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Leading by Example

Emergency Homes for Young People

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Chris
Shane
Alexia
Phil & Emma

I look forward to a new life.

Perspective

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[www.mixcloud.com NewHorizonYouthCentre](http://www.mixcloud.com/NewHorizonYouthCentre)

Where did you stay last night? In a hotel, I have been staying here ever since the shelters moved or closed. They transferred us to hotels because the government



youth worker Hazz Rees and case worker Kai Neckles at New Horizon @Jeremy Selwyn

said that we couldn't be in close proximity to others like we were in the shelters. I have been here from March.

So you were in a shelter, how was that for a young woman and you were working as well right? Yes I found myself in a shelter because of family issues. My cousin

was trying to refer us everywhere and when we found the day centre (NHYC) we weren't even in a shelter at the time. We were sleeping in busses and staying at hospitals. We were all new to this and had no idea what to do. My dad wasn't in the country Then my cousin found New Horizons and ever since then we got referred to a shelter.

How was it turning up at the centre for the first time? Were you worried? No, you know what it was so welcoming. In terms of support, the showers and the washing machines were great. When we were staying in the shelters we had to leave at 9am and go back at 7pm and I was working so I couldn't do my washing and my sister had to do it for me. Also in terms of food and facilities NHYC was the best thing.

What are the challenges you are facing at the moment and where you are staying at the hotel? I would say the main thing is the unknown of until when we will be able to stay in the hotels so I am trying to find somewhere to stay more permanently and I am going back to work very soon. Where I am staying currently it is too far for my work and I do work late nights so that is a problem.

Are you studying? Not at the moment but I want to go to university and study economics. I have applied already but its obviously on hold.

This is great, so driven and ambitious? How has looking for accommodation during Covid affected your health? Even though lockdown is easing now for house viewings, it is really hard. I am trying to move as quickly as possible but a lot of people dont get back to me. House hunting is a problem. In terms of jobs I am fine, still working, was on furlough.

You came in with your younger sister and your cousin

and you come across as the carer, the one who looked after them? Especially in London and me being the oldest one, they don't have anyone else to turn to. My mum passed away. Our father wasn't even in the country when we were made homeless. We had to do a lot of things on our own. Try to put a roof over our heads. Even before we found you guys we had no roof and then it is up to me if I am going to break or fold.

You have been able to stay strong which is inspiring? And your mother dies, that must have been very sad? Yes she did but I was 8 years old. It has been a long time and I have learnt to adjust to it and her absence. I will never let go her legacy.

What is life like inside the hotel? I have a room, inside I have a bathroom, inside which I have a toilet and a shower and a sink. I have a kettle here so I can make my teas in the morning.

So what have you been eating because there aren't any cooking facilities there? One of the biggest challenges is not being able to get a hot meal. Otherwise it is ok, we get meals three times a day, I am mostly alone in my room. Sometimes need to use a computer so I will go downstairs, I can go out for walks, watch TV and read. Most of the time I am reading, taking notes, listening to the word of god and that is about it.

What have you been reading? A book called Black and British. A forgotten history. which is great; the bible and some business books. It is time for me to take control of my life now.

What are you looking forward to? A new life. I know what I want to do so I really want it to unfold.

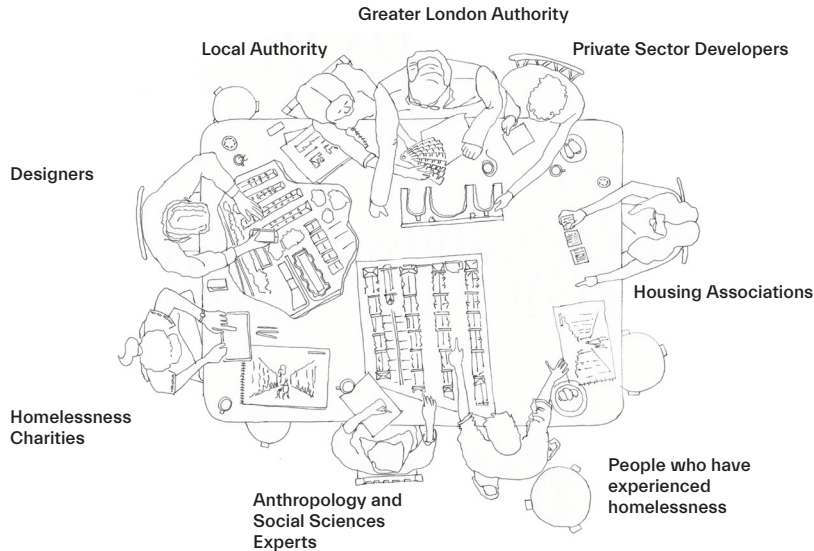
You have three words what would you say to young people out there? Persevere, trust and believe.

Preface—

In the UK, new-build specialist facilities for homeless people are a rarity and efforts to procure new, purpose-built accommodation are often hindered by the current planning process due to a lack of centralised guidance, legislation and design codes for this specialist use. In our search for case studies we were shocked to find how very few projects exist.

Despite the hurdles however, there are some encouraging examples where stakeholders have worked together to create better environments. This book features a series of case studies and conversations with designers, charities, local and central authorities, private sector developers, social workers and people who have experienced homelessness. Through analysis of the brief, outcome and use of spaces, the case studies aim to showcase how investment in good design and consideration of use can benefit both people in need and the local communities and economies. Whereas the interviews reveal multitude of perspectives, acknowledge constraints and discuss innovative ideas of how we can all individually and collectively work towards enabling viable, supportive and tailored accommodation to become a reality for more people which need it.

We hope by demonstrating that successful and affordable examples can be achieved if the right framework and quality objectives are in place, unlawful conversions will be replaced with well considered accommodation.



2

Case Studies



New Horizon Youth Centre Building

Type:	Day Centre
Length of stay:	N/A
Funding:	Charity fundraising/grants
Maintenance costs:	Covered by charity
Number of beds:	N/A
Type of bed accommodation	N/A
User group:	16–24 year olds
Spatial provision:	open entrance with integrated lounge space and kitchen and storage; meeting/counselling rooms; communal showers/toilets; shared laundry; learning space (for tuition); performance space; charity offices
Support services	advice, employment and education, accommodation, youth work, counselling and health
Other/complimentary uses	N/A
Designed by	Refurbishment and extension by Adam Khan Architects

New Horizon Youth Centre

New Horizon are a vital support network for 16–24 year olds with nowhere else to go. Through the ‘one stop shop’ of services they provide at their daycentre, via outreach and remotely, they support thousands of young people experiencing homelessness in London to improve their wellbeing, change their economic circumstances and find somewhere that they can call home.

NHYC's current home is in a 1930s existing building which is part of the Grade 2 listed Ossulston Estate in Somers Town near Euston Station. The premises were refurbished and extended in 2012 by Adam Khan Architects who centered the designs on the concept of home and how to invest an institutional building with the nurturing qualities, flexibility and generosity of a welcoming and settled home.

One enters the building through a seemingly unassuming residential entrance on the ground floor into a central open space which acts as a cafe, hangout area and meeting place - making one instantly feel at ease. The space is simple and warm, with timber storage cupboards lining up the walls so that visitors can leave their belongings on entry without much fuss. The central space leads onto alcoves with glass partitions which are used as 1 to 1 meeting rooms and further-on, the new extension wing offers training and skills development spaces. Discretely positioned on the way are the shower rooms which visitors can use.



New Horizon Youth Centre 'Barn',
Adam Khan Architects



"What is nice about the centre is that it is a one-stop-shop and there is something for everyone. We have the 'barn' used for boxing, fitness club and drama workshops and performances. Downstairs on the big table we will have big workshops and smaller ones on the sofas. The support spaces are all about having different things for different people because no two young people are going to be the same."

Phil Kerry, CEO New Horizon Youth Centre





Shelter from the Storm 2019

Type:	Night Shelter
Length of Stay:	0–28 days
Funding:	Charity fundraising/grants
Maintenance Costs:	Covered by charity and volunteering
Number of beds:	38 beds
Type of bed accommodation	dorms
User group:	all ages male and female; referral only
Spatial provision:	secure entrance lobby and reception; assessment 1:1 room; shared communal kitchen; communal spaces (tables, sofas, TV area, pool table, computers); communal showers/toilets; shared laundry; learning space (for tuition); outdoor courtyard/smoking area; dorms;
Support services	food, donation clothes store, language & computer skills, life skills, exercise
Other/complimentary uses	community cafe and retail space
Designed by	Holland Harvey Architects

Shelter from the Storm

Shelter from the Storm is a completely free emergency night shelter providing bed, dinner and breakfast for 38 homeless people every night of the year. It was founded in Islington in 2007 by Sheila Scott and Louie Salvoni to provide shelter and support for the homeless and dispossessed from anywhere.

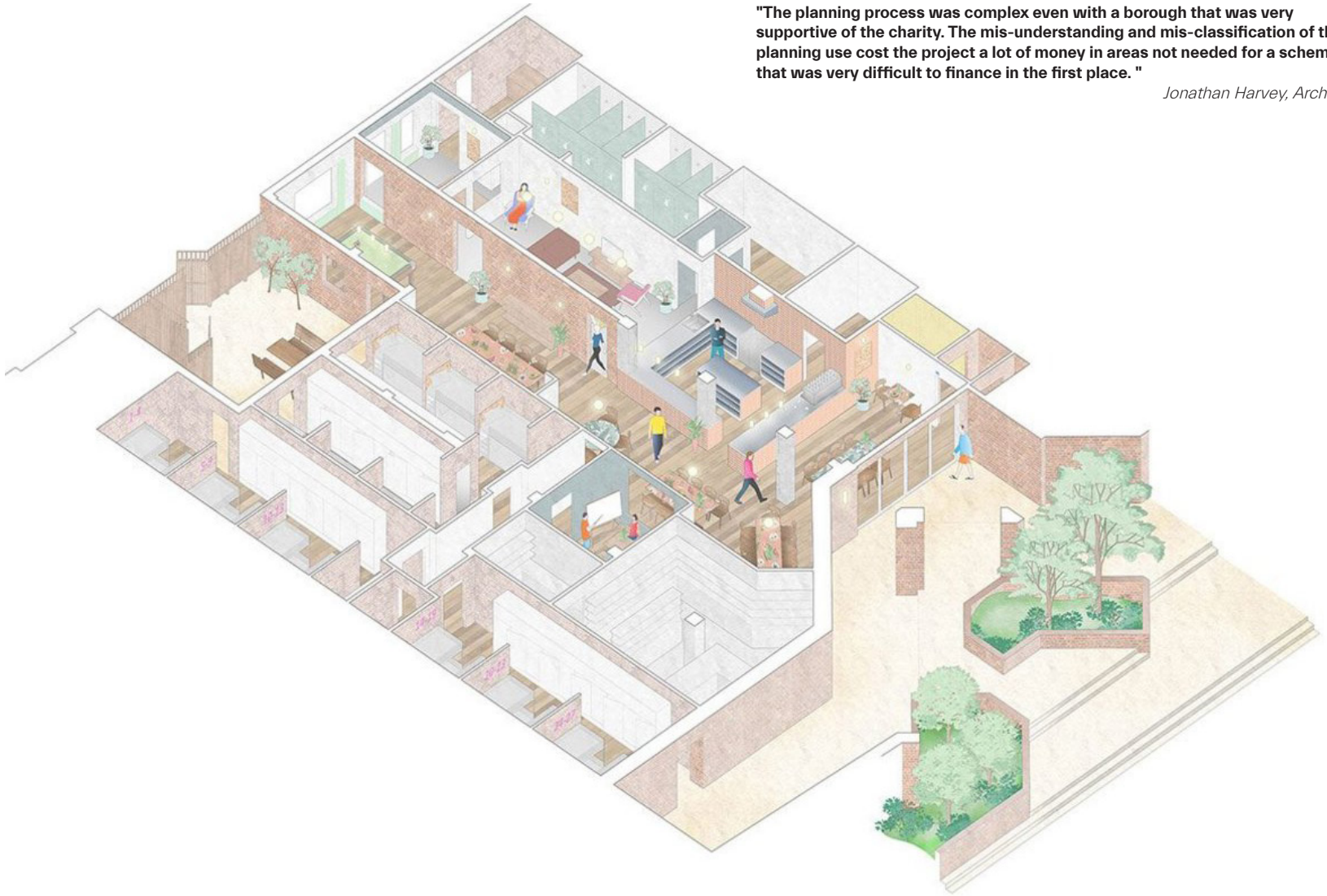
Being forced out of their former location due to rising rents and binding contracts, the charity embarked on an ambitious project to turn a dingy failed supermarket in a 1970s north London council estate into a thoroughly welcoming place. They commissioned architecture practice Holland Harvey to design a shelter and community cafe.

