



Your Local Pantry

Franchise Application Guidance

 www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk

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Introduction

Your Local Pantry is a network of community food clubs. Pantries are membership-based, co-owned and controlled by their members.

Pantries were first set up in Stockport in response to growing foodbank usage, especially in 'Priority One' neighbourhoods, areas of multiple deprivation and the on-going impact of the Government's welfare reforms such as the 'spare room subsidy' and 'benefit cap'.

As opposed to the foodbank model of free crisis provision, Pantries aim to offer dignity and choice in exchange for a small subscription fee. Pantries provide support to people on a low income, or recovering from crisis. By helping people with their food costs, they are better able to manage other debts and outgoings. They are also more able to afford to eat fresh fruit and vegetables, and try new things.

This guidance is provided for project leaders looking to set up and run a Pantry; the model can however be adapted to suit local needs and resources.



Pantry ethos

Offer dignity and choice in exchange for a small financial contribution.

A hand-up, not a hand-out; we are not a foodbank or crisis provision – we aim to prevent people from reaching this point.

Provide access to holistic, wrap-around support linked to areas such as money advice, housing, health, employment and skills.

Promote access to nutritious meals and increase fruit and vegetable consumption by utilising access to food surpluses.

Local and community led – members and volunteers keep our shelves stocked and our Pantries open, and as such must be at the heart of Pantry development, empowering themselves and their local communities by co-owning and controlling their own Pantries.

Pantry objectives

- Provide food security to those who need it most.
- Place communities at the heart of decision-making about food provision and choices.
- Reduce food waste in the UK.
- Increase skills, training and employment prospects.
- Improve health outcomes – particularly around the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables and through social eating.
- Improve emotional wellbeing and social inclusion through Pantries acting as community hubs.

How do we open a Pantry?

Following on from the successful Pantries opened and being run across Stockport, Stockport Homes has worked in conjunction with Church Action on Poverty to develop a social franchise model. By putting all of the knowledge and lessons learned over the past four years in to a fully comprehensive package, the Your Local Pantry franchise will enable organisations to establish Pantries more quickly and efficiently, more cost effectively and become part of a professional network across the country.

What does a 'franchise' actually mean?

A franchise is sometimes described as 'a business in a box', and some ways that is true. The concept and operational systems are all in place and are tried and tested methods. Franchisees receive a 'territory' to operate within and the majority of these are exclusive.

The right to operate the franchised Pantry under the 'Your Local Pantry' umbrella means using the know-how and methods which have been developed and are coupled with training and support and the essential use of the branding in operating the franchised Pantry. We will also work with you to tailor certain areas of the package to your local or individual needs. As we recognise that our franchisees come from a range of organisations, geographical locations and each have your own set of challenges to deal with.

However, setting up a franchise does not mean all of the work is done for you, Stockport Homes and Church Action on Poverty have developed and documented processes and operations and have learned from experience so that you don't have to, saving you time, money and the odd headache. We provide the tools and training to operate a successful Pantry however it is your job to research, consult people and choose the right location as well as the day to day running of the franchise.

As a franchisee you will have access to all of the policies, procedures, forms, templates, bespoke software and guidance

along the way for the duration of the franchise agreement. As is standard with franchise agreements, should you wish to terminate, you will no longer have access to this information.

As a franchisee you will receive;

- **A Your Local Pantry Handbook**
 - » which provides step-by-step instructions to guide you through setting up and running a Pantry including operational guides on everything from administration to marketing and reporting.
- **Pantry Management Software**
 - » this is currently being developed and will assist in managing volunteer and member information, stock management and day-to-day operations. This will also be provided with training and a reference manual to help you on your way.
- **Procedures and templates**
 - » documents relating to day to day Pantry operations and performance management to marketing materials and induction checklists.
- **Marketing materials**
 - » personalised to your Pantry as well as template press releases and advice.
- **Website**
 - » the details of your Pantry will be added to and promoted on the Your Local Pantry website www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk as well as promoted in our wider social media.
- **Training support**
 - » Advice, guidance and visits from the Project Officer and shadowing opportunities at existing Pantries.
- **Corporate discounts**
 - » as the Network grows we will continue to work with various providers and suppliers to offer discounts and services to franchisees.
- **Network Communications**
 - » including an annual Conference, networking opportunities and ongoing updates and communications across the Pantry network.

Appraisal Needs Assessment

Before committing to opening a Pantry, it is important to consider whether there is a need amongst the community you are looking to support. This is important both to ensure you are targeting people most in need, and to make a business case to commissioners, funders and partner agencies.

Your Local Pantry suggests evaluating need using evidence from the following areas.

Indices of deprivation:

The English indices of deprivation measure relative deprivation in small areas in England called lower-layer super output areas. Factors looked at when compiling these include health, unemployment and educational attainment.

A Pantry has the potential to improve outcomes in all of these factors, so it is important to target areas which are considered to be particularly deprived to have the maximum impact.

