



Our House Evaluation Year 1 Report

London Borough of Barking and
Dagenham Inspiring Futures

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Executive summary

LBBBD commissioned York St John University’s Institute for Social Justice to evaluate Our House. This report documents the project’s processes, impacts and learnings from Year 1 (2024-2025). The evaluation used a combination of qualitative and creative methods with children and young people (CYP) (N=60) and education, arts, heritage and local authority professionals (N=30).

- ### Year 1 key findings

 - CYP reported gaining improved confidence, teamwork, cooperation and technical skills through Our House (OH).
 - For many CYP OH was a deeply meaningful and enjoyable way to self-express through creative activity in safe and non-judgemental spaces.
 - Teachers reported that OH can support transition through positive relationship building and learning about CYP and their interests.
 - OH enriched artists’ practice and served as a catalyst for some to pursue socially engaged practice.
 - An asset-based approach, building community through creative collaboration, CYP with artist co-production of processes and products and multi-agency partnership working were key to the project’s reported successes.
 - There are early indications that OH supports children to envision different future selves for positive creative, education and social engagement.
 - There are early indications that OH may be particularly effective for CYP experiencing ill mental health and/or emotionally based school avoidance.

“Spectacular, wonderful and delightful to be in!”
(JCRS Student 2, 2025)

About our house

A 3-year multi-agency partnership research and delivery project.

Developing a new creative alternative education programme in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

To radically address the question: How can we re-engage young people in alternative education, getting them back into mainstream education and thriving?



Scan the QR code to watch

Our House Year 1 Exhibition: My place

Or visit this link: bit.ly/3J9NRIC

Recommendations

To strengthen OH years 2 & 3 key priorities include deepening multi-agency collaboration, ensuring sustained and potentially repeatable access to the programme and embedding youth voice more fully into both design and evaluation processes.

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Acronyms

AP	Alternative provision	JRCS	Jo Richardson Community School
CYP	Children and young people	KTPs	Knowledge Transfer Projects
DPS	Dagenham Park Church of England School	LBBBD	London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
EBSA	Emotionally based school avoidance	OH	Our House
FFTN	Far From the Norm	SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

About Our House

With the number of young people not attending mainstream education on the rise, how can alternative provision be reimagined? In what ways can it support young people to thrive? And what can arts and heritage contribute to this?

Our House is a 3-year research and delivery project (2024 – 2027) that brings together young people, artists, educators, local authority and heritage professionals to explore new ways of transforming alternative education provision in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD).

The project responds to the growing number of children not attending school in the UK post-pandemic (UK Parliament Education Committee, 2025) and builds on the borough’s 10-year [Inspiring Futures Cultural Education Partnership](#) alongside its extensive work on Inclusion (see for example its [Inclusion Pledge](#)). As such Our House starts from home.

Through **multi-agency partnership working** it is developing a new creative alternative education programme bespoke to people and place based on research and knowledge exchange. LBBD commissioned York St John University’s Institute for Social Justice to evaluate Our House. This report documents the project’s processes, impacts and learnings from Year 1 (2024-2025).

Year 1 activity at a glance

Delivered 110 hours of creative activity with young people at risk of exclusion in 7 schools engaging **76 CYP** from LBBD.

Met existing alternative education provisions to gather knowledge and advice and to collaborate. Shadowed meetings and processes to understand what we need in place for a successful and safe programme.

Created MY PLACE: a professionally installed exhibition at Eastbury Manor House exploring place and safety with artists and young people collaborating to give their experiences. We engaged **421** people in the exhibition, including **8 schools** from LBBD visiting and taking part in workshops.

Organised 11 wrap around events, inviting hundreds of members of our local community from schools, the public, and experts, to visit the exhibition and take part in seminars and workshops.

Designed a pilot programme and received critical feedback from expert stakeholders to refine it. Launched the pilot programme – where young people who are avoiding school will be invited to spend 3 days a week at an alternative programme to build their resilience and confidence, removing blockages to their school attendance.

Delivered 40 hours training for artists and local stakeholders in topics such as Trauma-informed Training and NSPCC Safeguarding.

Project partners

Dagenham Park Church of England School	Mayesbrook Park School
Eastbury Manor House	New Town Culture
Far From the Norm	Southwood Primary School
Green Shoes Arts	The Warren School
Ideate Education	Upstart Projects – Voice Magazine
India Harvey	Valence House Museum
Install Archive	William Bellamy Primary School
Jo Richardson Community School	York St John University

Increasing school absence, multifaceted barriers to attendance and complex needs: a national and local challenge

Nationally, the number of children not attending school has been on the rise since the Covid-19 pandemic (UK Parliament Education Committee, 2025). Not attending school can negatively impact children’s learning, development, wellbeing and safety. Persistent absenteeism can be an indicator of future negative outcomes including poor mental health (Cardiff University, 2021) and reduced educational and career outcomes (Klein et al., 2024). Therefore,

‘If we want to give children the best start in life, it must begin with making sure children can take-up their right to education’

(Children’s Commissioner for England, 2025).

