

A resource
for Warm
Welcome
Spaces
Leaders

Scenario Activities for Leaders Inclusion Workshop

Putting Inclusion into Practice

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"We are open and welcoming to everyone... we've folks from all walks of life... wealthy and homeless, young and old... professional and others with learning disabilities... all the colours of the neurodiverse spectrum, adults and children... all faiths and no faith... there's pancakes and cakes, teas and good coffee for everyone. We don't charge... there's games and crafts and telly and endless talking."
Warm Welcome Spaces Volunteer

Scenario Activities for Warm Welcome Leaders Inclusion Workshop

How to use this resource: The following scenarios are based on real situations that can arise in Warm Welcome Spaces. As you read each one, take a moment to think about what you would do. There are no perfect answers – these are designed to help you think through your approach, build your confidence, and prepare for situations you may encounter. After each scenario, you'll find some guidance and suggested approaches to support your thinking.

As you work through the scenarios, keep these principles in mind:

- Focus on barriers, not people – barriers are the thing to change.
- Prioritise dignity, choice and honesty.
- Think about what is within your power to change for this person.
- Communication, tone and reassurance matter as much as the action you take.

Scenario 1 – The Unexpected Physical Barrier

A guest arrives who is a wheelchair user. They have visited before, but today the usual accessible entrance is blocked due to temporary building work that the team were not aware of before arriving. There is no clear signage, and the alternative entrance involves a step. The guest appears frustrated and says, “Last time, this wasn’t a problem. I wouldn’t have come if I’d known.”



Take a moment to reflect:

- What barriers (apart from the physical ones) can you identify?
- How might the guest be feeling?
- What could you do or say in the moment?
- What might help prevent this in future?

Things to consider

- The guest has every right to be upset. Even though this wasn’t in your control, the impact on them is real – acknowledge that.
- Could there have been more communication? For example, a sign as you approach, an update on social media when the team arrived and noticed the issue, or an apology posted at the entrance.
- Could this be reported to the building owner, with a request for advance notice next time?
- Think about alternative arrangements – is there another way in, or another location that could work?
- Avoid becoming defensive. Focus on what you can do now, and what you can learn for next time.

Notes:

Scenario 2 – “They’re Just Trying to Help”

A volunteer notices a visually-impaired guest pouring themselves a hot drink and quickly steps in, taking the cup from their hand without asking. The guest looks uncomfortable and later mentions to you that this made them feel embarrassed. The volunteer says: “I was only trying to help! It looked dangerous.”



Take a moment to reflect:

- What barriers can you identify here?
- How might the guest be feeling?
- How would you support the guest and the volunteer?
- What might help prevent this in future?

Things to consider

- Independence and dignity are key. The guest was managing perfectly well – the assumption that they couldn’t was the barrier.
- When speaking to the guest, acknowledge how they feel and stay neutral about the volunteer’s actions. Instead of “I’m sure they only wanted to help,” try “I can understand why that felt uncomfortable, even though it wasn’t intentional.”
- When you next get the opportunity, have a gentle chat with the volunteer. Acknowledge their good intentions, but highlight that help must be offered, not enforced, and the answer must be respected.
- Ask the team to reflect: why was this assumption made? What does this guest manage independently elsewhere in their life?
- Offering help is always welcome. Taking over without asking is not.

Notes:

Scenario 3 – Sensory Overload

A guest becomes overwhelmed as the space gets busier and noisier. They cover their ears and move towards a corner. Another guest complains to you, saying, “They’re being odd and disruptive – can you do something?”



Take a moment to reflect:

- What barriers can you identify?
- How might each guest be feeling?
- How would you respond to the guest who is overwhelmed and the one who complained?
- What might help prevent this in future?

