

Our Impact 2018



Foundation

Contents

Introduction	4
Vision, mission and goals	5
Belong - young people beating loneliness	6
Our highlights	12
Strengthening communities	14
Values in action	18
Our funding	21
The year ahead	23



Read how our work is making a difference to young people and communities

In 2018, we funded projects in every UK nation and region. All our grants, from the largest (£210,000 to Young Scot) to our smallest (£500 to the Youth Trust on the Isle of Man) are searchable at threesixtygiving.org

Northern Ireland -

young people breaking down the stigma of loneliness, p.10

Newcastle - Beth's story of finding friendship, p.8

Liverpool - Co-op colleague Kayleigh uses her HR skills to train community leaders, p.15

Manchester - making robots inspires students to learn coding, p.17

Bristol - how social action built Evie's confidence, p.9

Milton Keynes - turning a derelict school into a vibrant community space, p.15

Introduction

2018 was a record-breaking year for the Co-op Foundation. Through support from Co-op colleagues, members and major new funding partnerships, we trebled our income, making a bigger impact than ever before in communities across the UK.



Belong, our programme tackling youth loneliness, grew its reach and influence. As loneliness became a national policy focus, we partnered with Government to create the Building Connections Fund Youth strand. Together with our other Belong funding, this brought our total support for youth loneliness projects to date to £6.2 million.

As a result, we've increased our impact target by 50%. By 2021, Belong will deliver measurable outcomes that connect and empower 7,500 young people. We'll also engage 25,000 young people in a national conversation to reduce stigma. Our progress this year has confirmed our position as the UK's leading charity tackling youth loneliness.

We also launched major new areas of work. Our interest-free loans are helping community spaces become more financially resilient. Through our support for the Charity Digital Code and a new partnership with Luminate, we're championing the uses of technology for social good.

All these activities are guided by our belief in co-operation, which is embedded in our new Values in Action framework.

I'd like to thank all our partners and supporters who made this work possible. This includes 63,000 Co-op Members who chose Belong as their Local Cause, and colleagues who volunteered and raised funds for our work. Special thanks and congratulations to Allan Leighton, whose long-standing commitment to the Foundation was recognised with a Better Society Award.

Building on our achievements so far, we look forward to collaborating even more closely with the Co-op in 2019 to develop some exciting new plans for the coming years. As the Co-op's charity, we'll combine our strengths with those of the business to help resources go further, making a bigger difference on the things that matter to our communities.

Jamie Ward-Smith
Co-op Foundation Chair of Trustees



A word from the Co-op

We're proud to support our own charity, the Co-op Foundation, working together with our colleagues and members to put our values into action, empowering young people and strengthening co-operation in communities across the UK.

Steve Murrells
Co-op Chief Executive



Vision, mission and goals

We are the Co-op's charity. Our vision is of strong communities, where people work co-operatively to make things better.

Our mission

The Co-op Foundation helps disadvantaged communities to overcome their challenges by putting co-operative values into practice.

We aim to stimulate and strengthen community action that connects and empowers people so they can work together to make things better.

Our goals

Two years into our 2017-19 strategy, we're making progress towards each of our three goals.

Belong - young people beating loneliness

We're championing young people's ability to contribute positively to their communities and helping to strengthen their sense of belonging.

Strengthening communities

We're investing in disadvantaged communities' capacity to overcome their social, economic or environmental challenges.

Values in action

We're building our reputation as a trusted charity with a co-operative difference, uniting with others to make a sustainable impact in communities

We launched Belong in 2017, in response to research that found that young people feel lonely more often than any other age group.

Since then, we've built a UK-wide network of projects working to understand youth loneliness in depth and develop ways to tackle it.

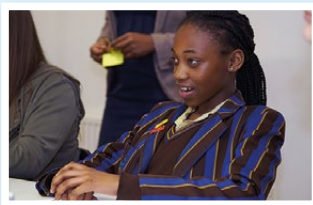
In 2018, we continued to grow the Belong network through our three-year, £2 million match funding partnership with the #iwill Fund. This is creating opportunities for young people to tackle loneliness - for themselves and others - through co-operative social action projects. **Read how Evie was empowered through Off The Record (Bristol)'s #iwill project on page 8.**

Another funding boost over the past year came from more than 63,000 Co-op Members who chose Belong as their Local Cause, giving 1% every time they buy Co-op products. This raised £238,000 to tackle youth loneliness, as Belong became a central part of the legacy from the Co-op's wider loneliness campaign.

