

FOOD FRIENDS FAQ'S



At Food Friends we run a meal-sharing initiative which connects volunteers – who are looking to share extra portions of their home cooked food – with a neighbour, who would benefit from a delicious meal delivered with company and conversation. We refer to these matches as 'food friendships', the person cooking a 'volunteer cook', and the neighbour receiving a 'food friend'. Fancy volunteering with us? Here are some frequently asked questions to help you on your way to COOKING, SHARING and CARING!

You will find the following questions answered below:

- 1. What's the sign-up process?**
- 2. Do I need to have any specific food related qualifications, and do you check my kitchen when I sign-up to Food Friends?**
- 3. Can other members of my household get involved and help me to COOK, SHARE and CARE?**
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- 11. Do I deliver a meal on the doorstep, or do I go inside?**
- 12. What happens if I can't deliver a meal as usual...maybe I'm unwell or am going on holiday?**
- 13. What happens if I'm worried about my food friend?**
- 14. What happens if someone doesn't like my cooking?**
- 15. What happens if I don't hit it off with my food friend?**
- 16. What happens if life becomes too busy and I can't volunteer anymore?**



Haven't found what you're looking for?

Don't hesitate to contact us with any further questions at:

**hello@food-friends.co.uk
01227 250 410**

1. What's the sign-up process?

There are 4 simple steps to signing-up with us:

1. Register your interest on our website. We will then be in touch via email and will send you a volunteer application form.
 2. Complete the application form – this takes no longer than 5 minutes. We ask you to provide us with 2 character references so have these to hand before you start the form.
 3. Complete a Basic DBS check, which we organise and pay for. We send you an email link to complete a remote application - it takes 5-10 minutes to complete this.
 4. Join us for an informal induction. This takes around 30-40 minutes and can be scheduled to fit around your other commitments. We can pop to your house to do this and are happy to come at an evening or weekend if that's the only time that will work for you.
- You're then ready to COOK, SHARE and CARE!

2. Do I need to have any specific food related qualifications, and do you check my kitchen when I sign-up to Food Friends?

To volunteer with us you don't need any specific food/cooking related experience and we don't need to check your kitchen. However, food hygiene is really important to us at Food Friends. We aim to develop trust and accountability within our community so, as a volunteer cook, it's your responsibility to only serve food that you would be happy to eat yourself. We provide you with some basic food hygiene guidance before you start and are happy to fund food hygiene training for anyone who would like to access it. We also give you some goodies to help you safely COOK, SHARE and CARE – reusable insulated food carriers, a fridge thermometer, food labels and a level 2 Food Hygiene information booklet.

3. Can other members of my household get involved and help me to COOK, SHARE and CARE?

Yes, they certainly can, the more the merrier! If they are over 18, they will need to sign-up to volunteer with us officially. If they are under the age of 18, they can accompany you but must always be supervised by yourself. Our meal sharing initiative is a fabulous way to forge intergenerational connections and many food friends enjoy meeting the youngest members of their community. We always ask that you discuss this with us first, so that we can check if your food friend's comfortable with others tagging along.

4. Who are the food friends that receive meals through the initiative and how do you find them?

Food friends are mostly referred to us by local professionals like GP's, Social Services and Social Workers. They are also referred to us by fantastic local charities and sometimes by themselves or from a neighbour in their community. Most of our food friends are over the age of 55 or living with complex needs. We don't have a strict referral criteria and welcome anyone who would benefit from some delicious home cooking delivered with some company and conversation.

5. How many food friends will I cook for?

You will be matched with one food friend, normally someone who lives alone, or perhaps a couple (if delivering two portions of home cooked food could work for you). You can then share your home cooked meals as and when you can and over time develop a fabulous food friendship.

6. How am I matched with a food friend?

Once you've finished your sign-up with us, you will be invited to join our App. Here you will be able to see all the food friends in your area looking to be matched with a lovely cook, like yourself. You will be able to see if they have any allergies or intolerances, their food likes and dislikes and some general information about them, their interest, and hobbies. You will also see roughly how far they live from you, so can choose someone that is going to geographically work in terms of delivering a meal. You can then let us know who you're interested in cooking for through the app, and then with a little bit of background work from us to keep things safe, you can start COOKING, SHARING and CARING. If accessing an app is difficult for you, please don't worry. We can talk you through possible food friends that could work for you via phone, email or over a coffee and get you matched up in no time at all.

7. How far will I have to go to deliver a meal?

When you sign-up, we ask how far you're willing to travel to deliver a meal – a short walk away, if you're happy to jump on a bike and go a little further or a short car journey. We will ensure that you are matched with someone that lives within the requested distance, and will discuss this again, to check that you are happy, before you start COOKING, SHARING and CARING. We aim to make sustainable food friendships so it's important that you think about what will work for you. To make things easier, you are also able to choose who you would like to cook for through our App, with distance in mind – see frequently asked question 6. How am I matched with a Food Friend to cook for?

