

# GREATER MANCHESTER VCSE DEVOLUTION REFERENCE GROUP

## Inclusive Economy case study: Open Kitchen MCR



Open Kitchen MCR has two purposes. Environmental: to reduce and stamp out food waste, with a focus on eventually fixing the problem for a sustainable and fairer food future. Social: to provide access to good food for all, and to upskill, educate and support people to come together to further level social inequalities.

Open Kitchen MCR is a community interest company and social enterprise, incorporated in 2014 (originally as Real Junk Food Project Manchester).

Open Kitchen MCR tackles environmental and social problems through a mix of practical action and campaigning. It intercepts food that would otherwise go to waste, and transforms it into amazing catering for conferences, meetings and special occasions. With its sharing ethos, Open Kitchen MCR caters at corporate/private events, for community/not-for-profit organisations, and works with vulnerable people at the grassroots. It also runs 'pay as you feel' staff canteens for housing organisations.



Open Kitchen MCR aims to balance fulfilling its environmental and social aims with operating a financially sustainable business model. It stops food from going to waste, and thus reducing carbon footprints. Open Kitchen MCR supports vulnerable people, including delivery of food and toiletries to three hostels for homeless people. It provides work placements as a step towards mainstream employment for disadvantaged people.

The biggest challenge for Open Kitchen MCR is financial sustainability, so that it can achieve positive environmental and social impact. It seeks to balance its business with its wider impact, such as purchasing environmentally-friendly goods and services. Integrity is crucial for Open Kitchen MCR, not only for ethical reasons, but also to attract new customers. It can be a challenge for staff to fully understand the implications of their purchasing and behaviour. There is also a wider challenge that, in their diversity, people can be messy and unpredictable.

Open Kitchen MCR makes things work effectively by taking the best from all sectors, not least in terms of practical issues such as people management, communications and performance appraisal. It also seeks to ensure that all of its people get what Open Kitchen MCR is about. It wants people to live its policies, not just write or know about them, and seeks to support them to make the policies come alive.

Open Kitchen MCR's vision for the future, as a social enterprise, is to be a business that values its environmental and social aims as much as its financial sustainability. More generally, it wants social enterprise (balancing environmental, social and economic aims) to be seen as 'normal business', rather than profit-driven business being the norm.



Further details at <http://www.openkitchenmcr.co.uk>