



# Saint Gobain Gap Homes Report

Believe in  
children  
 Barnardo's

In partnership with

  
SAINT-GOBAIN

# Introduction

Leaving home for the first time can be frightening for any young person. For care leavers it can be overwhelming.

Without family support networks, and with the majority having experienced childhood trauma, care leavers' perilous situations are compounded by incredibly poor accommodation options.

A shortage of housing means 1 in 4 young people leaving care in the UK are being placed in accommodation deemed 'unsuitable', with a third becoming homeless within two years.

United by the belief that a safe place to call home is a fundamental right, Barnardo's and Saint Gobain joined forces to pilot a new model to deliver transformative impact.

Together we have built our first two Gap Homes in Renfrewshire – providing young people with a space to feel proud of, and support to make a successful transition to independence.

Our Gap Homes have provided a life-line during lockdown, supported young people to achieve their dreams and ambitions, and have even helped care leavers to keep their own family together.

With plans to build 50 Gap Homes over the next five years, we are incredibly excited the potential of the project to transform the lives of hundreds of young people leaving care over the coming decades.



# The Gap Homes Project

Barnardo's Gap Homes project was born from a concrete mission: to address the shortage of suitable and appropriate accommodation for young people leaving care, in order to transform their futures.

Time and time again we have seen the impact of care leavers being placed in inadequate and inappropriate accommodation.

We have seen young people placed in youth hostels, run down B&B's and campsites, and the impact this has had on their mental health and wellbeing, robbing them of hope.

We have seen the cost to society of failed placements – with local authorities facing 3-year placement costs ranging from £32,700 to £97,700 per care leaver, not including the costs of crisis interventions.

And we have seen the impact of these poor living arrangements on care leavers' wider life chances:

- **4 in 10 care leavers** aged 18 – 21 are not in education, employment or training compared with 1 in 10 of their peers;
- **1 in 4 of the homeless** population have been in care;
- **1 in 4 of the adult prison** population have been in care.



Our Gap Homes initiative set out to prove that things don't have to be this way. By building suitable and purpose built transition accommodation, our Gap Homes will provide young people with a safe and comfortable space to find their feet – and to learn essential living skills such as healthy eating, budgeting and managing finances.

We would provide young people with the level of support needed to overcome significant challenges, and to secure positive destinations such as employment to support their journey to independence.



# Your support

Saint Gobain's employees have gone above and beyond to raise £200,000 to build the first homes, getting involved in everything from London Marathon to Dragon Boat racing.

Saint Gobain provided significant pro-bono support to secure planning permission and ensure adherence to regulations;

Saint Gobain provided high quality products at cost price, to ensure the best of living for young people.



As Barnardo's first venture into the building of houses, the project definitely brought challenges – securing planning permission took over two years. Saint Gobain's patience and industry knowledge have been instrumental in overcoming hurdles and achieving our goals.

# Case study 1: Mary

Mary's parents were not able to look after her and she spent much of her young life in care. When her parents died within a short time of each other she experienced immense pain and distress.

Mary was 19, with a new-born baby, when she moved into a Barnardo's Gap Home. She found it very difficult at first and her experience of being in a difficult relationship had affected her wellbeing and confidence. With Barnardo's support she began to learn about managing her home while attending to the needs of her baby.

When Mary's mental health deteriorated our staff helped her to address her feelings, taking time to reflect and to focus on her own needs. Respite from caring for her baby was provided too, helping her to get on her feet and to cope. Mary's parenting skills began to improve along with her confidence and sense of hope. She participated in parenting groups with other new mums, reducing her sense of isolation.

The Covid 19 lockdown period was especially challenging. Barnardo's staff visited Mary every day, offering practical support such as food parcels, milk and nappies along with company and reassurance. Mary accessed a wealth of virtual activities for her and her baby, including music and story time, and the parenting group online. Mary's positive relationship with Barnardo's staff helped her to trust that the support she needed would be there for her.

Mary is maturing into a responsible young woman and mother – responsive to the needs of her child and able to recognise when she requires support. She understands the benefits of being open about her own health and wellbeing, which improves her awareness and openness to her baby's needs.

Mary is now looking to the future. She has secured a place at college and she, along with her son, are preparing to move to their own home.



# Case study 2: Linda

Linda has a learning disability which means she finds it more difficult to learn, to understand and to do things that other young people of her age can do. Linda was referred to Barnardo's at 19, and living in a Children's Care Unit. While preparing to live independently it was clear that she was not ready to do so without support.

When we first met Linda she couldn't make eye contact. As we got to know her we understood that she could find it difficult to accept support if it was not on her terms. We began to understand that, within her family network, she had experience of damaging relationship patterns, including coercive control and extortion.

Linda's vulnerability, and her need to feel connected to others, compromised her safety. She experienced harassment from family members and from the wider community.

The Covid 19 lockdown was especially challenging and Barnardo's staff worked hard to ensure Linda was safe in her home. We helped her with routines, eating well and engaging in new, productive activities such as walking, art projects and cooking. Linda was prone to getting into debt, but with help began to work within a budget.

While Linda found this period especially difficult, she developed positive relationships with Barnardo's staff and appreciated that her best interests were the key focus. Linda said she felt cared for.

With this solid base to work from Linda was able to explore the impact of her earlier life experiences, including

her mum being unable to care for her as a child. She was able to understand her own needs and the impact that poor choices had on her. Over time Linda's ability to make better choices and to accept support and care have improved her confidence, her abilities and self-esteem.

Linda is now an increasingly independent young person who is able to plan for her future, make safer, more confident choices and manage her home and finances. She has started college and, in early November moved into her new home. This planned move was achieved in partnership with Sanctuary Housing Association who, from the outset of the Gap Homes development agreed to work with Barnardo's to secure suitable housing for young people moving from Gap Homes.

*Please note – young people's names have been changed to protect their right to privacy and confidentiality.*



# Impact

Our Gap Homes pilot has delivered our first two transition homes in Renfrewshire which will deliver a transformative impact for young people leaving care for decades to come.

## For Saint Gobain

Gap Homes has delivered against the organisation's purpose and sustainability goals: improving people's lives by creating better buildings, and supporting and developing the organisation's local communities to deliver transformative impact.

## For Barnardo's

Gap Homes has delivered against the objectives of our core priority programme for care leavers – developing innovative solutions and delivering transformative impact.

The project has also updated the vision of our founder Thomas Barnardo who set up his ragged homes 150 years ago to provide young people with a safe space, education and a route to employment.

## For society

Gap Homes has demonstrated the benefit of investing in appropriate accommodation for care leavers, in terms of the savings this can deliver to the public purse and positive impact which can be delivered for the most vulnerable.

With plans to build a further 50 Gap Homes across the UK over the next 5 years as a core component of Barnardo's upcoming Positive Futures appeal, and planning permission secured for the next 15 homes, we have a model which can go on to transform the lives of hundreds of young people leaving care over the coming decades and we are excited about opportunities together with Saint-Gobain.

Above all, we believe our Gap Homes project has shown that for vulnerable young people leaving care – there is a different way. And that by investing in the right accommodation, by providing the right support for the individual, and by working innovatively in partnership – it is possible to make a genuine impact in our local communities, and deliver a genuine impact for the most vulnerable young people in our local communities.

**Thank you Saint Gobain**

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