‘We had to understand the mindset of a person entering a shelter, as a guest, for the very first time. Sensitivity, domesticity and warmth were key to this project.’
Jonathan Harvey, Architect

The access to the shelter is through a discreet guest entrance off the street (left) with a picture window giving a glimpse of the warm community life inside. Once inside you are greeted by a friendly volunteer in the secured entrance lobby with an adjacent homely staff and assessment room. You then enter the main communal space which is light and welcoming, with a cafe and kitchen at its heart, making you doubt yourself if you are in a shelter or a hip new cafe. This central space is also accessible from a secondary entrance open during the day when the cafe doubles up as a wider community space.

"The planning process was complex even with a borough that was very supportive of the charity. The mis-understanding and mis-classification of the planning use cost the project a lot of money in areas not needed for a scheme that was very difficult to finance in the first place."

Jonathan Harvey, Architect



Axonometric view of the shelter, @Holland Harvey Architects

Clusters of break-out spaces have been carefully arranged offering users a space to sit alone or share a table with a small group of people, play pool or watch TV. The space feels relaxed, similar to a large living room. Additional study rooms are located at the back where volunteers help residents with language lessons, job applications or other learning.

Quality materials and care have also been carried through to the shared bathrooms and showers.



SftS - Kitchen

"We knew we wanted the kitchen at the heart of the shelter. People sitting down together to eat is important. Every culture, every religion has it. Particularly if somebody has prepared it for you and offered it as a gift. It shows that you care."

Sheila Scott, founder of Shelter from the Storm



SftS - Showers



SftS - Outdoor activities

"We have always tried to provide the best shower facilities we could. It is so important for people's health and wellbeing - that bit of privacy and moment of calm."

Sheila Scott, founder of Shelter from the Storm

There are two sleeping rooms (male and female) with bunkbeds and lockers - very simple and robust, requiring minimum maintenance which is a priority for a charity run nightly shelter with limited resources.

Overall, at Shelter from the Storm there is a clear emphasis on ensuring quality and generosity of the communal space, with a determination to move away from an association with institutional feel, where residents feel dignified by their environment.



"We worked hard with the architects to provide different spaces and areas for small groups and shy individuals alike where each could relax for a little."

Sheila Scott, founder of Shelter from the Storm



SftS lobby



SftS before



"It has always been a problem moving into an area. People will say 'I am really supportive of helping homeless people but just not here. These are the things we have always had to address and the way we do it is by inviting people in, encouraging them to volunteer, transparency, light."

Sheila Scott, founder of Shelter from the Storm

SftS after





Alexia Murphy @Westbourne House

Type:	Supported accommodation
Length of stay:	Up to 2 years
Funding:	Charity fundraising/grants
Maintenance Costs:	Covered by charity and volunteering
Number of beds:	12 bedrooms
Type of bed accommodation	private bedroom
User group:	16–25 year olds
Spatial provision:	secure entrance lobby and reception; shared communal kitchen; communal living room (table, sofas, TV, football table); shared laundry; IT room; private bedrooms (fully furnished, en-suite facilities and own fridge)
Support services	assigned key-worker, advice on budgeting, benefits, personal issues, cooking, finding employment and training, family mediation
Other/complimentary uses	N/A
Designed by	N/A

Westbourne House

Depaul UK

Founded in 1989, Depaul supports young people facing homelessness to achieve their potential. The charity provides accommodation, stability and relationship support and have properties across the country.

Westbourne House was one of the first properties Depaul acquired and still proudly owns today. A beautiful, grand, white-stuccoed terraced house, Westbourne House is a bold statement that challenges prejudice of what accommodation for young homeless people does or should look like. The four-storey terraced house has been converted into 12 private bedrooms for young people who share a high-quality modern kitchen, adjacent living room with table football, IT/study room and laundry. The young people who come to Westbourne House are either referred to the charity via the borough’s children services or come through the single homeless pathway. Each individual’s circumstances are different, and they can stay there for any time up to two years.

On entry at the house, in a bright and airy hallway, one is greeted by a smiling staff member who welcomes you in and asks about your day. The overwhelming feeling is of being at ease, welcome and at home.



Westbourne House, Depaul

"Good accommodation saves people, it stops people falling through the cracks. We work towards all our environments being psychologically informed and that means good quality lighting that is not abrasive and institutional, we want nice colours that aren't imposing and scary. Light and airy spaces with windows that you can open and get fresh air and look out from onto their neighbourhood, their city."

Cliff Dymond, Depaul



Hallway

"With young homeless people often you are starting from the very basics of cooking and self-care and they have to see what you are doing so we have and are developing lovely kitchens with the motto that the kitchen is as good as my kitchen."

Alexia Murphy, Depaul



Kitchen

Once through into the house, a wide, naturally-lit staircase takes you either down to the shared living spaces of the house or up to the private bedrooms, each with a view out towards a church green. Bedrooms are small but cosy and nicely decorated with a study space near the window.

Downstairs, the kitchen is the heart of the shared house. It is spacious, with high quality white tiles and finishes that encourage residents to take pride and care, to leave it clean and pleasant at all times. Young people staying at the house spend a lot of time cooking together. It is the kitchen where they share experiences of their days and encourage each other.

Another important space in the house which is often overlooked is the shared laundry which sometimes becomes a point of conflict if a garment goes missing. However, it is also a place to learn valuable interpersonal and argument management skills.

The thing that makes Westbourne House truly special is its uncompromising location in the heart of a wealthy neighbourhood, with great transport connections and links to nearby community infrastructure, schools, colleges, sports facilities etc. Young people staying there are often really engaged with school and college which is brilliant and the local authority ensures there is support for them in their local area.



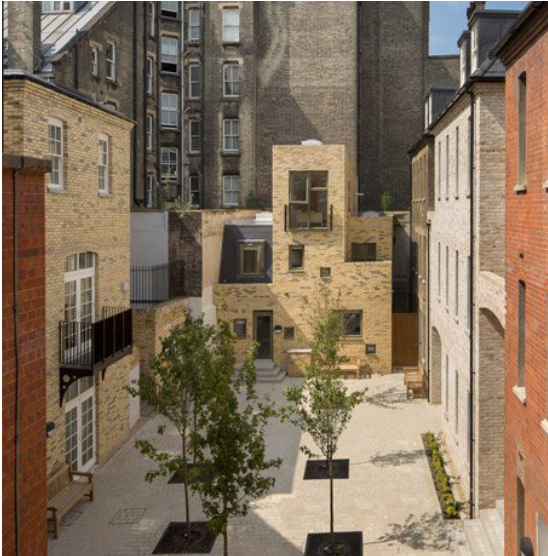
Kitchen window



Bedroom window

"Providing a decent standard of a room that has comfortable furniture, a window, nicely decorated, in a good building that is in an area from where young people can get to things. That has a massive positive impact on your mental health, on your ability to get up in the morning and face the day, to meet your counsellor, your housing officer... Appointments that are really stressful but if you know you have a safe base to come home to with a staff team that know you and support you and know your aspirations and strengths and focus on those rather than the deficits then you can succeed in life."

Cliff Dymond, Depaul



Mount Pleasant, Camden

Type:	Supported accommodation
Length of stay:	unknown
Funding:	Local Authority
Maintenance Costs:	Local Authority
Number of beds:	52 bedrooms
Type of bed accommodation	en-suite bedrooms in flats/clusters
User group:	all ages, female and male
Spatial provision:	secure entrance lobby, reception with lounge and back office/1:1 meeting room; laundry; training kitchen; IT facilities private bedrooms arranged in clusters 3/5 rooms sharing kitchen/living room and bathroom staff room and lockers
Support services	counselling, cooking training, IT training
Other/complimentary uses	N/A
Designed by	Peter Barber Architects

Mount Pleasant

London Borough of Camden

Mount Pleasant is part of LB Camden's Community Investment Programme. It provides safe accommodation and training for vulnerable people, to help them get back into work and stay independent. The hostel use on site was pre-established as the old building was a former hostel, originally built 100 years ago as part of a workhouse. The old building was dark and dingy, and not welcoming at all.

Peter Barber Architects transformed the hostel through sensitive part-demolition, refurbishment and insertion of new build cluster blocks, with new and old now set around a secluded and peaceful suntrap courtyard. The new building opened in 2015 and now provides 52 units of modern en-suite accommodation and training rooms for single homeless people with support needs.

The project is entered from a tiny lane through the arched doors of the Victorian hostel building. The entrance is a light, bright, and airy space with an open-planned reception and lounge which opens directly out onto a terrace.

The tree lined courtyard below is the principle circulation of the project, its main meeting space is in a sense the social heart of the place with little spots for people to sit. There is direct access to a laundry, shared

kitchens, a consulting room and the apartments which surround it. It is a place which encourages social interaction. Unplanned encounters between staff and residents which are a vital means of engagement and care of residents.



Street views

The hostel provides ensuite accommodation to 52 residents. There are little self-contained apartments for people who need a bit of space to themselves, accommodation in flats for those who are more gregarious, and there are larger accessible units for residents who struggle to get about.

The courtyard itself is formed by the demolition and removal of the central linking part of the original 'H' block hostel and the patching in of the long facades with reclaimed and new bricks in the London Vernacular.

Two new apartment buildings, little houses really, stand sentinel at the short East and West ends of the courtyard. A racy new building fronting Mount Pleasant reinstates the back of the pavement terrace evident in 18th century maps.



Courtyard views



"Since the building has been completed not only has the street in front of Mount Pleasant become active and well overlooked we have also heard directly from residents about how much they enjoy the building; sitting out in the sun and setting up art classes in the courtyard."

Alice Brownfield, Peter Barber Architects

**I cannot believe
the change in
me from the
day I went to
Mount Pleasant
until the day I
left.**



Frehiwot - Stayed at Mount Pleasant from 2015 - 2016
source: <https://cip.camden.gov.uk/housing/case-studies/>



Landaid House City YMCA

Type:	Supported accommodation + Move-on accommodation up to 2 years
Length of Stay:	Charity fundraising+grants
Funding:	Covered by charity and volunteering
Maintenance Costs:	146 beds
Number of beds:	ensuite bedrooms in flats/clusters
Type of bed accommodation	16–25 year olds
User group:	safe and secure entrance and reception; social space; IT facilities; Play room for visiting children; interview room; laundry; garden; cycle store; admin facilities accessible design
Spatial provision:	employment training, apprenticeship public gym, 2 community enterprise hubs, meeting rooms for hire
Support services	Levitt Bernstein Architects
Other/complimentary uses	
Designed by	

Landaid House

City YMCA London

City YMCA (London) is a relatively small independent charity, part of the wider YMCA charity network, which focuses on providing accommodation that offers a safe place for young people experiencing homelessness to piece their lives together.

The Landaid House project started more than 10 years ago when the charity was faced with eviction from a high-quality building in a central London location which was given to them on a social interest lease back in the 1960s. The building provided 256 affordable bedrooms for young people and was a valuable asset offering affordable housing as a first step for a stable life ahead. At the time the charity also owned a property on Errol Street which operated like a homeless hostel for young people. The old building on Errol Street however was unable to take increase in capacity and was deemed no longer suitable – institutional feel, inflexible layouts with long corridors and small bedrooms, limited and shared showers, failing boilers, sewage pipes and worn out facilities leading to ongoing increase of maintenance costs. Based on this the charity made a bold decision to run a series of feasibility options for the best route forward and subsequently decided to demolish the old building and replace with a new, higher capacity, purpose-built accommodation designed specifically for homeless young people. The new building, now called Landaid House is believed to be the first purpose-built accommodation for young people in London for more than two decades.



Pre-existing condition
Errol St building



Landaid House new
kitchens and
bathrooms

"We decided to go down the dignity route and create a psychologically informed environment which is of high quality that people can respond to positively. That meant good quality finishes and fittings as you would get in a normal housing development."

Chris East, City YMCA

The new 7 storey building offers health and wholeness facilities, a resident's lounge, laundrette and 20 flats with shared kitchen between 4, 5 or 6 ensuite bedrooms. There are also 12 two-bedroom and 4 one-bedroom move-on apartments. Wheelchair accessible flats are also provided.

All aspects of the building have been designed together with homeless young people who have informed the flat arrangements, provision of private showers and cooking facilities, the style and quality of



Gym changing rooms

the fittings and also the provision of supplementary uses such as the gym. The design has been led by a commitment to be a Psychologically Informed Environment and offer a dignified, inspirational setting for young people to live, learn and excel.

Flats are designed without 'living rooms' or access to WIFI to encourage the use of the social and support spaces, where social interaction with staff, social workers and other young people is key. Quiet rooms offer space for private conversations and support work. Shared facilities also include a laundry which is equipped with durable, highly-efficient machines aimed to ease maintenance.

