

Setting up a Community Pantry

A pantry or 'affordable food club', is a community-led scheme to redistribute surplus foodstuffs which would otherwise go to waste. Pantries typically operate on a membership basis. Members pay a small weekly fee, ranging between £3.50 - £5.00, and receive a selection of food items. The value of the food far exceeds the membership fee.

Getting started

Planning is key to success. Check levels of local need in your community. Don't duplicate existing schemes. Arrange a visit to a Community Pantry (or two) to benefit from their experience.

Important points to consider

- Will the pantry be independent or a project of an established organization, such as a church or a school?
- What governance structure will be most appropriate? Where will the pantry be based?
- Is the building secure and hygienic?
- Can you find enough volunteers to help you run the pantry?
- How will the pantry be funded?
- Where will you source the food?
- How much will it cost?
- How will you dispose of surplus packaging? (e.g. cardboard and soft plastics).

The **Food Standards Agency** website <https://www.food.gov.uk/> contains a wealth of useful information, including a [start-up checklist](#) and [guidance in setting up the premises](#)

[Spark Somerset](#) can offer guidance on choosing an appropriate structure.

Legal requirements

- A legal requirement for **any** new food business is to [register with your local authority](#) at least 28 days before operations begin. You will later be inspected by an Environmental Health Officer.

- You will need to develop a simple [food safety management system \(HACCP\)](#) to manage the food hygiene and safety procedures in your food business. This will help you to ensure that food is stored and distributed safely. Signing up for [free FSA alerts](#) will help you deal with issues such as food product recalls and food allergies.
- The Team Leader and deputy will need to undertake level 2 [Food hygiene training](#)
- A [health and safety risk assessment](#) will need to be carried out.
- Adequate [public liability insurance](#) (other providers are available) and cover for major assets such as fridges, freezers and other equipment will also be required.