

Welcome!

Hello, and thanks for opening this pack.

Over the past few years, we have helped Middleton residents turn ideas into action across housing, community energy, arts and culture, local enterprise, community ownership and the future regeneration of our town.

Some of that work has happened through major town-wide projects.

Some of it started over a brew.



Thanks to National Lottery players, we have secured almost £4.5 million of Solidarity Fund support over seven years.*

That means we can invest in people, relationships and long-term organising. It means we can grow our team, support new areas of work and build practical answers to issues people face in everyday life.

We are looking to recruit people who can build trust, work across differences, use initiative and help turn needs, frustrations and possibilities into organised action for community benefit.

You don't need to have followed one particular career path. Relevant experience might have come through paid employment, community organising, running a group, volunteering, campaigning, caring, running a home, starting something yourself, supporting other people or living through the issues our work is trying to address.

We are interested in you as a person.

We want to understand your values, how you work with people and what you could help Middleton become.

We hope this pack gives you a clear sense of our organisation and what working with Middleton Co-operating would involve.

*Thanks to National Lottery players, Middleton Co-operating has received almost £4.5 million from The National Lottery Community Fund. The funding will be used to make good things happen with people in Middleton; to increase community power and build a fairer local economy through co-operation, community ownership and resident-led action.

A bit of background

It all started in 2019 with a conversation between Middleton residents in The Olde Boar's Head.

The topic was a long-standing problem in the town: Warwick Mill.

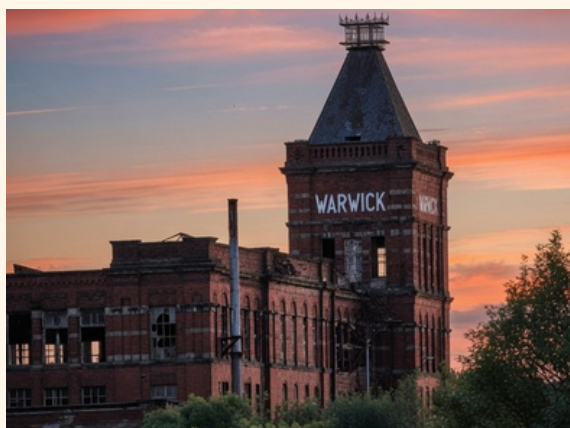
The Mill is five storeys of decaying, derelict neglect towering over the centre of Middleton.

A group of Middletonians, including Mark, Kallum and James, who are still part of the Midd Co-op team, met to discuss how community-led action could push things forward.

We dreamt of a huge community-led, co-operative and community wealth-building project that could transform the Mill and the town.

After setting up the Warwick Mill Action Group, we dreamt some more.

We decided the principles of co-operation, community power and community wealth building should not be restricted to one building. They should be town-wide.



Middleton Co-operating was born.

Today, we are a registered Community Benefit Society.

We still want to see a community-led plan to redevelop Warwick Mill, and our work has expanded into arts, housing, renewable energy, town centre regeneration, local business development, and reforming social security.

We work with residents, community groups, businesses, co-operatives, public bodies and other partners to build a fairer, more connected and community-powered town.

We exist to benefit the wider community rather than generate private profit.

There's loads more we want and need to change, which is why we're recruiting.

Our ambition is to help Middleton become Greater Manchester's first co-operative town - in the borough where the modern co-operative movement began, and to demonstrate a new way of working that puts community power at the heart of building a different kind of economy that maximises local ownership, minimises extraction, and works for the benefit of local people and communities.

How we work

The work begins with conversations with residents. We are rooted in Middleton and build strong personal connections across the town.



Circles

Our circles build on the needs of Middleton and the foundational economy.

What needs fixing in Midd? What can we help to improve? What do Middletonians want to develop? Some of our most established circles include:

Housing Justice

Our Housing Justice Circle grew after Langley residents came into the Lighthouse Project, where we are based, and told us about their struggles with their social housing provider. We worked with them to create a Middleton branch of Greater Manchester Tenants Union, now run by the people who first raised the issue.

Arts & Culture

Our Arts & Culture Circle grew from the need for a welcoming town-centre space where artists and residents could work creatively. Culture Co-op brought Arts Council England funding into the town, and we developed Art House Middleton.

Town Centre

Our Town, Our Future began because Middletonians needed a proper say in the huge regeneration planned for the town through the Mayoral Development Corporation. We took the conversation into schools, businesses, events, community spaces and Art House. Nearly 2,000 people completed the survey, more than 500 joined face-to-face conversations and over 1,300 asked to stay involved.

