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# **Making a House a Home: The House Project Evaluation**

**Research report**

**March 2017**

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# 1. Executive Summary

## The House Project

The Stoke-on-Trent House Project (HP) represents a new way of supporting care leavers to take control of their transitions to independent living and to have greater involvement and choice in creating a long-term home after care. It aimed to improve young people's housing stability and satisfaction and, from that base, wider post-care outcomes including participation in education, employment and training (EET), general wellbeing and integration through opportunities to develop greater autonomy and transferable skills.

The HP is a housing company based on a tenant-managed housing co-operative model, run for, and by, young people aged 16-18 who are leaving care. It comprises a staff team, (including facilitators to support young people) and a range of partner agencies (including a legal team, architect and training company). The model involves the transfer of void properties from the council to the HP on a short-term lease and peppercorn rent. The aim is to secure 10 properties at any one time, replacing allocated properties when they revert to the council. The 10 properties are allocated to House Project young people (known collectively as HP10) under HP tenancy agreements, alongside a bespoke package of support until the young person is considered ready and able to transition out of the project, at which point they and their home revert to a standard long-term council tenancy. The project involves young people working with the architect and project management team to refurbish the property, to engender a sense of ownership and enable them to create a home that meets their needs.

The HP provided the first cohort of young people with opportunities to take an active role in developing and running the HP company. In addition to the support they received to set up the company, young people received targeted support with independent living skills and EET. The HP aimed to support 10 young people to move into their HP homes in the first year of operation. Project delays meant that only 5 had moved in at the time of reporting.

The funding model, which pools the accommodation and living costs allocated to 16 and 17 year olds leaving care, aimed to create a more efficient and effective use of resources by distributing costs across the group and procuring bespoke packages of support to meet individual and group needs. Monies cover the cost of rent and utilities, the HP staff team and the procurement of services from partners and other agencies as needed.

## The evaluation aims and methodology

The evaluation aimed to understand the enablers and challenges involved in developing and implementing the HP model and to explore if and how it had effected outcomes for care leavers. Mixed methods were used which, given the small sample size (n=11),



involved a mainly qualitative approach underpinned by participatory methods. This involved working with HP young people to agree research questions and interpret findings.

The methodology comprised a process strand to understand how the HP was operating in practice (interview and surveys with HP staff, partner agencies, young people and their social workers or PAs); and an impact strand to explore the HP's effect on early outcomes (housing stability, EET participation and wellbeing) for young people and their experiences of setting up and participating in the HP (interviews and surveys with young people, social workers/PAs).

Data for both strands were collected at the start of the HP (T1), midpoint (T2) and at follow-up (T3) in March 2016 when the evaluation officially ended. Due to delays in young people moving into tenancies, the evaluation re-opened in November 2016 (T4) to gather post-move data for 5 young people who had moved into their tenancies since March 2016. The short time frame and small sample limited the extent to which outcomes could be achieved and measured. This evaluation, therefore, reports on early indicators of progress.

## **Main findings**

There was evidence that the HP had made good progress towards achieving its aims and intended outcomes, albeit slower than planned. During the first year of implementation, the HP model had been redesigned and established as a Company Limited by Guarantee. It had secured and fully refurbished 5 properties (with a further 4 properties underway) and 5 young people out of the first cohort of 10 had moved into their new homes. The staff team was in place, having undergone some changes of personnel, and the HP Board was operational. Most of the HP10 had contributed to setting up the project, with a central group taking on the majority of activities to develop, promote and sustain the project. There was a high degree of support for the project amongst the partners, and positive feedback on progress from the stakeholders, including the young people and their lead professionals. The project had, nevertheless, encountered a number of challenges to achieving intended outcomes, some of which had been overcome and some of which were dependent on the progression of the project and participation in it, over the longer term.

## **Process findings – implementing the HP**

Ambitious and delayed timescales presented challenges to implementation. Lengthy and complex processes were necessary to create a robust legal framework for establishing the HP as a company; negotiating contracts for leasing properties; and creating governance structures and tenancy agreements. It was felt that the complexities of setting up such a project within a local authority environment had been underestimated, and that the original 6-month time frame for moving young people into their homes had been unrealistic. Further delays were encountered after a change in council administration, when local

elections led to the need to renegotiate agreements at senior level to enable the project to continue.

The innovative nature of the project proved to be an obstacle to gaining buy-in and support as it required changes to existing systems across council departments, for example, changes to housing allocation policies and to financial systems for care leavers. The perceived risk of handing over properties to be managed by the HP company, which afforded young people a high degree of control, was also described as “anxiety provoking” (L1) and a further obstacle to gaining the necessary senior buy-in and permissions within the original time frame.

Some issues arose due to the level of participation and engagement required of young people. The first related to variable levels of engagement in HP activities that resulted in a core group taking on most tasks and raising questions about the co-operative nature of the project. Related to this were the reasons for non-participation. In some cases, EET, or other commitments, had prevented regular participation; however, there was concern that young people could feel overwhelmed by taking on HP activities at a time of transitioning from care. Staff queried whether business and legal tasks could be undertaken “behind the scenes” (F2) or prior to the project going live, without compromising the co-operative and young-person-led ethos of the project. This highlighted the need for an experienced and skilled staff team to provide the required level and breadth of support to young people. Bringing a new team together and establishing a cohesive working approach had taken up time in the early stages of the project, suggesting that using an established team or addressing staffing issues prior to the start of the project would have proved more effective.

Despite these early difficulties, the project was able to get back on track. The perseverance and commitment of staff and young people as project champions proved invaluable to raising awareness of the need for the HP and to obtaining support across the council and partners. Senior level buy-in, including support from the corporate parenting panel, once in place, was an essential component in recognising common goals and opening up channels for negotiating joint protocols across departments, and agreeing mechanisms to protect against negative outcomes for the council, young people and the HP. The obstacles encountered, and the HP’s experiences of addressing them, has demonstrated the need for sufficient time to carry out the groundwork; establish systems for supporting staff and young people, and providing the necessary reassurances and robust safeguards when pushing the boundaries and embarking upon change in local authority settings.

## **Impact findings – experiences and early outcomes for young people using the HP**

Having a home of my own would change my life for the better in so many ways. It would bring me stability, something I've not had much of in my life. (Aaron)

Ten of the 11 young people who entered the HP were looked after children aged 16 - 17 years. Five were in foster or residential care, whilst 6 had left their care placement and were living in semi-independent accommodation at baseline. Data on care history showed a degree of placement instability with an average of 8 placement moves for the group.

Information gathered at follow-up on experiences of being part of the HP was mostly positive. Young people welcomed the chance to choose and create their own homes, as well as having access to individual and flexible support. They reported increased confidence, communication skills, and feelings of community and integration. The negative aspects almost exclusively related to delays in being allocated their HP homes. In addition to creating uncertainty for the young people, the delayed move-in dates impacted on leaving-care planning and required flexibility from existing carers and accommodation providers to ensure that young people could remain until their HP home was ready.

Although the short follow-up time frame limited the outcome data, there was some cautious indication of improvements in young people's wellbeing and in early progress across outcomes. Most had maintained participation in EET (a condition of membership of the HP) over the first year of the project and 8 had remained stable in their baseline accommodation whilst waiting to move into their HP home. The remaining 2 had moved to temporary accommodation prior to moving to their HP home.

## **Implications and recommendations**

At a time when much focus is on delaying the move from care and expanding transitional options, the HP offers, to those for whom this is not possible or desirable, a highly supported move to their own tenancy. In doing so, it represents an interesting and innovative addition to the range of accommodation options for young people leaving care.

Sustainability and replication of the HP model relies on the availability of sufficient and suitable council housing stock and, under the funding arrangements, maintaining a flow of 16 and 17 year old care leavers into the project, and successful tenants out of the project. It also requires continued cross-departmental buy-in. There is potential for the HP to be an option for older care leavers aged 18+, perhaps stepping down from Staying Put or other semi-supported options; however, this might require revision to the current funding model.

Evidence from the HP suggests a number of recommendations for the future development of the model to ensure that it can offer care leavers, particularly aged 16-17, the protection they need to make a well-planned and safe transition from care to independent living. This

includes a skilled and experienced staff team; access to intensive and flexible support, including continued support and case responsibility from leaving care services; creating robust safeguards to ensure young people are suitable for the project and only move in to their tenancy when they are ready; and having contingency plans to safely manage changes to leaving care plans, exits from the project, housing breakdowns and evictions.

The second phase of the HP will see its continuation in Stoke, and expansion to other local authorities. To date, the HP has made significant progress in achieving its aims by creating considerable opportunities and potential for young people to support each other to develop the skills, agency and self-confidence needed to make a positive transition to independent living. More time is needed to fully appraise its success in enabling these young people in the longer term, to make a HP house their home.

## 2. Overview of the project

The Stoke-on-Trent House Project (HP) created a new model of supported housing for young people leaving care. It was set up as a company limited by guarantee (CLG), based on a tenant-led housing co-operative model. The first of its kind for care leavers in the UK, it involved young people having a lead role in developing and running the overall project, as well as choosing and refurbishing their own tenancy, and identifying the support needed to sustain it. The key elements were the offer of suitable, safe and long-term post-care housing alongside a holistic and bespoke package of training and support that focused on increasing young people's independent living and personal skills and their participation in education, employment and training (EET). Its co-operative underpinnings aimed to increase young people's sense of community and integration, and their choice and overall agency in their transitions from care to independent adulthood. In doing so, it sought to reduce the feelings of isolation and powerlessness that many care leavers can experience after leaving care.

To achieve this, the HP planned to:

- secure the transfer and lease of 10 properties from council housing stock to the HP and oversee the refurbishment and allocation of properties to HP members. At any one point, 10 properties would be held by the HP for allocation to HP members under a HP tenancy agreement that mirrored the regular council tenancy agreement. Each property would remain in the HP until the young person was ready and able to manage their own home, at which point the young person and their property would revert to a regular long-term council tenancy. Reverted properties would be replaced with void properties
- recruit 10 young people aged 16-18 years, in the process of leaving care to co-design, run and become members of the HP co-operative (HP10). Young people would be supported to choose the area and the type of home they wished to live in and would take a lead role in refurbishing the property to create a home for themselves
- create a HP staff team, consisting of a project manager, project administrator, careers advisor and 2 project facilitators to provide project level support to set up the HP and individual level support for young people taking part in the HP during their transition from care, and during their tenancy with the HP
- involve partner agencies in the delivery of the HP including Project Management Training to manage and carry out the refurbishment of properties and provide traineeships to the HP young people; an architect to work alongside young people on the redesign of their properties; an independent law firm to assist with creating the HP business and governance structure; and a clinical psychologist to work with HP

staff to increase their ability to identify and respond to any signs of past trauma and mental distress amongst young people in the HP

- a HP Board was established comprising members from the council, children's services, academia, HP young people and the Spring Consortium to oversee the project. The creation of the Board addressed the realistic limitations and concerns of handing over control of the HP and its assets to young people. The Board enabled HP young people to have a democratic say in all decisions and worked "to the principle that no strategic decision will be made without the agreement of the young people" (HP Business Plan).

In addition, the HP aimed to chart the learning and necessary components for delivering the project and for facilitating young people's successful engagement to inform the future sustainability and replication. A film crew was employed to provide documentary evidence alongside that gathered by the University of York evaluation team.

## **Project aims and intended outcomes**

The overall aim of the HP was to improve outcomes for care leavers by supporting young people to have greater choice and control in when they moved from care to independent living, and in finding a long-term, sustainable home of their choice after care.

Stoke-on-Trent's Innovation Programme (IP) bid identified a range of outcomes to be addressed through the HP, as outlined in their theory of change (ToC) (see Appendix A):

Process outcomes:

- lease 10 houses from council housing stock to transfer to the HP
- establish the first housing co-operative run for, and by, young people transitioning from care to independent living
- develop a unique training and support package designed around young people's individual needs and create a new facilitator role in addition to their social worker or personal adviser (PA), to "focus entirely on supporting the young people to become resilient and independent young adults and active members of the co-operative" (ToC)
- make better use of public resources by pooling social care and housing costs and to support care leaver's access to more flexible, personal and consistent services.

Young people outcomes:

- reduced housing mobility and breakdown after care
- reduced risk behaviour such as offending and homelessness

- increased EET and independent living skills and increased confidence, self-esteem, health and wellbeing, decision making skills, and sense of agency and community
- empowering young people to take control of their housing circumstances and, from that base, wider areas of their lives, by enabling ownership of the project and their own homes.

## Research context

### Leaving Care

There is a considerable body of research and practice evidence internationally on the extent to which young people leaving care aged 16 and over face heightened challenges and poorer outcomes during their journeys to independent adulthood (Mendes and Snow 2016, Stein and Munro 2010). Care leavers take on the challenges of independent living far sooner, often aged 16-18 years, in comparison to young people in the general population, who leave home, on average, aged 28. Statistics and research findings report that, in comparison to their non-care peers, care leavers are at greater risk of housing instability and homelessness; leaving school with no qualifications; unemployment; and poorer emotional, physical and mental wellbeing. Research has also shown that these risks are greater for the early leavers who move on from their care placements aged 16 and 17 and tend to experience poorer outcomes than those who remain in their placements until aged 18 and over (Dixon et al 2006, Munro et al 2012). Messages from care leavers, gathered through research, continue to highlight experiences of isolation and loneliness after care (Dixon and Baker 2016) and wider studies of vulnerable and marginalised adults show an over representation of care leavers in groups such as the prison, homeless and long term unemployed populations, suggesting continued risk and disadvantage throughout adulthood (Stein 2012, Courtney et al 2011, DfE 2015).

