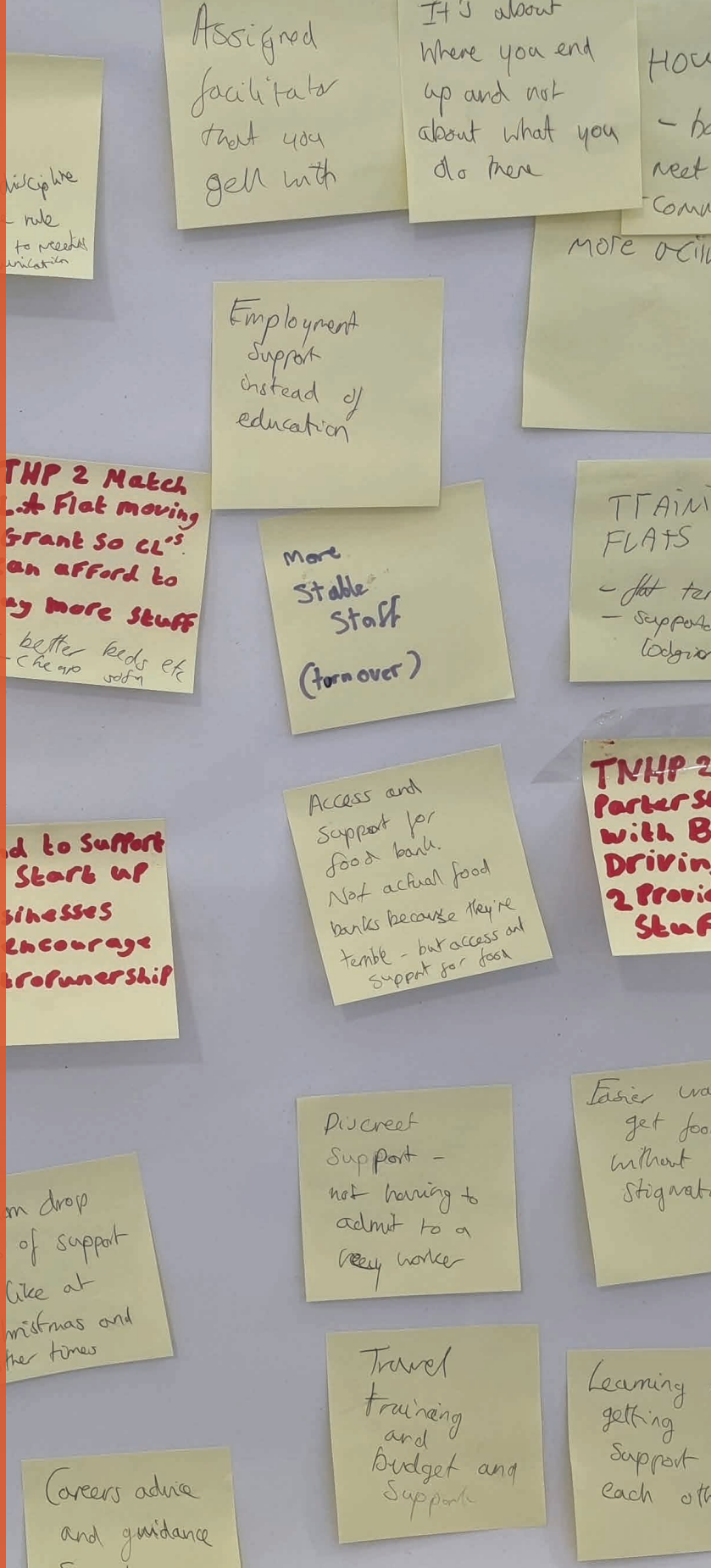


Our Community: A peer evaluation of our Local House Projects



THE NATIONAL
HOUSE PROJECT

Partnership
for Young
London



THE NATIONAL HOUSE PROJECT
Established as Charity in August 2018
Supported by DfE and Innovations Unit and leading educational institutions
Provides support for:
- House Project
- Psychology
- Enterprise
- Career

PLEASE KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE



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Foreword

The origins of the House Project approach started in 2011 with young people in a local authority setting sharing their experience of leaving care with staff. They talked about how unprepared they felt, their feelings of loneliness and isolation and how it might be done differently. They worked with staff to develop the first House Project and whilst the approach has developed over time it has continued to value the inherent resourcefulness and potential of young people to bring about change.

It recognises that with the right support, young people with lived experience of the care system are best placed to create solutions to the obstacles they face. When the Charity was established in 2018 it recognised the lived care experience of young people and their capacity to be architects of a system that can improve the way services are delivered to them and others and the Care leavers National Movement (CLNM) was formed to ensure that the voice of young people remained at the heart of the Charity.

Our approach has been independently evaluated by York University (2017,2020) and we are currently engaged with evaluations by Cambridge University, Warwick Business School and Scotland Through and Aftercare forum (STAF). Young people have been involved in all of these evaluations but at no stage have young people had the opportunity to learn about research, design an evaluation and undertake the research themselves. We have been impressed with the commitment and dedication shown by the Peer Evaluators and would like to thank CLNM, Partnership for Young London and every young person who has been part of this process.

As a learning organisation we value and respect all feedback but there is something qualitatively different about peer research. At the National House Project (NHP) we are committed to acting on the findings to change, develop and improve the House Project approach and would ask that project staff, stakeholders and partners join us so that together we can support young people leaving care to live connected and fulfilling lives.

The National House Project



Key findings

1. Young people feel positive about their House Project

Young people said overwhelmingly (92.8%) that they thought that their House Project is managed well and the vast majority (94.2%) of young people rated their House Project as 'Very Good' or 'Good'.

2. The House Project supports the mental health and wellbeing of young people

Most young people (78%) said that their House Project has a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Staff were the most important aspect of the House Project approach that supports young people's wellbeing (76%).

3. Young people feel a sense of ownership over their House Project

Young people feel in control of their House Project with most (88.4%) saying that their opinions mattered to how decisions were made and that they feel a sense of ownership over their House project (79.7%).

4. The House Project is effective at building a sense of community

Most young people (91.3%) said that their House Project is hugely important to their sense of community with the trust built between young people and staff being key. For many (61%) young people the House Project is their community.

5. The House Project staff are key in supporting young people

Almost all young people (97.1%) said that their House Project supports them to help deal with their responsibilities. Importantly, young people feel comfortable going to key workers if they feel like they have too much on.

6. The House Project expands young people's goals past the house

Almost all young people (97%) said that they have a goal for the future. The most common goal was starting a career (75.8%), followed by managing their home (60.6%), and saving money (40%).

7. Young people already feel independent but also need support

Young people define independence as dealing with responsibilities without needing the support of others and many (73.9%) said that they felt 'very independent', or 'somewhat independent' (21.7%). However, most (87%) also said that the House Project has supported them to live independently.



March 2020 - March 2021

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This award is presented to

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This award is presented to

Founding member - March 2021



Rosie Blackett - Participation Worker

Rosie Blackett

Sue Hammersley - Director

Sue Hammersley



award is presented to

INDEN FORBES

For representing Oxford Project at Care Leavers Movement and care leavers

Founding member - March 2021

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

This award is presented to

LOUISE

March 2019 - March 2021

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

March 2020 - March 2021

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

This award is presented to

MYESHA T

For representing Project Movement

March 2020 - March 2021



Recommendations

1. A new mental health and wellbeing support offer designed by young people

Currently, support comes from good relationships with staff and informal conversations. Local House Projects can strengthen how they support young people through the co-creation of a wellbeing offer so that young people design what additional or specialised support could be offered for their mental and physical wellbeing.

2. More opportunities for young people to participate in decision making

Young people feel heard and have a sense of ownership over decisions through their relationships with staff. Local House Projects can build on this by implementing more participatory approaches, such as participatory budgeting, a process where young people work collaboratively to take funding decisions internally.

3. Every House Project should have a physical base with more face to face activities

All House Projects need an easily accessible base, a communal space where House Project young people can meet and socialise. A lack of a proper base can stop the development of a community. Covid-19 has been challenging but as lockdowns ease up, young people want more opportunities to meet face to face and to meet young people from other House Projects across the country.

4. More peer support between House Projects and cohorts

To build on the sense of community, graduates from previous cohorts should be empowered and supported to support younger members, through informal conversations or mentoring. Many young people support each other with the responsibilities they have, but the NHP should build on this and create a system where young people are empowered to support each other across House Projects.