The communal lounge is subdivided into smaller zones including soft furniture and tables, space for computers, snooker table, tucked away TV corners so

that TV-watching and gaming does not begin to dominate the whole space. The social spaces at ground floor open up onto a residents outdoor garden to the back of the building. There is also a gym which residents can access for a notional charge of £1 to encourage young people to appreciate the facility and value it.

Quality and openness is carefully balanced against safety and maintenance considerations. A secure foyer separates the street from the greeting, post and reception area which flows into the shared lounge spaces. Smart systems provide residents access only to their circulation stair and lift, floor and apartment. The flats and private ensuite bedrooms have been designed to be safe and dignified. High-quality finishes and fittings and good levels of natural light and ventilation in each space are not compromised by practical safety features there to ensure the safety of vulnerable residents who may suffer from severe depression or anxiety.

The new building design also places emphasis on sustainability with a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating and over 40% reduction in CO2 achieved through passive environmental design, sustainable materials, green roofs/walls, gas CHP and PVs.

Funding has been a key challenge for the project as available grants often work by offering 50% up-front funding with the gap filled in by the charity itself. In addition, temporary accommodation for residents during the construction period had to be factored into the viability of the scheme. The project also faced



Landaid House

unexpected development and construction challenges which have caused significant delays and additional costs.

Originally due to open in 2019, at the time of writing Landaid House has still not welcomed its first residents due to the Coronavirus pandemic and ongoing construction delays. Despite all the challenges the team at City YMCA are hopeful that new, purpose-build, inner city facilities will become the norm rather than the exception. We hope to visit Landaid House, full of life and young people very soon.

3

Conversations

**2019-
2020**

HOMELESS IS NOT HOPELESS	I WANT TO HELP PEOPLE	I WANT TO BE A FILM MAKER	I SLEEP ANYWHERE THAT'S WARM	I MISS MY FAMILY	I AM AMBITIOUS	THERE ARE SOMETIMES FIGHTS	I SLEPT ON A BENCH OUTSIDE BUCKINGHAM PALACE	A JOB IS MY PRIORITY	I'M A STUDENT BUT I SLEEP ROUGH	I WANT TO DO SOMETHING BIG IN MY LIFE	I JUST WANT MY LIFE TO GET BETTER	IN FIVE YEARS I'LL START AT UNI
I WANT TO HELP OTHERS LIKE THOSE THAT HELP	I'M LIVING IN A HOSTEL	I WANT TO LEAD A BETTER LIFE	I NEED PEOPLE	I WANT TO BE HAPPY	TECHNICALLY I AM HOMELESS	I NEED A JOB	I HAVE A PLAN	LAST NIGHT I SLEPT IN A LO...	I WILL CHANGE MY LIFE	BETTER STAY	I DONT FEEL GOOD SAYING I'M HOMELESS	I WANT TO BE



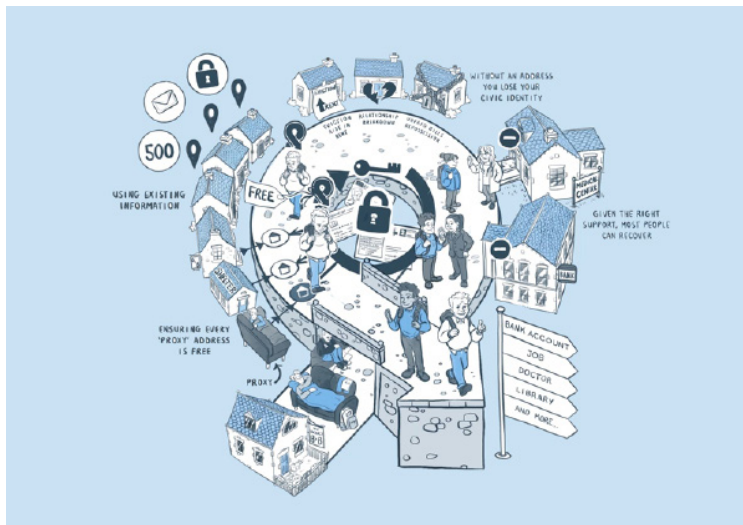
Chris Hildrey

Hildrey Studio and ProxyAddress

Tell us a little bit about Proxy Address and what were the key challenges you were faced with when starting?

Funding strategies for the homeless sector were one of the key challenges. The sector is very granular, very broken up, lots of different parties competing for the same thing. Proxy address was set up as a social enterprise rather than a charity.

What is the difference? Social enterprise can be business focused but there is a limit on how much you bring back to the company. The main thing is that you can be self-sustaining.



Proxy Address @Hildrey Studio

Where/When will Proxy Address start being used?

The test bed will be the London Borough of Lewisham.

How did you pick Lewisham? They wanted to make it a very focused trial. They came up in the process of research through Place Ladywell contacts. For homelessness Lewisham is deemed a “Sanctuary Borough” and now the deputy mayor of housing is ex-Lewisham which says a lot.

Have you approached other specific boroughs and was there a selection process? It was quite informal.

So how does it all work? When you present as homeless the Homelessness Reduction Act kicks in and the council has to offer a meeting with a housing officer in order to assess if an individual is eligible for assistance. The process has a number of checks e.g. they check if the person has access to public funds and the person needs to demonstrate they are eligible for assistance. So these things are already done. Proxy Address steps in on this process when the person is at this stage for additional checks which provide the foothold of knowing that essentially the person is homeless and they are who they say they are.

Right... That means that therefore a lot of the things that you might need those checks for in most cases its not to know your location, its to know you are who you say you are. So we kind of pe-deal with that.

So in a way a verification of identity? Yes exactly what it is in essence. So the person will refer themselves or they will be referred by the relief agency; they will approach the council; they will get general advice regarding general rules, relief, HRA and there are various decision points that come in in the assessment and they

include lots of things like “Do you believe the person is eligible; are they homeless or within 56 days of being made homeless (extended from the previous 28 days) and different eligibility checks: are you living in the UK, do you have recourse to public funds; or Emigration and Asylum Act and if the person is homeless underneath that....

So many loops...it really shows the system is “working” ...and then if you are assessed to be homeless or at risk of being homeless you either have a prevention or relief duty. And at that point, that is when you are on board with Proxy Address at this very same meeting. You have to have at least one face-to-face meeting with a housing officer

And that ties in with the whole eligibility process? ... yes the idea is that we make the assessment easier as well. So we do a number of different checks with a number of different bits of information, that come together to make what is called the CDD (Customer Due Diligence) report which is a finance term and is done in conjunction with the banks. And then if they pass that then we assign them with a ProxyAddress and then there are various different processes for the banks which I am not going to go into but it is important that all this first half is the HRA process.

So that is what a person goes through if they go to an assessment centre, right? Yes, as I say you have 56 days and again I think the issue is if you are 56 days away from homelessness the problems are already there. So there are some other things being done at the moment. There is a group called “Holsium Practice Group” who are a private sector group who are working with the government to do things like identify upstream when

people may be showing behaviours that would demonstrate that they are at risk of homelessness maybe before the person even knows it. So if the person is paying for council tax on a credit card three months in a row it's kind of a bit of a red flag. They have all these fancy procedural ways to map risks so that they can identify people and work with the councils to push signposting if you are at risk you can do x,y,z. Westminster were saying that exact same thing that the main flag that they found out was the council tax and they are starting now to do that and there is a huge shift... so there are all these policies and talk but what are the actual practicalities of how you can prevent initially and the practicalities of trying to deal with this huge bureaucracy which ProxyAddress is doing...

So the actual ProxyAddress, the address you are offering, who owns this address? It is a difficult thing right. There are various levels of fidelity to explain the project and I've talked about it from a 3min PechaKutcha to a long podcast so in that way there are “different versions” of the project which people might have heard of. It's a bit like when you are at GCSE and someone explains the atom as simplest form and then you get to your A-levels and they say “that is not true”. At first you get the simplest version so you can get your foot in the door to then understand the more complex stuff.

So what you might have heard before (which was originally one of the things we explored) was that we use No.13 Addresses

Like fake addresses? Yes but that is not what we actually use. So one of the key parts of our ProxyAddress and something that is key for architecture as well is that there is no point at which we can be designing

something and expecting the world to change to meet the design requirements. It is actually about navigating the realm of realities of what is currently here. That means if somebody says no, don't be silly that is impossible, I will work around it. It has been described as disruptive before and I see it as the opposite...

...it is aggressively compliant...

Its like ok, you don't want us to do that, we wont do it we will work around it and that makes it quicker to implement. One of the things that we do with that is exactly the addresses. For instance, I went through a long process of legal precedent about this as there is no reason why we couldn't use any address around the country right. But people's mindsets don't work like that. People identify personally with an address. If you buy a house you don't own the address. It is the most public information in the world. If you look at any road sign and number on the door, that is the address... you can google it, you can shout it out loud and you are not breaking any GDPR. But that is not how people's brains work and that is certainly not how risk-averse large institutions who we partner with work either. They are more worried about reputational damage. Doesn't matter if I say it is legal, they are worried about a DailyMail headline saying 'this organization stole my address and used it for somebody who is homeless' and nobody is going to get to page.4 where it actually says that there is nothing wrong with this. Everyone is just going to read the headline.

So ok there is clearly a bit of friction here from a reputational point of view so we have made sure that the addresses we use are only addresses with explicit consent. We have addresses that are owned by councils,

owned by Housing Associations, real estate companies which was an interesting one, and private donations as well. With real estate companies it was an unexpected one as they are basically asking to pay us to use their addresses...

Interesting... because of social responsibility or avoiding empty properties tax? Well the way it was described to me, and it is their term not mine, was their problem of 'wealth guilt'. They will be selling very high-end properties in London and they will get people who are within three weeks of buying a property and they realise that they will only be living there like 1 week every 6 months. And they ask themselves 'ah should I actually be buying this' and what they wanted was to put in an opt in box to get over that moral hurdle so that they can make more sales.

They could see that it was connected to them improving their sales by doing this. Yes but it is still bizarre. It is one of these things where the best partnerships are symbiotic. It is like OK they need to sell these extremely expensive properties and if we can help people at the same time then fine. If you dig deeply enough into 'should they be selling such expensive properties, should we be building such properties then there are questions but...

Of course but you can't answer that and in a way it is not your responsibility. Yes I am trying to make the quickest impact as possible within the current system.

Could I sell my address to you then? If I feel guilty about my address? Anyone could do it? You can give £5 to a person on the street or you could also give us your address and make structural changes.

How do you advertise that? At the moment is it just targeted conversations with people? Correct at the moment we are not open to private donations until the pilot trials are fully tested. Although we have had a few people asking.

So soon you will be able to... With the test bed in Lewisham and once people start to recognize it, it could become what everyone starts doing. I guess the question is how do you actually give homeless people their mail? The mail is straightforward. The thing is, I spent ages when I was going through the process of researching this, fixated on the mail. I was desperately trying to figure out how to make it work and I came up with awful ideas like vending machines for post... ridiculous things. Actually it is straightforward and it already exists. I went around the Mount Pleasant sorting office and in the first stages of the project I spent 3 weeks redesigning the entire redirection system of the Royal Mail. I went through the organizational charts and their machines and I was laughed out of the room because it was going to cost them about £30million to implement which was one of the first lessons when I learned that actually I shouldn't be trying to change the world to try and make this work. I need to make it work around the world. Their redirection system I expected will be like scan the envelope then a computer reads it, tracks the database and so on... when in fact it is literally people, in front of pigeon holes, they have a posted note and they put re-directed to 'blahblah', stick it on, and that is it. Posted notes. It is so analogue and old school. If your redirection doesn't work that is probably why.

So you are making a lot of work for those posted-notes guys are you? Potentially yes but the good thing is

that the redirection process is already there so we don't have to invent anything new to make it work. The principle is already there. Every year thousands of children send letters to Santa Claus and the address is Santa Claus at Reindeerland S4 MS or whatever ... and it is kind of heartbreaking, it doesn't go to Reindeerland. It goes to a sorting office in Belfast. Not quite as exciting. But the point is the address is a routing instruction and there is no reason why the redirection can't work. With proxy address generally speaking there are 3 answers to every question to deal with the different conditions: rough sleeping, sofa surfing and temporary accommodation. Each of those has different pressures and the post is one thing that works in different ways depending on what challenges you are facing

So for my benefit, when you get set up with Proxy Address but you don't have anywhere you live, you sleep on someones sofa for a day or two and then somewhere else...then how does the whole redirection work ... So for instance if you are in TA the problem is that mail redirection probably won't keep up with your level of movement. You might be moving every couple of days or weeks and if you are in TA there is a short notice (24h) if they want you to move and obviously if you are rough sleeping then you have missed the entire interaction with structured mail collection. A lot of rough sleepers use addresses of charities, churches, shelters. The problem with that is two fold: for the organization maintaining that service is incredibly draining because actually what happens is people sign up to it and they don't update their details. For instance Glass Door in Chelsea they were collecting post for about 120 people currently but they were receiving post for about 1200 because they

had previously used it and they hadn't updated their location so the charity has to sort out which is which and try and keep it for as long as possible. One guy didn't come back for 7 years and was declared legally dead and then suddenly he turned up at the shelter and was looking for his post and had to be told 'sorry you are actually dead'. The issue which has been recognized by several committee papers as well is that you cannot maintain accurate data and accurate information about people as they move. The other problem for the user is actually if you try to do anything with that address,

the stigma associated with that address stops you from being able to use it.