Research has demonstrated the importance of finding safe and settled post-care accommodation in terms of its positive impact on other life areas after care (Wade and Dixon 2006, Barnardos 2015). A national study of early outcomes for care leavers found that a positive and stable accommodation outcome can go some way to compensating for earlier difficulties and was associated with participation in EET, positive wellbeing and life satisfaction after care (Dixon et al 2006). Studies have also indicated that for many young people transitioning from care, finding accommodation takes priority over other life areas such as EET. Furthermore, securing their own tenancy is often the preferred choice over semi-independent or transitional options, such as supported lodgings or foyers for care

leavers (Dixon et al 2015). Indeed, national figures continue to demonstrate that the most common housing type for care leavers aged 18-21 years is their own tenancy<sup>1</sup> (DfE 2015).

There has been an increased focus over the past decade on improving outcomes for care leavers and in recognising the particular vulnerability of the early leaver group. This has included significant legislative developments in the UK to support young people to stay in care longer and until they are ready and able to move on to independent living, such as Staying Put in foster placements. Despite this, recent statistics and research show variable progress. A recent study reported that one-third (33%) of care leavers in the sample felt that they had no choice in when they moved on from their last care placement (Dixon et al 2015) while in a national study of over 700 care leavers in 2016, the need for better leaving care planning, preparation and support was highlighted amongst the main messages from young people who described their experiences of leaving care as being “rushed”, “cast adrift” or “abandoned” (Dixon and Baker 2016). Data on the use of Staying Put, however, suggests an increase in its use (from 17% in 2014 to 22% in 2015 for 19 year olds), despite early concerns that it was being used as a short-term option post 18 (DfE 2015, Munro et al 2012).

Data on outcomes, gathered by the local authority in the current evaluation during a consultation with local care leavers, reflected the national picture and concluded that:

Moving to live alone at 18, having left care, does not work for many young people, who have described to us their loneliness, fear and the feeling that they have been dropped off a cliff. (IP Bid)

It was in response to this evidence that the HP was developed as a solution to get to the “heart of the issues that lay behind these poor outcomes” (HP IP Bid). This included recognising the role that stable housing after-care, and continued and personalised support to manage it, alongside help to maintain participation in EET, could play in improving overall outcomes. Furthermore, the importance of increasing young people’s choice and agency in the transition process was emphasised as key to improving and sustaining positive outcomes over the long-term and giving young people “control over their transition”. (IP Bid)

## **Tenant managed and co-operative housing models**

The HP aimed to draw on the tradition of housing co-operatives. Also known as Tenant Management Organisations, such models are often social housing organisations managed by tenants. Around 1,000 housing co-operatives were operating across the UK, ranging in

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<sup>1</sup> DfE guidance includes: independent tenancy of flat, house or bedsit, including local authority or housing association tenancy, or accommodation provided by a college or university. Includes flat sharing.



size from under 10 to over 15,000 houses, with 195,000 homes managed by co-operatives in 2013, higher than at any point in the past 40 years, and rising. This has been attributed to socio-economic, policy and legislative changes, including the withdrawal of the state in the housing arena and the recent housing crises, which led to a demand for affordable alternatives to privately owned and rented accommodation. That said, only 1% of UK housing is co-operative in comparison to up to 15% in other European countries (Gulliver et al 2013). Housing co-operatives vary in size, type, governance and in the type and range of services provided. Guidance issued by the [Confederation of Co-operative Housing \(CCH\)](#) nevertheless states that all housing co-operatives need to be clear about how they have “made informed and democratic decisions ...for governing the co-op and delivering services” and recommends accreditation to meet regulatory standards.

Such models are considered more cost effective than the social housing sector generally, demonstrating efficiencies via lower levels of rent arrears, re-lets vacancies and repair costs (Gulliver et al 2013, Newton and Tunstall 2012). Further benefits include opportunities and resources for bringing disused properties back into habitable stock; better and more efficiently maintained properties; improved community engagement, and communal spaces, and overall tenant satisfaction (Gulliver et al 2013). For example, Tenant Services Authority research reported that co-operatives outscored all other landlords in customer service, repairs and maintenance, dealing with complaints, looking after communal areas, helping with housing benefit, health and safety and neighbourhood safety (Teasdale et al 2011). Evidence has also shown that housing co-operatives provided better value for money than other housing models (Price Waterhouse 1995).

There is a tradition across European examples, of co-ops developing to meet the needs of vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, including those in low-paid jobs or unemployed; homeless people, and young adults unable to get a foot on the housing ladder, and, as in one UK example, students ([Birmingham Student Housing Co-operative](#)).

Bringing together evidence of the housing, and wider benefits, to tenants and communities, and of the potential efficiencies to accommodation providers, housing co-operative models could offer a response to some of the challenges faced by care leavers taking on their own tenancies and also the challenges faced by local authorities and corporate parents responsible for ensuring care leavers have access to safe and suitable post-care homes. An important consideration, however, is the age limit for co-operative membership, where legal and contractual obligations might make its availability to those under the age of 18 restricted.

### **Tenant and homeowner training**

The HP model aimed to support young people to become “good tenants” (F1) through a package of skills training such as DIY, paying bills and instilling a sense of pride and ownership. Examples of tenant pre-tenancy training schemes (mostly involving financial

competency training) are designed to reduce the causes of housing breakdown and maintain the condition of properties and local areas (Collard et al 2012, Wallace, 2016).

## Changes to the project's intended activities

First, the intention for the HP to be a housing co-operative changed to it becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) based on co-operative principles. The HP set out to create a housing co-operative. However, the legal process associated with co-operatives required members to be aged 18 and over and meant that young people leaving care aged 16 -17 (the target age range for HP) could not, therefore, become full co-operative members. To address this, the HP was created as a CLG instead. A CLG model is often used for community projects, societies and charities. Most are not-for-profit companies (that is, profits are not distributed to members but reinvested in the company or used for services or items). CLGs do not have shareholders or, therefore, owners: instead they have members who run the company alongside a board of directors. Membership can be offered at different levels with varying types of rights, for example, where membership includes minors, as in the case of HP. The main purpose of a CLG is to protect those running the company from personal liability for any debts (see [Company Law Club](#)).

Second, delays in HP set-up postponed the transfer of properties to the HP. The HP aimed to provide houses for 10 HP members within the first year of operation, with the first group moving in by January 2016. Delays led to fewer young people taking up tenancies and none had moved in by the end of the main data collection in March 2016. Delays were attributed to the complex legal processes of setting up the HP company and a change of administration within Stoke council after local elections, in which key personnel, who had been involved in the early support and implementation of the HP, stepped down.

## Local authority context

The local authority is a unitary council providing key services to a population of 261,000 residents, including 35,100 young people aged 15-24 years. The area was rated the 13<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority in the UK in 2015, despite significant regeneration in recent years ([DCLG Indices of Deprivation](#)). Around 20% of working-aged residents were unemployed and the area had 20% fewer managerial, administrative or professional households than the national average, whilst the rate of residents claiming benefits, including in-work benefits, was around 25% higher than the national average. The area also had a lower rate of home ownership than the national average ([I Live Here data](#)). Of the 43 people registered as unintentionally homeless in the area in 2015, 26% (11) were young people aged 16–24 years ([DCLG Homelessness Statistics](#)). Despite high levels of housing need, reports in 2014 showed that Stoke-on-Trent had a higher level of empty properties, representing 4% of the city's housing stock, in comparison to the national

average of 3% ([Stoke Sentinel](#)). Several local schemes have been created to return empty and derelict properties to use ([Stoke-on-Trent Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy](#)).

In 2015, the local authority's population included 610 looked after young people, 85 of whom were aged 16-18 and within the age bracket for the HP. Nationally, care leavers aged 19, 20 & 21 are tracked via their EET and accommodation status. Results in 2015 for 155 young people within the age-range in Stoke, showed 32% (50) were engaged in EET, lower than the national figure, of 61% of all care leavers aged 19-21 in EET. Just over three-quarters (77%, 120) of Stoke's care leavers in the age-range were considered to be living in suitable accommodation, lower than the national figure (81%). The most common type of accommodation for Stoke's care leavers in the age range was independent living (45%), as was the case nationally (DFE 2015).

### 3. Overview of the evaluation

The aim of the evaluation was to describe the HP, understand the enablers and challenges involved in developing and delivering the model, and to explore whether and how it had affected outcomes for care leavers. In doing so, it aimed to contribute learning on how the HP was working and what might be needed for sustainability and replication.

The methodology comprised a process strand to understand how the HP was operating in practice in the local authority; and an impact strand to explore the HP's effect on the early outcomes for the young people and their experiences of involvement in the HP.

#### Evaluation questions

The main evaluation questions included:

- What does the HP involve and how was it developed, implemented and operated?
- What are the facilitators and challenges of introducing this type of opportunity and if and how any challenges have been overcome?
- Who are the young people using the programme and what are their experiences?
- Did the HP achieve its intended aims and outcomes for the setting up the HP and for improving accommodation, EET and wellbeing outcomes for young people?

The short project time frame (10 months) and small sample size limited the extent to which some outcomes could realistically be achieved. This evaluation, therefore, reports on indicators of overall progress towards achieving longer-term outcomes.

#### Methodology

The evaluation used mixed methods, which, given the small sample size (11), involved a mainly qualitative approach underpinned by participatory methods. Co-production techniques were used to ensure that the evaluation activities were aligned to the overall aims of the HP to empower young people to have a say in all aspects of the project. This involved working closely with young people to agree the methods of data collection and identify evaluation questions that reflected young people's views on what success of the HP would look like.

Data were collected at 4 key time points (T):

- T1 – baseline (October/November 2015) process and impact data
- T2 - midpoint (varied points between T1 and T3) impact data only

- T3 – follow-up (Feb/March 2016 – main evaluation endpoint) process and impact data
- T4 – update review (October/November 2016).

## Process data

Process data comprised 9 interviews and questionnaires carried out at baseline (T1 = 6) and follow-up (T3 = 3) with the HP Team, including the HP lead, HP manager, facilitators, administrator and careers advisor (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Process data and responses.**

	<b>Participation of managers, key partners and front-line staff</b>	<b>Planned</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Response rate</b>
T1	Baseline interview with HP managers/leads	6	6	100%
T3	Follow-up interview/survey with HP staff	5	3	60%
T3	Follow-up e-surveys to key partners	6	2	33%
T3	Follow-up e-surveys to lead professionals	11	6	55%
T4	Update interview with project manager	1	1	100%
	Overall	29	18	62%

At follow-up, electronic surveys (e-surveys) were sent to key partners involved in the HP for example, managers of the leaving care team, housing department and the architect, psychologist, training company and film makers. However, only the architect and psychologist responded (33%, 2). An e-survey was also sent to the lead professional of each HP young person to gather general views on the HP (process data) as well as feedback on the young people's progress (impact data), with 55% (6) responding. A final interview was carried out at T4 with the HP manager to gain an update on progress since the evaluation end point. The overall response was 62% (18 data items) (See Appendix B).

## Impact data

Eleven young people were recruited to the HP during the evaluation time frame. One young person withdrew from the HP within the first few months, having opted for Staying Put, and was replaced. A further young person left the HP10 at the end of the first year. Data on all 11 young people were gathered via baseline (11) and mid-point (9) questionnaires; interviews at mid-point (4) and follow-up (4); and an adapted follow-up interview for those who missed a mid-point interview, which combined the 2 schedules (5). The evaluation team planned to interview young people around 2 months after their move

to their HP tenancy. As this was not possible during the main evaluation time frame, a short update interview was conducted with 4 of the 5 young people who had moved into their tenancy at the end of the first year and who agreed to be interviewed (see Table 2).

Data on circumstances and outcomes in accommodation and EET were gathered at T1, T3 and T4 and a measure of subjective wellbeing, using the Good Childhood Index (The Children’s Society, 2015) was gathered at T1 and T3 to explore any change over time across the 3 outcome indicators.

**Table 2: Impact data for HP young people**

	<b>Participation of young people</b>	<b>Planned</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Response rate</b>
T1	Review of application forms	11	8	72%
T1	Management information system data	11	11	100%
T1	Baseline questionnaire	11	11	100%
T2	Mid-point questionnaire (YPq2)	11	9	81%
T2	Mid-point Interview (YPint1)	11	4	36%
T2	Focus groups x 3	3	3	100%
T3	Follow-up interview Feb-March 2016	11	9*	81%
T3	Lead professional (social worker or PA) survey	11	6	55%
T4	Update focus group with non-movers	1	1	100%
T4	Interviews with young people who moved to HP tenancies	5	4	80%
	<b>Total data items</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>77%</b>

\* Five young people completed the combined version and 4 young people completed a T3 only version.

Data were also gathered from the local authority management information system, on the characteristics, care history and baseline circumstances for all 11 young people. Their motivations and aspirations for joining the HP were gathered from a review of their application forms to the HP (see Appendix B).

Four focus groups were held with young people. In most cases, attendance was low (4 or 5), and often involved the same group of attendees. The final focus group was arranged to enable those who had not yet moved into their HP tenancy to share their experiences. Only 5 young people attended and of these 2 (40%) were from the non-mover group.

In all, data were gathered for each young person involved in the HP and included 17 one-to-one interviews and an overall response rate of 77% across all data collection activities.

## Participatory approach

The participation of HP young people was central to the evaluation. Their role involved shaping the evaluation, interpreting key messages, and contributing to dissemination activities as well as providing data as evaluation participants. The voices of young people are used through this report.

Members of the HP10 met with the evaluation team 15 times over the course of the evaluation. These sessions included team-building days, focus groups, participant observation and one-to-one interviews. The range of visits allowed the evaluation team to gain an understanding of how the project was delivered, how the role of the young people evolved, and to gather data on young people's individual outcomes and experiences.

The evaluation also aimed to provide young people from the HP10 with skills-development opportunities and this included working with 5 members of the group to develop interviewing, analysis and presentation skills. Opportunities included attendance at a 2-day residential research workshop at the University of York to identify and feed back on emerging themes from the evaluation data and develop a key messages presentation. It also involved working with 4 members of the HP10 to develop and deliver 2 presentations (one describing the HP and one on young people's involvement in research), which were co-presented at an international conference on child welfare in 2016.