Barriers to school attendance are multifaceted and complex. They include individual and family-level, school-based and systemic challenges. A child’s attendance can be impacted by an interplay of factors ‘including but not limited to poor mental health, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), poverty, bullying, racism, discrimination, and caring

responsibilities’ (Centre for Mental Health, 2024). These are factors faced by many children and young people in LBBD, which is a young and diverse borough that is amongst the highest Index of Multiple Deprivation in the country, with the highest score in London (London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 2022). With a growing child population, LBBD has seen a significant increase in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities with a 50% increase in Education, Health and Care Plans from January 2023 to April 2025 (UK Parliament, 2025).

It is for these reasons that inclusion is a key focus for LBBD, and why Our House seeks to radically address the question: How can we r ive education, getting them back into mainstream education and thriving?



Figure 1 DPS students attending a workshop at Eastbury Manor House. Photo taken by India Harvey.

Why have alternative provision through arts and heritage in LBBD?

It offers a mutually beneficial partnership with heritage sites in the borough; Eastbury Manor House and Valence House. Welcoming children and young people to these rich resources and in turn supporting them through a new Youth Archive.

“Our hard-to-reach audience are 16-24 [year olds] ... By giving them a voice within our service and getting them to direct how we do things we will hopefully bring more young people in.”

(LBBD Heritage professional 1, 2025)

It can reframe failure. Rather than something to be feared, failure is central to creative growth and learning (Fremantle & Kearney, 2015; Hannigan, 2018). Through arts practices, young people can make mistakes without failing.

It can support wellbeing. The arts and creative engagement can improve mental, physical and social health (Fancourt & Finn, 2019).

It builds on LBBD AP provisions in other curriculum areas (such as sport) with a new arts pathway.

Methodology

LBBD commissioned York St John University’s Institute for Social Justice to evaluate the programme’s impacts and influence on CYP not accessing, or at risk of not accessing, mainstream education. The evaluation consists of 2 phases. This report documents Phase 1 which used a combination of qualitative and creative methods including:

- 12 semi-structured interviews with Our House personnel and partners (education, heritage, arts and local authority)
- An end of KTP questionnaire completed by 3 participating schools
- A workshop held with 20 stakeholders to consider emerging insights (this included anonymous contributions collected via a Mentimeter presentation)

- Responses from 30 CYP to creative briefs inviting them to respond to the project’s key questions via dance and art making
- Insights and feedback from 60 participating CYP gathered through an end of project feedback form, or reflective conversation, as appropriate to the group.

Data were analysed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis. CYP contributions were anonymised.

Ethical approval was granted by York St John’s School of the Arts Ethics Committee.

Year 1 activity – a closer look

In year 1, Our House featured a variety of creative practices including dance, drama, film making, music, visual arts and textiles. Our House worked with local artists with specialisms in youth voice, mental health and play to develop Knowledge Transfer Projects (KTPs) led in 7 LBBD schools.

The KTPs were sites of experimentation and learning. Each KTP ran for 6 – 8 weeks and included cohorts with diverse needs. Across the KTPs, artists and education professionals exchanged knowledge to develop inclusive creative learning environments for young people to thrive.

Spotlighting practice: KTP with Far From the Norm

Taking boys’ dance seriously: Young person ownership of, and responsibility for, ‘real-world’ artefacts can be impactful

Far From the Norm (FFTN) is an internationally acclaimed hip hop dance theatre company which ‘established in May 2009 in a youth club in Dagenham’ (FFTN, n.d.). They led an inspiring KTP with 12 boys in Year 7 & 8 from Jo Richardson Community School (JRCS).

During the project the group explored the themes of home and belonging through choreography, sketching, music and making a film.

Taking an asset-based approach, this KTP explored barriers to school attendance and achievement with young people by focussing on what is important to them, alongside feelings of belonging and comfort. They asked:

How can we feel more at home in a space?

Can home be a person? A sport? A religion?



Figure 2 FFTN artist leading choreography with JRCS students. Photo taken by Camilla Greenwell



Scan the QR code to watch ***In Our Own Place***
A film made by JRCS & FFTN during the KTP
Or visit this link: bit.ly/4quEJPx

Insights shared through this approach – by both young people and artists – informed the design of the Year 2 programme. This included the importance of giving young people ownership and responsibility over projects they are involved in and the ways in which making real-world creative outputs can be impactful.

