

# Community Fridge Evaluation Report

Hale Community Centre

May 2024

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# Executive summary

## The project

Launched in August 2020, Hale Community Centre's Community Fridge & Cupboard aims to bring the local community together, enhancing community relationships and wellbeing, whilst reducing food waste. The service offers free produce to all, regardless of financial circumstance, as well as providing signposting into other local organisations where individuals need additional support.

## Evaluation approach

Using its established *Insight & Impact* evaluation service, Helpforce follows a consistent methodology to determine the impact of volunteering and voluntary services on health and wellbeing outcomes.

Between February 2022 and April 2024, Hale Community Centre partnered with Helpforce to undertake an evaluation of the service and determine the impact it was having for its members. During the course of this evaluation, data was collected via two surveys:

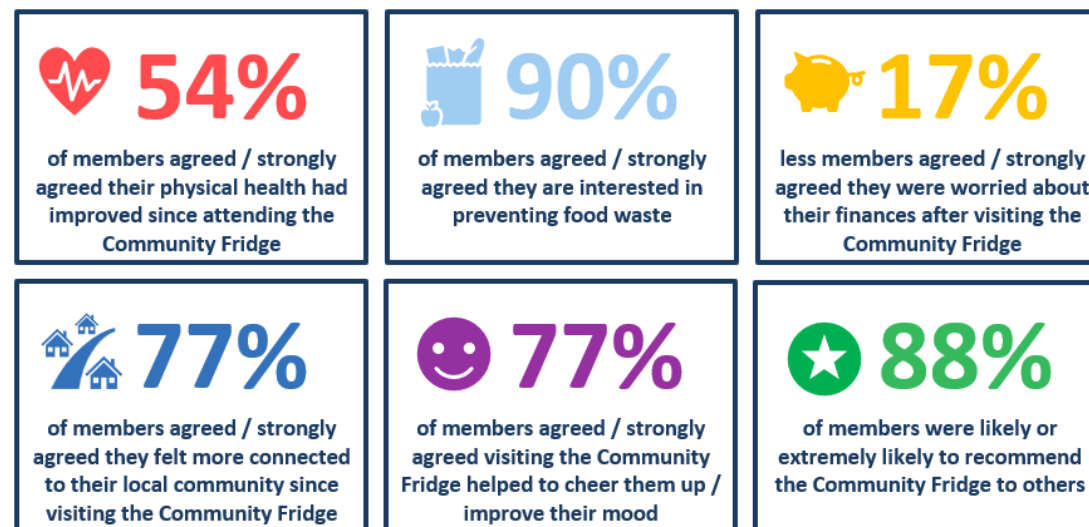
- A registration survey, completed by 246 individuals when signed up to use the Community Fridge.
- A follow-up survey, completed by 103 individuals after they had been using the Community Fridge for some time.

## Conclusions & recommendations

The Community Fridge & Cupboard appears to provide a beneficial and important service for the local community. This analysis highlighted some areas where they could further expand their service, including extended opening times, reaching more individuals who don't initially have an interest in the prevention of food waste, and by providing more support to connect individuals with local services. However, overall, individuals appear satisfied with their experience of attending, with many likely to recommend the service to others.

## Key findings

Feedback from attendees suggests the Community Fridge results in many positive benefits.



# Introduction

- Launched in August 2020, Hale Community Centre's Community Fridge & Cupboard (hereafter Community Fridge or Fridge) aims to bring the local community together, enhancing community relationships and wellbeing, whilst reducing food waste.<sup>1</sup>
- The Community Fridge is available to all for free, regardless of financial situation.
- Donations are received from local supermarkets, as well as produce grown by the centre's gardening club. Additionally, Fridge members are encouraged to bring their own excess produce to avoid it going to waste.
- The Community Fridge is run by staff and volunteers. They ensure the service is prepared, stocked, and accessible for their members. Additionally, they can lend a listening ear to attendees and support them to access other local community services who may be able to provide them with support.
- Between February 2022 and April 2024, Hale Community Centre partnered with Helpforce to undertake an evaluation of the service and determine the impact it was having for its members. This report brings together the key findings.

<sup>1</sup> [Community Fridge & Cupboard](#), Hale Community Centre Website.



# Evaluation approach: Outcomes and Methodology

## Helpforce's approach to evaluating...

Using its established [Insight & Impact](#) evaluation service, Helpforce follows a consistent methodology to determine the impact of volunteering and voluntary services on health and wellbeing outcomes. Target outcomes are identified across a range of beneficiaries representing the people and organisations involved, and then we collect the necessary data to prove and evidence the outcomes.