## Changes to the methodology

Changes to the HP time frame resulted in some changes to the evaluation methodology and timescale. None of the young people in the HP10 had moved into their HP tenancies during the evaluation time frame (August 2015 – March 2016). This meant that crucial data on transitions and support and on early outcomes post-move was not available. An additional round of focus groups with the HP10 was introduced midway through the project to compensate for a lack of outcome data. To enable some post-move data to be gathered, the evaluation re-opened briefly during October-November 2016 (7 months after the evaluation end-point) to carry out an update review. This enabled some information to be gathered from 4 of the 5 young people who had moved into their HP tenancies between July 2016 and October 2016, together with an update interview with the project manager to capture next steps for the HP.

Plans to explore value for money were restricted by the short time frame, lack of outcome data and limited information available to the evaluation team. Whilst this component of the evaluation had been highlighted during the planning stage as difficult to achieve given the small sample size and short time frame, it was hoped that some data would be available to provide an overview of any cost-savings achieved. Although this was not possible in the end, a discussion of the financial model has been included.

## 4. Key Findings

In addressing how far the HP innovation has achieved its intended outcomes, the evaluation findings report on how HP model was working in practice and the necessary conditions for progress by exploring the main challenges and facilitators involved in setting up and running the new model. The findings also provide an indication of early progress for the HP young people across key outcomes areas, such as accommodation, EET, wellbeing, self-confidence and living skills. They draw upon young people's views and experiences to explore what had gone well and not so well.

### How far did the innovation achieve its intended outcomes?

There was evidence that the HP had made good progress towards achieving its aims and intended outcomes, albeit slower than planned. During the first year of implementation, the HP model had been redesigned and established as a legal entity. It had fully refurbished 5 properties, with a further 4 properties underway, and 5 young people from the first cohort of 10 (HP10) had moved into their new homes. The staff team was in place, having undergone some changes of personnel, and the HP Board was operational. Most of the HP10 had contributed to setting up the project, with a central group taking on the majority of activities to develop, promote and sustain the project. There was a high degree of support for the project amongst the partners and positive feedback on progress from the stakeholders, including the young people and their lead professionals. The project had, nevertheless, encountered a number of challenges, some of which had been overcome and some of which were dependent on the progression of the project and participation in it, over the longer term.

## Process findings - how was the HP working in practice?

### Establishing the HP company

Setting up the HP required modifications to the housing co-operative model originally planned, and instead the legal processes resulted in the HP being formed as a CLG (in the interim at least). The aim to operate on co-operative principles remained central to the HP, meaning that young people, as tenants and potential tenants, retained a leading role in how the HP and their tenancies were managed. This included collective decision making on how the HP budget was used, what support and services were procured and in decisions about new and existing HP members, as is customary in a co-operative model.

The HP company was separate from the local authority, although a number of senior council members sat on the HP Board. Whilst the HP Board retained ultimate responsibility for regulations, assets, and major decisions, the process meant that decisions were made in consultation and agreement with the HP membership.



## The HP properties

The HP secured agreement with the local authority housing department for the transfer of void council properties to the HP on a short term lease (2 to 5 years) at a peppercorn rent. Ten properties could be leased at any one time. The HP bought in the services of the architect and training company to work closely with the HP10 to oversee and carry out the refurbishment of each young person's home.

Young people taking up properties had a tenancy agreement with the HP, alongside a package of support to help them prepare, settle in and maintain their home, and become a "good tenant" (F1). It was envisaged that as young people gained skills and confidence to fully manage their home, support from the HP would decrease and the young person and their property would be transferred to a usual secure council tenancy agreement. While some young people would be ready to move to a council tenancy sooner, it was considered that this would be achieved in 2 years. The HP tenancy agreement was designed in collaboration with the HP10 and mirrored the standard council tenancy agreement to ensure a smooth transfer when the young person and their home reverted to a council tenancy.

## The financial model

The HP aimed to achieve a long-term cost effective model of housing and support that could be self-sustainable beyond the IP funding. It aimed to provide better value for money than existing supported accommodation options for young people leaving care, by pooling the monies allocated for the accommodation and living costs of young people leaving care aged 16 aged 17 and using them to provide more personalised, and better quality, housing and support to create a sustainable home. The financial model was based on a number of assumptions related to the general costs of supporting young people leaving care.

Under the [Children Leaving Care Act 2000](#), local authorities (Children's Services) are responsible for the accommodation and living costs of most young people aged 16 and 17 leaving care. The costs for young people depend on their circumstances and level of need. Data provided by the local authority estimated the costs of high-need young people at £500 per week and £360 for other young people in 2015 (IP Bid).

The HP model was funded by pooling the payments for all 16 and 17 year olds joining the project and costed on the assumption that at least 3 high-need young people would be part of the HP at any one point. Calculations estimated that the 3 higher level payments would cover the cost of accommodation and support for all 10 young people in the HP.

Payments will be made to the HP by the local authority once young people take up their HP tenancies. The pooled budget will cover the rent, utilities, and insurance for the 10 properties and the central HP office space, with the surplus being used to cover the cost of

providing in-house support from the HP staff team and partners, and to purchase external support and services to meet the particular needs of the 10 young people as required. In this way, the HP aimed to ensure that the payments associated with the 10 care leavers were most effectively and efficiently distributed and utilised.

The leaving care grant (setting up home allowance) offered to all care leavers will remain available to individual HP young people as usual when they leave their final care placement and will be managed by the young person's social worker or PA.

At age 18, HP members will follow the usual systems for older care leavers. Those on low incomes or NEET will transfer to the usual state benefits system and become responsible for paying their rent and bills, as will be the case for care leavers who are in employment.

## **Young people in the HP**

The first cohort of young people had a relatively unique role, forming HP members (for example, tenants and potential tenants), as well as being actively involved in creating the model. This included involvement in HP planning meetings, business development training, attending legal and financial meetings, and contributing to management decisions and formulating procedures. In this sense, the experiences of this first cohort was likely to be different from that of future groups who will enter a working model, where much of the development work has been completed.

The target age group for the HP was 16 -18 years. The intention is that former HP tenants form a wider HP 'community', which will include access to support as needed (though not the full bespoke HP support offer) and invitations to HP community activities and events. It was envisaged that former HP tenants would also have a role in providing peer support and mentoring to new members.

Membership of the HP was dependent on conditions, set by the HP10 and staff team and designed to maximise the wider benefits of participation in the HP. These included a requirement for young people to be engaged in at least 16 hours of EET per week; to play an active role in the HP community, attending meetings regularly and taking up "opportunities presented through the project" (HP10 Group Rules); and to be respectful of other members and their choices and views.

## **Lessons learned - the challenges to delivering the HP**

Data from HP staff, partners, young people and social workers identified a number of challenges to running the HP during the first year of implementation (see Appendix C).

## Timescales for implementation

One of the main obstacles was meeting the ambitious timescale for setting up and operationalising the HP. Lengthy and complex processes were necessary to create a robust legal framework for establishing the HP as a company, negotiating contracts for leasing properties from the council and creating governance structures and tenancy agreements, before the properties could be transferred, renovated and allocated to young people. In hindsight, it was felt that the complexity and bureaucracy associated with setting up such a project within a local authority environment had been underestimated and that the original 6 month time frame for moving young people into their homes had been unrealistic:

It's just a traditional thing with local authorities...very slow to change policies and procedures so when you're trying to be innovative and ...want to move things rapidly, the council moves in a more sluggish way...rightly exploring how to go about changing council policies that are long written in stone. (M1)

There was also a feeling that the project team had misjudged the amount of groundwork needed before the legal aspects could even begin, "the solicitors have been brought in...but the formal structures haven't yet been agreed by Cabinet" (F2). As the manager reflected, "everything needed to be signed, sealed and delivered before we even embarked on this" (M1), including having secured the relevant council permissions.

Although initial work had taken place to obtain agreements, a change in council leadership midway through the implementation phase "profoundly affected" (L1) the project, effectively putting it on hold, which contributed considerable delays whilst fresh negotiations took place to gain agreement to continue the project:

What you need to do is work with your lead member and leader of the council...we did that under the previous regime, we had regime change and that's been where things have become more difficult. (L1 Fu)

This resulted in the HP team shifting their focus from the HP to re-negotiating agreements:

It's been a massive journey...a lack of awareness from the council...and although we got approval from the previous cabinet...we've got to go through the whole system again with the new cabinet...so we've spent a lot time trying to unpick the details....all the paperwork...meeting with the leaders...briefing sessions...presentations to councillors...the young people have presented in front of the panel as well. (M1 Fu)

The delayed timescales had a number of wider implications for stakeholders. Partners commented on the challenges of "the political and technical difficulties of delivering an initiative...within council structures ...tight timescales and budgets" (A1) and having to

suspend or reschedule planned work leading to “some frustration around delays with timings”. (M1)

The main consequence of the extended timescales was, however, the delay to processing properties so that young people could move into their new HP homes. This carried major implications for planning young people’s moves from their existing care placements or accommodation, creating a level of uncertainty for some and disappointment for most. In some cases, there was a need to find temporary accommodation for young people when their baseline placements had disrupted or had ended prior to the HP home becoming available. Whilst there was acknowledgement from stakeholders that the delays were outside of the HP’s control, there was nevertheless recognition of the need for better planning to avoid raising expectations and uncertainty and unnecessary movement:

It needs to have things planned more closely and carefully. You shouldn’t engage with vulnerable young people, sell them a dream til you’ve got everything signed off properly ...if you’re leaving care the most important thing is where you are going to live. (F2)

This was considered an important learning point by the project team:

We shouldn’t have given young people move in dates...that’s one of the things we’ve learnt, we don’t want to make promises and then break them...but it’s difficult not to give some indication of timings, but not specific dates. (M1 Fu)

Despite these concerns, staff felt that overall, young people had handled the news well. This, it was felt, had been facilitated by strong lines of communication to keep the HP10 updated on progress “about what’s happening, giving reasons...being open and honest” (F1), and the combined support of the HP staff team, young people’s social workers and existing carers and accommodation providers to work with the HP around timescales and plan new move dates.

### **Balancing innovation with perceived risk and challenges to existing systems**

A further obstacle that affected the implementation of the HP related to the new Council’s reservations about the project’s innovative approach. The main concerns surrounded the need for changes to existing housing allocation and rental procedures, and the perceived risk associated with handing over council properties to the HP per se, and moreover to an organisation in which young people held a high degree of control, which some respondents considered to be the most “anxiety provoking” (L1):

The big challenge is creating something different and innovative and putting young people in charge...current approaches don’t give much choice or power to young people...so [HP] approach has caused a lot of anxiety amongst the people running the current system..needing a vast amount of reassurance. (L1 Fu)

Whilst due diligence was expected, given the assets and the wider responsibilities involved, some respondents felt the extent of apprehension reflected the risk averse culture of local authorities and threw into sharp relief the tension between innovation and challenging existing systems in council settings. This raised the question of what was needed to create a receptive and optimal environment for innovation:

You have to recognise that unless there is a corporate will to do this it's not something that a council could do...however, if you said local authorities are incapable of doing innovation then you do leave this to the private sector... so...local authorities have weakness because of their fear of change...and the private sector...because it finds it almost impossible to look beyond its own profit motive. (L1)

Overcoming challenges, as discussed further below, required buy-in and also robust systems to ensure "minimised risk to the corporate business" (L1), which included:

Failsafe exit strategies...our tenancy agreements match those with the council, our leasing agreements are written by the council to conform to their expectations...if the project doesn't work the assets transfer back to the council...so we have gone a long way to be as close as possible to existing systems without losing the essence of the project. (L1 Fu)

### **Securing council properties**

A particular challenge was negotiating with the housing department. One concern was the loss of rental income to the housing department incurred through the lease of void properties to the HP at a reduced rent. The potential payback was providing long-term tenants through the HP. Another obstacle was finding suitable properties to meet the needs of HP young people and the implications for existing council allocation policies.

Although the area had a higher than average rate of void properties, respondents indicated that it has been a "struggle to find suitable properties" (M1) for the HP. Reasons included the Councils policy to allocate one bedroom properties to young people, most often in high rise blocks in the city centre. This posed both practical problems to the HP as there was a general shortage of one-bedroom properties available, and challenges to the ethos of the HP in that it restricted the extent to which young people could exercise choice in finding the type and location of property to meet their needs. HP staff also raised concerns that properties needed to be conveniently located to enable young people to maintain their EET commitments and, social and support networks. In additions, there was a strong desire to avoid co-locating the young people in communal blocks:

All you're doing is creating a care leaver environment...rather than integrating people into the community, which is needed...lets not put them in Care Leaver Street, let's put them in the community. (F1)

Most of these challenges were resolved by working closely with the housing department to build relationships and find solutions, which led to “considerable progress” (M1 Fu) in finalising agreements. This was further aided by gaining support at senior level:

There was some debate around the type ... and location of housing ... the leader of the council was very helpful. He was insistent that the property that we were allocating young people was appropriate and in the right place...and housing have been more accommodating since. (M1 Fu)

### **Managing young people’s participation**

A common challenge when working with vulnerable groups is maintaining engagement. Young people’s participation was central to the model and ways to manage it safely and inclusively were raised as an important component and task for the HP.

