

How to set up a bulk buy food group – Boyton Community Group's experience with SUMA

It's very easy! – A food group can be as small as one household or as large as the number of people who want to join in. A named person contacts a provider such as Suma for a customer number and password, which then enables that person to access the prices on the website and place an order.

In Boyton (and surrounding area) we have seven households who regularly place an order, and two people who alternate placing the order. We sometimes split packs with each other so that we don't end up with too much of any one item. We generally put in an order every other month.

It's not only food that can be bought in bulk – you can also buy things like toilet rolls, washing powder, nappies, soap and shampoo.

There are several ways to place an order with Suma:

- Online
- Via email
- By telephone

Delivery is free for all orders over £250.00. Orders must be placed by midday Tuesday for delivery on Wednesday or (more usually) Thursday in this area. We usually pay by debit card, but you can use credit cards, but there is a fee. You can also use a BACS transfer.

Advantages:

- Being able to buy specialist and hard to source food
- Prices are about 30% cheaper than supermarkets (buying in bulk at wholesale prices)
- If you buy from Suma you are supporting a worker's co-operative rather than a big multinational supermarket.
- Buying in bulk often means less packaging overall.
- Saving on food miles – food is delivered direct to your village/town in bulk rather than it going to a distribution centre and then to a supermarket, and then you driving to and from the supermarket.

Disadvantages:

- The co-ordinator needs to collate the order, be responsible for payment, wait in for the order and sort out the individual items for each household. (Payment is usually taken from the co-ordinators bank account about a week after the order is delivered, so that cheques from group members have time to clear).
- You need lots of storage space for the items.
- You need to be well organised and be able to plan how much you will need to tide you over to the next order.