



COMMUNITY FRIDGES: A mini guide



Registered Charity No. 1158700



Welcome and introduction



Community fridges

Community fridges are one tried and tested way of stopping good food ending up in the bin and promoting a spirit of sharing and mutual support within a community.

They work on an honesty basis and are housed in public, accessible places, making surplus food freely available to members of the public. Surplus perishable food is donated by local businesses or members of the public and then made available for all. Unlike food banks, the fridges are available for anyone to use and provide access to healthy food, share recipes and spark ideas around wider social and environmental action.





The Community Fridge Network

The Community Fridge Network (CFN) is a growing network of safely and effectively run fridges that are registered to re-distribute surplus food. Managed by environmental charity, Hubbub, the CFN provides a free support service and extensive resources for any UK group setting up or running a community fridge. It aims to make it easy for new projects to become established, and to help the concept flourish across the world. We share stories, challenges and our visions for the future.

The advice shared in this guide, and by Hubbub more widely, will also support groups outside of the UK to establish successful community fridges. We also have USA specific advice available. Please specify your preferences.



The CFN brings together major UK retailers, grant giving bodies, local authorities and community groups to reduce business and domestic food waste and support community resilience. It also enables experiences and impact to be shared so projects gain credibility and support. It is strongly advised that all UK community fridges become a part of the network, so that everyone can be confident that all projects are running safely and effectively, with minimal risk to the public.





The story

One of the first community fridges was set up by Hubbub in 2016 in the UK town of Swadlincote, Derbyshire. It was an experiment to cut household waste and help families save money, and it was welcomed by the community with open arms. Hubbub took the idea and trialled it in other locations across the UK, adapting the concept to the needs of each area. The idea spread rapidly and the network grew from 10 to over 130 fridges in three years, helping thousands to access nutritious food, save money and reduce waste across the world.



The 1st community fridge was opened in Swadlincote and the 100th Community Fridge was opened in Scotland by Charles, Prince of Wales