“One thing I worked on that I’m really proud of is when we made a song for the dancing [...] I came up with the idea to say the word ‘hey’ [...] and it sounded really good so we used it.”
(JRCS student 3, 2025)

“Being able to give the kids responsibility or ownership in what they were doing I think helps them really feel invested in what the project is. [And] if they know that the project has an outcome that is going to be in the real world, I think that helps them to be like; oh this is actually a real thing that is making a difference.”
(Shango Edunjobi, FFTN artist, 2025)

“I never thought I’d be the one on the TV. It’s shown me how much effort has helped.”
(JRCS student 4, 2025)



Figure 3 FFTN artists filming a JRCS student. Photo taken by Camilla Greenwell.

“My favourite part was probably the dances. I have a bare talent when it comes to dance, but I don’t really show it. You gave me an opportunity to show my hidden self.”

(JRCS student 1, 2025)

A mutually beneficial experience

This KTP was highly praised by staff at JRCS:

“This has been the most professionally led and delivered dance project I have been involved in at JRCS. [...]”

The impact of the project was evident in the final film but more so in the journey that the boys went on to get there. The experience of working with industry professionals across dance, music and film was so powerful and has ultimately supported in raising aspirations within the Arts.”

(Assistant Headteacher, JRCS, 2025)

Described as a ‘full circle’ project by JRCS assistant head, the project began with creative workshops, led to the creation of a filmed dance, and ended with JRCS students attending a FFTN performance at Sadler’s Wells East and joining them on stage at the end. Not only was it impactful for the young people that took part, who reported increased confidence and dance skills, it benefited FFTN serving as a catalyst for their socially engaged practice:

“It will forever be a project we hold close to us and hopefully will have a legacy too in further iterations!”
(FFTN Executive Producer, 2025)

Spotlighting practice: KTP with India Harvey

Exploring transition and learning through play

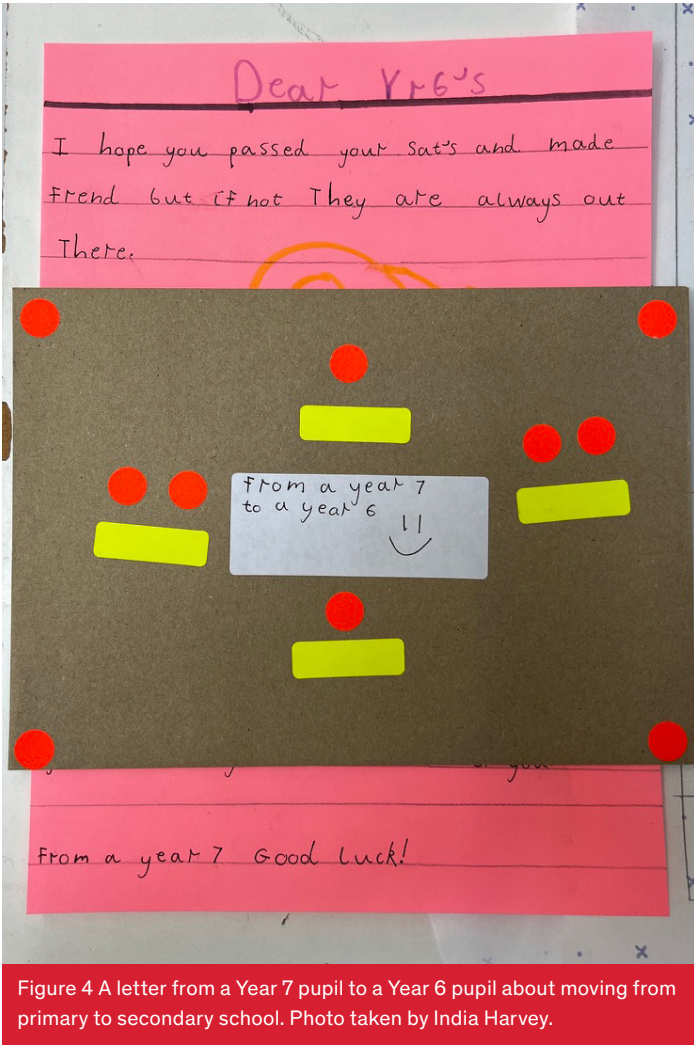


Figure 4 A letter from a Year 7 pupil to a Year 6 pupil about moving from primary to secondary school. Photo taken by India Harvey.

India Harvey, an artist working and researching in the fields of participatory art, landscapes of play, constructed textiles and neurodiversity, led KTPs in Dagenham Park Church of England School and William Bellamy Primary School.

Working with Year 5 and Year 7, these KTPs focussed on KS2 – KS3 transition and play. Activities included plushie, slime, structure and mark making. Alongside this, Year 7s were invited to write a letter to their past selves, which could be shared with Year 6s to give a sense of what transition was like for them. They were also invited to write letters to their future selves including future hopes, dreams, aspirations and questions.

