



## **West Cheltenham Community Pantry FAQ'S**

### **How do I become a pantry member and what will happen next?**

*To become a pantry member, you will need to either be referred to us by a third party or complete a self-referral form. The third-party organisation will complete a referral document and send it to us at West Cheltenham Pantry (WCP). Once we receive this referral for you, WCP will contact you directly to invite you to the pantry. If you do not have a referral, but feel that you are in need of the support of the Pantry, please complete a self-referral form that can be found on the West Cheltenham Pantry Website and send it to [info@westcheltenhampantry.org](mailto:info@westcheltenhampantry.org) and we will contact you. On your first visit to the pantry, you will be asked to complete our membership registration paperwork with us, which will take approximately 15 minutes and we can find out about you and your needs. You will then be able to use the shop afterwards.*

### **How much does it cost to be a member of the pantry?**

*It will cost you £3.50 per week and this fee will allow you to pick a total of 10 Items from the shop. 8 items from the shelf and 2 Items from the chilled area. Fruit and vegetables are items you can take on top of the 10 Items in your basket. We class them as free food items.*

### **Why does the pantry have this food item limit rule?**

*We must have the 10 Item rule in place to allow other members to use the pantry. It is to make sure that it is fair to all members. We limit the items from the chilled area for the same reason. If one member took too much, there may not be enough to go around.*

*We charge £3.50 for each shop because it means that we can continue to pay for the food deliveries which we receive at a discounted rate from our suppliers. That is why we can offer a top up food shop for £3.50 that would normally cost around £15.00.*

### **When is the pantry open?**

*The Pantry will be open 2 days a week for shopping. This will be Wednesday and Thursdays each week. 10.00am – 1.00pm.*

### **How many times a week can I visit the Pantry?**

*You are allowed to visit the shop once per week.*

### **Do I need to bring my own bags?**

*We encourage everyone to bring their own shopping bags, however we will hold a small supply of donated bags for life if you need a bag.*

*To comply with food safety regulations stipulated by the Pantry's suppliers you must bring and use the provided freezer bags. (Failure to do so may prevent you from accessing your Pantry shop)*

### **How many people are allowed in the pantry?**

*We will allow a maximum of 4 members in the pantry to shop at any one time. This is because of the amount of space we have in the shop, and to also promote social distancing. There is a reception waiting area with seating inside the Hester's Way Resource Centre if you need to wait while another person finishes shopping. Please just let us know when you arrive, and we will come and fetch you from the waiting area when we're ready.*

### **Do I have to use the shopping baskets provided?**

*Yes, we ask all shoppers at the pantry to use the shopping baskets provided, just as you would at a supermarket. Once you have paid for your shop, you will be able to pack your shopping bags.*

### **Can I bring my child/ children?**

*Yes, your children are welcome in the shop if you need to bring them with you.*

### **How does it work?**

*The pantry was set up to help support anyone within the West Cheltenham community who needs a food top up during the week. We are a member only pantry and the membership fee you pay helps cover the cost of WCP purchasing the food. The food that is supplied comes from various sources, some donated, but largely purchased through donation funding. The largest weekly delivery is purchased by WCP from Fareshare. Fareshare distributes food across the country to many different organisations.*

### **What products can I take?**

*To be able to feed many people, we must keep it fair, so members are allowed a certain number of items from the Pantry.*

*You will be able to have 8 items from the shelves, 2 items from the chilled area, and you will be allowed to take fruit and vegetables as well as the 8 shelf items. We ask that you are sensible when taking items, and do not take multiple products of the same type.*

### **What will happen if I don't turn up once I have become a member?**

*We need the members of the pantry to commit to coming each week once they have joined. This is because we must correctly allocate food quantities and to help us decide how much we need to order based on the number of people using the pantry.*

*If you will be unable to attend for a genuine reason, then we would understand, but would be grateful if you could contact us in advance to confirm future attendance.*

*If you do not use the shop weekly, WCP reserve the right cancel or refuse membership to allocate and give membership to another person that may need the service as there are a limited number of memberships.*

*Memberships are reviewed every 3 months.*

### **Do you have special dietary foods on offer?**

*We do not specifically stock for specialist dietary requirements, however there will be times when we receive Free From goods that are gluten free, and these will be separated from the other goods and priority given to clients who need them.*

### **Dietary requirements / Allergies / Intolerances**

*If you suffer from any food allergies or intolerances and are unsure of a product's ingredients, please ask one of our trained volunteers for further information.*

