

Community Fridge Project



**Mid & East
Antrim**
Borough Council



What is a community fridge?

- ▶ Community Fridges are a platform for sharing surplus food within a community to reduce food waste going to landfill. They are not means tested and are open to all. Food items can be donated by supermarkets, independents such as butcher/baker, takeaways, allotments, community gardens, and individuals. Items can be taken by anyone.
- ▶ Community Fridges differ from the vital role Food Banks play, but can be a complementary provision.
- ▶ There are currently 150 community fridges across the UK (now two in Northern Ireland) with each fridge sharing one to four tonnes of food per month. Each year 100 community fridges can redistribute 975 tonnes of food surplus (equivalent to 1.9 million meals) and benefit up to 77,500 people.
- ▶ As well as food sharing, Community Fridges give people opportunities to contribute through volunteering, learning new skills, or sharing their existing skills. So the benefits can extend beyond providing people with easy access to fresh nutritious food and reducing food waste, to impacts on health and wellbeing and reducing social isolation.
- ▶ There is no set format for a community fridge, some are in sheds, some are in schools. Some are open 24/7, some set hours etc.
- ▶ <https://www.hubbub.org.uk/the-community-fridge>
- ▶ Community Fridges do require volunteer hours e.g. daily checks for temperature and cleanliness and collecting food donations, so work best as partnerships.



Community fridges in MEA

- COVID Recovery funding secured in December 2020 for the Community Fridge project
- Council supplied the physical items required e.g. fridge, secure unit to house fridge, shelving, scales etc. and support community volunteers to develop the project and manage ongoing
- Council is working with partner groups at each location - Eden Allotment Gardens, Islandmagee Community Garden, Harryville Community Garden
- Fridges can be based inside, schools/cafes etc., but outdoor spaces work well for a number of reasons
- After 6 months of planning, Eden Fridge was the first to open in June 2021 and has been very positively received and well used. All produce is cleared daily. TESCO, ASDA, Henderson and M&S are supplying produce. 20 volunteers are managing the day to day running. The volunteers manage a facebook page which updates on what food is available/opening hours etc.







Environmental benefits

- ▶ On average, per fridge per month, 12kg of food is re-distributed which is the equivalent of 28,000 additional meals provided
- ▶ In addition, this equates to 37kg of CO₂ savings per fridge per month
- ▶ The data collected around food wastage re-directed will help inform local and regional policy e.g. Sustainable Food Places
- ▶ www.sustainablefoodplaces.org



Social benefits



- ▶ “Thanks for the food today. I am sitting eating an M&S bap. I’ve never had food from M&S in my life. It’s very nice.”
- ▶ “A lady came by and told me how good the project was for her mum, as her father had died a few weeks ago, and coming to the fridge was her mums only reason to get out and meet people. A little later another older lady came along, she told me how sad she was having lost her husband. She shared recipe ideas and told me how well she was eating with the little extras from the community fridge.”
- ▶ “A young mum takes a taxi to the fridge, the screams of excitement coming from the little ones is so hopeful.”
- ▶ “We took a box round to one of our neighbors who is deaf. He was so happy to receive the fresh soup mix, carrots and parsnips.”