## Methodology

For this analysis, Community Fridge members were asked to undertake two surveys:

1. A **registration survey**, completed when individuals signed up to use the Fridge. The survey consisted of questions about the individual's circumstances and their reasons for attending. The survey also asked questions related to the intended impact of the service, to act as a baseline to determine improvements. During the course of the analysis, we received **246 responses** to the registration survey.
2. A **follow-up survey**, completed after individuals had been using the Fridge for some time. The survey again consisted of questions about the individual's circumstances, and repeated the questions related to the intended impact of the service, to determine if there had been any changes. During the course of the analysis, we received **103 responses** to the follow-up survey.

The data collected via these surveys aimed to prove the achievement of several **Community Fridge member** outcomes.

Throughout the report, data findings are linked back to the data collection method using icons at the top right-hand side of the screen. Evidence strength is also rated used icons. These icons are as follows...



### Member Outcomes

- Improved knowledge of, awareness of, and access to healthy food.
- Improved health, related to healthy eating habits.
- Improved emotional wellbeing, reduced feelings of anxiety.
- Increased social connectedness as part of the centre community.
- Financial benefits resulting from easy access to food.
- Reduction in food waste at an individual and community level.
- Improved understanding of how to access support within the community.

### Insights vs Impact



Insight      Impact

### Evidence strength ...



Compelling evidence      Promising evidence      Limited evidence

# Insight: Community Fridge Activity



The Community Fridge is open on Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays, with the exceptions of bank holidays. On occasion, the fridge is also open on some evenings and weekends.

Between June 2022 and March 2024, the Community Fridge saw an impressive number of visitors, with **over 4,600 visits** across **423 unique members**.

Across this 22-month time period, the **average number of visits per member was 11**, therefore equating to one visit every other month. However, this was significantly higher for some individuals, with the number of visits per member ranging up to 107, equating to an average of 5 visits per month.

Whilst there has been some variation month on month, the numbers of people visiting the fridge has been on an **upward trajectory** since June 2022.

There was a noticeable dip in December 2023, however, data was only provided up until 8<sup>th</sup> December, so it is likely the number of visitors was higher than represented here.

Between June 2022 and March 2024...

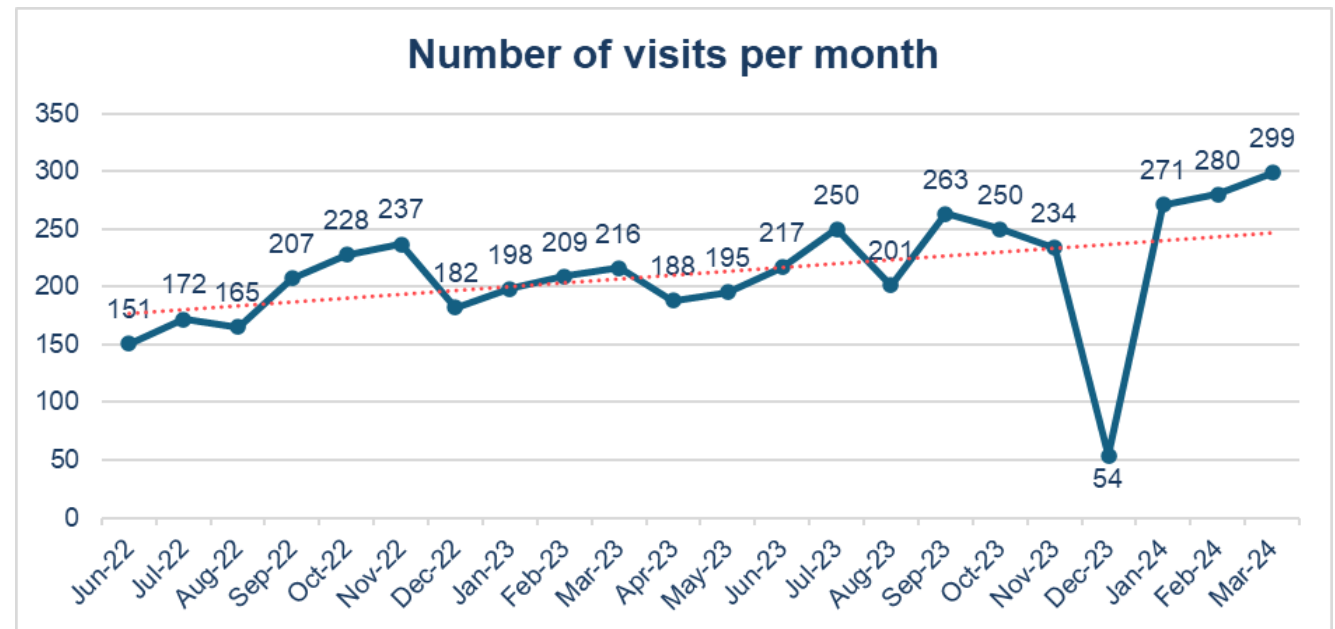
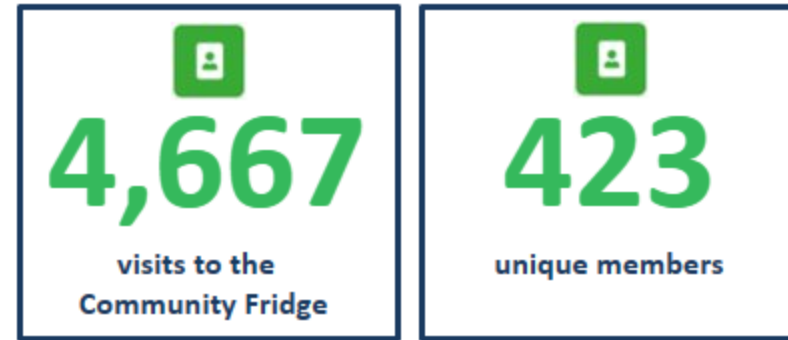


