



# Warm Welcome Awards: How to apply and eligibility guidance

## Warm Welcome Awards: Key Dates

Nominations Open:	Friday 23 January 2026
Nominations Deadline:	Friday 20 March 2026
Shortlist announced:	Friday 15 May 2026
Awards Ceremony:	Tuesday 16 June 2026

## How to Apply

### Who can submit a nomination?

*Please note, you are more than welcome to self-nominate your own space or nominate another warm welcome space or partner.*

#### Nominations can be submitted by:

- Warm Welcome Spaces: Volunteers, Staff members, Visitors
- Partner organisations
- Corporate partners
- Other

#### Self-nominations are welcome. You may nominate:

- Your own space
- An individual or volunteer
- A partnership or collaboration

- Another Warm Welcome Space you wish to celebrate

## What information will I need to provide?

The application form will ask for:

- Details about the nominee (individual, space, or partnership)
- Contact information
- Which award category you are applying for
- A short description of why they should be considered (max 250 words)
- Examples and stories (max 300 words)
- At least one image to flagship the application
- Confirmation of consent to be contacted and featured publicly
- Accessibility needs (for the finalist experience)

## How to submit

- Applications will be submitted through a simple online form.
- The form is designed to take 10-15 minutes to complete.
- You may submit nominations for multiple categories if relevant. All nominations are free.
- There will be a downloadable question form that we will ask you to save your answers on so you can prepare your application before submitting and look back on your application after submitting it
- There will not be an option to edit answers once submitting, so we will encourage applications to be written carefully.

## Eligibility and Criteria

### General eligibility

#### Open to every Warm Welcome Space and partner organisation in the UK

- All organisations formally part of the Warm Welcome network may enter, regardless of their type (community centre, library, faith group, charity, grassroots project, arts organisation, etc.).
- Partner organisations may include both formal and informal collaborators supporting Warm Welcome activity. It must be clearly stated what warm welcome space they have collaborated with.

#### Must be a registered Warm Welcome Space

- The nominated space or individual must appear on the Warm Welcome map or be verified by the Warm Welcome team as an active space during the relevant awards year.

#### No minimum opening hours, size, or funding level required

- Nominations are judged relative to each space's scale and capacity.

- Small, volunteer-led spaces are equally eligible; impact and values matter more than size or budget.

### **Volunteers and individuals nominated must be connected to a Warm Welcome Space**

- This includes staff, volunteers, community champions, trustees, guests-turned-volunteers, or neighbours who regularly support the space.
- Their contribution must be clearly linked to Warm Welcome activity within the last 12 months.

### **Partnerships may include informal collaborations or cross-sector teams**

- Partnerships may involve two or more organisations or individuals working together to deliver activities, share resources, or enhance community impact.
- Informal networks, pop-up collaborations, and co-produced initiatives are fully eligible.

## **Judging criteria across all categories**

### **Warm Welcome Values**

#### **Inclusive**

- Demonstrates a proactive welcome to people from all backgrounds, identities, ages, and circumstances.
- Shows sensitivity to barriers such as disability, language confidence, social isolation, financial pressure, or mental health challenges.
- Provides examples of adapting the space, activities, or approach to ensure everyone feels included and able to participate.
- Spaces that focus on a specific demographic or group (e.g., mothers and babies, men-only groups) are absolutely eligible, as long as they are inclusive and welcoming within their intended community.

#### **Collaborative**

- Shows willingness to work with others—volunteers, guests, community groups, partners, or local services.
- Demonstrates shared ownership, co-creation, or joint problem-solving.
- May highlight ways the space listens to and acts on community ideas, needs, or feedback.

#### **Courageous**

- Demonstrates bravery in addressing challenges, responding to local needs, or trying new approaches.
- Shows resilience, determination, and leadership—especially in difficult circumstances or with limited resources.
- Examples may include stepping up during a crisis, standing up for community members, or piloting new ideas.

## Warm Welcome Vision

### Contributing to a more deeply connected society

- Shows how the space helps reduce loneliness or social isolation.
- Demonstrates relationships, trust, and connection forming among people who may not otherwise meet.
- Provides evidence of community strengthening- e.g., friendships, shared projects, regular attendance, or increased confidence among guests.

### Strengthening access to welcoming community spaces

- Shows commitment to maintaining or expanding access to warm, safe, free, and welcoming spaces.
- May include outreach, flexible programming, partnerships, environmental changes, or reducing practical barriers to participation.
- Demonstrates how the space makes itself approachable, inclusive, and accessible to newcomers and returning guests.

