

# UNICORN

manchester's co-operative grocery

## Induction Pack





## Welcome to Unicorn!

You are joining a progressive and radical business that is committed to sustainable trading and democratic worker control. As well as being exciting and inspiring; whatever background you've come from your first few weeks & months at Unicorn will be challenging. They will involve large numbers of people, lots of information, a huge variety of tasks (many quite physically demanding), and probably a very new and different way of working. This pack is designed to help ease you in and hopefully help make this period as straightforward and useful as possible, both for you and for us. It is designed to be used alongside the training sessions you'll receive, and deals with a variety of issues including practical information about your employment here, background information on our commercial model, and a summary of our co-operative structure. The last part of the pack contains the training schedule and various forms that you'll use during your probation. This information should meet the needs of you, the probationers, so any feedback on this pack towards the end of your probationary period will be greatly appreciated – please give to the training team.

Induction training can be a steep learning curve. All co-op members are here to help you; but also ultimately to assess whether you demonstrate the skills and energy to become a director of Unicorn. As our continual successes or failures rely on co-operation and interdependency we take membership very seriously. We'll work together to train you to membership standard. However we do not give any assurances that membership is automatic, or that employment until after satisfactory reviews is secure. Whilst we look towards and anticipate probationary staff becoming members, we cannot offer any guarantees without demonstration of your continuing energy, commitment & drive.

Being a member at Unicorn brings huge rewards. Shared ownership, equal participation and pay, and working together towards common goals are things that make our working lives very different from the norm, and there is a lot of fun to be had here too. We hope you enjoy the challenges and variety you will experience during your probationary period and beyond, and come to feel as proud of Unicorn as we do. The membership of our co-op is what makes our business what it is. Welcome aboard!



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## Payroll details

We pay ourselves weekly in arrears, the wage being transferred electronically (BAC's payment) on or around each Wednesday to your account. Your first week's wage will not enter your account until the middle of the following week. It is your responsibility to provide us with accurate information – so that we can pay you promptly. You will be asked to fill out a form like the one below and return it to a member of the Payroll Team.

Until you can provide payroll with your P45 form, please print and complete the Starter Checklist which can be downloaded from HMRC's website at [www.hmrc.gov.uk/forms/p46exemptonline.pdf](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/forms/p46exemptonline.pdf). Once you receive your P45 please also pass this to Payroll.

Finally, please also bring in your passport so a photocopy can be sent to HMRC (original only, please don't bring a photocopy). If you have any queries, please seek advice from the Personnel Team.

Start date .....

Name in full:.....

Date of Birth:.....

Account Number:.....

Sort Code:.....

Bank:.....

Branch Address:.....

.....

.....

For our personnel records please confirm:

Residential Address\* .....

.....

.....

Telephone / mobile No\*:.....

Personal email address.....

\* It is vital that you let us know if these details change at any time during your employment

# Annual leave booking

The holiday allowance for Probationers and Members is 5.6 weeks per year (based on the number of hours you are rota'd to work per week).

You can use the [Holiday planner](#) via Google Drive from your email or in the Z:\General Personnel\holidays\hol planner to see what days are already booked up with leave. Different types of leave are highlighted using different colours, with the key at the top. Holiday Planner (in the General Personnel file on the shared network

You will be emailed a link to book holidays ([Leave Request Form](#)) through your Unicorn Email. A confirmation email will be issued by a member of Personnel.

## Unpaid leave policy

Unpaid leave is only available once within a Member's holiday year (i.e. Jan to Dec or July to June) and can be either short or long term unpaid leave. Requests should be submitted to the Personnel Team. No requests for unpaid leave will be accepted for July, August or over the Christmas / New Year period. Requests for short unpaid leave (totalling no more than the Member's weekly contracted hours) should be submitted at least two weeks in advance and will be authorised by the personnel team. Requests for longer periods of unpaid leave will need to be submitted at least three weeks in advance as they must be authorised by the Forum. Requests for paid leave received around the same time will be given priority.

Unpaid leave is not available for Probationers unless due to special circumstances. Any extended unpaid leave or sick leave during the probationary period will be added to the length of this period



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: How is the shop organised, day-to-day?**

The Operational Planning Team (Ops) are in charge of the rota, which spells out where everyone is scheduled at any given point in the day. The rota can change regularly as staff and requirements, of different sections of the shop, change. It is printed out in the corridor (Ginnel) between shop and storeroom, as well as being on the computer system. For your first two months as a probationer you will have your own rota emailed and put in your tray each week, until you are added to the regular rota. Each day, any rota alterations are listed in the diary, again kept in the corridor. This is read out at 9am each day – if you start after this time please have a look at it when you first arrive for work. As the day progresses the Floorwalker ensures that all necessary tasks are fulfilled and gaps in the rota are covered.

### **Q: Why is everyone at the start-of- the day diary reading there before me?**

The diary reading at the start of the day is an important time to come together and to get a picture of what's happening. If you are rota'd to be in at 9am, then you need to be available at the beginning of the diary session. It is your responsibility to be ready and available to work for whenever you are rota'd. If you are still walking down the road, or taking your coat off – then you're late. It is your responsibility to record your lateness and report it to the floorwalker. Once the diary has been read out you need to be ready to commence with the day. If you start later than 9am, please have a look at the diary when you start your shift.

### **Q: Who's in charge?**

As a workers co-operative with a pretty flat structure, no-one is 'in charge'. You will hear much more about this in the pack and during your probationary period. We don't have a shop manager, but the closest thing to this is the Floorwalker. This is a rota'd role that rotates between different members throughout the day, and involves overseeing the smooth running of the shop hour to hour. If you are unsure where you are meant to be at any point, they are the usually person to ask. However it's important to remember they are not the boss! The Floorwalker role should become clearer after a few weeks of working here.

### **Q. What about breaks?**

Everyone gets an unpaid lunch break of 45 minutes, with an additional 15 minutes admin time (this creates an hour block for rota'ing purposes), unless you are only working a very short day e.g. 9-1. Further breaks are as follows - if you work over 3.5 hours you are entitled to one paid 10 minute break. If you work over 8.5 hours (including your lunch) you are entitled to two paid 10 minute breaks. Tea breaks can be taken in the morning or afternoon as the employee chooses (and generally inside the allotted break shifts) but should not be taken during lunch breaks and must be reported to the Floorwalker.

### **Q. How do I get in and out of the building?**

If you start work before the shop is open, come to the side gate by the garden and ring the bell, this leads to the bike storage area and the shop and offices. You will be given a key for this gate in your first few weeks. When the shop is open to the public please don't use the Fire Exit at the rear of the shop (leading to the bike storage and back gate).

**Q: When at Unicorn do I do my shopping?**

You are welcome to do your own shopping on your days off, during your breaks, or (smallish shops) after the End of Day tasks have been completed. Please don't shop at other times when you're supposed to be at work.

**Q: Is the Restroom animal free?**

Unicorn is a vegan shop and employs vegan workers. Whilst there is no explicit rule saying people can't eat meat / dairy there is a common understanding that the Restroom is animal free.

**Q: When is something free?**

For various reasons produce will occasionally be written-off. The Floorwalker is the primary person responsible for writing off stock, as well as teams such as Veg, Deli and Fresh for their own stock. All reduced or written off stock has to be recorded through the till. If it isn't recorded – then do not remove. If something has been reduced (marked with a red "R" through the bar code) you cannot receive a further discount – please point out these items to the till operator. If something has been clearly marked as 'w/off' or 'free to staff' then it is okay to take and advisable to write your name on it.

**Q: Why does a store person say I can't walk around in sandals carrying a 25kg sack?**

You'd hope this is obvious – but it doesn't always seem to be. Back pain is common, broken toes avoidable. If you come to work in inappropriate footwear/clothing you will be asked to go and change. Safety boots are required for working in most areas of the shop, please ask Marta if you need some. You will be given a training session on health and safety during your probationary period.

**Q: Mobile Phones?**

Love them/hate them – see the policy... But please refrain from using them whilst working. While it may be necessary for someone to contact you in an emergency, generally your focus when at work should be work. And as a post script, if you're sensibly leaving your phone in a locker – please turn the ringer off. If you haven't been allocated a locker – please see Dvir, so that any personal items/valuables can be stored securely.

**Q: Common gripes and how to avoid them?**

We all like to think we're amenable, friendly people – and we are! But often the trivial will wear down folks' patience. If we can all set a good example.... For example do your own washing up; take your personal property home; don't prop open or obstruct fire doors; communicate – if you're having a bad day let someone know – rather than letting people be on the receiving end.



# Benefits for Unicorn staff

## Staff discount (casual staff, members & probationary members)

All staff receive a 25% discount through the till, one of our most significant perks! Things to note: this discount does not apply to whole cases (where a discount has already been made), nor to reduced priced items. The discount for Casual staff is only available on the days on which they work. The discount applies to yourself, your partner (if you live together) and your dependent children. It is not for friends, extended family or people who used to work here.