5. Create more consistency with staff; and look at how new staff are introduced

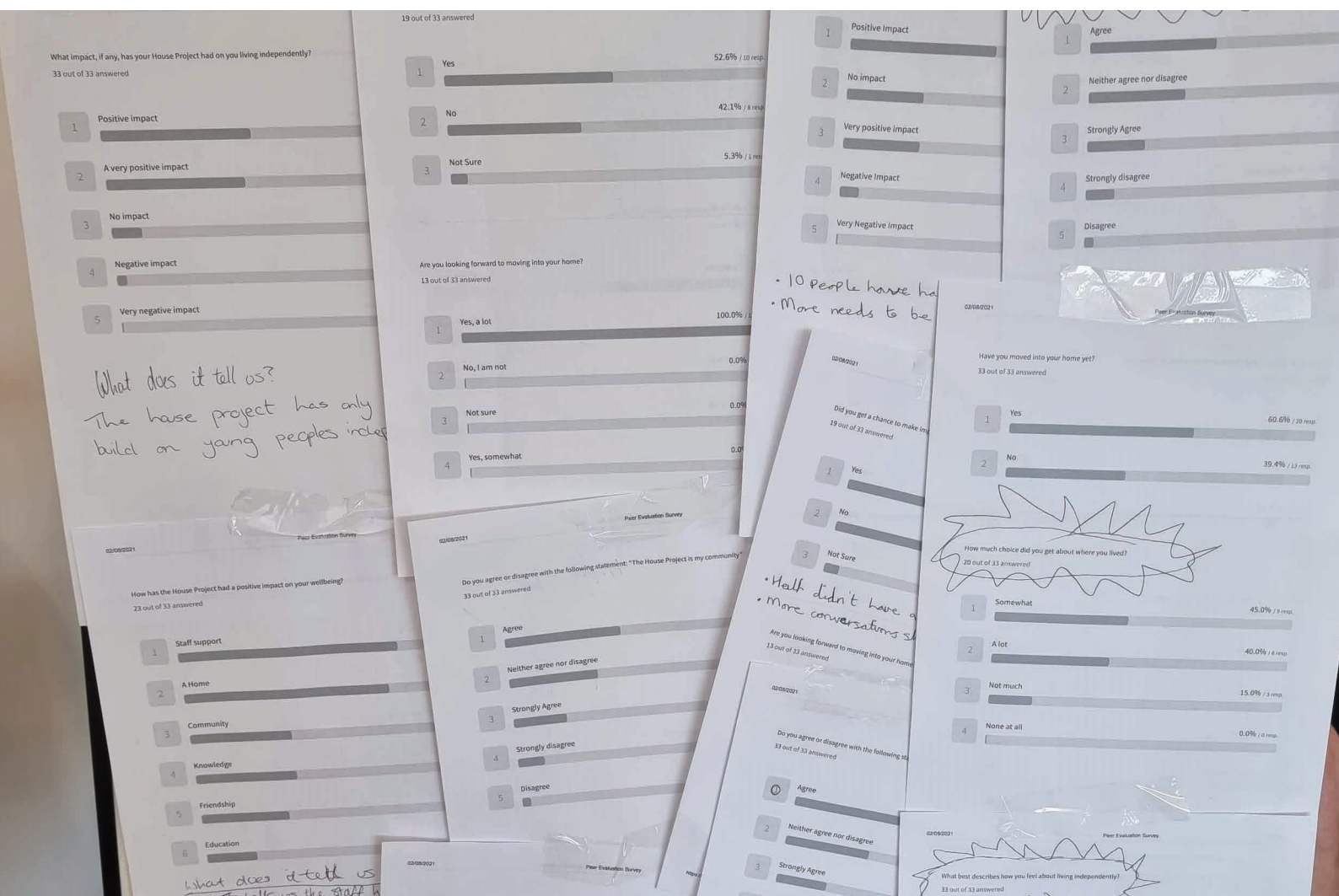
New staff and staff turnover can be disruptive for young people. Local House Projects should explore how new staff are introduced to young people with extensive bios and additional relationship building activities.

6. Create a stronger careers advice and guidance offer for young people with work experience opportunities and apprenticeship support

Provide more tailored one to one employment support, careers advice and guidance. Help young people move towards what they want, not just into education. The National House Project should support Local House Projects to support young people to access work experience, to enable them to try out a range of career options and educational choices like degree apprenticeships.

7. The House Project should provide ways for young people to ask for specific support and help in a discreet way and provide more unsolicited support

Many young people feel independent and do not feel comfortable asking for support. There should be ways that young people can seek support discreetly. Young people as part of Local House Projects should get unsolicited support, like food drops, that would help them when they least expect it.



We asked: "What would you like to see changed from the House Project?"

Nothing.

I wouldn't change anything about it. I love the people that I'm working with. It's just a positive energy to be with everyone.

The only thing I would change is for them to communicate with the young people a lot more because - they do communicate, but sometimes, for me, I didn't hear often enough from them.

Not sure. Probably more face to face.

I don't know to be honest. There could be more events. I don't need them. But like my mates are in the House Project still. They're not doing as much events as what we did but I think that's because of Covid.

There's not a lot I would change at all because they've done so many group meetings where you could meet with the other people on the House Project. They also done ones to ones where you could meet with a support worker, it wasn't like we've got to sit down and do work. It's just a case of just having a chat and getting comfortable. And they're also they made it really aware that if there wasn't somebody available at work one day where you needed help, you could always go to somebody else and that made you feel really included. There's not a lot that I would change about House Project whatsoever.

Just everyone should be a bit nicer towards each other. Right? There was a lot of arguing and fighting in it, like most of the lads are arguing. And it was just like, why bring it to the House Project? You're here to like, learn to be independent and get your own place.

People actually turning up to groups. It wasn't even that or a one on one, just more meals and stuff like the project, and no one really turns up.

At first, I didn't mind it. I thought, Yeah, this is good. I can turn the camera off a lot. Yeah nobody is gonna know what I look like.. It's been a while. But then as COVID went on, I was like, I want to meet them like, I don't know what they look like because the cameras are off. So this is why I came today, so I can meet people.

I don't know. People just think it's just for the flat. It kind of isn't. We have Christian, we have Rosie, we have Dawn, we have Steve. They're kind of there to support us.

Don't really know, could probably don't do the meetings on, what's it called, like zoom or teams. Face to face is better. If we go do something, it's better. Because, like myself, I learned when I am doing something. Instead of sitting there and like listening, No I can't be arsed with that.

There was meant to be more people coming today. I mean one girl is pregnant and doesn't have the money to come, that's reasonable, but then some people just doesn't want to come.

Maybe get information on other House Projects, maybe ones more established, to hear what they're doing. I find that our one is probably abit different to other people's, because we've just started off, so just like abit of direction about where it's going. Getting a base.

I wouldn't really change anything. They give you the allowance, they give you the flat. The deal that you get is quite fair.

I dunno, except for that online thing? But that's just because participation online.... I mentioned earlier, I feel like London's so diverse. There's not that there's not much judgement. We all are very comfortable.

The background of the slide is a photograph of a busy transit station, likely a London Underground station, with a teal overlay. In the top left corner, there are signs for 'Jubilee line ↑' and 'Tickets →'. The main title 'Our Approach' is centered in large white font. Below it, three stages of the research process are listed in white text, each centered and indented slightly more than the one above. The background shows people walking, some with backpacks, and a person in a dark jacket with a circular logo on the back.

Our Approach

Stage 1: Research planning

Stage 2: Fieldwork stage

Stage 3: Analysis stage

Peer research

A fantastic group of young people with the lived experience of being in a House Project has worked with Partnership for Young London (PYL) over 3 months to research how the House Project is working and how it can be improved. It has looked at the impact of the House Project approach and the support it provides young people.

Peer Research Approach

The Care Leavers National Movement (CLNM) were asked by the NHP to undertake peer research, conducted by people with lived experience of being in House Projects, to improve the ways that young people are supported. The project has been guided by four key principles:

1. Power sharing

CLNM have been equal partners with the NHP, and PYL in designing this work. Young people decided what they wanted to focus on, how they wanted to focus on it, and what they believe should change as a result.

2. Mutual respect for experience/expertise

This project recognises the unique perspectives from young people in CLNM and their valuable lived experience of the House Project as well as the important contributions of staff.

3. Informed decision making

At each stage of decision making young people have been provided with the necessary training and skills to ensure that they are making informed choices. CLNM have learned about research, interviewing and how other Local House Projects work across the country.

4. Maximum involvement

This project involved peer researchers in all areas of; research planning, administration, implementation, and completion. They have been extremely generous with their time to support this project.

Peer research overview

PYL who specialise in peer research with young people, have supported young people with the design and fieldwork for this project. The research project took place over three key stages:

1. Stage 1: Research planning and training

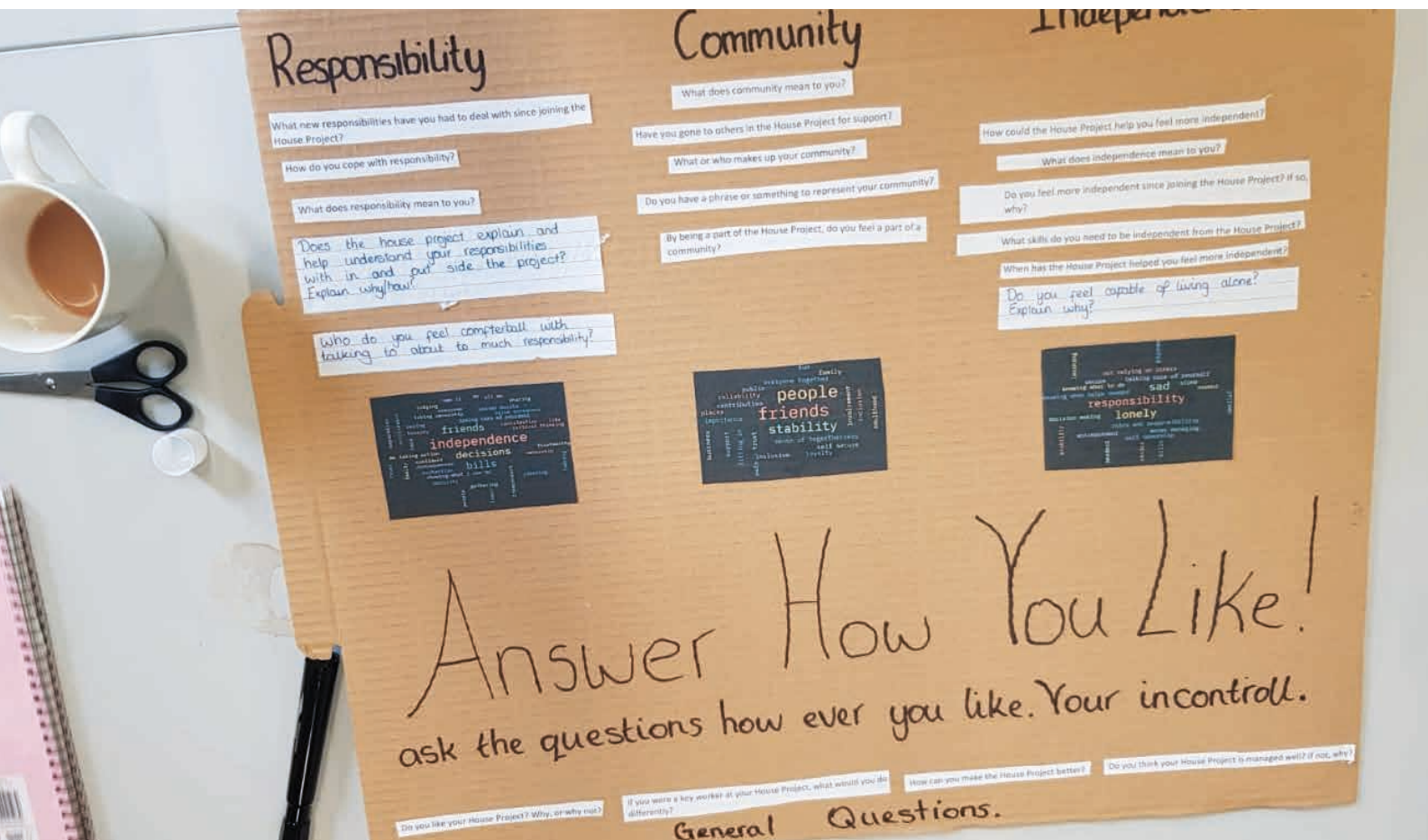
The peer researchers came together over a residential weekend in Crewe to design the research, the methods and to practice conducting research.

