



## COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING



Enterprise and  
social economy



Innovation

Preston City Council

### **Lady Boss – structured enterprise training for women from minoritised communities**

Since 2000, Preston has ranked within the top 20% 'most deprived' areas in the UK's Index of Multiple Deprivation. In the 2021 Census 27.4% of residents identified their ethnicity as "other than white". Since minoritised communities are traditionally underserved by mainstream enterprise schemes, Preston Co-operative Development Network (PCDN), in conjunction with Kind Communities CIC, designed and delivered a structured enterprise training programme for women cooks from these communities. It was funded by Preston City Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in response to stated community needs.

The Lady Boss programme engaged with 10 non-registered, home-based cooks from minority communities who were interested in gaining the requisite food safety qualification; registering with the local authority for food safety purposes; and incorporating as a business. 70% of the group came from Preston's most deprived wards, and 60% were non-native English speakers. To overcome language and cultural barriers, and ensure legal and technical concepts were understood, the programme was led by a multi-lingual PCDN Consultant, with programme mentors and speakers sharing the group's background and fluency in community languages. All were women, in accordance with the group's preferences.

The six-day programme consisted of workshops followed by facilitator-guided small group support, with mentors who had successfully overcome the same challenges as group participants. By the end of the programme, all members had achieved Level 2 Food Safety certification, 30% had successfully passed a home kitchen Environmental Health inspection (40% have inspections pending), and 70% had successfully started trading. Women reported the highest satisfaction levels with the programme experience and training.



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Participants and instructors from the Lady Boss programme at Preston City Council's International Women's Day event

'The amount the course has covered, and the support and training received, it's really helped me build my confidence.'- Adeela

'I was able to understand how to start a home business and really enjoyed every session.'- Sangeetha

'The trainer was very friendly. She explained everything very nicely and shared her own experience which was also helpful for us.'- Maria

Although the programme was to encourage individual business start-ups, participants expressed interest in collaborative purchase of ingredients, cooking and catering. Such an



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opportunity was provided by Preston City Council's International Women's Day celebration, when the group cooked and served a three-course meal for 50 people. A further catering invitation has been received from the University of Central Lancashire. By working together in this way, the group may be receptive to forming a co-operative for which further support and capacity building will be provided by PCDN.



Food prepared by Lady Boss programme participants for the International Women's Day event

The Lady Boss programme highlights the importance of understanding and responding to societal changes. The message of co-operatives and co-operation is one which resonates widely across the population but requires a nuanced approach and sensitive allocation of resources to include historically disenfranchised groups.

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