



NHP Participation Strategy 2023-24

Our Vision

Young People leaving care live connected and fulfilling lives.

Our Mission

To establish Local House Projects to work with young people using a psychologically informed practice framework to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence to grow their community, make their first home and have a positive future.

Foreword

The National House Project (NHP) has a strong record of participation and co-production. The first Local House Project (LHP) was codesigned with young people and they used their negative experiences of leaving care to create a different and more positive way of doing things for young people leaving care in the future. Young people came up with the concept of leaving care together, building a community so that they had friendships that they could trust and rely on and having a small team of staff who would support them on an ongoing basis. Whilst the House Project (HP) approach has continued to develop, the principles of working in a relational way and co-producing everything with young people has remained central.

The Board of Trustees values the ethos that underpins the HP approach and the work that is done to ensure that this remains a young person focused charity. The commitment to meaningfully involve young people is reflected in the actions taken to be open and responsive to ideas and feedback. A young people's Advisory Group takes a full part in all Board meetings and their ideas are welcomed and acted on. The Board is committed to investing the necessary resources and time to ensure that participation and co-production remain a focus at NHP.

Care Leavers National Movement (CLNM) represents young people from all our LHPs and their insights into developing good practice are invaluable. Young people tell us that there should be 'nothing about us without us' and this strategy sets out how we propose to make sure that this is the case.

Mark Leith

NHP Chair of Trustees

Introduction

This participation strategy will guide the HP community to ensure young people across all LHPs have meaningful involvement at all stages of decision making and drive quality of practice, whilst building social capital and equity.

This strategy will offer the framework for young people to express views, be listened to and heard in a safe and supportive environment that empowers them to drive positive change. NHP and CLNM work closely together, and this document will set out their aims and describe how they will develop participation and co-production in LHPs. We strive to impact on the wider care leaver community by influencing practice across local authorities who have an LHP and in changing the narrative that currently sits around care leavers, enabling the wider population to see their qualities and aspirations.

When we get participation right care experienced young people are able to positively shape the care leaver offer enabling resources to be used appropriately and to their best value. They are able to inform professionals about what helps and what doesn't and, with the right support and encouragement, can be the architects of their own futures.

Working in a relational way and understanding the impact of trauma enables professionals to build strong, trusting relationships which is essential if real participation and co production is to take place.

The NHP team and its Board members value the input from young people and all decisions impacting on the development of the HP approach are made with them. We continue to learn about how we create the best environment for young people to participate and strive to be as inclusive as possible. Young people are at the centre of everything we do, and this strategy will ensure that we continue to develop and grow with young people by our side. It will evolve and develop over time and will be reviewed by CLNM and NHP on an annual basis. The strategy will link to the ORCHIDS framework ensuring that young people across all LHPs are able to take **ownership** and **responsibility** for their lives and their LHPs, develop their **community**, have a safe and comfortable **home** to live in, become **interdependent**, feeling comfortable to ask for help when they need it, have **direction** and purposeful activity in their lives and have a **sense of wellbeing** that enables them to live connected and fulfilling lives. We will identify clear outcomes and actions by which we will achieve these.

Our Ambitions

NHP has clear ambitions and high expectations in relation to what we want to achieve. We aspire to:

- Drive excellence in everything we do
- Establish an LHP in every Local Authority and create a safe and supportive House Project community.
- Use our learning to improve wider leaving care services.
- Develop an expert care experienced user voice to change the narrative about care leavers, enabling them to make decisions about their lives and their projects and improve wider service provision.

We cannot do any of this without young people working alongside us. We need to learn from them and equip them with the skills and the platforms to make their views heard to people who can work with them to bring about positive change.

Why is participation important?

The definition of participation is the meaningful involvement in the decision-making process that affects your life.

