

Over the summer holidays numbers of people visiting the fridge sessions had become quite low but from September the numbers have increased again, with 15 – 30 people visiting each week, as well as others accessing the outside cupboard. We have been receiving regular donations of frozen food from Waitrose as well as donations of fruit, veg, bread and damaged packets from Tesco, Waitrose and Lidl. This means we always have a good amount of food to offer when the fridge is open and fruit, veg and bread is often available in between fridge sessions in the outside cupboard. We have begun collecting from Tesco Aldershot and this has been positive in receiving more tins and packet food where the packaging has been damaged. We have also signed up to receive food from Sainsburys but further work is needed to establish links with the local stores and help the staff there to understand the process for us to collect food.

It has been great to be able to provide some local families with food whilst they have had to isolate, particularly providing fresh food and ready meals.

One of our volunteers, Barbara, has restarted cooking at the centre each week, using ingredients we have in the fridge to make meals which can be frozen and offered to families when needed – again great to be able to provide to families who have been isolating.

In October half term we put on the big soup share event – a free lunch for anyone to attend with homemade soups, bread and cakes. It was a really successful event with a great turnout from the local community, really nice atmosphere and a good way to make some new links with people who hadn't previously attended the community centre.

As the centre has become busier the decision has been made to move the fridge into the back store room. This will enable the fridge to continue to open when the training room is hired out to others, and provides more flexibility in opening hours. Shelving has been purchased and put together and the final arrangements for moving are underway. Customers will then come into the centre to access the fridge, queuing within the foyer area. The benefit of this is that we hope to better engage fridge customers with other activities taking place in the centre and with colder and wetter weather customers will be able to queue in the dry!

We are also planning a lunch and training session for all of the fridge volunteers – particularly important to refresh training around food safety and ensure processes are being followed in preparation for the environmental health inspection. It is important to ensure that all food offered in the fridge is stored in a 'pest-free' way and so food in the outside cupboard is now being stored in lidded plastic boxes to ensure pests such as slugs and mice can't get to the food. The inspection is expected to take place Feb/March 2022.

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