Green Energy

Our Energy Circle grew from local people wanting climate action to mean something practical for Middleton. We helped set up Middleton Community Energy, bringing residents and technical expertise together to develop renewable energy projects with local schools and explore how more of Middleton's energy could be owned and generated locally for community benefit.

Addiction & Mental Health

Our addiction recovery and mental health work grew through our relationships with local people with lived experience who wanted a safe, pressure-free place to meet and support each other.

GM Living Income

Greater Manchester Living Income Campaign works to transform our social security system, starting with a guaranteed living income pilot that would show that when people are given the resources they need (both money & genuine caring support), all of our communities do better. We're part of a GM-wide coalition of great organisations who are driving this work forward.

We also want to develop work on green spaces, early years/childcare, transport, food, adult care, youth spaces, advice, work and skills, migration & sanctuary support and other areas of the foundational economy that don't currently work well for local people.

Principles

We do things with Middleton, not to Middleton.

We don't arrive with a finished answer and ask residents to approve it.

We listen, connect people, understand what is already happening and develop ideas with the people who will live with the result.

Not every idea can happen, and people will not always agree. We are honest about the limits while making room for people to influence priorities and decisions.



We help people connect, organise, make decisions and act. Tangible progress might happen straight away or take years of patient work.

Nobody in the Midd Co-op team should become the only person who can hold a project together.

We want team members who strengthen and support other people, share knowledge, build and maintain relationships between people and organisations, support new leaders and build things that can continue beyond one individual.

That means knowing when to lead, facilitate, support and step back.

We combine imagination with proper systems. We like creative ideas, informal conversations, festivals, exhibitions, parties and trying things differently.

We help make people's ideas and visions real while maintaining sound governance, safeguarding, financial control, clear decisions, good records and honest reporting.

Why go to a meeting when you can go to a party?

How we make decisions



Most of our work is developed through circles that bring together members, residents, staff and people with relevant knowledge and/or lived experience around a defined area of work.

We are committed to learning and practising sociocracy.

Our strategic conversations and decisions happen through our management collective, bringing together directors, the staff team, our freelancers, expert advisers and key partners.

For significant decisions, we aim to reach informed consent rather than rely only on a majority vote.

Circles help us share responsibility, make authority clearer and include the people closest to the work.

Sociocracy is not about everybody deciding everything. It is about putting decisions in the right place, giving people appropriate authority and making accountability clear.

We are always learning. We don't expect new colleagues to arrive as experts in sociocracy, but we do expect them to be willing to learn and take part.

Working at Middleton Co-operating

We operate a four-day, 28-hour working week. Full-time roles come with a full-time salary and employment entitlements, with the 28 hours worked over four days.

We made this choice because rest, family, friendship, community involvement, personal interests and life outside work matter, and because we want our people to stay healthy.

Employment at Middleton Co-operating is based on agency and autonomy.

We do not operate rigid daily start and finish times. Colleagues organise their working time around the needs of the role, the people they work with and their own circumstances.

Our work sometimes happens during evenings or weekends - events, festivals, conversations. When this happens, working time should be adjusted elsewhere.

Flexibility has to work both ways. It relies on communication, shared planning and taking responsibility for commitments.

Our work is rooted in Middleton. We support hybrid working, and employees are normally expected to spend at least half of their working time in the town.

Our current employment arrangements include:

- A four-day working week - 28 hours.
 - 25 days' annual leave plus bank holidays, pro rata.
 - Up to 12 weeks' contractual sick pay at normal salary within a rolling 12-month period.
 - An 8% employer pension contribution.
 - Flexible and hybrid working.
 - Work equipment and expenses.
 - Compassionate, emergency and carers' leave.
 - Learning and role support.
-

Working with us

Middleton Co-operating is ambitious, growing and still developing.

We have some solid systems in place, and others still need work. As we grow, you will help shape the structures and ways of working we need next.

The work can be unpredictable. A planned day may change because a resident needs support, an opportunity appears or something urgent happens.

Community work can be emotionally demanding. People may share experiences of distress, poverty, poor housing, discrimination, ill health, isolation or institutions that have let them down.

So, you will need compassion and empathy, good boundaries, safeguarding awareness and the ability to work through disagreement.

It is brilliant too.

You might help somebody arrange their first community meeting, see someone develop into a confident local leader, bring a neglected space back to life or help a vision become real.

We welcome applications from people with different backgrounds, experiences and routes into this work.

We will make reasonable adjustments throughout the recruitment process.

Right, here's the role...