Chart 1- Visits to the Community Fridge by month.

To note, activity figures were recorded and reported directly by Hale Community Centre. Helpforce has not been able to validate this data.

# Insight: About Fridge members and their families



Within the registration survey, participants were asked to provide information about themselves and the individuals living within their household.

## Where do Community Fridge members live?



Over three-quarters of members reported that they live within the GU9 postcodes, which is the same postcode as Hale Community Centre, illustrating the service attracts the majority of attendees from within their immediate locale.

However, a number of members live in other areas, with visitors travelling from over 13 different outward code areas and 184 separate postcodes. Indeed, within the follow-up survey some respondents indicated that they travel from further afield, with 8% suggesting they travel over 5 miles to access the service.

## How many people live within the household?



The majority of members reported having one (38%) or two (48%) adults living within their households. However, the number of adults within the household ranged up to five.

43% of members reported there were no children (individuals aged up to 17 years) living within their household. However, 45 members (18%) reported having one child and 68 members (28%) reported having two children living in their household. The number of children living in any one household ranged up to seven.

Overall, the average number of individuals within a Community Fridge member's household is 4.2.

*N=246 registration survey responses. 103 follow-up survey responses.*

# Insight: About Fridge members and their families



## What proportion of Community Fridge members are in receipt of benefits?



In totality, over half of Community Fridge members reported that someone in their household was in receipt of benefits at the time of registering for the service:

- 46% reported they themselves were in receipt of benefits.
- 4% reported that, whilst not in receipt of benefits themselves, another person within their household was.
- 7% reported that both themselves and another person within their household were receiving benefits.

Consequently, 42% of respondents did not have a person within the household who was claiming benefits.

## How many Community Fridge members are displaced persons?



12 respondents identified as being a displaced person at the time of registering for the Community Fridge.

*It is worth noting that it's possible that this number may be higher than is reported. The question of whether an individual identified as being a displaced person was introduced at a later stage of data collection, therefore only 50% of respondents were asked this question. Additionally, five respondents indicated that they would prefer not to say.*

N=246 registration survey responses.



# Insight: Visiting the Community Fridge



Within the registration survey, participants were also asked how they heard about the Community Fridge and how frequently they visit.

