



### **Why are we doing this?**

- We believe that everyone deserves an equal chance to fulfil their potential.
- We believe that refugees, people with multiple complex needs, and others get a raw deal in society.
- We believe that a combination of exploitation, vicious circles, discrimination and mistrust work against many people, removing opportunities to fulfil their potential.
- We believe that the many barriers that prevent small-scale local entrepreneurs from starting their own businesses rob society of huge benefits and drain people of drive and passion.
- We're stupid/smart enough to believe we can change things together!

### **How can we change things?**

- By investing time and energy into offering a step on the ladder for people who need it.
- By providing employment opportunities for those that are most in need of them.
- By providing a space where small food-based businesses can incubate and grow.
- By investing in people when no one else will.

### **What is the plan?**

- We will create a cooperative community kitchen/food incubator.
- We will employ those who find it hardest to get a job and given them experience/support.
- We will create a business model that has enough flexibility to cope with language barriers and works around personal circumstances.
- We will partner with food businesses who share our values and want to provide genuine careers.

### **About the business**

- The kitchen will be fully specified, able to cope with the toughest demands, and able to provide people with real-world experience rather than 'just another course'.
- Jobs will be available working in the kitchen directly, running the business, and running businesses from the kitchen.
- Space will be available to hire for people with food-based businesses, for example street food vendors and small-scale manufacturers, who need the benefits of a proper kitchen for small periods of time.
- We will run, and help others run, businesses from the space, for example, bread and cake making early morning, sandwich delivery to offices/factories during the day or pizza delivery in the evening.
- We will sweat the space and ensure it's used to its full potential and pays its own way.

### **What do we need?**

- What every project needs by way of priority: space, money, equipment and skills.
- People skilled in Financial Planning, Accountancy, PR & Marketing, Research, and other areas would be very useful members of the team.

## Two Case Studies

**Mohammed** is a 25-year-old refugee from Syria. He came to England in 2015 fleeing the war in his hometown of Aleppo. He travelled across Europe alone and eventually boarded a train from Paris to London by jumping on it en-route. When he got to London he went to a local police station where he applied for asylum. Mohammed has a sister in Birmingham and he wanted to be near her. He applied for accommodation with Birmingham City council and was referred to Spring Housing Association where he got a room in a shared supported house.

Mohammed started off by applying for Jobseeker's Allowance and took an ESOL level 2 course, plus extra classes at St. Chads church to help him improve his spoken English. He then accessed an employability course via the Job. He really struggled to survive on JSA while studying – it's close to impossible on benefits to pay for bus tickets every day, study materials, wi-fi, as well as having to re-buy everything such as clothing, cooking equipment and mobile phone to call his family back home.

Mohammed initially found it hard to find work as he could not prove his work experience or get a reference. He applied for a lot of jobs but was more often offered cash in hand work doing insecure work over long hours, in poor working conditions, for places such as takeaway shops. He does not want to work illegally and wants to find meaningful work and a career.

**Omar** is a 22-year-old refugee from Sudan. Omar fled the conflict by completing a dangerous trip across Africa, across the Mediterranean in a boat and through Europe to the U.K. His family used their savings and took out a loan to help Omar. Omar applied for asylum and was granted refugee status. He spent many months in NASS accommodation in Nottingham. He became very depressed as he did not know anyone and spoke little English. Eventually someone said there were more work opportunities and a bigger Sudanese community in Birmingham where he could make friends.

So far, he has not been able to get a job and feels there are many barriers in the way. Omar's English is better but still limited and he doesn't have experience in the types of jobs where the Job Centre has availability, such as food preparation and warehousing. He also cannot get the certificates required such as food preparation and health and safety, as he needs to improve his English.

Omar feels stuck and wishes there was somewhere he could go to gain work experience and improve his English quicker to help him get a secure job. He had taken on some cash in hand work, but has been exploited as they have made him work very long hours for little pay and finally let him go without a notice period.

*Contact us to help create and run **The Liberty Cookhouse** – lots of local people are already doing just a little bit to make a huge difference together!*

*E-mail: [libertycookhouse@gmail.com](mailto:libertycookhouse@gmail.com)*

*Or write your name/email in here:*