

The Magic of Dunterlie Foodshare

(2018-2021)

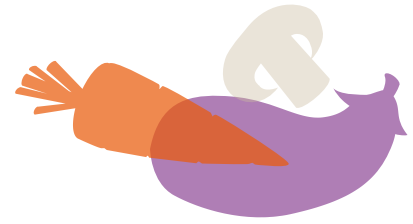
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Knowledge is Power

Introduction

According to the Cambridge Dictionary¹ one definition of “magic” is: A special and exciting quality that makes something seem different from ordinary things.



Dunterlie Foodshare officially began in 2019. If you mix this with a sprinkling of a global pandemic then we start to look at our lives, community, and the world around us from a totally different perspective. Things that once seemed so very important just don't seem so significant now and things you may never have thought of can make you see things much clearer.

One of the questions that keeps popping up for us as volunteers and as users of the Dunterlie food share is:

‘What is it that makes Dunterlie Foodshare magic?’

Volunteers and users are curious about what it is about Dunterlie Foodshare that makes us want to continue and to participate with passion and drive as volunteers within our group, and within the centre itself, that keeps us all coming back?

Some of the questions that may have been asked in 2019 could fall into the ‘not applicable anymore’ category. This doesn't necessarily make them any less valuable. I think that some answers are just seen through fresh eyes.

To try to answer this question of magic we need to take things back to the start and tell the full story of how it all began to where we are now.

Dunterlie Community

As of 2019, East Renfrewshire's population was 95,530.² 6157 of these people belong to the Dunterlie and Dovecothall area of Barrhead. This number is increasing year on year as the boundaries of Barrhead become wider with new housing consisting of Barrhead Housing Association, private Miller homes and East Renfrewshire council social housing stock.

1 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/magic>

2 <http://statistics.gov.scot/carts/77de2308-824f-4eee-b34e-88122f2f5d8b>



Dunterlie Resource Centre

Rena Mcguire, who all her life has lived in Dunterlie, has invested over 30 years working as a community activist. Rena has a wealth of experience in working alongside East Renfrewshire council and is a community councillor, she is a member of Barrhead housing association board trust and works alongside these teams to ensure a fair voice is heard. Rena obtained a British Empire Medal for her contributions to her community and at the age of 70 remains one of the leading ambassadors for the Dunterlie community and Barrhead more widely. She is a key member of many local groups, and has recently participated in activities ranging from learning Crochet to taking part in the weigh-in health group.

Rena has also led Safety in the Park for over 25 years. This event has seen every single school child across the whole of East Renfrewshire area become part of activities since 1999. Activities at safety in the park included: the Beer Goggle Challenge, Stranger Danger, road safety, health and wellbeing, electrical and fire safety and education on what to do in the event of floods or fire in the home. Rena is a mentor for anyone who wishes to know more about working within a community.

Laura Mathieson works alongside Rena and many other groups to aid and support in community led initiatives. Laura is employed by The Corra Foundation³ and one of her first and main tasks in this role has been heading up the pilot Foodshare with Rena.

Another very important team member at the centre is the caretaker of over 25 years, Moira Kerr. Moira was brought up in Dunterlie and is well-loved and respected within the area. Everyone knows her and she will always go out of her way to help if she can.

Dunterlie Foodshare: the beginning

Laura approached Rena in August 2018 to ask if she would like to run a 6-week pilot Foodshare in Dunterlie with the help of Crookston community group who had been running their own Fareshare-related project.⁴ This pilot would determine whether a need for such a project in Dunterlie would be welcomed or not. Over the 6 weeks it was determined that many in the community were struggling to afford a varied diet. Furthermore, the pilot revealed that the community cared about their carbon footprint.

The pilot was a huge success, and Rena and Laura began to establish the Foodshare project in Dunterlie as a permanent weekly event. This meant funding had to be found

3 <http://www.corra.scot>

4 <http://www.fareshare.org.uk>



for the Fareshare membership. The money for the weekly hall lets had to be found to pay East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure. There were additional logistical issues of transporting food safely to Dunterlie from the Fareshare Depot in Springburn in the North of the city. The distance is around 11 miles, but can seem a lot further in rush hour. On top of this, the community centre has no vehicle of its own, so transport had to be found.

Volunteers were also required to enable the project to go ahead, and it was a challenge to make sure enough volunteers were interested in doing the project. This included volunteers for the justice team to support the transport issues we faced. Once the volunteers had been secured they had to ensure regulations were in place for food handling. Health and safety, risk assessments had to be carried out and the volunteers participated in a health and hygiene certificate to allow safe food handling. All of this was done by good communication and teamwork and of course the community themselves.