2. Stage 2: Fieldwork stage

The peer researchers went out to Local House Projects across England and Scotland to conduct in-depth interviews with over 25 young people, and get surveys completed from 70 young people.

3. Stage 3: Analysis stage

The peer researchers came together during a residential in the Lake District to look at the findings from the survey and interviews, analyse key findings and create recommendations for the report.



Stage 1: Research planning

Young people from CLNM met in Crewe on the 15th and 16th May 2021 to design the research process. There were three key objectives for the weekend; decide the aims of the research, design the approach, and learn research skills.

Deciding the aims

Young people were first taught about research and why it is important. Research and evaluation should involve young people as it impacts on how decisions are made about the services they use. The aim of this research was to evaluate the House Project approach.

Young people learned about evaluation frameworks, why they are important, and how they are used, before learning specifically about the ORCHIDS framework which was used as a basis for this evaluation.

After a discussion about the ORCHIDS framework, the peer researchers took a vote on which aspects they wanted to focus on for their research. They decided to focus on:

1. **Responsibility** – with six votes
2. **Community** – with five votes
3. **Independence** – with five votes.
4. **Developmental direction** – with four votes.

ORCHIDS framework

Ownership

Responsibility

Community

Home

Independence

Developmental Direction

Sense of Well Being

Learning research skills

It was important that the peer researchers were given skills and learnt as much as possible about the research process. In this first part, we covered;

- **What is research?** – We looked at research, why it's important, and the differences between qualitative and quantitative research.
- **Evaluation frameworks** – It was important given the nature of the project to learn more generally about evaluation frameworks with examples of how they impact on the way services operate.
- **Writing interview guides** – We looked at different types of interview questions and how to structure an interview guide. Young people also looked at different types of cognitive biases and how to avoid leading

Designing an approach

Once the peer researchers had decided on an aim we supported them to design an approach. This took place in five steps:

1. Choosing an approach

They learned about the difference between qualitative and quantitative data the advantages and disadvantages of surveys; focus groups, interviews, participant observation, case studies and projective techniques. Ultimately, young people chose interviews, focus groups and surveys.

2. Generating questions

Peer researchers then shared the questions they had, or wanted to ask for the key topics that they had chosen to look at. It was important at this stage to record all the ideas from young researchers.

3. Creating interview questions

Peer researchers learnt about the types of interview questions and concepts like leading questions. They then refined these into questions that would be used in an in-depth interview.

4. Interview guide

We collated all the questions which were organised by peer researchers into interview guides. At this stage questions were arranged to flow as a natural conversation.

5. Survey design

We used the interview guide and questions from the day to create a survey which young people amended following feedback.



Interview Guide

Responsibility

- What does responsibility mean to you?
- How do you cope with responsibility?
- What new responsibilities have you had to deal with since joining the House Project?
- Does the House Project explain and help you understand your responsibilities within and outside the project? Explain why/how?
- Who do you feel comfortable with talking to about too much responsibility?

Community

- What does community mean to you?
- By being a part of the House Project, do you feel a part of a community?
- What or who makes up your community?
- Have you gone to others in the House Project for support?
- Do you have a phrase or something to represent your community?

Independence

- What does independence mean to you?
- Do you feel more independent since joining the House Project, if so why?
- When has the House Project helped you feel more independent?
- How could the House Project help you feel more independent?
- What skills do you need to be independent from the House Project?
- Do you feel capable of living alone? Explain Why?

Developmental direction

- Has the House Project helped give you a sense of direction? How?
- What gives you a sense of direction in your life?
- What, if anything, have you learned while being part of the House Project?

General questions

- Do you like your House Project? Why, or why not?
- What would you change to make the House Project better?
- Do you think the House Project is managed well? If not, why?
- If you were a key worker at your House Project, what would you do differently?

Stage 2: Fieldwork stage

The peer researchers then went to conduct in-depth interviews, using the interview guide that they had created. The interviews took place over 3 months, between June and September in 2021. In total:

- **The peer researchers spoke to 13 local House Projects across England and Scotland.**
- **The peer researchers spoke to over 25 young people.**
- **They conducted over 15 in-depth interviews and supported 3 focus groups.**
- **In total, they took part in conversations lasting over 5 hours.**

They were accompanied in the fieldwork stage by a member of staff from The National House Project, and focus groups were co-conducted with Partnership for Young London Transcripts were created ready for the analysis.

In the meantime, a survey was finalised with the peer researchers and was sent out to Local House Projects. In total:

- **70 young people completed the survey.**
- **We had respondents from every Local House Project.**
- **63% of those were women, 30% were men, and 7% were non-binary or other.**
- **The average age of respondents was 18.**

We would like to thank all the young people who took the time to complete the survey and give their view on their local House Project.



Stage 3: Analysis stage

Peer researchers were supported to review the data and distil the key findings and recommendations. They met over a few days in the Lake District in September and looked at:

- **Quantitative data analysis** – In groups, the peer researchers took time to look at the findings from the survey and had to choose the three key findings that they thought were the most important. The data from the survey included in this report came from the ones they decided were key.
- **Qualitative data analysis** – In groups, the peer researchers undertook a light-touch thematic analysis using the transcripts from the in-depth interviews. The transcripts were rotated around the groups providing everyone an opportunity to comment, add, or challenge each transcript.
- **Recommendations** – Lastly, the peer researchers took time to think about the changes they would like to see, both from what they have heard and their own lived experience.

We worked with Reels in Motion who attended the analysis session to speak to peer researchers about the process. To see some of the analysis session and learn more about the peer research process have a look at the video below:



You can see the whole film here: <https://youtu.be/nHv6vufjrjYE>

1.

The impact of the House Project

Young people feel positive about their House Project

Young people think their House Project is managed well

The House Project supports mental health and wellbeing

Young people feel ownership over their House Project



Introduction

Being a peer researcher is really important to us as Care Leavers National Movement reps. It shows that the National House Project values the views of young people - both good and bad, and are willing to invest in ensuring we have the skills needed to turn our role as reps in to a professional process of co-production.

Getting to know how other House Projects work during the fieldwork stage of the evaluation was really rewarding. For the first time we got to meet a wider group of young people from across all House Projects and we were given the skills to talk to them in a structured way to gain the information and insight we needed.

We got to understand through our peers how other House Projects work. What is good about one House Project differs to what is good about another which is what makes our community so great. We have felt true ownership over our Peer Evaluation process and are really proud of what we have achieved. More so, we are proud of the general positivity that radiates from young people when they talk about their home.

We have really enjoyed the whole peer evaluation process and look forward to working together with The National House Project to implement the recommendations set out in our report.

The Peer Researchers

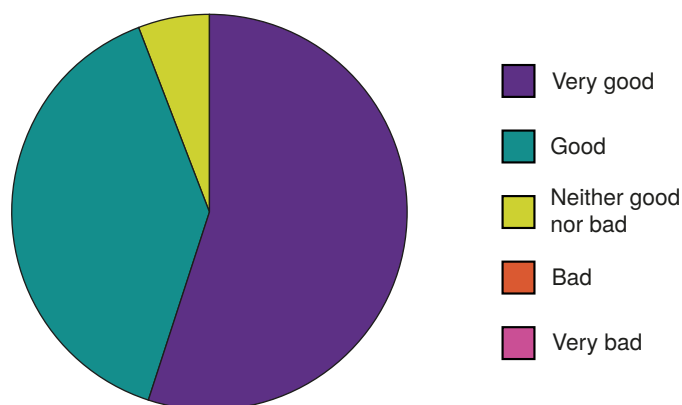


Young people feel positive about their House Project

Peer Researchers wanted to look generally about how young people felt about their House Project. Firstly, they asked young people how they would rate their House Project. Almost all (94%) rated their House Project as at least good, with over half (55%) rating it very good. Not a single respondent in the survey rated their House Project as bad, or very bad.

How would you rate your House Project?

“Yeah, literally – I think if I didn’t join the House Project there would be no chance that I would get a house. See like (my facilitator), she’s really helped with me college, and helps support with me with everything.”



