



Social Firms Scotland
Supporting businesses to transform lives



Jenna's Story – the bread maker



***The bread maker** is a Social Firm operating in Aberdeen City; a commercially focused enterprise producing high quality breads and confectionery. The purpose of their business activities is to provide a range of meaningful employment, training, educational opportunities and social activities to Adults with Learning Disabilities who are excluded in mainstream society.*

The ethos of the bread maker is to fully support and enable Apprentices to work in a holistic and innovative way, offering a stimulating and positive experience to each individual, valuing and recognising their contribution and input as a team player within their thriving bespoke business.

Jenna came to the bread maker after she finished her access course at College. Jenna has fragile X syndrome and mild learning disabilities; Anne, her mum, contacted the bread maker as she was concerned her daughter would become isolated. Jenna stayed in a village a few miles from Aberdeen and Anne was apprehensive about the lack of facilities and opportunities for Jenna there. She saw her daughter becoming more withdrawn due to her lack of interaction with a peer group and her mood was uncharacteristically low.

Jenna was referred to the bread maker's Apprenticeship programme and attended a trial day, which she enjoyed, getting on very

well with the team. She started two full days a week, working in the coffee house.

The bread maker supports the Apprentices through on-the-job learning and a volunteer scheme that sees individuals benefitting from 1:1 support if required. Jenna soon began to thrive in the coffee house, coping well with the routines, tasks, and working as part of a team. Having familiar, consistent routines is very important, as is being explicit with instruction, schedules, preparation and being kept informed of changes. It is a busy environment and can easily be overwhelming and confusing, so it is important this is not overlooked especially when there is a new addition to the team.

The bread maker is a stimulating experience which offers a deeper integration into everyday life and the wider community. The tasks and involvement increase capabilities and knowledge and the Apprentices take pride in their work and achievements which in turn increases their self-esteem and confidence. A lack of structure and motivation can lead to a range of issues; which can include mental health issues, challenging behaviour and depression. Staff members from the Community Learning Disability Team are on record saying these secondary aspects are not so evident once a person has become involved with the bread maker as the structure and consistency give stability and support. Jenna's family saw a remarkable difference in Jenna. Her social life opened up, she took more pride in her appearance, her communication skills improved and her moods and general outlook were brighter. Jenna had things to look forward to which gave her a focus and she gained many skills which gave her motivation and encouragement to try harder and learn more.

The bread maker schedules fun events throughout the year which are supported; a lot of the Apprentices get out and try new, exciting experiences that they may not have had the chance to before, with people they feel safe and secure with. These activities can often be the only event that the individual has to look forward to and their sole experience of interaction out with their family. Jenna made good use of these activities, trying out new experiences and mixing with a wide group of people.

Jenna made great progress in her first year. She had worked through the "my world of work" programme with staff, completed a CV, trained in interview techniques, discovered her strengths and weaknesses and looked at her attributes and qualities relating to work. The bread maker felt she was ready to go further and try volunteering with another company (still supported by the bread maker), to gain more skills and knowledge in the hospitality industry.

The bread maker has a partnership with Aberdeen University, to offer 6 week, full time placements in one of their campus cafés. This was a great opportunity for Jenna which she seized with both hands, working hard and learning as much as she could in her time with the University. The team there were very impressed and suggested that she apply for a position that was coming up in one of the other cafes. Staff at the bread maker assisted Jenna with completing the application form and preparing for the interview through role play situations and assisting with interview questions and answers. Jenna put in a lot of work; she still felt apprehensive but was very confident that she had done her best in preparation.

Jenna was very nervous as she'd never attended a real interview before but she interviewed well. The next day Jenna was delighted to hear she'd been accepted for job and could start in four weeks, working 20 hours a week. Jenna's delighted with her job and has made lots of new friends, but still keeps in contact with the people at the bread maker; she has a full and happy life.