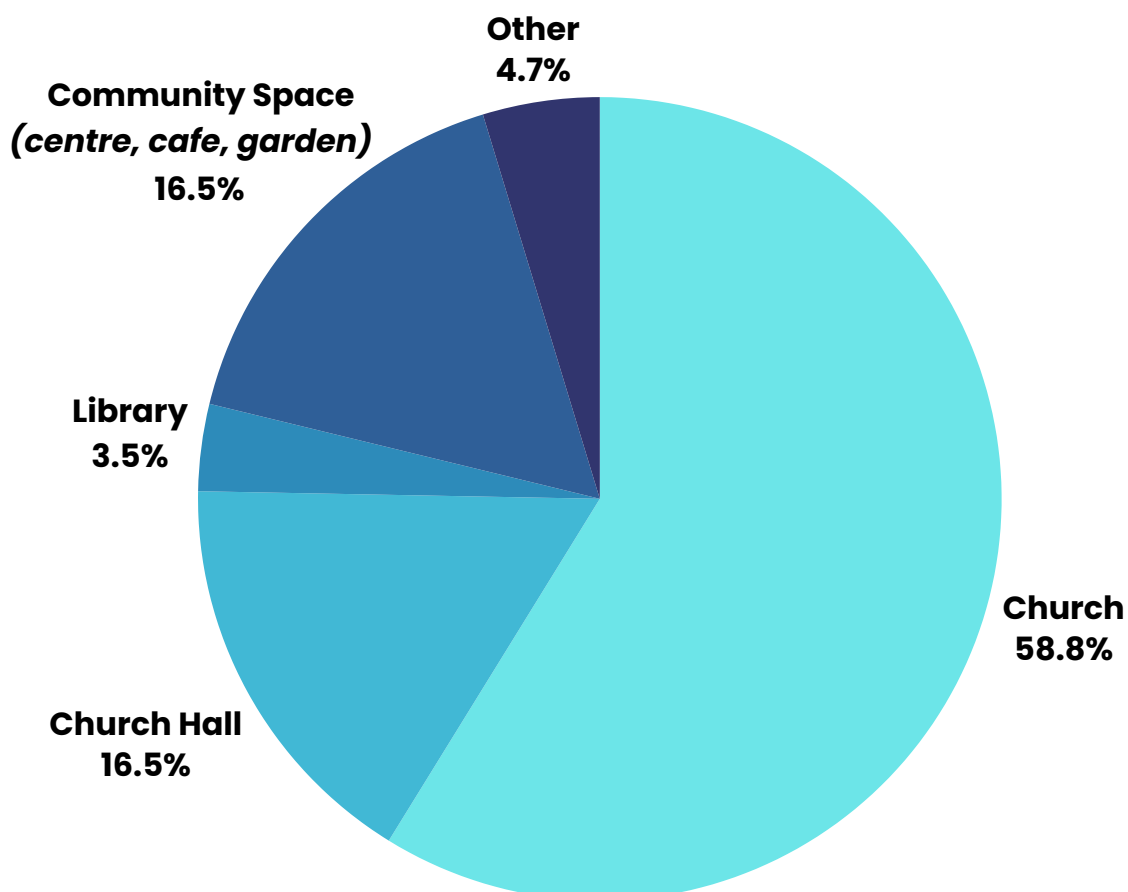
Survey responses: Venue landscape

From October–November 2023, Church Urban Fund conducted our annual Snapshot Survey deepening our overview of the **681* active Places of Welcome venues**. This is our fourth Snapshot Survey (2019, 2021, 2022, previously) providing us with a strong grounding for comparison between years.



We received a total of **85 unique responses** (12.5% of the total venues). The results give us an insight into motivations, growth, volunteer mobilisation, co-production of activities and partnerships formed from a diverse range of Places of Welcome across the network.

Breakdown: Venue type (of the 85 responding venues)





Survey responses: Key numbers

Mobilising and engaging volunteers

Across the **85 venues** that shared volunteer numbers, there were **495 volunteers** during the *week of the survey. The number of volunteers at any given venue ranged from 0-40, with **5.82** being the **average number of volunteers**.

Encouraging participation and raising profile

Venues reported a total of **2,587 participants** during the week the survey was conducted. The number at any given venue ranged from 1-150, with **30.43** being the **average number of participants**.



68% of venues reported having at least one new person that week

93% of venues reported that participants helped in some way

Based on this survey, we can estimate that Places of Welcome are reaching over 20,700 people and mobilising around 3,966 volunteers across our network of 681 venues.