For instance working with Passage Victoria and they were doing fantastic employment programme: they will help with CVs, teach IT skills etc. They were struggling to get anyone employed outside of specific partnerships that already existed and if they had people applying for jobs they actually wanted they would struggle. So they tried taking the address of the Passage off and that sorted out their employment issues straight away but obviously it is a very wealthy area, right next to Victoria Station and the post didn't have the organization name so it started going to the neighbours sometimes, the neighbours threatened legal action if they don't change it and the Passage had to go back to putting their organization name. Proxy Address on the other hand looks like a standard residential address but it can go anywhere so the idea is that you are judged by your merit not by your situation which is an important

thing about 'homelessness' that it is a situation not character. Depending on what homelessness you are experiencing it allows you to respond quicker and more easily, if you are moving too quickly you can collect it from a charity or the post office, news agents etc. There are a lot of collection points around. If you are in TA generally speaking it just works as normal because you don't move as frequently, you just move at short notice.



The Passage, Victoria

Are there any other projects you are working on at the moment? There is a homeless shelter in Marylebone for a charity operating primarily as a day centre. The experience with that borough which is Westminster has been very good, the charity have been very well supported and they are very well involved in the community. The charity owns a fairly large building and they are looking for the project to integrate the community more and I think that is important in any homeless accommodation or service like that. Some of the key moves we are doing in that project and the

charity lives by the motto of ‘Hand up not handout’ so its actually all about empowering people to live independent lives, not to sustain people in homelessness.

Is there a specific homeless user group the charity is focusing on? No, not particularly. They deal with people in extreme poverty so generally street homeless , potentially some hidden homeless as well. There is an NHS centre in the building as well and people can get help there. It is a really interesting one because the pressures of running a centre versus the pressures of providing a decent service there is a balance to be struck. For instance in their current format people will come in and they will...

So the charity is just a day centre and they don't provide any overnight accommodation? They don't currently but are just starting to and will provide it as part of the project. They also have a couple of residential units currently on top of the building for transitional housing. They get people with employment opportunities through partnering with Pret and they help people get up on their feet. They do have difficulties with that though for example people drop in to the centre, have half a meeting, then nip to the toilet and they will find them at the back having a fag and a beer and they come back in and the second half of the meeting is not really useful... That only happens because the back alley is quite easy to get to and the challenge we have set through conversations is how do you design and take a position that can deal with the worst case scenario and yet at the same time doesn't undermine the dignity of the majority of people. The position that we are going for is essentially if in a restaurant someone kicks off and becomes dangerously violent what do the staff do, they

call the police and people need to get safely to the kitchen for example.

You don't make it institutional like a jail...

...with closing shutters and non-movable chairs and so on. So we are taking that approach on the basis that we are demonstrating a degree of trust and 99% of people will be in a better position rather than designing for the 1% of people that will kick-off. For some homeless shelters that is a big issue down to the point where they only specify chairs with ski legs so you cant attack people.

So instead of reacting to worst case behaviours you design in a way that limits opportunity for example you ensure people cant gather that there is positive overlooking etc. Absolutely and you need to think that you want the peace to be there most of the time and if someone kicks-off you need to be ready for it. It needs to be designed in that slightly schizophrenic way. The most important thing I found in working in the homelessness areas is that at the end of the day we are all people and ultimately a lot of people who are approaching homeless services especially if they come from care backgrounds, abuse backgrounds and the biggest rise in homelessness in the UK is due to end of private rented tenancies so my point is that they are from very different backgrounds so you need to have that nurturing environment which is not institutional.

Not sure how far into the design process you are with this project but what was your experience with

consultations and the authorities so far? We have engaged with key stakeholders like local businesses and organizations, not so many residents as the site is not in a residential area and everyone has been quite supportive.

And the borough? How did you find the planning process with the new accommodation units for example and now it being only a day centre?

Well that is a statutory mess really.

What you will find as well is that every setting is different because different centres will have different service and where West London Mission will have night shelter and a health centre and rooms for interviews and assessments, residential use, then we are trying to integrate it more with the community so that there is not that barrier between people and we break down the otherness . When you try to break down that kind of programmatic barrier you end up with a blend of things and you cant just say this is block 1 and this is used for homeless people.

Sadly that is often how C3 works with affordable and social rent homes... Fortunately it is not a change of use application in that sense it is already there and it is Grade 2 listed building so generally speaking from a planning point of view is already defined. It is two buildings mashed together so all the floorplates don't connect and there is a weird shared basement so quite a lot of challenges to reconnect spaces but ultimately the Use Classes are already established on site which helps a lot.

How about the general conversations with the council? The council are very involved with the



West London Mission @thisispaddington



organization so they know them. One of the difficult things that has come from nearby residents actually is... there was a bit of concern around decanting and sending people from other places but also some people will always have these concerns about having a homeless shelter that brings all these homeless people here. At the same time that is about conversation and communication because a lot of that is based on assumption. The label of homelessness can make people seem like other and as soon as there is any kind of conversation developed people don't have a problem.



Old Dairy Site Croydon, HTA Design for Social-Capital-Partners
 Images @htadesign

Shane O'Neill x Alexia Murphy

Social-Capital-Partners x Depaul

As an introduction it is worth saying that Social Capital Partners have developed a model whereby they offer councils an opportunity to lease purpose-built accommodation for care-leavers and/or family temporary accommodation. So what would you say to everyone who says that short forms of accommodation should not exist and the efforts should be focused on prevention?

Shane: The reality is there are about 180,000 people already homeless (in London) sitting behind a queue of approximately 200,000 more people on the affordable housing waiting lists awaiting being permanently housed, hence why it is difficult to understand why we are asking the question singularly and not focussed equally on both prevention and provision? The thing about prevention is in a lot of cases it is very hard to measure “prevention efforts” yet “provision” measured through delivered housing against the TA waiting lists is a tangible metric against those on the housing need lists in each Borough. We believe there needs to be an equal focus on both prevention and provision and at Social Capital Partners, our focus is on provision of bespoke solutions to save councils money and provide a much higher standard of accommodation.

Do you think there is a shift in thinking and something is starting to unlock in at least recognising that there is a big challenge? Yes and no in that councils are focussed on providing long term accommodation to discharge their duty to tenants which is commendable but this

does not solve the problem for those in need of safe and secure temporary accommodation within their community, which does not carry a stigma for those unfortunate enough to end up in this position. Both Brexit and covid-19 are putting significant additional pressure on council as the demand increases yet the supply of affordable housing diminishes and is likely to become more constrained in the next five years given the current recession and economic environment.

Alexia (Depaul) walks in:

So you both have similar backgrounds in making things happen and providing accommodation for homeless people but coming from a different point of view Alexia you are coming at it from a charity and Shane is coming from a development point of view. It will be interesting to start with talking about the difficulties of starting a project and each of your experiences from the funding side to the planning side to the maintenance side.

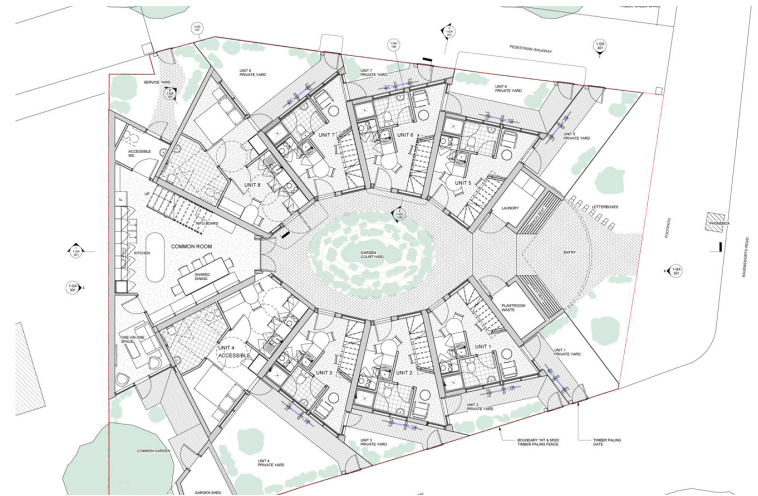
Alexia: Well we have 2 building projects, we received funding yesterday for one in Manchester for youth homeless people and also Safestop North East.

Shane: I would like to hear more in terms of funding?

Alexia: The North East scheme is 8 little mezzanine studios for young people who are homeless with support services on site through our regional office. Because there is no money to run supported accommodation projects so we will have an office on site to boost the support aspect.

For both projects you have support services, correct?

Alexia: Yes so the one in Manchester is 24/7 high support needs and we work with very complicated young people age 16–21 years of age who have been rough sleeping.



Safestop North East by Earle Architects; Images @RIBA

How many people? They are 13 people together at the minute and we will go down to 11. But as I said they are Manchester's most complicated young homeless people. Whereas in our other scheme it is move-on accommodation. We have found that there is a big deficit of accommodation for young people to move in to which is not foster caring and not hostels and somewhere which is manageable and affordable, self-contained but with a little bit of on-site support.

Shane: This is quite impressive

Should we start by talking about the reason why you are both doing what you are doing e.g. developing new accommodation?

Alexia: We are a smallish charity but the reason why we are doing it is because we are dependent on a system that uses buildings that are often not fit for

purpose and were never build for the purpose of looking after young people who lead very complicated lives. So we said right we need something, young people tell us what you need and what we know works. There are two sides to this: one is working with very complicated young people and they are in acute need and the other side of it is building something they can afford to live in and that meets their needs so that they are not in poverty. They are impoverished young people. If you are on Universal Credit and you are a young person you have £41 a week to pay for everything including travel and rent top-up. So be under no illusion they are absolutely impoverished and at the same time expected

to get out and get a job. So we are setting up to **try and create truly affordable accommodation and we do that either by developing it or working with people** like you who build it or buy it and give it to us on an affordable rent which means one that we can afford to take on and then let it affordably to young people.

Can I ask about when you said that the two (projects) you have been working on that there is difference e.g. acute need vs. move-on. In terms of design do you think there is any difference in how you design them or do you feel its quite universal ? The principles are the same so we worked with an architect to develop the design which we call the PIE (psychologically informed

environment) design brief of how it affects peoples behaviour and activities and this applies to both move-on and the complex needs project. As a basic we would

say that **everyone deserves their**

own bathroom because a lot of the young people that we have worked with have some awful life experiences. They have been very invaded in great many ways and the dignity of your own bathroom is important to them. But where we are in complex needs projects

they have to share other facilities so cooking... **often they will have no cooking skills.**

Sometimes they might not even know how to use a knife and fork so you are starting from the very basics of cooking and self-care and they have to see what you are doing so we have and are developing lovely kitchens

with the motto that **the kitchen is as**

good as my kitchen. You will come to see one of our houses in Central London which is a complex needs project and is in a house which is not great for its purpose but it's a beautiful Georgian façade in the heart of Central London... So I always wonder should we sell it and build 40units somewhere where property is cheaper. But the principles of very good, quality build is because where we work in poor environments the staff are going around all the time with polyfilla and paint repairing to try and improve things whilst trying to support the clients. Not building projects

where you create places of conflict where people have to congregate in the same place, where one person gets to see what everyone else is doing and therefore knowing who has money and who is getting a visitor and who is going out and coming back in ... you know all of that goes on in places where people are deeply

suspicious so we are trying to **design an environment where there is a**

lot of transparency so that things don't happen behind closed doors so you cannot see. You have been to our head office haven't you?

Yes. There we have put in a lot of glass so you can see through walls from room to room. You can always see what is happening in the buildings. It is about transparency in the building and transparency in our practice. We might have some semi-opaque glass windows if someone is in counselling so you can't see everything but at least you can see through to the room and out of the room. It's about building for transparency I guess.

Because all the thing you have said like everyone deserves their own bathroom, thinking about transparency, the way you share, the dignity of all of those things that feels like it could be absolutely universal to anything so in some ways those things in a way shouldn't have to be a question but have to be said. But actually if you are building affordable permanent housing ok you don't necessarily have to worry about too much transparency of shared spaces but the discussion about the play area being visible and passive

overlooking and having your own bathroom, yes, its is all there.. so it is kind of interesting. So the complex needs where it is 24/7 acute needs...

has to be to some degree communal, because you need staff knowing what is going on.

