



A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.

Major changes at food bank as demand rises



Vital service: The Finchley Foodbank team and the volunteers who help each week rely on donations of food, household items and cash to help hundreds of people in need.

By David Gritten

Almost 10 years after it first opened, Finchley Foodbank has carried out a major reorganisation of the way it distributes food and household goods to people in need from its base at St Mary's church hall in East Finchley.

Until recently, long lines of people waiting to be given items to help them make ends meet could be seen queuing outside the church where they were easily visible to pedestrians and drivers on the High Road.

But under the new system clients are offered a time slot, allowing them to walk straight

inside. "Nobody should have to queue for food from a foodbank," says Finchley Foodbank co-ordinator Anna Maughan.

Changes welcomed

Clients can also now choose their own items. Previously they had been given pre-packed bags of food, without knowing what they might be receiving. Now the food is laid out on long tables, so clients can see for themselves what they might need for the

week or weeks ahead.

A new selection of fresh items includes bread, eggs, salad, carrots, oranges, apples, garlic, onions and potatoes, and there are essential items for children such as nappies.

Inside the church hall, there is a 'family room' catering for larger households, as well as an area for single people and couples. As Anna comments: "It's been a lot of planning."

Clients have been offered a survey to gauge their comments about the new system. To date, 130 surveys have been completed. "They've been so excited," Anna reports. "There have been no negative comments at all. They seem thrilled to be able to make their own decisions."

Finchley Foodbank, staffed by volunteers who give up their time on Tuesdays and Saturdays, marks its 10th anniversary in February next year and this

reorganisation is one of the biggest changes in its history.

The food bank supports hundreds of people in need each week and has seen demand for its help increase dramatically this year as the cost of living rises. The volunteer team relies on fundraising and donations of food and household items to keep its service running. Donations can be brought to the church hall on Fridays between 12pm and 3pm. Find out more at www.finchleyfoodbank.org.uk

Tree lighting

Lighting the East Finchley Christmas tree takes place outside Budgens on the High Road on Saturday 3 December at 5pm.

Everyone is invited to come along for carol singing with music from Fixation Academy, Brookland School Choir and our community football team. A new tree and refreshments including mulled wine and mince pies are being generously provided by Budgens.

Christmas invitation

After an absence of two years owing to the pandemic, Bishop Douglass School in East Finchley is planning to hold its annual Christmas party for senior East Finchley residents again this year.

The party will be held on Tuesday 6 December from 5pm to 7pm (arrive by 4.45pm for a prompt start at 5pm). East Finchley residents who are over 65 are welcome and you should book your place without delay.

As usual, you will be welcomed with a glass of sherry by Year 10 students and enjoy a Christmas meal, followed by

carol singing and entertainment by pupils and staff. Games of bingo and a gift from Santa Claus will round off the evening.

Transport can be provided for those residents who are less mobile. To book your place, phone 020 8883 0433, leave your name and a contact number and someone will get back to you.

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