

Food Co-ops, bulk and group purchasing

Consistency

Control

Quality

Autonomy

Empowerment

Cost control

March 4th 2024

The background features a complex network of thin grey lines connecting numerous small, semi-transparent nodes in shades of brown, tan, and green. This network is overlaid on a white background that is partially obscured by large, semi-transparent green geometric shapes, including a triangle on the left and a larger, more complex shape on the right.

Food Co-ops

- ▶ Kelly Fritzsche Co-op Food Project Manager for Plymouth
- ▶ funded by NHS Devon in Partnership with Plymouth City Council and Four Greens Community Trust.

- ▶ My role is to help set up sustainable Food Co-ops in Plymouth.

- ▶ Based on the Co-operation Town model
- ▶ Understanding current provisions
- ▶ Getting feedback around what works well and future opportunities
- ▶ Understanding the surplus supply



Why do we need Food Co-ops?

Affordable food clubs / Small collective buying groups like these can offer a sustainable community food provision, helping build resilience and helping to relieve some of the pressure on food banks.

They can help to ease the financial pressure on people.

Food Co-ops are run and owned by members
Members are learning transferable skills.

Food Co-ops give people choice and dignity by being able to choose and pay for food whilst saving money on supermarket prices.

Additional services are offered to members

- PEC
- Adult maths classes
- Citizens Advice
- Food is Fun
- Food Safety Training

What is a Co-op?

Open to all - anyone can be in a Food Co-op (open membership)

Run by its members - everyone has a role

Working in cooperation with others - food sharing / resource sharing / being respectful of our individual and collective voices

Concern for our community - understanding what is needed in our community and working together to make a difference. Every Co-op in Plymouth is different

Education and training - volunteer training / PEC / Citizens advice / Livewell / Food is Fun / Food hygiene training

Member economic participation - we all pay in, and the money raised goes back in towards paying for food (not for profit)

Autonomy and Independence - every Co-op looks different and will be run differently depending on what the members decide.

Food Co-ops

Smaller groups (20 people Max)

Run and owned by the members of the Co-op

Learning transferable skills by all having roles and role swapping

Members pay weekly and contribute an hour a week to help run the Co-op

Open to everyone

Members pay weekly and the only money spent is the members weekly investment

£3 per week depending on what the Co-op decides to purchase.

Buying surplus food 150kg from Freshare, using local suppliers and buying in bulk all help to save money on food costs

Limited overheads as they can be run inside schools/community centres/churches/village halls. Groups only need 2 hours for sorting and splitting food

*Trials for Quarter 3 the
Mayflower School with St James The
Less collaboration
and
Plymouth University (SU)*

Treasurers

Collect and keep a record of all members subs

Researchers / Bargain Hunters

Look for good deals on products on the co-op's shopping list

Logistics coordinators

Organise the co-op's food deliveries and collections

Drivers, cyclists and walkers

Pick up supplies from shops and the local hub

Packers and unpackers

Arrange and bag the food for members to collect

Distributors

Deliver food to members who can't pick up

Meetings administrators

Schedule meetings, chairing and taking notes (on rotation), sharing minutes and other documents

Childcarers and cooks

Make sure meetings are accessible and fun (everyone on rotation)

Promoters

Telling people about the co-op and promoting its activities

it when you only have a few seconds to grab someone's attention, for example, when you first tell people about the co-op. Once you got them listening, you can go into more detail.

What

We're starting a food co-op here on our estate / on our street and want to invite everyone to get involved

Why

We all need to eat and feed our children, but we're sick of relying on expensive supermarkets or, when times are hard, on food banks. We want to have control over how much we pay for basic products and get to know our neighbours in the process.

How

Join us at this event we organised (there will be lots of delicious food!) / read this leaflet / visit cooperation.town / sign up here...

Co-op Roles



Did you know..?

This week, your donation of £32 is enough to provide TWO WEEKS worth of surplus food to a community hub like Nina's.

Nina says:

"You will never know the difference it's made and the confidence it's given me"

More than just a meal

Mum-of-one Nina joined her local food co-op to save money.

