



Celebrating spaces and the people that make them

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.