This was also the year that youth loneliness came into the national policy spotlight. As part of the Jo Cox Commission, Co-op had called for Government action to tackle loneliness across all age groups. With the Prime Minister committing to deliver these

recommendations, the Co-op Foundation took on a key role in making sure young people's experiences, and our learning from Belong, were reflected in the Government's plans.

In June, we partnered with Government to match fund and deliver a dedicated £2 million youth strand of the Building Connections Fund. With this, we're funding 22 new projects for young people at most risk of loneliness, and developing tools and resources that will help hundreds more youth organisations tackle this issue more confidently.



As demand for our funding exceeded all expectations, in November the Government awarded us a further £1.4 million to extend the Building Connections Fund Youth strand. We're using this to support another 144 projects that will tackle youth loneliness by involving young people in designing improvements to local services and spaces.

Mirroring our match funding investments in England, we also trebled our funding for youth loneliness projects in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with grants totalling £440,000 over the next two years.

With the support of Co-op Members and our match funding partners, to date we've awarded grants of **£6.2 million** to help strengthen young people's sense of belonging.

Our impact so far

Connecting

1,030 young people have more trusting relationships

1,178 feel valued by their community

Empowering

1,343 young people have improved confidence

1,366 have gained skills

Taking part

2,631 young people engaged in 29 Belong projects UK-wide



Based on analysis of outcomes reported by Belong projects that had been running for at least six months by January 2019.

We now expect to far exceed our original target for Belong

By 2021, we will:

Connect and empower 7,500 young people to combat loneliness

- a 50% increase on our original target.



Strengthen local youth services that provide vital support and opportunities.



Engage at least 25,000 young people in a national conversation

that breaks down the stigma of youth loneliness.



Connecting Beth to friendship and community

Growing up, Beth thought it was normal not to have friends. After her parents divorced, she was a young carer for her mum, which meant she rarely attended school or had the time or confidence to meet new people.

"I thought I would be happier without friends," she says. "That way, I wouldn't get hurt."

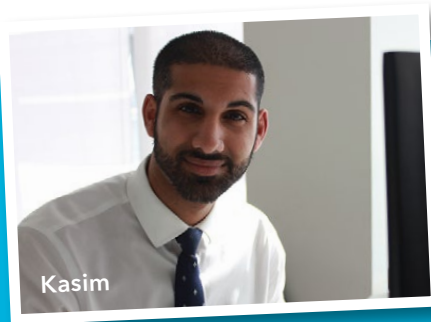
Then Beth joined the 'Fast Friends' project at Youth Focus: North East, funded through Belong. She said:

"I was nervous at first but we just had a laugh and did fun things like art. I can see now how closed off I used to be, but I'm a lot more confident since attending. This place makes me feel at home."

"I've also made a good friend who comes with me and I'm now thinking of volunteering as a youth worker, myself. I know what it's like to need help and not get it."



Beth (above right) at an Alternative Prom night, organised to bring lonely young people together at events they may otherwise miss



Building confidence through volunteering

In 2018, 35 Co-op colleagues took part in our e-mentoring programme. Working in partnership with the charity Volunteering Matters and four Co-op Academy schools, we match young people with volunteers who can help to build their confidence and offer guidance on achieving their goals.

"Volunteering made me take a step back from my own busy life and realise that I can help people. It's been a very rewarding experience."

Kasim from Co-op's Internal Audit team volunteered as an e-mentor. He supported a Year-11 student from Co-op Academy Failsworth and provided advice on revising for exams and balancing school work with his outside interests in sport. With Kasim's support, his mentee was able to pass his GCSEs and successfully applied to the college of his choice.

Empowering Evie with confidence and skills

Evie experienced mental health difficulties and anxiety growing up, which meant missing school and exams. Things started to change for the better after joining our Belong partner, Off The Record (Bristol).

Evie said: **"I've felt such a big difference since I joined Off The Record. They understand me. Leaving the house might seem a small thing to do but getting out and about is life changing when you've never had the confidence to do it."**

Through their involvement with Off The Record, Evie has met other young people from the LGBTQ+ community and helped them turn negative experiences into a positive challenge, by taking part in campaigns and volunteering to help the charity reach even more young people.

