

FAQ Community Living Rooms

Q: Is this a North Somerset Council initiative?

In response to the Cost of Living crisis, with the impact upon heating costs in particular, many areas of the UK have set up local responses, known as “Welcoming Spaces”, “Warm Spaces” etc.

In North Somerset, we wish to create a network of Community Living Rooms and some organisations have already created living room spaces. North Somerset Together, a network of community organisations, will develop the initiative, with support from North Somerset Council in relation to funding, branding guidance and social media toolkit support.

Q: What guidelines does the host organisation need to follow if offering to provide a space?

Organisations who wish to join the North Somerset Community Living Rooms network will sign up to the values of the approach:

1. You'll get a warm welcome

Every time you come to a Community Living Room, you will be given a warm welcome from the staff and volunteers there.

2. Everyone is treated equally, with dignity and respect

Everyone has a right to be warm, so everyone in a Community Living Room treats people, and is treated by people, with dignity and respect.

3. We'll not ask about your reasons for using the space

Every Community Living Room is a non-judgemental space.

If you want to share the reasons you are using the Community Living Room, someone will listen, but they won't tell anyone else unless you give them permission, or unless they must because of their safeguarding policies.

The space is not intended to be aimed at service delivery, more somewhere comfortable to sit and pass time with a cuppa and a biscuit.



Q: Why does my organisation need to provide details of our Community Living Room offer to North Somerset Council?

If you choose to share your details with North Somerset Council, we will support you by adding your space to a directory of all the places available to our residents across the public, private, health and voluntary sectors. We will ensure this information is clearly promoted so everyone who is feeling the cold knows where they can go to get warm, stay warm and enjoy a little company and some hot refreshments.

Organisations offering community living room spaces will be encouraged to form a network, to be facilitated by North Somerset Council under North Somerset Together, to share learning.

If you are interested in signing up to be included within the North Somerset directory, please complete the <https://forms.office.com/r/L9XhFEcDN8> questionnaire.

Q: Is there funding available for organisations?

Grants will be available to organisations in North Somerset for the creation and improvement of Community Living Rooms for local communities, leading to a positive difference for those living in the area.

We don't expect to make many awards of more than £500 however, if an organisation/group has an idea for something that would require additional funding to deliver, we would encourage ideas to be submitted, along with a detailed budget.

If you would like to apply for grant funding, please complete the <https://forms.office.com/r/076fDy2rzH> form.

If you will be working with volunteers, [Voluntary Action North Somerset](#) may be able to provide advice about how to make best use of volunteer capacity

Q: My organisation's heating/lighting bills are increasing, is there financial support available to cover this increase?

Unfortunately, there is currently no funding available to cover heating/lighting bills but if additional funding can be secured, this will be considered.

Q: Does the organisation need to provide receipts for expenditure?

In view of the size of the grants available, there will be no requirement to provide receipts for any expenditure for those organisations granted.

Where organisations are awarded over £500, receipts should be retained for a period of 12 months.

Q: What does the organisation need to provide for people using the space?

The expectation is that community living room spaces will offer a warm place to spend time with access to refreshments such as a cup of tea/coffee and a biscuit. Where possible, the space should have electrical charging points and comfortable seating but this may be difficult for some organisations to achieve.

Spaces can be provided by organisations to people they are already involved with, there is no obligation to make the space available to everyone in the local community, for example a bowling club may extend the opening hours once a week for members.

You may wish to signpost those who have financial concerns to North Somerset's [Worrying About Money leaflet](#) and North Somerset Council [Cost of Living](#) webpage.

Q: Does the warm space/public living room offer need to be all day/every day?

Spaces do not have to be available all day/all week but can instead be perhaps a few hours per day over a few days each week on a regular basis (i.e., an organisation such as a housing association may offer a warm place to spend time every Tuesday 1-3pm and Thurs 4-7pm, for example, or a community centre may offer a games evening for families every Wednesday 6-8pm).

As residents will be able to find details of the community living room spaces in their local area, they will be able to find a range of spaces available for use during the week

Q: Does the community living room need to open its doors to anyone who wants to come in?

It is up to organisations who they wish to use their community living room spaces and many may choose to offer space to those already involved with that organisation e.g. a sports club may provide additional space for those who are members of the club. Libraries and churches, on the other hand, may decide to offer a space for anyone who wishes to make use of it.

Q: What does the host organisation do if people are reluctant to leave the space at the end of the session?

Many organisations will be offering a space for people they already know well so the risk of this happening should be reduced. Organisations can seek guidance from Voluntary Action North Somerset with regards to equipping volunteers to handle this situation sensitively.

Organisations offering Community Living Room spaces will be expected to adhere to their own safeguarding policies and ensure that all staff and volunteers are briefed on these procedures.

Organisations are likely to have their own procedures for closing a session but where a conversation with people reluctant to leave the premises has been undertaken and the situation has not been resolved, organisations may need to consider requesting Police support.

Q: Won't these spaces put people at risk of contracting Covid-19 or 'flu this winter?

Organisations are advised to put in place measures to reduce the risk of contracting Covid-19 or 'flu, such as hand washing facilities, ventilation where appropriate, hand gel and face coverings. It is not possible to completely remove any risk of contracting Covid-19 or 'flu so individuals will need to bear this in mind when deciding whether or not to use one of the Community Living Room spaces.

The latest Covid-19 advice can be found at [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and we recommend organisations sign up for the automatic updates.

Q: Who do I speak to if I have questions about setting up a space?

You can contact the lead for North Somerset Council, Rachel Austin-Francis, by email rachel.austin-francis@n-somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01275 884544

If organisations are likely to use volunteers to support the Public Living Room spaces, they may wish to contact Voluntary Action North Somerset for guidance: [Home - Voluntary Action North Somerset \(vansweb.org.uk\)](https://www.vansweb.org.uk); by email info@vansmail.org.uk or telephone 01934 416486

Q: How will North Somerset residents without digital access know about the Community Living Room spaces?

As part of the North Somerset Cost of Living partnership action plan, North Somerset Council's Communications Team will be using a range of methods to let residents know about this initiative. In addition, it is envisaged that the North Somerset Together network will be used to communicate the information to the community.

It is also intended that organisations may wish to use some of the grant funding for promoting the spaces.

Q: Who do I speak to if I encounter challenges whilst offering a community living room?

Organisations should have their own management support arrangements in place to deal with challenges but will also have access to a network of North Somerset organisations offering Community Living Room spaces for additional support.

Issues can also be flagged by email with policypartnershipteam@n-somerset.gov.uk for discussion within North Somerset's Cost of Living working group meetings where required.

Q: What does the host organisation need to do if it decides not to offer a warm space provision at some point?

If an organisation decides to amend or withdraw the Community Living Room space offer an email should be sent to policypartnershipteam@n-somerset.gov.uk with details so the directory can be updated.