She went on to complete cookery courses, gain a food hygiene qualification, and make life-changing connections.

Less waste, more joy

That's because this week is the Big Give Christmas Challenge, meaning any donation made between midday 28 Nov - 5 Dec will be matched!

Don't miss the chance to make double the impact for people like Nina across the south west.





► Fare Share Surplus Fruit and Veg Delivery.

Co-op Social Supermarket

Our biggest group (over 100 members)

Needs a permanent space

Needs to be open more often

Run by volunteer members

Open to all

Looks and feels like a normal shopping environment

Annual Membership Fee

Items paid for weekly. Could be a points system or 12 items for £3.50 for example.

Requires fixtures / a smart till / fridges and freezers

*Trial will be at Four
Greens Community
Trust and Millfields*

Feedback from our Members

- ▶ Good value for money and good quality
- ▶ Absolutely amazing, great items every week, ideal for bits to add to meals for my kids and good variety.
- ▶ A lot you get each week, everything I need, and I enjoy it.
- ▶ Great value and a good choice of cupboard staples with a few treats.
- ▶ Good way to helping people out, don't know where I would be if we didn't have this food co-op.
- ▶ Love my role, nice to be of help and see the happy faces, it gives me the opportunity to socialise at the same time.
- ▶ It is always lots of fun
- ▶ It's a great experience, friendly people, you can make conversations with people you don't know.
- ▶ It has helped my confidence, helped me make friends and helped my skills in the kitchen.



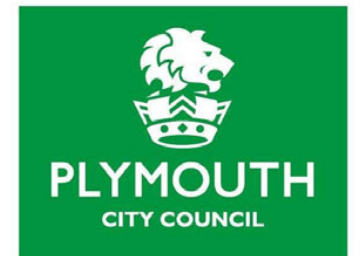
Co-operative Bulk Food Buying in Plymouth – an Overview

Ian Smith – Food Plymouth Core Enabling Team and CIC

March 2024



**COOPERATION
TOWN**





Context and Journey (1)

- **Pre-COVID origins of Plymouth Food Aid Network (PFAN) – Food Plymouth as a partner / supporter**
- **COVID-19 Pandemic - explosion of food aid (often indiscriminate) with some bulk food buying by FareShare – Food Plymouth facilitating PFAN**
- **Post-Pandemic / Cost of Living Crisis – PFAN shifting away from ‘Aid’ to an ‘Access and Alliance’ model (informed by the Torbay model)**
- **‘Peak surplus’ / leaving the EU effects evident**
- **Front-line food support providers often bulk buying from supermarkets**



Context and Journey (2)

- **Driving for fitness-for-purpose, quality of service and value-for-money (resilience and managing vulnerabilities)**
- **Co-operative Council / Co-operation Town model / Arrival of Kelly Fritzsche as Co-operative Food Organiser (Nov 2022 onwards)**
- **PFAN access and ALLIANCE drive supplemented by emergence of:
Plymouth Food Security COLLECTIVE (origins April / May 2023)
and
Plymouth Food Co-operative CONNECTIONS - 'The Bridge' - (origins August 2023)**
=> Plymouth's three-pronged approach to food security
- **'Cash first' approaches, wrap-around support (good pathways to better places)**



Plymouth Food Security Collective ('The Bridge')

- **Bulk-buying, warehousing and distribution of good food to support eligible front-line food support providers**
- **Membership model**
- **Front-line food support provider members classified as:**
 - **Emergency / Crisis – e.g. Trussell Trust Food Banks and Plymouth Soup Run**
 - **Resilience (meeting less severe but still pressing needs) e.g. qualifying affordable food clubs, food co-ops and Co-operative Connections project – must have suitable wrap-around support and specified additional measures in place to qualify**
- **Working collaboratively with FareShare South West**
- **Supporting education and learning activities**
- **Setting up as a CIC with co-operative principles**