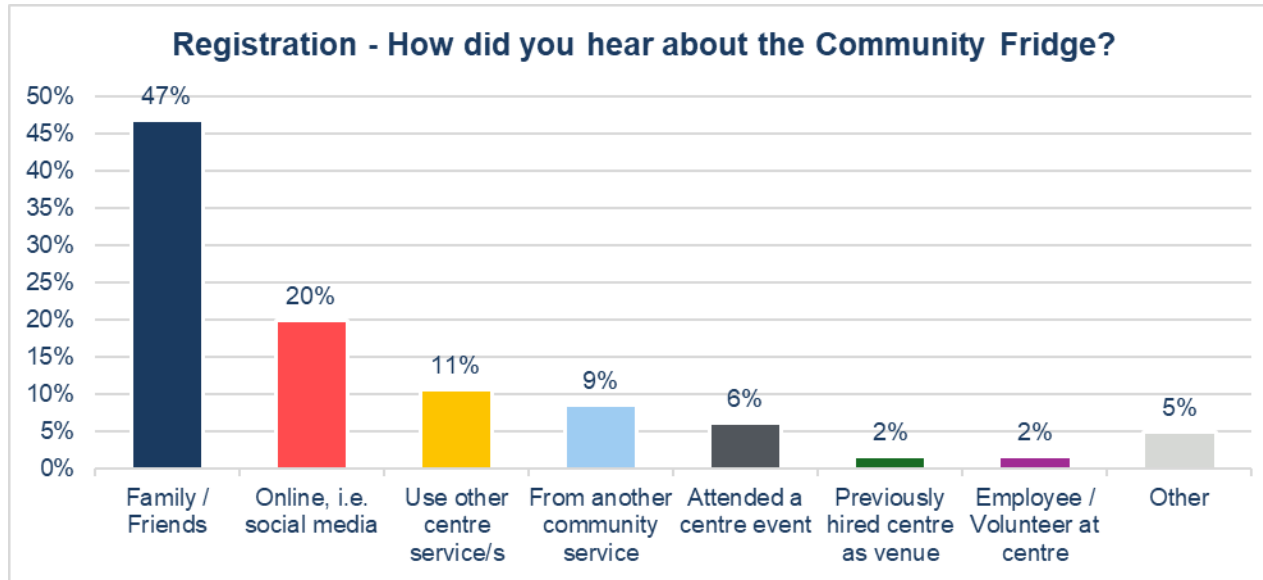


Chart 2 - How individuals found out about the Community Fridge

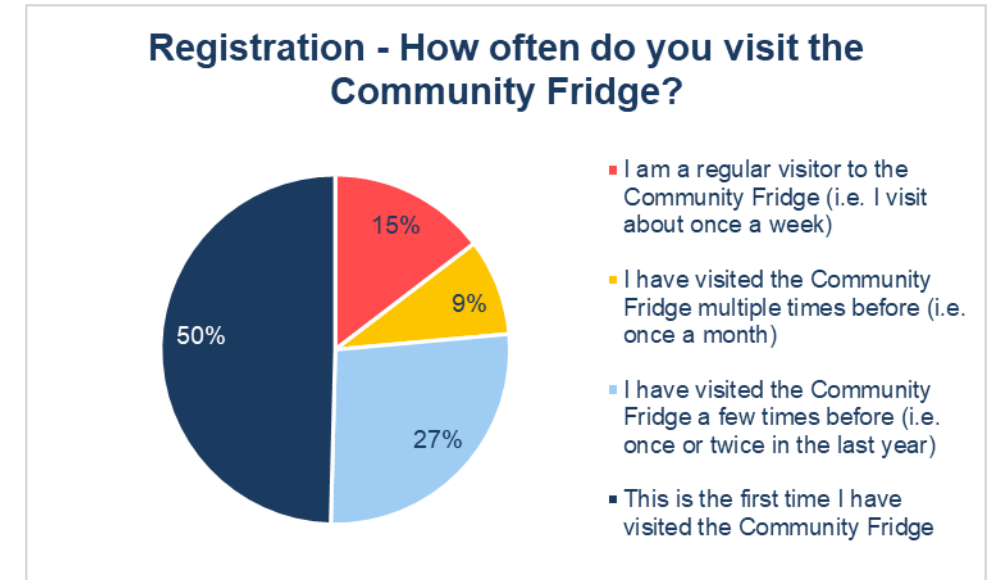


Chart 3 - How often individuals visit Community Fridge

Almost half of all members found out about the Community Fridge from friends or family. Additionally, 20% heard about the service via online platforms.

Half of respondents reported that the time of completing the registration survey was the first time they had visited the Community Fridge. However, 15% suggested they were regular visitors, attending the service about once a week.

N=246 registration survey responses.

# Insight: Supporting reduction of food waste



By encouraging members to bring their own surplus food to the fridge, as well as working with local providers to donate produce that might otherwise go to waste, Hale Community Centre hoped to engage the local community in their mission to prevent food waste.

