



COMMUNITY FRIDGE GUIDE

1. Environmental health issues

In order to comply with environmental health regulations, a community fridge must register as a food business with your local authority's environmental health officer. It is straightforward to do this online and Riki can assist you with the necessary paperwork.

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/register-a-food-business>

- **What can go in the fridge?** Community fridges must not contain meat, fish, cooked rice or any foods past their 'Use By' date.
 - **Use By vs. Best Before**
 - 'Best Before' dates are listed on 'low risk' foods with a long shelf life (e.g. broccoli, eggs). These will make up the majority of the foods in the fridge.
 - 'Use By' dates are on higher risk foods with a short shelf life (e.g. sandwiches from supermarkets or bakeries). These are thrown away by retailers at the end of the day and must be consumed that day. They should only be collected if your fridge is open in the evenings.
- **Cooked foods** must be labelled with allergen information and may only be donated by certified food retailers (not individuals)

2. Venue

Community fridges operate in a variety of spaces. It is a good idea to choose somewhere that is already used by the community, such as community centres or churches.

- **Staffed vs. Unstaffed:** You may choose to hire a member of staff to 'man' the fridge but this is expensive and many fridges choose not to. Venues such as community centres often have a member of staff there during opening hours. All essential tasks can be completed by volunteers (*see section 4*). Staffed fridges have the advantage of allowing for oversight (and so avoidance of some problems) and for signposting to other services. However some people may only go to unstaffed fridges.
- **Other activities:** consider what other activities could happen in the space. If you have access to a kitchen, you could host cooking workshops on using leftover ingredients (Replenish can provide help setting these up)

3. Food

Volunteers will probably need to pick up food from supermarkets and other food retailers and bring it to the fridge. Most supermarkets are subscribed to a scheme so that they can donate surplus food to charity:

- **Food Cloud** (Tesco, Aldi, Waitrose): <https://fareshare.org.uk/getting-food/fareshare-go-support/> - **this is the easiest way to get food.**

- Each charity is allocated one or more days in the week. You receive a text message the night before informing you of what is available and you must confirm.
 - **Sainsbury's:** <http://www.ccworks.co.uk/community-investment/case-studies/sainsburys-food-donation-partnership-programme>
 - **Coop:** <https://food.coop.co.uk/food-ethics/environmental-impacts/food-waste/food-share/apply>. They discount very heavily so they don't have much surplus food
 - **Food retailers** such as Greggs, Nando's can provide pre-prepared foods (e.g. sandwiches), but these are only likely to be available in the evening. They must be used on the same day (see section 1) and should be removed from the fridge before closing time
 - **Local businesses** can donate food
 - **Non-perishables:** possibly from store collections or left-overs from food banks or similar. These could be placed on a shelf next to the fridge labelled 'people in need only'.
- N.B.** When dealing with food retailers it is important to be consistent and reliable e.g. turning up within the time-window they give you and notifying them if you can't come.

4. Volunteers

Fridges usually have one coordinator and up to a dozen volunteers to help with transporting food and/or keeping the fridge clean. Where the fridge is in a staffed venue, the staff may keep the fridge clean. The coordinator organises the rota of volunteers and keeps in touch with retailers.

- **Finding volunteers:** friends/family, OCVA, local newsletters, NextDoor, Friendlypeeps
- **Training:**
 - It is recommended to induct volunteers on how to clean the fridge area.
 - The volunteer fridge coordinator should complete Level 2 food hygiene certificate (funded by Replenish).
 - OCVA also runs courses on volunteer management that may be useful for the coordinator.

N.B. If volunteers are transporting food by car, they should contact their insurance company and ask for a letter or email stating that they are covered to use it for volunteering.

5. Equipment

- Fridge, possibly shelving
- Waste containers (general waste, recycling and food waste)
- Cleaning materials: dustpan/broom, paper towels, spray, deep clean materials
- Laminated signs (Replenish can provide these)
- Fridge thermometer
- Storage bins if storing non-perishables and pests could be a problem.

6. Finance

- **Travel expenses:** volunteers who complete their induction with Replenish will have their travel expenses reimbursed.
- **Buying a fridge:** there are various sources of finance including the Coop, Gannet, local trusts, individuals and companies. Riki can assist you with this.