Plymouth Food Co-operative Connections

- **A collaboration between Four Greens Community Trust (FGCT), Millfields Trust, Food Plymouth and Plymouth City Council**
- **Two new social supermarkets being organised on Co-operative lines**
- **Six new food co-ops (20 members each) – facilitated by Kelly Fritzsche and run by their members**
- **A sophisticated specialist food transport truck with separate frozen, chilled and ambient sections (individual doors to each)**
- **Small-scale manufacturing trial - informed by the JarSquad Plymouth model - converting 'surplus surplus' fruit, vegetables and sometimes other food products into chutneys, sauces, jams, fruit leathers and dried fruit**
- **Resourced initially by circa £250K of UK Shared Prosperity funding – accountable body Four Greens Community Trust**



Putting Plymouth's #BestFoodForward

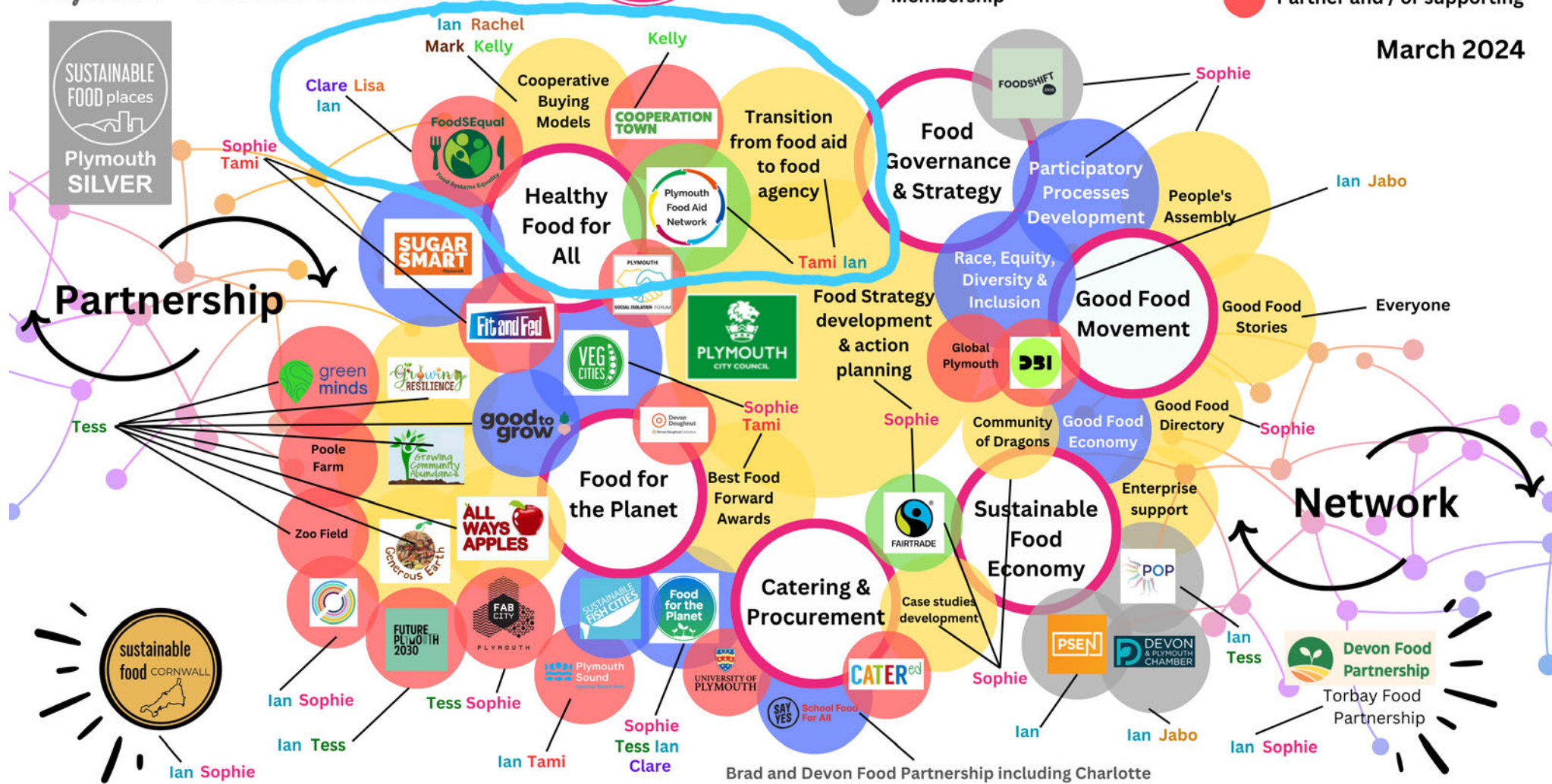
BUILDING A GOOD FOOD MOVEMENT FOR ALL



Key

- Sustainable Food Places key issues
- Campaign focus areas
- Core team work areas and activities
- Leading or facilitating
- Membership
- Partner and / or supporting

March 2024



Food Plymouth - the city's Local Food Partnership - is a central connecting hub for all food-related matters in the city and is resourced and facilitated by Food Plymouth Community Interest Company. Visit www.foodplymouth.org, follow [@foodplymouth](https://twitter.com/foodplymouth) or email sfp@foodplymouth.org to learn how you can help put Plymouth's #BestFoodForward on its Sustainable Food Places journey as an individual, community group, enterprise or organisation.



www.foodplymouth.org



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Bassetlaw Food Bank



Community Mobile
Shop

An ex DHL van, largest you can drive on a normal license and still had internal racking to keep fit out costs to a minimum. Purchase price £18k



The Shop

Overview of the operation

- Visits 10 rural locations a week
- Offers a basic range of ambient and fresh products
- Supported by 43 hours of paid resource
- Over 650 members
- Takes on average £950 a week
- Simplified pricing structure



Operating Model

- The mobile shop carries a basic range of 55 ambient lines along with a selection of the fresh.
- There is a household cleaning range and emergency toiletries.
