

Cooperation Hull

How we did it?

Cooperation Hull organiser, Suzanne, wrote this report about how she set up the co-op. We are sharing it here in order to support others looking to set up a co-op in their area. This would particularly be relevant to Cooperation Town groups outside of London.

Almost by chance, at the beginning of February, I came across the Cooperation Town project via my local time bank website, linked to the Mutual Aid website.

I emailed the group and spoke to Shiri at great length about the potential of setting up a Cooperation Hull co-op. Shiri suggested my first port of call would be FareShare, who I hadn't heard of before...

After a phone call and a few emails, I arranged to go and see them to meet the staff and be shown around the depot. I was given membership forms to fill in, there and then. I was reassured the forms may look a bit daunting, but just do my best with them.

I didn't have a venue at that time, but I was speaking to a couple of community centres in Hull, which, for one reason or another, fell short of the mark. When I decided to look closer to home, I realised my local village hall ticked all the boxes!

Within a week or so, it was vetted by Fareshare, who advised us to register with Environmental Health asap. That was a simple ten minute online form filling exercise. After registering, I got a confirmation email and I had a phone call from a Food Safety officer, saying they may or may not visit once we are up and running. Once Fareshare saw this confirmation, they sent me a bit more paperwork and asked to see my Food Hygiene Certificate, saying at least one of our active members must have one. We have also agreed to maintain a database of our members, as a health and safety requirement, just in case the need arises for the purpose of product recall.

It's taken almost six weeks, but the co-op is almost ready! We are close to placing our first order. I understand Fareshare regions have slightly different operating procedures. Ours charge £1.50 per tray, minimum 10 trays per order, with a delivery cost. They prefer a yearly subscription to be paid upfront, but recognise groups like ours need to pay monthly, so initially that will be a direct debit from my personal account.

We will be collecting our produce to keep the hall hire cost down; otherwise we would be paying by the hour, just waiting, not knowing exactly when the delivery was due.

Up to now all the interest raised has been through word of mouth. I modified Shiri's original flyer into a press release, which has been printed in the local free monthly newsletter, distributed through five or six villages. We plan on drip-feeding information to the community about our progress this way, rather than leafleting door to door.

Shiri suggested I set up a dedicated email account (it's cooperationhull@gmail.com), whilst she quickly produced our fantastic logo, all of which gave me the confidence I needed to talk to others and take it further.

If there is any chance I can pass on my own experience to support other groups, I am keen to do so. If anyone has any further questions or comments to make, I'm in it for the long haul but will try and return emails and calls as quickly and efficiently as is humanly possible.

Suzanne,
Cooperation Hull

