

Empty Kitchens provides more meals for vulnerable people with M&S scheme

As the countdown to Christmas continues, Edinburgh-based charity, Empty Kitchens Full Hearts, has ramped up the number of meals it is providing to those in need thanks to M&S's food redistribution programme.

A colleague app, launched at the start of the pandemic, is now used to notify charities when surplus food is available, helping to increase donations and stop food going to waste. More than 413,000 meals have been provided to charity groups in Edinburgh using surplus food donated by M&S.

Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts – a volunteer-led scheme on Ferry Road that sees professional chefs turn surplus food into healthy meals – is providing over 2,700 meals a day to the most vulnerable families in the city. This Christmas, the organisation will be making and delivering a venison dinner so that those in need don't miss out on a special meal. Cathy Miller, food donations collection manager at Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts, said: "The donations we receive from M&S help us to cook fresh meals for hundreds across Edinburgh every day who would otherwise go without. M&S's fantastic food donations really are integral to our food delivery programme."

Jenny McPartlin, Store Manager at M&S Edinburgh,

said: “It’s going to be a Christmas like no other this year and we’re doing everything we can to ensure it’s as easy as possible for local charities and causes to collect meals to feed the people who need it most, particularly as we enter the festive season when money can be a concern for many. When we have surplus food, our absolute priority is for it to end up on someone’s plate, through our charity redistribution programme with Neighbourly. We’re thrilled that the app has already helped to make such a difference to charities like Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts, and hope to continue to help charities across Edinburgh this season to support our local community and help prevent food going to waste.”

- Since 2015, M&S stores have supported over 2,100 local causes nationwide, from food banks to youth clubs and hospices, donating 19.6 million meals so far to those in need. In partnership with Neighbourly the new colleague app is now in all 585 M&S stores, enabling many of them to more than double their food redistribution rates. Across the UK, more than 7.8 million meals have been donated since 1st March alone.

- M&S’ digital loyalty scheme, Sparks, has so far raised almost £7 million for charities, with customers able to select from 35 charities, including the Neighbourly Foundation.

- M&S is always looking for new partners to work with. Local charity and community groups who would like to get involved in the food surplus programme or other charity initiatives are encouraged to email mandsfood@neighbourly.com to find out more.