We know that a service shaped by the experiences of its community results in a better service and better outcomes. Care experienced children and young people have a range of experiences and perspectives that enables differing perspectives and views to be heard and enriches the decision-making process. Successful engagement through participation and coproduction ensures that NHP and LHPs are able to deliver what young people need and, in the process, encourages them to be active citizens who will go on to lead positive lives and contribute to their local communities. Young people are able to develop their skills and knowledge and have opportunities to learn, have fun and achieve. In doing so they promote a positive care leaver narrative and build an evidence base that supports work with young people in the future.

There are differing types of participation that enables involvement and influence at several levels, and we aim to actively involve young people in each of these areas.

- Individual participation – in NHP we developed the ORCHIDS framework to ensure that young people can be active participants in making decisions about their own lives.
- Social participation – helps to develop relationships and a sense of community. Young people come together in LHPS, are represented in CLNM and in doing so develop and improve their LHPs.
- Public participation - involves shaping and informing decision making at a regional and national level. Young people have access to a public platform where their insights and messages can be heard to influence policy. In doing this they are actively changing the narrative for the wider audience.
- Co-production –The approach is value-driven and built on the principle that those who are affected by a service are best placed to help design it. In NHP staff and young people work together to reach a collective outcome.

How will we do this?

We will ensure that NHP continues to work with young people to develop the HP approach.

- Young people will be involved in the recruitment of all NHP staff and Trustees.
- NHP will resource and support the work of CLNM via dedicated participation and development workers.
- We will ensure that young people are involved in the decision-making process at every level by supporting the advisory group to attend Board meetings and actively participate.

Actions for NHP:

- Second Participation and Development Worker to join the team.
- Young people to be involved in any recruitment during 2023/24.
- CEO and Director to meet with Advisory Group prior to every Board meeting to go through agenda, papers and talk through any questions they want to put to Board.

We will develop a shared value base and champion the benefits of participation throughout the House Project community.

- When engaging with new local authorities they will receive a copy of the participation strategy and we will ensure that the organisation is signed up to supporting young people to actively participate in decision-making processes.
- Young people and senior managers will deliver a pitch to NHP as to how an LHP would work for them and how young people will be involved in its design and delivery.
- Young people will be involved in the recruitment of all LHP staff.
- All new LHP staff attend NHPs induction training which is co delivered with young people.
- Every LHP will elect 2 young people to represent them at CLNM.
- CLNM reps will attend Community of Practice to share examples of good practice, challenges, and possible solutions and to give wider feedback on areas of work that they are currently involved in.

Actions for NHP:

- CLNM reps to be involved in helping new LAs to develop their pitch.
- CLNM to present at the launch of all new LHPs.
- Young people to be supported to deliver a range of inputs including the delivery of energy workshops.

We will support CLNM to work on their objectives.

- To share good practice and successes – by supporting a CLNM annual conference
- To raise challenges and provide possible solutions - by attendance at meetings such as Community of Practice.
- To peer evaluate LHP's and make recommendations – by ensuring good quality training and support is in place.
- To develop new ideas designed by young people – by communicating regularly and attending CLNM meetings.

Actions for NHP:

- Resource CLNM annual conference
- Support young people to attend events and pay travel and sessional fees.
- Support young people to carry out Peer Evaluation (this year's focus to be Home, Ownership and Sense of Wellbeing) and to deliver their findings and recommendations at this year's conference.

We will support LHP staff to develop their participation practice and share with the wider system.

- Enable staff to support young people to take an active role in steering groups and other Local Authority meetings.

- Develop the role of a Participation Champion in each LHP who will link with the local authority participation worker to share good practice and build opportunities for participation in the local area.
- Support meaningful participation across the wider system

Actions for NHP:

- Each LHP to identify a staff member as a participation champion who will:
 - take a lead role in sharing best practice in participation across the House Project community.
 - ensure that their CLNM reps can attend group sessions before and after every CLNM meeting to gather feedback and report back and facilitate the reps or other members of the LHP to attend Steering Groups.
 - support CLNM reps who are members of the Advisory Group
- Develop a participation Learning Circle in Lancashire
- Develop a best practice workshop for LHP participation champions and LA participation workers.
- Build a participation resource folder for LHP staff to access.