Reports from staff and young people indicated that the level of participation across the HP10 varied, with a central group emerging to take up the majority of HP set-up activities. Participation at group activities was also sometimes poor, with some members frequently missing HP10 co-operative meetings and events, which could affect the extent to which the co-operative principles and collective decision making could be truly exercised. The difficulty of finding meeting times to suit all 10 young people due to personal or EET commitments was acknowledged:

We’re never going to get a time that’s going to be fine for all 10 young people but as long as they’re letting us know why they can’t attend....and we’ll let them know what they’ve missed. (F1)

Persistently low participation raised issues of equity from some young people who were regularly attending meetings and activities, and subsequently felt they were putting in more work than others were:

Hardly anyone’s turning up so ..... they haven’t done as much work as we’ve done... we have to put all the work in and they haven’t done anything and they can get a house so it’s a bit unfair really. (Sophia)

In addition to the frequency of young people’s participation in HP events there was some acknowledgement that the level of the tasks that accompanied HP participation had placed demands on young people and their ability to manage other life events. The aim to empower young people to take responsibility and control of the HP and their move to their own homes was widely commended as a positive means of facilitating choice, agency and skills development. However, the project team highlighted a need for this to be managed carefully to avoid overwhelming young people, who, by the very nature of the project, were at a vulnerable and transitional stage of their lives:

Asking them to consider the difference between charitable and non charitable organisations, look at the structure of co-operatives...designing the interior of a property ...when a young person is thinking of leaving [care], managing their money, cooking ... there's a massive transition to cope with and the added complexity of right now let's do some business planning.. might be asking too much. (M1)

On reflection, staff members wondered whether some of the HP development and legal work could have been carried out behind the scenes and presented to young people to make decisions so as not to compromise their contribution. This highlighted the dilemma that the HP staff team and young people were grappling with when negotiating their role in not only managing their own transitions but in actually building the vehicle that was taking them on that journey. For some staff members the message was more clear cut, reiterating that the HP's "core principles are ownership, responsibility, independence where you give young people responsibilities within a safe environment, which is really a safe set of relationships, you will reap back incredible potential" (L1). In practice, young people voted with their feet, with those who were reluctant or unable to take on HP tasks taking more of a back seat, whilst others fully engaged with opportunities, some demonstrating impressive levels of commitment:

The governance meetings are really heavy duty...and the young people have just been incredible...their participation, behaviours within the session, to sit in a legal meeting an entire day with complete participation. (S1)

A key learning point from staff was to "ensure the young people selected are the most suited to the project and 100% committed". (Fa)

### **Forming the staff team**

Related to the above was the challenge of bringing together an appropriate staff team that had the necessary expertise, resources and knowledge to effectively facilitate young people's experience of the HP:

Recruiting staff with the right competencies is vital. It is important to have strong support and supervision networks for staff involved in the project. (Pz Fu)

The role of the facilitators was particularly important and covered a broad remit, aiming to facilitate young people's personal development as well as their role in creating the HP business model. During the course of the first year, the number of facilitators increased from 2 to 3 to better meet the intensity and breadth of responsibilities:

My role is quite complex...we've got to talk to young people about all aspects ...about housing, about tenants, writing tenancies, getting support, whether it's going to be a co-op or a charity. (F1)

The short time frame for setting up the HP and developing the new business procedures whilst supporting young people, placed considerable responsibilities and demands on the newly formed HP staff team: “there’s some things that none of us have ever done so we’re all learning as we go...which is really challenging as professionals”. (S1)

There had been initial complications in getting the full HP staff team in place with 2 members juggling their previous role with their new HP responsibilities. In addition some underlying tensions were evident to all involved in the HP and could at times present a distraction from the tasks, “we’ve had to do a lot of work around the dynamics of a team who haven’t worked together ...trying to get to work together effectively” (M1) and this had presented unclear messages to the young people.

Staff feedback suggested that some of these challenges might have been averted by recruiting staff with a history of working together as, whilst a team from different disciplines brought different professional expertise, it also took time to adapt to each other’s different working practices, professional language and personalities:

A project of this nature would be better fitted with an experienced project team who’d worked together previously. A brand new project team...it was a tough challenge for us to understand each other’s mechanisms and ways of working...the teams changed, we’ve lost members and added new members. (M1 Fu)

In many respects the staffing issues might reflect the types of challenges that any new staff team would experience, what the manager referred to as “Tuckman’s norming, forming and storming processes” (see Tuckman 1965). The varied and untested nature of the HP support model and the timescale pressures to hit the ground running, however, had raised the importance of needing time prior to the start of the project and for setting aside time for dedicated staff team building during the project.

## **Lessons learned – the facilitators for implementing the HP**

A number of components contributed to the progress achieved by HP within the first year of operation. (See Appendix C).

### **Project champions**

Having champions with a strong commitment and belief in the project played a considerable part in enabling the HP to overcome some of the initial reservations and set-backs to achieve its goals. The HP benefited from several dedicated individuals who showed perseverance and willingness to actively promote and campaign for the project, and work closely “with elected members as corporate parents to support what we were doing” (L1). This proved fundamental to working through the challenges, discussed above, and keeping up the momentum and ensuring that the HP had a strong presence on the council agenda.



Champions included staff and HP young people, who made a significant contribution as project ambassadors. This included attending and contributing to council meetings; giving presentations to councillors and corporate parents, students and practitioners; and hosting events to showcase the HP model for local and national policy makers. The impact of hearing first hand from young people was a particularly strong driver for increasing council support, raising awareness of HP and importantly the reason why it was needed; “that direct conversation...it’s a very powerful and important thing”. (L1)

In championing the project, staff and young people not only secured support for the HP, but were able to use it, and the attention it received, to raise awareness of the issues experienced by care leavers generally. The HP provided a platform for young people to be recognised as positive role models helping to dispel the negative perceptions of care leavers and the lack of understanding within the council of the challenges they can face:

It’s raised the profile of the dilemma that our care leavers face in Stoke-on-Trent. When they talk about the project they talk about the situation care leavers find themselves in. (M1 Fu)

### **Cross-departmental and partnership buy-in**

Data gathered at follow-up showed that there was strong support and considerable good will towards the project amongst the stakeholders, including the HP partners, council leaders and key departments, particularly housing. This helped the HP to make progress and address the obstacles and complexities encountered.

There was a sense across the HP and partnership teams that they were on a journey towards a shared goal and “learn[ing] new skills together” (P1 Fu). This was demonstrated by the partner services in their reasons for getting involved, their willingness to “stick with us on the journey” (M1 Fu) despite the delays and their commitment to adopting new ways of working in order to embrace the principles of the HP to work alongside and empower the young people, “our clients”. (P1 Fu)

Agreeing common goals and mutually beneficial outcomes when developing relationships across council departments was also a driver for collaboration and cooperation. This was facilitated by accessing the support of Stoke’s corporate parenting panel. Senior buy-in from the leader of the council and the executive director also helped to garner wider support and to unblock the channels to keep the project moving forward:

Our executive director of people made it quite clear that this project must succeed and it’s getting through to all of the council departments now that they need to help to facilitate our journey as efficiently as possible. (M1)

Keeping the channels of communication open, and being willing to build effective relationships and agree joint protocols were also emphasised as being crucial to the HP’s

progress. This was particularly important as they were working with several partners to align practices and policies to find a common way forward:

It's challenging when you've got so many partners involved, I guess communication is one of the main things that we need to make sure we are getting it right I have to say that the relationship with the housing team has developed into a real healthy one...we've got a real good level of support within the local authority. (M1 Fu)

Needing to be "very flexible" (Fa), "regrouping and taking stock of the issues, re-planning the way forward" (P1 Fu) were also highlighted as enabling progress by the partnership.

The experiences of the HP in addressing these obstacles demonstrated the need for sufficient time to carry out the groundwork; systems for supporting staff and young people; robust safeguards and reassurances when pushing the boundaries to create change and innovation. The strengths of the project were evidenced by the components that enabled it to overcome the early obstacles, including project champions and, crucially, obtaining buy-in and support at strategic level as well as across relevant services and partners.

## **Impact findings – the HP young people**

This section explores the general characteristics of the small group, their reasons for applying to the HP and their experiences and progress in outcomes during the first year.

### **Characteristics and care history**

The first HP cohort comprised 8 young women and 3 young men aged between 16 and 18 when they joined the HP. Most were White British, with 18% (2) being Mixed Heritage. Just over one-quarter (27%, 3) of the group was reported to have a learning difficulty and around one-third (36%,4) were considered to have a mental health difficulty.

The sample appeared fairly representative of the local and national care population. Ten of the young people were looked after at the start of the HP, most commonly (64%, 7) on a full care order. One young person (9%) was aged 18 and therefore no longer formally looked after. Most of the group had been in care long-term, most commonly entering care aged 8 and most had only one care episode (64%, 7). Just over one-third (36%, 4) had entered care as adolescents aged 12-15 years (see Appendix C).

There was evidence of unsettled care experiences amongst the group. The number of care placements ranged from 2 to 18, with just over one-third (36%, 4) experiencing 8 or more placements since coming into care, suggesting a high degree of placement movement and instability. Research has highlighted the negative impact of placement instability on young people's care and post-care outcomes including difficulties with forming attachments and maintaining friendship and social networks, unmet health and educational needs, and poor post-care accommodation and EET outcomes (Ward 2009, Stein 2012) . It was these issues that the HP was seeking to address by creating a

supported and young person-led transition from care to independence, suggesting that, for this group at least, the HP offered scope to compensate for early experiences of instability by enabling young people to create a long term home after care.

### **Young people's circumstances at baseline**

Though all but one were still formally looked after, over half (55%, 6) of the group had left their care placement prior to the age of 18 and were living in semi-independent or supported accommodation, when they joined the HP. Most of the responding group felt happy (60%) and safe (82%) in their baseline accommodation. Those who reported feeling less happy tended to be the young people who had left their care placement<sup>2</sup> demonstrating a need for support to increase young people's opportunities to find a happy and settled home after care. Again, this suggested that the HP group seemed well matched to the aims of the project.

The HP also aimed to address young people's participation in EET, and the project team included a dedicated careers worker and training provider. In addition, a condition of HP membership, introduced midway through the project, required young people to undertake EET for a minimum of 16 hours per week.

There was a high level of EET participation at entry to the HP. Most of the group (64%, 7) were in education at college (5) or school (2), and 1 young person had a traineeship. Of the remaining 3, 1 young person was a full-time parent and 2 were NEET. Around two-thirds (64%, 7) of the group said they would like more training or qualifications. The level of EET participation for the HP group (72%, 8) was high in comparison to EET participation for care leavers in the local authority generally (40% at age 19, DFE, 2015) suggesting HP members were doing relatively well.

Information on risk factors and difficulties at baseline was limited due to gaps in local authority management information systems data. There was no evidence of involvement in offending in the 18 months prior to baseline. Information on other risk and difficulties was gathered from young people and suggested some problems with drug use (27%, 3) and being bullied at school or college (36% 4).

### **Motivation and aspirations for joining HP**

All HP young people were in the middle of the transition to independent adulthood and most of the group (73%, 8) reported worrying to varying degrees about their future. The HP aimed to reduce some of the uncertainty of leaving care by offering a timely

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<sup>2</sup> Though not statistically significant, a comparison of mean scores for the in-care and care leaver groups showed a lower score for the latter (8.10 and 4.25 respectively) indicating greater dissatisfaction with the home they lived in (Mann Whitney  $p=.052$ ).

opportunity to take more control of how and when the transition to their own long-term home took place, the type of home they would move into and how it was refurbished.

Young people were asked during the application process why they had wanted to be part of the HP. A review of their application forms showed that motivating factors included meeting their personal needs as well as a desire to “help other young people if they are struggling”(Young Person). Themes included wanting a long-term “warm and loving home”, meeting new people, gaining confidence to be better prepared for the future and developing as well as sharing new skills. Young people also hoped to create a home they can be proud of, as one described, “[to] show friends and family the work I have done on the property”.

Having a home of my own would change my life for the better in so many ways it would bring me stability something I’ve not had much of in my life. (Aaron)

## **Outcomes and experiences for HP young people**

One of the intended outcomes for the HP young people was their full and committed participation by being an active member of the group, helping to develop and run the HP as a business and working with partner agencies such as the architect and training providers to design and refurbish their home. The extent to which young people played an active role in activities varied and was identified as needing improvement:

It’s varied because of different reasons...we always wanted to give the young people the power to make decisions and it feels like in some cases they’ve decided that they don’t want to participate so we need to try and find a model that emphasises the commitment required...find individual solutions to get them back on track. (M1 T4)

In terms of the level of participation in creating a home, opportunities were limited to those young people who had been allocated properties. Most had participated in the design, some project management and some DIY, such as “stripping wallpaper and painting” (M1):

I was obviously on the front line mainly for everything that was going on, so I was in my house every day here with (architect) making sure things were on track and things were moving. (Ava)

The variation in the extent to which young people were hands-on, however, was felt to warrant a more formal commitment to ensure increased levels of participation, buy-in to the HP ethos and skills development:

Some got stuck in and want to be there every day and others don’t. We feel we need going forward to try and combat that... to have almost a proper agreement, a contract where the young person will sign up to doing a minimum number of hours on the renovation of the property. (M1 T4)

In terms of wider HP activities, approximately 18 group events had taken place by follow-up (7 months into the project), including business meetings, group learning and development activities, group social activities, evaluation focus groups and interview meetings. The HP had, therefore, required a degree of time and commitment from members. As discussed in section 4.1, the level of participation and engagement from the full group had been a challenge and had ranged from 2 to 9 attendees across the activities. In most cases, particularly over the summer months, up to 6 young people had attended activities, despite evidence that the facilitators had invested time in phoning and texting HP members prior to meetings to try to increase engagement. It is not clear whether fluctuating attendance was simply a consequence of the timings of meetings clashing with college, work or personal commitments, as some suggested: “the meetings have not always been convenient given [YP’s] caring responsibilities” (LP108), or whether it reflected a level of disengagement by some young people, or an indication that the demands of participation proved too burdensome due to other life events. There had been some acknowledgement that the HP included some young people who would struggle given their wider needs. It was hoped, however, that being part of a small community, working together to share the responsibilities, might overcome the challenges and facilitate engagement.

In any event, the level of participation raised questions around the co-operative nature and representativeness of the HP and whether it could ensure that all members had their views reflected in decisions. There was some indication that a group of 4 or 5 young people, who attended most of the sessions, effectively formed a sub-group within the HP, “I class it as HP5 as there is only usually 5 people turn up”. (Lee)

This sub-group was influential in how the project and policies were being developed and promoted and which activities were planned. It is too soon to tell whether this was viewed positively by other members of the HP (for example, those who might welcome others doing the administrative work) or whether this could act as a barrier, placing some who were less able or willing to engage, on the periphery. As a group, the HP members were able to delegate roles to each other, so in theory everyone could have a say in the HP’s management. Despite this, roles invariably seemed to have been taken up by the group attending most of the activities, “I’ve had to take over sometimes because they’re never here and basically doing everyone’s position when they’re not here”. (Lee)

This led to some disquiet and confusion within the group, particularly where roles had changed without discussion: “I should be the organiser but I think that’s changed now... because [they are] texting everyone and I thought I was the organiser of this” (Bailey). The system for role delegation was under review at T4 to provide a more fluid role rotation, where members could be allocated to an event or task as needed and to fit in with their commitments and availability.

