

Cheshire West Welcoming Spaces Fund Evaluation September 2024



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Introduction

[Cheshire Community Action](#) (CCA) partnered with Cheshire West & Chester Council to administer, promote and distribute the 2023-24 Welcoming Spaces Fund targeted to community organisations across the borough. The programme launched in December 2023, issued 38 awards of up to £2,500 per grant to community organisations across Cheshire West.

In total, just over £70k was allocated, with £50k coming from Cheshire West and Chester Council. To assess the impact of the grant funding, CCA carried out a survey of beneficiaries who attended Welcoming Spaces that received CWaC funding. It set up the survey online and sent posters to all Welcoming Space organisers to display in their venues with a link, QR code and some additional copies that could be printed out for organisers to go through the questions with their beneficiaries.

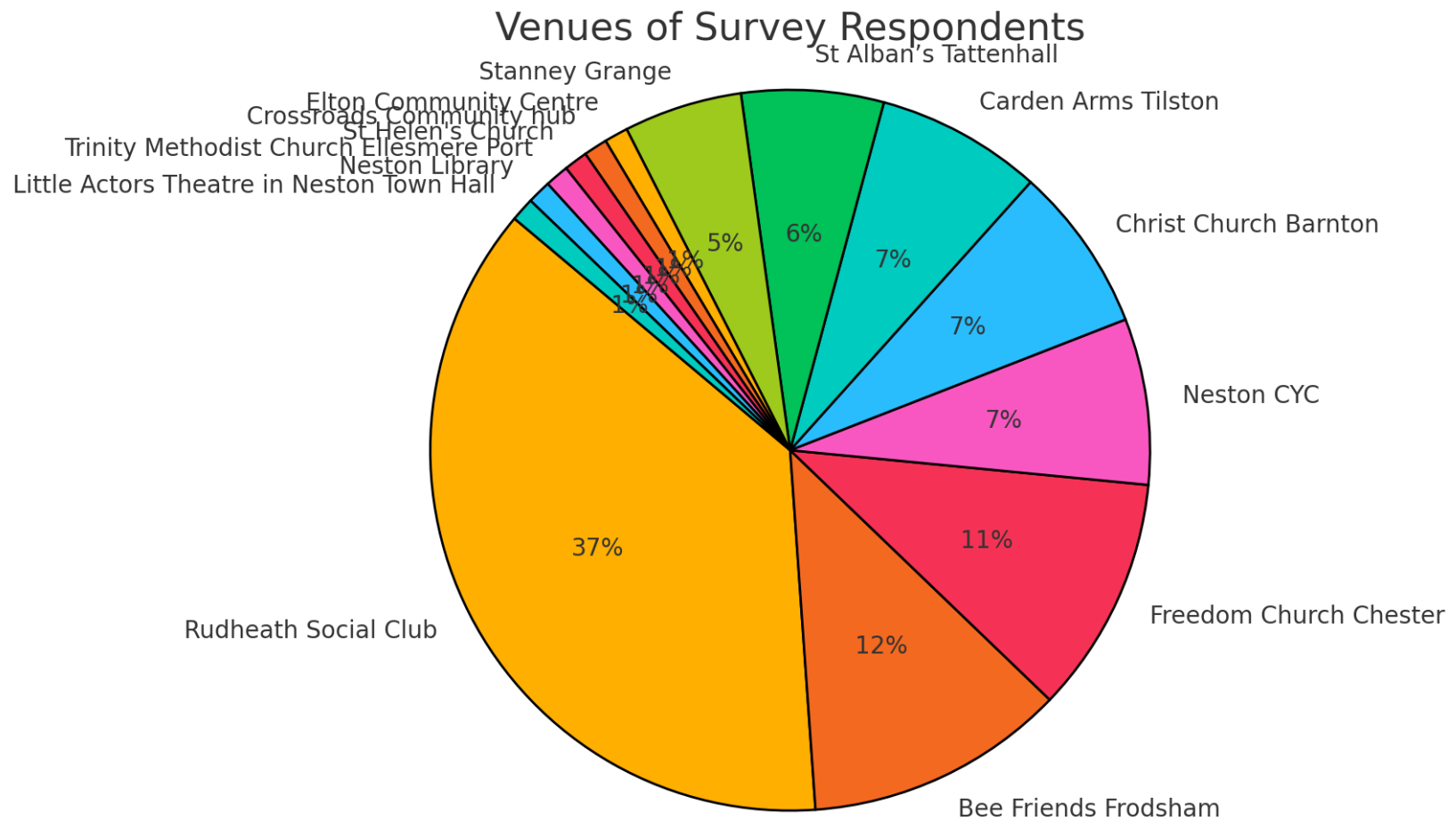
CCA then used this data to inform a social value calculation to establish the social return on investment for every £1 spent on the initiative. CCA also analysed data from grant the application record.

