

## Dundee West End Community Fridge

### So much more than free food



The Dundee West End Community Fridge, which has just celebrated its 3rd birthday, is open 6 days a week (closed on Sundays) from 11am - 2pm.

Since it opened in July 2019 it has given out over 210 tonnes of food, the equivalent of 480,000 meals, and has helped to feed 1350 people each week.

So clearly there are many people who know about it and how it works but there are others who are still a bit puzzled by the concept.

Here, then, are the answers to questions you may have but don't like to ask. A Beginners' Guide to Community Fridges, if you like.

#### What is a Community Fridge?

A Community Fridge is a public space that enables food to be shared within a community. It is a very simple way of passing on food that is perfectly edible, but was in danger of being thrown out by supermarkets or food businesses, to people who can take it home and enjoy it, but can also be a place that brings people together to learn more from each other about reducing food waste.

#### Is the food really OK to eat?

Absolutely! A Community Fridge is bound by the same Health and Safety rules as any other food business. The food may be past its 'best before' date, but it will never be past a 'use by' date.

Let's just clear up another possible confusion here:

'Use by' dates show the point up to which a food is safe to eat.

'Best before', however, is the date up to which the food will be in optimal condition. Food can be safely consumed after its 'best before' date even though it may no longer be at its best quality.

This is a very important distinction and if we all remember it, we could make a massive difference to the amount of food that is thrown away every single day.

#### What Food is Available at a Community Fridge?

Any food you can think of. The team running the West End Community Fridge collect food from all the main, local supermarkets each week, but also receive donations from allotment holders, gardeners and local food businesses.

#### Do you see it as a joy or a real nuisance that you never know what you might find there?

One day it's nothing but bread and bananas, another day the Fridge might be full of freshly picked spinach and strawberries, or it could be ready meals and radishes.

NB: the food on offer each day doesn't actually always begin with the same letter and there are generally more than two foodstuffs on offer.

#### Who Can Take Food from a Community Fridge?

Everybody! You do not need to be experiencing poverty and you do not need a referral. If you plan to eat today, you're invited to visit the Community Fridge. You will absolutely NOT be taking food that other people may need more - you will be taking food that might otherwise have ended up in the bin (producing greenhouse gases and making a huge contribution to the present climate emergency).

#### How Are Community Fridges Helping to Combat Climate Change?

Look back to the beginning of this article and remind yourself just how much food has been diverted from the bin since the West End Community Fridge opened. Over 210 tonnes! That has sequestered the same amount of carbon as growing 11,386 tree seedlings for 10 years.

To put this another way - if food waste were a country, it would be the third-largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions after China and the US. So anything helping to reduce food waste has to be a good thing.

#### Are There Other Community Fridges in Scotland and Elsewhere?

Oh, yes. The Community Fridge network, run by the environmental charity, Hubbub, currently has over 100 Fridges in Scotland and over 300 in the UK and is working with the Co-op to fund 500 Fridges by the end of 2023.

And that's just in the UK. Community Fridges, though they may come in different names, are to be found all over the world.

#### So is it like a foodbank?

No. Foodbanks have a very different remit. People in crisis can receive a voucher from a professional, and be given a food parcel containing three days' worth of food from a foodbank. Foodbank staff provide support to help their clients resolve the crises they are facing.

The Community Fridge, on the other hand, is open to everyone and is about avoiding food waste (though if it helps anyone in poverty, that's a bonus).

#### Who Runs the Community Fridge?

The Community Fridge is run by Transition Dundee and has a paid Fridge Co-ordinator, but is entirely volunteer-led. A small, dedicated band of volunteers collect the food each morning and are there to re-distribute it each day.

#### Can I Help or Get Involved?

Easily! There is a reason it is called a Community Fridge. As well as helping re-distribute food, the team behind every Fridge wants to create a strong community, and the team behind the Dundee West End Fridge is no different. If you live nearby please come and help us use the food.

If you are a grower of vegetables and have a seasonal glut, please consider giving your surplus produce to the Fridge, safe in the knowledge that it will be gratefully received by our visitors.

If you can't get to the Fridge but like what is being done there, you can make a financial contribution. You can choose to make a one-off donation, or a regular commitment. Any money received will go directly towards the running costs.

<http://www.transitiondundee.com/donate>

**'Cutting food waste is a delicious way of saving money, helping to feed the world, and protect the planet'**

- Tristram Stuart, English author and campaigner