



## The ability to change a life could be as simple as where you buy your morning coffee

**A**ccording to statistics from Crisis UK, 77% of homeless people want to work now, and 97% want to work in the future. And yet, across the country, only 2% of rough-sleepers are actually in full-time employment.

At the same time, the general public is buying more coffee than ever before. The number of coffee shops in the UK is expected to rise from 18,000 in 2015 to a staggering 21,000 in 2020, and the British Hospitality Association recently revealed that the coffee industry is the fourth largest employer in the UK.

When *Big Issue* founder John Bird and entrepreneur Cemal Ezel teamed up in 2015, they saw an innovative way to bring these two trends together. And with that, Change Please, an incredible

social enterprise making waves in the mission to end homelessness, was born.

### Who are Change Please?

Change Please are a beneficiary organisation who train and employ homeless people to work as baristas in mobile coffee vans across London. With a similar structure to the *Big Issue* magazine, Change Please launched in 2015 with just six staff selling a cup of coffee for £2.50 – a bargain in the capital.

### The recruitment process

The organisation takes referrals from voluntary partners, including CrisisUK, the *Big Issue*, and One Housing Group, meaning that it is able to take people

who have already engaged with support services, and who are ready to get back into work.

The baristas are then trained and mentored each day by fully-qualified industry professionals who are able to share their knowledge of customer service, quality control and management. These professionals are also able to set a workflow and standard for the beverages, allowing Change Please to compete with the high quality service that would be expected in any high street coffee shop.

### More than just coffee

Forever looking forward, the initiative provides additional training in health and safety, cash handling and customer service, in order to provide the baristas





with the skills and experience they need to progress and continue employment. Once they have been working for six months, the baristas are then offered employment with one of Change Please's partners.

Safe and secure accommodation is a gateway to permanent employment, education and accessing essential services like GPs. While in employment, Change Please offers support with housing, acting as guarantors, making direct payments and underwriting tenancies in order to offer its baristas the best chance of securing themselves a permanent home.

### Mental wellbeing

Research shows that a secure home is imperative for good mental health, and the rates of mental illness in homeless people dwarf those of the general population. With this in mind, Change Please offers support with mental wellbeing, both as an organisation and through referrals to its partners.

“ 77% of homeless people want to work now, and 97% want to work in the future ”

Their “jobs-first” approach hopes to offer the baristas a sustainable platform from which they can rebuild their lives. The work also helps to address the stigma against homeless people, allowing them to showcase their skills to the public, employers and business owners. *Continues >>>*

## Homelessness and mental health

A worrying 32% of single homeless people reported a mental health problem, and their rates of depression are 10 times higher than that of the general population.

A 2009 investigation into the mental health of homeless people found that the rate of psychosis is between four and 15 times more prevalent than in the general population. But, the same research also found that as a person's housing situation becomes more stable, the rate of mental illness decreases over time, showing a direct correlation between housing and mental health.

## Case Study: Tom



Tom is a barista for Change Please. Since starting, he says that the initiative has given him a second chance at life. "I've made a lot of mistakes in my life, I never thought I'd make it past 30." He says: "Now I'm 34, I have my own flat, and best of all I can have a chance to succeed with all the support anyone could ever ask for. Change Please means 'LIFE' for me."

## Supported by the Big Issue

Peter Bird, Distribution Director of the *Big Issue*, sees similarities between the two initiatives: "Selling the *Big Issue* works well to provide people currently living on the streets with a way to help themselves work towards a better life, but there is a gap between that segment of homelessness and securing a regular job that needed a solution. Change Please provides that and will hopefully be the hand up that people need to work their way back into society."

## Fundraising for fixed sites

In just four months, the first Change Please cart sold more than 78,000 cups of coffee. The team are now fundraising for a fixed site. While their mobile coffee vans can employ up to four people every year, a fixed site will allow them to

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*Since launching, Change Please has helped 35 formerly homeless people transform their lives*

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employ double that at each site, as well as acting as a training facility and a place to bring the community together.

In addition, it is their hope that a coffee shop will further help to demonstrate the level of skill and experience that these baristas have. You can support Change Please's cafe by donating on [crowdfunder.co.uk](http://crowdfunder.co.uk).

## Hitting the shelves

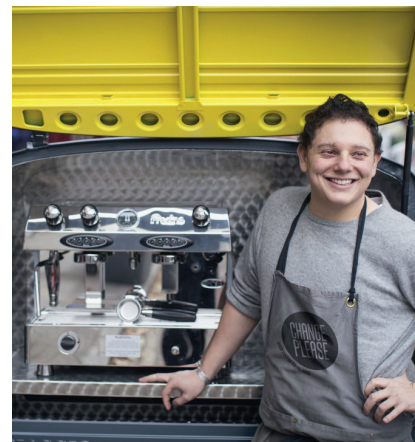
In September 2017, almost two years after launching, Change Please coffee beans are now being sold in Sainsbury's stores across the country.

The packets of these speciality-graded coffees include stories about the people who helped to make it, and, in the same way as the coffee sold in the coffee vans, a percentage from each pack goes back to the homeless baristas.

## Where are the coffee vans?

You can find the coffee vans, which are also available to hire for events, in 15 sites across the capital, including Borough Market, Canary Wharf, Christ Church, Southwark, Here East, and the Shard. There are also two office coffee bars at Time Inc. in Marsh Wall, and Kraft-Heinz on the 21st Floor of the Shard.

## Founder: Cemal Ezel



"Change Please is a huge step forward to helping the current state of homelessness in the country," says Cemal. "We have built this social enterprise on being a 'pick me up, not a hand out' for the people involved, and it is their hard work that has got their lives moving in the right direction." 🇬🇧

## The numbers

## In 2016:

- 16% increase in rough sleeping
- £1.15 billion local authority spending on homelessness

## Thanks to Change Please:

- More than £1 million saved in government homeless costs
- 35 formerly homeless baristas employed
- 15 sites in London
- 375 Sainsbury's stores selling Change Please coffee

For more information on how you can support Change Please, visit their website: [www.changeplease.org](http://www.changeplease.org)