## Bicycle Maintenance (members & probationary members)

Members and probationary members can make use of the bicycle maintenance benefit. Revolve Manchester set up outside the shop every Thursday afternoon to fix customers' bikes and also carry out staff bike repairs by arrangement, with labour paid for by Unicorn. Members/probationers simply cover the cost of parts. There is a spreadsheet on google drive which you should use to arrange repairs with Revolve and on Main Office 4 computer there is a shortcut to this spreadsheet.

## Physical Health Loan / Bike Loan / Computer Equipment Loan (members)

Three loans are available up to £1000 (total combined) to cover expenses incurred in participating in activities that have a positive effect on physical health, to cover the purchase of a bike or bicycle equipment or purchasing a computer and/or accessories. Repayments are by a direct weekly deduction from the Member's salary.

Member requests for loans must be agreed and authorised by a member of each of the Finance and Personnel Teams. To apply for a loan, a Member must complete the relevant form (available at Z:\Finance\Loans\Employee Loans or from the Finance Team) and submit it to the Finance Team with a pro-forma or fully paid invoice/receipt.

## Simply Health Scheme (members)

Simply Health is a benefit provided to Unicorn members. Upon becoming a member you qualify for free personal health cover paid by Unicorn. Prior to membership (during probationary period) you can opt to pay for yourself through your wages. More details on following pages.

## Pension Contributions (members & probationary members)

More details on following pages. All workers are automatically enrolled onto our pension scheme. You can opt out and will need to talk with Steve if you so wish.

## Wage Bonus (members)

We distribute a modest amount of the profit we make to members; the overall amount and frequency is determined using stipulated targets and based on the financial needs of the operating business. Individual dividends are calculated on the extent a member has taken part in the business.

## Personal Training Budget (members)

Any training that is necessary for your work will be paid for by Unicorn, but each member receives a small annual training budget to be spent on any form of training or learning they like. This benefit will be paid through payroll and therefore will be taxed. It can also be rolled-over to a maximum of £300. Speak to a member of the Training Team for more info on this once membership is attained.

## Sabbaticals

After 5 years and after 10 years from commencement of their Probationary period, Members can, and are encouraged to, take a consecutive 4-week block of extra paid time as a one off.

## Extra Leave

After 10 years of service, starting in the next holiday year, a Member receives an extra 0.8 weeks of annual leave per year. If unused in one year, this Extra Leave can be carried over, and accumulate to up to 4 weeks of Extra Leave. When 4 weeks have been accrued, the Extra Leave will accumulate no further, until part or all of it has been used.

(Note: see [Policy List](#) for more information)



# Simply Health Scheme

## Price based on selection above:

All benefits are per person per year, except new child benefit

### Dental

100% cash back up to your chosen annual limit

[What's covered](#)

### Optical

100% cash back up to your chosen annual limit.

[What's covered](#)

### Physiotherapy, Osteopathy, Chiropractic, Acupuncture & Homeopathy

100% cash back up to your chosen limit

[What's covered](#)

### Chiropody/Podiatry

100% cash back up to your chosen annual limit

[What's covered](#)

### New Child Benefit

12 month qualifying period

[What's covered](#)

### Consultation

Test and scans

[What's covered](#)

### Health Assessment

[What's covered](#)

### Prescription

[What's covered](#)

### Hospital Benefit

Maximum 20 days / nights per claiming year.

Pre-existing conditions are not included.

[What's covered](#)

### GP, dietitian, consultation fees, vaccinations and inoculations

### Free Helpline

[What's covered](#)

**Level 4**  
**£16.33**

£125

£125

£125

£75

£200

£450

£300

£30

£20

£75

Available  
24 / 7

This is an example of the benefits this scheme can provide and is not topical. Talk to Steve for an in depth explanation.

# Unicorn Grocery Ltd Stakeholder Pension Scheme

If you decide to join the Stakeholder Pension Scheme your employer will:

- Deduct your contributions directly from your pay, there is no need for you to set up a direct debit. The contribution amount deducted is the net amount (after deduction of tax). The Peoples Pension will claim the tax you have paid back from the Inland Revenue and pay it straight into your plan
- Pay a contribution equal to 5% of your salary into your plan.
- Allow you to make changes to the amount you contribute at least once every six months

The only charge you will pay is an Annual Management Charge. The standard charge is only 0.5%. The charge is calculated as a percentage of your fund value and is reflected in our fund unit prices.

## Pension information

### The three key principles behind The People's Pension are:

#### Helping Employers

Our online services are designed to support employers, ensuring that meeting their regulatory obligations is as simple as possible.

It helps assess the workforce and provides employers with communication templates.

It checks payroll information to ensure you have the right contributions as well as highlight any employees about to approach their staging date.

It provides management information and reporting for the entire scheme membership.

We provide UK call centres offering technical help, dedicated account managers and support material.

#### Employee Engagement

We will provide employers with a tool box of simple and engaging communication materials, providing the most effective channels for their workforce.

Helps educate workers throughout the whole enrolment journey.

Provides workers with an online account that enables them to see their own pot at any time.

#### Design Simplicity

The People's Pension is a master trust; with the interests of members at its heart, provided on a not-for-profit basis.

Three lifestyle investment profiles, including a default option, with seven additional fund options.

A transparent annual management charge of 0.5%. With no extra fees on transfers, no contribution fees, no monthly fees, no implementation fees, no upfront fees. 0.5% is 0.5% and that's it.

## Enrollment:

Every probationer will be automatically enrolled into the pension scheme. The joining pack will be sent to your email account within a month of enrolment, including information about how to track your fund online.

## Timeline: So what will the next few weeks/months have in store...

### First two weeks:

- Receive induction Pack/induction session
- Details taken for banking and payroll
- Health & Safety induction
- Packing room induction/training
- Introduction from Personnel (Personnel 1)
- Induction in office systems
- Received your 1st week's rota
- Participated in a Start of Day and End of Day routine

### Weeks three to four:

- Attend a Red Training session.
- Also by the end of the 2nd week your first wages should appear in your bank account – any problems see Payroll.
- Induction into Security systems
- Work part or all of a weekend
- Spend time with one of the floorwalkers

### Fourth week to eight:

- Received training with:

Veg. Team	Store team
Deli Counter team	Fresh team
- Policy documents induction session
- As part of a supplier visit spend a day with either a local grower – Glebelands Market Gardens or at another supplier.
- Completed Soil associating / Organic induction.
- Attended Forum (2 visits in all)
- Induction into finance systems (Finance 1 & 2)
- Completed your Supermarket visit. Only then can you start your Pricing Project.
- You should be till trained by now.

### After two months:

- Your daily rota should be incorporated into main Task Rota
- First Probationary review – feedback from Production and Shopfloor Teams.
- Start pricing project
- An initial Home Team will be allocated.

### Around the end of your fourth Month:

- Second Probationary review from all members and project feedback.
- Consider what responsibilities you can help your team with.

### At the six month sate:

- Personnel Systems 2

Towards the end of your sixth month: Final Membership Committee decision. Depending on your track record there are three outcomes –

- a) You are offered a permanent job as a member of Unicorn Grocery Workers Co-operative.
- b) We seek to extend your probation.
- c) If you do not meet standards of membership you will not be offered membership.



## Who we are

Situated in Chorlton, South Manchester, Unicorn Grocery is one of the biggest and most successful independent wholefood shops in the UK. We were named the Soil Association's '[Best Independent Retailer](#)' in 2016, adding to previous award wins from [The Observer Food Monthly](#) and [BBC Radio Four](#). Unicorn has far surpassed the scale, success and market penetration of the average wholefood shop, with a 1,250m<sup>2</sup> premises and a yearly turnover of just over £7 million, or £145,000 in a typical week. Over 6,000 transactions go through our tills each week, from a regular customer base of approximately 5,000 people.

## Background

Unicorn Grocery Ltd began trading on a 550m<sup>2</sup> site in September 1996, after over two years of preparation. The business grew out of the founders' experience at the Daily Bread Co-operatives and Roger Sawtell's *Blueprint for 50 Co-ops*. In 1980, the Northampton Daily Bread attempted to replicate the economical cash and carry approach of Community Foods in London, but soon found the most promising market in the general public, not traders. *Blueprint for 50 Co-ops* outlines this model, a neat combination of clear ethics and efficient trading. While Unicorn has grown beyond Sawtell's vision, especially in fresh food sales, the essence remains: direct buying, competitive prices, wholesome foodstuffs and strong values.

## The Unicorn model in a nutshell

- Wholefood grocery store (not a health food shop)
- Fresh, wholesome, quality produce
- Direct and bulk buying, alongside minimal handling
- Large premises (at least 400m<sup>2</sup>) with half retail, half warehouse area
- Sourcing based on clear nutritional and ethical criteria
- Broad range of products with a focus on staple cooking ingredients
- Prices (like for like) competitive with supermarkets
- Value added through on-site packing (and later, fresh-cooked food)
- Good relationships with suppliers (honest trading and prompt payment)
- Co-operative ownership with a flat management structure
- Dedicated staff, shared principles underpinning all business decisions
- Strong customer loyalty based on trust and clear, consistent ethics
- Accessible, friendly image

### Good prices in a good shop

Unicorn achieves success through unusually competitive pricing (comparable with supermarkets), and a broad, high-quality product range. This combination requires a shop of a certain scale. In addition to these basic requirements, the following points are also critical to our success.