"I feel like I'm accepted here by everyone. For the first time, I can just speak and be 'me'"



"It's so empowering to know that I'm now doing something to change things. I want to make sure other young people don't go through what I went through."

As well as volunteering at Off The Record, Evie is freelancing as an illustrator and specialising in designing zines.

Off The Record's work tackling loneliness with LGBTQ+ young people and those facing mental health difficulties was supported with a grant of £70,000 over two years from our #iwill Fund.



Tackling youth loneliness together

Tackling stigma



Loneliness can be difficult to talk about. We've heard from our Belong partners about their challenges in overcoming the stigma that many young people feel about it.

In April 2018 we published 'All Our Emotions Are Important', research looking at how to break the silence about youth loneliness. We found that 65% of young people see loneliness as a problem for people their age, but less than one in five feel that youth loneliness is taken seriously as a social issue. As a result, many young people lack the confidence to talk about feeling lonely, through fear of how others will react.



Talking openly about loneliness

Isolated young people in Northern Ireland are tackling the stigma of loneliness through social action. Supported by our Belong partner Youth Action Northern Ireland, groups of young people came together at an autumn showcase event in 2018 to put on drama performances, learn how digital can build connections and talk more openly about feeling lonely. Young leaders facilitated the day's events, boosting their own skills, and helping others come together to make new friends.

However, we also learned that young people would rather confide in their peers than anyone else, and that while they might not admit to needing help themselves, they are much more open to reaching out to help others.

Through our Belong projects, we set out to break down the 'invisible wall' that stops young people from talking about loneliness, and unlock the potential for mutual peer support.

Strengthening local youth services



In 2018 we funded 'A Place to Belong', research by UK Youth which explored youth workers' perspectives on loneliness and what could help them do more to tackle it.

Most youth workers who took part in the research (82%) agreed that loneliness is an issue for the young people they work with. They identified many ways that their organisations already address this, such as providing safe spaces, positive relationships and support for young people to learn how to respond to difficulties.

However, they also reported significant challenges, and 87% said they would value more support with addressing youth loneliness. Based on their findings, UK Youth made a number of recommendations for how this support could be provided.

Through our partnership with Government, and building on our current support for our Belong network, we are now working to deliver many of UK Youth's recommendations. This includes creating new training materials for youth workers and developing a longer-term structure for collaboration and shared learning.



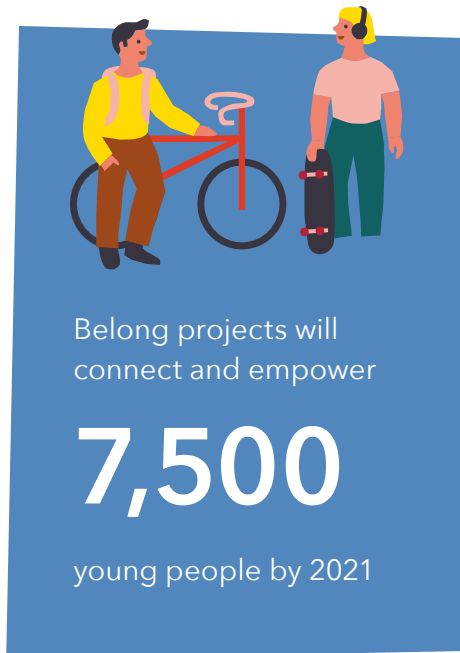
Sharing learning across Belong

"The work we do around youth loneliness is challenging and can be overwhelming at times. I find the Belong network is a way of getting support from other partners, sharing ideas and becoming inspired."

– Steve Watson, Youth Focus: North East

In 2018, we brought our Belong partners together with policy-makers and research experts at two national events, to share experiences and ideas about tackling youth loneliness.

Our highlights



Strengthening communities

We're investing in local spaces that bring people together, helping community organisations grow their incomes so they can improve and sustain these spaces longer-term. We're also helping charities and social enterprises use technology to serve their communities in new ways.



Credit: Warwick Sweeney

Community spaces

In 2018, we launched a new offer of interest-free loans and grants for enterprising ideas to support community spaces.

Venues such as parks and community centres, where people come together to enjoy shared interests, are key to strengthening communities and building connections. Groups that run these spaces need regular income so they can continue to meet local needs.

Our loans help local groups to develop trading activities that benefit the whole community. We also offer extra help where needed, through grants for work that benefits more disadvantaged groups.

In 2018 we awarded **£839,000** in grants and loans to 11 community spaces across the UK.

