

CASE STUDY

The Value of Volunteering

JUNE 2025

This case study follows the journey of one young man, who began his volunteering journey with ChangeKitchen CIC in 2022, and who we are always delighted to see with his mum when he pops back in to say Hello...

His preferred reference is C in this case study.

What was the challenge you felt existed as a family (narrated by C's mum)...

Having Autism and a learning disability makes it extremely hard to get employment. I have been told by a reliable source that our local council has one of the lowest employment rates for disabled people in the country!

Many of C's school friends haven't been able to find employment, so it always felt like getting work would be a real challenge!

We, as C's parents, and his sisters, feel strongly that we want C to live as normally as possible and find some way to contribute to society (and his bank balance!). However, he can. It is also about finding the right balance - a full-time job would potentially make life difficult so finding a job with the right amount of hours, and sympathetic staff wouldn't be easy.

How did his volunteering experience help...

Having a learning disability often means that all of C's learning and general life experiences take place within the family.

Having a volunteering placement with ChangeKitchen CIC meant that he could experience life outside the family (without his mum standing over him guiding him all the time!). It meant that he could meet new people from all walks of life and learn things that we would never think to teach him.

Tommy, the ChangeKitchen CIC manager, was really supportive of C and made the transition to a work placement really easy.

As his mum, I probably also 'cosset' him but in a different environment, challenging things are asked of him and he has the chance to respond and grow.



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What's happened since...

C started working at Solihull Council Catering Service and did a sort of internship for a year at a kitchen in a day centre. At the centre, he learnt further skills and was guided in what would be expected of a kitchen worker in a similar setting.

After a year, he was moved to a nearby infant school as a catering assistant. He works two days a week in the kitchen helping to prepare food, deal with dishes, clear tables and all that goes with helping maintain a functioning kitchen.

After a year, he was also offered bank shifts to cover when staff in other schools are absent.

This has been really beneficial to C as he has had to learn to 'drop' what he is doing and rush over to a completely different school and help at an hours' notice.

He now has a reputation as a reliable and trustworthy staff member.

Working at ChangeKitchen CIC helped him prepare for different situations, different instructions and different ways of working.

Feedback from Thomas Randa, ChangeKitchen CIC mentor...

I can remember when C and his mum first came to see us at ChangeKitchen CIC.

At that time, they both said they felt as though they didn't know where to go for help but so desperately wanted to make some changes to support C's journey towards work of some kind.

C started with us on a very low-key engagement path to take things very much at his pace, whatever that was on any given day.

He quickly gained confidence when working with our kitchen team, eager to pick up new skills and became a valuable member of the volunteer team.

Seeing how C has progressed from quiet and needing consistent routine, to working and being able to adapt to the different demands of being a bank worker on the Council list is amazing!

It's what makes every day at ChangeKitchen CIC worthwhile..... well done C, we're so proud of you!



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