So that idea of good quality communal spaces and designing without corridors as much as possible, that is just critical. Because by building better physical environments that would reduce incidents, this helps to reduce staff sickness and therefore cost, it will help people move on sooner and if they feel like you have thought enough about their environment they will think well then you have thought through enough about me and what I need so that builds trust. I mean there are lots of things plants, outdoor space, light. And although it is basic, it is basic when somebody comes to you as an architect and says 'I want you to design me a house, or a kitchen, or a building or an office or whatever', it is not a level of amenity or quality that is thought of if you are homeless.

No absolutely. So what you know a place (home) even small is not afforded to people who are homeless.

I always think when someone says 'there is this group that has this acute need in their lives, there has to be some unusual design thing that unlocks it that is different' and of course there is an emphasis on communal space vs private space and the balance between the two. It reminds me of the conversations we have been having about co-living or shared living and

the London Plan has now started to recognise co-living and the big selling point there is your private space is a bit smaller but your shared space is so generous which is something you would not be able to afford as an individual and the support network obviously helps you work from home, you don't have to travel as much, you have connections to the local community, there is a relationship to the public...etc. And I just feel that every time we meet a developer that want to do this, everything they are saying is connected in some way to this and when you look at the design brief its oddly comparable. The support that is needed is different and obviously having your office there and the charity workers there is really, really essential but actually the fundamentals of the design seem somehow relating and comparable.

I suppose the Manchester project we are doing in a house that we have, with the other project we are starting from scratch on a site that we need to demolish and building something which is bespoke. That is us going with the opportunity to design something lovely.

They are designed to minimise fuel costs, every little house has its own garden space not big but somewhere to store your bike or for someone to sit for a cigarette even. We have a double height mezzanine arrangement in each studio and everyone has their own front door.

You also have a lovely shared outdoor space is that

right? Yes so we have this **social outdoor space in the middle and private outdoor space at the back** of each

little house. We also have a double height office space overlooking the shared outdoor space and will have a shared coffee room, kitchen and space for communal activities or meetings or local community use if the community want to go and use it and our regional staff on the floors above. So there is shared indoor space, shared outdoor space, independent self-contained outdoor space and self-contained indoor space. The units are completely self-contained.



Architectural model of a typical studio for Depaul. @ Earle Architects

They have a laundry room, kitchenette, so you can go and conveniently cook a meal and

that is important.

How does the outdoor communal space work? You have it in the middle of the plan so everyone needs to walk through it in order to get to their own front door, which in a way encourages socializing and interaction. How in an ideal world does that space operate?

One hopes that it is like an old fashion 'street'. You know where all people know their neighbours. I think we have 4 front doors on each side (8 units in total). It is nicely closed off from the main road so you will be hard-pushed to look into it from the road. I don't know yet, I will ask the young people what they want to do with it and whether they want outdoor table and chairs etc. We have a similar project which is 6 one-bedroom flats like cubes around a communal space in Newcastle and they have garden table and chairs in the middle and they sit out there like an outdoor living room.

You have said before that there is an issue with scale when it comes to projects like that and a difference between move-on to acute needs accommodation. Can you elaborate on this a little bit more? **We aim not to have, in our complex needs projects, more than 14 young people. That is very much the upper limit of what we think is manageable because 14 people living together is hard enough.**

Do you think complex needs being a maximum of 14 people, is there scope for larger sites? **We prefer to keep things small. We could have put 12 units on the proposed North East site but there is an impact on staffing as well. There is a whole impact on cost and who you move into it, so if you want to keep it affordable (keep management costs down) then you are**

in the realms of very, very low-needs people.

Thank you, Alexia. So for Social Capital and Partners, same question Shane, why did you start doing what you are doing and where are you coming from? **I suppose we see ourselves as a bit of a disruptor. We looked at this**

just differently. **We see a real need to provide alternative bespoke**

suitable accommodation as people transition from being homeless to their permanent home. We believe we can provide safe and secure environments for families at a significant discount to the TA properties which councils are procuring. Homelessness is a problem for a lot of people all over London and the fact that you rarely hear about the number of families displaced from London, away from the fabric of the community, is concerning. Where you bring up homelessness and talk about awareness which I have done on a number of occasions with my staff and friends where I ask them 'what do you think when you hear the word homelessness' and people's perception predominantly are those poor people visible on the streets who look like people in need of sheltered accommodation, people just don't understand how many ordinary people are actually homeless in their borough. The reality is there is a percentage of the 180,000+ people who are homeless in London who have very complex needs, but that is not true of every homeless family. We look to understand the plight of the hidden homeless who inevitably are poor by the virtue that they cannot afford the exorbitant rents in London

and become reliant on their Borough for help. The London Boroughs just cannot keep up with the demand and people end up in unsuitable, overpriced accommodation which does not meet their needs.

And we have a principle that **every child should be afforded a safe and secure environment in this day and age and in this great city** (one of the richest cities in the world) . So the question is how can we start to do better? We started looking at the breakdown of who is homeless in each borough and we began to understand that in order to solve the homeless problem, we need to be building many different residential typologies and broaden our mindset to evolve and pioneer new solutions and future proof building, whilst building to a high standard and adhering to minimum guidelines around building standards. We don't believe we are the solution to the problem, we are a small part of a solution, but there are

lots of pieces to the jigsaw and **there is real shyness in accepting that the current offering for TA is not fit for purpose** and needs to be replaced or evolved into the various bespoke residential typologies. London councils have had a difficult time dealing

with unscrupulous landlords who have come along and poisoned the well. The current TA offerings should be licenced and all brought up to decent homes standard and held to account. The key to unlocking the affordable housing requirements and procuring the quality buildings which are needed to solve the homeless problem resides in collaboration with developers, private sector funding and accelerated planning programmes, when schemes are being built for local residents.



Example unit types developed by Social-Capital-Partners in collaboration with HTA design. Image @htadesign

Key to regulating the sector is minimum quality standards in relation to placemaking. Before we can address the situation we need to accept that there are c. 8000 people homeless per Borough in London and we need to accept that there is a practical need for temporary accommodation of exemplar quality. We then need to weave both central government funding and private sector funding to bring exemplar schemes to

fruition with a commitment from the councils to lease the buildings to unlock the development funding element and guarantee future pipeline of properties to meet the council TA housing needs waiting list.

Alexia: What do you mean by central government funding e.g. what strand of funding?

Shane: Bespoke funding from the GLA and HRA budget to focus specifically on this area of need.

Alexia: Well there is a huge problem there which we have discussed before about how do we get revenue to enable support services, because yes we can get capital funding to build but then the running costs are crippling. And yes there is central government funding but that is prioritised and distributed to all sorts of groups/organizations they have a duty towards e.g. the elderly, children who are looked after, care leavers but you can have a 17 year old care leaver and a 17 year old single homeless individual and their needs are exactly the same, one will be funded the other won't. So my dilemma is the other one and what can we do there.

Shane: Unfortunately I don't have an answer to how one provides a consolidated approach both to the built environment and post occupation needs as one. What we are trying to do is to create mixed and balanced communities and move away from this stigma around homelessness because a lot of people who are homeless in London are homeless because London is

too expensive and no other reason. So back to **our**

key principles: amenities and services, management,

community and integration. We are talking to a group now, you may know them called Fat Macy's (<https://www.fatmacys.org/>)? They do some pretty amazing stuff and are impressive in their approach to unlocking opportunities for those in temporary accommodation post occupation. Ultimately it is a multi-tiered approach which is needed from many sectors to formulate a successful response to the complex jigsaw of homelessness.



Fat Macy's @ fatmacys.org



Alexia: So how about the rents, how do you set them?

Shane: What we do as a business is seek to lease to the council on a long-term basis (at a discounted affordable rent) and then the council set the rents.

Alexia: Here lies the problem for our young people, because if I am to provide affordable housing for young people on the margins, should they don't have a safety net of housing benefits, or secure job and are on 0-hours contracts, I need to know that I am not putting them in an impossible position by setting a rent that is unaffordable and has no safety net. In order to set a rent

and still have a safety net, I have to set a rent that is pegged to shared room rate local housing allowance (LHA). If you look at LHA and you look at the shared room rate you realise that it is different in every borough

and that **shared room rate is well below affordable rents and is way, way below the market rent.**

Then I can only work with building owners, who offer buildings at rates young people can afford to cover the rental costs at. We have set up a peer tenant programme with an organization called Commonweal which is very small. We have 15 units in 5 houses. We have been testing the concept and we have been trying it for 5 months. The way it works is that Commonweal give us the houses to our young people, we lease the house off Commonweal at roughly half local housing allowance shared room rate which means that we can then charge to young people 100% shared room rate. It is not a scheme for people with complex needs its for young people who are homeless and come through our services in different ways and we do not want to get them into hostels because they don't need to be there. The minute you get someone who is at university or at college and they just can't go home, they need a hand-up, they don't need to be put in a hostel.

The minute they end up in a hostel their grades drop, it is very hard for them to get out.

What we can do is put them in this peer-led housing programme which is tiny at the moment but eminently scalable. These are young people who might have not gone to college and they have missed that experience of shared accommodation. They might be 18 and have gone into an apprenticeship, not lived in a communal situation with other kids their own age. They become homeless they get into stopgap services and we can divert them out to peer-led housing. What that means is that within each house we have one young person who is the peer-lead and they are responsible for corralling the house similarly to any shared house, someone needs to make sure the bins go out, the broadband is payed for, the garden is dealt with or required repair works are reported etc. We have no support element to help these young people it is a housing-led programme only. We have a charitable trust who have agreed for one year to fund a post to help coordinate this so that we collate a body of experience, a toolkit, a framework that we can replicate wherever else it is needed. The only truly affordable accommodation that is decent accommodation – the houses are beautiful, but it is very small, just 15 young people.

But it is replicable as you say?

Alexia: Yes if we can get houses that can be leased at the right price point. As I said we have properties brought to us, with developers saying we can lease it to you for 7 years and you will take all the risk of filling it, carrying voids, repairing it etc and the rents will have to be up there in line with the market.

Shane: That service that you are offering, the council should really provide you with the land. They have so many empty properties in every council in London to give you buildings that you can provide this service in. We are currently developing c 330 units and that is potentially housing for 1000 people. We would like to be doing this for 10,000 people in the next 5 years. At the same time the councils probably do have the properties to give to charities. If you look at the scale of piloting what you are doing, to get 10 properties in every borough, to me shouldn't be difficult to ask for. That is the type of disruption that you need to marry up, from what I can see you are providing a very good service and the councils have the product, they have the land, they own the buildings, you need the two to go

together in order to make a difference. **You can't just put people into a building**

and leave them as you say. Going back to your point about cost, the cost of the nightly rate accommodation in London which has hijacked all of the accommodation away from all of the councils is 60% too high for sub-standard accommodation in most cases - you can potentially save £100m a year on

temporary accommodation expenditure and have significantly better accommodation, guaranteed housing pipeline and the ability to close down those TA properties which are often not fit for purpose.

Alexia: The relationship with local authority is critical for me, I cannot do anything without their support.

Shane: You are not asking for a lot in my book. You are dealing with the council's issues.

Alexia: Here lies the problem with a London youth homeless project. Whichever London borough may host a model project, we could be seen to be importing homeless people into that borough and that borough is going to struggle with that. We need a pan-London commitment to the scheme.

Shane: In order for us to do a scheme we need to be able to provide a minimum of 100 units. The reality in London is if you go thorough stakeholder consultation with councils and communities, the majority of people who are homeless are actually families, so we focus predominantly on 60–70% two beds, 15–20% three-beds to get dual aspect on corners and also get DDA compliant units. For example we have a scheme in Croydon where right at the back there are mews houses three-bedrooms. They are designed in such a way that if one parent was in a wheelchair they have a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen on the ground floor but that is not a requirement through the planning process as it is Sui-generis. That is us future proofing for the Borough requirement as there is always a need for DDA compliant type units for people who are disabled in whatever regard, but that is not a requirement.

Miranda: What is interesting is that housing departments are sitting there and hopefully know what

their need is or at least some of them do more than others. Generally, the housing department vs. The planning department, they hear the need at least and they deal with the need. Because we are in London, central government is slightly different than the London Plan, the GLA's ambition does differ to the central government ambition. Also, London has the ability and has to self-fund so London has the responsibility to lead as an example. And all boroughs and councillors talk about the right things of how they will create social housing and provide more affordable housing. They say it and they all want to do it but they don't seem to have the funding or the mechanisms to enable what they want to do to be achievable. One of the people that we spoke to, Paul, lovely guy, he was an auditor, he has worked in housing departments, he will say that the slashing of government means so that we are unable to give the supported to the accommodation that is required is a huge issue. The fact that B&Bs exist, and boroughs pay loads and loads of money is because they don't have literacy the people to manage their own properties. So there is a funding and housing and skills and people scenario, which is where the charities have to jump in because there isn't the funding for having just that supported network. Social services have been slashed so you have private developers enabling a thing but they don't have the skills or the ongoing revenue to do the support. That is where I can see there is a problem with the supported part as well. What you are talking about in the sense of talking about people who maybe don't need that much support, they just need a hand-up ... and there is some kind of graph here that I am struggling to get where the crux is, where does the funding really matter?