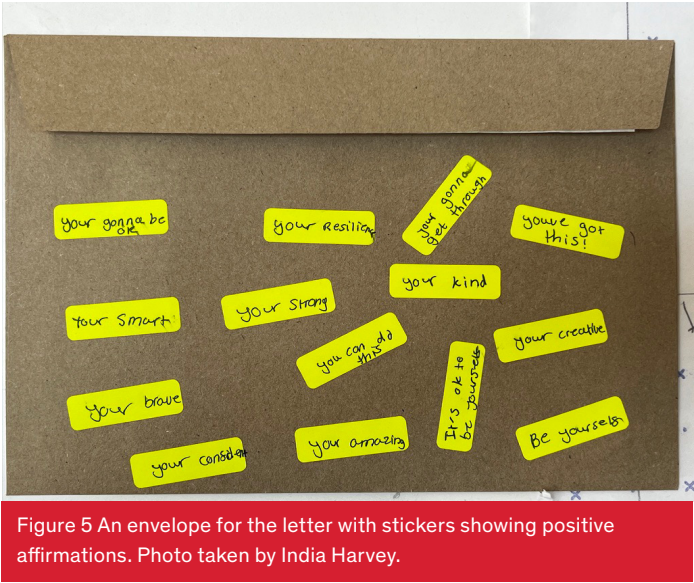


Figure 5 An envelope for the letter with stickers showing positive affirmations. Photo taken by India Harvey.

“It was a really good way to express how we feel, not just in words but in art. And it got our minds off of things.”
(DPS student 1, 2025)

This KTP highlighted the importance of playful learning experiences for CYP across school stages to develop skills, curiosity, creativity and critical thinking. Participating students from Dagenham Park School reported learning a range of technical and life skills through the play experiences afforded by this KTP;

“I learned how to be confident in myself – by speaking and involving myself.”
(DPS Student 2, 2025)

“I learned new life skills like sewing.”
(DPS Student 1, 2025)

“I learned that it doesn’t really matter if you’re perfect.”
(DPS Student 3, 2024)

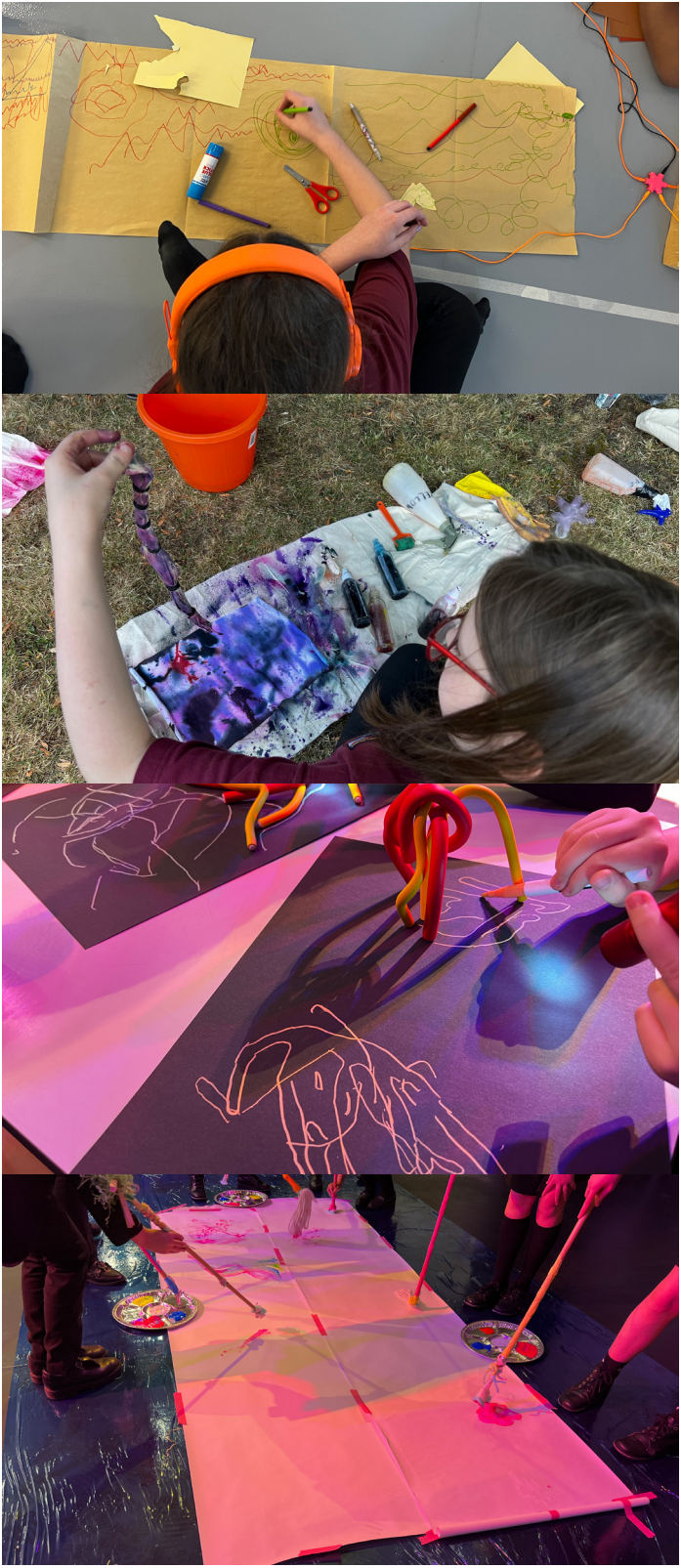


Figure 6 – 9 Images of the creative processes undertaken during KTPs led by India Harvey. Photos taken by India Harvey.

