



Update March 2023

“Unlocking God’s purpose in you through meeting the needs of others”

The New Year started quietly as it usually does giving us a little breathing space, to recover from the busy Autumn and Christmas Seasons, which of course included Christmas Hamper packing. BUT numbers are creeping up quickly, read on to hear our latest news and updates, including Christmas.

Karen Kendall – Project Lead

Referral Statistics: Although numbers took their usual drop in the first 2 weeks in January, they soon picked up so that by the beginning of February we were back to figures similar to the Autumn. In the first 8 weeks of 2023 we delivered 191 packs providing at least 4,095 Meals. There are many larger families (that are new to us) asking for help, so the number of Children we support is increasing. In the last 10 months 80% of households referred to us are NEW.

Still a high number (over 50%) of the referrals are coming through Citizen’s Advice. The wards with most referrals each week are still the Old Dean and St. Michael’s and we still maintaining an increase in support to Frimley/Frimley Green & Deepcut/Mytchett.

Time Givers update:

We now have a really good number of Time-givers, although if you know someone is interested in joining us we never say no to inviting them into the warehouse so they can see how the Besom work and to evaluate with them if there is anything God is calling them to give in either time or skills.

Look at the amazing job these three guys did when we purchased three special wheeled trolley racks and transformed our overflow area making it so much more accessible.



Our drivers are also amazing – we do have a nominal limit to how many deliveries we expect them to manage in a shift, most of them go over and above that on occasions! All the warehouse teams have also been working additionally hard to help with a stock take! The trustees asked “what if (God Forbid) we had a disaster in the building, do we know the value of the stock! So for a time the shelves were littered with “D” for “Done” post-it notes meaning they had been counted!



Soon we are hoping to put on some training on special dietary requirements so that we are all a bit better informed when it comes to Vegan, Diabetic, Gluten Free, halal diets etc. more and more referrals come with special dietary requests.

Spotlight: Patricia Ellis

My journey with Besom began shortly after its launch in May 2009 at St. Paul's Church.

I soon became St. Michael's rep and each week offered a few hours to help.

Our premises then was half a garage but big enough for a little storage of crockery, cutlery and a few other household items. Very little food then. As I remember there was five of us, including Grace, as the driving force. For our first Christmas, I believe we had 5 or 6 hampers to do and just look where we are now !!! Praise the Lord.

We then moved to our next garage and the demand for food was increasing. Being a completely empty space, it was great having some shelving and a table to work on. About this time I took over the accounts, which were quite straightforward then but as we grew they became far more complex. So I was very grateful to be able to hand them onto one who was far more experienced.

I had also been a trustee for many years until I retired last year. Now looking at the warehouse we have and remembering where it all started is quite awesome and such a privilege and blessing to be a part off.

The first boxes we placed into those few churches as we grew, was exciting and having the support of 16 churches now, is again, just amazing.

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One other thing I must mention, is when covid struck, in March 2020.

Some time before that we were receiving a big increase in donations. I must admit I was a little concerned about where it was all going to be used. Then of course lockdown came, Besom had to close and I had my answer.

All our shelves were emptied and it was taken to help with the start of Surry Heath Prepared, who co-ordinated the boroughs response for the pandemic. God had gone before us yet again.

Most importantly though are the wonderful people that have been apart of Besom over the years. The skills and gifts each one have brought and continue to bring is very special to see. From such a simple start to where Besom is now, I believe is truly God's work in Action.

Thanks be to God. Patricia

Schools provision: The school breakfast club that we support received further deliveries in January, the club now has a coordinator and numbers are now much more regular & we still have a good supply of cereal in the warehouse!

Supporting others when our ambient Stocks are high: – a number of folk have commentated on the high level of our stock since Harvest, in the same way we don't turn away time givers we don't tend to turn away donations of food and we seek other ways to make sure folk on our communities are supported. We are happy to make regular food donations to the St. Martins Free food stall (in suspect this may prevent some people needing to seek referrals from us). Also the Hope Hub, in January we gave them the ingredients so that they could prepare 18 packs with recipe cards for 4 person recipe for Tuna and Sweetcorn pasta bake. **We are now beginning to "eat" into those harvest stocks (pardon the pun!)**

When People ask what we need and we explain what items we have "plenty in stock" and what "we need" we are always at risk of just tipping the level of stock and overflowing with something different, but for info here is the latest update:

We buy "Fresh" weekly:

- Fruit & Veg
- Bread & spread
- Sliced cooked meat
- Fresh meat

We have plenty of:

- Tinned Soup
- Tinned Beans
- Pasta
- Tinned Tomatoes
- Cereal & Porridge
- Tea & Coffee

We run out of:

- Cartons Longlife milk / Fruit Juice
- Custard/Rice Pudding Tins & Individual Pots
- Jam
- Spam & Corned Beef
- Chinese & Curry Sauces
- Tinned Vegetables & Fruit
- Bleach/Disinfectant surface cleaner

Christmas: In our last newsletter we were rejoicing about the amount of food that had come in from the many church and school harvests, that influx was followed swiftly by Christmas donations. We can't possibly mention everyone but here is a shout-out to some notable ones: Kings International College Student Leadership Team collected as part of their Christmas Jumper day and filled an estate car, this is it laid out in our entrance hall →



← Ann-Marie who runs “Music with Mummy” held a special Christmas Saturday event and her clients donated items as well as cash!



Caroline who runs “Dreamy Bee Studio” cake making company came in with → some gorgeous cakes for our time-givers.



..and of course so much came in from the churches, we were able to prepare and distribute 152 hampers, working also with the rotary who we supported with a

lot of our excess so that we could help to bless even more families.



These is just some of the donations from the Waitrose collection and these are a handful of the finished Christmas Hampers (these are some we delivered to Kings International College). This year we prepared quite a number that were delivered to Lakeside guests who do not have cooking facilities so we worked out a particular list of contents for their hampers. Our sincere thanks to Jane Bocutt who organises this every year,



for her sacrificial dedication but who has indicated that 2022 was her last year doing this, something for prayer.

Special visitors: It was great to have Surrey Heath Mayor Councillor Helen Whitcroft come to visit the warehouse in February. Here she is with a few of our Time-givers and with the car full ready to go out on a second round that day.



Upcoming events for your diary:

Waitrose Bagshot trolley collection: If you are near Waitrose Bagshot on the **24th March** then please come & say “Hello” as we will be there between 9am – 3pm holding a Pre-Easter Trolley collection. A huge thankyou as always to Waitrose, who invite us to share something of “what we do and why” with their customers, and to give them the opportunity to donate to those most in need in our community. This is Peta and Nigel, (our Thursday Shift Leads) in December they usually take the early shift!



Time-givers Thank you Tea: Watch out for news of our next Tea, provisionally 25th April at St Michaels church hall again.

Prayer Thanks & Needs:

1. Thanks as always for God’s abundant generosity.
2. Thanks for all those that give, be it in time, money, skills or donations.
3. Can we pray especially for the Shift Leads who put in some considerable hours each week.
4. Pray for those who are referred to us and are struggling financially especially in light of the increase in basic living costs.
5. Pray for a team to take on the running of the 2023 Christmas Hamper preparation.
6. Pray for a balance of donated ambient food stocks