### Strong ties to customers and suppliers

Unicorn focuses on educating customers and the wider community about food and trade issues to ensure a deeper and more loyal relationship with the shop. We work continuously to build good relationships with our suppliers and bring them closer to our customers with in-store information and events. Buying direct from suppliers and growers is a cornerstone of our business model, allowing for bulk purchases at lower prices. We deal with over 200 suppliers, including approximately 160 primary producers.

### Principles

A strong set of principles underpin our business. We have created a place where we would like to shop and we are proud to work. Unicorn is a wholefood grocery that strives to make trade sustainable for people, animals and the environment, and our remit is affordable, wholesome food with a focus on organic, Fairtrade, local and ethical production. We estimate that approximately half of our sales are organic; other criteria (local, regional, fairly-traded, etc) are more difficult to measure, but we know we offer a significant proportion of ethically produced lines. For a relatively mainstream retailer, it is a start, but there is much more work to do (see the next page for the full list of our principles).

### Customers

Unicorn customers tend to live nearby, with 56% residing within two miles; 45% travel by bike, bus or on foot. A significant number of customers also travel from outside South or Central Manchester, indicating widespread and unmet demand for our 'offer' in other parts of the Northwest. More than 10% of customers travel ten miles or more to reach us, and a few visit from much greater distances. Most of our shoppers are people who like to cook, or those with young families. While our stock is entirely vegan-friendly and we appeal particularly to people with specific dietary requirements, we aim to provide a range of goods to satisfy the bulk of any customer's weekly shop.

### Wholesome food

We focus on basic ingredients for tasty, interesting and affordable cooking, and steer clear of food containing artificial additives and refined sugar. Nearly one-fifth of our sales come from our dry goods range of grains, pulses, dried fruits, nuts and seeds packed on the premises. By keeping prices low, we aim to improve access to healthy, sustainable food for those on lower incomes. However, we still have work to do; although one-third of our customers earn a household income below £25,000, around half of the total UK population falls into this income bracket.

### Co-operative working

As a worker co-operative, the shop is owned and run by the people who work in it. Unicorn maintains a relatively flat management structure, in which all members earn the same hourly rate and make decisions by consensus. Despite the challenges of this way of working, co-operative workers report higher job satisfaction than in comparable retail jobs, as reflected in high retention and low sickness levels. Unicorn currently provides a living wage for around 68 co-operative Members and several Casual workers (see the Job section on our website for an explanation of Casual labour).

# Principles of Purpose

Unicorn seeks to operate within a set of ethical and social guidelines which we call our principles of purpose, this is set out below.

## Secure Employment

We aim to provide secure employment for our members. We seek above all to provide a livelihood for ourselves with some control over our working environment. We accept the responsibilities and rewards of this challenge.

## Equal Opportunity

We believe that all should have an equal opportunity to undertake paid work. Ignorance and prejudice should not be an obstacle to this. The ability to carry out a minimum of 20 hours useful work per week entitles a worker to apply for membership. The respect and income derived from a job are important to many people in our society which is one which values paid work highly.

## Wholesome Healthy Consumption

We aim to trade in wholesome foodstuffs and household goods of non-animal origin. We trade in foodstuffs which have undergone minimal processing, in contrast to the steady trend towards a highly processed diet in this country. Specific product guidelines include the avoidance of added sugar, salt and animal derivatives. We strive to sell products of organic standard and maximum nutritional value whenever we can find or generate a market. Provision of food educational materials help in this aim.

## Fair and Sustainable Trade

We aim to trade in a manner which supports a sustainable world environment and economy. We trade preferentially in products which follow the "Fair Trade" ethos and alert our customers to the problems cash crop agriculture. We are concerned that much of world trade is to the disadvantage of poorer nations with a consequence for people's health and lives. We operate a fund from which to support projects addressing and challenging this imbalance. 4% of our wage costs are contributed to this fund. We trade in products which in themselves and in their packaging produce minimum impact on the environment because we are concerned at the current large scale disposal of inorganic waste. Wherever possible we lobby for the use of reusable packaging (e.g. glass containers of standard size).

## Solidarity in Co-operation

We aim to support like-minded ventures, co-operatives or otherwise. We acknowledge both competition and co-operation as fundamental to human nature. We seek to encourage co-operation by operating a fund to support projects which share our vision of community and society in the United Kingdom. 1% of our wage costs are contributed to this fund. We promote co-operative structures and spirit through all our trading, social and educational activities. Solidarity requires occasional boycotting of goods, services and companies and the promotion of such boycotts.

## Produce

Unicorn is a wholefood grocery, providing and promoting affordable, wholesome food and a more sustainable form of trade. Where possible, our products are organic (all fresh fruit and vegetables, alcohol and bread, plus much more), fairly traded, local, regional or otherwise ethically produced.

Buyers constantly evaluate products for affordability and ethics; we try to trade as sustainably as possible while still reaching a price-conscious mainstream market. Our range reflects this dual purpose, from products that may not differ much from those in your corner shop, to more radical (but still affordable!) 'Fairtrade plus' lines like Zapatista coffee or Kitchen Garden spices, and everything in between. Generally, we focus on selling basic groceries at realistic prices.

## What we sell

Unicorn's Principles of Purpose include guidelines about the products on our shelves, and we draw a few clear lines in support of our aim for more wholesome, sustainable food. We do not stock products derived from animals or containing cane sugar, and we largely avoid refined grains like white bread and rice. Although we promote alternatives, we never focus on what we do not sell. Unicorn has never marketed itself as a 'vegan' or 'sugar-free' store, which would have turned away the majority of our customers before they set foot inside. Nor are we a health food shop, and we do not stock supplements or natural remedies.

### Product range

From our opening stock of 400 lines, we now stock over 3,000 different products (with some seasonal and other fluctuations) from over 200 suppliers. The shop is split into departments and types of products. Sales percentages are approximate.

- Branded 'ambient' (food that can be stored at room temperature) (24.3%)
- Branded 'non-food' lines that include household, bodycare, baby care, etc (8.6%)
- Organic fresh fruit and vegetables (27.3 %)
- Packed goods (17.9%)
- Chilled foods (9.5 %)
- Frozen foods (1.0%)
- Deli (5.1 %)
- Alcohol (2.5 %)
- Food Prep (3.8 %)

### Fruit and veg

Unicorn's entirely organic (and 'in conversion') fresh fruit and vegetable section provides one of our greatest attractions. In addition to the basics, we sell produce not normally found in supermarkets, such as purple sprouting broccoli, kohlrabi, ship-freighted exotic fruits and a very wide range of squashes and pumpkins.

We buy over 90 per cent of our UK fruit and vegetables directly from growers, much of which arrives within one or two days of harvesting. However, a full year-round range – a requirement for a good level of market share – still relies heavily on Europe and beyond. Roughly three-quarters of Unicorn's total annual fruit and vegetable sales come from abroad, although we have worked to decrease this proportion by supporting local growers and buying land ourselves.

Quality control is the hallmark of the veg team. To ensure a good-value, delicious and fresh-looking produce section, we rely on correct storage methods, rotation, tasting (especially fruit), and reducing prices to shift sub-standard produce. In addition, with a high-quality range and no need to differentiate between organic and non-organic, we can sell our fresh produce unpackaged. Customers can buy exactly what they need, save on waste and packaging, and by handling loose produce, they see, feel and smell its freshness.

### Packed dry goods

In 'own brand' packaging, we offer all the essential ingredients to make a complete meal (around 120 products, each in several sizes). We showcase not only the most wholesome basics of the culinary world, but also unique products and quantities that are not available elsewhere, from brown Jasmine rice to vanilla pods to three kilogram bags of pumpkin seeds.

We pack on site for various reasons – it provides employment for the local area, and a kind of employment in which people of all abilities can participate. It also provides a pool of labour that other areas of the shop can draw on at busy times of the day. The labour costs are of course built into the cost of each packed product, and a close eye is kept on efficiency in the packing room to make sure it remains profitable.

### Bread

Our bread range distinguishes us from the industrially-produced standard, containing no additives or preservatives, just the ingredients you would use at home. Our star bakers are the Handmade Bakery and Wye Bakery, who provide a range that draws customers in from near and far.

### Household and bodycare

We offer a sustainable alternative to mainstream non-degradable cleaning products and synthetic, animal-tested 'beauty' products. As so-called 'eco' products flood the supermarkets, our definition remains stringent. Our bodycare range avoids ingredients like synthetic perfumes, parabens, and SLES, while the household section steers clear of enzymes, phosphates and chlorine bleaches. In addition to specially developed ecological ranges, we stock cheap and effective traditional cleaning products like white vinegar and soda crystals.

### Alcohol

Our organic wines, beers and spirits are made without animal products in the clarifying process. We order directly from a wide range of micro-breweries, from basic ales and lagers through to seaweed and ginger ales, from cider and perry to specialist beers fermented by 'wild yeasts from heaven'. Unicorn's licensee carefully chooses tasty, good value wines and spirits from UK organic alcohol wholesalers.