Resisting the adultification of children

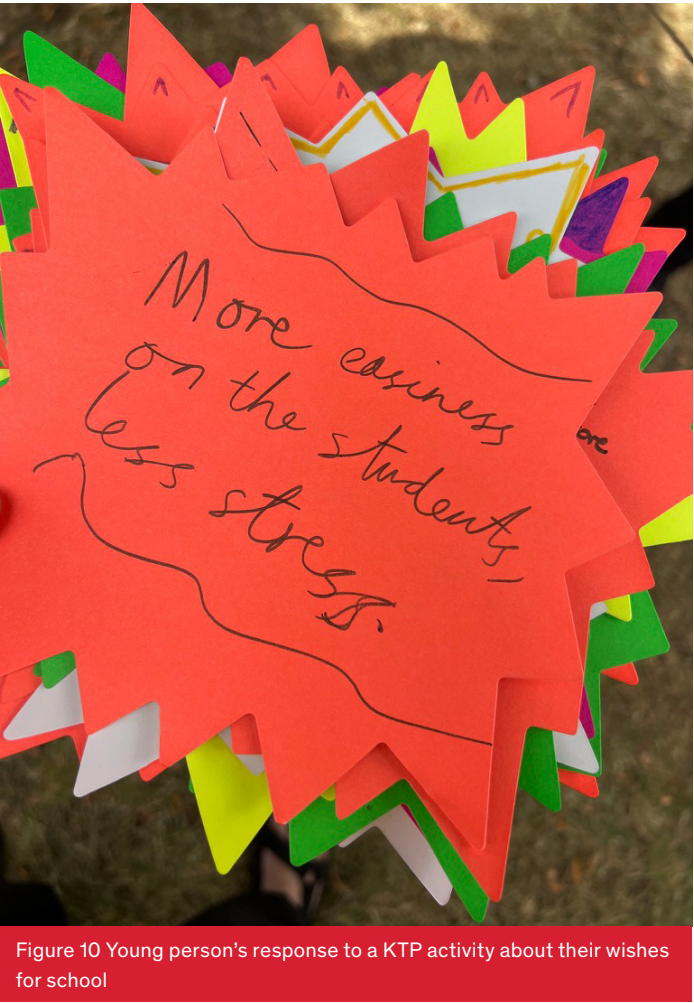


Figure 10 Young person's response to a KTP activity about their wishes for school

Beyond the learning potentials of play, this KTP provided an opportunity for arts, education and heritage professionals collaborating on the project to reflect on the importance of **spaces for children to be children**. When presenting their work to the group, India explained that resisting the adultification of children is part of the ethos of their practice.

‘Adultification is a form of bias where children are viewed and treated as older than they are’ (NSPCC, 2025). It ‘disproportionately affects Black children and young people, causing them significant psychological harm’ (Meheux & Miller, 2025) and can lead to educational inequity through over-policing black children in schools and disproportionate exclusion rates (The Commission on Young Lives, 2022).

Resisting the adultification of children is important for Our House as a programme that serves a diverse and young borough. Recognising children as children and behaviour as communication, the project’s incorporation of play through a creative curriculum might be understood as an ethical imperative.

“I think it is really important that we allow children to be children [...] the adultification of all of these children that ‘act out’, for want of a better description, prevents them from being children.

Children from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds are often treated as if they are adults when they are still children. And that’s something I try really hard for my staff not to do.”

(Cathy Stygal, Headteacher Mayesbrook Park School, 2024)

A recipe for playfulness

Collated from William Bellamy Primary School pupil insights

1. Add **games** (lots)

2. Stir in being respectful, teamwork and being a kid

3. Mix well

4. Add more **games**

5. Fold in **fun activities** – lots of varieties (ripe/unripe)

6. Move around freely (stir, mix, pour, smooth, stretch, other)

7. Make **friends** to warm gently

8. Sprinkle a bit of not-knowing-what-is-going-to-happen-next

9. Heat to **curiosity** mark 6

10. Now your creativity is simmering - **creative, colourful, joyful, free**

11. Feel your **emotions**

12. Take it to pieces, re-bake, re-make, **play** again

13. Be yourself, have **fun**

*SOMETIMES JUST 1 OR 2 INGREDIENTS IS ENOUGH

13

Upskilling artists, heritage and education professionals

Upskilling artists, heritage and education professionals for effective and safe creative alternative provision is a key aim of the Our House project. In Year 1, the project fostered learning, critical reflection and skill development through:

- **40 hours training** for artists and local stakeholders including intersectionality and radical safeguarding, trauma-informed training, and disability confident & inclusive practice training.
- **3 collaboration days** for artists, heritage and education professionals to exchange knowledge and experience and to consider the project’s core challenge together.
- **Invited talks** with speakers from a range of organisations including the University of Arts London, Tate, Voice Magazine, Subwise and Mayesbrook Park School
- **Artist briefings** to consider school expectations, share artistic practice and approaches to evaluation.
- **Youth voice training and consultancy with heritage teams** to develop the Youth Archive.

Many participating professionals reported learning through the project;

“...the in-depth policies, procedures, and background knowledge required for education settings has proved valuable - not just for this project but in general in understanding the needs and requirements of young people in our modern world.”

(Heritage professional, 2025)

“I’ve learnt how ideas can be explored through movement as well as conversation.”

(Southwood Primary School Learning Mentor, 2025)

“In terms of what I’ve learnt; definitely more insight into the education process and the ways in which alternative provision operates. [...] I’ve certainly been able to develop my sense of self & reinforcing the ideas and concepts around youth voice; through the action of applying via the collaborators rather than directly; meaning I can benefit from their feedback and 1:1 conversations too.”

(Youth Voice consultant, 2025)

My Place: Exhibition at Eastbury Manor House



Figure 11 A section from MY PLACE, the project’s Year 1 exhibition Eastbury Manor House. Photo taken by Wow Marketing.

Year 1 culminated with My Place: a professionally installed exhibition at Eastbury Manor House.

My Place showcased creative work made by young people in the borough during the KTPs. It explored what living in Barking and Dagenham means to young people and feelings of belonging and safety. This was used to inform the development of Our House Year 2 – to shape a new creative alternative provision in ways deemed supportive and welcoming on young people’s terms.

421 people engaged in the exhibition. This included young people from 8 LBBD schools who participated in complementary workshops.

“The exhibition was great for me and I feel like it was just a really good experience overall.”

(JRCS Student 3, 2025)

“It really touched on our emotions [...] we got to write [about] our everyday lives, how do we feel, what’s our special place, what’s your safe place, how do you feel about this place [school], at your home and in your heart.”

(JRCS Student 2, 2025)

Insights

Children and young people’s self-appraisal of their achievements through Our House

During the KTPs children were invited to reflect on their learning and participation. In keeping with the project’s asset-based approach, the following word cloud shows their responses to the question: during this project, **what would you give yourself a gold star for?**



Figure 12 A word cloud showing responses from 24 CYP at The Erkenwald Centre, The Warren School and JCRS to the question: what would you give yourself a gold star for during this project?

The size of the text corresponds to the number of mentions. It is notable that teamwork and cooperation were mentioned most frequently. This corresponds with positive reported impacts of Our House as a project that fosters relationship building (see page 18 for discussion).

Alongside teamwork and cooperation, improved confidence, the ability to self-express and technical skill development (e.g. in dance, sewing, drawing, filmmaking) were reported across the KTPs. (See page 12 for example).

Notably, Year 1 has demonstrated the potentials of Our House to support children to envision different future selves for positive creative, education and social engagement.

“I learnt that ... there is always something hidden inside of you that you don’t know.”

(JCRS Student 4, 2025)

The KTPs offered a safe space without judgement

Feeling safe at school is a critical factor in addressing school attendance and re-engagement, particularly for emotionally based school avoidance (Hamilton, 2024).

The KTPs were valued by participating CYP as ‘calm’, ‘peaceful’ and ‘comfortable’ environments where ‘no-one judged you’.

“You can be anywhere, you can be anything, as long as you feel safe.”

(JCRS Student 5, 2025)

Many CYP said the KTPs differed from their usual experiences of school, which some described as ‘hostile’. The role of facilitating artists in creating safe spaces alongside opportunities to build positive relationships were pivotal to this. Young people valued;

“Having like that safe space where you don’t need to like worry if anything’s going wrong cos they would all like help me.”

(Jo Richardson student 2, 2025)

Our House artists were able to facilitate safe spaces because they 1) have place-based knowledge as artists practising within or from LBBD, 2) have expertise and/or lived experience in youth voice and mental health support, and 3) were supported with extensive training. This was exemplified through the work of Green Shoes Arts, who specialise in wellbeing through creativity, and their approach to holding space. Through their KTPs many detailed insights into CYP experiences of neurodiversity, bullying and marginalisation were shared. As Green Shoes Arts practitioner Laura Ann Haywood explains, the KTPs were “a safe space [for CYP] to offer their feelings, which led them to form new friends in a space and then they grew” (2025).