Strengthening community action at the Old School

We invested £80,000 (a £50,000 interest-free loan and a £30,000 grant) into the renovation of the grade-two listed Old School building in Old Wolverton, near Milton Keynes. The building had fallen into disrepair, but Future Wolverton, a local community co-operative, believed it could once again be a focal point for the area.

"Re-opening the community hall was crucial for local people who had been without a community facility for more than 10 years," said Marie, Future Wolverton Chief Executive.

Our funding is helping to create a new community space for local groups and build a new three-bedroomed guesthouse. Income from the guesthouse will help maintain the venue, and a community cafe will provide work experience for pupils from a local Special Educational Needs school.

"Funding from Co-op Foundation will enable Future Wolverton to generate income which will help support the overall sustainability of the organisation," says Marie.



Sharing skills

As the Co-op's charity, we aim to make the most of our colleagues' skills by pairing them with community groups that can benefit from their expertise.

Kayleigh Nayland has been a Co-op colleague for 13 years. She currently works as a Leadership Facilitator in the HR team.

She volunteered with four HR colleagues to provide training at the Bridge Community Centre, near Liverpool, through our Skills Share programme. This helped staff at the community centre build their management skills. Volunteers also gained the chance to improve their own skills.

Kayleigh said: **"Volunteering at The Bridge gave me the opportunity to support non-Co-op colleagues with the skills and content I use in my day-to-day work. But it's also about helping yourself to develop. Volunteering helped grow my confidence, build closer relationships with colleagues and learn new ways to work with others so I can be more effective in my role."**

Harnessing technology

A lack of digital confidence and skills can reduce charities' ability to connect with those who need their services, or to raise funds to secure their own futures.

To help address this, we co-funded the development of a new Charity Digital Code of Practice, through a grant to the Small Charities Coalition.

We worked with a steering group of digital and charity sector leaders to publish a set of principles and guidance, informed by consultation with 180 charities of all sizes, that will help them to grow their impact through technology.



"The Charity Digital Code of Practice will help small charities, in particular, to take their use of digital to the next level. The momentum for digital change is growing across the sector and we want the Code to help deliver this."

- Zoe Amar, Chair of the Charity Digital Code Steering Group

In Manchester, we launched a major partnership with The Federation - the Co-op's hub for ethical digital innovation. With funding from Luminate, we are providing free co-working space and support to social enterprise start-ups that are using technology to benefit communities. We're also exploring, through a series of events, how the digital revolution can be harnessed for good - and how we can overcome its ethical challenges.

In 2018, we welcomed 14 organisations into this collaborative community, and held 61 events, from talks by leading international academics to coding workshops for local school children.



Hive Learning Network - developing digital skills

Hive Learning Network is a social enterprise we are supporting through our partnership with The Federation. It runs 'digital making' activities for 13- to 18-year-olds, to ignite their interest in technology and help them think about opportunities to work in the digital sector.

We supported Hive to run a week-long Code Camp in August 2018. Young people were helped by volunteers to build their own drones and robot cars. Following the success of this event, Hive have been able to secure larger grants to expand their work. This includes forming a partnership with two of the other social enterprises supported by our programme, Innovate Her and Digital Advantage. Together, they will deliver digital skills activities in up to 200 schools across Greater Manchester.

Damian, the founder of Hive Learning Network, said the connections and support they have received through our partnership with The Federation, supported by Luminate, has been invaluable.

"The Federation is the right place for Hive. We're a not-for-profit whose mission is to help society through education. The Federation shares those principles and is a community of people who can support us."