This is an extraordinary reflection on how young people feel about their House Project, and a sentiment that is reflected in the interviews. The peer researchers asked “Do you like your House Project? Why/Why not?” and we found that of the 14 who fully answered the question:

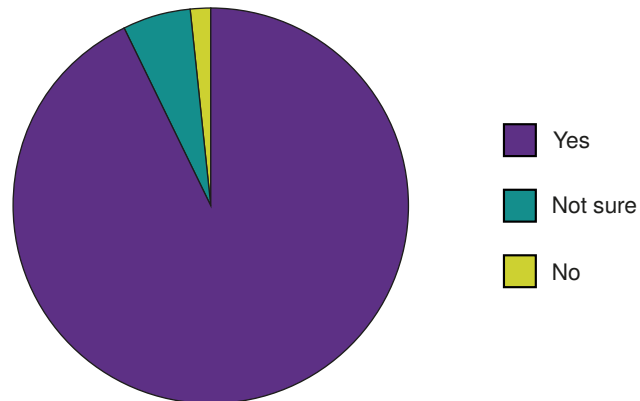
- Almost all of them (13 out of 14) responded very positively about the House Project.
- All of them (14 out of 14) spoke about people as being what they liked.
- Half of them (7 out of 14) spoke explicitly about staff.
- Half of them (7 out of 14) spoke about other young people and the community.

“Yeah, it’s fantastic. But I was speaking to one of my cousin’s friends, and he is in the same predicament as me, he’s lived in hostels and things. And I was like, ‘You should have been put on this’ – it’s such a great opportunity..... having the support here, knowing people are working actually for you. Because if I had to go through the housing programme it’s like I’m begging these people to provide me a house and it’s like, it’s very uncomfortable. But knowing that these people here are actually here to support you and help you. They help you in everyway.”

Young people think their House Project is managed well

Peer Researchers wanted to look at how well the House Project was managed. In the survey, the vast majority (92%) said that they thought their House Project was managed well. Only 1 respondent said their House Project was not managed well.

Do you think the House Project is managed well?



One of the clearest issues that came up in the interviews was the role of Covid-19 and lockdown over the past two years. While this impacted on the amount of face to face activities, young people generally thought that their House Project had managed this well.

“Yeah. To be fair with COVID, they normally meet up, having personalised stuff, but because COVID, they’d have to do it on the call, zoom and teams. Yet, they actually have to be fair.”

“Yeah I think they have managed it well. Trying to get as much as they can during Covid, with support and that.”

“(Yes, my House Project is managed well), I say so. Especially during the lockdown.”

The young people thinking their House Project was managed well was usually a reflection of how they felt about the staff and their positive relationship with them.

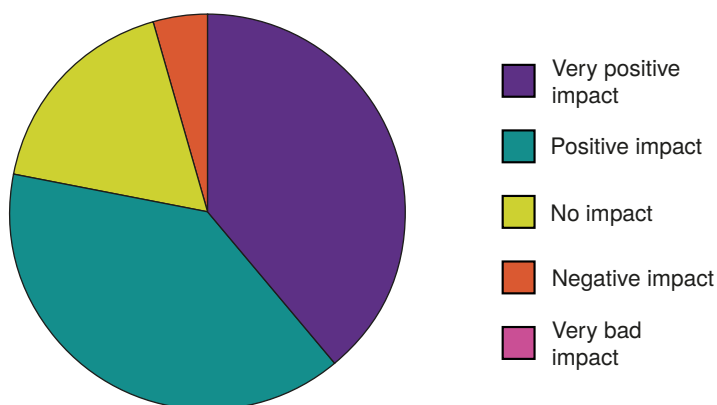
“Yeah, I do definitely (think the House Project is managed well). Well, obviously, facilitators, they are always on top of. They always know, like what we need to do. They let us take control of some stuff we need to do. So they make sure we’re all on like, target and what we need to get and always like just keeping control over everything.”

The House Project supports mental health and wellbeing

Peer Researchers wanted to look at mental health and wellbeing and the impact that being in a House Project has on this.

In the survey, the majority (78%) said that the House Project does have a 'positive' impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Only 3 respondents (4%) said that it had a 'negative' impact.

What impact has your House Project had on your wellbeing (mental or physical health)?



“I like the staff because they helped me with my mental health and supported me. But I like the young people too because, at first I was worried because there were some in the group because when I was 13 I had a fight, an argument and that, but all of a sudden we had rules and that. And I just feel like there’s no drama in that.”

Of those who said that their House Project had had a positive impact on their mental health in the survey, we asked them how the House Project has had a positive impact. The most common answer was staff support (75%), followed by a home (72%), and friendship (51%). This again highlights the importance of staff and the work that they do with young people

Recommendation 1

A new mental health and wellbeing support offer designed by young people
Currently support comes from good relationships with staff and informal conversations. Local House Projects can strengthen how they support young people through the co-creation of a wellbeing offer; so that young people design what additional or specialised support could be offered for their mental and physical wellbeing.



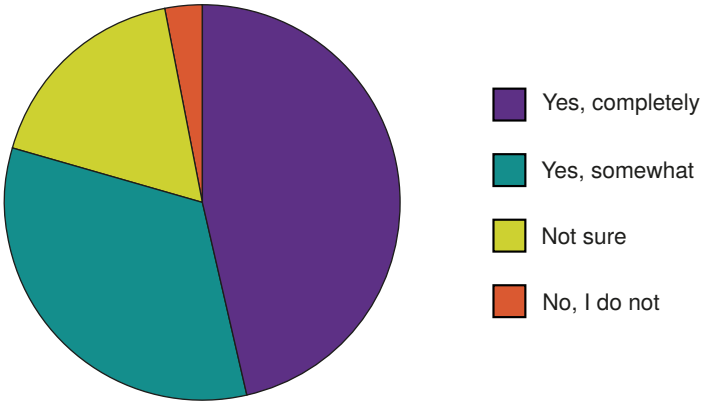
Young people feel ownership over their House Project

An important aspect to the House Project is a sense of ownership and providing young people the opportunity to have a say and make decisions. In the survey, most (79%) said that they feel a sense of ownership over their House Project. Only two respondents said that they did not.

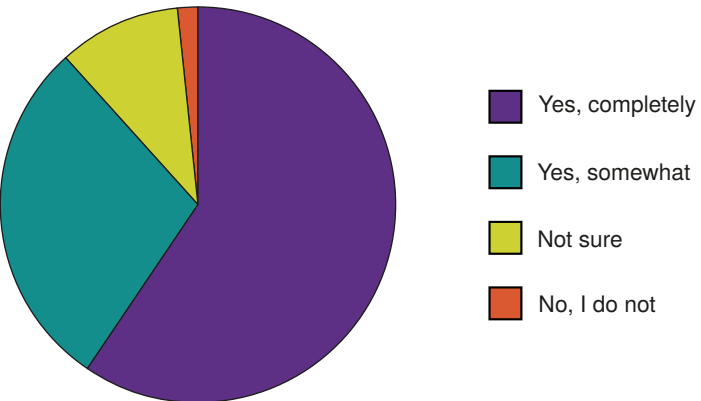
“We are the ones (who decide), we just write everything down and we just give them the budget, and they will give us, and we will go together.”

Even more young people (88%) said that they felt that their opinions mattered to how decisions were made in their House Project. Young people felt listened to by staff, and that they could influence decisions with their opinion.

Do you feel a sense of ownership over your House project?



Does your opinion matter to how decisions in your House Project are made?



Recommendation 2

More opportunities for young people to participate in decision making

Young people feel heard and have a sense of ownership over decisions through their relationships with staff. Local House Projects can build on this by implementing more participatory approaches, such as participatory budgeting, a process where young people work collaboratively to take funding decisions internally.

2. Community

Community means different things but people are key

The House Project is effective at building a community

The House Project is a community for young people

Introduction

The entire point of a community is helping each other, there's no point of it if you don't help each other. I would help my friends in House Project if they needed and they would help me. Even if their House Project is far away, in another city, I would walk if I had to, I am there for them and they are there for me. I would hope anybody that joins or participates in House Project in any way shape or form, whether that's staff or a young person in care is being helped by this, I hope they find the sense of community and friendship that I have in the House Project.

The House Project has given me the best friendships I've ever had with staff and young people. They've helped me in so many ways and I am so grateful. The staff genuinely care, it's how they are with young people, how they communicate, they see us as young people, not a child in care. They see us as genuine people. For me, it's a family dynamic, they see you as part of the family. Parents would do anything for their children, and The House Project would do anything in their power to help us because they want to make change.

I have a community with other young people too because we get to meet up, and talk about the differences between our areas, and their experience with care. We get to meet different people that we wouldn't normally meet, but we've got that sense of community, because we've all been in care. We actually have that experience. I've made friendships for life, they've experienced a lot of the same things I have, with mental health issues, and I've seen them get through it and we all want to help each other.

You have a group here that doesn't care about your past and only cares about you now, and how you're going to be in the future. People make mistakes, people have a past, but if you look past that and help them now, that's a community. I feel like I belong at the House Project.

Byron, a peer researcher

Community means different things but people are key

We found that community means different things to different people. It can mean places; like where they live, or their city. It can mean spaces; the local park or their House Project base. However, the most common theme was people and how people are that forms a community.

“Communities are like the environment, the people, your elders, for example. The people around you, you don’t know them, that’s your community.”

Young people did not see a community as a group of people alone, but the positive relationship and bond between those people. A community is a group of people that share experience, and trust.

“Community means to me a family where you respect each other.”