Shane: In my head the answer is that

everybody deserves a minimum standard of a safe and secure living environment.

This should be a human right.

Miranda: Agreed about the shelter or the actual environment. What I am talking about is the support, the social and support bit of the money. There is the additional support that someone might need to get a job, develop skills, address vulnerabilities so there is a range here which is hard to grasp.

Alexia: We operate in a system that is predicated on charging high rents and service charges- often for services delivered in buildings that are not suitable for the purpose of supporting people. Ultimately these are unaffordable to the people needing to be housed. They are stuck, dependent upon housing benefit to pay their rent and even if they get a job if it is a low paid job, the margins allowed by universal credit are too slim to enable them properly and safely to be lifted out of insecure housing permanently. This is the conundrum we have. You can do it another way, I work with social investors to deliver outcomes without prescribed inputs so we work young people across South East London. We are 18months into a three-year programme - don't fix the money on the bricks and mortar, fix the money on the person and follow the person. In a Housing First way but slightly different as the individual's housing might change a bit on the way but you stick with that individual for 3 years and you work with the person

wherever they are – they may be in supported accommodation, they may be in independent housing, but you work with them to facilitate improvement in their resilience, their skill set, their CV, their driving licence to make sure they can get ID and all the rest of it. We can do things like pay for driving lessons so that someone can become a fire-fighter for example. So homelessness is not only about the bricks and mortar but also the skill sets to be able to be independent.

Shane: Agree and I will go back to what I said from the outset – what we do at Social Capital Partners, we are not the answer, we are just a tiny part of the answer in that complex solution jigsaw.

It is so interesting to have you talking to each other.

Shane: I am not a specialist in social care but what I can tell you is that we can add value in delivering future proofed specialist build temporary accommodation in London and lease it to the council at between 40% discount to what they are paying in the market. What that potentially translates to in any scheme is c £1,000,000 a year savings versus their nightly rate yearly bill whilst providing exemplar building where people will have a “home from home”. This saving can be re-purposed into much needed social care. The message we are trying to get across is that through joined up collaborative engagement we can procure exemplar buildings whilst helping councils to substantially reduce their TA costs at a time when the economic market is providing a detrimental effect to both councils revenue and tenants needs.

Phil Kerry

CEO, New Horizon Youth Centre

What was the motivation behind this career path that you have taken? I have always been interested in working with young people. I started my work life as a maths teacher and got increasingly interested in what happens outside of school with young people in informal settings. Particularly about helping young people who wouldn't otherwise get the support that I had growing up. That led me, after many years, to people who are experiencing homelessness because ultimately everything has been taken away from them.

When you were a teacher was there anything in particular you saw in a child or were there any children who you thought were vulnerable to the situation you see here? I wouldn't say necessarily that I saw someone who I was worried about becoming homeless. But you see hundreds, maybe thousands of young people and you realise they are all quite different. The things they have going on in their lives are quite different and how that presents in terms of behaviour in school setting or somewhere like our centre - you have to always bear that in mind. How people are is not who they are a lot of the time.

I understand that everyone that comes to the centre has a different story but what are the most common causes for youth homelessness? The most common reason is typically a family breakdown - something has gone wrong in their own family home. But the reality is there are multiple reasons - there isn't a one size fits all.

Some of the things that keep young people homeless however are quite common. We know that if you end up homeless as a young person your ability to access support from the state (the government) is actually much more challenging than it would be as an adult. Your ability to find housing is much more difficult and that includes supported housing. The type of housing that should be there for you if you are homeless. and your ability to build your finances, to find a job, to have a better improved economic situation is much more difficult than if you are an adult. You are much more likely as a young person to be in precarious work, 0-hour contracts, less money. So the system works against young people and it is those things that we are trying to address with the work we do here at New Horizon Youth Centre.

I saw some statistics that a lot of young people are in education and still finding themselves homeless. Well yes a lot of the young people that come to us are working, they are in education. We have people who sleep on the streets at night and go to work the following morning. A

lot of that is because of the lack of housing. **There is a shortfall of housing at every stage of the market** in London. As we know buying a house is almost impossible for a lot of young professionals let alone young people who are

coming through our doors. Private rented sector is competitive, it is expensive, there are a lot of hoops to jump through if you have never been in it before - like deposits, employment, contract checks etc. Social housing - almost non-existent. Impossible to access as a young person. When you get to the homelessness side of things - supported accommodation, shelters, hostels. They just don't really exist in the form that they should. Particularly now in times of Coronavirus. We have rough sleepers coming through our door every day and there is nowhere they can go.

Are the young people often disguising the fact that they are homeless from their employers? Some young people don't even realise they are homeless themselves. Typically 30% of the people who come through our door have experienced rough sleeping and doing so regularly, but most often young people are sofa surfing - calling in favours from extended family, mates... a night here, two nights there, occasionally run out of favours and go out on the streets, then back on a sofa. They just see that as

life and getting by. **If you walk into the centre most days you wouldn't recognise that the young**

people are homeless. They don't 'fit' that stereotype of homelessness, young people don't associate with it themselves. They are young people, they are going about their lives, they have just hit a barrier at the moment.

You mentioned that homeless people in general are

categorised as homeless and there isn't a differentiation between young homeless or older homeless. What are the specific differences and therefore requirements that you think a young person would need? If I say to you picture somebody who is homeless. Most people tend to think instantly 50 year old male in a sleeping bag, outside a shop door either early in the morning or late at night, maybe using alcohol or drugs. That is a very small part of the picture. We know that a lot of young people do not experience homelessness in this way. They wouldn't feel safe in a shop door late at night and wouldn't want the stigma. They tend to experience the streets and homelessness quite differently and therefore

the sorts of support they need and the services they should access are also quite different.

What do you think your day support offers that others you have seen might not? What makes New Horizon work quite well is that it is a 'one stop shop'. A lot of the young people who experience homelessness need to go to lots of different places across the city to get different things. We have everything under one roof -whether it is you have slept on the street last night and you need a shower or you are here to see a nurse or a counsellor perhaps you want to improve your mental health and discuss some traumas in your life, you want help with accessing the private rented sector or finding a job or applying to study. All of those things can be done in our building, in one place.

Importantly, I think you can do it with your piers in a

group with staff who see the best in you.

How many homeless young people are we aware of in London and how many are coming through here? The numbers bit of it is quite difficult to pin down. To give you an indication there were around 6000 young people who were recorded rough sleeping in London and also

according to the same statistics **for every one person you see on the street there are thirteen times as many who are hidden homeless**

– sleeping on sofas or not on the streets so they are not showing in official statistics because of the way they are navigating the lack of having somewhere to live. We know that thousands of young people every year are approaching their local council saying ‘I am homeless, I need support.’ And we know that a lot of them don’t get the support they need.

I can imagine that with the stigma some people don’t want to even approach the council? Or even know that support exists... we have done surveys with young people who have slept rough and just didn’t know they can approach the council. It is not something you learn in school. You wouldn’t know that until you needed to know it.

How do young people find about New Horizon then? A lot is a word of mouth, the other thing is young people now increasingly have smart phones so the misconception of people don’t have anything is not true. Unfortunately some people will turn up here with

nothing because they have been mugged but most people have a phone. What they don’t have is a means of charging it and often don’t have access to wifi. We also do street outreach and a lot of the other outreach services know about us.

How many young people do you have coming through your door per day or per year? Normally we would get about 1000 young people come through the doors each year and that can be up to 50 young people in a day. Obviously things are slightly different at the moment with Covid and we have had to limit the numbers of young people who come through.

How would you define a success with the people you are working with? People come here because they are

experiencing homelessness so **success really is about sorting their housing situation but we also know it is about all the other things which are wrapped around them.** Success

for us is when people don’t have the need to come here any more. We want everyone to move on. When people have everything they need to move into independence they will naturally stop coming to the centre.

If you could wave a magic wand and get the local authority or government to change one thing what would it be? I don’t personally blame the councils for anything. There are systemic issues all the way up and down the chain and councils are just responding to the difficult

situations they find themselves in. The thing I would wave my magic wand on is definitely the housing. We need to unlock more housing both for young people to stay in for the short term when they need support but also a stable home in the long term. That is the big thing, that is why people come through our doors and that is the reason they often struggle to move on.

How important have you found people's interaction with this space? Have you been in any facilities that are not designed such as this one and what can they be like? The thing is generally with homelessness services is this perception and attitude of what homeless people 'deserve'. We get this all the time with "do you want these second, third hand, dirty old clothes and things to give to young people". And we always say: "no, of course

we don't want that, **these people deserve what their piers deserve, what any young**

Londoner deserves." We don't want cast offs and I believe the same is true for the buildings. I've visited a lot of homelessness services and a lot of them look nasty, dirty and there is a sense of 'this is what you deserve'. When you come to New Horizon Youth Centre it is a nice, clean, friendly, warm, welcoming space. It

gives you a sense of ok **you might not be home yet but for the time being**

this can be your home and it is the place from which you can re-build your life.

That must reflect on you (the staff) as well being able to come into a nice working environment in a central London location, with coffee shops, lunch spots and so on, it must charge you positively as well. Yes, look around we are sat in this lovely barn-like space which was designed by an architect, it is light and young people fed into the design process, they told us how they wanted it redone before we started any of the

refurbishment works. **It is important that it feels like a good, professional, safe space for them but also a youth-friendly space.** A place where they feel safe and they want to come back to.

What spaces do you find young people prefer? Do they congregate in a specific area and what is that space like? What is nice about the centre is that it is a one-stop-shop and there is kind of something for everyone. Downstairs in the drop in there is a sofa area so people can be a bit more communal, there is a computer area and a little quiet space where people can sit by themselves or in pairs or have smaller conversations. There are meeting rooms where you can be totally private. There are areas like our 'barn' here where you

can do communal work. So it is about having different things for different people because no two young people are going to be the same.

What have been the differences for you since Covid? You mentioned there has been a decrease of people coming through but I imagine there has been an increase in homelessness? It is still early days post lockdown in terms of understanding the effects of Coronavirus. What is clear is that general homelessness is increasing, and youth homelessness is also increasing. Whilst we cannot have as many people in the centre because of social distancing, viral remote services are definitely on the rise. If you look at the statistics across London in terms of young people rough sleeping it has gone up 50% in the last quarter. So from April to June 2020 despite all the homeless hotels operating and the ban on evictions, 447 people are recorded sleeping rough on the streets of London. Those numbers have gone up 33% since last year and 50% in the last quarter and with all the other things going on in the world and the challenges young people face, they are only going to continue to rise.

I noticed downstairs a shared eating table? What role does that have? One of the things we do every day in the centre is that we offer a breakfast in the morning and a hot cooked lunch and those are the busiest times of the day. That is the point when you will see up to 40 young people around our big dining room table, across

the sofas, **all having a meal together with the staff and sharing**

stories. Is where a lot of ‘what has been going on’ gets shared, it is when a lot of the aspirations for the future get shared.

Is there a parallel to the family dining table perhaps? Like the centre of home? The dining thing is interesting because a lot of young people don’t want to sit around the dining table because they are not ready to or have an eating disorder. We had this discussion recently whether we should have only one big dining table for everyone to sit around. The answer is no, you cannot do that because some people will literally starve. It is complex. Some people really want that social space and love the interaction but some will go to the other end of the centre and sit in a dark corner and that is the only way they will be able to eat.

Could you describe the spaces used for learning or development and life skills? The centre is multi-use, we have lots of different rooms. We have the ‘barn’ which is used for lots of things like boxing on Tuesday, fitness and run club on Thursday, drama workshops, performances, we have a music studio.



Street Orchestra London at New Horizon Youth Centre

Downstairs on the big table we will have big workshops and smaller ones on the sofas so different rooms, different spaces allowing for different types of activities to take place.

Some of the people who you will meet here look and act like someone you will meet at university or college until you hear some of the things that have happened to them in their life. I really remember there was a lovely young woman who used to come to the centre and when young people come here, the first thing they do is go through the advice rooms and staff will go through what has led them to come to the centre. This young woman had said what has been going on and the abuse she has suffered at home, and that she had been rough sleeping on the streets for two weeks because she couldn't deal being abused by her dad anymore. The staff had asked what has it been like on the streets and the answer was 'it was so nice and quiet'. To be rough sleeping was heaven compared to what she had at home.

