



SCOTTISH BORDERS : MESSAGES & MEALS

INTRODUCTION

In June 2019, we started our pilot project Messages & Meals, in Sainsbury's store, Kelso. The aim is to put on a weekly shopping trip to the supermarket for older people who cannot get out on their own, and to offer the opportunity of eating lunch together in the café.

The customers are offered support and advice making up their shopping lists and are then assisted around the supermarket to get their messages. Most of our customers had not visited the supermarket in a long time and they would be unable to do so without this service.

The service gives our older customers who are socially isolated and otherwise unable to meet people, the time and place to enjoy sitting together and sharing a meal and a blether.

OPERATION

The day starts with being picked up and brought into Sainsbury's supermarket in Kelso. Once all our older people in store, we have a cup of tea together and the shopping lines come out! There's help from our volunteers, who have had EAWW basic nutrition training, to make up everyone's list. We have customers with special dietary requirements including diabetics and assist them with making good food choices. Our customers are escorted round the store to shop and assisted to pay and pack by our volunteers.

Over lunch, which is kindly provided by Sainsbury's and offers our older people the choice from the full café menu, conversations flow! Our initial group of 10 older people who started coming in June, has expanded and we now have 18 participants who have benefitted from the service.

DEVELOPMENT

We have worked in partnership with Scottish Borders Council Local Area Coordination Team, who have been working with older people transitioning from day services. The LAC staff supported older people who were moving to new services like Messages & Meals, following the closure of day centres locally. The team continues to make referrals to our service.

As a rural area, there are a number of challenges allied to transport availability. We are working with Teviot Wheels, our local community transport CiC, and a bank of volunteer drivers, whom we rely on each week. We have been fortunate in having the support of committed volunteers, using their own cars to bring customers in. As we commence a new phase, we are working with Teviot Wheels, to provide a sustainable transport solution which also allows more spaces to be offered.

CONTINUATION

Messages & Meals has been successful! The initial core group of 10 customers continues to come each week. Additionally, we have 8 others who have benefitted from the service and 8 recent enquiries. There are on-going referrals from Health & Social Care partners and we have been able to put in place a system for referring and assessing suitability. We now have a waiting list as we work to increase capacity.

From our customers and volunteers:

Mr M. who is 88 years young said:

“This is my Christmas Day, with my Food Train pals. It’s the best day I’ve had in years, I wish it could be Christmas every day!”

Volunteer Mrs R. said :

“A big part of Messages & Meals is helping our customers plan what to eat and what to buy. I get a sense of satisfaction knowing our folks go home with good stuff to eat!”

Mrs A. one of our customers recently commented:

“I love that B (volunteer) takes me round and makes sure I don’t miss anything, because I can’t see. My choice of what to eat now is so much better and I love getting out”.