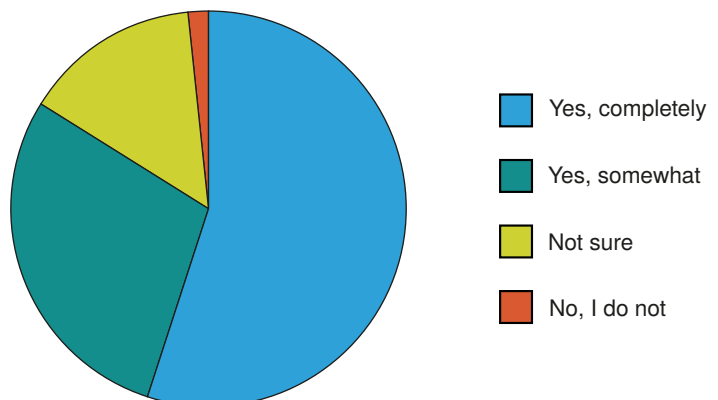
The trust that young people have with other people enables them to feel comfortable, feel like they belong and enables them to engage with the wider community.


“Community to me is somewhere where you feel confident and comfortable around other people, where you feel like you belong.”

Most young people in the survey (84.1%) said that they did feel like they belonged to a community. Over half (55%) said that they completely felt part of a community, while a third (29%) said that they somewhat feel part of a community.

Do you feel like you belong to a community?

Importantly, only 1 respondent (1%) in the survey said that they did not feel like they belonged to a community. This is perhaps because, at a minimum, the House Project provides a sense of community for all young people.



A photograph of a person in a red shirt standing at the front of a room, gesturing with their arms raised. They are addressing a group of people seated at tables. The room has a whiteboard with the word 'Collaborative' visible. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text is centered in white.

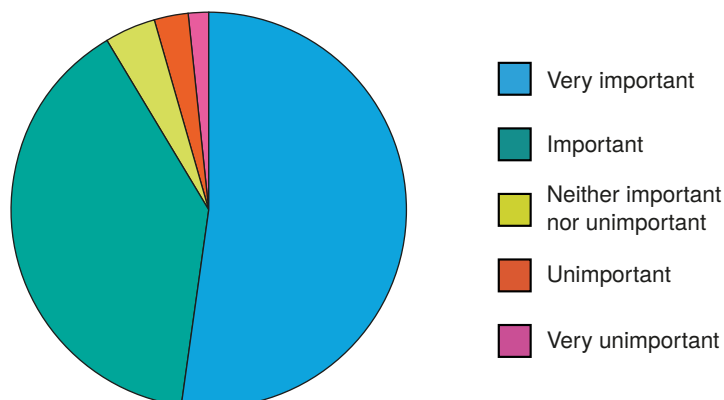
**“I remember just going out
and just being able to talk to
everyone.**

**That gives me a sense of
community knowing that
people in the area are being
friendly.”**

The House Project is effective at building a community

Young people who are part of the House Project build relationships as part of being in the House Project with staff and other young people. Most young people in the survey (91%) said that the House Project was 'hugely important' to their sense of community, with over half (51%) saying that it was 'very important'. Only three respondents (4%) said that it was 'unimportant'.

How important is the House Project to your sense of community?



We found that a sense of community within the House Project was built in a range of ways:


- Regular meetings – Young people within House Projects having to meet up and interact on a regular basis.
- Activities and trips – Young people can make friends, share experiences and do something fun.
- Learning together – Young people support each other through the House Project Programme and develop their independence.

“We're all like, friendly towards each other, close to each other. We all know each other. They take us to Mac (McDonalds). And they always check on how we are and make sure we are alright”

Recommendation 3

Every House Project should have a physical base with more face to face activities

All House Projects need an easily accessible base, a communal space where House Project young people can meet and socialise. A lack of a proper base can stop the development of a community. Covid-19 has been challenging but as lockdowns ease up, young people want more opportunities to meet face to face, and to meet young people from other House Projects across the country.

A group of people are seated around a table in a meeting room, engaged in a discussion. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue rectangle that contains white text. The background shows a typical office or meeting environment with a table, chairs, and a window.

“The reason we all enjoy it so much is because we’ve got, cringe, a bond. When we first started, we didn’t really know each other.

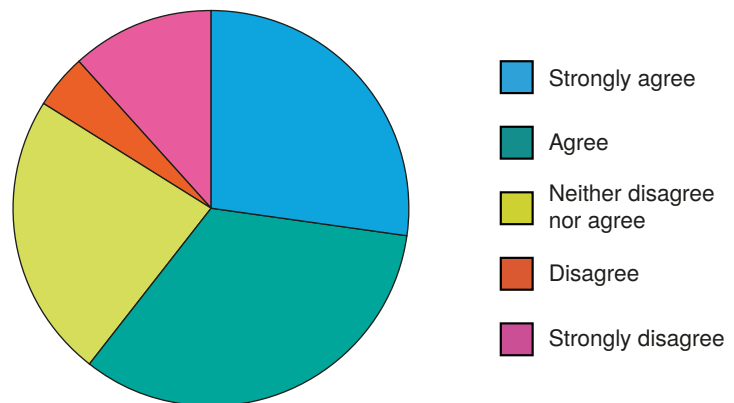
I knew a few people there because obviously I’m from the meeting itself anyway.

Yeah, when we started speaking and get together, it became sort of our own little family sort of thing.”

The House Project is a community for young people

For many young people we spoke to, the House Project is their community. Over half (61%) of the young people in the survey 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that "The House Project is my community", with a small minority (15%) disagreeing.

Do you agree or disagree: "The House Project is my community"?



"I'd say everyone (is my community). Everyone who's in the House Project. Literally everyone."

We found that the House Project works best when there are trusting relationships between young people. Young people have a fantastic opportunity to make friends, and in some cases a family, with others with a similar lived experience to them.

"I feel like the House Project is a massive family. I like it because, it's a group of kids in care that get each other. They're all in the system."

Young people go to each other for support and go to each other when they need help. This peer to peer support is a valuable part of the help available to young people in the House Project, alongside the sense of community and belonging that it creates.

"Yeah, because you're very involved with everyone and each other. And people tend to go to you if they think they've got an issue or want advice. So that makes a community."

Recommendation 4

More peer support, between House Projects, and cohorts

To build on the sense of community, graduates from previous cohorts should be empowered and supported to support younger members, through informal conversations or mentoring. Many young people support each other with the responsibilities they have, but The House Project should build on this, and create a system where young people are empowered to support each other across House Projects.

“But obviously, I’ve got one of my friends in the House Project as well. I’ve known him for three years, I consider him family.

You know, like, he’s always there whenever I need him.”

4. Responsibility

**Young people define
responsibility in action**

**The House Project gives young
people responsibilities**

**The House Project staff are key
in supporting young people**

Introduction

People ask me what responsibility means to me. It means having control over something, whether myself or processes that I manage. Although, it's important to also recognise you don't have to deal with all your responsibilities by yourself. I feel great when I know I have control over a situation, I can plan as I have all the information I need.

The House Project always supports people – they don't just give you the responsibilities, they're always there to help. I've learnt budgeting, how to cook a meal on a budget, cleaning, and how to plan an event. I've learnt a lot, but I learnt the most from budgeting. When you're in foster care, you don't have to worry about buying food, you don't think about what you spend money on, you can buy fizzy pop and sweets. But when you move out you have to budget for meals, rent, and paying your bills. The House Project just made me think; you have to pay attention, and you can't take money for granted.

The other young people are there to support you too if you've got too much responsibility on. It's important to help people take on their responsibilities, if someone needs helping. In my eyes, I would want someone to do what I'm doing. If I was struggling, I would want someone to sit down with me and help me make it make sense. If someone is struggling, they need help to get what needs getting done, done. Routine is important, because it's knowing what responsibilities you've got. It helps mentally to understand, and plan, what you've got to do.

When I started the House Project programme, I felt I took responsibility for my actions but now I take responsibility for a lot more. I take responsibility for how my actions impact on others too, particularly in my role as a Care Leaver National Movement representative. Being a representative was a whole new responsibility, and I've been planning new things, events in our House Project, and taking a lead in my cohort. It's important to make sure that young people going through care have a voice. Not everyone wants to talk to project leads, but I can pass on their message, make sure people have a choice and help them. I think we should give everyone an opportunity to take a role and learn leaderships skills.

Katie, a peer researcher



Young people define responsibility in action

Responsibility means very different things to different young people in House Projects, depending on their lived experience. For some, responsibility is simply defined in the day to day tasks that they have had to take on.

“Probably, in the house making sure stuff is on time, keeping the house clean, that’s responsibility to me.”

“Generally, like your day to day tasks like washing up, getting into the bath, that’s your responsibility and no one else’s.”

Many young people related responsibility to a sense of adulthood, and maturity. This is partly due to the large number of new tasks that they were now responsible for, like shopping, cooking, or paying bills.

“It means going for the shopping, doing adult things.”

“It means a lot. Being mature.”