Key highlights from the evaluation:

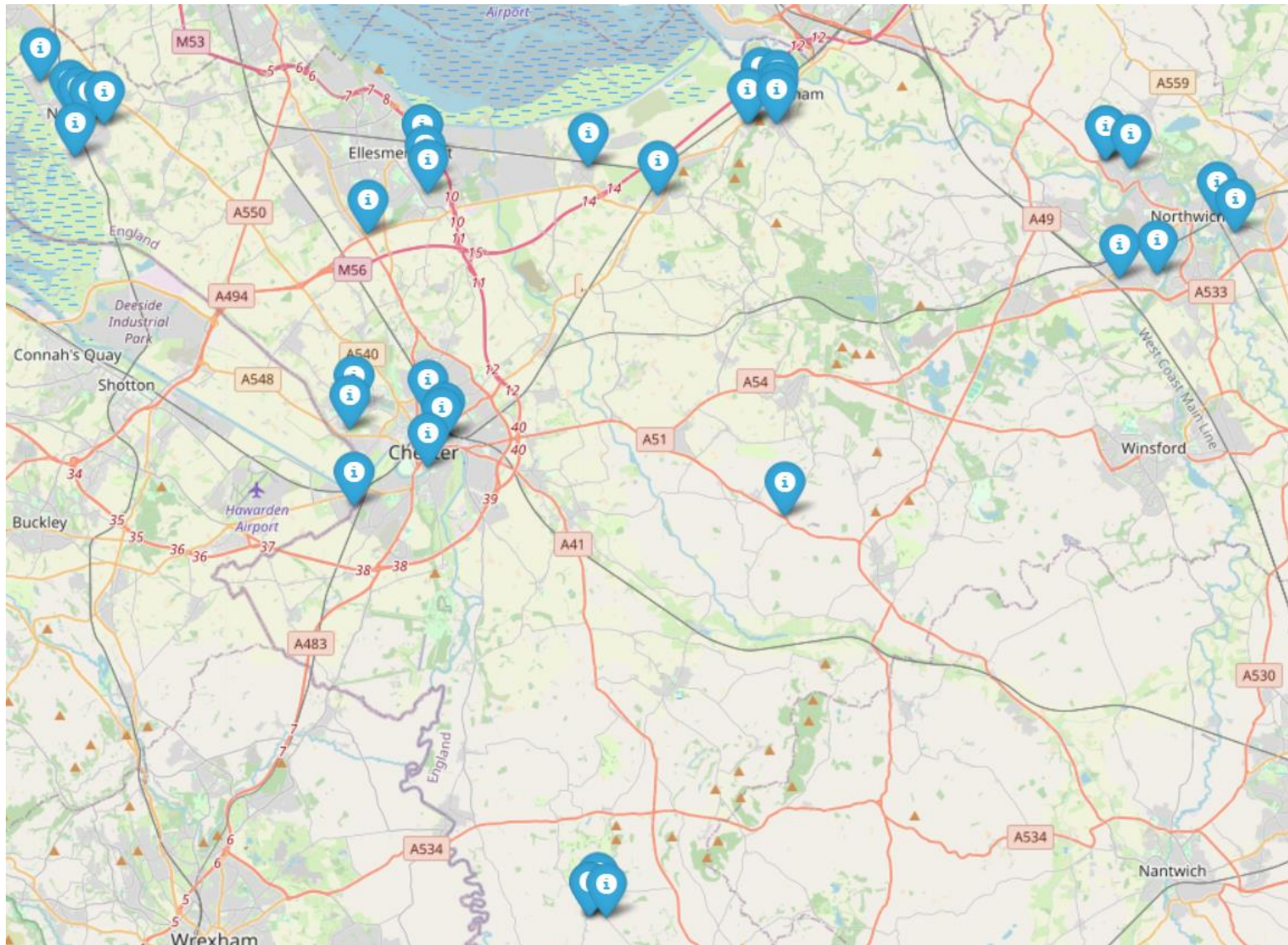
- The survey had **76 responses**.
- The project has **supported in excess of 1800 people for at least six-months** during 2024.
- The project has resulted in a social value of **£5.40 for every £1 invested**, with the key proxy being a reduction in social isolation for beneficiaries. This has been reinforced with survey data that shows **82% of beneficiaries stating they attend the Welcoming Spaces for social reasons**.