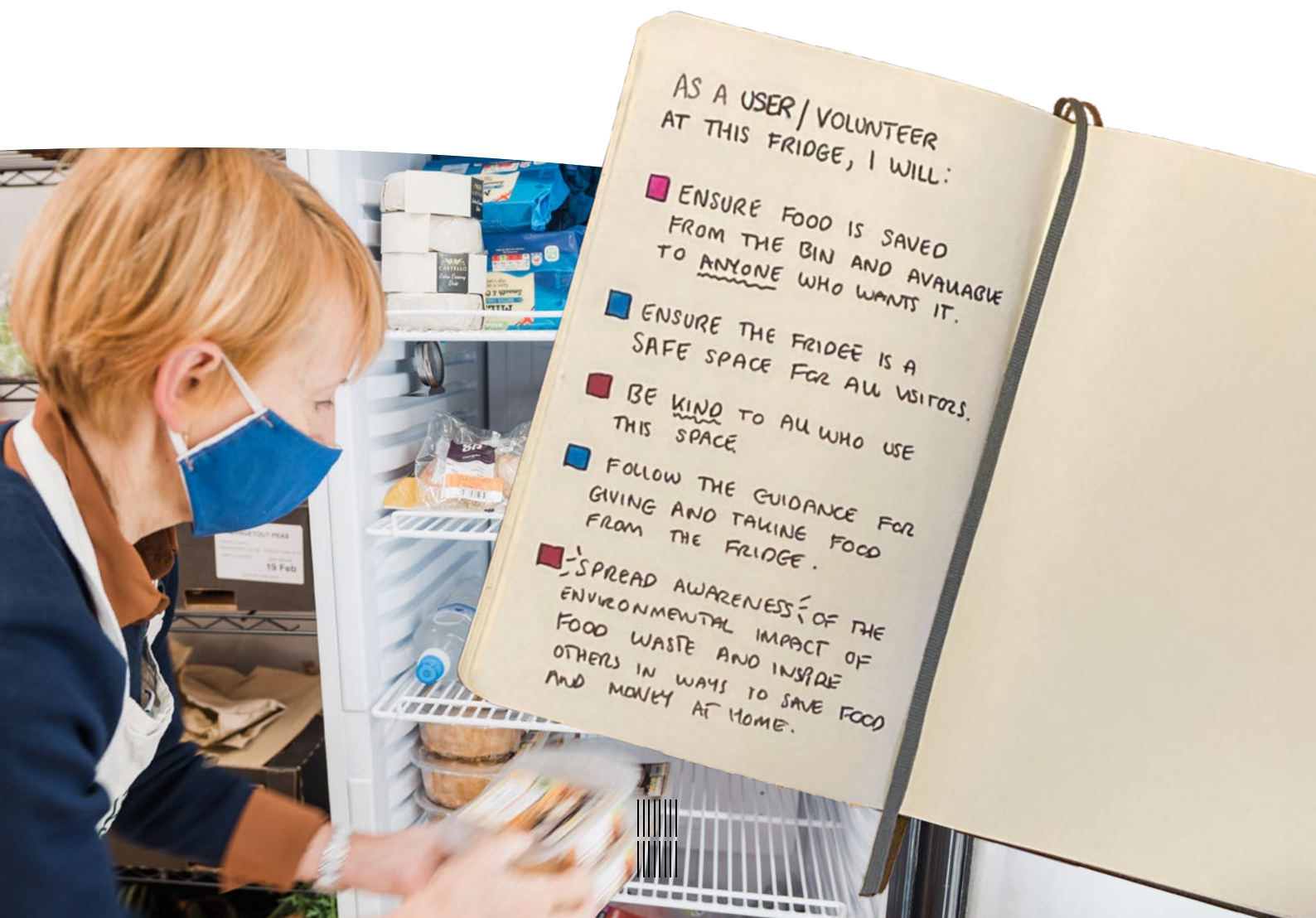


Our shared ethos

The ethos and vision for the fridges is an important aspect of the community fridge movement. Community fridges are friendly, accessible and community-led initiative. They are open to everyone, regardless of means and are not a food bank, or a solution to food poverty.

Members of the movement share a vision for enticing and user-friendly spaces. To help achieve this, Hubbub has created a range of resources including posters, recipe cards and illustrations that you are welcome to use and adapt, in order to create a fridge that suits your community. Get in touch if these have not yet been made available to you.

We strongly recommend that you create a user agreement for your fridge. This will act as a code of conduct that volunteers and visitors will agree to and promise to follow when visiting your fridge. It can be tailored personally to your fridge and be core to the values and expectations of your community.





Impact



With each fridge sharing one to four tonnes of surplus food per month, the collective impact is huge. However, community fridges often do much more than cut food waste, and the stories we have heard from the communities reflect that. The fridges bring people together and help build stronger bonds within the community.

Many sites support local residents to learn more about food, sustainable eating, growing and eating on a budget. The fridges can also be used as spaces for wider social and environmental action, through activities and events like community kitchens, clothes swaps, repair services, growing activities and a space to share and exchange household items and skills.

Cutting waste

Community fridges are a tried and tested way of reducing the environmental impact of food waste, which is a huge issue. A third of all food produced globally is wasted. If it were a country, it would be the third biggest emitter of greenhouse gases globally.

In 2020 the UK CFN redistributed 975 tonnes of surplus food to 150,000 unique visitors, the equivalent of approximately 1.9 million meals.





Social impact

As well as distributing surplus food to reduce waste, the fridges also offer a place where residents receive food saving advice and recipes, so they can save money and reduce food waste at home too. The community fridges have also helped strengthen household and community resilience by holding community food growing activities to help residents become more food secure and using the space as food co-operatives. Over 50% of the fridges in the network help individuals and families eat a greater range of food including eating more fruit and veg and 1/3 of fridges use the space for growing activities to support communities.

Measurement

Hubbub provides a measurement framework to monitor the food passing through the fridge and capture the environmental, social and economic impact of community fridges in a simple and robust way. We then create an annual impact report to support community fridges to easily communicate impact to funders and interested others.

Once you sign up to the CFN, we'll send you simple digital reporting forms. Fridges outside of the UK can also request access. Drop us a line communityfridge@hubbub.org.uk

You can use scales (bathroom scales are good for large amounts) or weighing hooks to weigh the amount of food going into the fridge. An easy way to measure how much has been redistributed is to weigh the amount of food waste from the fridge (in kg) and deduct it from food going in.





First steps opening a community fridge



Location, location, location

Your community fridge should ideally be in an area with high footfall or community activity that has some level of supervision, to minimise the chances of misuse. This could be in a foyer of a building where people are in the vicinity, or a covered and secure unit in an area that is covered by CCTV.