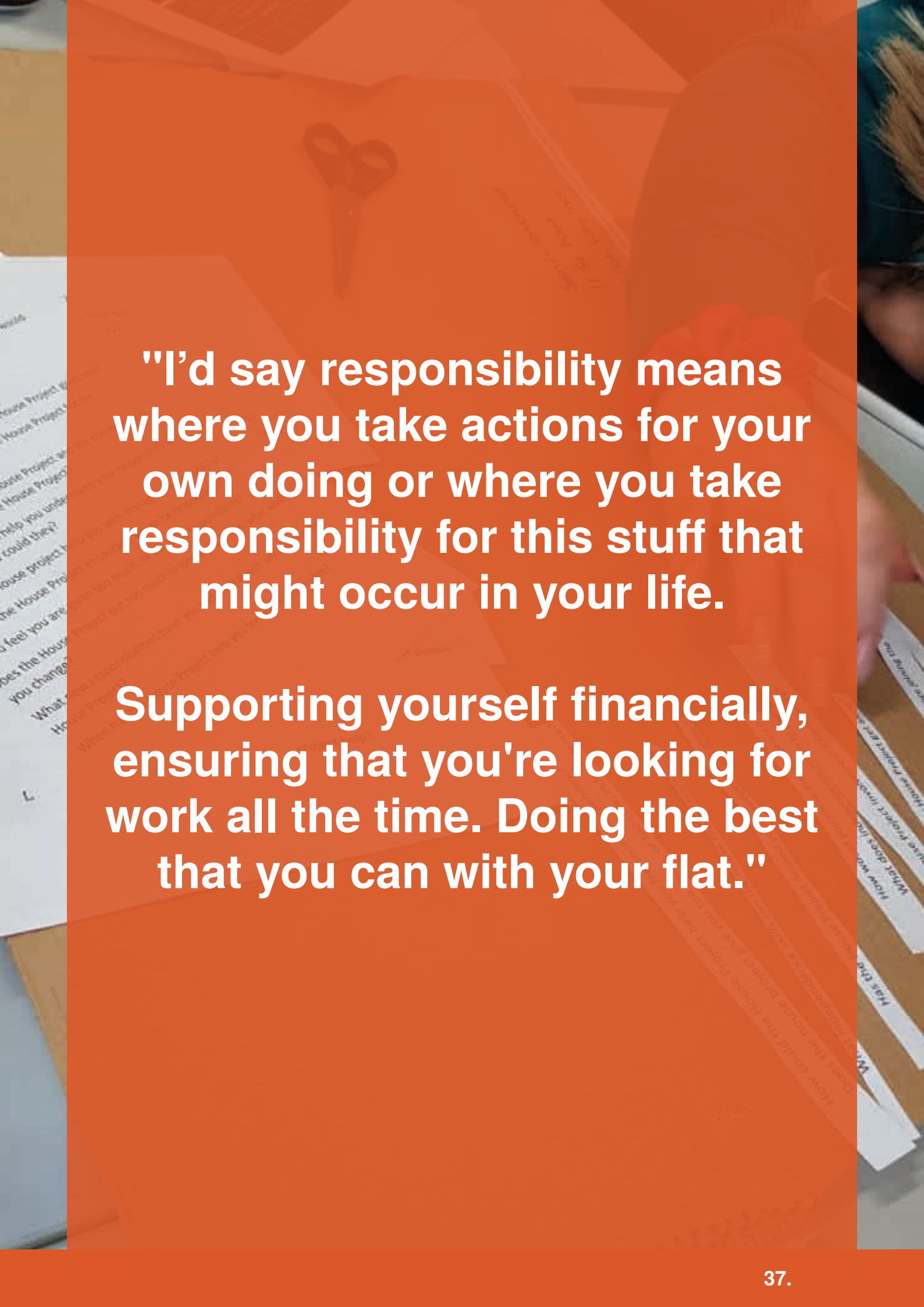
“Responsibility is obviously, being an adult and being mature and taking actions. Being grown up about situations.”

However, what came across the clearest from young people was that responsibility was linked to actions that we take ownership or accountability for.

“Ownership. Taking ownership of your actions.”

“Being accountable for your actions, like making sure you’re organised in every aspect; so time, cleanliness, looking after yourself.”

“When I get my flat, I’m responsible for looking after it, making sure it’s neat. Making sure it’s clean, making sure it doesn’t get messy. Being responsible for who comes into my flat, be responsible for who knows where my flat is.”



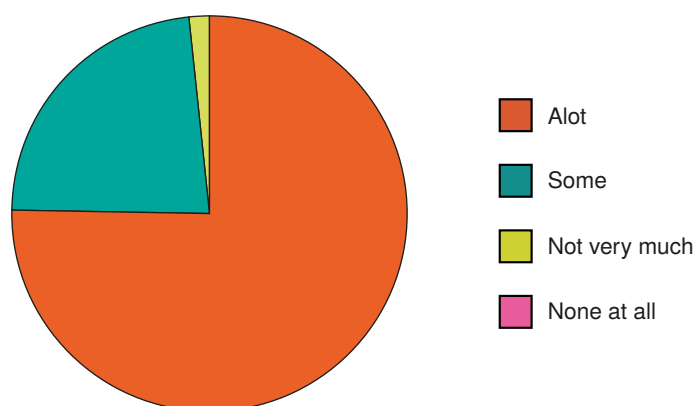
"I'd say responsibility means where you take actions for your own doing or where you take responsibility for this stuff that might occur in your life.

Supporting yourself financially, ensuring that you're looking for work all the time. Doing the best that you can with your flat."

The House Project gives young people responsibilities

We spoke to young people at different stages of their journey with their House Project and looked at the responsibilities that they had been given. Almost all young people in the survey (98%) said that the House Project provided them with responsibilities, with three out of four (75%) saying it gave them a lot of responsibility.

How much responsibility does the House Project give you?



There are three key themes in the additional responsibilities that young people spoke about:

1. House Project specific work

Young people are aware of their regular responsibilities to their House Project; turning up for meetings, doing the module work and their behaviours in that community.

“Making sure I'm here for the meetings, making sure I am able to do this where I have to travel. I'm one of the representatives for Rotherham, so also when we've got our meetings.”

2. Independent living and personal goals

Young people said that since joining the House Project they have been made more aware of certain day to day responsibilities like cooking and cleaning, and more long-term responsibilities like employment.

“Doing module work, working the washing machine in the house. It's the little things you didn't have to think about that, like 'what temperature should the fridge be at'...”

When considering the new responsibilities that they have had to deal with since joining the House Project a common theme was the positive impact of routine and stability associated in managing responsibilities.

“They have shown me that what I needed in life is stability and awareness of my own safety.”

We asked: "Does the House Project explain and help you understand your responsibilities within and outside the project?"

Yeah, the main thing in the House Project is responsibility because they want to improve our independent life.

Yeah, obviously, we can speak to them about anything, like whenever and all the time, which is obviously helpful.

Yeah, like being mindful of neighbours. They've lived there 40 years, so they hate me being there. But uh, they've helped me with my college. Because when I moved in, I stopped going, I refused to go, but they helped me get back on track.

It really helped with budgeting a lot and help us understand what we what we need monthly, weekly. They went into depth about our bills. They're helping us find electricity bills. So they help a lot. As I said earlier, it's good so we were prepared mentally. So we have to be organised when the time comes.

Yeah, definitely inside the House Project services, they do the sessions to teach you new skills, which is obviously you take responsibility.

Yea, they are real good with the information, to be fair. I always got like a big booklet. Got loads of information in.

Yeah. When we're in our meetings they give you a lot of responsibilities, and when they give us like stuff to do, they make sure sure we can do them. You've got to take it up.

Yeah, like we have a portfolio. And then we're meant to upload stuff like our cooking, what we're doing, like the washing, just do that videos to show that you can live independently, independently. And that we can cope on our own.

Yeah, they went through things at the start, teaching you to do things yourself

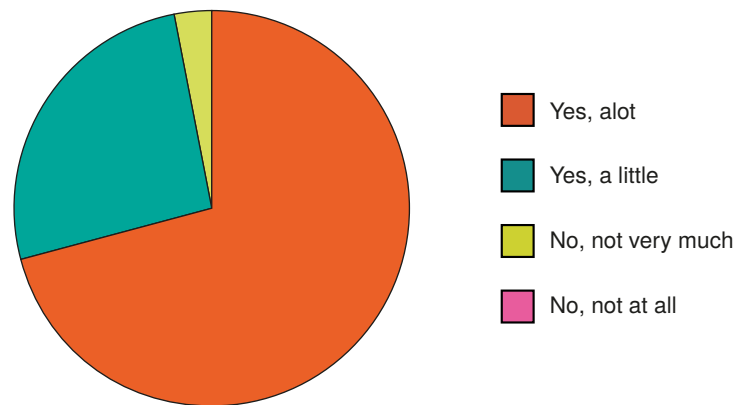
Uhm, you get a lot of support and help from (staff), they'll sit down and help you with everything, from college work to home projects, whatever you need your support.

The House Project staff are key in supporting young people

While we found that other young people in the House Project were key in creating a sense of community, we found that staff were key in supporting young people with their responsibility.

Firstly, almost all young people in the survey (97%) said that the House Project supports them to help deal with their responsibilities. Similar to previous findings on wellbeing, the relationship that young people have with staff is vital to their ability to cope with responsibility.

Does the House Project support you with your responsibilities?



“If I'm having concerns about stuff, I'll go to (my facilitators), because they helped me a lot and they can usually help me deal.”

Often it is just supporting with reminders, and advice, around taking out the bins. Though in many cases, the support that staff provide seemingly goes above and beyond, through informal contact via texts or emails.


“Whenever (my facilitator) texts me, he just lets me know that I need to do this, to go ahead with this.... he's basically telling me I need to keep all my actions I'm doing in a good way.”

The trust built between staff and young people is key as support for responsibility is often very informal in nature. The relationship needs to be at a point where young people feel comfortable to approach staff.

Recommendation 5

Create more consistency with staff and look at how new staff are introduced

New staff and staff turnover can be disruptive for young people. Local House Project should explore how new staff are introduced to young people with extensive bios and attentional relationship building activities.



**“If something were too much
for me, I'd always make sure
I'd tell someone.**

**I've done that before where
I've had too much and not
telling anyone and it's gone
bad.”**

5. Sense of direction

Young people's sense of direction is unique

The House Project expands the goals of young people

Introduction

Sense of direction is massive and without it I would feel lost. The things that give me direction are being part of groups that I can share experiences in such as Care Leavers National Movement and the Care Leavers Forum in Wolverhampton.