Since we officially began in 2019 we have had a huge success. Between 60 to 80 bags of food have been handed out every week.

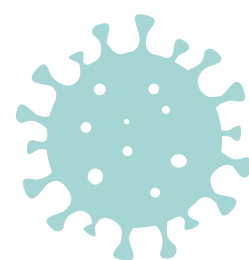
Things only got busier after the pilot finished. Every week, we had our routine of sorting the food, bagging it ready for opening time at 11:30. One of the nicer problems that Rena faced was that the majority of the volunteers felt so part of it that a weekly rota had to be created to ensure everyone had a turn at volunteering. Even the agencies in the form of Citizens Advice and Money Advice came in early to help with the sorting and bagging process.

Every Friday our food was given outside. Families turned up in all weather. Items that you may look at in the shops and wonder what you can cook with them were always a subject for conversation. The most unusual item I can think of was a large batch of banana leaves. As it turned out, nobody really knew what to do with these in terms of cooking. This did spark my curiosity. We found out that these were used in many tropical and subtropical regions in not only cooking but they are used for decoration and symbolic purposes in some religions but also used as we would use our plates. So, when they showed up in our part of the world it was a day to remember. These were later redistributed to the local school and this redistribution happened often between St Josephs Primary and Barrhead high school and the care home in Dunterlie.

Then Covid-19 hit and everything stopped!

The Foodshare was forced to stop on the 13th March 2020 when Covid-19, and the resulting lockdown, led to the closure of the community centre.

Despite this, Rena was asked if she and some volunteers would like to assist in the running of the humanitarian hub in 2020. This originally ran from



Barrhead High secondary school but as things started to slowly open up, the humanitarian hub had to be moved to a different location. Dunterlie community centre was chosen as the new venue to allow the continuation of essential parcels to go out to families every week.

Many of the recipients of this council-run food supply for individuals and families in need had previously been supported by the Dunterlie Foodshare. As time moved on and life slowly began to open up again, news reached us that the council-run service was due to finish. This meant that Dunterlie Foodshare was given permission to run as a follow-on service to ensure food was still getting out to those in need. From 2nd October 2020, the Dunterlie Foodshare served its community without fail every Friday.

It is important to remind ourselves that during this time all council buildings remained closed, and people were still working from home. Only the Dunterlie caretaker and Dunterlie Foodshare volunteers were allowed into the centre. Laura couldn't come in. All new risk assessments had to be carried out and strict guidelines were followed. We had to change the way we ran the Foodshare. We ran like this for approximately one year. Only very recently, in September 2021, have residents been able to make a welcome return to the community centre, and to have that very vital social interaction.

We learnt a lot during the pandemic. Covid-19 allowed us as volunteers to really get to know each other. We worked very closely with each other and became our own support bubble. I believe we were privileged in having each other there at a time when many of us couldn't see family and friends, and we essentially became our own Friday family. We valued our time more than ever and the magic could be clearly felt. We all laughed and cried together, and even watched one of the team's (Jolene) baby blossom. We were happy and felt safe in our volunteer bubble that allowed us to have something that so many could not - to interact with others and to feel like we belong.

During this time, a simple distant welcome was the equivalent of receiving an emotional hug. The Foodshare time was never just about reducing waste and feeding families. These are extra byproducts of something much bigger which is going on every Friday morning at Dunterlie community centre.

This brings us back to the magic!

Is the magic a result of people being together and all working toward a common goal?



How much do we need to find to run?

There is an amazing power of determination to find funding when running a project like Dunterlie Foodshare. To give an idea of what is required, here is a breakdown of basic costs before one bag is given out.



Breakdown of basic costs	
Fare share membership	£1876.80
Hall lets supplied by East Renfrewshire Culture and leisure	£2912.00
Total	£4788.80

Writing the number down, I cannot believe that volunteers have to find nearly £5000 before anything else can be considered. We are totally self-funded with no help from East Renfrewshire council in terms of discounts or free lets. Other costs include items such as food bags, hand gloves, cleaning products and blue rolls. Paper, pens, tea, coffee and even dish washer tablets. Everything is paid for by us. Even the bags we provide the food in have to be bought.

It is very important for anyone wishing to understand how the Dunterlie Foodshare runs understands the great achievement by raising the money not just for one year but now 2 years.

Rena often says “if you don’t ask the question, you won’t get any answers. It is always better to ask and be told no than not to ask at all.”