### Deli

Our deli counter may not earn the largest proportion of sales to wages, but it has always offered pulling power with top sellers like hummus and olives, and samosas and pasties for the lunch crowd. In recent years, our deli team has started making our own innovative range of prepared foods for sale both in the deli and the chiller. Starting with soups, and with an increasing range of salads, flapjacks and other treats, on-site fresh food preparation provides the two standbys of grocery glory: USPs (unique selling points) and added value (something profitable). In addition, it is useful for promoting certain lines and making use of oversupply or 'use soon' fresh produce.

### Chilled

In addition to our top-selling hummus, our fridges boast a wide selection of tofu and tempeh, plus plenty of burgers and sausages. Chilled goods provide some of the best opportunities for innovation, and we have built on our original range with fresh juices and an ever-growing range of wholesome, prepared foods. We watch development of these luxury items carefully, and avoid stocking products that will challenge our reputation for good value.

### Freezer

Unicorn has a small freezer, which contains a limited number of frozen fruit and veg lines, plus ready-made organic pastry, burgers, and the delicious Booja Booja ice cream. A freezer also offer opportunities for frozen UK-grown fruit and vegetables to help through the annual 'hungry gap'. In considering a frozen food section, we have also kept in mind our overall commitment to encouraging meals cooked from wholesome, fresh ingredients, eating seasonal and local food, the impact of long-haul chilled transport and the value of the pound against the euro (many frozen ranges come from Europe).

## Sourcing

### Suppliers

Unicorn relies more and more on the cost savings of buying direct, and currently deals with over 160 primary producers, as well as the usual wholesalers such as Essential, Suma and Community.

### Ethical purchasing

Like all our business decisions, we choose suppliers in line with our Principles of Purpose. While we are not able to trade exclusively with companies that exactly match our own ethics, we favour ones that do and we attempt to avoid the worst offenders in global trade, e.g. by discontinuing lines when small manufacturers are bought out by corporations that don't meet our policies and principles.

### Innovation

Innovation always appears in food production – even a return to basics can be a new fad! All members need to keep abreast of food trends in popular culture and trade magazines; small organisations benefit from being quick to recognise change and act accordingly. The food business requires 'foodies', with the whole working team of eyes and ears on other people's shops, kitchens and conversations (including probationers!).

## Summary of Unicorn: Pre-history

The shop was started in 1996 by a group of people who wanted a different and better option for doing their shopping than the supermarkets, and they created a place they wanted to shop in themselves – where good quality, wholesome tasty food was sold at decent prices, competitive with the supermarkets, a shop where products were sourced and sold with care for where they'd come from, how they were produced, and how they impacted on people, animals and the planet.

It all began in 1994, when Griff Dines met Adam York, having been introduced to each other by a member of Daily Bread Co-operative in Cambridge. Both had expressed an interest in establishing a similar worker co-operative enterprise in Manchester. They met a couple of times in mid-1994, together with Ian Browne, and meetings of this three-person working group began in earnest early in 1995. Daily Bread provided various facts and figures to help develop a Business Plan, and around this time the working name (Unicorn) was chosen, provided by Adam's son. Over the next few months, the business plan and statement of purpose (what we came to call our Principles of Purpose) were developed. Adam had meetings with various bodies to look into grants and financial support – many of whom were pessimistic that we would find the cash to get off the ground! He also researched planning permission, business start-up grants, and business rates and so on.

By the summer of 1995 they were in a position to register Unicorn, done on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1995. We were registered as an Industrial and Provident Society using the ICOM "white rules". Founder members were Ian Browne, Griff Dines, Gary Lawson, Matt Robson, Jane McCourt, Paul Wilding and Adam York, although only Adam and Griff were really active at this point. At this time, the Business Plan was also finished and distributed to those who might make grants or invest in loanstock.

As it turned out, grants were tricky to come by for a not-yet-existing worker co-op, so finance was raised via loans and Loanstock – a form of a fixed-term bond raised from supporters, members and potential customers. Eventually, funds of around £30,000 were secured through loanstock, with a further £17,500 raised through a loan from ICOF (now Co-operative and Community Finance). Together, these furnished Unicorn with start-up capital of around £47,500.

Adam and Griff drove all around South Manchester trying to suss out what areas might be attractive to look for premises. They looked from Levenshulme (the station was considered but already sold) through Withington and Didsbury to Chorlton (originally in the Albany Road trading estate), Northenden and Sale. Although many of these areas would be possible sites for the shop, Chorlton was seen to have advantages because of its "cosmopolitan" nature. At this stage, two new people got involved in the working group - Diane Wimbush and Lucian Conway.

By the following summer, the current site had been found, and a lease agreed with the owners, Town and Country Driveways, for part of the ground floor. After 18 months of research, legwork and hard, unpaid graft from its founder members and volunteers, Unicorn opened on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1996.



# Unicorn Chronology

Year	SALES	Cost Of sales	Avg. Basket	% Change Sales	% Change Avg Basket	General Inflation (RPI)	Avg. Sales/Wk	Avg Hrs/Wk	Sales per Hour	% Change Sales/Hr	# Members	Gross/Operating Profit	Business Costs	GP as a % of Sales	Wages	Wages	Other Costs	Other Costs	NET PROFIT AFTER TAX	Net Profit % of Sales	General Notes
1996	£56,463	£42,989				2.5%	£1,086				8	£13,474.00	£29,486.00	23.86%	£ 9,154.00	16.21%	£ 23,751.00	42.06%	-£16,012		Open in Sept, funded by loanstock & ICOF loan. 2 tills, 550 sq.m. site.. Food scares: BSE, E-coli.
1997	£371,494	£275,108		558%		3.4%	£7,144				6	£96,386.00	£85,833.00	25.95%	£ 37,878.00	10.20%	£ 54,152.00	14.58%	£10,553	2.84%	
1998	£558,623	£401,861		50%		2.4%	£10,743				7	£156,762.00	£128,639.00	28.06%	£ 73,634.00	13.18%	£ 51,581.00	9.23%	£28,123	5.03%	
1999	£826,128	£600,330		48%		1.4%	£15,887				10	£225,798.00	£203,142.00	27.33%	£ 127,957.00	15.49%	£ 70,608.00	8.55%	£22,656	2.74%	Anti-GM food campaigns
2000	£967,211	£680,010		17%		2.5%	£18,600				10	£287,201.00	£273,665.00	29.69%	£ 168,545.00	17.43%	£ 101,282.00	10.47%	£13,536	1.40%	Branding overhaul (new logo, etc)
2001	£1,241,104	£887,764	£10-£11	28%		0.5%	£23,867				14	£353,340.00	£322,957.00	28.47%	£ 217,023.00	17.49%	£ 96,944.00	7.81%	£30,383	2.45%	Foot and Mouth outbreak. Start selling Jute bags.
2002	£1,479,669	£1,038,327	£11-£12	19%	9.5%	2.6%	£28,455				15	£441,342.00	£370,293.00	29.83%	£ 249,166.00	16.84%	£ 102,888.00	6.95%	£71,049	4.80%	
2003	£1,960,316	£1,412,801	£12-£14	32%	13.0%	2.5%	£37,698				14	£547,515.00	£533,470.00	27.93%	£ 313,411.00	15.99%	£ 228,031.00	11.63%	£14,045	0.72%	Loanstock & Triodos loan fund building purchase. Premises inc to 950 sq.m. in 2nd quarter, visible from main road. Purchase 3rd till, hire non-member shop assistants. Atkins diet craze; SARS outbreak
2004	£2,933,792	£2,017,174	£14-£17	50%	19.2%	3.2%	£56,419	1137	£49.62		19	£916,618.00	£734,235.00	31.24%	£ 435,272.00	14.84%	£ 272,914.00	9.30%	£182,383	6.22%	Lift membership cap (15); Aim for all-member org, minimal casual labour Reorganise to devolved structure & quarterly MM; Purchased a fourth till 'Gillian McKeith effect', huge growth in whole foods sector Moved offices upstairs and further increased shop and store, premises increase to 1,150 sq.m.
2005	£3,601,359	£2,456,709	£16.93	23%	9.2%	1.8%	£69,257	1451	£47.73	-3.8%	31	£1,144,650.00	£966,269.00	31.78%	£ 641,653.00	17.82%	£ 292,044.00	8.11%	£178,381	4.95%	Tesco Extra Burnage opens
2006	£3,878,381	£2,658,048	£18.68	8%	10.3%	4.0%	£74,584	1533	£48.65	1.9%	41	£1,220,333.00	£1,101,293.00	31.47%	£ 737,197.00	19.01%	£ 332,623.00	8.58%	£119,040	3.07%	Growth slows, decide to retain 5-10% casual labour for flexibility. Purchased a fifth and sixth till
2007	£3,650,330	£2,481,299	£17.75	-6%	-5.0%	3.7%	£70,199	1450	£48.41	-0.5%	43	£1,169,031.00	£1,013,991.00	32.03%	£ 678,736.00	18.59%	£ 290,767.00	7.97%	£155,040	4.25%	Install green roof; Supermarket campaigns
2008	£3,636,694	£2,534,477	£17.85	0%	0.6%	5.0%	£69,936	1440	£48.57	0.3%	37	£1,102,217.00	£1,007,697.00	30.31%	£ 688,580.00	18.93%	£ 286,519.00	7.88%	£94,520	2.60%	Credit crunch and value of the pound falls against the Euro; Loanstock repayment. Reissue funds purchase of Glazebury (21 acres) Built 'east wing' extension to store, increasing premises to 1,250 sq.m.
2009	£3,697,386	£2,564,401	£18.11	2%	1.5%	2.0%	£71,104	1393	£51.04	5.1%	40	£1,132,985.00	£991,785.00	30.64%	£ 666,337.00	18.02%	£ 274,195.00	7.42%	£141,200	3.82%	BBC Radio 4 Best Local Food Retailer. Credit crunch and currency instability continues
2010	£3,759,451	£2,600,439	£17.90	2%	-1.2%	4.1%	£72,297	1453	£49.76	-2.5%	36	£1,159,012.00	£1,058,012.00	30.83%	£ 691,246.00	18.39%	£ 330,079.80	8.78%	£101,000	2.69%	Despite global economic instability, 10% rise in sales (plus lesser rise in customers/avg basket) from Sept. Grow a Grocery guide published. Decide to expand deli food production.
2011	£4,126,788	£2,850,372	£18.84	10%	5.3%	4.1%	£79,361	1513	£52.45	5.4%	39	£1,276,415.53	£1,124,402.53	30.93%	£ 737,457.02	17.87%	£ 347,888.23	8.43%	£152,013	3.68%	10% sales rise continues despite economy. Trends of local food, cooking from scratch. Reinstitute fortnightly all-member meetings (training).
2012	£4,542,785	£3,150,864	£18.54	10%	-1.6%	2.5%	£87,361	1669	£52.34	-0.2%	40	£1,391,921.00	£1,225,094.00	30.64%	£ 844,807.00	18.60%	£ 342,676.00	7.54%	£166,827	3.67%	10% rise in sales continues, 'community love' permeates/strong year for independents.
2013	£5,385,326	£3,710,707	£19.00	19%	2.5%	2.0%	£103,564	1853	£55.89	6.8%	44	£1,674,619.00	£1,509,051.00	31.10%	£ 1,029,283.00	19.11%	£ 441,720.00	8.20%	£165,568	3.07%	18% increase in sales, Trust important! (Horsegate, processed food provenance scandal, supermarket differential pricing story, sugar debate), increase demand for organic, more stable Euro
2014	£6,099,880	£4,162,429	£19.72	13%	3.8%	1.0%	£117,305	2030	£57.79	3.4%	52	£1,937,451.00	£2,093,022.00	31.76%	£ 1,329,562.00	21.80%	£ 785,062.00	12.87%	-£155,571	-2.55%	Sugar and overuse/obesity in the media constantly. Organic sales up 2% in UK. Major building refurb, inc. new roof, upstairs food prep kitchen & offices, sales increase (& recruitment) continue. £377K Building work and HMRC repayment put through profit and loss ('other costs')
2015	£6,946,325	£4,716,365	£20.99	14%	6.4%	0.0%	£133,583	2233	£59.82	3.5%	60	£2,229,960.73	£2,084,257.10	32.10%	£ 1,591,120.57	22.91%	£ 373,111.08	5.37%	£145,704	2.10%	Building refurb finishes, food prep kitchen opens, more recruitment. Sugar in the media (Jamie Oliver). 'Clean Eating'. Sales increase continues.
2016	£7,260,070	£4,896,917	£21.87	5%	4.2%	2.2%	£139,616.73	2426	£57.55	-3.8%	70	£2,363,152.79	£2,222,648.79	32.55%	£ 1,733,625.17	23.88%	£489,023.62		£140,504	1.94%	Brexit, volatile pound. Inflation pending. Economic uncertainty coupled with fierce competition from discounter et. al. going for organic, free from, green pound. Increase in organic market. 3rd quarter slow down in sales and average basket.