Foundation



A partnership supported by Luminate

Values in action

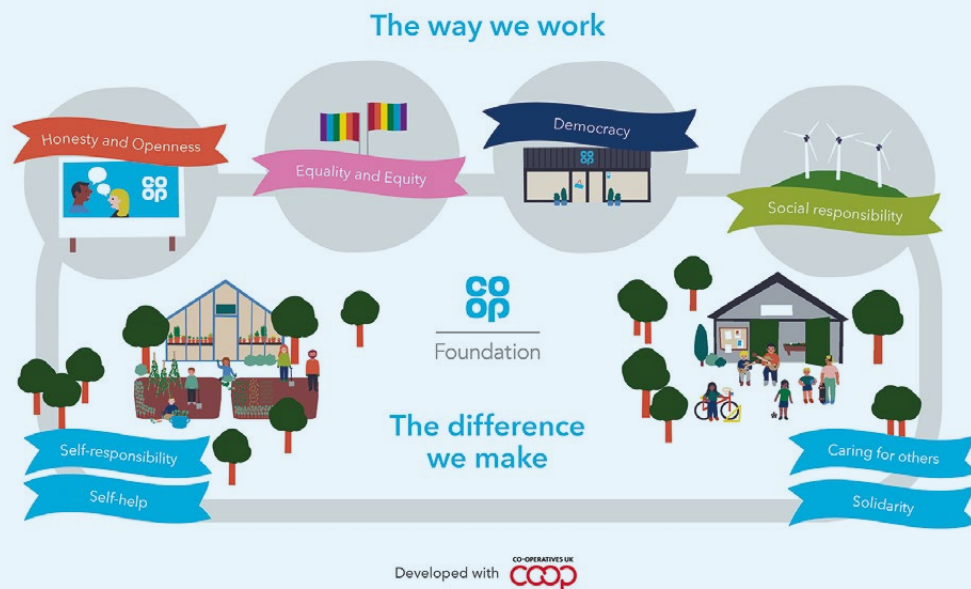
Our values guide the way we work and the difference we make.

With the support of Co-operatives UK, in 2018 we developed our Values in Action framework, and published a set of commitments for how we will put this into practice.

This work helped us to define more clearly the difference we want to make through our projects:

- **Connecting people to increase solidarity and caring for others**
- **Empowering people through increased self-help and self-responsibility.**

We also set out how the way we work is shaped by the values of equality and equity, social responsibility, democracy and honesty and openness.



Equality and equity

We're committed to:

- Sharing our resources fairly to support communities in all parts of the UK
- Giving extra help to communities that are facing the biggest challenges
- Making sure everyone, whatever their background, can access opportunities and have their voices heard.

In 2018 we carried out our first diversity survey across all our Belong partners. From this, we learned more about the barriers faced by some groups to accessing services, and used this insight to inform our assessment of new projects.

We also reviewed the geographical distribution of our resources, and adjusted our criteria to reach a broader range of communities, while continuing to give priority to the most deprived 30% of areas. Using the Co-op's new Community Wellbeing Index further enriched our understanding of local strengths and challenges.

Social responsibility

We're committed to:

- Putting ethics and values at the heart of our decisions – from how we raise our funds to how we spend them
- Making the most of our resources, and encouraging others to contribute what they can towards shared goals
- Balancing risks and opportunities to maximise our impact.

In 2018, we took our commitment to responsible investing one step further. As well as continuing to invest our endowment in a fund that prioritises positive social and environmental impact, we made our first investments into projects that will directly further our charitable mission, while also making a financial return.

We bought £50,000 of community shares in Ballymacash Sports Academy, the first community-run sports centre in Northern Ireland. Investing alongside 300 local individuals and businesses, we're helping to build a facility that will benefit the area both socially and economically. In the long-run, our investment will 'recycle' back to support more community projects in the future.



Democracy

We're committed to:

- Listening to the communities we serve, and helping them have a stronger say over what matters to them
- Widening participation in community action, so that it is representative of the whole community
- Involving all our stakeholders so they can contribute to shaping our work on an equal basis.

Young people have a say in all aspects of our Belong programme.

Claire, 14, a pupil at Co-op Academy Swinton, was part of the panel that helped us decide which projects to fund through the Building Connections Fund Youth strand. She said:

"It's important that a young person like me can have a say in decisions that affect others my age. I recommended projects that I thought would really help people 'belong'."



Claire

We're grateful, too, for the community insights provided by volunteers from the Co-op's National Members' Council who supported our work in 2018. David helped to judge the social action campaigns developed by young people in Birmingham, working with our Belong partner Envision.

"I met some lovely young people, representing the wonderful diversity that is Birmingham, who understand what the co-operative values are of saying 'let's work together, let's sort things out, let's work as a community'."

- David Hallam



Honesty and openness

We're committed to:

- Telling stories from our work that champion the co-operative difference
- Sharing our plans, celebrating success and being open about where we think we can do better
- Clearly and simply explaining what we do and why.

In 2018 we published details of all our grants on www.threesixtygiving.org - an open data platform which enables more transparency and better decision-making in charitable giving.