Rena asks a lot of questions and gets answers. An example is when she approached East Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership in Barrhead, who then supplied the Foodshare with 2 under-counter freezers, a chest-freezer and a fridge. This allows us to store some food that has a long shelf-life as the food can be very mixed. How much of a particular item there is varies from week to week.



Some facts and figures

Overall

Length of time Foodshare has been running	88 weeks
Approximate weight of food prevented from going to landfill	10 tonnes

Volunteer hours given

Volunteer hours required	20 per week
Additional donation hours	2 per week
Total volunteer hours given	1936 combined

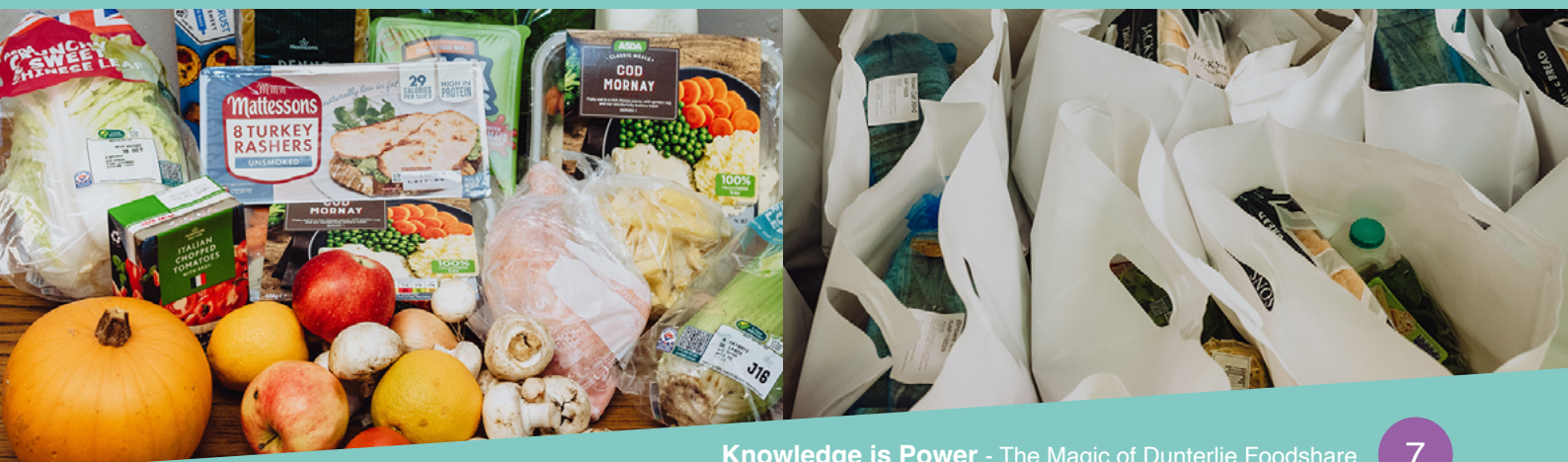
Support provided

Number of bags given out per week	35 bags
Number of bags given out since Foodshare started	3,080 bags
Number of meals distributed per week	105 meals
Total meals given	9240 meals

Three random weekly bags were chosen to calculate the average cost within each bag of groceries.

- Bag 1 = £33.47
- Bag 2 = £28.69
- Bag 3 = £23.12

The average bag would cost £28.47 for any one household to purchase using Tesco supermarket with a clubcard. These bags did not include extras that we give out on occasions such as books, sanitary products and toiletries and does not include any products that are given via donations from Tesco and Co-op that is collected by volunteers and sorted to store safely until the next morning to be given out for anyone who can use it along with the bag given. This also saves approximately 5 large bags of food items from going to landfill every week that the stores couldn't sell.



Questionnaire



In an attempt to gain more knowledge from the users of the Foodshare, Rena constructed a questionnaire with a few questions. It is hoped that the feedback and analysis will enable the Foodshare to look at possible improvements that could be made. It is also hoped that the survey results will give an insight as to how the users of the Foodshare feel about certain aspects of the way it is run.

Q1 How did you hear about Dunterlie Foodshare?

A	Social Media	Leaflet	Word of Mouth	Other
	0	26	5	3

Q2 How often do you come to the Foodshare?

A	Weekly	2 Weekly	Monthly
	28	5	1

Q3 What do you think of the provision of free food without any referrals?

A	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Other
	9	6	23	2
Other comments				
I wouldn't use it if I needed a referral				

Q4 Our aim is to provide at least 3 meals within the bag on a weekly basis. Do you think we achieved this?

A	Yes	No	Mostly
	30	1	3

Q5 We have also provided toiletries on/off. Do you find this useful?