I've always heard this phrase that most people are only three steps away from homelessness. Or one, a lot of the time yes. You can see how it can all spiral. Say you lose your job, started arguing more with your wife, she is struggling, then your relationship breaks down, you start drinking more, you sleep on friends sofas for a few months until you run out of favours and here you are.

What is going on now then since lockdown? Well there was a big focus on "Everybody in" which was about getting rough sleepers off the streets and into the hotels. Absolutely brilliant and for a moment in time it looked like we have ended visible homelessness.

Fascinating. Everyone thought it was impossible for it to happen before 2025 but within a week we did it. Of course all that has happened is that in that moment in time it was ended, the next day new people ended up on the streets and since then more and more people have ended up on the streets. There is no accommodation available and with the eviction ban ending soon and the furlough scheme ending, this is a huge worry for me and for young people. What would happen to all these homeless people? The focus has been entirely on what happens to the people in the hotels and the thought is 'they can't go back to the street' which is great and also very important but what about everyone else and what happens next? The

numbers are growing so quickly. **It will be a very challenging time ahead.** The shelters have all closed and they were a lifeline for many people, there were the winter shelter which are basically just lots of mattresses on a church hall or dorm beds in other facilities and they have all had to close because of social distancing. The very limited provision which was there before is suddenly not there at all.

Alexia Murphy

Depaul

How did you acquire Westbourne House? The government gave us the money. We had a very charismatic CEO at the time who is still a CEO of one of our other sister charities. Depaul UK was the first charity and then Ireland, USA, Ukraine, Slovakia, France... we are just bringing India online this year probably. The reason I was at MHCLG today is because we have a project which is going to bridge between Depaul UK and some services in Romania. I set up Depaul Romania, so it is kind of growing. Anyway, this project (this building) was the first one Depaul owned and it's still the flagship – it is in a central borough and it is big, it is a bold statement to have a beautiful building like this compared to what many people have to live in. It is also symptomatic of the sort of old buildings we have to operate out of. It is better than most for sure as some of them are dreadful. Even purpose-built ones from the 90s or 80s are appalling.

How long do people stay here? The maximum is two years, but they will often move much sooner than that. They are all very young. That is part of the problem – young people moving in to places that we run, they are there for a reason like protracted family or social problems. At the moment we have quite a settled group here and it is quite calm. They are often really engaged with school and college which is brilliant and Westminster are a good authority for us to work with because they are very good at looking after their young people. Some of the other areas we work in, that is



Sherborne House, Depaul London Offices, @ClaireLizPhotography

definitely not the case. We have huge issues in parts of south-east London and Islington at the moment around gang membership in particular.

Why do you think they are less helpful (the boroughs)?

Part of it comes down to money. For example, this project is well funded because we own the building and therefore we claim all the rents and can manage that side of it ourselves. Where we operate out of buildings belonging to other people or registered providers we have to hand most of the rent over to them which means we don't have flexibility to use it on staffing.

So at the moment there are developers that could do better and more affordable rents but at the same time that would be governed by making sure they get their investment returned. The darker side is that by owning homeless accommodation in the current climate and demand you are guaranteeing yourself income without any risk at all really... Well yes that is exactly right and more developers are turning to this, but how affordable are those rents going to be? The developer will be secure indefinitely, they can project exactly how much money they will have coming in, the local authority is secure because they can bring in the money through housing benefit, the people who are not secure are the ones living in that development because at the end of the day they are either in very poor accommodation and can't get out of it (if the development is badly done) or they are in decent accommodation with people locked into high rental properties not being able to move on.

If there are developers out there that are willing to build more affordably by trying to reduce rents as much as possible what would this be driven by?

What the government are willing to pay. Our peer landlord programme comes to mind which is where social investors who are going to make a profit but there are social investors (not private) have given money to a small organization called Commonweal who buy semi-detached houses, lease them to me for 59% of what the government will pay which means that I can then let them to young people at 100% of what government can pay. That leaves us 41% on top of what we are actually paying for the rent to pay for repairs, renewals, utilities, licensing, maintenance.

So what happens if you have a property which you don't own and the rental values are higher? On some properties we have a management agreement which means that we agree with the owner for example a housing association - we will take a 15bed property off them with a management agreement. If the rent was £100 per week per room, about £83-87 of that goes back to the housing association for the core rent and we end up with £13 to pay for all basic repairs. Anything major and structural they will deal with. If the window glass is broken we would have to repair it, but if the window frame is coming out because they haven't maintained it they will have to pay for that. But young people with complex needs who are homeless, 16 year olds, they are high-impact if that makes sense. On top of things like repairs we have to pay for staff to do the housing management which is make sure the rents are collected and coming in, serve any notices, chase arrears, do the liaison with housing benefits. Or if the resident is working and paying their own rent then chase the resident themselves. Staff are paid for through support so this is where the local authority

comes in. Housing management and social support are two very different things. For example Westminster pay us to support young people in need but that very clearly does not include housing management.

So are these support payments different borough to borough? As in do Westminster can afford more because they are a more affluent borough? Kind of, lets say they are less lean than others. Partly because they want to retain this property and we don't have to, we can sell the property or we can repurpose it for another group. Because it is owned by the charity we can theoretically say that we want to bring in young people from North East for example. The fact is we have a negotiated a good deal and support here because of Westminster and supporting young people from the area. This is why we need to get over this for the London shelter idea wherever you are sited the local authority will say 'not in my back yard'. We do have a concept problem with local authorities and we need the GLA to back this.

Although in an ideal situation every borough should care for their residents and there is enough housing in each borough to accommodate their own residents. Because when you start displacing people there are a lot of other negative issues associated with that in terms of school attendance, travel costs etc. Absolutely. I am not joking, there are London commissioners in children services and remember they have a duty to the children but they don't have a duty to most homeless young people. Even those that they have a duty to care and support, London commissioners will come to the charity and ask what accommodation we have as far north as

Darlington. **They are sometimes forced to put looked after children on their own as far north as Darlington.**

You said there is no duty to homeless people? Why is that? No there is a duty and even when there is a duty that happens so the point was imagine what happens to homeless young people who are not owed the same duty.

It is quite upsetting. If you end up doing that theoretically then you have to double up on other facilities of support to make that work? So we have moved one young man from London to the north of England a few years ago only because he was in danger of being killed due to gang affiliation and he wanted to move in order to be able to start a new life. He moved and he settled down there, did a trainee chef course and is now a chef in a big hotel and is a real success story but he is just one person.

How do people get referred here? Everyone coming in here will be coming either through Westminster children services or through the single homeless pathway. Through children services they are care leavers for whom there is no other option e.g. foster care hasn't worked, children's homes haven't worked. A looked-after child can start making decisions about their living situation at the age of 16. Through the single homeless path they have gone to Westminster City Council and said 'I am homeless' and the council have

decided to place them here. That doesn't mean the council have any responsibility to move them though.

Once they are here you are saying the council have done their due diligence and hand them over to you? So for looked-after children the council will retain some responsibility for some of them up until the age of 24, for other up until the age of 21. They will make them an offer and if the young person does not accept the offer they are on their own e.g. they have disengaged. For those who are single homeless the council have no duty to make an offer so we can work with the council around what is available.

Sorry how come there is no duty towards single homeless young people? Well a local authority that has resource can choose, so up in some norther areas, young people get a 1-bed flat straight away which is just what happens. In Manchester city and all the London boroughs that is just never going to happen. So private rented sector is the main offer. However

private rented sector is not an

option because a). rents are too expensive because they are driven by the market; b) a homeless young person can't afford them and wont get housing benefit to cover that rent; The single biggest source of young people approaching local authorities as homeless is evictions from private rented sector.

I went to an event at Camden to hear them speak about their new policies recently and I guess every single borough and every time we go through the planning process they say 'the most important thing to us is affordable housing' and what I am finding really

frustrating about that is the word is used very flippantly what affordable housing is. I just feel and really hope that this research might show what truly affordable housing needs to look like to be affordable to young people. All the local boroughs and the GLA are all saying the same thing that it is very important to have social value embedded in local neighbourhoods. It is all 'local, local, local', each borough reflecting this in their Local Plan, but then also saying 'we are hugely ashamed of the rise in poverty in the borough and we are going to focus on affordable housing'. In reality on every project that I have worked on, the affordable housing you start to find means shared ownership at market rate or affordable at 80% market rate and the London Affordable Rent (c.50% market rent) seems to be the best one but it is a very low percentage of that. In my mind it comes back to that question of who determines need? Camden will say we know there is a rise in poverty but in that case should they not have a responsibility to say x% this type of affordable, and y% social and z% supported specialized is required in this locality, but I feel like there isn't that granular thinking. I am sure there are people looking at that and maybe some boroughs do that but it doesn't seem like the planning policy teams speak to the housing needs teams enough. At the end of the day the question is 'what is the rent' in pounds and who can afford it or are people locked into claiming housing benefit and not working. That is another thing with the way Universal Credit works we find a lot of people are worried about what will be taken out of their benefit if they do take on a low payed job and in that case it might be better not to. For example this place is actually unaffordable for a young person if they are working at a Costa coffee part

time, they won't be able to cover the rent. The rent here is probably in raw terms £300 a week for a room which is dictated by the Local Housing Allowance specific to Westminster and that is just the accommodation, the support is on top of that.

It's also about not being too naïve about it. When we are talking about the spaces that we think will be ideal I feel like they have to be in the realms of reality and idea about viability. For example looking at the New Horizon Youth Centre that we have all visited, I would say that if there was some accommodation attached to it I would say that is quite an example of what we are talking about in the ideal situation. You walk in and it feels different, there is an open plan feel to it, and there is somewhere you can sit down have a cuppa, there are meeting room spaces, it doesn't feel institutional, it's in the centre of town and when you walk past it it does feel like part of the city. There are so many good things about it apart from no-one can stay there and feels like that is a shame.



Depaul policy work and advocacy for truly affordable homes
@<https://uk.depaulcharity.org/policies/submission-london-housing-strategy/>

Private landlords have driven rents up in poor accommodation and as I said every single week I have somebody phoning me with an "offer". I even had the previous housing minister tell me "we have got these Indian investors who have property, they would like to do a deal with you. Yes, but the cost of me signing up to that lease are going to be huge and I cannot afford that. What they are doing is they ratchet their rent up so they have guaranteed income for 7 years and I get people staying there who cannot afford to move on, move out, pay the rent, go to work, recover in any way. That is where the money is and why there are so many private hostels and hotels converted into hostels. But the money could be spent differently - better property, better service, better outcomes for young people.

So if the councils were to say I've got a site, have it. There is funding from the GLA to assist with it say from the overall Section 106 pots or other funds that they can syphon off to each borough. Each borough then has a plan for affordable housing based on the need say there are x number of young people and x number of families, we know that in some of those cases they need a little bit of support and in others it's more so they need to be split into different types of accommodation. Basically there is someone who is managing that process. With the amount of money already being spent I don't understand why they don't take matters into their own hands. Local authorities will approach housing associations to take on the property for them because housing associations can leverage in the capital. If a registered provider sets a core rent and service charge the local authority can claim 100% of it from central government. So if they can work with someone to do

the job that is better for the local authority than the local authority doing it themselves.

What we are doing at the moment is our project in the North East - a new build scheme which has 8 studios which are like tiny houses, all self contained. Together with offices for the charity and communal space, activity space, counselling rooms; everybody has a little private garden and their own front door; shared outdoor communal space... so basically shared outdoor and indoor space plus private indoor and outdoor space. This is very interesting to me because from the very beginning we have worked with the council and they gave us the site as a gift. Before we had even gone to planning we were talking about the cost of supporting young people, what the rents might be and building that into the strategy.

How do they make it financially stack up? If they work with us because we have a subsidiary registered provider and if the registered provider manages those 8 units they can set the rent in agreement with the council. This is going to be dependent on what the council want to use it for e.g would it be 8 people aged 16–17 or 18 coming out of care which may be more chaotic and require more supervision, they may want to put some concierge type of help assistant who can also do repairs.

So the housing management lies with the registered provider? Yes, but they are our subsidiary. The safest thing for the charity is obviously to own the whole lot but then our hands are tied in what we can use it for. If we retain it in full we will have to let it at very low rent to very low-to-medium risk young people. So we have to agree on the support level in order to determine how

it will be managed.

So that sounds like the ideal model to me. Getting a site from a local authority and then specifically working with them to understand what their local needs are, so when they are looking at the project they are looking at it from the end user's point of view, so that the design process is specific. then also factoring support costs in so that everything is holistically understood. So when we don't have the knowledge and ability that your charity has then there is a gap that I guess we are trying to plug in somewhat. It is encouraging though that there are so many similarities of design and approach between the different emerging projects we have seen even though they have different architects and client objectives. There seems to be a universal language.

