

Helpful guides to supporting people remotely: Guide 2: How to set up an Online Cooking Club

Through conversations with our partners across the UK, it's evident there's a huge appetite for supporting people in the local community remotely. We've heard amazing stories about how staff at community organisations and libraries have been finding ways to substitute the face-to-face support that is valued by so many of the people they regularly help.

That's why we're working with various partners to create a series of easy-to-follow guides for delivering digital skills support remotely. Each guide will include a bit of background information, and a few simple steps you can follow to give it a try.

This guide, the second in a series, comes from Stephanie Lees-Pinson, Training & Employment Lead, and Elizabeth Tonks-Leeke, Digital Inclusion Mentor, at [The Intact Centre](#) in Preston. The team found a creative way to keep their popular 'Thrifty Kitchen' cooking club running in the virtual world.



The context

The Intact Centre provides a range of support in the communities around Preston including tailored advice, financial guidance and social clubs and gatherings. Much of this support has now moved online, allowing the team to continue developing trusted relationships with those who need help and a familiar voice the most.

When the centre is open, they normally operate a Food Hub in partnership with Preston City Council and a network of other like-minded organisations. Their primary aim is to get much-needed food parcels to vulnerable families, and then help them make tasty, nutritious meals out of the ingredients they've been sent.

Making it happen

Typically many of the service users don't know what to do with some of the ingredients from the centre's pantry, so they set up Thrifty Kitchen. This is typically a regular class, including cooking lessons with a huge focus on socialising. Over the past few weeks, Stephanie launched the Thrifty Kitchen Facebook Group and Youtube Channel to continue this much-needed support online.

The Facebook Group allows the team to post recipe cards, create interactive polls about food, and most importantly provide a platform for people in the community to connect with each other. This conversational aspect keeps the group informal, and helping people to set-up notifications on their devices means that none of the members miss the latest posts. Members also regularly point people in the direction of other support services that they may not have heard about otherwise.

After a few weeks, the team began making videos and publishing Facebook stories of cooking tutorials using the basic ingredients they knew people had at home. Members are encouraged to give it a go themselves, and some even share photographs of their finished meals. Not only does the group help people feed their families, it also gets them practising their digital skills.

It's not just the people they support who are having fun either - those involved at The Intact Centre have set-up their own group to encourage each other to be more creative in the kitchen. In the coming weeks they'll be trialling a Thrifty Kitchen live cooking lesson, delivered using the Zoom platform. We can't wait to hear more.

Setting it up

- 1. Think of an appealing name for your Online Cooking Club. It has to be something that hooks people in, and gives a clear indication of what they can expect. It's also worth drawing up a rough plan, thinking about what you're going to post and when. Always plan content in advance and have ideas ready to go.*
- 2. Set-up an internal team of people at your organisation who are responsible for producing and posting content, as well as moderating and responding to comments. Although running a virtual club like this should be fun, it can become a little overwhelming if it's left to just one person.*
- 3. At this stage you have a plan, a team, and some content, so now it's time to set-up the Facebook Group and, or, a Youtube Channel. It's worth asking a couple of volunteers or clients you know who are comfortable using Facebook to help get the conversation started, hopefully inspiring others to engage. Avoid setting up a channel and then leaving it empty.*
- 4. After a few days or weeks of adding content, you'll have a fully fledged Online Cooking Club that's a hive of activity. Now's the time to start to promote it to everyone you support. Remember to ask your partners and funders to promote the group too. Maybe add a link to the Facebook Group and Youtube Channel from your website and other online platforms to increase traffic.*
- 5. This is the most important step, which is to have fun. Strike the balance between posting regular updates whilst avoiding making running the group a chore. Remember to ask your members for feedback regularly so you can ensure your Online Cooking Club is meeting the needs of those you're trying to help.*

Helpful resources

['How to set up Facebook Groups for Pages'](#) - Social Media Examiner

['Social Media Mastery'](#) - Canva

['How to host a webinar on Youtube'](#) - Youtube

Keeping in touch

Remember, if you give the Online Cooking Club a go, we'd really like to hear about it. You could either get in touch with your Network Specialist to give them an update, or tag @Online_Centres on Twitter if you're posting online about the session.

For more information on The Intact Centre, [please visit their official website](#).

If you've got any feedback about this guide, or have an idea you'd like us to include in the series, please get in touch by sending an email to hello@goodthingsfoundation.org.