

# BENTHAM HOUSE

## A COOK FOR CHANGE CASE STUDY

Kemi Madumere leads Brighter Futures, a London-based organisation supporting adults with learning disabilities to build independence, confidence, and employability skills through practical, real-life learning opportunities.

Through initiatives such as Camouflage Café, learners gain hands-on experience in hospitality, customer service, and community-based enterprise. Kemi is really passionate about growing opportunities for more young adults to progress towards greater independence and meaningful employment so is keen to develop her hospitality training offer. Her plans included opening a restaurant on a new residential care site called Bentham House. However this was the first time Kemi had taken on a catering contract at this scale.

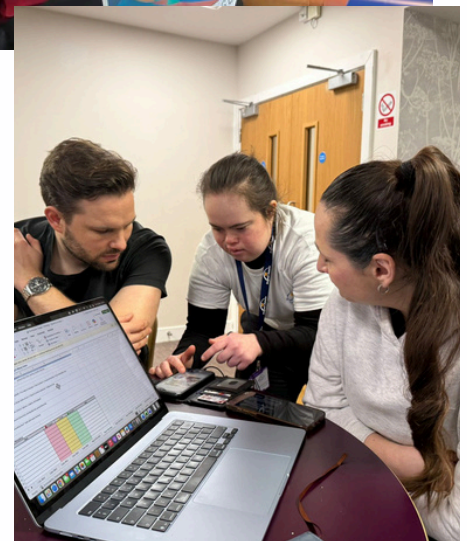
Kemi joined the first Cook for Change programme, run by Cook for Good in 2025 to help prepare for this next step. This incubator is designed to drive wider social change through food and cooking, by supporting social entrepreneurs to develop more sustainable community food hubs. A key part of the programme is to connect entrepreneurs to mentors and advisors within Cook for Good's culinary partner network. Restaurant Associates were a cornerstone partner for the first year of this programme.

The Cook for Change team connected Kemi with Alex Borley, Operations Director at Restaurant Associates. Following an initial chat, Alex brought a small team to meet Kemi and talk through her plans. This has led to a number of follow up visits and a deeply impactful package of support for Kemi and her team.

Restaurant Associates reviewed the kitchen layout and design flow, and gave guidance on recruiting the right kind of chef. They also donated cutlery, plates, a coffee machine, and chef expertise to help Kemi to develop menus. And provided a supplier list and have offered ongoing catering advice to support Kemi with strategic growth.

Crucially, the Restaurant Associates team took time to meet Kemi's service users directly, which Kemi feels has transformed the quality of support – advice was tailored to the realities of working with adults with learning disabilities rather than being generic and the RA team have really bought into what Kemi is doing.

As a result Kemi now feels confident enough to reach out to Alex and his team with questions as they arise, describing the relationship as like having an 'unpaid advisor' in the background. The restaurant is on the verge of opening, with the kitchen design, systems, and menu development all strengthened by Restaurant Associates' input.



Kemi sees the relationship with both Cook for Good and Restaurant Associates as being a powerful springboard for expanding and diversifying her model. The programme and mentoring support have given her confidence to scale. And in doing so to deliver on her ultimate goal....to help more of her students to showcase their skills to potential employers in real working environments, and ultimately move into employment.

As Kemi herself says...."Restaurant Associates have been a key partner in supporting the development of our brand new café and the planning of our future restaurant offer at our senior citizens residential village. From introducing us to chefs and helping us organise our kitchen, to donating essential equipment and advising on suppliers and recruitment, their support has been both practical and strategic. They have been a consistent source of guidance as we continue to build and grow our food offer."

And the experience has been really positive for the Restaurant Associates team too....

"Working with Kemi and the Brighter Futures Group team has been a genuinely rewarding experience. From the start, we could see the passion and purpose behind the Bentham House project and the incredible opportunities it will create for adults with learning disabilities. It's been great to support Kemi with practical advice, kitchen planning, equipment and mentoring, but most importantly to help build something that will give people real hospitality experience and confidence for the future. We're excited to see the restaurant open and proud to continue supporting Kemi and her team as they grow."

Alex Borley, Operations Director, Restaurant Associates

"It was a real privilege to meet Kemi and the team and gain a deeper understanding of the incredible work they do to support young adults with disabilities into meaningful employment. The experience highlighted the vital role local organisations play in championing inclusivity, building confidence, and creating opportunities for individuals to develop valuable skills and thrive in the workplace."

Harry Hyman, Operations Support Manager, Restaurant Associates

