



Your independent community newspaper

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Leytonstone Community Fridge co-ordinator Diana Korchien takes in donations from local people

Waste not, want not

A solar-powered fridge is helping Leytonstone residents stop food from being wasted.

The Leytonstone Community Fridge allows people to donate unopened packaged food within its use-by date, as well as raw fruit and vegetables, enabling others to pick it up for free.

Environmental campaign group Transition Leytonstone has been working for over a year to have the fridge installed in Church Road and won support from North London Waste Authority to get it launched last month. Support also comes from environmental charity Hubbub, which runs the national Community Fridge Network.

Unlike other community fridges in London, which are usually placed inside community centres, the Leytonstone fridge can be

found in a “funky” shelter designed by local spatial designers, Made With Volume. The fridge is located next to Café de Montmartre and is open 12pm-3pm on weekdays, enabling residents and businesses to share surplus food.

Diana Korchien, fridge co-ordinator at Transition Leytonstone, said: “Beyond simply reducing food waste, the fridge will play a socially important role in strengthening community ties; Transition Leytonstone is anticipating a steady growth in regular users.

“To meet this need, we intend to increase our storage capacity by installing a second fridge and freezer powered entirely by solar energy and have already raised a good proportion of the funds needed.”

To find out more:

Visit transitionleytonstone.org.uk

Demands for inquiry into school transport 'chaos'

by Russell Hargrave

Angry parents are demanding that Waltham Forest Council conducts an inquiry into the “chaos” of its new school transport scheme for vulnerable children. At the start of the new school term children with special educational needs were left on busy roads without lifts to school and some have missed classes completely, in the latest controversy to hit the assisted transport programme.

The problems arose after changes introduced by CT Plus, the company responsible for

taking vulnerable children to and from school. Pupils using specially-adapted buses for school travel had previously been collected from their homes, but under the new scheme they use a series of pick-up points in the borough.

However, some families were not told which pick-up points to use until the last few days before the new term began, and some buses turned up late or did not arrive at all. One local mum, Vicky Kemp, described how worried she was about the effect on her son, who uses a wheelchair and has been picked up from his home by a minibus for the last ten years.

The old system was “quite

straightforward, very easy,” Vicky told the *Echo*, “but in this new term we discovered that we have to go to a pick-up point, which is two streets from where we live, and stand on the corner of the road and wait for a period of time which is unknown.

“It is just so unpredictable.”

Vicky explained that her son's condition means that he struggles to keep himself warm. “It's so worrying, they're just not thinking about the children's health.”

Samantha Halil, who lives in Chingford and whose five-year old son needs assisted transport, said that she got less than 72 hours' notice that the pick-up system

was changing. The bus was 35 minutes late that first morning and late again in the afternoon. “After half-an-hour I was thinking: ‘Where is my child?’” said Samantha, adding that he'd been left “agitated and distressed”.

In a letter sent to council leaders and CT Plus executives, dozens of worried parents have demanded the council investigate what has gone wrong. It says: “This September saw the school transport system thrown into chaos, causing excessive stress to those involved.

“We are asking for an investigation into what has gone wrong as a matter of urgency and an ongoing plan of action to be put in place to

ensure this will never happen again.”

And in an email seen by the *Echo*, sent to parents by Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy, it was revealed that CT Plus received 1,500 calls in the first week of term.

The *Echo* revealed in August that the new contract between the council and CT Plus targeted savings of £1.2million from the budget over the next four years.

Waltham Forest Council issued a statement on behalf of CT Plus, stating: “We apologise for this short notice [to changes] and the disruption to services for children but are committed to working with the council to resolving this in a timely and effective manner.”