



## How to set up a CropDrop operation in another area

Here are some steps we would recommend if you wanted to start some CropDrop action in your location.

### **1. Where are the potential produce growers to join the project?**

Find all the allotment and growing sites in your town, local authority or ward area:

- A. Allotments on publicly-owned or parish land would be listed under the local authority and/or town council website or via parish council websites of villages.
- B. There may be some allotments on privately owned ground. You may only track these down by word of mouth, asking around or possibly by some exploring of the local geography using Google Maps.
- C. If there is a large landowner in your Local Authority, you can ask them if there are any allotments on it, eg the Duchy of Cornwall.
- D. There may be growing groups eg "Your Town in Bloom".

### **2. How to contact the produce growers to invite them to participate in this community initiative?**

Each site may have an Allotment association or an allotment committee, with linked social media pages eg a private Facebook group

Find if they have a co-ordinating contact point eg town/parish clerk or committee chair

Private allotment sites could be listed/registered under national allotment associations but may have no coordinating body or person. Contact with these growers may only be achieved by a sign on the gate inviting them to contact you or a direct visit - with permission of the owner.

A growing group will have a secretary.

The most effective way to engage a growing group is to meet face to face.

Finding a member of a site who is keen to 'lead' and take the first steps to make it happen, such as considering a storage place to collect the donated produce, talking to other growers, contacting the site rep and also, quite simply and importantly, being the responsible contact/co-ordinator. Having that key person is a formidable 'tipping' pressure.



We found groups who initially hesitated have decided to join, when they heard of a local/nearby project in need of the produce.

### **3. Who would benefit from the produce?**

During the pandemic many projects boosted or changed their provision to provide food parcels to those in the community who needed food.

A. Foodbanks

Does your town/city have a Foodbank? Which type is it - one that is part of the Trussell Trust\* or an independent Food bank? It could have more than one.

Where are the distribution/collection points? There could be more than one

\* If it is a Trussell Trust foodbank, it may not be able to take fresh produce.

B. Church/faith groups - have provided a range of different food services during the pandemic

C. Schools - some schools arranged for enhanced food parcels to go to families with FSM, some continued this service thro the school holidays and may still be providing as schools return

D. Groups set up in response to the pandemic

Ask the community contacts and town council for contacts

E. Other charitable groups eg elderly, domestic abuse, drug abuse, homeless charities

F. Food Clubs, Food Pantries, Community Larders, Community Supermarkets, Community Cafes, Community Fridge

These are starting to appear around the UK, either launched by a national charity eg Family Action, or as part of a Local Authority backed initiative responding to Food Poverty or the Food agenda.

### **4. Who has an overview of affordable food provision in your local authority area?**

A. Contact the Public Health team to ask who is responsible for Food Health and see what they already know about initiatives like Feeding Britain, Sustainable Cities.

B. Find out where is the nearest Transition organisation to your area

Eg Transition Bath. <https://transitionnetwork.org/>

This charity arranges environmentally-informed initiatives such as energy purchasing groups and, in the case of CropDrop, wholesome food growing initiatives.

## 5. Who/what else do you need?

A. A team with rough responsibilities and attributes, accepted by the members.

For example our team has:

- Deborah - local knowledge, co-ordinating,
- Fiona - media, networking & connections, enthusiasm
- Joe - tech, spec and brains
- Lyn - contacts to allotments, vision and Transition movement background
- Milly - knowledge of food insecurity landscape, council governance to help bring/inform these projects
- Sam - coordinating, organising, records, structure, overview

We have leaned towards what we are good at, seen that in each other and pushed on our own strengths without stepping on others. When team members recognise the need for a range of strengths and have a shared goal to combine them - it has a significant positive effect on the team working & co-ordination.

The speed with which we have achieved the project operation has been helped by half the core team already knowing each other

B. Information required from growers:

- from where can produce be collected?
- when can fresh harvested produce be stored and collected ?

C. Information required from projects who distribute food:

- does the project have capacity to collect produce?
- if not, on which days and at what time can produce be delivered?

D. A map of the area you are covering

Connect each growing site with one of the most local food providing projects, depending on the information researched in b) and c) - eg an allotment that harvests at the weekend is better suited to a project that shares food on a Monday, rather than a Friday.

Decide if additional volunteer support is required to transport the produce.



- E. You may consider having an appeal for volunteer drivers to transport donated produce from the growing locations to the projects. Then allocate drivers in the locality and possibly arrange a rota.
- F. The allotment growers may need a box to store harvested crops before collection - protected from the weather and hungry, foraging animals.
- G. You may share with allotment growers how to handle the question: - what if another allotmenteer wants to swap or take some produce in the collection box intended for the charitable project?

## **6. Social media coverage and publicity across radio and local press**

Creating a local presence and connecting with local initiatives and groups supporting any aspect of the 'green' agenda via social media produces untold benefits and connections in terms of volunteers, support at the allotment sites, resources, unexpected help for unanticipated challenges and more

## **7. What is the wider agenda for schools and food education?**

Look at Rosie Havers' free YouTube channel - Vidigrow:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5dazzAr69bl3soWeee1Psg>

Rosie designed and produced these 15min video programmes for teachers who are unfamiliar with growing. A new video is released each month and takes you through a cycle of planting, growing, harvesting, seed collecting etc.

She has also suggested holding a food sharing table as an after school club, with kids pricing donated veg for raising funds for the PTA or the school's chosen charity.

The pupils could do some weighing too.

Schools could also take some of the produce to explore or cook a meal or use in an art project.

We are planning to explore these aspects.



## 8. What are the key lessons we learned from 2021?

- A. **Lockdown Impact:** The extended lockdown from January to June reduced the various stakeholders' energy and capacity.
- B. **Allotment Engagements:** Allotmentees are reluctant to commit to growing extra produce in the Spring. They often expect to join a network quickly when surplus crops are being harvested.
- C. **Co-ordinator workload:** Closures of affordable food projects (temporary or permanent) caused significant additional co-ordination effort.
- D. **Insurance:** A risk assessment policy only partially mitigates the requirement for Public Liability (PL) insurance. PL Insurance is required for advertising with volunteer recruitment organisations.
- E. **Allotment access:** Allotments have different policies and solutions for access to collect surplus produce.
- F. **Allotment co-ordinators:** This role has a significant impact on the success of the quantity and operation of CropDrops from their allotment site.
- G. **Volunteer drivers:** Deployment on a more targeted basis was shown to achieve more with fewer drivers.
- H. **Technology support:** Use of Google Forms for volunteer drop reporting and Airtable for data storage and management reporting had a positive impact on co-ordination time.