

First Minister pays a visit to a Warm Welcome Space

First Minister, John Swinney, joined guests and volunteers on Easter Monday at St. John's Cornerstone Warm Welcome Space.

The space is one of the 211 Warm Welcome Spaces in Scotland, offering a safe space to keep warm, make friends, and connect with their local community.

The number has grown considerably this winter, with a 55% rise in Warm Welcome Spaces opening their doors across Scotland since October 2024.

The First Minister was joined by David Barclay, Warm Welcome's Campaign Director, and David Linden, Senior Director of Public Affairs for the Warm Welcome Campaign. The Warm Welcome Campaign supports, resources, and champions the network of more than 5,250 community spaces across the UK and raises awareness so that more people can find a place of belonging and connection close to home.

The St. John's Cornerstone Warm Welcome Space in West End is a place for the local community to connect and receive a warm welcome in a friendly community space, offering tea, coffee, and hot soup. Whether people want to meet new friends, get out of the cold, or just read a book, St. John's epitomises the very essence of the Warm Welcome Campaign in the heart of Scotland's capital city. The Warm Welcome Space has been supporting the local community all through the cold and dark winter months but keeps its doors open all year round.

Mr Swinney was given a very warm welcome and spent time chatting to guests and volunteers and he heard from guests, who talked about the importance of the space as a consistent place where they could connect with others and be heard, and from volunteers about how they benefit from being part of the space and always leave feeling fulfilled and uplifted. He also spent time talking to Reverend David Bagnall, who shared the story of the Warm Welcome Space at St. John's and how it had gone from a winter-only space to being open year-round due to popular demand.

Mr Swinney said: "This week I am convening a gathering with political, faith and community leaders to discuss how we can strengthen and protect the values of democracy and respect, which are so integral to our nation's prosperity.

"Projects like the one at St John's in Edinburgh demonstrate this exactly – the compassion and resilience of our local communities in Scotland has the ability to bring people together, particularly in times of hardship and division.

"It was a privilege to meet guests and volunteers at St. John's – one of over 5,250 Warm Welcome Spaces across the UK. Spaces like this can be a lifeline to people who are struggling to keep warm and those feeling lonely.

"Whilst we face an incredibly challenging set of circumstances at this moment, the inherent strengths of Scotland, our people and our communities, I believe can create great possibilities for our country."

David Barclay said: "We were thrilled that First Minister John Swinney joined us at the wonderful St. John's Cornerstone Warm Welcome Space today. It was a real boost to guests and volunteers, with smiles all around.

"Although the number of Warm Welcome Spaces has grown by over 30% in the last few months, local awareness of how to find your nearest space is low. We want to change this so everyone

knows how to find a place of connection in their neighbourhood. Warm Welcome Spaces like St. John's Cornerstone play a vital role in supporting communities.

“The First Minister’s visit is a golden opportunity to shine a light on the remarkable difference Warm Welcome Spaces make and to encourage more people to visit their local space. ”

The Warm Welcome Campaign hosts an interactive [Warm Welcome Spaces map](#) that helps people find their nearest space by simply entering their postcode.