## Impact

### Demonstrable benefit to guests, volunteers, or the wider community

- Shows clear outcomes: improved wellbeing, increased confidence, strengthened relationships, practical support, or new opportunities.
- May include small data (attendance numbers, volunteer hours), but personal stories and specific examples are equally valuable.
- Judges consider the proportional impact relative to the scale, resources, and challenges of the space.

## Storytelling

### A clear, engaging example that brings the nomination to life

- Provides a vivid story, moment, or example that illustrates the nominee's contribution.
- Helps judges understand not just what happened, but why it mattered and how it felt for the people involved.

### Scalability or inspiration value

- Shows how the idea, behaviour, or story can spark inspiration for other Warm Welcome Spaces.
- Can be a replicable model, a creative approach, or a powerful example of kindness, courage, or connection.

# Warm Welcome awards: Category-specific criteria

## Unsung Hero Award

### Shows exceptional kindness and quiet commitment

- Provides steady, reliable support that guests and volunteers depend on.
- Often contributes behind the scenes or in ways that are easy to overlook but are essential.

### Goes above and beyond without seeking recognition

- Takes initiative, notices need and helps before being asked.
- Shows humility and a genuine desire to make the space welcoming and safe.

### Significantly contributes to the warmth and safety of the space

- Helps build a culture of calm, trust, and acceptance.
- May support safeguarding, emotional wellbeing, conflict resolution, or practical care

## Warmest Welcome Award

### Creates a joyful, inclusive, imaginative welcome

- Uses creativity, hospitality, warmth, or cultural expression to make people feel uplifted.
- Makes the experience of arriving feel special, reassuring, and human.

### Demonstrates creativity or cultural expression

- Incorporates community culture, food, music, décor, seasonal celebrations, or intergenerational activities.
- Personalises the welcome so it reflects the neighbourhood and people who use the space.

### Makes people instantly feel at home

- Acts in ways that reduce anxiety or hesitation for newcomers.
- Creates a space where people feel safe to be themselves.

# Bright Ideas Award

## **Introduces new ideas, approaches, or solutions**

- Fresh activities, programmes, tools, or ways of working that enhance the space.
- May involve technology, arts practice, co-design, environmental improvements, or new engagement methods.

## **Improves accessibility, sustainability, engagement, or safety**

- Innovations tailored to the needs of specific groups (e.g., sensory-friendly sessions, multilingual materials).
- Could include environmentally friendly practices or new approaches to volunteer wellbeing.

## **Demonstrates creativity in challenges, outreach, volunteer support, or fundraising**

- Shows originality and resourcefulness, especially when facing constraints.
- Could include community-led projects, unexpected partnerships, or inventive ways of involving new people.

# Unlikely Friendships Award

## **Tells a compelling story of connection between people who might not otherwise meet**

- Highlights relationships formed across age, culture, background, language, or lived experiences.

## **Demonstrates the power of bridging divides**

- Shows how the space helped people overcome assumptions, isolation, or difference.
- Reflects mutual respect, curiosity, and shared humanity.

## **Shows Warm Welcome Spaces as catalysts for genuine friendships**

- The relationship should be meaningful, ongoing, or transformational - not just a one-off interaction.

# Community Connector Award

## Highlights a partnership that strengthens community impact

- Could include collaboration with local services, schools, faith groups, cultural organisations, mutual aid groups, or small businesses.

## Demonstrates collaboration, shared learning, or joint delivery

- Shows how partners contributed in complementary ways.
- Could include co-designed activities, shared resources, or extended reach.

## Shows how working together achieved more than working alone.

- Evidence of scaled impact, deeper relationships, or new opportunities created through partnership.

Rt Hon Gordon Brown

# Chain of Hope Award

## Demonstrates transformational leadership

- Leadership that inspires, mobilises, or strengthens people and systems.
- Could be a single individual or an organisation championing long-term change.

## Shows measurable, lasting community impact

- Impact that is felt beyond a single activity or season.
- Could include new services, stronger networks, sustained engagement, or significant improvements in community wellbeing.

## Inspires others through scalable ideas, outreach, network building, or national/local advocacy

- Demonstrates influence and inspiration
- Shows leadership that encourages collective action, collaboration, or wider movement-building.