



COMMUNITY MANAGED LIBRARIES NATIONAL PEER NETWORK

Supporting communities & vulnerable people
this winter



The role of Community Managed Libraries this winter

Community Managed Libraries are already providing communities with a safe space to grow, socialise and learn. This has become even more vital with the cost-of-living crisis across the UK, with CMLs offering unfettered access to warmth & safety, computer use, books, activities, events, and support services.

CMLs are in the heart of communities, both rural and urban, and are open to people all ages and backgrounds. The CML Network, with around 500 community libraries across the UK, can develop strong local & regional partnerships enabling wider service provision and the potential for joint funding.

The huge network of volunteers operating throughout the CML Network are well placed to continue to support communities this winter.



What CMLs are doing

Supporting people in your community this winter, can just mean continuing to offer the important activities and services which CMLs already provide. Community organisations are providing ground level insight into the issues being faced and what support & information would be most relevant to circulate. CMLs may consider linking up with other local partners to increase your combined impact.



Jigsaws & Games Clubs

CMLs all over are already running games clubs & jigsaw lending. See Nidderdale Plus Community Library's [Jigsaw Library](#).



Community Cafés & Coffee Mornings

Around 20% of CMLs currently run either a café, coffee corner or regular coffee mornings, with many more offering simple hot drinks. See Blackfen Community Library's '[Rooted Coffee House](#)'.



Community Events

Events & activities that are free or low-cost encourage inclusivity and community cohesion. Author talks, local history groups & social clubs are regular features in the majority of CMLs.



Comfortable furniture & safe spaces

Making use of seating and warm communal spaces providing a safe haven. See Upholland Library & Café's [space](#).



Providing additional support



Signposting

Supporting users to find advice and guidance such as local advice services, [Citizens Advice](#), [Age UK](#), energy support & [Food Banks](#).



Opening Hours

Extending opening hours, where possible, during colder periods.



Tech Support

Additional digital support through workshops, training and access to IT equipment. Supplementary advice can be found on the [Digital Culture Network](#).



Activities

Offering homework clubs, after school activities, coffee mornings or sessions for families & children.



Energy Advice

Provide training & advice workshops. Explore local partnerships through [BESN](#) & [National Energy Action](#).



Cafés & Hot Drinks

Providing hot drinks and community meals. This could be as simple as a hot tea urn.



'Wall of Kindness'

Offering a space (inside or outside) to hang donated coats and other warm clothing for those in need to use.

Energy bill relief & support

Energy Bills Support Scheme

Alongside additional measures recently announced, households will still receive the £400 discount. Consumers do not need to do anything as the discount will be applied automatically, starting in Oct 2022:

- £66 in October and November
- £67 in December, January, February and March



Combined with the Energy Price Guarantee, those with low usage could actually see a reduction in the total paid compared to the current rate.

[Find out more](#)

Energy Price Guarantee

The Energy Price Guarantee will reduce the unit cost of electricity and gas so that a typical household in Great Britain pays, on average, around £2,500 a year on their energy bill, for the next 2 years, from 1 October 2022.



There is no maximum energy bill, standard tariffs have a maximum daily fee and cost per energy unit that providers can charge.

Consumers will pay standing charges, even if they use no energy. The average annual fees for standing charges are between £225 & £296, depending on the location.

[Find out more](#)

£650 means-tested benefit

Over eight million households in the UK on means-tested benefits will get a payment of £650, as part of the wider [package of support announced by the Government](#) to help with the cost of living crisis.

- £326 was paid in July 22
- £324 paid in November 22

This will be paid by either DWP or HMRC, depending which benefits are received.

Energy Bill Relief Scheme

The government will provide a discount on wholesale gas and electricity prices for all non-domestic customers (including all UK businesses, the voluntary sector like charities and the public sector such as schools and hospitals).

It will apply to fixed contracts agreed on or after 1 April 2022, as well as to deemed, variable and flexible tariffs and contracts. It will apply to energy usage from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023, running for an initial 6-month period for all non-domestic energy users. The savings will be first seen in October bills, which are typically received in November.

As with the Energy Price Guarantee for households, customers do not need to take action or apply to the scheme to access the support. Support (in the form of a p/kWh discount) will automatically be applied to bills.

Cornwall Insight reports that the scheme will represent approximately a 45% discount, dependant on the type of contract. We are awaiting further clarification on how CMLs will be affected if they are in fixed term contracts established before 1 Apr 22.

Warm Welcome Spaces

The Warm Welcome campaign is an initiative aimed at equipping community organisations to support anyone and everyone to access warm spaces, activities, and services this winter. 1 in 4 people may not be able to heat their homes sufficiently this winter, even with the government measures recently announced. Many of the existing services which CMLs already offer mean that community libraries are very well suited to feed into the campaign. To become a Warm Welcome Space, it must:

- Be **free** (community cafés etc. are fine though)
- Be **warm**, ideally offering hot drinks. This does not need to be fancy; a tea urn is perfect.
- Have **people** (staff/volunteers) there to talk to, signpost or advise.
- Be **safe**. This includes adequate insurances and policies being in place.

You can sign up via the [Warm Welcome](#) website and find a step-by-step guide [here](#).

How CMLs can get involved

- CMLs can feed into an online discussion group with other CMLs by signing up [here](#).
- Sign up as a [Warm Welcome Space](#).
- The Network can connect you with other peers who are already running services and activities which you are seeking to start.
- Share ideas and suggestions with other CMLs through the online Network [forum](#).

You can contact the Community Libraries Network via info@communitylibrariesnetwork.org.