8. How often do I need to deliver a meal?

The majority of volunteers share some home cooked food once a week, some less often, and some more frequently. Being a volunteer cook is flexible and we would love to hear from anyone interested in sharing extra portions of home cooked food, and forging a new local connection. We can make it work for you. The most important thing is to be open and honest about what you're looking to do. COOKING, SHARING and CARING is great, so we want to encourage as many people to be involved as possible.

9. What do I deliver my home cooked meal in?

Most volunteers deliver a meal on a plate, covered with foil or cling film. Then next time they deliver a meal they collect their plate from their previous delivery. A bit of a plate exchange! Others prefer to use a Tupperware and have a similar exchange process. It's completely up to you and your food friend. If you're worried about using your own plates, or don't feel you have anything suitable, we are happy to buy you some so you can join us to COOK, SHARE and CARE.

10. Do I deliver a meal that is chilled, or does it have to be delivered hot?

Most volunteers deliver a chilled meal that a food friend is then able to reheat at a time convenient for them. This gives you more flexibility as to when you can deliver a meal and allows you to have time for a chat when delivering (rather than your food friend having to dash off and eat straight away before the meal gets cold). Before you are introduced to your food friend, we will have already spoken to them to check that they are happy to reheat a chilled meal in their microwave or oven.

11. Do I deliver a meal on the doorstep, or do I go inside?

This is completely up to you. We make it really clear to volunteers and food friends that this is your choice - you should only go into someone's house, or invite someone in, if you feel comfortable doing so. We visit all food friends at home so try to identify any risks and let you know about these before you deliver a meal for the first time. Food friendships blossom in different ways. Some stay as doorstep chats as that's what people feel comfortable with, others turn into natters over a cuppa with friendship developing way beyond the food.

12. What happens if I can't deliver a meal as usual...maybe I'm unwell or am going on holiday?

Rest up if you're not feeling good and have an awesome time if you're on holiday! Volunteering to COOK, SHARE and CARE is flexible and based around the fact that life can be busy and unpredictable. You and your food friend will arrange meal deliveries between yourselves, you just need to let them know what's going on for you so they can keep up to speed. Once you've developed a firm food friendship you may find yourself sending a postcard when on your travels or having a chat on the phone if your too busy to deliver a meal as usual.

13. What happens if I'm worried about my food friend?

We have a good chat about this at your volunteer induction, but in short, your responsibility as a volunteer would be to let us know straight away and we would take it from there. Your Food Friends Coordinator is there to support you with any concerns that you may have, and then follow this up to ensure that everyone in our Food Friends community is kept safe and well supported.

14. What happens if someone doesn't like my cooking?

There's always a chance that this can happen! We are all human after all! These are the things we do to avoid this being an issue:

- a. We spend time with food friends when we meet them to find out if they have any allergies or intolerances, the meals they enjoy and more importantly the ones they don't!
- b. You can then choose who you cook for - so you can pick someone who enjoys similar foods to you.
- c. We ask all involved in Food Friends to treat everyone with kindness and respect. This is reflected in all of our policies and our code of conduct. If someone isn't a fan of a meal, we would expect this to be sensitively communicated, so it can be avoided in the future.
- d. Most importantly your Food Friends Coordinator, or a member of the wider Food Friends team, will be there to support you (Monday-Friday 9-5) to navigate any difficult situations-food related or not!

15. What happens if I don't hit it off with my food friend?

Rest assured that we are here to support you throughout your food friendship and to help you with any difficulties that you may have. We will check in with you after your first meal delivery, to discuss how it went, and then routinely every 3 months. However, your local coordinator will always be there for you to chat through any problems that may arise, available via phone or email or to meet for a chat over a coffee if more comfortable. If you feel that it's not going well with your food friend, your coordinator can sensitively communicate this to them, and then we can get back to the drawing board and see if there's another Food Friend that you might like to start cooking for.

16. What happens if life becomes too busy and I can't volunteer anymore?

Supporting volunteers is super important to us here at Food Friends. We always encourage volunteers to be open and honest, and to let us know if they need to step away from volunteering at any point. So, if you can't continue to volunteer then there is no need to worry. You can talk to your local coordinator who can sensitively communicate this to your Food Friend. We will then try our best to match them with another volunteer cook as soon as the right person pops up, so they can continue to be supported. We hope those volunteers that leave us will have such a fabulous experience that they will come back to COOK, SHARE and CARE in the future.