



Affordable Food Toolkit



A Feeding Britain guide – January 2021

Establishing an affordable food project

The affordable food projects established within the Feeding Britain network are hosted in a variety of locations, adopt different pricing structures and utilise differing membership criteria. They do, however, all aim to provide access to affordable and nutritious food in a sustainable and dignified manner. Whilst acknowledging that food banks play a vital role in crisis support, the development of affordable food models allows a longer-term provision for the local community. The ability to choose items, make a financial contribution and shop in a setting as similar to a regular supermarket as possible creates a more positive and less stigmatised experience for families and individuals on low incomes. The funds raised from membership fees also allows reinvestment into high quality food supplies and financial sustainability for the project, without the need to rely on grant funding.

Membership

Membership structures vary across the network to suit the needs of the local community.

Households on a low income

Some centres utilise income criteria with means tested membership. This requires the new member upon registration to provide documentation indicating low income from employment or receipt of benefits. The threshold of £16,190 (used for means-tested support such as Healthy Start vouchers and free childcare) is often applied.

DATE: __/__/----

TITLE: MR MRS MISS

NAME: _____

GENDER: MALE FEMALE DATE OF BIRTH: _____

ID VERIFIED BY: _____

MARITAL STATUS: MARRIED SINGLE SEPARATED DIVORCED
WIDOWED CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

EMPLOYMENT STATUS: UNEMPLOYED FULL TIME PART TIME
SELF-EMPLOYED

ADDRESS:

ADDRESS VERIFIED BY:
BANK STATEMENT BENEFITS LETTER COUNCIL LETTER
UNVERIFIED OTHER _____

BENEFITS (ONLY TICK IF SEEN PROOF):
CHILD BENEFIT CHILD TAX CREDIT COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION
DISABILITY ALLOWANCE EMPLOYMENT AND SUPP ALLOWANCE
JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE PENSION UNIVERSAL CREDIT
NO BENEFITS OTHER _____

SIGN CRFB REP: _____ SIGN COLLECTOR: _____

Sample membership form

Location dependent

Some centres, particularly those based in areas of deprivation, are open to all residents regardless of income within a certain proximity/postcode area.

Universal membership

Other clubs offer a universal membership free from criteria.

Referrals

Often the food projects accept a mixture of referrals from external organisations including housing associations, Citizens Advice Bureaux, GP surgeries and food banks, along with the ability for individuals and families to self-refer. Some projects also offer the opportunity for crisis/fast track sign up.

Job Centre	Housing Association	Food Bank
Local Schools	Faith Groups	Steering Group Members
Medical Centre	CAB	

Other considerations

- Length of membership
- Level of demand: the number of members that could realistically be sustained.
- GDPR: The secure storage of personal details should they be requested at the sign up stage.
- Regular attendance: Some centres review and occasionally withdraw membership for individuals not regularly accessing the project, for example, if they have not visited for a period of 6 weeks. This, to generate a space for someone potentially in greater need.

Pricing structure

Across the network, members gain a discount of up to two-thirds on their weekly food shopping, compared with what they would pay in regular supermarkets and are offered access to a wide range of produce for which they can shop with dignity. Many projects choose to offer access to additional items free of charge, for example, any food supplies of which the setting has received a particularly high quantity, fruit and vegetables, or personal care items.

Weekly fee

A popular pricing structure is to charge a weekly fee of between £3-£5 for which the member can select a range of items to a value of between £15-£20. This model often requires an element of guidance with regards to how many items of a certain kind can be chosen to ensure equal access for members shopping at different times of the day. Some settings also charge a minimal annual fee to join, often in the region of £1 per household.



Item guidance at Foleshill Community Supermarket, Coventry

Points-based membership system

In collaboration with FareShare, Feeding Britain has developed a new membership fee and points system which is being piloted in Birkenhead. Each time a member visits, a membership level is chosen, and a cash fee is exchanged for the corresponding number of points. 1 point is equivalent to 25p and all items within the shopping area are labelled between 1 and 5 points. The customer is then able to enter the shopping area and choose items to the value of the points purchased.

Membership Level	Points Awarded	Membership Fee
1	4 Points	£1.00
2	10 Points	£2.50
3	20 Points	£5.00
4	30 Points	£7.50
5	40 Points	£10.00

By offering a points credit system, any unused points can be carried over to the next visit. Many members are utilising this system to purchase points in bulk upon receipt of income and returning to shop throughout the month when required. Currently, between £500-£600 per week is being held in the form of points.

The membership fee is processed through the till when the member arrives and exchanged for a receipt detailing the number of points purchased, the member's name and their membership number. This is retained by the member as proof of purchase and given to the team member at the counter once the items have been selected.

The team member processes the transaction by checking the items and points receipt. Should any unused points require saving, they are recorded on an index card stored in a rolodex. The card contains the member's name and membership number and is signed by the member at the end of the visit to document the number of points available. This process will be replaced by an electronic swipe card once the till system has been upgraded.

Accessing food supplies

Many of the projects across the network offer a broad range of fresh, ambient, chilled, and frozen items. A number of projects also stock household, cleaning, personal care, and baby items. Product selection is of course tailored to equipment availability and storage space!

FareShare

Signing up as a FareShare member allows projects to receive a certain quantity of food depending on the tier of membership purchased.

Other surplus food redistributors

- Food Drop
- His Church
- Neighbourly
- Too Good To Go
- Olio
- Co-op Food Share
- Occasional corporate donations received by Feeding Britain

Local supermarkets

Either through direct connections or via FareShare Go, many partners access food donations from their local supermarkets. This method will often require projects to collect food from the store at the end of the day.