Document 1 gives an overview of the area in which the first Pantry was established, Lancashire Hill, to illustrate how you can demonstrate need for a project in your chosen area.

You can find comprehensive information about the indices of deprivation at:

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015

Relevant local strategies and plans:

Financial inclusion and food poverty may feature in a range of strategies and action plans in a local area, for example, family poverty strategies. It is valuable to find out whether launching a service like a Pantry will contribute to these, because it will make it easier to secure 'buy-in' from local commissioners and providers.

For example, in Stockport providing services for the relief of poverty in areas of deprivation features as part of the Borough Plan, and therefore Pantries are well aligned to this. Helping customers into employment and volunteering opportunities is also part of the delivery plan for Stockport Homes.

You can find out about local strategies and delivery plans by visiting your local authority's website and making contact with the relevant sources stated therein.

Existing provision:

As well as building a business case for need, it is important to check that there are not already projects of a similar nature in your chosen area. If there are, it may cause duplication and resources could be better directed elsewhere to have maximum impact.

You should check with the following to find out about existing provision in your local area:

- FareShare in your area
- The Trussell Trust, who run foodbanks across the country
- The local authority
- Local voluntary sector support services (if relevant)
- Local housing providers

Consultation

Equally as important as establishing whether there is a need for a Pantry is finding out whether it is what the local community wants. When looking to set up a Pantry we recommend the following.

Asking local residents whether they would use a Pantry:

This can be done effectively via a survey asking about what stock they would like to see, what opening times would suit them etc. The survey should give an outline of how the Pantry will work so residents can say whether they would sign up as members. A sample survey is provided as **Document 2**.

The survey can be posted to residents; if choosing this method we recommend including a pre-paid return envelope to increase the response rate.

The survey can also be done by door-knocking or telephone calls; this usually gains a higher level of responses and allows for residents to ask questions, but is more time and labour intensive.

Local businesses

It is important to consider whether local businesses will support the opening of a Pantry in their area.

Some may have concerns about the impact on their own trade, whilst others may wish to donate or negotiate a reasonable price on stock.

We recommend speaking with local businesses face-to-face to address any concerns they may have; you can initiate this by either visiting them in person or by sending a letter outlining your plans and inviting comment. An example letter can be found at **Document 3**.

If local businesses express concerns about the impact on their trade you can alleviate this by outlining how trade for local businesses should not be adversely affected:

Pantries have limited opening hours and membership numbers.

Members cannot drop in for items like they would a shop, and not everyone in the community will use the Pantry.

Pantries can help bring people to local shops if there are other items they need whilst making their visit.

Not all items will be available for sale in a Pantry – particularly licensed goods like tobacco and alcohol.

Partner organisations

It is important to build relationships with other organisations as they will act as both a referral source and a provider of additional advice and support.

We recommend, as a minimum, contacting your local authority's neighbourhood management service and advice service or equivalent. You should also seek to engage with local housing providers, especially if they manage a high proportion of properties in the area where you plan to open a Pantry.

Suppliers

FareShare Network

Pantries rely on the redistribution of surplus food; this makes the model work both in terms of finance and the principle of offering not just ambient but also chilled, frozen and fresh food.

Before considering whether to open a Pantry, you must check whether there is a FareShare branch which will supply your project. Please visit www.fareshare.org.uk

FareShare has membership criteria meaning that they will not be able to support all organisations; you will in particular need to meet particular food safety standards.

FareShare Greater Manchester has supplied Your Local Pantry since it began in 2013, but each FareShare branch may have slightly different operating principles. Capacity to supply will also vary between areas; this is why it is crucial to consult with your local branch before progressing your project.

Local suppliers

As well as FareShare, you should consider finding out whether there are other suppliers you can build relationships with in your local area. This is particularly important if you want to ensure your Pantry is stocked with staple goods such as fresh milk, bread and fruit and vegetables.

Set-up costs and funding

Document 4 provides an overview of the capital costs associated with setting up a Pantry.

Your Local Pantry emphasises the importance of purchasing equipment which has:

- been bought ideally as new with warranty, or if not been recently been PAT tested; and
- is of catering standard: Pantry fridges and freezers will be opened frequently and need to store a lot more goods than domestic appliances; therefore you need to reduce the risk of them suffering from wear and tear.

Equipment you will need to purchase as a minimum includes:

- Display fridge and freezer – with temperature display
- Storage fridge and freezer – with temperature display
- Shelving for both the Pantry store and storage area
- Insulated freezer bags, thermometers and fridge magnets featuring food safety guidance for customers – these are a requirement if you are distributing chilled / frozen food.

Other sundries and items you may wish to consider are:

- till or cash tins within which to store payments;
- receipt books and financial ledgers; and
- shopping baskets.

As well as set-up costs you should also ensure you have sufficient start-up funding to cover the costs of at least the food you receive from FareShare in the first year. This will vary depending on the amount of stock you need and where your Pantry is located; it can also change each year. Please visit the FareShare website and contact your local branch for more information:

www.fareshare.org.uk

Revenue costs may or may not apply, depending on whether you already have a premises. You may need to consider further funding if you need to cover utility and rent payments.