Things to consider

- The guest who is overwhelmed is not being “odd” or “disruptive” – they are responding to a sensory environment that has become too much for them.
- To the guest who complained: explain warmly that this is a welcoming space for everyone, and people experience environments differently. If you have a space agreement that refers to inclusion, gently remind them of those shared values.
- To the guest who is overwhelmed: approach calmly and ask if there’s anything you can do to help. Acknowledge that the room is a bit noisy or busy. If you have a quieter area, let them know it’s available.
- If they are safe and seem content sitting quietly, let them be – but make sure they know where to find you if they need support.
- For the future: could you create a designated quiet area? Could you manage noise levels at busy times?

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Scenario 4 – “This Place Isn’t for People Like Me”

A new guest arrives, looks around briefly, and quietly says to you, “I don’t think this place is really for people like me,” before turning to leave. They don’t explain further.



Take a moment to reflect:

- What barriers might have led to this moment?
- What assumptions might the guest have made, and why?
- How would you respond in the moment?
- What small changes might affect how welcoming your space feels to someone arriving for the first time?

Things to consider

- There could be many reasons for this reaction: the space might feel overwhelming if it’s busy, it might look difficult to navigate, there may appear to be established groups or ‘cliques,’ or it simply may not look like what they expected.
- A lack of visible diversity – in the people, the posters, or the way the space is presented – can send a powerful unspoken message about who the space is ‘for.’
- An in-the-moment response could be as simple as: “I’m sorry to hear that. You’re always welcome here. Would you like me to show you around?”
- Think about first impressions: what does someone see, hear and feel in the first 30 seconds of arriving? Could a dedicated welcomer help?
- Review your posters, imagery and communications – do they reflect the diversity of your wider community?

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Scenario 5 – “We Can’t Let Them In, It’ll Upset the Regulars!”

A volunteer asks to speak privately with you. They explain that they’re worried about welcoming people from more “diverse” backgrounds into the Warm Welcome Space. They say: “I’m not trying to be unkind, but some of our regulars won’t like it. They’re used to how things are, and I don’t think it’s fair to upset them by changing who the space is for.” The volunteer seems uncomfortable rather than angry, and says they’re just trying to keep the space calm and friendly.



Take a moment to reflect:

- What barriers are present in this situation?
- How might different people be affected – the volunteer, existing regulars, and potential new guests?
- What is your role here – supporting the volunteer while being clear about the values of Warm Welcome Spaces?
- What could you say that acknowledges the volunteer’s concern, challenges exclusion, and reaffirms inclusion – without the volunteer feeling attacked?

Things to consider

- This scenario is about values, not conflict. The volunteer isn’t being deliberately unkind – but the outcome of their suggestion would be exclusion.
- Warm Welcome Spaces are for everyone. Inclusion is not conditional on others’ comfort.
- Avoid blame, but be clear. You can thank the volunteer for being honest while being firm that welcoming everyone is central to what you do.
- Reassure the volunteer that they won’t be left to manage difficult situations alone – that’s your role as lead.

This can feel like a daunting conversation. Here are some approaches you could draw on – these aren’t word-for-word scripts, but ideas to mix and match depending on the situation. The most important thing is that you speak calmly, openly, and in a way that sounds natural to you.

Approach 1

You might say: “Thank you for being honest with me – I really appreciate you raising concerns rather than feeling unsure on your own. Part of what Warm Welcome Spaces are about is being open, comfortable and safe for everyone in the community. That includes people who may not have used the space before or who come from different backgrounds. Part of our role is helping everyone feel comfortable sharing the space respectfully.”

This thanks the volunteer for speaking up, reinforces values without accusation, and clearly restates inclusion as a core principle.

Approach 2

You might say: “I understand that change can sometimes feel worrying, especially if people are used to things being a certain way. At the same time, we can’t decide who feels welcome based on whether it might make others feel put out. Our role is to help everyone feel safe and respected here. Sometimes we don’t actually know how people will respond until we give them the chance.”

This validates the emotion but not the exclusion, separates discomfort from harm, and reaffirms your inclusive responsibility.