A	Yes	No	Haven't Had Any
	26	2	6

Q6 If you were buying the food provided within the bag, how much do you think it would cost?

A	£10-£15	£20-£25	£30	£30-£40	Don't Know
	8	6	13	5	2

Q7 We already include fruit, veg, chilled foods, tinned food, cereal, bread/rolls, tea, coffee, sugar, biscuits, sweets, chocolate, frozen foods, toiletries and sanitary products. Is there anything missing from the bag you can think of that has not been included?

A Household cleaning products such as bleach were suggested but only by 2 individuals. Everyone else said we are or have provided everything they could think of.

Q8 During the first lockdown of covid 19 did you receive groceries from the humanitarian hub to your home?

A	Yes	No
	12	22

Q9 The project has been running since 10th May 2019 with the exception of covid March 2020-October2020. During covid last year did you receive any bags delivered to your door during these times? yes/no if yes were you aware that it was Dunterlie Foodshare that put your name forward for this service?

A	Yes	No	N/A
	6	6	22

6 did not know that it was Dunterlie Foodshare that nominated these households for essential food delivery.

Q10 As users of the service are you aware that the project is community run with no paid staff?

A All 34 people know that the Dunterlie Foodshare was volunteer run.



Survey findings



34 people completed the questionnaire and we can determine certain factors by looking at the results. Some of the findings confirm what we already felt about the Foodshare.

For instance, it is well regarded by those who use it and provides most of the items households require. Some households have clearly benefited from the service on a regular basis, including those who, for whatever reason, did not or could not make use of the humanitarian hub during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Some results were unexpected and are possibly things to look at in the future.

A surprising finding was that 12 households who regularly received groceries and other supplies were unaware of where the provisions came from.

It was also revealing that 8 individuals estimated the value of a bag at between £10 and £15 yet 13 others valued it at over £30.

This method of gaining knowledge is very useful for us to look at ways we can improve the service. This was the first feedback from we have created for the Foodshare and will be used again in the future with alternative questions.



Volunteer diary

Volunteers at Dunterlie Foodshare recorded personal diaries of their experience volunteering during the pandemic. The diaries help to show the magic of Dunterlie Foodshare, both from the perspective of a volunteer and as a recipient of food parcels.



Lynn

Its volunteer day finally for Foodshare after helping for a few weeks with the humanitarian hub. We were cleared and I was invited back to participate in Dunterlie community centre Foodshare reopening preparation. I felt so excited and apprehensive all at the same time. Something to look forward to and to aim for. This was a huge opportunity for me personally as the whole of East Renfrewshire remained closed due to covid. For me just to be asked to help made me feel needed, trusted and valued as a person. After struggling all my life with mental health issues from anxiety, depression, learning disabilities being dyslexic, brought up in a fairly unsettled manner it felt so good to feel like I was home and questioned if this is what people within a community call normal. I can honestly say that it is the first time in my life I have felt part of something. The Dunterlie Foodshare then Covid 19 has been an opportunity for myself to either give up and go back to being isolated as an everyday occurrence long before Covid or keep feeling that something magical like a spark of somebody I was still getting to know.



Today I didn't doubt myself or question why people accepted me being there. I was just content to be helping and feel part of something. This went well and, as it was our first week, we learnt a few things we could improve or change on. We had a great turnout, and a few new faces came along as well. We were thanked by the community for doing the Foodshare. All in all, it was a fantastic start considering the fact we were in a global pandemic and locally our community buildings were all still closed. We had to have lots of new safety rules in place and follow strict track and trace methods as standard. We may not have offered a cuppa and a sit-down, but we did still offer a face albeit behind a mask and gave out free bags of food otherwise destined for landfill.

For me I believe the magic comes from belonging to something and feeling valued.

This magic we mention is much like any other energy as it morphs and moves around. It will be different for every volunteer but collectively it has a huge impact.

Rena

Two years into this project and some elements of every week puzzle me in terms of our numbers and why people come every week and some have stopped altogether.

As for the magic, I think as volunteers we feel comfortable with each other. Consistency in our routine has given us all a purposeful role.

Regardless of the motivation to participate in volunteering we at the Foodshare have formed a bond together. The volunteers for the time in the centre can be themselves. Not wives, mothers, carers or caretakers, workers, they are there because they want to be there as individuals.



Mary

I love the element of surprise each week with my Foodshare bag, my brain goes into overdrive as to how I can cook the contents and my family are never disappointed. Not only that but I am so very grateful to Dunterlie Foodshare. It has been lifesaving with a welcoming, friendly and helpful group at a time when I needed the contact from others. A simple gesture from a smile can give you so much on that day. To feel valued.

