



Safer Communities Alliance

Warm Hubs Initiative - November 2022 to March 2023 Supported by Dartford Borough Council

The grant we received from DBC (Care in crisis) was aimed at addressing the growing energy costs affecting people of all ages, especially during the winter months. To achieve this, we led a collaborative effort, bringing together various partners to implement a "Care in Crisis" project. This project included Warm Hub spaces where individuals could access activities, crafts, sleeping bags, practical welfare support, and hot meals for children, young people, and families from November through March 2023 in Dartford. We also provided elderly lunches and family activities during the Christmas holidays.

The funding was used for every one of our partners to provide meals, heating equipment, travel, volunteers' expenses, room hire and staffing. We were funded to deliver for 3 months, and we continued until the end of March 2023 until the grant was complete.

Here are the organisations and partners that came together and participated in this project:

1. **Hope in Hope Charity** - Dartford Centre: Provided lunch for African elderly individuals from African communities at 12:30 pm.
2. **Wilmington Community Church**: Organised groups for elderly individuals on Saturdays and on Tuesdays
3. **Crossway's Church** - Dartford Acacia Hall: Supported families and adults on Thursdays including the homeless
4. **SCA** - Bizniz Point: Assisted families providing meals each Tuesday.
5. **Acts 2 Church**: Offered elderly lunches on Saturdays and provided community emergency cooked meals weekly from a drop-in on Fridays.
6. **Methodist Church** - Dartford Town Centre: Supported families for after-school activities on Wednesdays.
7. **The Temple Hill Baptist Church** (New Life Christian Community - part of the ministry is NLCC Food Hub): Supported both Dartford Food Banks, distributing food vouchers to the most vulnerable during the Christmas break for access at local establishments.

Target Group: We aided 319 individuals, including 125 children aged 1-16, 19 young people aged 18-25, and 65 elderly individuals. Among the recipients, 25% were employed, while 75% were unemployed. Notably, 68% of our beneficiaries were single parents, primarily female, with only one male.

All the recipients resided in Dartford and its surrounding areas, such as Darenth, Longfield, Stone, Swanscombe, and Wilmington.

Ethnicity: Our beneficiaries represented diverse ethnic backgrounds, with 58% being White British, 7% Asian, 22% Caribbean and African, and 13% Ukrainian and other Eastern European.

Referrals: Our project received referrals from various sources, including local GP practices, Well-being Link at Darenth Valley Hospital, Dartford Arndale Centre (Mental Health team), schools, social services, local PCSOs, and other community organisations.

Provision: Throughout the project, in addition, we hosted three significant events over and above the weekly provision. This included a Christmas dinner for 120 people at Temple Hill Baptist Church in partnership with a local restaurant, a sit-down Christmas dinner for 40 elderly individuals, and 15 Eastern European homeless individuals were provided with Christmas dinners and support as needed, along with referrals to the winter shelter and DBC.

Attendance: We observed consistent attendance at all the hubs, with 30 individuals attending regularly at each hub. Some attendees came just a few times, while others attended specific hubs only. We increased the length of the running of the hubs until March 2023 to ensure we spent the money and were able to continue through the ongoing winter months.

Volunteers: We were fortunate to have the support of 12 dedicated volunteers from the community. These volunteers came from various professional backgrounds, including medical, teaching, and former service users, all motivated to contribute to their community's well-being.

Outcomes: The Warm Hub served as a lifeline for many individuals facing issues related to debt, household matters, mental health, job applications, and energy costs. In response to these challenges, the Unity Hub was established to continue addressing:

- Practical support, including assistance with bunk beds, family relocation, appliances, clothing and more.
- Resources, such as help with energy cost schemes, grant applications, budgeting, and legal support.
- Referrals to relevant services, including Citizens Advice Bureau, social services, domestic violence support, and crime prevention.

The Unity Hub has been embraced by the community, including youth who visit independently of their parents.

Future recommendations

We consulted with as many individuals that attended and the key needs they felt they needed help with was the following.

- Extra Tuition
- Employment
- Exercise
- Mental Health
- Low Income Support
- Safety around Dartford and home circumstances
- Nutrition
- Referrals to counselling services
- Referrals to CAB for migration support
- Continued Warm Hubs provision
- Opportunities for young people to gain qualifications to support sessional work and volunteering

As a result of this, we have made these objectives our goal and aim to supply 'needs led' provision for our diverse and marginalised communities within the Warm Hub initiative in Dartford. We will open more rural Warm Hub

opportunities to address travel and access issues, particularly for the elderly population.

In addition, we have registered with Acts 2 Community Church, to deliver meals in the community to some of the families, Family Action for white goods, BBC Children in Need for practical articles and equipment for children and young people and Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust for individual grants for young people.

We have increased our offer of exercise including Pilates, dance, and sports. We are running a coffee morning weekly and inviting speakers based upon the suggestions and requirements of attendees. Also, we will be hosting and promoting cultural events for the local community ensuring we provide support for those that have specific needs and requirements. Our aim is to aid integration for vulnerable and marginalised communities into the wider society of Dartford.

Diversity Equality and Inclusion (DEI)

We pride ourselves in our providing essential support for our community but also highlighted the significance of embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles in our ongoing efforts. We encourage a more diverse representation of community members in our decision-making processes, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued. By seeking input from the community from various backgrounds, we tailor our services to meet the unique needs.

This includes targeted outreach to underserved populations, ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to benefit from the Warm Hub initiative.

To measure our progress in DEI efforts, we collect data on the demographic makeup of our beneficiaries and regularly monitoring our impact. This enables us to make data-driven decisions and continually improve our services.