Comparison table: Year 22/23

Snapshot Survey	Average no of volunteers	Average no of participants	At least one new person that week	Report participants helped in some way
2023	5.8	30.43	68%	93%
2022	4.6	23.36	67%	88%

(2023- 681 active venues, 12.5% response rate) (2022- 610 active venues, 23.1% response rate)

Survey responses: Stories and feedback

Every Place of Welcome provides refreshments, signposting and a welcoming space but many venues reported a range of additional activities taking place. These activities are diverse, reflect the interests of community members and meet specific needs.



Activity highlights

St Mark's Community Hub, Birmingham:

"We have linked up with the Salus Foundation once a month with advice on healthy lifestyle habits to improve people's wellbeing. Every week there is a Social Care Practitioner at the Place of Welcome to give advice, information and support, Community connections and signposting."

St Luke's Clay Hill, Enfield:

"During school holidays, we have held children's activity sessions at the Place of Welcome. This includes free soft play and crafting. In the session last week, 50 children and 50 adults came, and many asked if we are open every week. We hired the soft play equipment and now we are considering purchasing our own equipment so we could have a soft play area each week. When we have held the children's sessions, older people at the Place of Welcome have really enjoyed being in the company of children, and there are clearly inter-generational benefits to having people of all ages coming."

Cafe Lingo, Isle of Man:

"We are the only English language cafe on the Isle of Man offering free English lessons and information about life on the Isle of Man to people whose first language is not English, regardless of nationality, race, faith (or no faith), age, gender or level of ability, plus their children. In the past seven years we have welcomed more than 450 people from approximately 50 countries."

Places of Welcome venue leads and volunteers are often motivated individuals who are dedicating to building community and ensuring people are known and valued. Their work is reflected by the range of partnerships formed locally and the access to support enabled through activities and signposting across the Places of Welcome network.



Impact highlights

The snapshot responses share key impacts from across the network. Highlights centre on support for those experiencing bereavement, opportunities to develop employment skills and Places of Welcome bringing different groups of people together from across the community. We have drawn key responses into three broad themes:

1. Connection and community

St Paul's Stalybridge:

"Last year a group of parents with young children all came separately to this warm welcome and got to know each other as a consequence. They then realised that they all spent new year alone, so organised something for themselves that night with their children."

Skipton Community Wellbeing Cafe:

"An older man, who had stopped coming to the cafe a few years ago, was badly affected by a housefire with all his possessions lost. He came back to the cafe and told us the situation, so we were able to refer him to Foodbank, recommend him for a grant for a phone and signpost him to other support for housing, medical and other needs. He has since returned to the cafe most weeks since he knows the people there care about him."

'The Pilgrim's Rest' at Christ Church Thornton:

"A veteran, who had a stroke, was very lonely. Every day he looked at his flat walls with no company or conversation. Now he comes five days a week to 'The Pilgrim's Rest' and enjoys conversation, laughter, food. He has a family, here at our Place of Welcome. He loves being here. The volunteers have smothered him with love and friendship. They even give him a lift to Church on Sunday. He has a new lease of life."

Hope House Gornal

"6 of our ladies went on holiday to Benidorm last month. They didn't know each other before meeting here. 2 others are going on a Turkey & Tinsel holiday to Torquay - that's success! They've planned a Caribbean cruise for next year!"

2. Confidence

SAX Community Fridge, Saxmundham:

“One of our visitors was unemployed and was finding it hard to get work. At one of our open days he and his wife offered to cook their home made Indian food. This was so well received that he was encouraged to start a takeaway business which is now thriving and keeping him and his wife very busy!”

St Edburgha's Place of Welcome, Birmingham:

“We have good links with a local mental health resource centre, and several members of our Place of Welcome benefit from their services. One client from the centre started attending Place of Welcome in March this year. Through the social contact, he gained confidence and by August was able to return to work on a phased return. By September, he had returned to full time work, highlighting the important role that Place of Welcome had played in his journey of recovery.”

St Gabriel's Place of Welcome, Ashton-under-Lyne:

“One lady came through the door for the first time in tears, having been encouraged into trying it by her son following the death of her husband. She was very nervous and shy and needed a volunteer to sit with her for two or three weeks until her tears stopped and her confidence grew. The visitors sitting near her were amazing, going out of their way to welcome her and make friends, chat etc. Gradually she became confident, strong and was so happy. She now joins in with everything we do - exercise classes, the drumming group, choir etc and she laughs and sings with sheer joy. It's amazing to see the transformation and the affect that coming to the sessions has had on her mental and physical health and wellbeing.”

