

Friday Food at the Aylesbury Methodist Church - Report on the first 3 months

Following a period of discussion and deliberation, the AMC Church Council agreed to the establishment of the Friday Food project in the newly-refurbished Welcome Space at the entrance to Aylesbury Methodist Church. Volunteers were recruited, DBS checks carried out and a training session organised, together with a manual for those taking part.

Friday Food opened up on 1st November 2019, and in doing so, the Church joined with the Quakers and Catholics who were already providing meals on Monday and Wednesday evenings respectively. This meant that there were now three evenings during the week when those who were homeless or struggling with feeding themselves could have a free hot nutritious meal.

During its first three months, the project operated on 14 evenings, opening its doors at 6 p.m. and serving meals up until 7 p.m., although guests were not obliged to leave until 7.30 p.m. During this time, 54 different people have used the drop-in facility, with an average on number each night of around 10 guests.



The meals have been provided by 9 different volunteers, and on each evening, there has been a team of 4 volunteers, who have taken on the different roles of Team Leader, Security, Hospitality and Kitchen. This division of labour has worked well, although in practice, people have doubled up on roles as necessary. As well as providing meals, there have been plenty of opportunities for chatting and listening to people's problems.

The meals have been very much appreciated, and while the primary aim of the project has been to provide good food and a welcome to people who have been on the margins of society, it has also been able to provide some additional support in particular circumstances.

There have been some individual stories, with two of the regular guests being people who have been homeless on and off for at least ten years. With these two and others, it has been possible to engage with them in seeing whether there might be some additional help that they could access in addressing some of their long-term problems. Where necessary, guests have been pointed towards the work of the Aylesbury Homeless Action Group (AHAG), which assists individuals in finding accommodation, and to the Council's Severe Weather Emergency Provision. A couple of guests have also linked in with other church activities, with one writing a prayer request and another attending a Sunday morning service.

The church itself has also benefited, both from seeing the Welcome Space used effectively for a wider purpose, and from building relationships with people whom it might not otherwise have much interaction with.