The following results summarise the responses to the beneficiary survey.

Venues of survey respondents

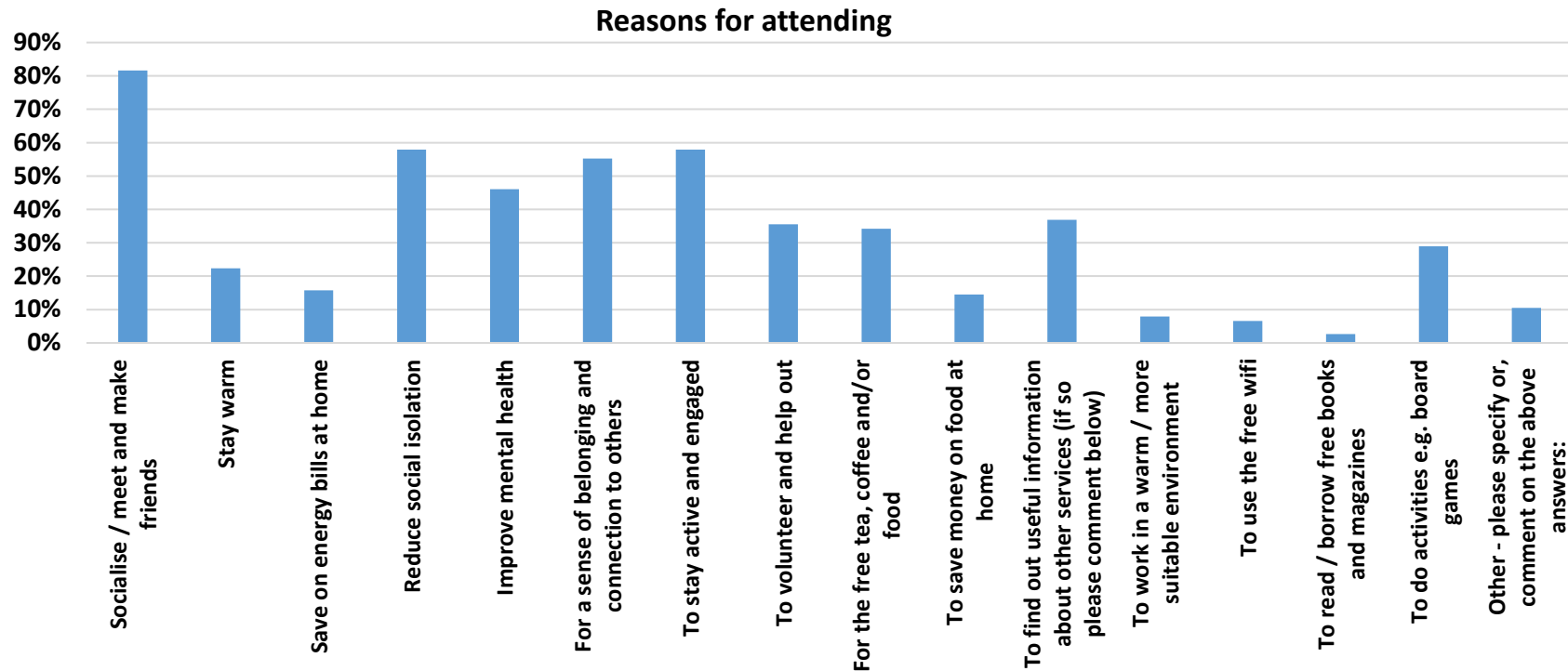


Locations of beneficiaries that responded to the survey based on post code



Map source: Open Street Map

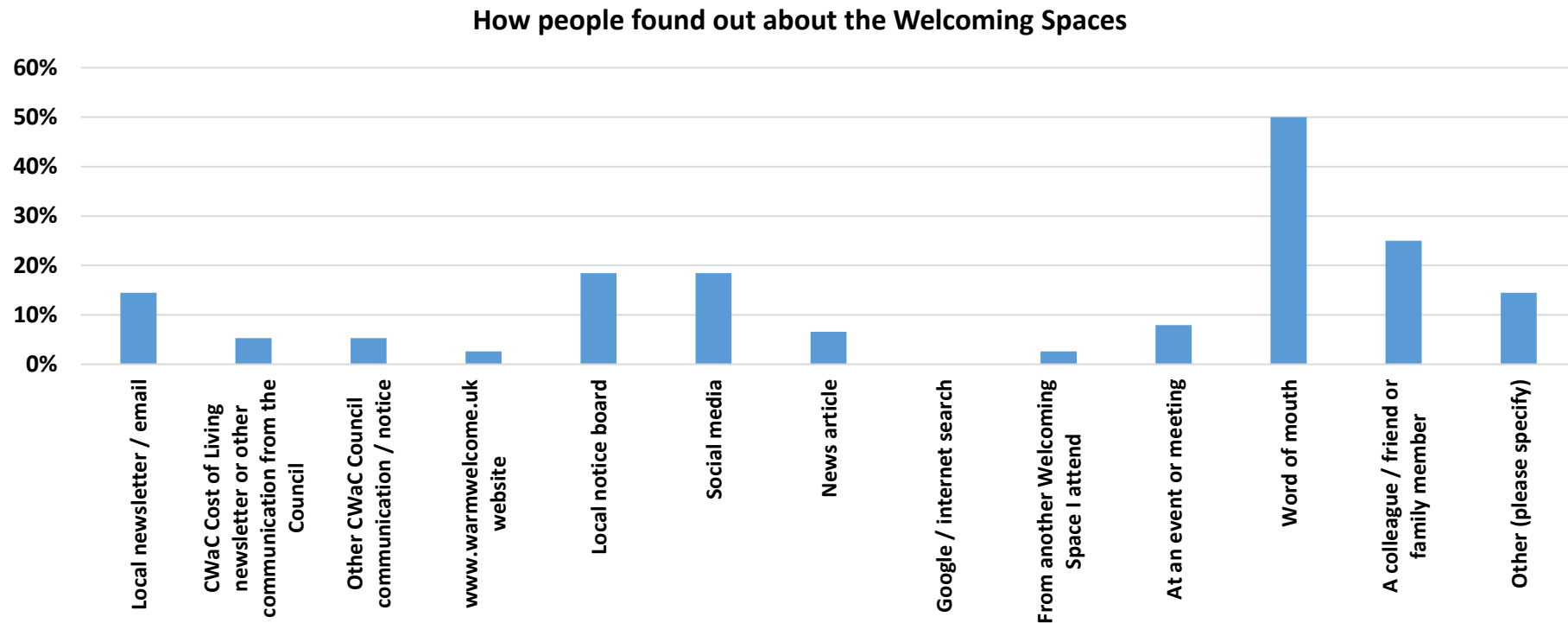
Reasons for attending the Welcoming Spaces



Key Insights:

- **Social Interaction:** The most commonly selected reason for attending the Welcoming Space is to "Socialise / meet and make friends," with **82%** of respondents choosing this option. This indicates a strong social element to the space.
- **Combating Isolation and Improving Well-being:** High percentages of respondents attended to reduce social isolation (**58%**), improve mental health (**46%**), and feel a sense of belonging (**55%**). This suggests the space is crucial for mental and emotional support.
- **Practical Support:** Several respondents also attended for practical reasons, such as staying warm (**22%**), saving on energy bills (**16%**), and accessing free tea, coffee, and food (**34%**).
- **Other Activities:** The space provides opportunities to stay active and engaged (**58%**), volunteer and help out (**36%**), and participate in activities like board games (**29%**).
- **Information Access:** **37%** of respondents used the space to find out useful information about other services, highlighting its role as an information hub.
- **Other:** Around **11%** of respondents had additional reasons for attending, including accessing a play group for toddlers, the foodbank, and other social groups. Many comments highlighted a need for connection and support in dealing with isolation at home.