Approach 3

You might say: “One of the things that keeps Warm Welcome Spaces strong is that they bring different parts of the community together. That can sometimes feel unfamiliar, and it can take time for some people to adjust. In the long run, it usually helps build a more welcoming and supportive environment overall.”

This frames inclusion positively, reduces fear of ‘loss,’ and avoids creating an ‘us vs them’ dynamic.

Approach 4

You might say: “I completely understand that change can feel uncomfortable sometimes. Part of our role is to welcome people from lots of backgrounds and treat everyone with respect. That’s really central to what we do. If you ever feel unsure or worried about how to support someone, you don’t have to manage it alone – that’s exactly when you can come to me.”

This clarifies expectations, keeps the volunteer supported rather than criticised, and encourages future openness.

Approach 5

You might say: “It sounds like you’re worried things might become tense or difficult, which is understandable. You wouldn’t be expected to handle that on your own. If anything challenging comes up, I would step in to support you and the guests.”

This addresses the underlying fear rather than just the belief, builds confidence, and reinforces that leadership support is there.

You might also want to think about: how would you respond if a regular guest did express discomfort about sharing the space with someone from a different background? Having thought this through in advance can help you feel more prepared.

Notes:



Scenario 6 – A Request for Personal Care

A guest asks you if someone can help them with personal care in the accessible toilet. You know this isn't something volunteers can provide. The guest seems embarrassed and says, "I thought this place was meant to be accessible."



Take a moment to reflect:

- What barriers can you identify?
- How might the guest be feeling?
- How would you respond in a way that is clear, kind and respectful?
- What could you do to prevent this situation arising unexpectedly in future?

Things to consider

- Saying 'no' kindly is inclusive. Boundaries protect both guests and volunteers.
- Avoid phrases like "We're just volunteers," "We can't help with that kind of thing," or "That's not our job." These can feel dismissive.
- Thank the guest for asking. Be clear and calm. Reassure them they are welcome. Focus on what you can do, not just what you can't.
- Avoid over-apologising or making it about your discomfort – keep the focus on the guest and what happens next.

This can be a sensitive conversation. Here are some approaches to draw on:

Approach 1

You might say: "I'm sorry, we're not able to help with personal care, but that doesn't mean you're in the wrong or that you shouldn't be here. Let's have a look together at what might make things easier for you while you're with us today."

This sets a clear boundary without apologising for the rule, reassures the guest they are not the problem, and keeps the conversation collaborative.

Approach 2

You might say: “I can understand why that feels frustrating, especially when you expected this to be an accessible space. While we provide lots of access features, we’re not trained or insured to provide personal care. I’m really happy to talk through what would help you feel comfortable while you’re here.”

This validates feelings without becoming defensive, explains the boundary simply, and avoids blaming the guest.

Approach 3

You might say: “I’m really sorry, personal care isn’t something we can support with here. I know that may not be what you were hoping to hear. I want to make sure you feel comfortable, so if there’s anything else we can do – either now or for next time – please let me know. Is there anyone you’d like us to call who would usually support you with personal care?”

This centres dignity and respect, avoids patronising language, and keeps options open without making promises.

Approach 4

You might say: “You’re right, accessibility matters to us, and we remove as many barriers as we can – but personal care is something we’re not able to offer. I’m sorry if that wasn’t clear beforehand. Thank you for raising it – we’ll make sure that’s communicated more clearly to avoid future disappointment.”

This acknowledges the guest’s point without argument, clarifies expectations for the future, and accepts responsibility for communication.

Notes:

Remember: There is no perfect response to any of these situations. Every situation is different and nuanced. What matters most is that you respond with respect, honesty and open communication. You will receive further supporting resources through the Inclusion Toolkit, and support is always available through your Warm Welcome Spaces network.



Notes:



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The Warm Welcome Campaign is hosted by the Good Faith Foundation, a charity focused on cross-sector collaboration for social inclusion. Registered Charity No 1188639

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