



Companions Real Bread CIC - Guidelines for Referrals

Companions Real Bread CIC is a not-for-profit social enterprise, a positive social network built around the commercial business of a real bread bakery, with a specific motivation to give support to ex-offenders, particularly those recently released from the local prison.

Its secondary responsibility (on which it also has to report to the CIC Regulator) is to benefit the wider community by increasing its access to real bread. The implication of this is that those coming to us for support need to understand that the work of the bakery has to be fulfilled.

What type of support can we offer?

Companions offers **opportunities for meaningful use of time** - by getting involved in the work of the bakery, ex-offenders trying to resettle will benefit from: work experience, a chance to learn / develop generic and specific work skills, a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment, reduced boredom, reduced social isolation, reduced time in which to be tempted to offend, and the opportunity of a reference in due course.

While the work is going on, Companions can offer **active listening for emotional support**. By having the chance to talk things through with people who understand the difficulties people go through on release from custody (and for some time afterwards), we anticipate that ex-offenders will benefit from increased confidence and self-esteem, and increased resilience. We aim to actively encourage **self-reflection**, so that people can see the progress they are making, and determine to make more.

We also hope that the community of Companions will become a place where the sort of **practical help and advice** that is offered to friends will be readily shared.

Essential criteria for referrals.

All participants need to be **18 or over**, and **living in or resettling to Bedford Borough**.

A level of literacy and numeracy is necessary as we are working with ingredients and recipes, and would prefer to avoid expensive mistakes!

Everyone needs to be **drug and alcohol free while on the premises**. Anyone showing signs of intoxication by any substance will be required to leave immediately, and may be excluded from further contact.

An understanding that they have been referred to Companions to **share in the work**, as well as in the companionship.

Companions is intending to recruit to two levels of involvement (see over):

1. Associates are recruited to a structured and rolling 6-month programme of training and work experience, focused on gathering a portfolio of proven generic and specific work skills, around bread production, customer service, selling and marketing. Associates commit to working with us for a 3 days a week on a regular basis, and as the end of the programme draws near will be given support to find paid employment. Places on this programme are strictly limited and expected to be filled from within the prison. However, it is anticipated that places will from time to time fall vacant, in which case we will seek to fill the vacancy from amongst our existing volunteers.

2. Volunteers are recruited from any source to support the work of Companions in a wide variety of ways and on a more ad hoc basis than Associates. Volunteers may be ex-offenders or non-offenders but will all be looking to benefit in one way or another from their involvement, and will all be expected to contribute to the positive community that Companions is building. They will therefore have a level of commitment to Companions, a serious desire to avoid offending against the law and will know and accept that Companions promotes honesty (with self and others) and trusting relationships as the means towards achieving a more fulfilling lifestyle.

What are we looking for beyond the essential criteria?

We are looking for people who are ready to benefit from the support on offer at Companions, and who will not put at risk either the work of the bakery, or the chances of other people to benefit from their involvement with Companions and for whom we have a duty of care.

We therefore reserve the right to refuse any applicant, whether or not they meet the following guidelines; a refusal may be due to the make-up of the already-existing community, rather than a negative view of the applicant themselves. We will always try to be open about our decisions.

Our guidelines are around where someone needs to be on the pathways to resettlement.

1. Accommodation. In accommodation, so they can gain maximum benefit from working with us.

2. Employment, Training and Education. A strong desire to work. Associates are likely to have a work record, and have been working while in custody.

3. Drugs and Alcohol. We expect people to be some way towards being completely free of addiction, although we appreciate there may be occasional relapses.

4. Health, including mental health. We need to be aware of any physical or mental health issues. We want to be understanding and supportive, but need to be mindful of our capacity to support and (with regard to mental health issues especially) our duty of care to the established community.

5. Finance, Benefit and Debt. This should not get in the way of any referral; the Job Centre is supportive of clients volunteering with us.

6. Attitude, thinking and behaviour. A strong desire to avoid reoffending. An open mind to new experiences and ideas is always helpful!

7. Families and relationships. We are actively looking for people who want to be part of a community. This means they are prepared to give as well as take, to support others as well as receive support themselves.

We are open to discussing any possible referral - call 07743 755543 or email Maggie@companionsrealbreaduk or Nigel@companionsrealbreaduk