

The fridge is continuing to develop in what we offer and who we partner with, and adapt to the ever changing ways of life with Covid.

The number of visitors we have to the fridge tends to vary from approx 20 – 40 people plus more accessing the outside cupboard outside of our opening times. The outside cupboard has proven really popular for people to help themselves at times that suit them and enable fruit and veg to be on offer over the weekend. This was a collaboration between ourselves and Men in Sheds.

We had a lot of donations in the lead up to Christmas and so were able to offer all families visiting the fridge treats, raffle tickets (for which everyone received a prize) and we provided lots of food parcels and treats to local hospital staff.

Our main donations come from Waitrose, Lidl, Tesco and Asda and we've just expressed interest in collecting surplus food from Co-Op.

In the latter half of the Autumn term and in January, Peter Woodd, a local businessman, very generously financed fresh produce for the fridge each week which was great for supporting struggling families. His support has come to an end for now but we have been liaising with Ahmadiyya Muslim Community who are keen to support those in need at this time. They are arranging food parcels with fresh produce for 3 local families we know are struggling and are able to provide more if we come across other families in need of this support.

Tim Alden, a local chef, has begun cooking with our surplus food so that we can offer more freshly cooked meals, soups and snacks and enable our surplus to be put to good use. During this current lockdown we have been keen to support home-schooling families and we have begun offering a hot takeaway meal. It's really great to have Tim as our head chef and the first 2 meals have been a real success providing 50 – 60 meals each time. An Indian takeaway is planned for 18th Feb with Ahmadiyya cooking this for us and providing all the ingredients – we again currently have 60 meals booked in for this. We hope to continue on a weekly or fortnightly basis whilst children remain home-schooling, and as well as offering a support to families we hope this will continue to develop our links within the local community and make more people aware of the fridge and community centre.

As a registered food business we are due an inspection from environmental health. We've recently had the first stage of this via a phone call and then subsequent video call. The face to face assessment will take place in due course, likely when Covid restrictions begin to ease. The initial assessments we've had have gone well and have been useful in double checking details of how we should operate to ensure our food safety as well as demonstrating our knowledge and processes around food safety. We now have a food safety management system in place, the kitchen has had a deep clean and re-organisation and we're continuing to build upon the processes we have in place for ensuring good food safety. We currently have 15 volunteers involved in different aspects of the fridge and further training for the volunteers around food safety is planned for the end of Feb/beginning of March.

In the Autumn we had a really successful 'soup share' where ingredients from the fridge were cooked into delicious soups and offered café-style to the local community. We hope, when Covid restrictions allow, to be able to do this again offering freshly cooked meals in a café format – a great way to use up surplus food, connect with the local community and help provide a safe and relaxed environment for people to begin to socialise again.

Katie Burnhams, CoOrdinator
Community Fridge & Cupboard