CropDrop & local growing

Regional partners are beginning to explore the option of connecting with local allotments/food growers to supply fresh fruit and vegetables free of charge. Further information relating to the scheme and a 'how to' guide can be found [here](#).

Projects with outdoor or garden space have launched community growing schemes allowing food items, herbs and fresh flowers to be grown and offered to members within the affordable food project.

Market traders

Many projects have connected with local market traders to access low cost fruit and vegetable supplies whilst also supporting the local economy.

Purchased items

Often, projects may need to top up supplies of food staples or particular items given the uncertainty of surplus food. Feeding Britain have developed strong relationships with the following retailers to access favourable rates:

- Morrisons (wholesale pricing)
- Brakes (catering quantities)
- Relationships formed at a local level: B&M, Iceland, M&S, Aldi, Greggs & Asda.

Suggested retail equipment & approximate costings

Projects generally seek a level of in-kind support in the form of donated equipment, shelving, furniture and other essentials.

It is recommended that if chilled and frozen food is to be stocked, glass fronted equipment is purchased to allow members to view available items without frequently opening the doors and creating a temperature control risk.

Costs will also be impacted by a requirement for portable equipment (for settings running a food project for a proportion of the time, alongside other users of the space), whether debit/credit cards are accepted and the sophistication of the till/EPOS system.

Refrigeration/freezer units (glass fronted)	£800/£500 fridge/freezer
Portable shelving	£150 per unit
Food storage units (with doors)	£200 each
iZettle Retail Kit	£599 plus VAT 718.80
Label printer	£90
Shopping basket	£6 each
Re-usable shopping bag	£1.90 each

Additional services

Wraparound support is often provided, including in-house advice, or signposting to other services within the community covering welfare, debt, life skills and employment support.

Many centres have incorporated cooking demonstrations and recipe cards to inspire the members to use items that are in stock that week.

Recipe inspiration:

- [Feeding Bristol](#) produced recipes and materials representing best value for money for £15 and translated them into 16 languages!
- [FareShare Yorkshire's FullCrumb Kitchen](#) makes use of surplus food to create delicious recipes and interact with families through cooking tips, live sessions, and videos.
- [Oasis Hub Bath](#) produced the store cupboard staples recipe book "Let's Cook Together"
- [Hubbub](#) produce a variety of resources covering tips on reducing food waste and meal planning

Some projects also act as a drop-off point for other initiatives, for example, to receive donations for a baby baskets scheme.

Many projects further interact with Healthy Holiday schemes and the recent emergency provision, acting as collection and distribution hubs for both food and children's activities.

Polices & procedures

Food hygiene and handling

FareShare require recipients of food to hold a minimum of Level 2 Food Safety training, be registered with Environmental Health and show evidence of a satisfactory EHO inspection.

Employees and volunteers must be trained to follow the standard processes for storing and distributing food supplies and ensure enhanced measures are in place for chilled and frozen food, including equipment temperature checks and ensuring members are equipped with appropriate freezer/chiller bags and instructions for transporting and the storage of food at home.

Numerous resources are available online, including templates and checklists to aid with meeting the legal requirements for food safety. The most user friendly is Safer Food, Better Business and further information can be found [here](#).

Data Protection

Personal details of members must be collected for a suitable purpose and stored securely. Members must be informed in a clear and easy to understand way how you intend to use their personal information, and if you intend to share it with a third party. A 12 point plan adapted from the Information Commissioners Officer (ICO) guidance, can be found [here](#).

Safeguarding

The [Ann Craft trust](#) offer a free checklist tool covering safeguarding, prevention and the Recognition, Reporting, Recording and Reviewing processes. A short online questionnaire will provide tailored resources and materials to ensure safeguarding procedures for young people and adults at risk are in place.

Health & Safety

If more than five individuals are employed, a written statement (signed and dated) confirming the person responsible for health & safety (Chief Exec, director etc.) and how the following issues, for example, are managed:

- Slips and trips – accident procedures and recording
- Fire safety – equipment, alarm testing, drills and call point
- Cleaning chemical control
- PAT testing
- Risk assessments
- Manual handling

All volunteers and employees should be provided with a copy of the policy and should sign to confirm they have read and understood its contents. Copies should also be displayed for view in

shared areas or notice boards and be included as part of an induction process, with content revisited regularly.

Useful resources for policies & procedures:

[NCVO Know How](#)

[Small Charity Support](#)

[Charity Commission guidance](#)

Staffing

The majority of projects operate with a mixture of paid and voluntary positions, depending on the scale of the operation. Some projects, particularly those operating shorter, fixed session times are run entirely by local volunteers.

Feeding Britain regional partnerships are often co-ordinated by a dedicated staff member or a local organisation, and through regular steering group meetings and networking, offer the opportunity for like-minded projects to share resources and best practice.

Projects further offer opportunities for work experience, participating in schemes such as Kickstart and return to work programmes for those facing barriers to employment.

Supplementary activities – revenue generation

Depending on the amount of space within each venue, many projects pursue supplementary revenue streams to facilitate further investment into the setting. These include:

- Hall or kitchen hire for local groups
- Advertising space
- A café (often accessible to non-members)
- Take away prepared meals
- Meeting rooms/spaces for complimentary services or local businesses

Support from Feeding Britain

Membership of the Feeding Britain network provides access to:

- Funding to cover set-up costs
- Ongoing support and guidance with fundraising, financial and project planning
- The sharing of best practice from other regional partners
- Opportunities to attend informative webinars
- Favourable rates on food and corporate donations
- Increased publicity via our website and social media channels
- Forming connections for the acquisition of food