



**COMMUNITY  
FRIDGE**  
*Network*

**Annual Impact Report 2023**

**Nourishing Communities, Reducing Waste**



Registered charity no. 1158700



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# Introduction

## What is the Community Fridge Network (CFN)?

A community fridge is a space that brings people together to share food, meet up, learn new skills and prevent fresh food from going to waste. They're open to all and anyone can share or take food, including surplus from supermarkets, local food businesses, producers, households and gardens. Fridges are run by community groups in shared spaces such as schools, community centres and shops. There are over 650 fridges across the UK (and counting).

The Community Fridge Network is coordinated by environmental charity Hubbub and brings together all UK based groups running a community fridge. It enables them to share knowledge, skills, ask questions and provide support to each other. Through the network we also offer free, comprehensive guidance on how to set up a fridge and run it effectively.

## Network growth

In 2023, the CFN has grown to reach over 650 fridges across the UK. This year's support has included:

- Partnership and collaboration:** By working closely with partners like Co-op and Starbucks, we've offered over £1m of support and funding to community fridges, helping them to reduce food waste and bring communities together.
- Investment in our resources:** We've enhanced our free guidance and template documents to support new and existing fridges to run smoothly and safely.
- Training and development:** We've held webinars and workshops on important topics like food safety, volunteer management and fundraising. These have helped build skills and confidence in running a successful fridge.
- Our support is not only to grow the number of fridges but also to increase the positive impact of each one, making sure they remain valuable resources for their communities for the future.

## Our reflections

Mia Hartwell, our interim Head of Food, reflects on the year:

*"It's been inspiring to see how each community embraces their fridge, turning surplus food into so much more. After an incredible 2023, we're looking forward to being able to do even more in 2024, helping fridges thrive in challenging times."*

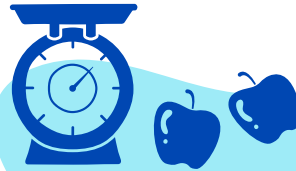


# A look back at 2023

**2023 has been a landmark year for the Community Fridge Network, with significant expansion, innovation and community engagement:**



**79** new fridges launched, bringing our total to over **650** nationwide



Collectively, the network saved over **7,650 tonnes** of food from going to waste, the equivalent of **18.2 million** meals

**100** new food hubs have been funded



Over **631,000** individuals visited their local fridge



Over **£1 million** in grants given to **238** groups



Brand new **£1.9m** investment fund launched



**Better Society Awards**  
National Commitment to the Community Award

## A note on our data

Hubbub sends a quarterly survey to all community fridges to understand site activities, food shared, visitor estimates, and challenges faced by coordinators and volunteers. Unfunded fridges report data voluntarily, while funded fridges have an agreement to report food and visitor data. We calculate the estimated impact of the network once a year, based on the survey data we receive. This report's impact has been calculated from data shared by over 194 fridges across the year.

We calculate 'average food shared' by the total tonnage reported and multiply this by the number of fridges open that month. This helps us estimate monthly and annual food distribution. We use 420g as a typical meal size to estimate meals shared. The same methodology is applied to visitors, averaging reported figures and multiplying by the number of fridges open in that period.

# The Highlights

## Investment fund 2023

In 2023, as part of our exciting new extension to our partnership with Co-op, we launched the CFN Investment Fund. This has given existing community fridges a boost to invest in things they need, like better equipment, training for volunteers, and ways to get food delivered. The aim of this fund is to help fridges run effectively and serve their communities for longer.

In October we launched the first round of funding, which provided 106 grants with a total value of £614,000. So far, the fund has been used for:

- **Upgrades/ one-off purchases:** Items like electric vans, cardboard balers or new fridges to update and improve fridge operations.
- **New ideas:** Groups can test new activities and run workshops, like composting and how to reduce food waste at home.
- **Attracting and retaining volunteers:** Training programmes and support for volunteers so they can feel confident and keep doing their amazing work, plus help towards improving the volunteer recruitment process.
- **Smoother running:** Investing in technology and helping with paperwork.
- **Working together:** Helping groups with training and dedicated time to build stronger local partnerships with business and organisations.
- **Accessibility:** Making their building or activities more accessible so that everyone can benefit.