You should also consider whether you currently or will be liable to pay Business Rates and Corporation Tax; relief and exemptions are available for certain organisations depending on their legal structure and local authority they are based in. We suggest you seek advice from an appropriate source to ensure you have established what costs you may incur in setting up your Pantry.

Your Local Pantry has been successful in securing funding from a range of sources to provide capital equipment; potential grassroots funders who offer small grants to help set up community projects include:

- Forever Manchester, including the CDL Fund and Seed Fund: <http://forevermanchester.com/funding>
- Greggs Foundation: <https://greggsfoundation.org.uk>
- Manchester Airport: www.manchesterairport.co.uk/community-working-in-our-community/community-trust-fund/
- Skipton Building Society: <https://www.skiptongrg.co.uk/>
- Big Lottery Awards for All: <https://biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/Awards-For-All>
- Local housing association funding programmes

An example of a successful funding application made by Your Local Pantry can be found at **Document 5**.



Identifying a location / premises

Choosing the correct site and location for your Pantry is vital to its success and popularity.

Main points of consideration:

- Is the chosen location accessible for deliveries?
- Are there any stairs or kerbs? If so, is there a lift / alternative route?
- Is there a suitable area for a store room?
- Is it central and comfortable for members / residents / volunteers to access?
- Are there toilets and hand washing facilities?
- Is there good access to public transport?
- Is it safe for taking cash payments?
- Is there plenty of storage space?

Decisions regarding opening times should be left up to the residents who will be using the Pantry, through consultation. Your Local Pantry stores typically open two times a week; one in the morning and one late afternoon, for two hours each session. This is so that we can increase the amount of people that are able to access the Pantry – those that work, those on the school run etc.

Not everyone setting up a Pantry will have access to their own premises; we recommend contacting local housing providers, the local authority, churches and community groups to see if they have space which can be made available. This may also be more cost effective than finding an independent venue, as it could reduce outgoings in terms of rent and utilities. You should still check however any implications in terms of Business Rates from the local authority.

A template letter requesting support from another local organisation can be found at **Document 6**.

Legal Structure

Your Local Pantry was originally set up as a constituted community group (unincorporated) with a Steering Group comprised of members from Stockport Homes, Stockport Council, Health and Pantry volunteers.

A basic template Your Local Pantry constitution can be found at **Document 7** you will need at least three unrelated Board Members to sign – Chair, Treasurer and Secretary as a minimum. Please note: this template is an example only, we suggest seeking advice from a local voluntary sector support service if you are setting up a new organisation to run a Pantry.

This template, for an unincorporated community association, is the simplest form of legal structure, but there are others which you may wish to consider as your project grows. Different legal structures can give greater ownership to members, help attract external investment / funding and also aid better financial reporting, transparency and credibility.

A guide to legal structures can be found at:
https://www.uk.coop/sites/default/files/uploads/attachments/simplylegal_0.pdf



Staffing levels

Pantries can be run by either paid staff, volunteers, or a combination of the two. We recommend the use of volunteers not only to keep costs low, but to increase attachment to the local community and provide valuable work experience opportunities.

It is essential that all volunteers receive adequate food safety training; as a minimum this should include Food Hygiene Level 2 certification.

Before considering setting up a Pantry you need to consider whether you can attract enough volunteers to carry out its daily operations. A list of job descriptions can be found at **Document 8**.

Recommendations for minimum staffing on a Pantry shift are:

- One volunteer taking receipts and checking bags behind the counter
- One volunteer on the shop floor helping customers
- One volunteer keeping the shelves well stocked should be at least two volunteers.

Consideration should be given when deciding upon opening times and number of sites to what staffing can be provided to new projects.

There is a considerable level of administration undertaken behind the scenes at a Pantry, and therefore consideration also needs to be given to fulfilling the following roles. These could be completed by one or more people, but more than one will definitely be required to fulfil roles such as petty cash tin handlers and cheque signatories:

Administration role

Based at a central administrative location. This person will be responsible for inputting all member payments and visits, taking phone queries from the Pantries and collating statistical information.

Finance role

Based at a central administrative location. This person will be responsible for undertaking bank reconciliations, monitoring restricted funds, and being the tin handler for petty cash.

Cheque signatories

There will need to be at least two of these to authorise payments; they will be responsible for signing all purchase orders and petty cash requests.

Finally, you should consider who will manage your Pantry project. This could be a paid member or staff or a volunteer, but it is crucial that someone takes responsibility for:

- Managing volunteers, including facilitating team meetings, helping to develop rotas and taking forward personal development plans where these are used.
- Problem solving, especially where issues arise which need addressing immediately for example, staffing shortages.
- Overseeing health and safety.
- Ensuring stock levels are sufficient.
- Responding to comments, concerns and complaints.





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