# What is a Co-operative?

“Co-operative businesses are owned and run by and for their members, whether they are customers, employees or residents. As well as giving members an equal say and share of the profits, co-operatives act together to build a better world” (From the Co-operatives UK website [www.uk.coop](http://www.uk.coop))

Unicorn Grocery is a workers co-operative. A workers co-operative is owned and democratically run by its workers. All members are directors and all directors are workers.

There are many other types of co-operatives though, e.g. The Co-op supermarket is part of a bigger group which includes e.g. funeral care and pharmacy. They are a consumer co-op, which means that it is owned and run by the customers. As a customer you can get elected to be on the board of the Coop Group. There are also housing coops, where people who live in the house own and run it. There are multi-stakeholder coops where staff and customers are members. Barca, the Spanish football club is a co-operative and as a fan you can buy a share to become a member and stand for the board elections.

Although all those are independent, the co-operative movement is a worldwide movement. Over a billion people are members of co-operatives. What connects the co-operatives apart from the name, is the 7 principles and the values that every co-operative adheres to.

## Principles

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- Voluntary and open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Member Economic Participation
- Autonomy and Independence
- Education, Training and Information
- Co-operation among cooperatives
- Concern for the community

The Worker Co-op council, an elected group of co-operators organised by Co-operatives UK, explain in a booklet how these principles relate to worker co-operatives. A copy of the booklet they have produced is provided along with your induction pack. Unicorn should always fulfil these principles or at least work towards fulfilling them.

## Values

Co-operatives are based on the values of **self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality** and **solidarity**. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Unicorn engages in a lot of nationwide co-op activities and there will be plenty of opportunity for you to get involved and visit other cooperatives and meet fellow co-operators.

If you visit the Co-ops UK website ([www.uk.coop](http://www.uk.coop)) and look at their [Directory of co-ops](#), you can see the comprehensive list of co-ops in the UK. We trade with a numbers of worker co-operatives.

Here are some of the ones you will probably hear being mentioned regularly:

- Suma – one of the largest worker co-operatives in the UK, a wholesaler based near Halifax. We sell a lot of their things, e.g. the Ecoleaf cleaning products, pasta, pesto etc. <http://www.suma.coop/>
- Essential – also a worker co-op wholesaler which is based in Bristol. We get some herbs and spices from them, also peanut butters, teas etc. <https://www.essential-trading.coop/>
- Calvert's – a small printing and design co-op who have designed the 'Co-operate or Die' t-shirts you will see a few staff wearing. <http://www.calverts.coop/>
- Infinity Wholefoods – a worker co-operative based in Brighton, they have four areas of trade, wholesale, shop, café and bakery. We don't trade with them but worth a visit if you are ever in Brighton. <http://infinityfoodsretail.coop/our-shop/>
- Outlandish – one of the many newly established worker co-operatives in the tech sector <https://outlandish.com/>

Here are a few websites that tell the history and the present of cooperatives very well

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<https://www.uk.coop/about/what-co-operative>  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooperatives>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worker\\_cooperative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worker_cooperative)  
<http://ica.coop/en>

If you are interested in more information here are a couple of good books:

- Co-operative Revolution by Polyp (a comic book which tells the history of co-operatives in the UK)
- John Restakis (2010) Humanizing the Economy: Co-operatives in the Age of Capital (Environmental Economics) (good overview of countries who do cooperatives extremely well like Emilia Romagna in Italy and Mondragon in Spain)
- David Erdal (2011) Beyond the Corporation: Humanity Working (Erdal turned his family business into a coop)
- Johnston Birchall (1994) Co-op: The People's Business (good general overview and history of coops)

# Unicorn's Co-operative Structure

All co-ops are run democratically by their members, however the way they choose to govern themselves can vary widely. Worker co-ops tend to have fairly non-hierarchical structures, and ours is similar to many other smaller worker co-ops in that we aim for a 'flat' structure where every member has equal say for equal pay. There is no manager or management committee, we are all equally responsible for our business - although of course we all have different responsibilities and tasks day to day, and overall no one of us should have any more power to control the business than anyone else. Every member is a company director at Unicorn, and thus legally bound by our co-op rules, as regulated by the Co-operative and Community Benefit Society Act.

So, if there isn't a top-down management system, how is the business structured?

## Members Meetings

Our sovereign body for decision making is the General Meeting, referred to at Unicorn as the Members Meeting (MM). There are three scheduled MMs per year, including the AGM which includes the election of the chair, treasurer and secretary and approval of the budget. We also have an annual Away Day in which we focus on strategic planning/visioning and team building. We also hold EGMs as needed to make time-sensitive decisions. MMs are for policy and major decisions, reporting and scrutiny of activities. All decisions are reached by consensus. Our Principles should influence every decision we make – from big policy decisions to the 'day-to-day'.

In the early years we operated with regular full Members Meetings for decision making, alongside high levels of individual autonomy. As the co-op grew we decided to adapt our structure to accommodate more members, and in 2004 we formally devolved day-to-day decision-making powers to teams, with most sending a representative to our central Forum to ensure we maintained good communication across the co-op.

## Forum

Forum makes smaller operational decisions and can make decisions on spends up to £5,000. Reps are there to feed their team's opinions into the meeting and carry information back to their teams. Forum helps teams stay connected with each other and provides coordination and accountability between them. All members are expected to read the Forum pack to stay up to date with what's going on in the business. Any member can ask to attend Forum for any given agenda item.

