



GETTING SURPLUS FRESH FOOD FOR YOUR FOOD BANK

July 2016

This leaflet explains how to get fresh fruit, vegetables, bread and dairy products that supermarkets would otherwise dispose of. Doing this

- Helps to **reduce food waste**
- Provides **healthy food** to food bank clients, virtually for free
- Provides an **opportunity to talk** to clients about cooking and eating healthily

Supermarkets are very efficient, but they deal with very large quantities of food, so even a small percentage of wastage leads to large quantities of surplus food. This typically goes to anaerobic digestion or landfill. However due to some recent initiatives, notably a 2016 French law that prohibits supermarkets from throwing away food and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's "War on Waste", **it has never been easier for charities to get surplus food from supermarkets.**

Things that you will need (these are discussed below)

- Agreement with one or more supermarkets
- A volunteer with a car who is willing to pick up food regularly and punctually
- Some money for incidental expenses
- A link with at least one other charity who can take any leftover food

Things that you do NOT necessarily need (these may surprise you)

- Storage or refrigeration facilities
- Waste management facilities
- A complex food handling system

AGREEMENT WITH SUPERMARKET(S)

You need to understand how supermarkets operate:

- They deal with large quantities of food, so you will not be able to just pick out just a few things (but there are ways around this - see below).
- They do not know from day to day what waste they will have, or indeed whether they will have anything, so you will need to deal with that uncertainty.
- They are very concerned about health and safety. You will probably be required to wear a high-visibility vest when you are on their premises. You will also probably need to sign a form that absolves them from all liability for food once you have received it.
- They value reliability: once a collection system has been set up with them, they will expect you to collect food regularly and on time.

- They go through regular staff changes, so you may need to 'train' new staff as they come on board.

But they are generally keen to work with community groups, so you should receive a cautiously positive welcome.

Some supermarkets operate an Internet based ('cloud') system. You sign up with them, become an approved recipient, and receive notification in the evening about what food will be available the next day. This system is used by M&S (www.neighbourly.com/food) and Tesco (www.fareshare.org.uk/fareshare-foodcloud).

Other supermarkets have 'community champions' or managers whom you will need to contact. Aldi are generally very helpful, also Sainsbury's and Morrison's. Other supermarkets – in our experience the Coop and Iceland – have a company policy of not giving away surplus food, but do try *any* supermarket as company policies may change. It may require several attempts to get an answer from the supermarket. Be prepared to show that you understand how supermarkets work, and beware that this stage is the most frustrating.

You will be picking up fresh fruit, vegetables, bread and dairy products; and non-perishables. You are not legally allowed to pick up or distribute food past its 'use by' date (past 'best before' is OK), and meat/fish requires such a complex handling process that they're not worth it.

RELIABLE VOLUNTEER WITH A CAR

If it is difficult to find a volunteer with a car who is fit enough to lift the food, it may be possible to pair them with a fit but non-driving volunteer. Regular car insurance generally covers volunteering activities, but you may want to confirm that with the driver's insurance company. The volunteer will need a plastic sheet to protect their car, and a high visibility vest.

MONEY FOR EXPENSES

Some volunteers will be happy to pick up food for free, but others may wish to claim mileage (up to 45p/mile). A high visibility vest costs less than £5

LINK WITH ANOTHER CHARITY (OR SORT OUT STORAGE AND WASTE HANDLING)

Many food banks worry about storing fresh food and dealing with food that clients do not take. By far the easiest solution is to pick up from the supermarket(s) before your food bank opens, hand out the food during food bank hours, and drop off any extra food to the other charity(ies). Sure Start children's centres are particularly good, but many other charities will be more than happy to receive free fresh food delivered to their door.

This leaflet has been produced by Food for Charities. If you need further information, example liability forms, help in contacting supermarkets etc., or if you have experiences of collecting and distributing surplus food that you would like to share, please contact Riki at 01865 243488 or riki@phoncoop.coop. Also see www.foodforcharities.org.uk.