Where young people had attended events, there was a sense that they had enjoyed and benefited from the experiences. Feedback from young people suggested that some had particularly enjoyed learning about the business management aspects, “because I want to be self-employed I really enjoyed finding out more about business and tax”. (Sophia)

### **Did the HP impact on progress and outcomes for young people?**

Data at follow-up (T3) were available for all 11 young people, though only 9 at update<sup>3</sup> (T4), 1 young man and 8 young women. There were some changes in accommodation, EET and wellbeing by T4. Outcomes at this relatively early stage of the HP appeared mixed but gave some insight into young people’s progress and experiences of the HP.

### **Accommodation**

At the final data collection point, (T4) 5 young people had successfully moved into their HP homes. Two had moved directly from residential care to their new HP home and 1 had moved into their home from supported accommodation. Two of the 5 young people had, however, moved to temporary informal accommodation in the interim whilst waiting to take up their HP tenancy, after their baseline accommodation had disrupted. One of these young people, who was identified by their lead professional as homeless at follow-up explained, “my foster carer gave notice on me so now I am a sofa surfer”.

For the 4 young people who had yet to move into their HP home, all seemed to have remained in the same care placements (2) or semi-independent/support accommodation (2) over the year, demonstrating a commitment from some carers and existing accommodation providers to work with the HP team to manage transitions and ensure stability for young people despite a level of uncertainty around timescales for moving.

For those who had moved into HP tenancies, 4 of the 5 were interviewed between 3 weeks and 2 months after their move. Olivia, Mason, Ava and Clara all identified that they were given enough notice of the move-in date, and that things had generally gone well.

Support during the move differed for the 4 young people. Some had received support from their carers “Foster carer is getting hampers ready for like cleaning products [saying] today is the day you do this and tomorrow is the day you do that...just very supportive” (Mason). All 4 young people had input from the project facilitators during the move. However, one young person, who had planned the move around their job, reported feeling stressed, as there was limited support available on the day:

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<sup>3</sup> Two of the original group had left the HP and their current circumstances were not known to the HP staff team at T4.

That week of me moving was so stressful, we started on the Monday and (facilitator) was busy all day so ... later on that day, we only had like an hour so we just grabbed everything out of my room. And then on the Tuesday I actually ordered a removal van to come and get the rest of the stuff. (Ava)

Moving house can be one of the most stressful events in someone's life and the experiences of the HP young people highlighted their appreciation of the support from HP staff, carers and lead professionals. However, it also revealed a need for careful organising and planning from both young people and staff facilitators to ensure that the process runs smoothly.

## **EET**

EET progress appeared positive for the group. There were some changes in EET activity over follow-up for at least 6 members of the group (55%). For 3 young people who had been out of EET at the start of the HP, this was a positive change, with 2 going into education and 1 taking up a traineeship by follow-up. A further 2 young people who had been in college at baseline, however, were NEET at follow-up. Nevertheless, 8 (88%) of the 9 young people felt that their EET circumstances had improved since joining the HP, which Olivia and Isaac attributed to their "growing confidence" and "work experience" opportunities and, for Lee, the direct support of the facilitators "helping me a lot more on a one to one basis to support education".

By T4 update, all young people were participating in some form of EET. Five were in further education, 2 had traineeships, 1 had full time work and another was working part time and claiming benefits. Participation levels, therefore, appeared to have remained good throughout. This is likely to reflect the focus of the project on providing support and training opportunities to find and maintain EET as a condition of membership of the HP.

Nevertheless, there was a balance to be achieved between participation in the HP activities and maintaining external EET opportunities. For young people who were engaging in EET, carrying out work on their HP property could be difficult to fit in whilst those who were not meeting their minimum 16 hour commitment to EET could face delays to getting their tenancy. Aaron, who had a full time job, struggled to engage with the HP tasks: "it's just I have to work so I can't really commit to every session", while Mason highlighted that his lack of commitment to EET had led to his accommodation renovation been pushed back: "I wasn't really going to my educational side so they weren't doing my flat up or nothing. But now like I've done everything I need to do, I've managed to get my flat".

## **Wellbeing and self-confidence**

Information on young people's subjective wellbeing was gathered using a self-completion checklist administered at baseline (T1) interview and again at follow-up (T3) interview by

the research interviewer, an average of 4 months later. It is worth noting that data was gathered on a very small sample and over a short time frame and, therefore, the results of the analysis should be treated with caution.

The GCI involved measuring subjective wellbeing across the 10 domains of young people's lives that research carried out on young people in the general population has shown are important to them (Rees and Main 2016). In addition, it contained a global measure of wellbeing (for example, how satisfied are you with life, all things considered).

Young people in the study were asked to rate their happiness and satisfaction across the 10 life domains and the global measure on a 0 (very unhappy) to 10 (very happy) scale. The total possible score for the measure was 100, indicating maximum satisfaction with life (i.e. scoring 10 (very happy) across all 10 domains).

Analysis included generating an overall score per individual young person, a mean score for each of the 10 domains and a mean score for the group based on the 10 domains.

Nine young people completed the GCI at both time points, though some did not provide a score for each of the 10 items on the measure.

### **Subjective wellbeing at baseline**

Total scores at baseline ranged from 18 to 95 with an overall mean score of 67.0 for the group indicating a moderate sense of satisfaction with life. Over one-quarter (27%, 3) of young people scored below the midpoint of the scale and could, therefore, be said to be somewhat unhappy and dissatisfied with their lives at the start of the HP.

The total possible score for each domain ranged from 0 to 10, where 10 indicated 'most happy'. The mean score for the group for each domain indicated that the areas young people in the sample were most happy with were their family (mean 7.6), how they used their time (mean 7.4) and the choices they had in life (mean 7.3). The areas that the group were least happy with were appearance (mean 6.1) and the home they lived in (mean 6.3).

The mean scores across most life domains were lower amongst the HP group in comparison with what would be expected of 10-17 year olds in the UK (see Table 3). Of particular note, were lower levels of satisfaction with their home.

### **Change over time**

The small sample size, missing data on some items and variation in timescales between T1 and T3 meant that it was not possible to examine individual change over time. The overall mean scores for the group at both time points was used instead as an indicator of progress. The increase from 67.0 at baseline to 74.0 suggested a trend towards improved levels of happiness over time. This was also reflected in young people's global ratings with



the group mean rising from 7.2 to 7.7 at follow-up, supporting the upward trend in wellbeing for the group.

**Table 3: Young people's wellbeing at T1 and T3**

Life domain (n= T1, T3)	10-17 year olds in the UK mean	YP T1 mean	YP T3 mean	YP T1 Unhappy*	YP T3 Unhappy*
1. Family (n=9,9)	8.4	7.6	8.3	9%	0%
2. Time use (n=9,9)	7.4	7.4	8.2	18%	11%
3. Choice in life (n=9,8)	7.0	7.3	8.1	18%	13%
4. Future (n=9, 8)	6.6	7.1	8.1	18%	13%
5. Health (n=9,9)	8.1	6.9	8.3	18%	0%
6. Friends (n=9,9)	8.0	6.9	8.0	30%	11%
7. School/college (n=7,6 )	7.1	6.7	7.8	33%	0%
8. Money & things (n=9,9)	7.2	6.4	7.0	9%	11%
9. Home (n=9,9)	8.0	6.3	7.2	36%	11%
10. Appearance (n=9,9)	7.0	6.1	7.2	27%	0%
<b>Total score - 10 domains</b>	/	67.0	74.0	27%	0%
Happy all things considered (n=9,9)	/	7.2	7.7	18%	11%
Additional item:					
Self confidence	/	5.11	7.00	36%	11%

\* Considered unhappy if scored below midpoint (5 for individual items, 50 for overall score). The use of / denotes missing or unavailable data.

The area in which the greatest increase in satisfaction was recorded was young people's happiness with friends (6.9 at T1 compared to 8.0 at T3), which might perhaps reflect the development of social networks and relationships between the HP members, as reported by young people and staff during interviews.

There was also an increase in the group's happiness with the home they lived in, rising from 6.3 at baseline to 7.2 at follow-up. In most cases, this was the same home they had lived in at baseline. The change in satisfaction might therefore reflect young people's increasing sense of autonomy and skills as was suggested by the views of some young people: "now I'm getting on better with independence skills my [foster carers] are taking notice of what I can do more" (Ellie), and some lead professionals who considered the HP

to be a “consistent positive” (LP101) in young people’s lives at a time of transition and potential uncertainty and providing a supportive network:

HP is giving them the confidence, as is required to move on when they are 18 years old, to move into their own accommodation, plus the reassurance of extra support to develop the skills to live independently. (LP103)

### **Self-confidence**

An additional question about young people’s perception of their self-confidence was added to the checklist. Though excluded from analysis of the full measure, separate analysis showed that young people considered their self-confidence to have increased over time from a mean of 5.11 to 7.00 for the group, representing the largest increase across all the life areas (change score 1.89). Many factors might have contributed to this: the new friendship groups, the opportunities to develop independence skills: “my independence has got loads better I can do loads more for myself now” (Clara); the support to sustain EET, and for some, the feeling that participation in the HP had brought a feeling of control and direction: “I’m more aware as a person, life beyond being in care has some focus now” (Ellie), and had given them a purpose “I now fill more hours in the day with the house project”. (Ava)

Overall, therefore, there was some cautious indication of improvement in young people’s sense of wellbeing and, for most, positive progress in accommodation and EET over the first year of the project. As discussed in the next section, qualitative data from young people, their lead professionals and HP staff team suggested that progress had been facilitated by the consistency of support, developing friendships and increased skills.

### **Lessons learned – views on what worked well and not so well**

Information gathered at follow-up interviews and focus groups highlighted some of the positive aspects of the HP and some areas for improvement. Young people commented positively on the chance to be involved in the project and to create a home to be “proud of” (YP focus group T4). They highlighted increased communication skills, confidence and feelings of community, integration and a “group to depend on” (YP focus group T4) as well as access to individual and flexible support. The negative aspects were almost exclusively related to the timescales and delays in being allocated and moving into their HP homes.

### **Friendships and integration**

A strong message running through responses was having an opportunity through the HP, to make friends and form a supportive social network. This was evident in young people’s initial reasons for applying to the HP, in their experiences of participation and their views on how the HP had affected their lives.

I think it's just that I know I've got the support around me, if I ever do fall that I've got someone to pick me up and get me back on the right track. (Clara)

Lead professionals also reported that participation in the HP had increased their young person's "confidence", "self-esteem", access to support and connectedness, providing "the benefit of having a ready-made support network with consistent support from project workers". (LP108)

The importance of this benefit is not to be underestimated given the high tendency for care leavers to experience loneliness and isolation after care. Having access to a small group with common goals and a shared understanding of the care experience appeared to have offered most of the young people opportunities for close friendships, peer support and integration by becoming "a group supporting each other..confidence building" (F2) that, if sustained through the co-operative, could help to combat isolation and create long-term support networks, even after young people had moved on from the HP10:

It's like not ... being lonely...I think [social worker's] concern was me being on my own, I wouldn't have anyone there, but this project means that I can still be part of a group of people and I won't always be on my own. (Ellie)

Young people who participated in the focus group at T4 referred to the chances and "the opportunity of a life time" (YP focus group) that the HP had afforded them in comparison to other care leavers. The young people agreed that whilst the HP could "not change everything" (YP focus group) it had at least brought attention to care leavers and had gone some way to removing the "stigma of care leavers" (YP focus group) that some might experience in wider society:

Even if we are care leavers who have had colourful backgrounds, the HP has changed the expectations of care leavers and their image in Stoke. (Ava)

### **Flexible, tailored and accessible and support**

A second feature that was particularly valued by the young people was the intensity, range and frequency of support offered by the HP team: "I get a lot more support than I was expecting" (Ellie). The HP aimed to provide bespoke support to match young people's specific practical, emotional or training needs. Support took the form of group training events (for example, cooking skills, budgeting, DIY, tenancy agreements and business development) and one-to-one support sessions and general encouragement from the facilitators. As discussed earlier, this called on staff to cover a wide variety of tasks ranging from being the liaison between young people and the partner services and attending care reviews with social workers, to providing specific support with independence training:

Becoming their housing officers, getting young people into a good routine about ...independence, paying the bills and being a good tenant...and having the confidence...to solve their own problems. (F1)

as well as the important individual day-to-day encouragement:

Like a parent,...one week I'll be checking every minute that [they] are at college, because sometime you need someone to get you out of bed..and then the end of the week to say 'you've done really well you know, have a good weekend and make sure you're up for college on Monday'. (F1)

Working across the different support needs of young people's lives was considered a particular strength. Providing a single worker with the time to facilitate both direct support and access to wider help could reduce the need for young people to go to several different support agencies, "young people in care, their lives are so fragmented ... so our process needs to be very good at joined up". (L1) An aspect that was particularly evident in young people's feedback was the significance of having a member of staff who talked publically of their own care experience. This had engendered an additional level of trust and affinity within the supportive relationships that were developing in the HP, creating feelings of having someone "on my side" (Mason) who "understands us" (Lee) as well as providing a positive role model to the group:

[Facilitator] knows what it's like to leave care, I could tell them everything, which is a good thing. (Sophia)

The accessibility of the support from the HP team was also highly appreciated by the young people. They described being able to "drop-in for a cuppa and chat with [facilitator]" at the HP offices on an informal basis or as and when a support need occurred was part of the added extras that the HP could offer (not least through having a healthier staff: young person ratio) in comparison to the usual level of support from children's social care:

One of the main areas of progress is the relationship building...the real trust between the young people and the project team...more than the people they are usually involved with because we see them regularly, listen to them, understand them. (M1 FU)

In acknowledging the value of out of hours support, the HP staff team had initiated an extended hours working pattern to ensure an increased level of access for those young people who had daytime work or college commitments.