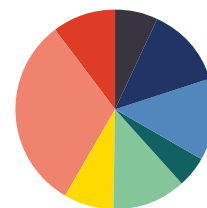
Our funding

In this record-breaking year for the Co-op Foundation, we almost trebled our income, from £1.7 million in 2017 to just under £5.1 million. This was thanks to new and increased sources of support from within the Co-op and beyond.

As well as receiving funds from Co-op Members who chose Belong as their Local Cause, we benefited from a wide range of fundraising activities by Co-op colleagues. The Co-op also renewed its textile recycling partnership, which turns donations of unwanted clothing into funds for our work and the Salvation Army. In Wales, the Co-op donated funds from carrier bag sales, which we'll use to launch a new programme in 2019 supporting green spaces.

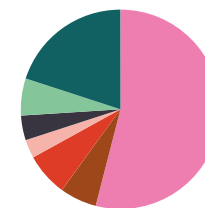
We helped these donations go further by uniting with other funders. Building on our existing match funding partnership with the #iwill Fund, major new grants from DCMS and Luminate allowed us to scale up our work tackling youth loneliness and developing digital skills.

Finances 2018



How we raised £5.1 million

- Investments 7%
- Welsh carrier bags 13%
- Textile donations 13%
- Co-op Local Community Fund 5%
- Other donations 12%
- National Lottery Community Fund #iwill grant 8%
- DCMS grant 31%
- Luminate grant 10%



How we used it...

- Belong 54%
- Community spaces (grants and direct costs) 6%
- Community spaces (repayable investments) 7%
- Digital skills 3%
- Volunteering projects 4%
- Support costs 6%
- Ring fenced for future projects 20%

These figures are unaudited and may therefore be subject to adjustments. Our full audited accounts for 2018 will be available on the Charity Commission website when finalised.

Fundraising

From sponsored walks to Christmas parties, teams across the Co-op were full of ideas to bring colleagues together and raise funds for our work. A big thank you to everyone who took part in events to help us tackle youth loneliness and strengthen communities.

The 2018 Co-op Property Charity and Awards Evening raised an incredible £95,000 for the Co-op Foundation. This is an annual event run by the Co-op Property team to raise money for good causes chosen by colleagues. In 2018 it was hosted by football legend, John Barnes.



Forty Co-op colleagues helped raise more than £2,000 by taking part in a sponsored 12-hour fast for Ramadan. The fundraising idea started as a conversation between two colleagues and soon snowballed to such an extent that they beat their fundraising target eight-fold! We really appreciate your support.

Contact us to find out how you can get involved.

✉ foundation@coop.co.uk

How can you help?



1. Co-op Members can choose Belong as their Local Cause until the end of October 2019. 1% of everything you spend on Co-op products and services will go towards our youth loneliness projects. Visit: bit.ly/cause-belong



2. Raise funds by donating unwanted clothes and shoes to official textile banks at your local Co-op.



3. Set up your own fundraising event, or support us with a one-off or regular donation at bit.ly/donate-coopf

The year ahead

In this final year of our 2017-19 strategy, we will work to create a lasting legacy from Belong, scale up our investment in community spaces, and collaborate closely with the Co-op to develop new community programmes that put our values into action.

Belong

2019 priorities:

- Support all our Belong partners to maximise their learning and share the impact of their work
- Develop new resources for youth workers to build their confidence and capabilities to tackle loneliness
- Develop a campaign to reduce the stigma of youth loneliness, co-designed with young people.

Strengthening communities

2019 priorities:

- Grow our support for enterprising community spaces, making at least 20 new interest-free loans
- Provide extra help to develop plans for improving and maintaining local green spaces
- Help more charities and social enterprises use technology to grow their impact.

Values in action

2019 priorities:

- Develop our strategy for 2020 onwards, collaborating with the Co-op and other partners to create new programmes that build on our achievements so far
- Refocus our volunteering activities, integrating these with our main programmes to maximise their impact
- Apply our values framework to all our policies, making sure they reflect our Co-op difference.

Find out what we're up to first by
subscribing to our blog and following
us on Facebook and Twitter.

Sign up

www.coopfoundation.org.uk

Like us



[Co-op Foundation](#)

Follow us



[Coop_Foundation](#)



Foundation

Co-op Foundation is a working name of Co-operative Community Investment Foundation,
a charity registered in England and Wales (1093028) and Scotland (SC048102).

Registered office: 1 Angel Square, Manchester M60 0AG