## Teams

All members belong to at least one team. Teams are responsible for managing specific areas of work, from looking after day-to-day operational tasks to taking responsibility for identifying opportunities in their particular area of the business. Teams elect an Overview, and in turn a Shadow, to coordinate their work. Meetings provide a chance for decision making, information sharing and receiving Forum feedback.

## Restructuring - Sociocracy

As our membership has grown and the number of team members has exceeded the total number of members we had before devolving the structure back in 2004, we have identified a number of difficulties with the existing team and Forum-based system.

We are currently in the process of restructuring the co-op following Sociocratic principles, as agreed at our AGM in May 2019, so you are joining us at an exciting time!



Sociocracy is a governance system very much in line with our co-operative principles - it creates a framework for equality and the opportunity for all members to have a voice, and it seeks to build trust and foster a sense of belonging through a system of shared power and distributed authority.

Sociocracy has three main components:

1. circle working within a linked structure
2. consent decision-making
3. continuous learning and evolution via feedback

### Circle Working

In a sociocratic structure, circles are organised in a distributed power framework. The aim is always to push decision-making authority to the most specific circle dealing with a particular operational area. These circles (often known as sub-circles) hold full trust and responsibility to manage the operational work area(s) in their domain. Sub-circles then link to a circle with a broader focus, generally known as a department circle. Department circles link in to a General Circle, something similar to our current Forum. It's very important to understand this system as it is intended to operate. The term sub-circle does not in any way suggest it is inferior in value or decision-making authority to a Department circle! The only difference between the circles is their range of focus.

We are currently designing the connecting structure to link all of our team-based Circles, and intend to replace Forum with a General Circle later this year.

In the meantime, we are in the process of establishing Circles from our existing teams. Unlike teams, Circles have a membership limit of nine people, which ensures that meetings can be run inclusively with all members having an equal chance to speak. Meetings are conducted using rounds - a methodology that encourages and supports our co-operative ethos of valuing everyone's contribution equally.

A Circle member differs from someone who carries out a task in a team. Not everyone who does a particular task, working on the deli counter for example, will be a member of the relevant Circle, and those who are Circle members take on the responsibility of managing that Circle's 'domains', developing policies to guide how the work is done and ensuring the Circle is meeting its stated aims. Circle membership involves thinking like a manager for that area of the business; constantly considering the Circle's performance and how it can be improved upon, during day-to-day work as well as in meetings. It is Circle members who are ultimately accountable to the rest of the co-op membership for what happens in that area of the business. They should be fully aware of the Circle's progress towards meeting its annual goals.

Many teams will have non-circle members who will work in that area of the business and give feedback to help with decision making without attending the Circle meetings. Team members will also have opportunities to take part in temporary helping circles as needed to undertake project work.

### Consent decision-making

We have a good decision-making system at MM level, using a very pragmatic form of consensus. As part of the restructure we are aiming to bring a more structured decision-making system into our new Circles based on the theory of consent. In consent, we are looking for a decision that Circle members can work with, something within their range of tolerance. We actively ask all Circle members to consent in order for a decision to be made. Giving your consent means taking ownership of the decision and doing your best to make sure that it is successfully put into practice.

In consent decision-making, the question asked is “can you work with this decision?” It may not be your favourite option, it may not be exactly what you want, but ask yourself if implementing the decision will mean that you are still able to do your work well to meet your circle’s aims. If the answer is yes, give your consent.

**Personal preference:** the outcome preferred by an individual.

**Range of tolerance:** everything a person can work with. Not necessarily their preference.

**Objections:** outside the range of tolerance - anything interfering with carrying out the circle’s stated aims.

In consent decision-making objections are welcome. They can make proposals better, and they enable everyone in the circle to take ownership of decisions. We ask each person with an objection to explain it in more detail, we listen to their concerns and integrate them into creating a better proposal. The three main methods of integrating objections are:

**Friendly amendments** - small wording changes to address concerns

**Shorten the term** - would the circle consent if we tried this proposal for two weeks, a month, two months?

**Measure the concerns** - what is the risk this proposal presents? List all the concerns and figure out a way to check if they happen, e.g.

- sales may drop - try it and measure sales over the trial period
- it’ll be less efficient - try it and evaluate at the end of the trial period (or at set intervals)

The consent process is supported by well-put-together agendas, shared in advance, with clear intentionality around what we’re making decisions on and why we’re bringing items to meetings. Good facilitation is crucial.

### Continuous learning and evolution via feedback

Sociocracy has an action-focused ethos, i.e. looking for proposals that help us make small-scale experiments to learn from. In this way we try things out and evaluate what works and what doesn’t, and resist the urge to look for the perfect option before we make a decision. Hand-in-hand with this approach sits the commitment to recording the decisions we make and assigning review dates, seeking appropriate feedback from other members to help inform our decisions, and taking responsibility for implementing and supporting decisions taken.

We’re not looking for the perfect proposal, we want to act instead of discuss over and over again. Our meeting time is limited. We’re aiming for proposals that address issues raised by being **good enough for now and safe enough to try!**

Sociocracy is a governance system that starts from the standpoint that everyone wants to do their best. We all want to do our jobs well, to make our business a success, to get satisfaction from our work and build positive relationships with those we work with. It is fundamentally about sharing power to create the kind of organisation that reflects a vision for a more cooperative world: where people trust and support each other, help each other and consider each other’s needs.

If you have questions about Sociocracy please do come and speak to one of our implementation group - Abbie, Baptiste, Britta, Dan H and Debbie.



# Being a Probationer and Member in a Workers Co-operative

Your first few weeks here will almost definitely be a bit overwhelming! The rota is very different to anywhere else for a start; you'll move around the shop a lot and work with lots of different people each day. There are so many people to get to know and the days are long, filled with hard psychical work.

Here are a few tips for your first few weeks.

- If you have any questions, don't feel afraid to ask them, anything!
- If you have any problems, even if it is something at home that may affect your work, please talk to someone. A member of Personnel is always available to listen. The training team will guide you through any questions you have with your work.
- If you have made a mistake, tell someone, they will show you how to do it better next time. We all make mistakes.
- If one member has told you one thing and another then tells you something different, just explain this politely! It is not easy having 60+ bosses but everyone is here to help you to become a member, and a boss yourself.

After a few weeks you will join a team and you will get more of a flavour of what it means to be a director.

- Start taking on responsibilities and volunteer for things. Even if you think you might feel too new for this, members are always happy to help.
- Be aware of efficiency and wastage. Unicorn's profits directly relate to your wage – nothing is really 'free'!
- Read forum packs and minutes, check your emails regularly. Make sure you read and understand the newsletter. Always read the diary when you come in.

## Reviews

- Your performance will be reviewed by several teams after two months of being here. Two representatives per team will help in this process. Personnel will feed this back to you and if there are any areas of development, then they will be discussed.
- There will also be a 4-month review, where all members comment on your performance. The same feedback procedure applies.
- After 6 months there will be one more review followed by a decision by our Membership Committee (voted for once a year by the whole membership) who will look at all the reviews and the projects to then reach a decision if you will be a member and director of Unicorn.

## Being a member

If you pass your probationary period, and we hope you will, here's a few things that will change:

- You are now a director of the company, you are also not only an employee but also an employer (the Personnel training session towards the end of your probationary period will explain this in more detail).
- You will pay one pound to the co-operative, this is the extent of your limited liability as a company director and makes you a co-owner of the business.
- The Secretariat team will register you as a member, acknowledge any other directorships you may have and record your current residential address.
- As a co-owner of the business you will need to take responsibilities around that e.g. taking the mobile phone home, volunteering for overtime if short-staffed.
- You now have a full say in everything that happens here - you can suggest proposals, help form policy, and generally have an equal influence over how the business is run. This is probably the most exciting thing about being part of a workers co-operative!
- You will now be expected to take part in reviewing fellow-members.
- You now get a share of the Wage Bonus.
- You are now entitled to full member benefits such as Unicorn paying for your SimplyHealth cover, Personal Budget and Bike Scheme.
- By the time you have reached 7 months, you will have taken on some more responsibilities, shop and office based.
- Hopefully by now you will see Unicorn as 'your' business, where you can and should be proud of it, worry about it, and love it!

## Unicorn Policy Documents

Towards the start of your employment you will be given copies of existing Policy Documents, which the Co-op expects you to have read and to act in accordance with whilst employed at Unicorn.

Background: A number of policies held by the Co-op, as well as reflecting our efforts for equality and fairness, are also required by law. All policies are in line with our Purpose & Principles Statement and have been reached through the consensus decision making process.

We will ask you to sign a separate sheet to acknowledge a) you have received a copy of the policy documents, and b) that you have read the document and will act in accordance of its guidance.

From time to time revised, or new policy documents will be adopted by the membership, reflecting either the Co-op's intentions, or aligning ourselves with forthcoming legislation.