How people found out about the Welcoming Spaces

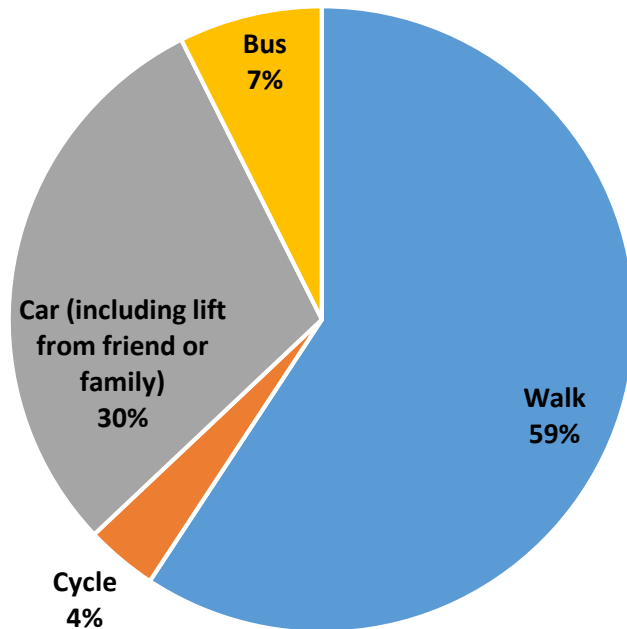


Key Insights:

- **Word of Mouth:** The most common way respondents found out about the Welcoming Space is through **word of mouth** (50%).
- **Friends and Family:** 25% of respondents learned about the space through a colleague, friend, or family member.
- **Local Notice Boards and Social Media:** Both **local notice boards** and **social media** are equally important, with 18% of respondents.
- **Other Communication Channels:**
 - **Local newsletters or emails** accounted for 14% of respondents.
 - **Council communications**, including the **CWaC Cost of Living newsletter** and other **CWaC notices**, contributed to 5% of awareness.
 - The www.warmwelcome.uk website brought in 3% of respondents.
- **Less Common Sources:** Sources such as **news articles** (7%), **events or meetings** (8%), and **other miscellaneous reasons** (14%) contributed a smaller but still significant portion.
- **Additional Comments:** The "Other" section included: **foodbank**, **citizens advice bureau**, **church**, and **local shop posters**.

How people travelled to the Welcoming Spaces

How people travelled to the Welcoming Spaces



Key Insights:

- **Walking:** The majority of respondents (**59%**) walk to the venue, suggesting that most attendees live close to the Welcoming Space or prefer walking as a mode of transport.
- **Car Usage:** **30%** of respondents used a car (including getting a lift from a friend or family), showing that while many walk, a significant portion still relies on vehicles to reach the venue.
- **Bus Usage:** Only **7%** of respondents used the bus, indicating that public transport is not a primary method of transportation for attendees.
- **Cycling:** A small proportion (**4%**) cycle to the venue, which might indicate a preference for other modes of transport, or that the location is not particularly cycling-friendly.