My family motivates me each day. With my foster carers, I now call them Mum and Dad, which filled a hole in my heart. Not having my Mum, or not having my Dad, but having this family is everything to me. Having this Mum and Dad are always going to be there for you. That gives me a motivation to keep going.

I think the modules I learn at House Project helps motivate me. Seeing you can't do something, builds a goal in your head. For example, you don't know how to cook proper meals, so there's modules around doing your own shop, cooking your own meals. It starts simple, I want to cook this meal, so you buy ingredients, you look for a recipe online. I've learnt a lot from House Project, especially around mental, to believe in myself more. I wanted to learn how to pay bills, and now I know how to pay bills. I didn't realise how simple it was until I did it. It's just a few details online, I thought I had to send off a cheque, and wait for a letter that says well done you've paid your rent. My facilitators helped me with that, and everyone at the House Project.

Having routine in my life gives my sense of direction a rooting, an example of this would be when I go for dinner with my mum and dad every Sunday. I love this, as well as structure it gives me an opportunity to bond with my siblings over baking a cake. I love keeping my body and mind active by attending the gym and mindfulness classes.

Now I want to do multiple things; finish college with a good grade, I want to finish decorating my flat (I'm not painting my walls), go on holiday (I haven't gone on holiday in years), and I want to be a PPO at Sea Cadets. It stands for probational petty officer. If I become a PPO, I get teach cadets without supervisor, and run my own courses. I guess it means freedom, and independence, from years being a cadet, proving to the staff members that I can look after cadets.

Shawna, a peer researcher



Young people's sense of direction is unique

We found that sense of direction comes from the goals that young people have and the tangible things that they want to achieve in the future.

“Sense of direction is obviously, for me is to know what I want in the future. Such as like my career, or anything in general.”

Some young people are motivated by money, and specific goals in their careers and with employment, while others are motivated by personal goals of wellbeing or happiness.

“Money. I’m very money motivated.”

“Thinking about the future, all the happy stuff that I want in my life, just the little things that might not seem like they matter, but they do. I just keep them in the back of my mind.”

As such, the source of a young person's sense of direction is deeply personal and informed by their lived experience.

“This is personal to me, but (someone close to me) passed away in March. She passed away, and at her funeral, it made me realise that you’ve only got one life and you have to live it to its fullest.”

Recommendation 6

Create a stronger careers advice and guidance offer for young people, with work experience opportunities and apprenticeship support

Provide more tailored one to one employment support, careers advice and guidance. Help young people move towards what they want, not just into education. The National House Project should support Local House Projects to expand the work experience opportunities young people have, to enable them to try out a range of career options, and educational choices like degree apprenticeships.

We asked: "Has the House Project helped give you a sense of direction? How?"

Yeah, they like they push us forward by trying to push us forward, like help us to push ourselves forward to be able to be independent. For when we're older, for example, and when we're living alone.

It's given me a sense of direction. When I was going through care, I didn't really have much of a want or a need to do shit. To move forward in life. That's the reason I didn't want to really go to college or do anything. But once got into the House Project, I wanted to start get my own place and moving along, I understood what I needed to do, what I wanted to do and what my path is.

Yeah, yeah, a lot, actually. Because....uh, wow it's getting deep yeah? If I weren't on the Housing Project, I'd be messing my life up.

They have because like, they helped me to like get a job and they help me with interviews and making me friends because I've always gone for toxic people that tend to mess me about. So they've helped me like get in a better community and like help more with that.

I probably gave me a direction to get my own place.

Yeah, it has. It's really has. It's given me confidence that I know I'm ready now. I was scared at the start, of being alone and having a flat. It's scary isn't it?

Yeah, something to look forward to. Where I can actually have something that's mine, that I can call my flat.

I would say yes, because they help direct you in the right place, the right places to go, where you can speak to them if there's something going on with your house.

The House Project expands the goals of young people

We found that young people develop and expand their sense of direction during their time with the House Project. Almost all the young people in the survey (97%) said that they have a goal for the future.

This is because, from the very start of their involvement, there is a house at the end of the project that provides a clear goal.

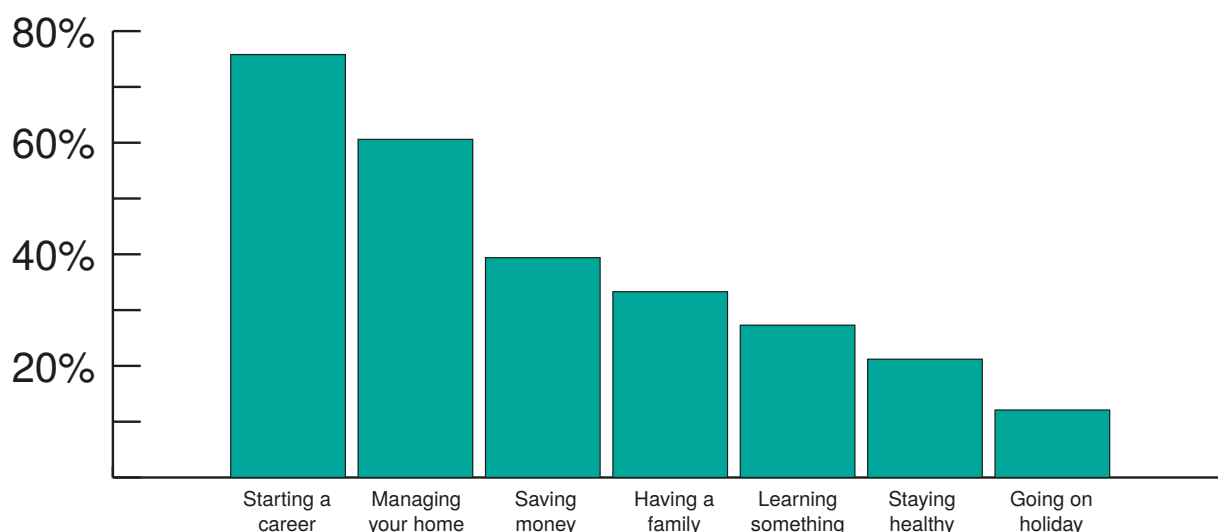
“Yeah, something to look forward to. I can't wait till the end of it. Where I can have something that's mine, that I can call my flat.”

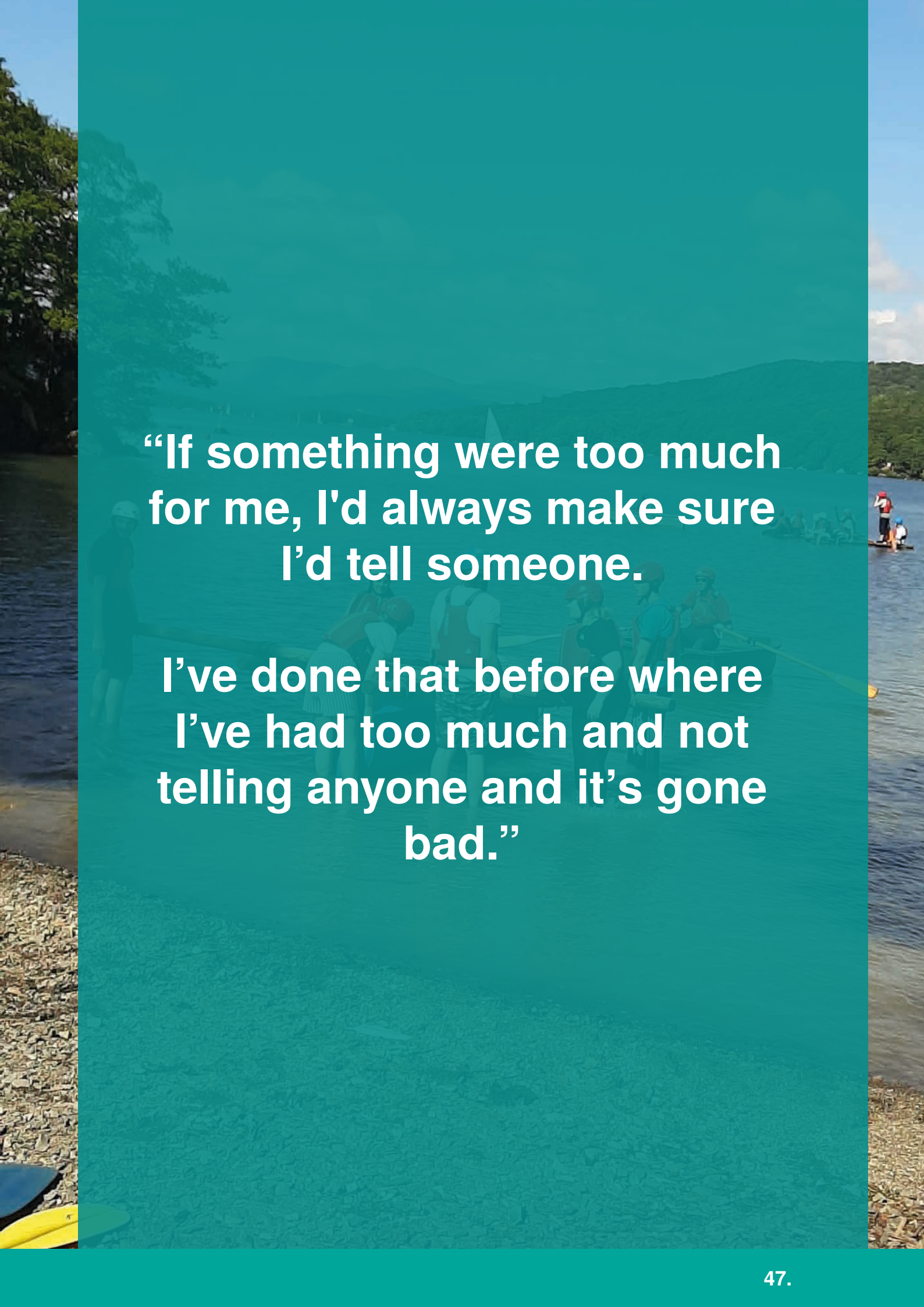
However, the house at the end of the project almost acts like a gateway to other goals. Young people start with a goal of a house which leads to the goal of living independently which then leads to goals around employment and education.

