



Surplus Food Gathering from your community

What is surplus food gathering?

Co-ordinating collection and distribution of surplus food in your community is a great way to ensure food doesn't go to waste and to help people in need.

Surplus food is food that is still fit for human consumption, even if it has little or no commercial value, or its date labeling would prevent it being sold.

Although many charities already collect surplus edible food, the vast majority is still thrown away, so there are lots of opportunities for you to match this spare food with those who need it. - Build strong relationships with others locally, including developing links with food banks and charities providing social care for vulnerable people, for instance those who are elderly, homeless or living on low incomes. What kinds of food would help them achieve a balanced and affordable diet? You can then identify how best to make a real difference, and pass on this knowledge as part of your event.

TOP TIP

Try to raise the issues of food waste and the potential solutions in a positive way. It's far better to explain the social, economic and environmental opportunities and benefits, rather than challenging people about why they're wasting so much food!

Consider inviting someone from your local foodbank to share their experiences and talk about what happens to the food that is donated. You can find out where your local foodbank at <http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/welfare/foodbank.asp> or through contacts at the end of this guide.

Why gather surplus food?

Rising costs for housing, food and fuel in the UK have affected many householders' ability to buy and cook their meals. In stark contrast with this, food waste from the home is a major issue. We throw away 7 million tonnes of food and drink from our homes every year, the majority of which could have been eaten. It's costing us £12.5bn a year and is bad for the environment too.

The purpose of this guide is to explain how you can set up a regular collection point for surplus food from within the community that can either be redistributed amongst the communities more vulnerable members or to donate to your communities nearest foodbank.

Developing links with food banks and charities providing social care for vulnerable people, for instance those who are elderly, homeless or living on low incomes, might help you to identify how best to make a real difference, and pass on this knowledge as part of your event.

Households and individuals also generate surplus food, by buying or cooking too much or not planning out their meals, or they might just have ripe fruit remaining unpicked in their gardens.



Identifying the food available in your community and finding effective ways to pass on any spare can make a real difference to the lives of those who struggle to get enough to eat. It also directly helps our environment, by reducing the energy and other resources needed for production and disposal.

What things do I need?

- Information on any local schemes already passing on food surpluses and reducing waste (such as food banks), including any particular items that they don't accept
- Boxes and bags
- Transport and a suitable space to store any food you collect and sort

Things to make sure you have considered

While food bank schemes are delighted to receive food donations, equally there'll usually be limits on what they can accept. Donated items will need to comply with any food legislation, be in good visual condition (without mould or bruising), and with any packaging intact. Food banks need to be managed appropriately and this includes complying with health and safety standards so it's well worth asking them to help you meet any requirements.

1) Setting up your collection space

All you'll need is a corner or cupboard in your main community venue such as the village hall to store the food that is donated. If you have space offer separate collection boxes for tins and packets and for main meal and dessert donation – this will help people locate what they are looking for or make it easier for the food bank to secondary sort.

Make sure your collection point is clearly signposted so that people can leave donations if there is nobody around to accept it.

2) Communicating what you're doing

Cumbria County Council will provide you with posters to promote your collection service. Contact Katharine Smith at katharine.smith@cumbria.gov.uk or on **07831 205382** to request some. These posters will describe the items that are being collected and will also include a space for you to write where your collection is taking place. You should arrange to have these posted in regularly frequented community venues.

3) Push the message out to the community

As well as posters you should try to get the message out via local newsletters, social media accounts or other popular local means of receiving information. Inform the local schools and any groups that are using your community venue – ask them to have a specific push for donation themselves.

4) Keep people engaged

Once you have your collection point and your contacts set up you'll want to keep your donation point fresh in peoples mind. Try using a snappy campaign such as *insert community name* BOGOF – By one get one for the food bank.

5) Passing your donations on the food bank

Arrange with your foodbank a mutually convenient time for them to collect (or you to drop off) your donations – this will be weekly or monthly depending on your level of donations. If you accepting fresh food donations these will need to reach the foodbank much sooner.

Try to visit these organisations or the recipients to find out where the food ends up and see the difference it makes.

If you want to try something even more local....

If you want to redistribute your food locally yourselves then you might want to set up a mini foodbank for your community. This could take place on a regular day or even just say to the community come and access it when you need to. This could be a real help to local people in crisis without the stigma attached to using a food bank.

Mini case studies / testimonials from communities who have arranged similar sessions

To me it seems morally wrong to waste food, so I'm really happy to see any surplus passed on to others here in Cumbria. I now donate weekly to my local food bank, and regularly volunteer to help with distribution.

King's Food Bank has been operating in Kendal for 3 years, and so far we've been able to provide 44,658 meals to local families and individuals who've found themselves in emergency situations.

Further information and support

Across the UK there are lots of great schemes working to redistribute **surplus food**, including **local food banks** that are often set up through churches, charities and other local community organisations.

In north-west Cumbria the **North Lakes Food Bank** has a network of collection centres, and is feeding around 600 people every month within Allerdale and Copeland districts: www.thefoodbank.org.uk

Barrow Food Bank provides a minimum of 3 days emergency food and support to those in southwest Cumbria who are in crisis: www.barrow.foodbank.org.uk

The King's Food Bank in Kendal provides tailor-made food boxes to meet the needs of each individual and family referred to them: www.kingsfoodbank.org.uk

The Trussell Trust is a charity that coordinates the only UK-wide network of food banks. In 2013-14 their foodbanks fed more than 900,000 people nationwide:

www.trusselltrust.org/foodbank-projects

Other useful organisations and resources promoting food redistribution include:

FareShare tackles the issues of food waste and food poverty, seeking to benefit both vulnerable people and the planet: www.fareshare.org.uk

FoodCycle is a national charity combining volunteers with surplus food and spare kitchen spaces to create nutritious meals for those at risk of food poverty and social isolation: www.foodcycle.org.uk

Leftoverswap is a new app allowing people to offer and receive leftover food items in their local neighbourhood. The scheme started just with individuals signed up, but there are now food shops and restaurants getting involved as well: www.leftoverswap.com