### **Why do some products have old best before dates?**

*The pantry may stock items which are near or past their best before date. Best before dates are about quality, not safety. When this date has passed, it doesn't mean that the food is harmful, but it might have begun to lose its flavour or texture. These items will be clearly marked.*

### **Food Product Labelling**

*All available food products will come with ingredients labelling identifying the ingredients and any allergens contained within the product. If you are unsure of something on the label, please check with a member of staff / volunteer.*

### **Can you help me with other topics?**

*Yes. We are not just a food pantry. We offer guidance and support via our sign posting service to other organisations to help you with other concerns you may have or problems you or your family could be facing. These services are free and offered by trained and qualified volunteers. There is advice and help for utilities, debt, work, housing, benefits, and wellbeing.*

### **Are your volunteers and Staff fully trained and DBS checked?**

*Yes, all our staff and volunteers are thoroughly assessed and must have a DBS check before joining the Pantry.*

### **Can I help at the pantry?**

*We are always keen to involve the community within the Pantry. If there is an availability for a volunteer position and you would like to join, we will keep you on our waiting list until a volunteer role becomes free, and then send out application paperwork for you to complete and return.*

### **Can I recommend the pantry to people I know?**

*Yes, you can tell people that you think may benefit from using the pantry, but they would still need a referral sent through to us from a third-party organisation, or self-referral, but WCP would like to help as many members of the community as possible, so if you know someone that the Pantry could help, please tell them about us.*

### **What will happen if I cannot afford to pay my membership fee?**

*The Pantry works like any other shop. You will need to pay for the goods at the time of visiting the shop, just like you would a supermarket. The fee for any weekly shop is always £3.50. We have a card machine and prefer card payment but can accept cash if this is the only way you can pay.*

### **Who uses the WCP pantry?**

*Our members predominantly come from the West Cheltenham area. We offer our membership to anyone that may need help to keep themselves or family fed, at a time when they may be facing hardship. WCP understand that the cost of food in the UK is very expensive and with so many people facing challenging times for many different reasons, the pantry offers a short-term solution to make sure members have access to food.*

### **Can I request certain products from the pantry?**

*WCP are unable to choose what products we would like from our suppliers or donators, so we cannot guarantee what products will be in stock, but please ask us and we will do our best to help if we can.*

### **Is there parking at the pantry?**

*Yes, there is free parking at the Hester's Way Resource Centre where the pantry is located. However, please be aware that the car park can get busy at peak times as the carpark is also for the use of the other businesses too, and WCP cannot guarantee a parking space for you. There are 3 designated disabled parking bays.*

### **When does the Pantry receive deliveries?**

*The Pantry can receive deliveries at different times throughout the week.*

### **How do I end my membership?**

*If you would like to end your membership with WCP because you no longer need the service, please let the Pantry Manager know, and confirm it by e-mail or in writing, and WCP will remove you from the members list. Should you wish to re-join the Pantry in the future you will need to re-apply or be referred again.*

### **Can I shop for other members?**

*Please discuss this with the Pantry Manager.*

### **Is the pantry accessible for wheelchair mobility scooter use?**

*The Pantry shop is ground floor with level access. The front door entrance is 90cm wide. This will allow some mobility aids through the door, but not all. Please check the measurements of your mobility Aid. If you need help within the Pantry, our staff and Volunteers will be happy to help you in any way they can.*

### **Is there a WC facility?**

*There are toilets located on the Ground Floor of the Hester's Way Resource Centre. There are male, female, and disabled toilet facility that customers of the WCP can use if required.*

### **Does the pantry do deliveries?**

*The Pantry does not currently deliver.*

### **What type of products does the pantry stock?**

*WCP stock a range of household foods. The main food stock is canned, boxed and packet goods. There are frozen and chilled goods, we have a selection of fruit and vegetables and there will be hygiene goods. Our stock will change frequently, but we will always try to provide the most essential items.*

### **Who do I speak to if I need to ask for help?**

*If you need any help in the Pantry shopping or for anything else that may be going on in your life, please don't hesitate to speak to the Pantry Manager or one of our lovely volunteers. They will always be ready to assist you.*

### **What happens to fresh foods that have not been taken or used?**

*If we have any remaining food that needs to be eaten quickly, we will send out a text to Pantry members to let them know that there is free food available for collection. This will be on a first come, first served basis. If we have no response from our members, we will then look at composting the food.*

### **Which organisations do you work with?**

*WCP work closely with several organisations within Cheltenham, including other food providers and pantries, the Council, Housing Associations, charitable agencies, and the Church. The organisations all play a different role, but the combined effort is to create better support to the local community.*