

PRESS RELEASE

1 December 2018

The House Project starts its second phase and rolls out to five more local authorities

On 1 December The National House Project launched as an independent charitable organisation with a vision that young people leaving care live independent and fulfilling lives. This was the first step in their second phase of DfE Innovation Funding.

In The House Project's successful initial pilot phase, funded in 2015 by the DfE, young people aged 16+ managed the refurbishment of void properties in Stoke-on-Trent, which they then moved into and which became their homes for as long as they wanted.

The House Project now moves into its second phase of DfE Innovation funding which is to enable the development of new House Projects in five local authorities and the establishment of 'The National House Project' as a National Charity.

Nadhim Zahawi MP for children and families said "I'd like to congratulate the National House Project in taking this huge step forward to becoming a charity that will drive forward an inspirational concept.

I am delighted that the DfE funded House Project in Stoke-on-Trent has been scaled to support 5 more local authorities in Phase 2, and that the incorporation of the National Charity will provide the basis for developing the expertise to support the developments of House Projects across the country.

Your cooperative approach has the potential to transform how services work with young people leaving care. I look forward to seeing this project go from strength to strength".

Charitable status was granted in August 2018 and the 1 December starts the beginning of the next phase of House Projects in Islington, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Rotherham and Doncaster. Learning from the pilot, the House Project is being rolled out to these locations to create the evidence base, resources and financial modelling to implement roll out to interested local authorities post March 2020.

The National House Project is the hub in which it will develop the model and provide the expertise and support to help any group of young people and the adults working with them to apply and set up their own House Project in the future. The House Project takes a ground-breaking approach through encouraging young people to take ownership of their project, in order to enable care leavers to achieve successful independence. The Project was co-designed with young people from the start and works on cooperative principles whereby adults and young people in and leaving care, work together to refurbish properties that then become their homes.

Every year around 10,000 young people in England leave local authority care. A third of care leavers experience homelessness between 6 - 24 months. Other research highlights that over 25% of the adult prison population have been in care and that care leavers are four times more likely than the general population to have mental health problems. The poor outcomes that occur during transition and beyond are hugely influenced by the traumatic experiences that brought young people into care. This can then often be compounded by experiences within the care system.

Moving to independence from 16 and living alone from 18 as a care leaver is daunting. Doing this without the support of close family and at a much earlier age than the general population (average age of leaving home is 24) does not work for many young people. Many describe at this time their loneliness, fear and the feeling that they have been 'dropped off a cliff'.

Mark Warr, CEO of The House Project said; "We need to support young people leaving care by working with them and this is what The House Project aims to achieve. With the success of the first pilot phase it is now an exciting time to be starting phase two and creating a solid framework that can be rolled out nationally. We are already seeing the difference this project can make to young people leaving care. This second phase is another key step in ensuring young people leaving care are supported and are given the same opportunities most young people are given."

The need to improve outcomes for young people leaving care is what led to the establishment of the first House Project in Stoke-on-Trent. Through the House Project this potential for improvement was channelled by young people into managing the refurbishment of properties, which ultimately became their homes and building a community of support to overcome the loneliness and fear they had described. The process focused on maximising young people's ownership of all aspects of the project, making them feel proud of what they had developed giving them confidence in themselves and their futures.

The ORCHIDS framework defines the House Project and makes it different to other leaving care and accommodation options. It provides a clear operating framework that uses the energy, experience and creativity of young people and develops a supportive and safe base from which to explore the world and build a positive future.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide accommodation and care for young people that are looked after until 18 years, and to provide support to care leavers up until 25. The cost of accommodation represents one of the highest challenges to local authority budgets and often with little evidence of achieving good outcomes for the young people.

The House Project approach provides intensive support and with the development of a community of peer support, for as long as is required, it replicates the principles of 'staying put' and staying close'. With skilled and experienced staff the project provides a safe step down from residential/foster care, allowing their support to be provided at lower costs. House Projects deliver improved outcomes for young people at lower costs and reduce the demand on wider local authority and partner agency budgets with fewer tenancy breakdowns, improved emotional, physical and mental health and less contact with criminal justice services.

The first House Project began in Stoke-on-Trent in 2015. Ten young people were nominated, applied and gained places on the project. They refurbished void properties, leased from the council. York University evaluated the project and reported that after two years, 8 of the 10 original young people were settled into their own property and were successfully maintaining their House Project tenancies.

One young person who participated in the pilot phase said; "I'd compare the House Project to a tree; we've planted it and we're growing up. We're all together and we're all going up."

To find out more about The House Project please visit www.thehouseproject.org or email enquiries@thehouseproject.org

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