It's ideal if there's a nearby site where activities associated with the fridge, such as cooking workshops or food co-ops, could take place. Community fridges have been set up in community centres, University campuses, churches, cafés, outhouses, shipping containers and robust outdoor sheds!

It is also important to consider what you could do with the area around the fridge and how the space could connect the community. You may want to have space for a freezer as well as a fridge, to enable large amounts of surplus to be received and stored for longer, an adjacent table with scales, shelves for food items that don't need to be refrigerated and wall space for information and resource sharing.





Making your space inclusive

To ensure the fridge is inclusive, select an area that's easily accessible to all. Consider how you can enable equal opportunity of access. For example, consider any physical, social or religious barriers when choosing your site. It is also important to make sure communications to the public on how to use the fridge are big, bold and bright – and that information is presented in a logical order that is positive, light-hearted and friendly. Consider any language barriers that visitors may face and offer translated versions of communications as needed.

Users must be clear on the process and familiar with the Disclaimer. People may be disinclined to use the fridge if they feel as though it's only for people 'in need'. Instead, it should feel like a place that is open to all, and a common sense way of stopping good food going to waste.

Once you sign up to the CFN, we'll share ready-made, editable signage and usage instructions for you to display.

Food can be donated by individuals or businesses, so long as food meets the inclusion criteria. Normally, all you need is one strong partnership with a major retailer for a steady supply of surplus food through your fridge.

There will be a range of stakeholders who may be able to support your project:

- **Local Authority (including Environmental Health Officer)**
- **Local food retailers and supermarkets. This could include coffee shops, cafés, greengrocers, delis, producers, growers, factories and bakeries**
- **Community groups or charities that cook meals for local people**
- **Local cookery schools**
- **Food banks, local voluntary services, Citizen's Advice**
- **Local waste management facilities**
- **Other food waste campaign groups**
- **Local press**





Health and safety

Hubbub has developed a set of health and safety guidelines for starting up and running a safe and professional community fridge. These guidelines differ depending on where you are in the world.

At current we can provide guidance for the UK and USA. If you are outside of these regions, the guidance may still support you to navigate your local systems, but we would advise you seek local expertise.

Our guidelines have been developed with consultation from the Food Standards Agency, Environmental Health Officers and Food Safety consultants.

In the UK, you will need to register as a Food Business, and establish food safety procedures. Following from this you will get a food hygiene rating and certificate for the fridge. You will be given this when you have had an inspection from an Environmental Health Officer. Our guidance will help you to navigate this process. If outside the UK, you will need to seek guidance from your local authority dealing with food safety.

Before you open your fridge, volunteers will need to familiarise themselves with the relevant sections of the 'Safer Food Better Business for Retailers' publication from the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The document is based on the principles of HACCP (hazard analysis and critical control point). The fridge's final risk assessment, HACCP, cleaning schedules, maintenance processes and systems for managing food coming into and out the fridge will be in accord with the advice given.





Set-up costs

Community fridges can be set up in a very basic way, or with all the bells and whistles – it depends on where it's housed and how you want it to look.

Set up costs may include:

- Funding a Project Co-ordinator role
- Creation of a space to house the Community Fridge e.g. refurbishment of a publicly accessible space, installation of a shed or locker
- Installation of CCTV
- Installation of electrics and lighting
- Direct material costs (Hubbub have created an example shopping list in the resource pack)





In the long run

Volunteers needed

Community fridges are often very reliant on a committed pool of volunteers, managed by project co-ordinators. The level of staffing needed for the fridge is dependent on the ambitions and the existing resources of the host site. Fridges could be maintained by volunteers, a paid member of staff or a mixture of both. Either way, you will need someone in charge.

The community fridge co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that suitable volunteers are recruited to manage the fridge and that they are adequately trained to do their role in line with health and safety guidance, and in a way that responds to the needs of the local community.

Volunteers will be needed for the smooth running of the fridge, including regular cleaning, contents monitoring, picking up surplus from local businesses, organising events and logging food into the fridge. Hubbub has created a number of useful documents in the resource pack that will help with reaching out to volunteers, outlining tasks and a rota and contact sheet.

Food collections

Any donated food must be correctly labelled, stored and logged by a volunteer. All visitors must read the Instructions for Use and Disclaimer before taking anything out of the fridge. There's no restriction on the amount of food that can be taken from the fridge, however, visitors should only take what they need and will use. Visitors will have to sign out the food item on the logging out forms and ensure all food is washed and thoroughly cooked if necessary, before eating.