- We buy in bulk on key lines for price and to try to break even on food costs
- We replenish daily based on sales.
- We use a Zettle till system with contactless payments accepted.
- We operate a membership scheme with no qualifying criteria (self-policing)
- We sign post via leaflets and QR codes to additional support and information in the district e.g. Energy bills, loan sharks etc.

Operating Model

The model is based on the following pricing.

- Any 10 items for £5 / Any 15 items for £7.50 / Any 20 items for £10

The client is limited to a maximum of 20 ambient lines from the range of 55 items each week, but can also purchase an additional fresh item for 60p each from the following list:

- Portion of apples (2 apples) / Portion of bananas (3 bananas)
- Loaf of bread (either white or Brown) / 250g tub of margarine
- Half a dozen eggs (£1)
- Portion of Potatoes (approx. 500g in weight) / Portion of onions and carrots (one large onion and 4 carrots)
- In summary if you have a £12.50 you can get 20 ambient/cleaning/toiletry products and 4 fresh lines. This will make a real difference to households under financial hardship and with weekly access will allow clients to make their budget go further. Payment will be accepted in the form of cash, chip and pin or contactless. We will not operate any form of credit. If the operator experiences a member who is in hardship, they will contact the BFB Manager for advice.

Buying Strategy - 1

○ We purchase from 4 wholesalers

1. Bookers
2. Morrisons Wholesale
3. Brakes
4. Howarth's

Buying Strategy -2

- We use gravity feed on core lines
- We buy core lines at best price e.g. bleach to subsidise other lines
- We split products e.g. laundry pods/toothbrushes/tea bags
- We use fresh lines from our growing projects and local allotments



Buying strategy - 3

- We buy Fruit and Veg via a wholesaler in Sheffield
- We buy eggs in cases of 360 and split our selves
- We get bread from supermarkets



Shop internals



Basic Finance Model

Shop income for full year 2023/24 £53,000

Shop food costs for 2023/24 £39,000

Van operating costs £4,200

Staff Costs (including uniform) £28,000

Total Operating costs £71,200

Total annual funding required to operate £18,200



Thank
you!