[Policy List](#)

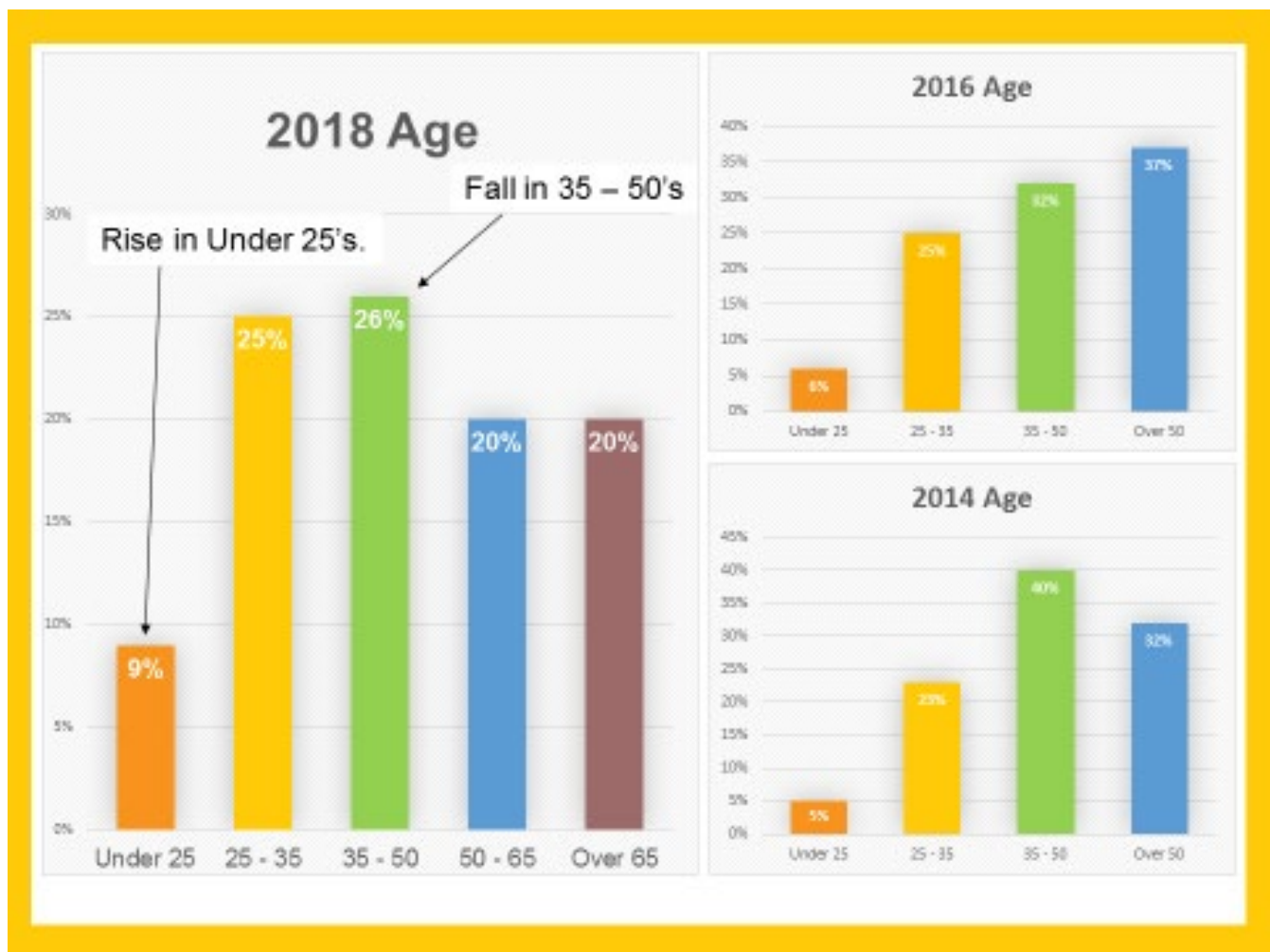
## Unicorn Customer Care

Part of every member's role at Unicorn involves working on the shop floor directly with customers, and it is a really important role. What is the point of working so hard behind the scenes, sourcing such great products, if we fail on the shop floor? We want to be a shop you can enjoy spending time in; a pleasurable rather than a painful experience; a place in the heart of the community; a friendly place. And it's up to us – on a daily basis – to deliver this. You will receive training in your probationary period on answering the phones, working on the till, dealing with customer queries etc and hopefully you will enjoy your time on the shop floor. We have a lot of extremely lovely customers. Read on for a snapshot of who our customers are and what they like about us.

## A snapshot – some Customer Survey results from 2018

### About the survey

- Customer Survey runs every two years. (Biennial)
- This is the first year the survey has run online as well as on the New Products Table.
- Participation of 477 customers (154 online and 323 in shop), an increase in sample size from the 203 customer participation in the 2016 Survey.
- 29% of the survey (139 people) have been shopping at Unicorn for less than two years. I will disaggregate this sample group throughout my analysis to profile new customers (people who started shopping here after the 2016 Survey).
- There are so many possible angles to approach the dataset, so if anyone wants any demographic sampled please let me know. (For example, people who live within a mile informative about community events.....)



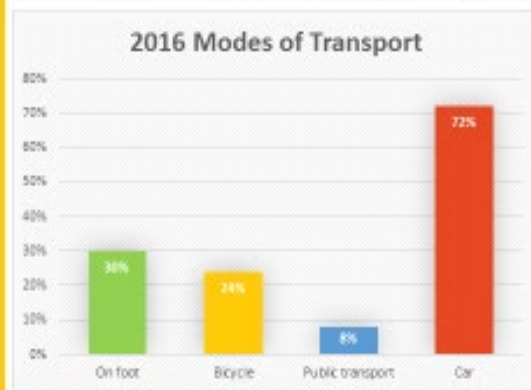
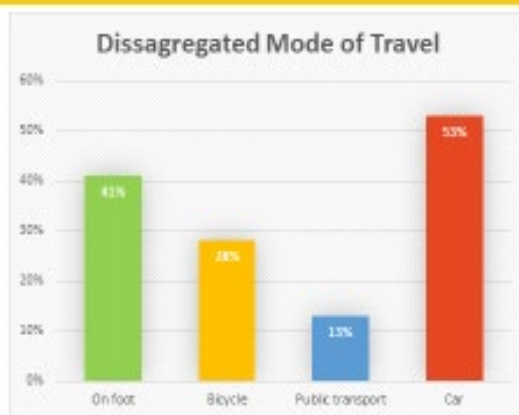


Increase in customers living within a mile radius of Unicorn, this is positive news as 90% of people living within a mile walk or bike.

51% of customers who live within a 1 – 2 mile radius of Unicorn are – admitting to – using their car. This is a sample group to try to incentivise to walk or bike to decongest the car park.

53% of customers who are travelling more than 10 miles are coming once a month.





10% reduction from 2016 in people – admitting to – using cars is positive.

Especially in the disaggregated new customers, who are largely comprised of a younger demographic. This is probably partially due to the fact that the younger generation do not have access to cars and are driving less.

10% increase in people walking is positive.

There were lots of suggestions for parking schemes on weekends.

## Plastic/ Packaging is the foremost issue in public conscience, it came up 86 times in the survey. This is a sample of customer thoughts:

"Would love to see Unicorn as a more plastic free place. Most of the items sold here with a plastic wrapping could be changed."	"Disappointed that some Veg (cucumbers) in plastic wrapping!"	Noticed the changes in deli plastic - any plans for the refrigerated products?	Love chikpea sticks but lots of plastic bags	Could you have large containers for us to refill our own containers with instead of using so many little plastic bags? Even just trial it for basics (rice, oats, cereal, oil, flour)?
	"Positive changes re change for plastic tubs in deli"	"more renewable / recyclable packaging"	"Options with less plastic please."	"Some packaging plastic"
"I have issues with the things that come in non-biodegradable plastic bags"	More dry bulk e.g. pulses, herbs etc. to put in own containers.	Self scoop options for all pulses/ spices/ grains etc.	Options to do refills on washing up liquid etc and converting to refills on all dry goods too	Push to non-plastic further if you can!
"Could use less plastic"	"Encourage people to bring own bags, jars etc to fill up"	the amount of plastic is a concern in many environments and there are too many products in the shop for which you can't avoid plastic.	Your bags are still better than supermarket ones because at least they can be reused, but I'm trying to be as zero waste as possible and it'd be nice to get rid of them entirely.	"I would love to see more package free schemes e.g. bring your own jar / bag and fill with oats, lentils, rice, etc."
"Would prefer more sustainable packaging and more plastic free options e.g. in bodycare"	"Please can you provide a refill service for household goods e.g. washing up liquid, laundry liquid, shampoo."	Would love to see packaging free products/refill stations.	I wish you could refill household items such as washing up liquid, laundry powder. Bringing in my own container to refill would be great.	Not as much zero waste facilities as I would like. If there were more I would do all my shopping here.
"Love little packaging, little waste Fairtrade community. Love the free box, the glass jar exchange, love Unicorn! Thanks for being great!"	Love the reusable packaging, lunchboxes, cups, straws etc. more of this please. Most excellent ☺ the soup cup scheme	Plastic packaging for pre-packaged items, would be nice if we could bring own containers for cereals, dried fruits etc. or if you just used paper.		Amount of plastic - should be a solution to buy without so many plastic.
"Fill up own containers from tubs of pulses/grains. No plastic"	Plastic Free	Any other options than plastic?	"Please try to set a date to be plastic free."	"Plastic-less celery"
"Everything is wrapped in plastic! I would love it if you introduced a silo system where people bring their own containers."	I know you've been working on your packaging but I'd love to see bulk bin dispensers where I can refill my own containers. I'd buy a lot more here if that was an option.	"less packaging would be good. Or recyclable packaging"	Package free items such as nuts, seeds, beans, that are available to decant into our own containers	"Plastic free pasta"
"More package free, less plastic in general"	"Would be good to see the option to bring own containers, bottles etc. to reduce packaging"	Why are so many things in plastic bags ?? So many other wholefood shops have big help yourself tubs	Love the jar exchange	"3dove towards more plastic free. Although you are doing well"
	"Just the amount of one use plastic packaging i.e. nutspices etc."	Irish Cuts in paper packaging in Tesco.	Not a gripe, as such, but it would be nice to have more dry goods available for bring-your-own containers.	
		"Still have a way to go to reduce packaging - but you're much better than most"	"All veg set in plastic - e.g. celery/lettuce"	
		Non-packaged dispensers	Compostable bags if possible	"Also going refill for house cleaning products would be really great!"
			Too much packaging still	