As the community chef I get an opportunity to show what can be prepared from the bags of food. This happens once a month and it has been very positive. Everyone gets to try what I have made and ask me any questions. If they wish they can take the recipe home to try.



Gina

As a volunteer I feel appreciated because I get to meet people, it takes me out the house every week and our residents get to come in and have a cuppa, a chance to chat to others, and they leave with a bag of food for free.



Graphic facilitation

We wanted to explore, and gain more insight into, the magic of Dunterlie Foodshare. We arranged for an artist to participate in a meeting using Zoom along with Andrew from SCDC. All the volunteers got together and had an interactive, socially-distanced, meeting about experiences and thoughts on being a volunteer. We had to pick some photos that were relevant to us then discuss what these meant, to tell a story of why these images stood out to us.

Every one of us got something from this experience and I'm pretty sure most of us ended up in happy tears. In particular, we discovered how close a bond we had formed during the pandemic. Our relationship does not cross boundaries and we don't sit around gossiping negatively, we do try not to judge and we have a laugh at each other. If we have a problem we talk it out. Perhaps this would be different if we all worked with each other every day, but we are a team and it's working to date.

DUNTERLIE FOODSHARE FRIDAY 30TH JULY 2021

YOUR EXPERIENCES = BEING A PART of the FOODSHARE

OUR AREA has a LOT of GOOD PEOPLE that have *Community Spirit*

"I DIDN'T FEEL CONNECTED to the LOCAL COMMUNITY... UNTIL I JOINED FOODSHARE!"

OUR LOCAL AREA has a SPIRIT of FAMILY that OTHER AREAS DON'T...

"I HAD a BAD PERCEPTION of DUNTERLIE, UNTIL I JOINED FOODSHARE..."

PEOPLE DON'T TEND to LEAVE DUNTERLIE... it's a *Welcoming* PLACE...

PEOPLE DON'T KNOW WHAT we HAVE to OFFER...

IT CAN be TRICKY to CONNECT with TENANTS (if they DON'T WANT to BE CONTACTED...)

IF YOU TALK to EACH OTHER, YOU CAN LEARN from EACH OTHER



Photographs...

OSCAR the CAT - BRINGS *Happiness* to ALL that SEE HIM

the POWER of *SOCIAL Inclusion*

COLLECTION of 300 BAGS for an AREA WE DON'T USUALLY SERVICE (OCTOBER)

the FOODSHARE has BROUGHT PEOPLE OUT of THEIR SHELL

RENA as a HUGE PART of BRINGING EVERYONE TOGETHER & SUPPORT EVERYONE

LOTS of LEARNING & COMING TOGETHER

OSCAR the CAT HELPS to ATTRACT PEOPLE into the CENTRE & BRINGS EVERYONE *Together*

THINKING FORWARD...

WE'RE SEEING MEMBERS of the COMMUNITY & WE HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE

LOCKDOWN has HELPED US GET to KNOW EVERYONE BETTER...

WE ARE WELCOMING & INCLUSIVE for ALL

the *Magic of DUNTERLIE...*

LEGACY of FOODSHARE - HOPING OUR CHILDREN WILL CONTINUE the MAGIC & CARE that WE HAVE

TRYING to SHARE the MAGIC GOING on INSIDE the CENTRE (eg. to PRASSERS-BY)

LOOKING at HOW MENTAL HEALTH has AFFECTED PEOPLE OVER LOCKDOWN

Conclusion

This report was based on a number of different research methods, both qualitative and quantitative. It brings together first-hand experience and observation with data about how the Foodshare is used.

Part of the magic of the Foodshare stems from the vital support it provides local families. People in our survey reported that they required food parcels on a regular basis and many weren't able to receive support from the humanitarian hub run by East Renfrewshire Council. They also reported that the supplies covered all their needs and the Foodshare was valued by all.

The other magical aspect of the Foodshare is clearly how much it has benefitted volunteers. The accounts provided by Rena, Mary, Gina and myself (Lynn) highlight how volunteering at the Foodshare has positively impacted on our lives. It has made us feel valued, improved our mental health and provided us with much-needed companionship, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic when social isolation became even more of an issue in communities.

Evidence from a 300,000 year old cave near Tel Aviv found that humans have always gathered in hunting, preparing, cooking and being together when eating it. The magic of Dunterlie could be something as simple as food bringing us together. So it's possible that the Dunterlie foodshare is in some form inherited behaviour from ancestors and muscle-memory that these acts of food related activities bring us joy, happiness, togetherness and a sense of achievement as it has done in time.