“We have successfully built great connections with organisations such as the wellness centre located in Doncaster who help disabled and vulnerable people with life skills and support, the food we have supplied to them has helped them to teach basic recipes to these people. Overall helping them to live and support themselves.”



**Agape Life Church Community Fridge - South Yorkshire**



## Food hubs

Together with Starbucks, Hubbub has helped 100 community fridges transform into 'food hubs'. These hubs now offer a range of activities, from teaching healthy and sustainable cooking skills to growing food. With the support of food hub funding, these grants have elevated community fridges to the next level.



### Food skills

The workshops teach people how to cook healthy, low-cost meals using surplus food, empowering them with valuable skills while reducing food waste.



### Food growing

These activities encourage people to grow their own food, improve access to healthy food and provide connections to nature.



### Community connection

By providing welcoming spaces for community meals and informal gatherings, the food hubs help build social connections and combat loneliness.



### Affordable food

Supporting collaborative purchasing and/or local food retail. This could include food co-operatives, food box schemes, fruit and vegetable stalls or a community café.

In 2023, we awarded **£700,000** to **100 groups**, reaching an estimated **14,800 attendees**. Highlights include:

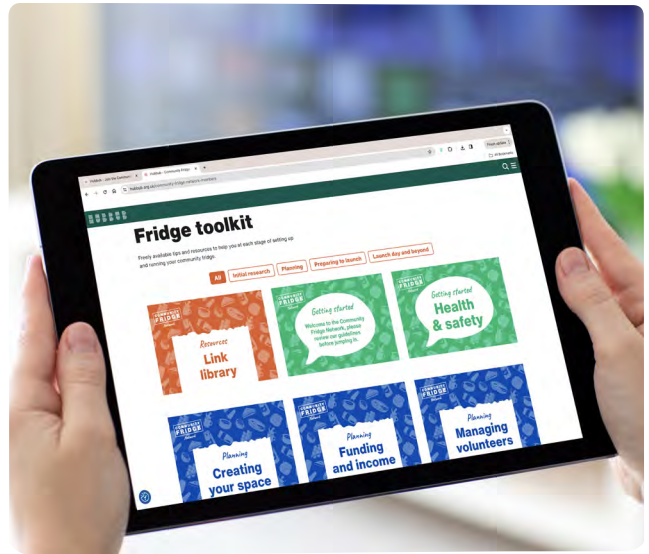
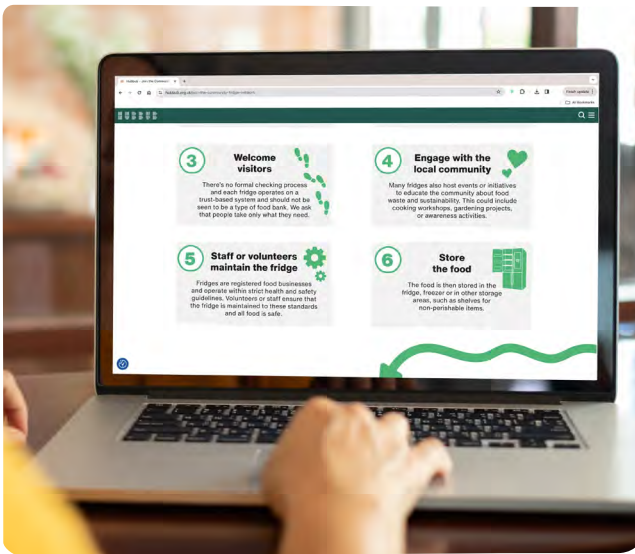
- **Skill workshops:** Over 50 workshops on cooking, organic gardening, composting, and food hygiene.
- **Affordable food initiatives:** New veg box schemes provided fresh, affordable produce to over 1,000 families, redistributing thousands of kilograms of surplus food.
- **Community meals:** Hundreds of community meals shared, reducing loneliness and building social ties.
- **Community gardens:** Established ten new gardens, installed greenhouses, raised beds, and accessible pathways, engaging volunteers of all ages and abilities in gardening.

# Ongoing support in 2023

We're committed to helping all community fridges thrive, whether they are new or have been running for years. This year, we focused on enhancing our support offerings with:

## New members' portal

We launched our new members' portal giving community fridges a one-stop shop for news, insightful case studies and events.