### **Managing the transition - moving in**

The delayed timescales for allocation, renovation and moving into HP homes caused disappointment and some dissatisfaction amongst the group: "I know it's a new housing

project but it's gone really slow" (Lee), and had left some young people in limbo: "I have waited to move since January so it's a bit strange still living here". (Ava)

Several lead professionals commented on the disappointment that they and their young people had felt when they had been told that their move was on hold and the impact this had on leaving care planning. This included a degree of criticism about the way in which the project had been communicated to young people, with some staff commenting that steps should have been taken to avoid raising expectations around move in timescales:

The HP [should] be realistic about timescales with the young people and professionals to ensure that young people are not disappointed with the speed at which the project progresses. (LP108)

Once in their HP homes, most young people seemed to be settling in well, though still in the early stages of adjusting to their new circumstances. For one member of the group, the stark contrast of moving from their small group home to living on their own was particularly apparent and required a tailored package of support to help them manage the transition. The HP team was able to buy in bespoke support, along the lines of a staying close model, to ensure the young person had access to 24-hour in situ support, which gradually reduced over an agreed timescale.

### **Targeting the right young people**

Another area highlighted for further attention was the selection of young people for the HP. There were some concerns about the level of commitment from some HP young people and, conversely, the level of input expected of the HP group, and how this might be reconciled going forward. A related issue that was raised by young people's lead professionals was whether the project was targeting the right young people. One lead professional felt that the current HP group involved less complex young people who might have found post-care housing stability in any event:

I worry that the HP doesn't address the real issues facing children leaving care at 18 and seems to be set up for the same young people who would possibly fare the best in independence without the support of the project. (LP104)

As a balance, most lead professionals recognised that the HP was new and therefore required wider knowledge of what it involved and which young people might benefit, and felt that it could prove a useful resource:

I feel the HP is very much a separate project at the moment which is to be expected given it is a pilot project. It would be exciting if this model could be offered to other young people in LA on a wider scale in the future. (LP108)

Targeting the right service-user group is inevitably a challenge for new projects. This is particularly so during the set-up phase when arguably the focus is on getting the components of the project right by piloting it with more capable young people before rolling it out to young people with greater, and possibly more relevant, needs. As discussed in the next section, a longitudinal evaluation would be necessary to follow up those participating in the HP and their longer-term outcomes to understand if and with whom the HP is most effective.

## 5. Limitations of the evaluation and recommendations for future evaluations

The limitations of the current evaluation are located in the limited time frame for gathering data on outcomes and value for money. The small sample size also limited the outcomes analysis. The evaluation took place during the set-up and early implementation of the HP (i.e. pilot phase) and as such, was able to report on the experiences of creating the model and the initial stages of running it within a local authority context.

Due to the delays in operationalising the project and subsequent delays in young people moving into their new HP homes, information on young people's outcomes was limited to a focus on their early progress, and experiences of being part of the team that created the HP, rather than their experiences and outcomes of moving into their new tenancies.

Whilst the data provided some indication of the impact of being part of the HP and some emerging evidence of progress in young people's self-confidence, wellbeing and EET, this should be treated with caution due to the sample size and short follow-up. Furthermore, it was too soon to understand the impact on accommodation stability and experiences of independent living.

The time frame and lack of available data on outcomes and costs also affected the ability of the evaluation to report on cost savings and value for money. For example, none of the young people had taken up their HP tenancy (thus releasing their accommodation and support costs into the HP) during the main evaluation time frame and, whilst 5 had moved in by the update review at T4, most had been living in their property less than 2 months.

A future evaluation could build upon learning gathered through the pilot phase of the HP and shift the focus from implementation towards assessing how the model works in practice for future (and larger) cohorts of care leavers, perhaps with different levels of need. Longitudinal evaluation will be necessary to gain a better understanding of the impact of the HP on the longer-term outcomes for care leavers.

A longer-term evaluation that includes a more comprehensive exploration of the eventual business model (for example, social business or use of social impact bonds) will also be able to help test out its potential for providing a more cost efficient and effective alternative to current accommodation and support options for young people transitioning from care. It should also provide scope to test out how the model works in different local authority settings and what, if any, refinements are required for maximising its impact, sustainability and replication.

## 6. Implications and Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The House Project model presents an interesting and promising addition to the range of accommodation options for young people leaving care. It holds potential to provide young people with a direct step into a long-term home accompanied by a package of support that runs alongside, and exceeds, that traditionally offered. Findings from the evaluation of the HP suggest a number of recommendations for sustainability and replication of the model.

### Implications

Some implications arising from the HP model related to the age of the target group and the funding arrangements of model.

The aim of the HP to support young people aged 16 to 18 to move into their own tenancy might appear at odds with the current policy and practice drive to delay young people's move from care until after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The recent rise in Staying Put to enable young people to remain in their foster placements beyond 18 and local authority duties to provide a range of supported accommodation options to meet the needs of care leavers (Barnardos 2015), reflects the general consensus that delaying young people's move from care to independence creates a more normative and gradual transition and improves the chances of positive outcomes.

Research and practice evidence indicates that young people who leave care aged 16 and 17 (the more vulnerable early leaver group), tend to fare worse after care, and experience a greater level of risk (for example, housing breakdowns, poor outcomes in EET and wellbeing). However, these risks can be embedded within the circumstances in which these young people leave their care placements, rather than attributed to age alone, for example, in the unplanned or unsupported moves to unregulated transitional or transient accommodation and whether they are able to access ongoing support. By focusing on younger care leavers it could be said that the HP is responding to the reality that some young people move on from their care placements early at 16 or 17, either through choice, or because placements break down and options become exhausted, or due to the less comfortable scenario in which some young people are rushed out of care to free up care placements. The HP model has the potential to reduce that risk by providing a planned and highly supported transition which, having permanency running through its core, could reduce the number of post-care moves that young people need to make before finding their home after care. In doing so it could address the tensions that exist within the current system, where services are striving to provide young people with a delayed and gradual move from care whilst contending with the realities of limited availability in transitional options and the fact that the choice and preference for many care leavers is to move into their own tenancy as soon as possible, using intermediate options as short-term stop gaps



only. That said, safeguards are needed to ensure that young people have a settled base during the project from which to prepare for independent living at their own pace, and remain in, whilst their project tenancy is undergoing renovation and until they are ready to move in.

The HP also offers potential to provide an option for older care leavers aged 18 and over, perhaps stepping down from Staying Put or other semi-supported options. However, this might require revisions to the funding arrangements for the model.

The current funding arrangements of the HP raise the need to build in systems to protect against unintended consequence when developing such projects more widely. The funding relies on the payment of the accommodation and living costs attached to 16 and 17 year old care leavers into the project in order to sustain the model. An unintended consequence of this arrangement might be to provide an incentive to move young people into their HP tenancies before they are ready to take that step, in order to release the funding into the project. Equally, the same need to manage the flow of 16 and 17 year olds into the project could result in young people aged 18 and over migrating out of the project and reverting to council tenancies before they are ready, in order to free up capacity within the project.

Future projects, therefore, require robust safeguards to ensure that the needs of young people are not compromised by the financial requirements of the model. The HP had in place a number of systems to protect against this and maintain its overall aim to empower young people to take control of their transitions. These included the scrutiny of the HP Board to oversee decisions; case responsibility (including leaving-care planning) remaining with young people's social worker or PA; and also the co-operative underpinnings of the model, which enabled the young people themselves to have the main say in when members moved into their properties, as well as in and out of the project.

In addition, Corporate Parenting responsibilities of the council and the legislative framework, which requires the oversight of care plans by Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) for moves to unregulated accommodation post-care (see [IRO Handbook 2011](#)), should, in theory, provide a further level of protection to ensure that moves to independent living for early leavers are managed safely, at the right time and in their best interests.

## Recommendations

The HP had received further DfE IP funding to expand the specific HP model in Stoke and to work with other local authorities to replicate it more widely. In addition, there was emerging evidence of similar models to the HP developing elsewhere (see [Hartlepool Action Lab Housing Heroes project](#)). The experience of setting up the HP provided several lessons and recommendations:

- realistic timescales are needed for setting up and running such projects and for effectively monitoring and evidencing impact. This was particularly so for the HP, which had developed from a standing start and required intricate legal and contractual procedures involving several partners. Timescales for young people transitioning from existing accommodation into HP homes also needed to be realistic, carefully managed and communicated to ensure a planned move
- related to this is the need to establish a firm foundation early on, including securing the necessary agreements from the relevant agencies and stakeholders across the council, prior to fully opening the service to young people. For the HP, there was a need to weigh up the amount of behind the scenes work with its aim to fully involve young people in the creation of the project. Evidence suggested that the impact of the somewhat convoluted negotiations and subsequent delays on young people provided justification for doing some of the groundwork before involving them. This is unlikely to be an issue for further cohorts of young people as they will be entering a working model
- the HP benefited from a receptive environment, which took time to establish and was hard won. It included support from stakeholders at a senior level and across agencies. Buy-in from corporate parents at strategic level and across relevant agencies was essential for unblocking the channels and creating a shared goal and drive to make the HP happen. This was particularly important given the innovative nature of the project, the perceived risk, and need to challenge and change existing systems (for example, change to systems for allocating tenancies and to practices for managing and funding young people's transitions from care). Buy-in was achieved by establishing robust safeguards to protect young people, as well as the council's assets, and the persistence and commitment of project champions and ambassadors. Keeping partners on board and developing links with other services and agencies will be essential to the cross-agency approach of the model
- an essential condition for this innovation was the availability of suitable and sufficient council owned housing stock. The HP relied on access to unoccupied or void properties in need of refurbishment that could be leased from the council. Stoke had relatively high levels of empty houses (4% of council and private housing compared to the national rate of 3%), including over 400 council houses that had been empty for at least 100 days in 2014-15. This holds implications for the replication of the HP and development of similar models, perhaps limiting its scope to local authorities with similar levels of void council-owned properties
- areas with a lack of one bedroomed properties might also need to consider the implications of the Spare Room Subsidy (see Wilson, 2016). Older care leavers who are claiming benefits when they revert to council tenancies might be at risk of losing benefits and be required to move to a smaller property (DfE, 2016)

- the sustainability of the model relies on a sufficient number and flow of suitable young people coming into the project and a sufficient flow of successful tenants leaving the project. This included managing timescales for moving out of existing accommodation and moving into the new tenancy, and matching the type and availability of houses with young people and their readiness to move. The project might consider using one property as a training flat to help manage the transitions. This could provide a short-term option for young people whose accommodation ends prior to their new tenancy becoming available as well as chance for a practice run, particularly for young people moving into their new tenancy from small group homes where the transition to living alone might be particularly stark
- a robust assessment of young people's needs, aspirations and circumstances is essential for ensuring that the right young people enter the project at the right time for them, with the right level of commitment. Ongoing assessment will be required to review and manage their transition into the new tenancy, with flexibility built into the process to respond effectively if care or leaving care plans change. This will help to protect the young people and the effectiveness and sustainability of the project
- of particular importance in projects such as the HP that are working innovatively to support and empower vulnerable young people, is the need for a skilled and experienced staff team, providing a safe pair of hands and safe relationships to enable young people to take control of their transitions and responsibility for the project. The HP demonstrated the need for diverse skills, including preparation support, housing support, financial and EET guidance, as well as business management and support to run the HP. The range and intensity of the support requires expertise and confidence and robust staff supervision, training and support
- clear procedures are needed to safely manage exits from the project including step-down to lower levels of support and reverting to council tenancies. This includes having effective contingency plans to manage negative outcomes such as project dropout, accommodation breakdown or eviction from the co-operative. Joint working systems might clarify roles and ensure that usual leaving care support remains in place alongside the HP support package, and that follow-on support from other relevant agencies is arranged where needed. This also emphasises the importance of selecting suitable young people for the project to minimise the likelihood of poor outcomes. This is imperative when working with vulnerable young people for whom a sense of failure or rejection might be more keenly felt
- finally, contingency plans are also needed to protect the communal business and the future of those young people involved who have either been allocated, or taken up, project tenancies. Examples of contingency plans within the HP model included setting aside a pot of money to cover any debt incurred by tenants (for example, rent arrears) and the legal and administrative costs associated with tenant evictions

The second phase of the HP includes continuation in Stoke and expansion to other local authorities. To date, the HP has made significant progress, creating opportunities and potential for young people to develop the skills and agency needed to make a positive transition to independent living. A longer term follow-up is needed to understand if and how the HP is able to support young people making that transition and whether that support can adapt to meet the changing needs and circumstances that young people might encounter on their journeys. Further evidence is therefore needed to fully appraise its success in providing an effective and cost efficient means of enabling young people to make an HP house their long-term home.