Our full How-to-guide includes a comprehensive list of the food that can and can't be accepted by the fridge. This guide also includes instructions for how to label, log and store food collections.





Fridge maintenance

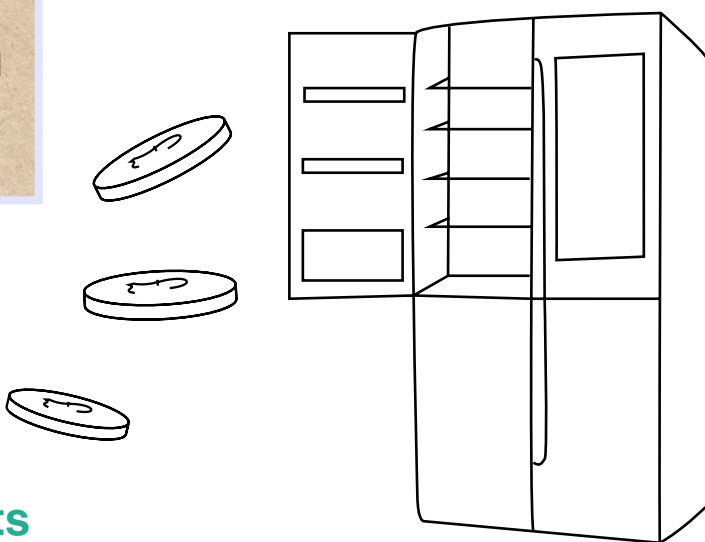
As part of the CFN, volunteers are required to ensure that the fridge is regularly maintained, cleaned and organised to a safe standard. This will include:

Daily tasks:

- Cleaning and sanitising the fridge and wider space
- Contents monitoring: including throwing away and composting unsuitable food
- Contents organising: ensuring food is clearly labelled and stored on the appropriate shelf or drawer
- Fridge reporting: the temperature of the fridge/ freezer and a scan of the logged food must be recorded daily and filed online if possible

Weekly tasks:

- Pest checks
- Deep clean of the fridge and space
- Once every 4 weeks complete the 4-weekly review in the 'Safer Food Better Business' diary section



Funding and ongoing costs

There are many ways to seek financial viability in the long term. There may be the possibility of funding from local donors, food retailers and businesses. Other options include grant giving organisations and crowd funding. You might also want to explore other models such as setting up a supporting social enterprise or a membership/cooperative scheme.





Beyond a fridge

The fridge is often so much more than just a fridge. It brings people together, it addresses social isolation and provides people with the opportunity to meet new people, access healthy food, try something new and save money. The fridges can also be used as spaces of wider social and environmental action, through activities and events like community kitchens, clothes swaps, repair services, growing activities and a space to share and exchange household items and skills.

Activities that might complement the Community Fridge could be:



A community garden with composting



'Grow your own' workshops and information



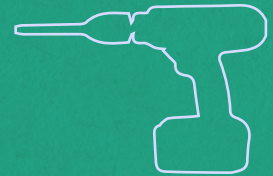
A herb garden and seed swapping



Cooking classes and community meals



Recipes and tip sharing e.g. how to cook nutritious meals on a limited budget



Sharing of materials: cooking and gardening equipment, lesser used household tools



Skill swapping or time banking



Advice and signposting for vulnerable people

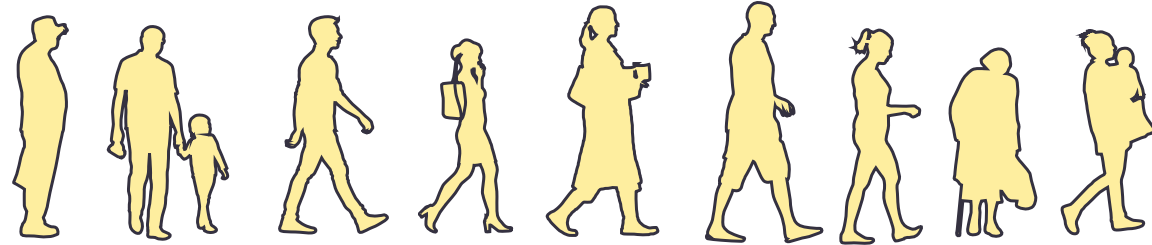
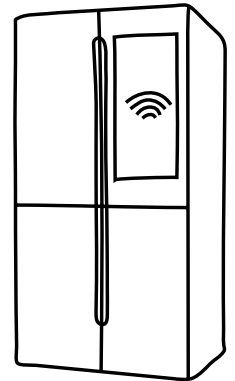