 **69%**  
of members indicated  
reducing food waste was a  
motivator for visiting the  
Community Fridge

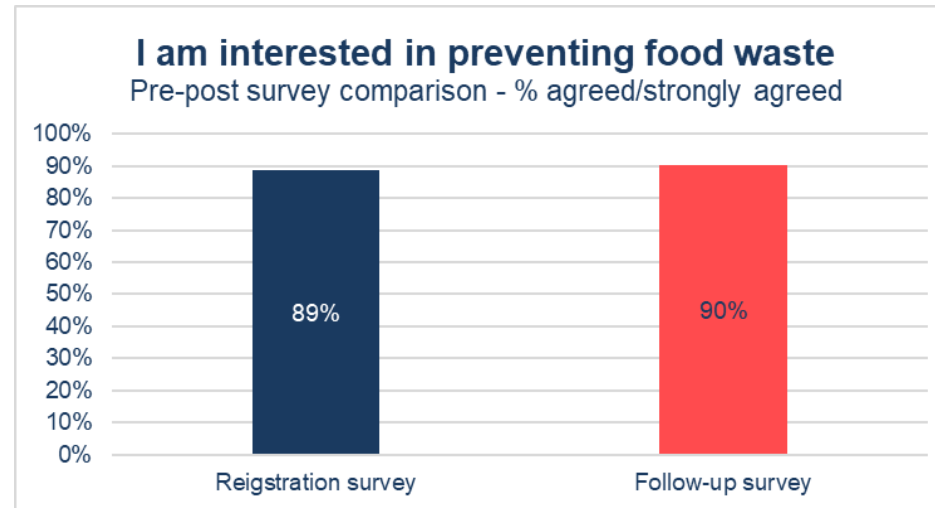


Chart 4 – Comparison of impact statements related to interest in reducing food waste

 *“So pleased to see food waste being reduced.”*  
Community Fridge Member

 *“You are all wonderful. It’s great to be able to teach the children about food waste.”*  
Community Fridge Member

Upon registering to become a member, almost **7 in 10 individuals indicated that reduction in food waste was a motivator** for their visit/s. Indeed, this was again reflected by members when asked how interested they were in preventing food waste. As illustrated in chart 4, **89% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement upon registration**. Throughout use of the Fridge, these high levels of interest appear to have been maintained, **with 90% of respondents to the follow-up survey also agreeing**.

Additionally, some members specifically commented on the positive impact the service has had in reducing the amount of food that was thrown away unnecessarily, as well as educating others in the prevention of food waste. It therefore appears that the Community Fridge has been a **positive means by which individuals can prevent food waste** within the local community.

*N=246 registration survey responses, 103 follow-up survey responses.*

# Impact: Physical health and healthy diet



One of the anticipated benefits of the Community Fridge was to enable people to have increased access to healthy food and improve physical health as a result. Through the registration and follow-up surveys, respondents were asked how much they agreed with statements related to maintaining a healthy diet to see if there was any change over time.

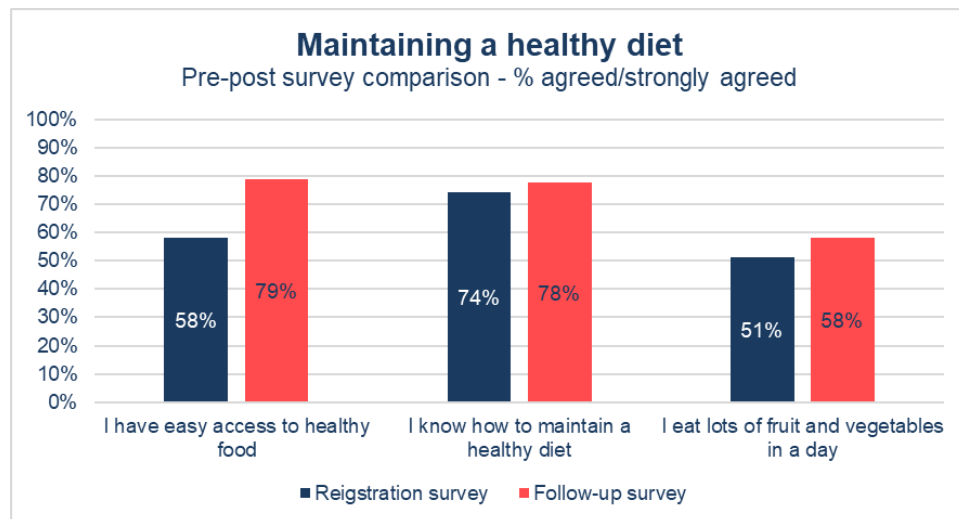


Chart 5 – Comparison of impact statements related to healthy lifestyle/diet

As can be seen in chart 5, the comparison of responses from the two surveys suggest a **higher level of agreement with all three statements related to maintaining a healthy diet** after using the service.

The biggest change was seen in response to the ‘I have **easy access to healthy food**’ statement, with a statistically significant increase of 21% more individuals agreeing or strongly agreeing in the follow-up survey.

A small, but not statistically significant increase was seen also in relation to the ‘I **eat lots of fruit and vegetables**’ and ‘I **know how to maintain a healthy diet**’ statements, with numbers of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing increasing by 7% and 4% respectively.



In the follow-up survey, respondents were also asked what difference attending the Community Fridge had made to them. Just over half of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that their attendance had **positively impacted their physical wellbeing**. Whilst no individuals strongly disagreed with this statement, 6% did disagree, and 40% were neutral.

These findings indicate that for a number of members, the Community Fridge has had a **positive impact on their physical wellbeing**.