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## 8. Appendices

### Appendix A. The House Project (HP)

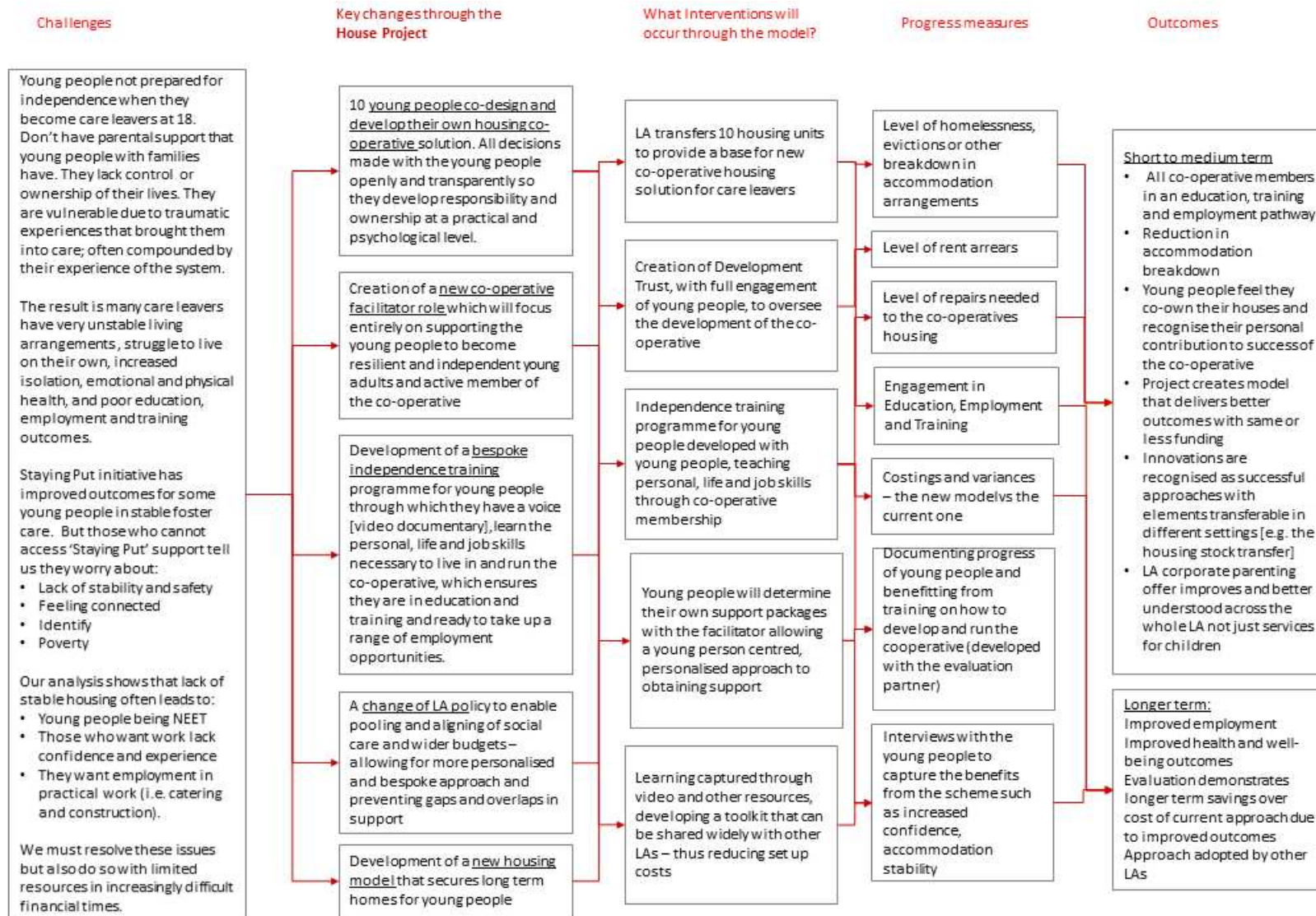
The HP's business plan outlined the following aims for its young people:

- the ability to sustain their housing tenancies – reducing the risk of their tenancies breaking down leaving them homeless
- all young people in the project on an education, training or employment pathway which motivates them and meets their needs
- enabling young residents to avoid offending
- improved health and well being
- enhanced confidence and control over their lives; ownership of the project and pride in their achievements.

The House Project also seeks outcomes for the public sector:

- the project should cost no more than it normally costs to provide housing and support for the young people
- better use of existing housing resources by refurbishing them and bringing them into use for young people
- savings through better outcomes for our partners in the police, health, employment and other services
- a model that can be scaled up and replicated by other LAs.

Figure 1: HP Theory of Change





## Appendix B. The Evaluation

### Methodology

The evaluation used mixed methods, drawing upon both quantitative and qualitative data. Given the small sample size (n=11), the main approach was qualitative, underpinned by a strong participatory component to enable the evaluation team to work closely with the HP young people. Co-production techniques were used to ensure that the evaluation activities aligned to the overall aims of the HP, which is to empower young people to have a say in all aspects of the project. This involved working with young people to agree the methods of data collection (focus groups and interviews) and identify the key areas of focus for the evaluation to ensure that they reflected young people's views on what success of the HP would look like.

### Process data collection

Data on how the HP was developed and working in practice were gathered from document reviews and from key staff from the HP, other relevant partners and young people's lead professionals. Face-to-face and telephone interviews, questionnaires and electronic surveys (e-surveys) were used to gather data. There was a generally good level of engagement with the evaluation, with the exception of responses from the partner agencies.

**Table 4: full process data collection and response**

	<b>Participation of managers, key partners and front-line staff</b>	<b>Planned</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Response rate</b>
T1	Process interviews with HP managers, staff and project lead at baseline	6	6	100%
T3	Feedback from HP manager, staff and project lead at follow-up (March 2016): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process interviews with managers</li> <li>• E-surveys with HP staff</li> </ul>	2 3	2 1	100% 33%
T3	Bespoke E-surveys to key partners and stakeholders at follow-up (March 2016) (Leaving Care manager, architect, film company, housing dept., legal dept., psychologist). Responses from architect and psychologist only.	6	2	33%
T3	E-surveys to lead professionals (social workers or PAs) of HP young people at follow-up - March 2016, to gather comments on the HP	11	6	55%

	<b>Participation of managers, key partners and front-line staff</b>	<b>Planned</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Response rate</b>
	process.			
T4	Update interview at T4 (with project manager)	1	1	100%
	<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>62%</b>

## Impact data collection

Eleven<sup>4</sup> young people were recruited to the HP during the evaluation time frame. One young person dropped out of the HP10 and was replaced, and a further young person left the HP10 towards the end of the first year. Impact and sample data were gathered for all 11 young people recruited to the HP.

The participatory approach included flexibility in how data were gathered from young people, with some preferring group discussions to individual interviews. A combination of approaches was therefore used to ensure that all young people had an opportunity to contribute views. Focus groups were arranged to coincide with other HP activities and meetings so as not to overburden young people. Whilst in the end, most young people took part in face-to-face interviews, only half regularly attended focus groups and other HP meetings. This same small group that attended were those that had been most actively involved in setting up the HP, so, whilst there was good representation from the central players, data on those who were less engaged, for whatever reason, were not captured fully.

Quantitative data on young people's characteristics, circumstances and outcomes were gathered from a range of sources including:

- a data mapping proforma developed by the evaluation team to collate data from the local authority's management information system and the HP application and referral data
- an evaluation questionnaire administered to each young person at the start of the HP (T1) on circumstances and outcome areas (for example, accommodation, EET and wellbeing)

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<sup>4</sup> The HP was designed to work with 10 young people during set-up stage, forming the HP10 core group. One member of the core group realised early on that they were not ready move into an HP property and withdrew from the HP10, though continued to have some involvement in HP activities. Another young person was recruited to the HP10 group. One young person left the HP towards the end of the first year.

- an interview or questionnaire with young people at midpoint (T2) on outcome areas (for example, accommodation, EET status, wellbeing)
- an e-survey of lead professionals (social worker or personal advisor) at T2 to gather their views on the impact of HP on the young person
- an interview at follow-up (T3) to explore ratings of progress approximately 6 months into the project
- an interview or questionnaire at update (T4) with young people and staff on young people's circumstances.

Qualitative data on young people's motivation and aspirations for joining the HP and their experiences and views on its impact were gathered via:

- four focus group meetings with young people to explore key issues and outcome areas throughout the evaluation time frame
- a review of application letters at T1
- questionnaire to explore expectations of the HP at T1
- monitoring forms to gather feedback on HP activities
- face to face interviews and questionnaires at T2 to explore views on HP activities and personal progress
- face to face interviews and questionnaires at T3 to explore views on personal progress, circumstances and outcomes across accommodation, EET and wellbeing
- face to face interviews at T4 to gather views and experiences of the HP and moving into their HP tenancy.

## Appendix C. Findings

### C1 Baseline

**Table 5: Young people's characteristics and circumstances at baseline**

	<b>Full HP sample</b>
Total number of cases	N=11
<b>Demographics</b>	
Male	27.3% (n3)
Female	81.8% (n8)
<b>Age:</b>	
16 years	54.5% (n6)
17 years	36.4% (n4)
18 years	9.1% (1)
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	
White British	81.8% (n8)
White and Black Caribbean	9.1% (n1)
White and Asian	9.1% (n1)
<b>Background and history</b>	
<b>Legal status at referral:</b>	
Section 20	27.3% (n3)
Full Care Order	63.6% (n6)
Care leaver	9.1% (n1)
Not known	9.1% (n1)
<b>Time known to Children's Social Care</b>	
< 1 year	0
1-3 years	36.4% (n4)
4 – 8 years	9.1% (n1)
9 or more years	54.6% (n6)
Mean number of years	7.73
<b>Age of YP - first became LAC</b>	
1 - 4	18.2% (n2)
5 - 9	45.5% (n5)
10 -15	36.4% (n4)
Mean:	8.36
<b>Number of care episodes ever</b>	
1	63.6% (n7)
2	36.4% (n4)
<b>Number of care placements</b>	

	Full HP sample
2	9.1% (n1)
4	27.3% (n3)
5	9.1% (n1)
6	9.1% (n1)
7	9.1% (n1)
8	9.1% (n1)
10	9.1% (n1)
13	9.1% (n1)
18	9.1% (n1)
<b>Baseline accommodation</b>	
Foster care	18.2 (n2)
Residential / small group home	27.3 (n3)
Staying put	9.1% (n1)
Semi independence	36.4 (n4)
Living with family member	9.1% (n1)
<b>Self-Reported risk factors</b>	
Alcohol use: 'drink a lot of alcohol'	0
Drug use: 'use a lot of drugs'	27.3% (n3)
Experience of being bullied	36.4% (n4)
<b>MIS needs at baseline</b>	
SEN	18.2% (n2)
Visual impairment	18.2% (n2)
Moderate Autism	9.1% (n1)

## C2 Follow-up

**Table 6: Accommodation at T4 (n=11)**

Accommodation at follow up	
No information	9.1% (n1)
Foster care	18.2% (n2)
Residential/Small group home	9.1% (n1)
Semi independence	18.2% (n2)
House project accommodation	45.5% (n5)

**Table 7: Young people's participation in eet at T1, T3 and T4**

Main activity	Baseline (T1)	Follow up (T3)	Final update (T4)
School	18.2% (n2)	0	0
Further education/college	45.5% (n5)	45.5% (n5)	27.3% (n3)
Apprenticeship/training	9.1% (n1)	9.1% (n1)	18.2% (n2)
NEET	18.2% (n2)	18.2% (n2)	9.1% (n1)
Full time parent	9.1% (n1)	0	0
Other education	0	9.1% (n1)	18.2% (n2)
Full/Part time job	0	0	9.1% (n1)
No information	0	18.2% (n2)	18.2% (n2)

**Table 8: Young people's ratings of improvement between T1 and T3**

Change over time:	Full HP sample
<b>EET:</b>	
Better	72.8% (n8)
Just the same	9.1% (n1)
Worse	0
<b>Home life:</b>	
Better	27.3% (n3)
Just the same	45.5% (n5)
Worse	9.1% (n1)
<b>Life in general:</b>	
Better	36.4% (n4)
Just the same	36.4% (n4)
Worse	9.1% (n1)

**Table 9: Reasons for joining the HP**

YP	Motivations and aspirations for joining the house project	What young people can bring to the project
1	With your help I would have the skills I need for living independently	I could put all my skills of knowing what young people want into action
2	It is a good idea to learn new skills and build on skills I already know. It is also great that I would be meeting new friends	I am good at, and enjoy, working with other young people, I have good team working skills
3	I would like to discuss things with other young people and share skills	I have vocational skills relating to building and home making and

YP	Motivations and aspirations for joining the house project	What young people can bring to the project
		woodwork
4	I have been living independently for almost a year now. I have really enjoyed it but not felt at home,  Having a home of my own would change my life for the better in so many ways it would bring me stability something I've not had much of in my life	I am very hard working and will be very good and intelligent with targeting the money funded to me
5	Not only would it give me a family home but it would also give us a future	I've had to grow up quickly I could encourage the others to make good decisions
6	I really enjoy meeting new people and discussing other things to help young people	I will help others if struggling
7	I want to show people I can be independent and trusted. It will be a good opportunity to help me with my confidence and I will also get to know more people	
8	I want to make a home for myself and make the best of this amazing opportunity	I'm confident standing up and speaking in public so I could support others to say what they want.

