

# New business being opened in Craigmillar today

A social enterprise has opened for business in Craigmillar in a bid to bring contract manufacturing back to Edinburgh and  create much-needed jobs. After Edinburgh businesswoman Allie Cherry struggled to find a manufacturer for her vehicle awning business Packa Shack, she was inspired to set up a contract manufacturing social enterprise, Sew Can Do, to produce textile products and create work and training opportunities in the Capital.

Liz Cameron, Director and Chief Executive of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, will officially open Sew Can Do at the Castlebrae Business Centre, Craigmillar, this evening at 6pm.

Liz Cameron said: "This is an outstanding business model which contributes on so many fronts. This is a fantastic social enterprise which provides individuals with the opportunity to utilise their skills, gain additional experience, and at the same time creates much needed flexible job opportunities. I am particularly excited about this development as we need many more start up businesses in the manufacturing sector. I am confident that it is only the start of what I hope will be a successful business".

The social impact of Sew Can Do is offering employment to people who previously worked in manufacturing before the majority of work went abroad, and to women returning to work. Allie also plans to add a training and employability aspect to the business in the next couple of years.



She explained: “We want to reconnect people with their existing manufacturing skills and offer employment to trained machinists, including women returning to work. Our supervisor, Pauline Thwaites, previously worked in manufacturing and brings the skills, knowledge and experience she developed through working with Marks & Spencer, Russell Athletic and Berghaus to enable us to support businesses who want their products to be made in the UK, with the added appeal that we are a social enterprise based in Edinburgh.

“We plan to draw on her skills in our next stage of development to offer training and employability opportunities to people who face barriers to employment. Sew Can Do is currently recruiting a pool of homeworkers from the local area who can work flexible hours to suit their own circumstances.”

Sew Can Do aims to support new and small businesses through product development and a ‘no job too small’ approach to manufacturing runs, to enable the companies to test their

product on the market and then to support their increased demand for manufacturing as required.

Sew Can Do is currently working with [Packa Shack](#), to manufacture their range of rear fitting vehicle awnings, and recently supported [Komic Brew's](#), Kickstarter campaign to fund the printing of their book 'Scarecrows'. The firm made rag doll versions of the main characters from the book, which was the highest value reward for the campaign and is in discussion with other local social enterprises to support them with product development and manufacturing. (see photos at end of release)

The former civil servant successfully attracted Start It seed funding from Firstport , Scotland's social development agency, in March 2014. Allie was then selected in September 2014 as one of seven social entrepreneurs to make up the first cohort for [LaunchMe](#), Scotland's first social enterprise accelerator programme.

LaunchMe, delivered by Firstport, offers an intensive tailored programme of business support, investment readiness, investment brokerage and mentoring as well as seed funding. Allie successfully applied for £25,000 which helped her secure her Craigmillar premises.

Allie said: "Gaining Start It funding from Firstport and getting on the LaunchMe programme has enabled us to take on premises and expand more quickly than we could do on our own. It also gives us the opportunity to draw on knowledge and experience from those involved in both programmes which will make a significant difference."