*N=246 registration survey responses, 103 follow-up survey responses. Statistical significance testing performed at 95% confidence level. Results of statistical significance testing are only indicative – please see ‘[Data limitations](#)’ page for reasoning.*

# Impact: Financial wellbeing



It is also hoped that the Community Fridge can help to alleviate some of the financial burden on individuals who may be struggling financially by giving access to free, healthy food.

Within the registration survey, **three quarters of respondents indicated that they visited the Community Fridge to help with their finances.** Indeed, this was the most highly selected reason for attending.

As can be seen in chart 6, a comparison of responses from the registration and follow-up survey indicates that there has been a positive change for members. The proportion of individuals agreeing or strongly agreeing that they are **worried about their finances decreased by 17%**, which was statistically significant.

Again, members provided positive feedback about the impact that the Fridge had had upon their financial situation, suggesting that the service has **positively influenced individuals' financial wellbeing.**



 "I don't know what we would have done without the fridge the last few months. We have been struggling financially and it enables us to eat healthy food. Thank you for all you do."  
Community Fridge Member

 "Friendly, non-judgemental, helps finances and food waste."  
Community Fridge Member

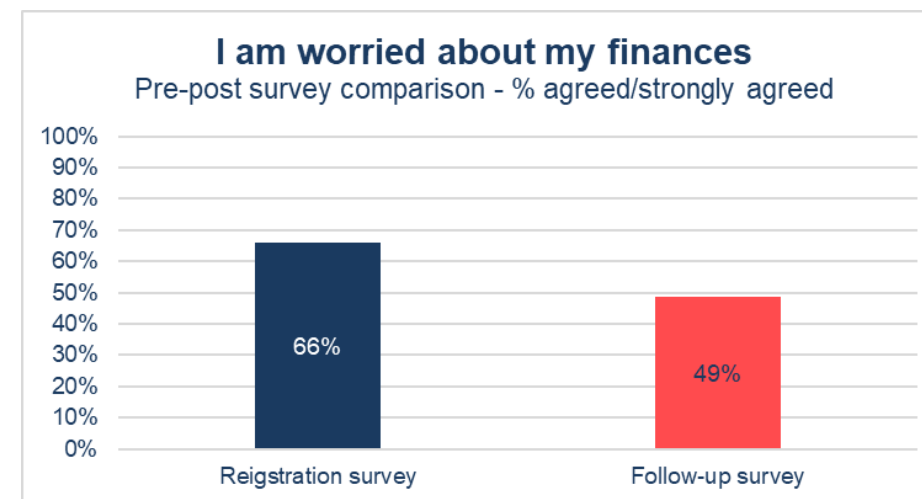


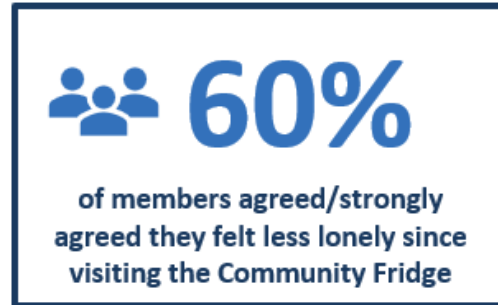
Chart 6 – Comparison of impact statements related to financial concerns

N=246 registration survey responses, 103 follow-up survey responses. Statistical significance testing performed at 95% confidence level. Results of statistical significance testing are only indicative – please see '[Data limitations](#)' page for reasoning.

# Impact: Community and social connections



Through attending the Community Fridge, it is hoped that individuals can build connections with other attendees, but also connect with other services within the community.



Within the registration survey, **almost a third of respondents indicated that they visited the Community Fridge for the conversation with others**, suggesting this wasn't a motivation for the majority of individuals who attended.

However, as a result of their visits, **60% of members reported that they felt less lonely** since visiting the Community Fridge. Additionally, **70% agreed they felt more connected to their community**. This feedback therefore suggests that, whilst it may not have been a motivator for attending, many individuals have seen a social benefit from the Fridge.

As part of the service offered by staff and volunteers at the Community Fridge, members can be signposted to other services within the community who may be able to offer them additional support. Of the follow-up survey respondents, **31 reported that they had been signposted to other services** (30%). Of these individuals, **42% actively made contact with these organisations**. Responses therefore indicate that only **13% of all members connected with other services**.

Members provided additional insights into the social interactions they had made through attending the Community Fridge, suggesting it was a good forum to connect with the community. It therefore appears that, whilst it is possible **more could be done to connect attendees to local support organisations**, the Community Fridge has had a positive impact in **improving individuals' social wellbeing**.



*"It helps me feel better to talk to people and feel like there is help with a smile."*

Community Fridge Member



*"This provides us a good opportunity to connect people within the community. So, keep it going."*

Community Fridge Member

N=246 registration survey responses, 103 follow-up survey responses.