Figure 13 Image of KTP at Green Shoes Arts. Photo taken by [INSERT name]



Figure 14 Students from Dagenham Park School exploring sounds on the grounds of Eastbury Manor House.

Working outside the classroom

Working outside the classroom was valued by many CYP. When asked how the KTPs could be improved, this was one of the top suggestions. Working outside was considered by CYP as a supportive means to ‘explore more things’, ‘relax’, ‘calm down’, ‘have a change of scenery’ and ‘ask others about art through interviewing’.

Suitable clothing, both for outside activity (warm coats for example) and creative practice (overalls that can get messy) were suggested as something for the project to provide going forward. Professionals noticed positive engagement by CYP when working outside of school:

“... there was almost a sharpened focus when they got there [Eastbury Manor House] ... maybe as it’s somewhere different, they are not quite as comfortable, which almost makes them find that comfort in each other and work really well together.”
(James Hodgson, Culture & Heritage Curator, Eastbury Manor House, 2025)

James’ comment points to the potential value of skilfully held discomfort and risk-taking through creative practice outside of the classroom. He went on to question whether novelty was a factor in this success. This speaks to Our House as a circuit breaker - a productive alternative learning environment that disrupts negative patterns and supports new pathways to emerge for CYP and those they work with - alongside wider conversations held throughout Year 1 about school reintegration (see ‘Challenges’ on page 22 for further discussion).

KTPs as a space to build positive relationships with peers and adults through creative collaboration

CYP and teachers reported that the KTPs supported positive relationship building. Key to this was:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Providing space for CYP to express themselves and get to know each other in small groups |
| 2 | Creative collaboration:
a. Through the joint pursuit of making together, a sense of community was built.
b. Mistakes were valued as part of the creative process, rather than equating to personal failure. |
| 3 | Working with visiting artists as a circuit break, whereby CYP had a fresh chance for positive interaction with adults working as collaborators. Nurturing relationships built through joint pursuit and care – not just academic performance – were crucial to the effectiveness of this. |
| 4 | Listening to CYP on their terms through creative processes and products. |

Project partner Voice Magazine (through early development of the Youth Archive) and Ideate Education (through KTPs) were significant contributors to youth voice discussions and practice throughout Year 1. As Ideate Education founder John Akinde explains,

“We need to move beyond tokenism. We need to create culturally grounded spaces for young people to lead and make decisions, not only so they can be empowered, but ultimately so we can make the system more equitable and relevant.”
(2025)

It is through co-production that space can be opened in this way with and for young people. And crucial to effective co-production is relationship building, which was a strength of the project.

“The way that the practitioners engaged and delivered the sessions was incredible. The relationships they built from the off ensured that the children felt safe and comfortable to engage with the programme and share their ideas.”
(Georgia Easter, Learning Mentor, Southwood Primary School, 2025)

“I developed that relationship with Jordan and Shango [FFTN artists] and everyone else who was in like the group and I developed like a positive friend group in the sessions, and like [I was] just happy, happy to be there.”
(JRCS Student 2, 2025)

Many CYP reported that Our House was different to school because the programme prioritised time for relationship development, not just subject learning.

“... in lessons, obviously they’re great because we’re learning, but you don’t really get understood a lot [...] You don’t have time to actually socialize or [get to] know a lot of the people in the room ... like everyone knows one thing about you, that’s what they base you off. So, it’s just nice in here [the KTP], because we’re all familiar with each other.”
(The Warren School Student 1, 2025)

As this young person goes on to explain, having friends at school matters because:

“School is painful in a way because if you don’t have friends or you don’t fit in enough, it’s like a torture mechanism of the same routine everyday of people who do not like you.”
(The Warren School Student 1, 2025)

This corresponds with research which has shown that supportive relationships are crucial for addressing emotionally based school avoidance (O’Hagan, Bond & Hebron, 2022). Finally, the timing of interventions to support positive relationship building is important.

“Lots of them were talking about the friendships that were formed as a result [of the project]. And I think you can’t really beat that. Especially in Year 7, like feeling that you’ve got a place and a thing – like a niche. I think that is one of the strongest things that we can have in schools that can prevent further issues.”
(Rebecca Simpson, Assistant Headteacher, JRCS, 2025)

The affordance of a different space whereby 1) children can form friendships and bonds early on in their school career, and 2) professionals can learn about children and their interests is a rich potential of Our House. Furthermore, emphasis on early intervention suggests that Our House should continue to focus on KS2-KS3 transition, and projects for Yr7-8s.



Figure 15 JRCS students participating in a KTP led by Ideate Education. Photo taken by Kayleigh Dobinson.

