

The Octagon Community Hub Report for Willingham Parish Council April 2026

The Octagon Community Hub has continued to grow and thrive. We regularly cater for 25 attendees, many of whom come every week. Other attendees come when they can or need a place where they can feel safe, secure and comfortable. Over one hundred individuals attended the Community Hub last year.

With your generous support we have been able to offer a much more nutritious lunch. When we opened the Hub, we were limited to tea, coffee, biscuits and packet soups. Our home-made vegetable soups served with buttered toast quickly became very popular as did our jacket potatoes.

In October 2025, after several successful small grant applications we were finally able to completely refurbish the Octagon kitchen. After 26 years we were able to replace the single oven, hob, extractor fan, refrigerator as well as all of the cabinets and working surfaces to comply with health and safety requirements. This work was undertaken by Wakebro Construction Willingham, a local family firm. The previous equipment was unreliable, degraded and not energy efficient. With these new facilities we have been able to increase the range of nutritious lunches we can now offer.

Buttered toast and jam or marmalade between 10am and 10.30am is also very popular and many people arrive early for this. We have subsequently seen a decrease in the number of biscuits needing to be consumed because people were hungry, perhaps, not having eaten breakfast.

Mid-morning cake and biscuit snacks are still available for those who come later but then we serve a light warm and nutritious lunch from 11.45am. We also cater for dietary requirements, such as dairy free and gluten free.

It is your generous grant which pays for all of our refreshments, apart from weekly donations of bread from Boswell and Son, Bakers in Church Street and milk from the Willingham Co-op. Your grant of £500 is divided between the 51 weeks we are open and we work carefully within this budget. Donations of tea and coffee and biscuits and cakes are sometimes given by attendees or local organisations and we are very grateful for these, but we cannot rely on them.

In liaison with Cambridgeshire ACRE, we frequently host visiting speakers and activities as well as a vaccination clinic in the autumn. Our Village agent, employed by Cambs. ACRE also visits regularly to help attendees with a variety of questions and issues

We would like to thank you most sincerely for your support again this year. Your grant towards the Hub's refreshments has, and is, making a huge difference to how we can support our village community.

Sue Lines (Lead Volunteer) March 2026