Fuel poverty support





Hubbub support and resource pack

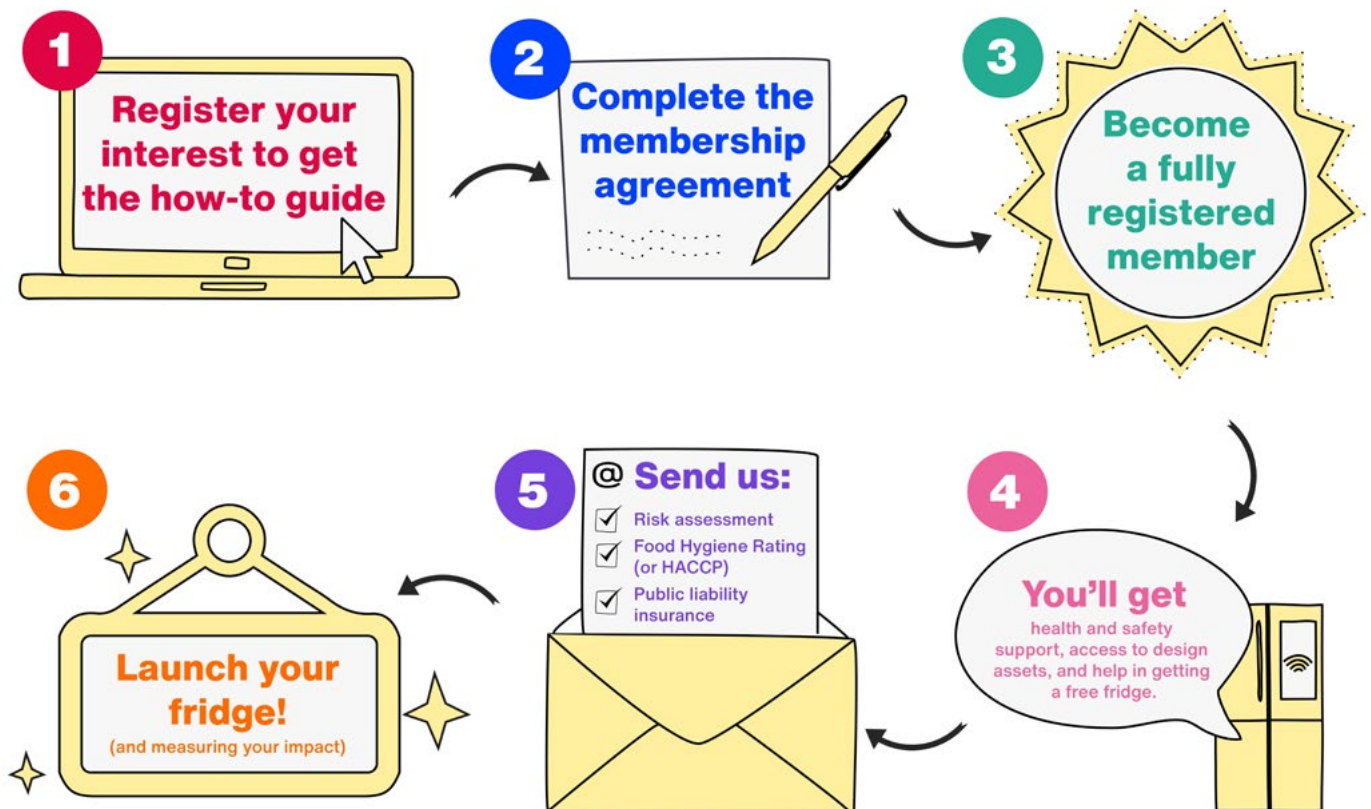


Joining the Community Fridge Network

We encourage every community fridge to join the network. Currently, it is only open to UK members at present, but we are happy to advise and support non-UK members.

To join, please complete this membership form: <http://bit.ly/cfnmembership>.

Please do read this thoroughly and make sure that you will be able to provide the documentation and assurances asked for in time for your launch.