### C3 Qualitative data

Table 10: Qualitative data

Themes	Quotes
Timescales for implementation	
Legal frameworks	One of the things we're coming up against....it's just a traditional thing within local authorities...we are very slow to change policies and procedures so when you're trying to be

Themes	Quotes
	<p>innovative and very quick in reacting to the needs of our young people on the project, it's just two clashes of pace. It's a major obstacle, we want to move things rapidly, the council moves in a more sluggish kind of way, they are not saying "no we can't do that", quite rightly they're exploring how we go about changing council policies that are long written in stone. (M1)</p>
<p>Change in leadership</p>	<p>It's been a massive journey in terms of the political agenda ...a lack of awareness from the council...and although we got approval from the previous cabinet that was elected...we've got to go through the whole system again with the new cabinet...so we've spent a lot time trying to unpick the details... that's been the challenging part...all the paperwork...meeting with the leaders...briefing sessions. Presentations to councillors...the young people have presented in front of the panel as well (M1 Fu)</p> <p>I think we've been profoundly affected by a number of internal issues, which I don't think would necessarily apply to many other local authorities. (L1 Fu)</p>
<p>Implications to project due to timescales</p>	<p>We've made progress; it just feels as if the progress has been too slow...we aimed ambitiously to have all 10 of young people in their own properties in January and we're now in March and we have none in mainly due to the political process. (M1 Fu)</p>
<p>Implication to YP due to timescales</p>	<p>I think the timescales we were given, we thought we could do it a lot quicker than we could ...we've had to be honest with the young people about what's happening, giving reasons...being open and honest, it's for the right decisions. (F1)</p> <p>We shouldn't have given young people move-in dates...that's one of the things we've learnt, we don't want to make promises and then break them...but it's difficult not to give some indication of timings, but not specific dates. [M1 Fu]</p>
<p>Innovation and risk</p>	



Themes	Quotes
Challenging existing structures	<p>The big challenge is creating something different and innovative and putting young people in charge...current approaches don't give much choice or power to young people...so [HP] approach has caused a lot of anxiety amongst the people running the current system. Needing a vast amount of reassurance. So we've had an interesting role reversal where a group of young people realise they've got to reassure adults. (L1 Fu)</p>
	<p>What we've had to do in term of managing risk has been...helping adults to manage their own perception of risk and that's the problem with all innovation...the people who are the current stakeholders in the current system are the most at risk from it and yet they hold the power to enable it to happen. (L1 Fu)</p>
Overcoming challenges	<p>Failsafe exit strategies...minimised risk to the corporate business because our tenancy agreements match those with the council, our leasing agreements are written by the council to conform to their expectations...if the project doesn't work, the assets transfer back to the council. So we have gone a long way to be as close as possible to existing systems without losing the essence of the project. though the essence is what is most anxiety provoking...handing over power to young people...but it we aren't prepared to hand over power to young people how will they ever gain responsibility ...our core principles are ownership, responsibility, independence. (L1 Fu)</p>
Securing council properties	
Challenges	<p>The housing team were difficult to get on board. There had been some shift in managers. They were new and we had to do some groundwork. But once we built those new relationships we did make considerable progress...(M1 Fu)</p>
	<p>[Main problem] quite simply it was loss of rental income...the idea of the HP. supporting future tenants in the HP and transferring them over to a council tenancy sounded great, they loved that ...but the fact [HP] were getting these properties on a peppercorn rent gave housing and some</p>

Themes	Quotes
	councillors concern. (M1 Fu]
Identifying properties	<p data-bbox="563 331 1445 745">It was a struggle to identify suitable properties...the council allocation procedure for young people would allocate them a one bedroom property ...but there is a shortage of one bedroom properties...so there was some debate around the type of housing and location of housing ... the leader of the council was very helpful he was insistent that the property that we were allocating young people was appropriate and in the right place...and housing have been more accommodating since. (M1 Fu)</p> <p data-bbox="563 757 1445 1037">It's very difficult to get 10 properties in a similar area but also areas that the young people want to live. We don't want young people in areas where they're not comfortable, where they're going to struggle to get to education. We didn't realise that would be as much of a problem as it actually has been. (F1)</p>
Managing young people's participation	
Engagement	<p data-bbox="563 1144 1445 1384">[for] one of the young people I work– the timings of the meetings have not always been convenient given her caring responsibilities: however, the project workers have attempted to be flexible and have met the young person half way (LP108)</p> <p data-bbox="563 1395 1445 1608">We try to arrange meetings for days and times...but you know we're never going to get a time that's going to be fine for all 10 young people but as long as they're letting us know why they can't attend....and we'll let them know what we've missed. (F1)</p> <p data-bbox="563 1641 1445 1742">Maybe 2 or 3 that are hard to engage but obviously they have got other young people to support em (F1).</p>
Expectations of HP members	<p data-bbox="563 1776 1445 1977">It's varied because of different reasons...we always wanted to give the young people the power to make decisions and it feels like in some cases they've decided that they don't want to participate so we need to try and find a model that emphasizes the commitment required...find individual</p>

Themes	Quotes
	solutions to get them back on track. (M1 T4)
Forming the staff team	
Challenges	<p>A brand new project team. It was a tough challenge for us to understand each other's mechanisms and ways of working. The teams changed. We've lost members and added new members. (M1 Fu)</p> <p>Staff team dynamics at times have been challenging. (Partner zfu)</p>
Experience and expertise	<p>The other learning point is the actual development of the project team ... getting the right people in place to deliver the project in the first instance... the right skill set...a project of this nature would be better fitted with an experienced project team who'd worked together previously...understand each other's personalities...we've had to do a lot of work around the dynamics of a team who haven't worked together. Trying to get to work together effectively. (M1)</p> <p>Facilitators are not support workers, they facilitate young people to find relevant support The facilitator will never be a standard support worker...they are constantly giving ownership back to the young person...how can we solve this together? By some training for [young person] or bring it to the team meeting, perhaps we could all do with some training..team problem solving and the facilitator helping young people to thinks things through...learning about decision making...(L1)</p>
Staff skills	<p>My role is quite complex...this project we've got to talk to young people about all aspects ...about housing, about tenants, writing tenancies, getting support, whether it's going to be a co-op or a charity..I facilitate the young people...so I find I've been doing a lot of research myself to find out what these things are ..so when people come and talk to the young people I have some understanding to make it young person friendly for them. (F1)</p> <p>like we will become their housing officers, getting young</p>

Themes	Quotes
	<p>people into a good routine about independence and paying their bills and being a good tenant, when you learn those skills and you continue and it becomes routine after the HP so it's implementing them skills...and it's having the confidence....to solve their own problems that when they do mess up and haven't paid a bill they don't bury their heads in the sand....they can come to us and we can help them create a payment plan. (F1)</p> <p>I'm the sort of middle guy to make sure everybody understands, I would be speaking to the young people...[working ] with the social workers, leaving-care teams all the professionals. (F1)</p>
Support for staff	<p>The elements of support for the facilitators their wellbeing and case management...we've got a strategic manager...to do monthly supervision, [HP manager] to do the task orientated supervision and we've employed a psychologist to offer staff additional support every months and give a better understanding of how young people have been impacted by trauma in the past. (M1)</p>
Intensive support for young people	<p>I can make sure, like a parent, that [young people] are doing everything they can do. One week I'll be checking every minute that you're at college because sometimes you need someone to get you out of bed and then at the end of the week to say "you've done really well you know, have a good weekend and make sure you're up for college on Monday". (F1)</p> <p>we are trying to create something that is essentially therapeutic...we're doing something that enables young people to make better connections, to feel more joined up...young people in care, their lives are so fragmented and individual agencies keep on doing individual processes. That experience is fragmented...so our project needs to be very good at joined up. (L1)</p> <p>The existing support provided through the PA would stay in place, the facilitator is there to complement that role. Work in conjunction. We've got 2 facilitators for 5 young people so</p>

Themes	Quotes
	<p>the ratio is far healthier than a PAs (M1)</p> <p>One of the main areas of progress. The relationship building we've done with young people. Already there's a real trust there between the young people and the project team...they trust us more than the people they are usually involved with because we see them regularly, we listen to them, understand them. Got them completely immersed in the project and as much as possible they make the decisions on how things move forward. Giving them ownership. (M1 Fu)</p> <p>we attend reviews ...arrange meetings ...and when they move in to the HP, then we'll put in additional support around independency and living as part of a community. (F1)</p>
Project champions	
HP staff	Our executive director of people made it quite clear that this project must succeed and it's getting through to all of the council departments now that they need to help to facilitate our journey as efficiently as possible. (M1)
HP young people	One of our young people in care spoke to [chief executive officer] and told him how frightened she was about moving to independence...he said how moved he was by that direct conversation...it was a demanding thing to do but actually that was a very powerful and important thing to be doing. (L1)
Raising awareness of the HP	[What's gone well] the overwhelming thing that's gone well is the general support for the project within the local authority and externally...we know this particular project is being focused on in [national media] and it's comforting to know we've got the total support of our executive and leader of the council...support that we're getting from a higher level filtering down. When I talk about barriers and ways to overcome them within various departments...when I remind them of the people who are behind us it makes life a little easier getting a new policy or procedure for the HP. there's a real will of everybody involved. (M1)
Multi-Agency/ cross-departmental buy-in	

Themes	Quotes
Communication	<p data-bbox="563 237 1445 488">It's challenging when you've got so many partners involved, I guess communication is one of the main things that we need to make sure we are getting it right. Communication with the external partners is quite robust: we had a [team-building event] where we brought along all partners and young people. To meet sometimes for the first time. (M1)</p> <p data-bbox="563 533 1445 835">The more challenging communication is between our internal council departments. The legal team and our void housing team. I'm having more face-to-face meetings, which is time consuming just making sure people are fully aware of [HP] progress and that communication is effective...I have to say that the relationship with the housing team has developed into a real healthy one.... (M1 Fu)</p>
Flexibility	<p data-bbox="563 880 1406 1037">With the legalities, negotiating with [housing]...you have to create a whole load of documents ...that get signed by somebody. But it's getting people round the table, and all those things happen as soon as you do that (L1)</p>
Building relationships	<p data-bbox="563 1088 1445 1469">The agreements we are formalising with partners, there's a relationship with housing ...[they're] going to have to house these people anyway "if you give us a void property we will give you a good tenant...and we'll give you that void property back in a good state". The second relationship is with social care...we both need to be conscious of each other's work. What do [they] need from the HP. What services and outcomes you want to sign off the risk assessment for a young person being placed with the HP (L1)</p> <p data-bbox="563 1514 1430 1637">I have to say that the relationship with the housing team has developed into a real healthy one.... we've got a real good level of support within the local authority(M1 Fu)</p>
Reflections	
Planning	<p data-bbox="563 1760 1445 1953">It's a brilliant project and there are so many officers working for the council who want to see this succeed but it needs to have things planned more closely and carefully...a project is 90% in the planning and 10% in the execution. I'd love this to happen but you shouldn't engage with vulnerable young</p>

Themes	Quotes
	<p>people, sell them a dream [until] you've got everything signed off properly....because I don't want to let them down...because ...if you're leaving care the most important thing is where you are going to live. (F2)</p> <p>[if doing it again] going back to the political framework everything needed to be signed, sealed and delivered before we even embarked on this. we thought it was with the previous administration so the switch of councillors didn't help us locally but one of the key learning points for me is you have to have complete and utter buy-in from the people who make the decisions...better communication. (M1 Fu)</p>
Benefits to the young people	
Forming relationships	<p>[It has] gone quite well, I think they are beginning to form amongst some of them, a group. Supporting each other. Confidence building. (F2)</p> <p>We've seen friendships emerging within the group themselves ...which has been really good to see. (M1 Fu)</p> <p>The HP community for members that leave the HP solves an even bigger problem for care leavers...having somewhere at Christmas, being part of a wider family and community. (F1)</p>
Increase in YP skills	<p>We see how much the young people have learnt on this journey...how the co-operative and working together is kind of naturally already implemented in them...they've come up within allocations policy...to make it fair if 2 young people want the same property. Putting the reasons they want it and the young people will make the decisions but they want to do it fairly...making good decisions. (F1)</p> <p>The best thing has been the young people's response, has been absolutely superb, their thinking, creativity...debating how they will manage surpluses, the degree to which they get it is constantly confirmed that this does make sense to them...where you give young people responsibilities within a safe environment, which is really a safe set of relationships: you will reap back incredible potential. (L1)</p>

Themes	Quotes
	The governance meetings are really heavy duty...and the young people have just been incredible. their participation, behaviours within the session, cos you expect a little bit of boredom and playing on their phone. coz that's the nature of young people. But to sit in a legal meeting an entire day with complete participation, some of them were making notes for themselves...because [they] want to run their own business..(S1)
Themes	Quotes
YP participation	
Commitment to the HP	Because there's too many meetings and like everyone doesn't have the time like I class it as HP5 as there is only usually 5 people turn up. (Lee)
	hardly anyone's turning up so it's like they shouldn't really be a part of it they haven't done as much work as we've done and they're going to be I think it's kind of a bit selfish how we have to put all the work in and they haven't done anything and they can get a house so it's a bit unfair really (Sophia)
Role allocation within the HP group	I think everyone just voted for me because...I'm not busy but everyone is moaning because I'm taking on some of their positions but at the end of the day. I've had to take over sometimes because they're never here and basically doing everyone's position when they're not here. (Lee)
	I should be the organiser but I think that's changed now... Because [he's] texting everyone and on Facebook and everything like that and I thought I was the organiser of this, so I've got nothing to say really about that. (Bailey)
What worked well	
Skills	Now I'm getting on better with independence skills my FC are taking notice of what I can do more (Ellie)
	The different opportunities it's given me because if I wasn't involved in this I wouldn't get my house or be setting up an



Themes	Quotes
	apprenticeship (Ava)
Relationships and support	I get a lot more support than I was expecting. Even the meetings, how they're like really common and often, I was expecting maybe once a month for a gathering and never see each other for another month. And the weekly, it's different days, and I just thought it's really supportive. (Ellie)
What didn't work well / could have been done better	
Participation in EET	Before [HP] young person did attend college for a short time; however, they did not maintain this. House project has supported the young person in finding a suitable traineeship. (LP106)
Breakdown in accommodation	my foster carer gave notice on me so now I am a sofa surfer. (Clara)
Moving into HP accommodation	That week of me moving was so stressful it was unbelievable. We started on the Monday and I had a visit with my support worker on the Monday so I had to do that for like two hours, and then then later on in the day, (Facilitator) was busy all day so I couldn't have (Facilitator), so later on that day we only did, we only had like an hour so we just grabbed, grabbed everything out of my room, the boxes, do 'em in the van...just kept doing that for like an hour and a half or something like that, just piled everything on, and then I stayed at my old, my new house while (Facilitator) went, I stayed up there and like started putting things away and stuff like that, then obviously went back to my [other] property, stayed there that night, stayed Monday night. And then on the Tuesday I actually ordered a removal van to come and get the rest of the stuff because I couldn't be arsed to wait for (Facilitator), I had to go to work as well, and my wardrobe wouldn't, well we thought it would but I didn't want to risk it if it would fit in the Postman Pat van, so I thought oh I might as well just get a van, cos I couldn't sort of wait for (Facilitator) and for everything else, cos obviously he was working too, it was like ... I just wanted to get it done. So I rang a van and then moved the rest of me stuff myself. (Ava)



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