What beneficiaries say they like the most about the Welcoming Spaces

Examples of comments:

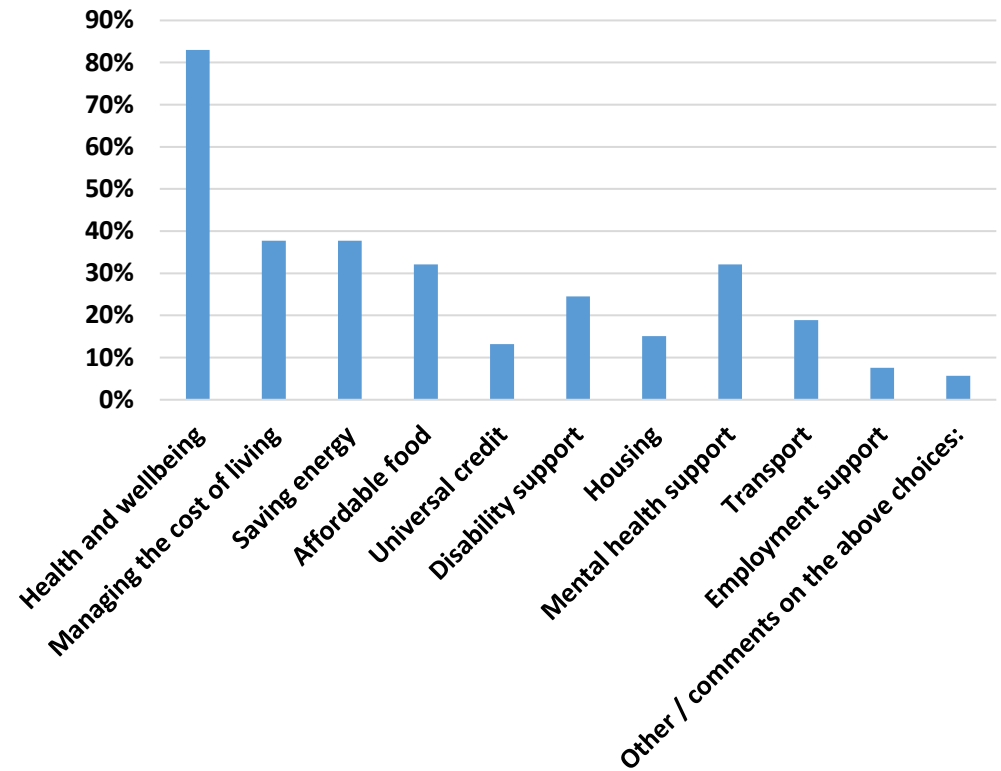
- "It's a friendly welcoming space for all ages and brings the community together. Great services on offer to help those in need of them."
- "Very friendly, lots of activities, free refreshments, and a sense of welcome."
- "Everyone is very welcoming and makes you feel included."
- "It has created a social group that participants are enjoying and interacting with each other, reducing isolation."
- "The people and the atmosphere. It really is a welcoming space, and all the volunteers work hard to ensure that everybody feels connected."

Other information and services beneficiaries would useful to access while attending the Welcoming Space

Key Insights:

- **Health and Wellbeing:** The most highly requested service, with **83%** of respondents indicating interest. This highlights the importance of health and wellbeing support in these spaces.
- **Managing the Cost of Living and Saving Energy:** Both topics were equally important, with **38%** of respondents selecting each. These reflect current concerns about financial sustainability and energy conservation.
- **Affordable Food and Mental Health Support:** **32%** of respondents selected both affordable food and mental health support, emphasizing the need for accessible resources that address both physical and mental wellbeing.
- **Disability Support:** **25%** of respondents sought disability support, pointing to the importance of inclusive services for people with disabilities.
- **Universal Credit:** **13%** of respondents would find information about Universal Credit useful, indicating a need for financial support guidance.
- **Transport:** **19%** of respondents highlighted the importance of transport information, which may indicate a need for assistance in reaching the venue.
- **Employment Support:** **Only 8%** selected this, indicating a lower demand for employment-related services, possibly reflecting the primary focus on wellbeing and community connection.
- **Additional Comments:** The "Other" category (**selected by 6%**) includes requests such as:
 1. **A men's group:** A specific social support request.
 2. **General satisfaction:** Some respondents expressed that everything they need is already available at the space.

Other information and services that would be useful



Case Study:

Frodsham Main Street Memory Café VE Party Day: <https://cheshireaction.org.uk/case-study-frodshams-main-street-memory-cafe-gets-welcoming-spaces-grant/>



For more information, please contact:

John Heselwood - email: john.heselwood@cheshireaction.org.uk

Tel: 07723 062756

www.cheshireaction.org.uk