For the full survey follow the link: [Customer Survey 2018](#)

Or check out all the surveys here .... Z:\Ed & M\customer surveys



# Probationer Training Programme

<u>Induction Session</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health &amp; Safety</li> <li>• Building Layout</li> <li>• Locker and Gate Key</li> <li>• Workwear, what to wear and when</li> <li>• Security</li> <li>• Customer Care</li> </ul>	<u>Production Session</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technique</li> <li>• Speed</li> <li>• Economics and Adding Value</li> <li>• Traceability</li> </ul>
<u>Shop Floor Session</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facing up/putting out</li> <li>• Customer care/enquiries</li> <li>• Queues, or not!</li> </ul>	<u>Merchandising</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shelves, stock and appearance</li> <li>• Signage</li> <li>• Store Layout</li> </ul>
<u>Supermarket Big Night Out</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to multiple supermarket</li> </ul>	<u>Pricing Project</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal or External price checking</li> </ul>
<u>Commercial Strategy</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our model of direct purchase</li> <li>• Prompt payment</li> <li>• Competitive pricing</li> <li>• Adding value on site</li> </ul>	<u>Department Sessions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veg I+II+III</li> <li>• Deli I+II+III</li> <li>• Fresh I+II</li> <li>• Alcohol I</li> <li>• Store I+II</li> </ul>
<u>Supplier Visit</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glebeland's for example</li> <li>• Or other</li> </ul>	<u>Shop Floor II</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Till Operation I+II</li> <li>• Meet+greet</li> <li>• Till Support+Floorwalker system</li> </ul>
<u>Personnel Sessions (2)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employer+Employee</li> <li>• Reviews</li> <li>• Career Development+training</li> <li>• Membership+Disciplinary Committees</li> <li>• People Decisions</li> <li>• Co-operatives UK Workers code</li> </ul>	<u>Office Systems</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E mail</li> <li>• Phone System, transferring calls, messages</li> <li>• Diary, Address Book</li> <li>• Clear Communication</li> </ul>
<u>Education &amp; Marketing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our message</li> <li>• Statement of Purpose</li> <li>• Newsletter, Blackboard</li> <li>• Website</li> </ul>	<u>Finance sessions (2)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Profit and Loss, cashflow, forecasts</li> <li>• Balance sheet, takings, budgets</li> </ul>
<u>1 &amp; 4% fund</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the funds and decision making.</li> </ul>	<u>Consensus Decision Making</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How we make decisions</li> <li>• How we solve problems during meetings</li> </ul>
<u>Soil Association</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organic Traceability</li> <li>• Lot numbers / batch codes</li> </ul>	



## Probationer Supermarket visit

Creating a good shopping experience for our customers is vital to the success of the business. This involves having excellent product knowledge and making sure we create a comfortable, friendly atmosphere in the shop. An important part of achieving this is making sure we maintain an awareness of how we compare to other shopping choices out there. The idea of this project is to get you to visit one of the larger multiples and consider the shopping experience there compared to Unicorn. First we want you to look at the general shopping experience in terms of things such as lighting, shelf height, ease of finding products, till queues, customer service, facilities, labelling and promotions. These are all significant considerations that affect where a customer chooses to shop but ultimately it is the product range and pricing. So we then want you to look in greater detail at the actual product offer at this multiple compared to Unicorn. The significant factors to consider are the range of comparable goods, overall choice, quality and price. We want you to write up a report commenting on the general shopping experience compared to Unicorn and presenting in more detail the following product comparisons:

### Ambient section

How great is the selection of directly comparable brands, eg: Doves Farm, Provamel (Alpro), Clipper. Note down as many as you can find. How does this compare to what you were expecting? **Find at least 5 directly comparable products and note down their prices in the multiple then compare them to our prices.**

### Fruit and Veg

Have a look at the Fruit and Veg offer and compare prices of staples such as potatoes, carrots, onions, bananas, apples, organic where you can find them but conventional vrs our organic if not. **Note down five prices and come back and compare them to Unicorns prices.** Any comments on packaging, presentation, quality and range?

### **Chilled/Frozen goods**

Have a look at the chilled/frozen section how does our offer compare? There may be direct comparisons eg pure margarine and equivalents houmous, tofu, veggie burgers, sausages how does range, quality and price compare? **Pick out a five products to compare and note down prices.**

Lay out a table in your report of the products you have noted down for comparison showing if they are cheaper or more expensive in Unicorn, if they are a direct comparison or an equivalent and if they are both organic or organic vrs non organic. Write a conclusion on how our offer stands up compared to the multiple you have visited, put yourself in the mind of a regular customer who is looking to do their weekly shop and comment on our strengths and weaknesses.

The purpose of this visit is to primarily increase you grocery skills, it also gives us a chance to see what you observe from your visit and how you present it. Your write up may be reviewed as part of your membership application material.



# Induction Training Record

Name.....

Start Date.....

As part of your training you will be rota'd to have introductions in all the core tasks of shop work. To help us monitor, support and rota this training, this record sheet must be kept up to date. Anyone providing you with training will be looking for you to have this sheet available to sign, and it is your responsibility to get this sheet signed. Evidence of training taken is a condition of passing first review; and subsequently - membership decision.

	Designated Trainer	Date of training	Member conducting training to sign
<b>Induction Session</b>	Richard / Eve		
<b>Health and Safety</b> Locker& gate key, workwear	H & S Team		
<b>Building Layout</b>	Richard / Eve		
<b>Policy Docs Overview</b>	Britta / Richard		
<b>Security</b>	Dvir		
<b>Production Session inc.</b> Technique, speed, economic & added value	Craig / Eve / Dave		
<b>Customer Care</b>	Sarah		
<b>Tour with floor walker</b> Facing up, putting out Customer care /inquiries Queues			
<b>Commercial Strategy</b> <b>Our model direct purchase</b> Prompt payment Competitive pricing Added value on site	Richard		
<b>Merchandising</b> Shelves, stock & appearances , signage and store layout	Kellie		
<b>Pricing Project</b> Internal & external price checking	Richard		
<b>Soil Association / Organic induction</b>	Stuart / Craig		
<b>1 &amp; 4%</b> Intro to the funds and decision making	Abbie		
<b>Probationer Supermarket visit</b>	Self-directed		
<b>Alcohol</b>	Alcohol team		
<b>Food Prep taster session</b>			

	<b>Designated Trainer</b>	<b>Date of training</b>	<b>Member conducting training to sign</b>
<b>Veg 1</b> <b>Veg 2</b> <b>Veg 3</b>	Veg Team		
<b>Deli 1</b> <b>Deli 2</b> <b>Deli 3</b>	Deli Team		
<b>Fresh 1</b> <b>Fresh 2</b>	Fresh Team		
<b>Consensus Decision Making</b>	Abbie		
<b>Supplier Visit</b> Glebelands or other	Co-ordinated by Richard		
<b>Store 1</b> <b>Store 2</b>	Tom / Michael		
<b>Till 1</b> <b>Till 2</b> <b>Till 3</b>			
<b>Picking 1</b>  <b>Picking 2</b>	Dvir / Britta / Lisa / Leah		
<b>Personnel Session 1</b> Holidays, lateness, absence, etc  <b>Personnel Session 2</b> Employer/employee, reviews, career development & training, membership & other committees, disciplinaries, people decisions	Britta / Lisa		
<b>Finance Training 1</b>  <b>Finance training 2</b>	Vic / Fernanda		
<b>Education &amp; Marketing</b> Our message, our Principles of Purpose, our marketing strategy & how we put all this into action day to day	Debbie		
<b>Office systems</b> Emails, phone system-transferring calls & taking messages, diary & address book, clear communication	Richard		
<b>Forum Observations:</b> Forum 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Co-ordinated by Richard / Eve		
<b>Product of the Fortnight</b>	Co-ordinated by Richard		