## Toolkit for new fridges

We launched a digital 'fridge set up' toolkit to give new fridges all the information they need to get started.

## Monthly meet-ups

These gatherings offer fridge coordinators an opportunity to share updates, hear inspiring tales from other members, and ensure they are on the right track.



# Working in partnership

## Co-op x CFN



Co-op has been instrumental in expanding the reach of community fridges. In 2023 we were thrilled to extend our partnership with Co-op until the end of 2025, supporting the growth of the network with 65 new fridges and the funding for 300 investment fund grants.

## Starbucks x CFN



Starbucks has partnered with the CFN to fund new food hubs through the Starbucks 5p cup charge. This is applied when a customer chooses to use a single-use cup. Introduced voluntarily in 2018, Starbucks has donated these funds to Hubbub to help create stronger, greener communities including food hubs.

## Stella Artois support



Stella Artois has generously supported the Community Fridge Network with funds raised through an in-store marketing campaign. The funds have been crucial in helping the Hubbub team expand and sustain the network, allowing us to reach more communities and make a bigger impact.

## Dentsu support



Dentsu has been a key supporter in modernising the Community Fridge Network. These funds have been allocated towards the development of a new user-friendly, automated, and interactive online map for all community fridges. This updated map will make it easier for people to locate their nearest fridge and for new fridge groups to integrate into the network seamlessly.



# Voices from the Network

“When our fridge was first set up, it was seen as a handout, but now people see it as a community asset. We have regulars who come not just for food but for company and support.”

 **Larne Community Fridge**

“An elderly Turkish man comes to our community fridge every week and brings his homemade bread to share with others. It has become a tradition, and now people look forward to seeing him and tasting his bread.”

 **Dostiyo Community Fridge**

“Daniel is our active volunteer who comes in every week without fail, and he is always ready to help. He has formed close bonds with the people who come to the fridge and has created a real sense of community.”

 **DGMA Community Fridge**



“A young mum came up to me at the fridge, and she was so grateful for the fresh produce we provide. She told me it has made a huge difference in her ability to provide healthy meals for her children.”

 **The GoodNESS Project**

“I think you all do a great job and your awareness of how each and every larder operates differently to meet the needs within their communities is brilliant.”

 **Crumlin Hub Community Fridge**



# Partner with us

Businesses and organisations can partner with the CFN to fund, supply, or support fridges in various capacities. Your involvement could help expand the reach and impact of fridges across the country.

## A big thank you

As we reflect on another year of incredible growth and impact, we extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who has supported the Community Fridge Network. From our dedicated coordinators and volunteers who give tirelessly of their time, to our partners and funders who believe in our mission, your contributions have been the backbone of our success.

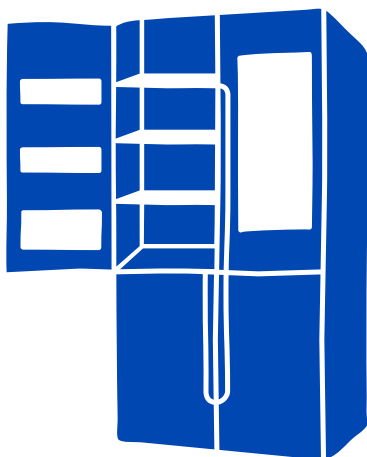
Coordinators and volunteers are the heart and hands of community fridges. Their dedication to managing the fridges, engaging with the community, and spreading the word has been instrumental in the Network's expansion and efficacy.

Special thanks to Co-op, Starbucks and all our other partners who have provided not only funding but also resources and support that enable our fridges to thrive and serve more people.

Their collective efforts have not only helped reduce food waste but have also fostered stronger, more resilient communities across the UK.

“Partnering with Hubbub over the last two and a half years has been an absolute honour for The Co-op. With expert support and advice from Hubbub, the partnership is deepening the impact of each community fridge. Through investment from Co-op members, we have launched a fund to help community fridge hosts both survive the challenges of cost increases, and thrive, by developing engaging services that support communities to come together around food.”

- Ed Powell, Mission Manager, The Co-op



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