



CO-OPERATIVES UK

What is a **co-operative?**

From the **outside**,
a co-operative
may look like any
other business.

It's what goes on
inside that makes
them different.

There **IS** an alternative...

There are over **4,800 independent co-operatives in the UK**. They work in all parts of the economy, from healthcare to housing, farms to football clubs, credit unions to community owned shops, pubs to public relations, wind farms to web design.

Co-operatives are not just supermarkets and funeral services – although these are amongst the most successful co-operatives found on the high street.

Look out for co-operatives near you.

Co-operatives are owned by **people** like you!

Co-operatives exist to serve their members, whether they are the customers, the employees or the local community.

What's more, these members are the owners, with an equal say in what the co-operative does. So, as well as getting the products and services they need, members help shape the decisions their co-operative makes.

Across the UK, co-operatives are owned by more than 11 million people – and these numbers keep on growing.

Join in, become a member of a co-operative.

Co-operatives **share** their profits

Co-operatives want to trade successfully – they are businesses, not charities, after all. Members, such as farmers or freelancers, tenants or taxi drivers, can often do better by working together. And sharing the profit is a way to keep it fair and make it worthwhile. Rather than rewarding outside investors, **a co-operative shares its profits amongst the members.**

Use your membership benefits.

Co-operatives are a **success** around the world

This mix of **self-help and mutual aid** has made co-operatives an international force for good. 100 million people around the world are employed by co-operatives, whilst 800 million are members.

In Kenya smallholders can trade their coffee for a fair price only because they are members of co-operatives. In France nine out of ten farmers maintain their livelihood by being part of a co-operative. In Spain the fans of Barcelona have a say in their football club because it's owned by them.

Buy fair trade, most comes from co-operatives.

A co-operative health check

Co-operatives are a flexible model of business. They can be set up in different ways, using different legal models, depending on what works for the members. This health check, based on principles signed up to by co-operatives worldwide, is about what is common to all co-operatives.

CHECKLIST

✓ **Open membership**

Membership is the lifeblood, but whether the members are staff, consumers, businesses or other organisations, coming together is their choice. Anyone who is eligible to be a member should be able to become one.

✓ **Equal say**

All members get an equal say. For example if you are electing a Board, it is one member, one vote rather than votes being down to how much money you have put in.

✓ **Good for learning**

Co-operatives have a long tradition of training and education for members.

✓ **Independence**

Co-operatives shouldn't be beholden to anybody, whether government or another business.

✓ **Collaboration**

Where possible, co-operatives collaborate with each other and have a commitment to their community.

Be co-operative!

If this brief guide to co-operatives has whetted your appetite, there are plenty of resources to help you find out more and get involved.

Stay in touch with co-operative action at
www.cooperatives-uk.coop

Find out about membership for co-operatives from
www.cooperatives-uk.coop/join

Get help and register a new co-operative through
www.cooperatives-uk.coop/legal

Get co-operative business advice and support from:

- Co-operative Enterprise Hub
www.co-operative.coop/enterprisehub
- Wales Co-operative Centre
www.walescoop.com
- Co-operative Development Scotland
www.cdscotland.co.uk
- Your local co-operative development specialist
www.cooperatives-uk.coop/cdbs



CO-OPERATIVES UK

Co-operatives UK works to promote, develop and unite co-operative enterprises. It has a unique role as a trade association for co-operatives and its campaigns for co-operation, such as Co-operatives Fortnight, bring together all those with a passion and interest in co-operative action.

Any organisation supportive of co-operation and mutuality can join and there are many opportunities online for individuals to connect to the latest co-operative news, innovations and campaigns. All members benefit from specialist services and the chance to network with other co-operatives, whilst for new co-operatives, Co-operatives UK provides low cost registration, free membership and free advice on legal structures and governance.

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