# Impact: Emotional wellbeing



As a result of some of the other outcomes of the service, such as improved social and financial wellbeing, the Community Fridge aims to improve individuals' emotional wellbeing. Within the follow-up survey, individuals were asked about the impact their membership had had on their mental health.

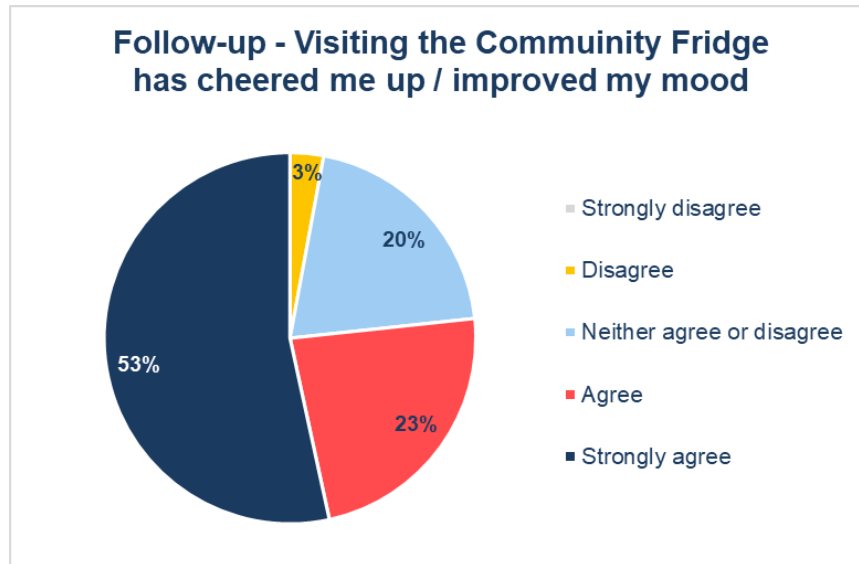


Chart 7 – Fridge impact on members mood

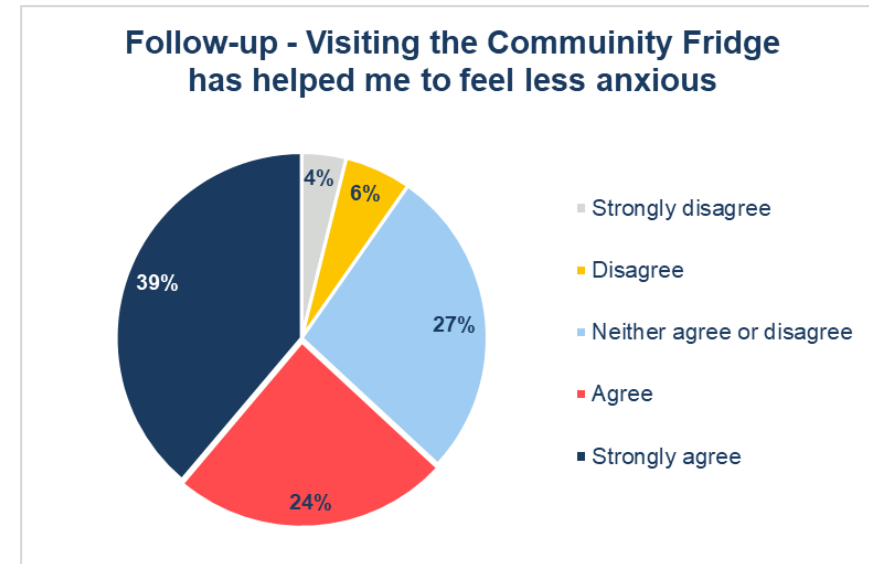


Chart 8 – Fridge impact on members feelings of anxiety

77% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Community Fridge helped to **cheer them up or improve their mood**. Additionally, 63% agreed or strongly agreed that the Fridge **helped them to feel less anxious**. Some individuals did disagree with both statements, and 4% of respondents strongly disagreed that the Fridge improved their anxiety – unfortunately, these individuals did not provide any further context as to why they felt this way.

One member reflected, *“the volunteers are lovely, they make me feel very welcome - It’s one of the main things that keeps me coming back. I feel quite tired sometimes, but they always smile and cheer me up”*.

Overall, these responses indicate that, for many members, the **Community Fridge does positively impact on their emotional wellbeing**.

N= 103 follow-up survey responses.

# Impact: Member experience



And finally, within the follow-up survey, individuals were asked to reflect on their overall experience of using the Community Fridge, including how likely they would be to recommend it to others.