The importance of multiagency partnership: Working & learning together

Multiagency partnership working has been significant to the impacts of Our House. In Year 1 the project brought together professionals from education, heritage, local authority, arts and youth services to address its substantial ‘challenge’; re-engaging **young people** in alternative education, getting them back into mainstream education and thriving. In Year 2, it plans to extend this to include health with mental health counsellors.

Our House takes a whole systems approach which is necessary given that school non-attendance is a complex and multifaceted issue. It is a project that starts at home as professionals within LBBD seek to support CYP within LBBD. As such, Our House doesn’t ‘parachute in’ – a critique that has been raised of socially engaged arts practices (Hope, 2011) whereby outsider lack of awareness of context can inadvertently harm those intended to be helped.

Collaboration days were pivotal to Our House’s multiagency partnership working. They were held at key moments during the project, serving as spaces for those involved to address the project’s ‘challenge’ together through knowledge exchange and collective reflection. Significant to the success of this was a *growth mindset* approach through the *Power of Yet* (Dweck, 2006) and a commitment to hope.

“When we only name the problem, when we state complaint without a constructive focus on resolution, we take away hope.”
(hooks, 2003, p.xiv)

This ethos informs Our House design, delivery and reflection for future action.



Figure 16 The Power of YET Poster by Jenni Saslove.

Challenges

As a new project piloting a different model of working, there were practical challenges connected to balancing different stakeholder needs and priorities. These included:

- 1. Time constraints:** Some schools reported balancing children being outside of lessons and project delivery as an initial challenge.
- 2. Provision of suitable space within schools:** Creative practice needs space. It was difficult for some schools to provide this.
- 3. Timing off-site visits** to minimise staffing impacts needs consideration.

Wider considerations for Years 2 & 3

- 1. Supporting successful reintegration to mainstream school:** With concern that children may find the transition from Our House back to school challenging, reintegration should be foregrounded throughout the programme. A dedicated education professional from the child’s school that works with Our House could be one way to address this.
- 2. Sustaining practice:** One of the top requests from most participating children was to be able to do the KTP again. Moving forward, Our House should consider whether it operates as a short-term circuit break, and/or if there is a continuity of offer.
- 3. Deepening collaborative practice:** To enhance the effectiveness of the project’s multiagency partnership working, teachers and other education professionals should join future reflection days. This could support navigating differences in stakeholder expectations and parameters.
- 4. Embedding youth voice:** Whilst children were listened to within programme delivery, in what ways could youth voice be further embedded within its design and evaluation?

Conclusions

Through Year 1’s test and learn approach there are early indications that Our House can serve as an effective circuit breaker for CYP to positively engage with education. CYP reported improved confidence, better understanding of the importance and value of ‘effort’, and developing teamwork, cooperation and technical skills. Many valued the ability to self-express through creative activity and saw Our House as a meaningful and enjoyable way to ‘take your mind off things’ in a ‘safe’ and ‘non-judgemental’ space which differed to perceptions of school as ‘hostile’. Teachers highlighted that Our House could support transition because it affords a different space whereby 1) CYP can form friendships and bonds early on in their school career, and 2) professionals can learn about CYP and their interests.

Notably, Year 1 demonstrated the potentials of Our House to support CYP to envision different future selves for positive creative, education and social engagement. There are also early indications that the programme may be particularly effective for CYP experiencing poor mental health and/or emotionally based school avoidance.

Key to the project’s reported successes was:

- taking an asset-based approach,
- giving CYP ownership and responsibility within project processes and products,
- CYP with artist co-production of real-world creative outputs,
- building community through creative collaboration,
- valuing mistakes as part of creative and learning processes,
- offering playful and safe spaces where children can be children and behaviour is understood as communication,
- working with visiting artists as a circuit break, whereby CYP had a fresh chance for positive interaction with adults working as collaborators,
- nurturing relationships built through joint pursuit and care – not just academic performance,
- multiagency partnership working, and
- a commitment to learning across the project through a range of training and knowledge transfer underpinned by a growth mindset ethos.

To strengthen Years 2 and 3, key priorities include supporting smooth reintegration into mainstream school, ensuring sustained and potentially repeatable access to the programme, deepening multiagency collaboration with greater involvement from education professionals, and embedding youth voice more fully into both design and evaluation processes.

Recommendations

Have future activity co-led between artists, teachers and heritage professionals:

- whereby a teacher(s) joins the activity as a key adult that can maintain positive relationships developed through OH as CYP and teacher return to mainstream together.
- with a heritage professional(s) joining the activity to enrich connection to the collections and to support OH contributions to collections.
- as a means to iteratively consider different expectations & priorities.

Embed youth voice more fully into project design and evaluation to develop a creative alternative provision that is relevant, meaningful and developed with young people.

Deepen multiagency collaboration with greater involvement from education professionals through regular reflection days.

Consider programme longevity for sustained and potentially repeatable access.

Recommendation from CYP:
More outdoor working with clothing to support that.

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