“It's given me a sense of direction. When I was going through care, I didn't really have much of a want or a need to move forward in life. That's the reason I didn't want to really go to college or get an education or do anything. But once got into the House Project, I wanted to start get my own place and moving along, I understood what I needed to do, what I wanted to do and what my path is.”

This is reflected in the survey, where we asked young people what their goal for the future was. They told us about the diverse range of goals they had. In fact, the most common goal, for three out of four respondents (75%) was starting a career followed by, managing a home (60%), saving money (39%) and having a family (33%).

Does the House Project support you with your responsibilities?



A group of people are in a canoe on a lake. The background shows mountains and trees. The scene is overlaid with a teal gradient.

“If something were too much for me, I'd always make sure I'd tell someone.

I've done that before where I've had too much and not telling anyone and it's gone bad.”

A young man with light brown hair, wearing a dark suit, a light blue shirt, a patterned tie, and a dark face mask, stands in a clothing store. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The store has racks of clothes and a mirror in the background. The entire image has a purple tint.

5.

Independence

**Young people feel independent,
and want to be independent**

**The House Project helps young
people to live independently**

Introduction

Independence is a vital aspect of the House Project goals when helping young people be prepared for independent living. For myself this was a large turning point within my thinking as from a young age I was independently looking after myself as well as being a young carer. For a long time I treated my responsibilities and problems by myself as I believed this is what came with independence. I joined the project when I was 16, still thinking of my independence in this way.

Through my time progressing through the House Project I learned all the responsibilities I would be taking, the skills I must implement, as well as how to tackle things I had already faced in the past. This helped me understand that independence is not managing your life by yourself but knowing within yourself when other's help is the best option and when you have the tools and agency to handle it yourself. This meant that when I moved in, I felt comfortable telling my facilitators what I'm struggling with or what has gone wrong and they would not sort the problem for me but assist me in doing it myself. This meant that I was never reliant on the help to complete these tasks but instead I was guided through the processes so that I had the skills to tackle it in the future.

Now I have the skills I need to manage and look after the things in my life. I feel confident that I don't need the continued assistance of my facilitators but know that I could come to them if I needed help and I would receive that help without judgement.

Independence is such an important aspect of the House Project journey. Without it a lot of other key aspects fall apart.

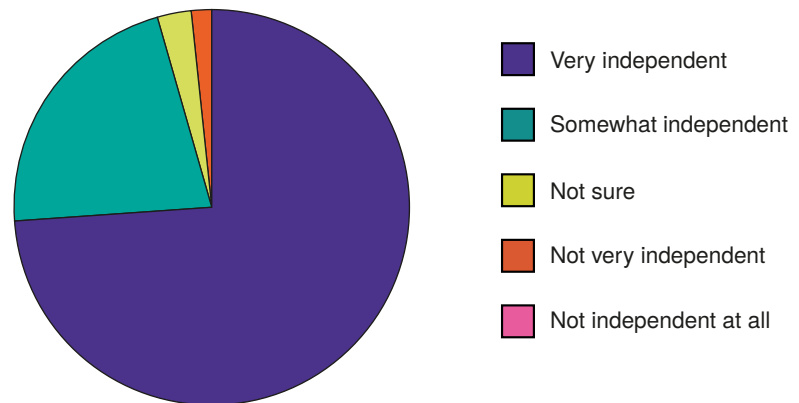
Marshall, a peer researcher

Young people feel independent, and want to be independent

In both the surveys and interviews, young people said that they feel independent. In the survey, almost all (95%) said that they felt 'independent', with most (74%) feeling 'very independent', and some (21%) feeling 'somewhat independent'.

To young people independence means not only taking on responsibility and taking action, but without support, choice, and confidence.

How independent do you feel?




“Being able to like, pay for stuff yourself, being able to keep up with stuff, like paying for bills. Just being able to be like a functioning adult without needing help.”

“I feel like, choice, having more choice. Like before, living in residential, I didn't have much choice, had to come home, couldn't choose what you wanted to eat.”

Young people are also looking forward to living independently. The vast majority in the survey (96%) said that they were looking forward to moving into their home, and most (95%) said they were 'positive' or 'very positive' about living alone.

“I do feel capable of living alone, I would probably just need someone else just to help abit.”

A group of people are seated at tables in a meeting room. In the background, a whiteboard is visible with some faint markings. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple rectangle containing white text.

“Definitely. If you met me before I joined the housing project, I wouldn’t be talking to you like how I am now, I would of just sat in the corner and been quiet.

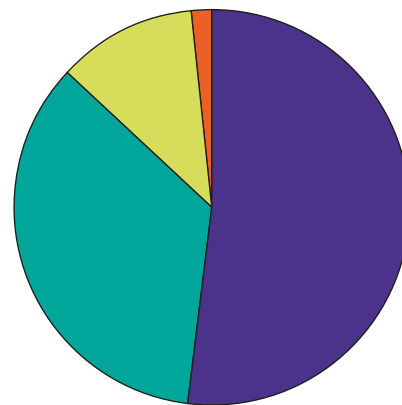
But the House Project has properly improved my confidence and improving my confidence has improved my independence.”

The House Project helps young people to live independently

We found that, like responsibility, the House Project supports young people to live independently. Most young people in the survey (87%) said that the House Project has had a positive impact on their ability to live independently, with over half (52%) saying it had a 'very positive' impact.

What impact, if any, has the House Project had on you living independently?

“Just when it has come to problems like the house and that, and they try and get me to do it myself.”



- Very positive impact
- Positive impact
- No impact
- Negative impact
- Very negative impact

Interestingly though, young people clearly associate the goal of getting a house, with living independently, and living independently as living without support. However, this can cause risks as young people focus less on healthy interdependence and potentially risk isolation.

“It taught me that, when you’re moving in, that it is basically you, yourself, that you got to depend on yourself. At the end of the day, that’s your flat, it has your name on it, it’s yours.”

“Surviving on your own really. Looking after yourself, not relying on other people.”

Recommendation 7

The House Project should provide ways for young people to ask for specific support and help in a discreet way, and provide more unsolicited support

Many young people feel independent and do not feel comfortable asking for support. There should be ways that young people can seek support discreetly. Young people as part of Local House Projects should get unsolicited support, like food drops, that would help them when they least expect it.

We asked: "Do you feel more independent since joining the House Project, if so, why?"

Yes, I feel very independent. Because through the meetings that we have, they help us to become more independent.

Personally. The place I had before was a stepping stone between the care home and the House Project. I was already doing my own clothes, shopping, cleaning, and all of that. But it has helped, but I already had skills.

Yeah, I do. And before doing the House Projects, I wasn't cooking my own food and wasn't doing my own washing. Just sitting in my room all day, I still sit in my room all day. But now I do my own washing, cook food every now and again.

Mostly, but I think for me, everything I was doing, I was doing before I joined the House Project. It was more the fact that I just needed somebody to help me. Get my phone bill set, because doing things myself can be quite stressful for me.

Yeah, because obviously, I've been allowed to make mistakes and learn from them and also has been allowed to have my own property which has let me be independent..... I'd say when I first moved in, because they obviously kept that distance, so I could get used to them living on my own. So I had that independence of trying to learn it all on my own.

Yeah, I feel independent, because they helped me get my first job.

Yeah. They helped me get my own place. They helped me sort out my bills. They got me into a line of work. To the point where now I'm looking at my own jobs. I'm doing my own work. I'm paying for my own bills.

What next?

We want professionals to read this report, to understand the House Project and care leavers more, so they can customise their support and tailor it around what we have found out. We need to hold the National House Project to account, so there's always questions around their decisions, to make improvements, and so that people can understand why they make their decisions.

The role of The Care Leavers National Movement is to get policies changed at local House Projects and talk about problems at a national level. If there's one problem in one House Project, I would talk about that, see if anyone else relates to it in other House Projects to see how big the problem is, and work together to change it.

I want the National House Project to implement changes based on the recommendations of this report, to improve local House Projects. For me, personally I want to see changes like more employment support. I know they've started to hire young people, but I want to have more knowledge on how recruitment works, and for care leavers to get help with their CV or training on how to do a good job interview.

It's important to create change from this report, so that the investment on time has been worth it. We've learnt about different things, gone to all these different House Projects, and spoken to and interviewed to all these young people, care leaver to care leaver. We want to see the results, in the next few weeks, months, years, whenever, but we want to see results. Change is important because it helps makes the House Project better, it's a great thing, but it can always be better.

lbs, a peer researcher

Roles

22nd October 2021

Narrator: Katie, Rachel Dickenson

Catering: Byron, Triniti, (Trustee)
*Kelly, *Sakina, Kyha

Welcomes: Shawna, Louise, *Rebecca, *mark

CLNM Intro: Louise, *Nikita, Tan

Peer Evaluation: *Sakina, Nathan, *Matt

Partnerships: *Ibs, Rebecca, *Sue

Story so far: *Marshall, Sean, Feabien

Tech ^{stage} Guy: JJ, Luke, Marshall (Sean^A)

Outro: Louise, Nikita



THE NATIONAL HOUSE PROJECT

Partnership
for Young
London

The National House Project
www.houseproject.org

Partnership for Young London
www.partnershipforyounglondon.org.uk