**88% of respondents were likely or extremely likely to recommend** the Community Fridge to others. Of these 73% were extremely likely.

Some members did state that they were extremely unlikely to recommend the Fridge (8%, or 8 of 103 respondents). Unfortunately, they did not provide any further context as to why they felt this way. However, many of these individuals responded positively to the statements around what difference the Fridge had made to them. Additionally, three of these respondents provided positive comments about the service overall, including feedback from one respondent who stated, *“great staff and very welcoming”*. It is possible, therefore, that some of these responses may have been selected in error.

Three respondents did provide some **recommendations to improve the Community Fridge**. These related to the **opening hours of the Fridge**, with one individual requesting that they are open outside of working hours. Additionally, one member requested **better directions on the process when visiting the Fridge**, suggesting they would appreciate better directions for the queue/ticket line.

Overall, **members appear to be satisfied with their experience** of attending the Community Fridge. Many commented on the wonderful staff and volunteers who are *“welcoming”*, *“friendly”* and *“helpful”*. Additionally, members gave thanks and appreciation for the service.



N= 103 follow-up survey responses.

# Conclusions and recommendations

Hale Community Centre's Community Fridge and Cupboard appears to provide a beneficial and important service for the local community. Feedback from attendees suggests the Fridge results in many positive benefits for its members, including **building social connections, improving emotional wellbeing, and maintaining a healthy diet.**

Additionally, the service appears to provide a **positive mechanism by which the local community can work together to prevent food waste.** The service attracted a high proportion of members who had an interest in this upon registration, and this was maintained throughout their interaction with the Community Fridge. Given that most members had existing interest, **there may be an opportunity to try to attract individuals who have less of an interest in reducing food waste at present,** consequently engaging a wider population of the community in this mission.

This analysis highlighted some areas where the Community Fridge could further expand their service. Some individuals suggested that they would appreciate if the **opening hours of the service were adjusted** to avoid working hours. Additionally, whilst some individuals suggested they had engaged with services they were signposted to, only 13% of members suggested they had engaged with any other community organisations as a result. Individuals may therefore benefit from **further support and encouragement to connect with services who can provide them with further support.**

Overall, individuals appear **satisfied with their experience of attending,** with many likely to recommend the service to others and giving thanks to the supportive staff and volunteers.

## Acknowledgements

Helpforce would like to pass on our thanks to the team at Hale Community Centre, in particular to Melissa Salisbury, Kelly Lees, Emma Swinden and Cathy Burrows. We would also like to give thanks to all the members who gave their time to participate in the surveys, without whom this evaluation would not have been possible.



# Data limitations

- The results from the registration and follow-up surveys are not directly comparable:
  - Respondents were asked to provide their membership number when completing the surveys. When analysing this data, it appeared there were several duplications of membership numbers within the same surveys and only a small proportion of membership numbers matched across both surveys (30 in total). To note, any obvious duplicates were removed from the analysis.
  - There was also a smaller number of respondents who completed the post-survey.

Due to the timeframe over which the data analysis was completed, it is likely that a number of members stopped using the service as their circumstances changed. Therefore, we can conclude that not everyone who completed a pre-survey also completed a post-survey, and vice versa. Analysis should therefore be considered as a more general comparison of individuals' perspectives upon registering for the service and upon using the service for some time.

- For statistical significance testing on differences between pre- and post-survey responses, it was not possible to complete dependent samples testing due to these discrepancies. Therefore, independent samples testing was performed, however it cannot be claimed that the samples are independent. Hence the results from any statistical significance testing between these samples can only be used indicatively.

# Appendix: About the Helpforce Insight and Impact Service

## What is it?

- [The I&I Service](#) is an online tool to help you easily and effectively evaluate your voluntary project or initiative.
- It guides you on a simple 4-step process, from designing outcomes for your beneficiaries through to what data we will need to collect - how, when, and from whom.
- Resulting in an evaluation report that our team produces for you, showing evidence of impact made against the outcomes and insights around how the project is working.



## A guide to some key terms we use



**Insights** provide an understanding of a situation or problem. They help us to share valuable information around what is working well, and what is not working so well, so that we can advise on potential service improvements and developments.



**Impact** relates to evidence of lasting and sustainable changes. Impact data helps us to understand the value and difference being made as a result of the project.

**Evidence** is reviewed against the following criteria to determine if it is **compelling**, **promising**, or **limited**:



- Is the sample size / response rate reliable and robust?
- Is the data direct or a proxy measure?
- Is there a causal link between the evidence and the outcome?
- Is there a control group or comparative data set?
- How was the evidence gathered – directly from participants, or via a third party?
- Was the survey question well designed, or has there been signs of misunderstanding by participants?

# helpforce

## Thank you

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