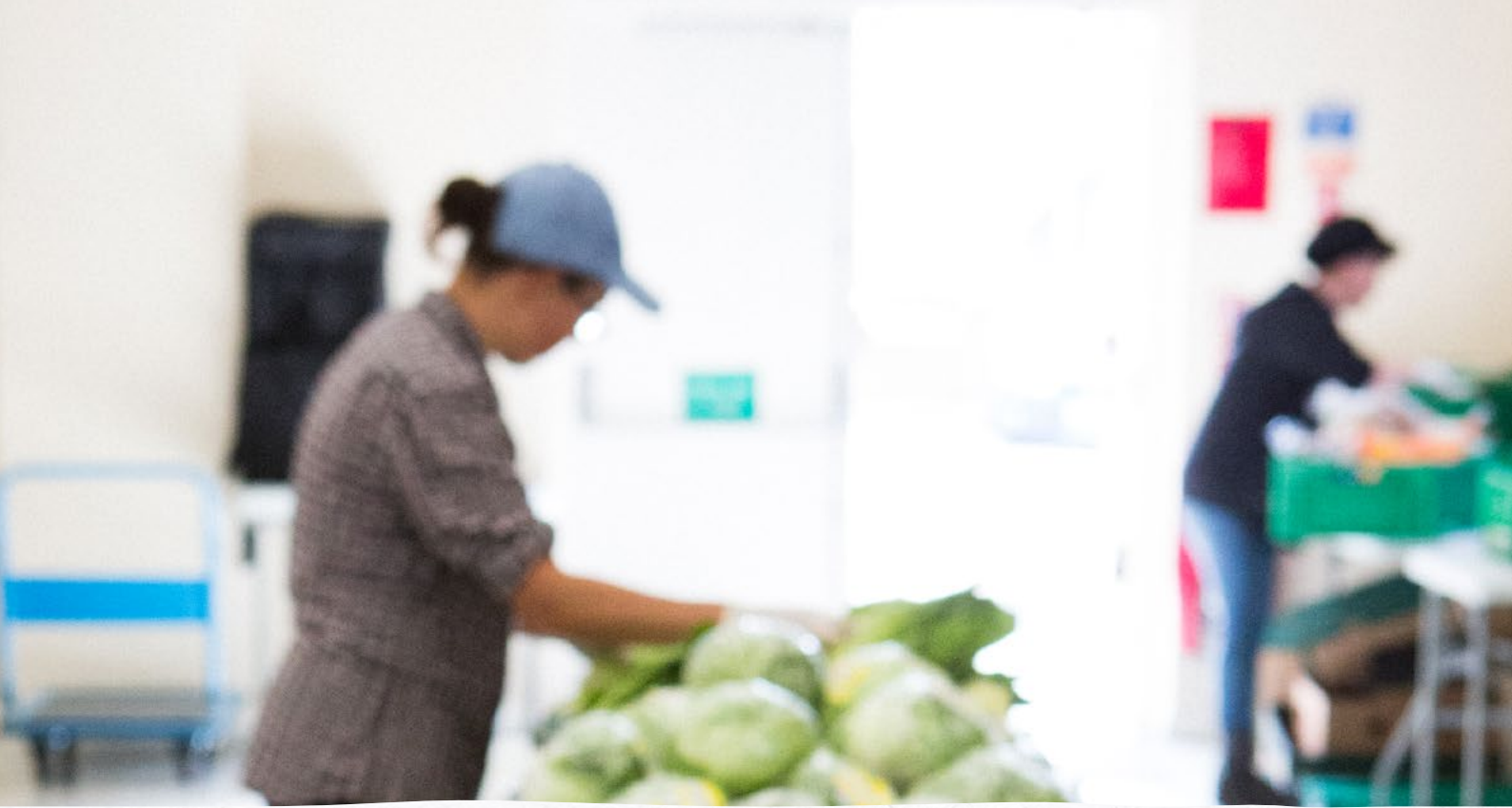


Resource Pack

Once you have filled in the online form you will be sent an email with the information on the next steps and a resource pack. We will also add you to our mailing list. The resource pack includes:

- Information on the Community Fridge Network
- Setting up - useful documents and templates
- Staffing and volunteer guidance
- Guidance for fridge use
- An application form to apply for a free fridge or freezer unit
- Measurement and evaluation framework
- PR and social media support
- Design assets – including posters, flyers, stickers and signs
- Recipe cards





Thank you

#COMMUNITYFRIDGE