Rowheath Pavilion Place of Welcome, Birmingham:

“A man with learning disabilities has been connected with our group for 5 years. Initially he would call in, eat a piece of cake, standing, for 5 minutes and then leave. Now he sets up the room in advance of our arrival, helps set out tablecloths and materials across the room and donates snacks for our food table. He is a valued part of our community.”





3. A welcome for all (access)

Goscote Greenacres Community Garden:

“We have an elderly gentleman who regularly attends the coffee mornings. He has mobility issues and uses a walking stick. As soon as our volunteers see him arrive in the car park always go straight out to meet him and take his arm to walk to the building, whilst another gets his high chair ready for him. They have built up very good friendships and relationships being proud of being accepted and able to offer their help and support to someone else.”

Clayton Gospel Hall Well-being Café:

“One of our church members catches the Access Bus to church. Her driver calls in for a coffee and a chat before taking her home now on an almost weekly basis as we are his last pick up of the morning.”

St Francis of Assisi Place of Welcome, Wednesbury:

“We took a trip to Lichfield, supported by a grant from Awards for All. We managed to find a coach that could include our 2 members in electric wheelchairs, and several other disability aids. This was the first time they had been included in any trip and they were delighted. We visited the Cathedral, our mother church, took part in a service and all found somewhere for lunch. It was a great success, but I was so pleased that we could take everyone who wished to come, including several children!”

Places of Welcome have worked hard in 2023 to ensure access and a space for people struggling with the cost-of-living crisis.

St Oswald's West End Centre, Bradford:

Feedback from a Places of Welcome participant: “The centre is a safe and warm place for me to go which has really helped over the winter with the energy costs, it means I haven't needed to turn my heating on too much. I come to use the computer to do my job search and browse the internet as I cannot afford internet at home. I enjoy meeting new people from different cultures find it very interesting and have made friends at the centre. Everyone looks after each other here. It gives me somewhere to be with company as I live alone.”

Survey responses: Network strengths and challenges

Our Snapshot Survey also provided an opportunity for venue leads to share the support they had found valuable from the Places of Welcome network and highlight challenges they face. These responses provide learning opportunities for our central team as we look to grow and diversify the network develop our offer to venues.



Highlighted support

Temple Street Methodist, Stoke-on-Trent:

"I think that we needed an identity and Places of Welcome has certainly given us that. We are a Place of Welcome Community Cafe and we use those words in all that we do when we're talking about what we offer to our local community. The words 'Place of Welcome' indicate that here is somewhere where people will be valued, respected, and welcomed!"

The Heart of Welcome Café, Crawley:

"I was encouraged to change our existing facility to a Place of Welcome because I felt that the principles were in tune with what we were doing, but also I wanted us to stop charging as I felt this was a barrier to some people. By identifying for our church that we could be part of Places of Welcome they agreed not to charge. It was helpful to have the ideas and information from Places of Welcome to reinforce what we were trying to do and for ideas."

The Bureau Centre for the Arts, Blackburn:

"In early 2019 we ran a Real People Honest Talk project at The Bureau and identified that one of the challenges facing our local community is that it is hard to find places to socialise. Our action following the project was to set up a Place of Welcome, which we began in March 2019."

St George's Community Café, South East London:

"We wanted to be found easily by those that needed somewhere – and this has been achieved by the search location on the Places of Welcome website."



Highlighted challenges

Challenges that venues shared with us relate to funding, meeting rising energy costs to ensure spaces were warm over the winter and retaining volunteers as they move to employment.

Venues also noted challenges they had overcome by listening to their member group and adjusting opening times or activities

Places of Welcome continue to build community and confidence in venues across the nation. They work to ensure members are known, valued and celebrated in a space where they can offer their own gifts and skills.

St James Community Church Place of Welcome, Bradford:

“We sing happy birthday and give a cake with candle to anyone with a birthday. Recently we celebrated one of our participant's 100th birthday! Until recently she was one of the keenest quiz-devisers (making up her own quiz questions and riddles which were often difficult brainteasers!).”

St Agnes Church Hall, Leeds

“A man came who spent every day in bed last winter. He only went out to buy tobacco. He saw our board and came in. He has been every session since and now has confidence to go to other places.”

If you would like to find out more about setting up your own Place of Welcome, please visit: www.placesofwelcome.org.uk

The Places of Welcome Network is supported by:

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NETWORK**⊕

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With thanks to all the respondents to the Places of Welcome Snapshot Survey 2023!