Well exactly, **there is nothing special in the things we have identified as the things that young people need when they are trying to get back on their feet but it is just something that is rarely afforded to them.** Therefore we have had to start from scratch to work out what will work for them and it is this sense of your own front door, sense of your own space, self contained. The thought of what do young people want and need and

testing it with them – **front door but also someone nearby to help them if**

needed. They might not be able to deal with troublesome neighbours without getting themselves into trouble. All those basic skills learning around relationships, dealing with things etc. Relationship building is a big thing for young people who often have been let down in their life by the people who should have looked after them, some of them have been violated. A lot of the work we do in the north is around young people who have experienced sexual exploitation and have ended up in care services. They are not people who tend to have developed well balanced relationship skills so we need to start from the very beginning. Especially with neighbours and amongst themselves, things can escalate very quickly from nothing because they haven't learned to negotiate.

It must be so hard to trust, after everything some of these young people have been through. Yes. Our head office was developed as a Psychologically Informed Environment so you can see these huge sways of glass so you can see through from room to room to room.

What do you do there? Education training, we have a night stop, young people run a little café and its loss making at the moment.

In terms of the provision in the North East scheme, what do young people get as part of their private space?

So a front door, a bit of private outdoor space, bike storage, somewhere to sit on the outside. I am quite



Depaul head office @earlearnarchitects

clear that **every young person should have a double bed if**

they want one. The bed is in a mezzanine bedroom. Underneath the bedroom there is a bathroom

and the flooring of the shower room goes straight into a small laundry so they have their own laundry under the stairs. They also have a tiny kitchen and a small living space big enough for a small sofa and a table with two chairs.

So is this around 20- 25sqm? Something like that.

Square meters to me are mute point, providing it is very well designed and it is functional. It seems though that there is a sweet spot of around 20–25sqm which feels right. Is there a reason why you wont be able to do this financially? Well you can only do what you can afford and I know some local boroughs go for much much smaller spaces because they cant afford anything else. The thing is you don't get the full funding for a project like this. From our experience you might be able to get around 40% through funds and grants. We had some funding from Homes England and the National Lottery. The rest is either our money from our property fund or fundraising or we sometimes start a project and hope we will be able to raise the rest.

The problem for you then is you put 60% in and that money is gone from other pots. You have rents coming in but I can't imagine that being much. Yes, we will never get the money back in the way that a private developer would. We get money back from other donations coming in but they are usually restrictive and can only be used for specific things.

So is there a middle ground where a private developer can fund these 60%? Well I think about this a lot, how do you run services when local authorities have no money to provide the support. I have also been talking to our social investors who spend a lot of time pondering this as well. Part of it is the bricks and

mortar, part of it is the support. The question is how do you sell a support model and how do you quantify value. At the minute what local authorities buy are inputs for example 12 beds, 250 support hours. Whatever that means to young people at the end of the day... whereas what I think they should be saying is 'we want 25–30 young people every year to leave your service not homeless with these set of skills'.

And that is better investment isn't it? A guaranteed outcome meaning that you don't have to keep supporting and spending taxpayers money.

Yes and the evidence base for it sits with social impact bond funded service we did which was called "Your chance". It was evaluated and it shows the cost of supporting a young person to prevent homelessness,, to get them into a working environment, to build up relationships was around £8,500 over three years whereas to put a young person in supported accommodation for a year will be about £40,000 per bed and we don't even know what the outcome will be.

So what was Your Chance exactly? Your Chance was kind of like Housing First but putting the support first and then people will inevitably transition through a couple if different types of housing until we settle them. Which was the right Thing to do because they were quite young. Change was necessary. Some had to go backwards to supported accommodation, And then forwards again. I believe 40 to 50% went to work, whereas in some places where rents are really high they can't work. This is what happens when you don't lock money into high rents.

This is why I feel that it is a central government and GLA responsibility. If they have seen this working why

do they not continue the programmes or change legislation? So for the funding stream, it was a pilot project. The government never really evaluated the programme. So we did a more in depth evaluation of our own scheme and our own costs. Ours was undoubtedly the most successful. I love a bit of social investment. It is very different from working with the commissioner, Because they are on your back all the time you're constantly being measured. So back to the programme we did it it was successful but no local authority had the funding to pick it up.

Commissioners will come and say you tell us what we need to decommission in order to pay for this scheme. For them what they need to know is that there is a bed here that they can send someone to. It is very reactive urgent approach as opposed to much more managed programme, assessing who is in need, where are they going to come from, how are they going to get to us etc. At the minute though we are doing a similar programme called 'I aspire' with care leavers in South-East London. That is 250 care leavers for four years and that should pay for itself eventually because the savings are tangible. We are working with a quite astute commissioner in Lewisham.

It sounds like Lewisham are doing more and more? Wonder why is that?

They have a huge crisis but they are dealing with it, they recognise it. Maybe that is why you hear about them more.

It is still surprising because you have various boroughs, say Newham who have the worst homelessness crisis in England but they don't seem to be progressive or coming up in any of the conversations we have had with key charities. Well, in terms of why Lewisham are progressive maybe it is because they didn't used to have a problem, thinking 15–20 years ago when Westminster and Camden etc were dealing with acute rough sleeping issues, Lewisham had no rough sleeping. Today they have acute problems with homelessness. As affordability moved out further and further out of the centre of town, Lewisham became subsumed in something that they hadn't forecast. They suddenly had lots and lots of people moving out, rents went up, their own local inhabitants couldn't afford the rents, they had a huge social housing crisis... they have built a lot of properties in Lewisham but they have had things like the DLR which has pushed housing prices up... Interestingly, an almshouse charity reached out to me recently saying that they have almshouses for elderly but they understand that there is a need for young people and they were asking if a similar model would work. They are interested in funding it and handing it over to someone like us to manage. But because of the funding it has to be in Lewisham.

The thing with everything we are talking about is that it is not new, it has been around forever with the Almshouses and young workers villages. It just seems like people have forgotten about it. Interestingly back then it was private patronage, a strange thing where if you had money and were religious you had to put it back into society. That has obviously shifted in time and now we have charities I guess. Today the onus is on

governments and local authorities to deal with this and manage it but sadly **they are struggling and are overwhelmed by the need.**

This conversation has been so valuable because we are architects and we can't change the system or provide the support - this is what you do. But what we can do is to ensure we are not naïve about suggesting an utopian model but that people have adequate, dignified and safe places to live. That is why we are not concerned with the obsession of square meters because each specific model has a different viability and in the current world you have to work with that. However setting a framework within which each borough can work and do the best they possibly can is what we can do at the moment. Having a baseline of musts like having an en-suite bathroom. It is also tied to how long people stay because if we are talking about rough sleeping in winter night shelters, people sleep in dorms with very

basic facilities for free, but **these shelters are absolutely still necessary** but these facilities are not supported accommodation and you will not be expected to stay there for 1–2 years. Whereas a place like this (Westbourne House) reminds me of when I was younger and shared with housemates for a year or two and then moved on. So the point was there is such a great need that the more diversity and provision the better, but that should be tied to the

length of stay.

The problem is though, in planning terms they commit to a time limit say 1–3 months to make it politically acceptable and then the reality is that they have nowhere to move those people onto and they stay much longer. It is also tied to the funding, if at the starting point you are building something smaller and cheaper surely that means that there should be more money for support? A sort of a sliding bar of 'if the private spaces are smaller, the shared spaces and support offer is greater'. And also talking about who in assessing the type of accommodation they need. If you have homeless youngsters with really complex needs, history of abuse etc, you wouldn't place them in large self-sustained 1-bed flat or even in a shared flat where they have to negotiate with 4–5 other people because they won't be able to cope. They will need a place to sleep and lots of support.

So what is the absolute must then if you have a young person that you have identified that they need to be placed somewhere and worked with? The absolute must is small in terms of the number of young people. If they are going to be there for 6month-2years it has to be manageable for them. We briefly managed a place with 42 young people with complex needs and it was absolute chaos - noise, arguments, learning to negotiate with so many people, little clubs and gangs forming leading to exclusion. So as an organisation, our

maximum is 14 people in one place. **It needs to have all the things designed in**

that make us all feel good, able to cope and resilient like access to natural light.

None of these things are unusual but certainly for young homeless people they might be. Also having a level of self-containment, level of shared space, having some staff around.

What do you mean shared space? **A space**

where they can socialise so that they don't have to take people into their own personal space because they can be very easily exploited. A place where they can invite a friend from school, family or a social worker without their own home being invaded. It is very easy for them to become overwhelmed by people who will take over their own space. Also where young people can get a flat, they often don't have the money to entertain themselves in it, to furnish it, so you will go in and they would have pushed all the furniture into one room and the bed might be in the sitting room...

they make it small because they don't have much.

So in a sense a space too big is intimidating at this stage? Yes.

How about nice to haves? If you were living in the ideal world? Having your own external space – something to look after. A dedicated space where activities, training, learning can take place.

What do you think of the relationship to public, local community uses e.g. inviting people in? Is it completely a no-no? So in some of our facilities the volunteers we have working in the café, kitchen, garden etc are local people. So for example on Monday we have “Italian Day”, with a lovely guy who owns an Italian restaurant and he comes in on Mondays and makes pizza and pasta with young people and then they sell it. So yes it is possible but in small numbers.

This feeling of the other with homelessness as something which shouldn't be looked at, that somehow architecture can potentially literally open that door to people to understand and for it to be within the high street and not hidden away. Obviously there is the nervousness around having to protect your residents and there are lots of not very nice people around, you cant just invite anyone in especially when some of the young people might have experienced some horrible things in the past. But there always seems to be that ambition to change the image say with SftS and their community cafe they are always so proud that people have come in and said “oh when is the shelter opening”. Is this from your opinion naïve or is it alright for some but not for others? I think it is one of the things that most of us are wrestling with and it depends on the funding model. The loss making cafes cant viably carry on but the thought of talking to someone about real commercial ventures could work, and is probably they way we have to go...

To sub-support the model? Yes.

Are there any social benefits in that if you had the chance of mixing user groups? That is the puzzle. But in

terms of the benefits **there is a**
‘normalising’ influence of
having people coming in and
being part of a more usual
community, doing more usual

things. The café thing is always quite a difficult one but certainly communal space, as long as there is a really good divide between that and the accommodation. There was a model a long time ago called the Time Square Hotel. It was the original model for housing first and it was in New York. It was a hotel where the homeless people lived and worked within it. And somewhere on the way it became Housing First. Crisis tried to replicate it in London but they couldn't manage it. That idea of live work is great but we need to remember young people are not hotel-less they are home-less so whatever we build there needs to be some sort of normalising influence of home. One of the

things we talk about at Depaul is **the kitchen**

table being really critical. So all of our 24/7 support projects will have a kitchen table that everyone can sit around. Just so you can sit around it and eat or talk or play games.

Yes I grew up in a tiny flat sharing with siblings and the kitchen table was the heart of the space, we would

eat there, do our homework there, play cards or board games, have guests around it. So it is such an important element of your shared space. In terms of emotional experience, you always talk about the sense of arrival, can you explain a bit more what you mean? Well it is

the “ **you are truly welcome**” isn't it? We put a lot of emphasis in our support on the welcome, we always say to our new residents “we are so glad you are here”. We had a workshop with young people last year and we asked them what was your experience prior to being here. They don't make choices, they are told – your option is X. So they described the process of coming to Depaul, usually we get in touch with them first, meet them somewhere, bring them in, and it is really little things that stick with them... I remember one young woman wrote “they made the bed for me” and “they are thinking of the issues before we even think about them”. We know what the problems are going to be living like this (housemates) with 12 people on top of each other so just understanding where the pinch-points are going to be, the noise, trying to design them out. Things like the laundry is a huge point of conflict – “ I put the washing, I came back and my jeans were stolen”. It is important for people to think beyond themselves.

So with that in mind and that laundry is a point of conflict, is there an opportunity for these spaces to become also about learning? Oh they have to. It is the interpersonal skillset.

What if they were done in a way that the staff can see the laundry and the positive thing is that you need to spend some time there and there is an exchange that

could happen. When you are a young person who lives in a place like this you basically have nothing and the little you have is really, really important and you know what everyone else has got. Sometimes stuff goes missing. Nobody sits in our laundry as they are not lovely places to sit - 2 washing machines and a dryer.

This has been a great conversation. Do you have anything else you want to say or emphasise with regards to what designers should consider? The main thing is to remember that it is young people that are in the heart of this!

**It is young
people that are
in the heart of
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Edited by Polina Pencheva, Miranda
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Edited and designed in London,
August 2020 as part of the RIBA
Research Grant 2019

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With particular thanks to Alexia
Murphy, Phil Kerry and Emma Henley
for the mentoring along the way.

With particular thanks to Odelay
Films for their generosity, passion for
film and making the story behind this
research visible and accessible to
more people.

Ben Falk
Frank Dow
Jossiah Newbolt.