



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

COMMUNITY



Social Partnership



Co-production

Plymouth City Council

Mayflower Food Co-op

Based on the Cooperation Town model, Food Co-ops are small neighbourhood buying groups that provide their members with affordable groceries sourced in bulk and from surplus and distributed at a very low price.

Food Co-ops are owned by their members and run according to the needs of that community. Members decide collectively on how to organise and are responsible for the day-to-day running of the co-op.

Mayflower Food Co-op started in July 2023, collaborating with the local church and school. Twenty parents/grandparents and parishioners came together to form this Food Co-op. These people did not know each other, and they met once a week and all paid £3. They source fruit and vegetables from Fareshare, the food redistribution charity and go shopping each week, buying in bulk to save money. They then share this food equally.

Every member of this co-op has a role in enabling the co-op to run from treasure and co-treasure, from buyers to members who work on a rota basis, to accept and sort the delivery; everything is covered. As a collective, they decide everything together, making the Co-op unique.

What every Food Co-op has in common is the Co-op principles.

- **Open to all** - anyone can be in a Food Co-op (open membership)
- **Its members run it** – everyone has a role in the food co-op.
- **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 and working together to make a difference. Every Food Co-op in Plymouth is different.
- **Education and training** – volunteer training / PEC / Citizens advice / Livewell / Food is Fun / Food hygiene training / Adult maths courses.
- **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 the members' decisions.

Mayflower Food Co-op members over the last eight months have:

- Attending local free cookery courses together, often helping each other with transport, and attending together makes it more manageable.
- Four members attended the Adult basic maths skills course together held at the local school, stating, “I would not have felt confident enough to go on my own, but I wanted to attend the course. *I am so pleased we could do this together.*”
- Members have attended volunteer days at Fareshare depot, packing food for other charities and gaining valuable experience. *“I really enjoyed giving back and seeing how this all works. I will come back.”*
- Two members have passed the level 2 food hygiene course paid for by the Food Co-op.
- The members asked the church if they could use the space for longer on the day they meet and sort the shopping, so they now have a space where the members meet and have tea, coffee, cakes, and biscuits, making this a community coming together, friendships have been made.
- Many members have attended the drop-in from citizens’ advice and have been able to get help around money maximisation.
- In the eight months Mayflower has been running, 4,950kg of food has been redistributed from the landfill to these members.

Feedback from the members:

“Being on a pension this really helps me as I struggle a bit” – Chris.

“It has helped me make friends, it has helped me in the Kitchen, and it has helped me massively with my shopping bill. You will never know the difference it’s made and the confidence it has given me” – Nina.

“It’s a lovely chance to meet new friends amongst all the food, which is the really helpful part”, – said Rosalie.

The model is proving popular. We started a Fruit and Veg Co-op at Plymouth University last year. It is student-led and has been so well received. They have three groups meeting in alternate weeks. This year, thanks to funding from the UK Prosperity Fund, we will open six more food co-ops throughout Plymouth, the first of which started in Cattedown in Feb 2024.

It is a movement that is making a difference in so many ways.



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