

Barnabas Project – End of Project Impact Summary February 2025

Overview

The Barnabas Project at Only a Pavement Away was established as the legacy project of the House of St Barnabas (HoSB) following the closure of the HoSB charity and club in January 2024. The closure meant that the ongoing support usually given to graduates would have ended immediately, leaving these individuals vulnerable to falling back into homelessness and at increased risk of crisis. This time limited project offered graduates 12 months of progression support and formally ended on January 31st 2025. Thanks to the generosity of host charity Only A Pavement Away, combined with a group of committed funders and volunteers, we were able to ensure that an ongoing package of progression support could be offered to all HoSB Employment Academy graduates who needed it. This report provides summary of the impact of the funding on the individuals supported during this period, along with lessons learned from the perspective of the project team.

The House's closure was difficult for many, and it was essential for their stability that they had trusted and familiar staff they could turn to. With a case load of 50 graduates, the small team of three was busy from day one operating at full capacity. The friendly and dynamic team at Only a Pavement Away have been hugely supportive of the project, sharing their modern (pro bono) office spaces at The Restaurant Group in Borough, as well as the services of the charity.

The original planned outcomes from the beginning of the project were as follows:

- 30 graduates to find and keep work, of which 10 get better work.
- 30 graduates to improve their professional and social networks.
- 10 graduates to improve their housing.

Project outcomes attained

We are delighted to report that at the end of the project, we exceeded our targets for the project, with much higher than anticipated results for housing.

	Annual target	2024 Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	2025 Jan	Cumulative year to date	% of annual target achieved
Graduates attain, retain or improve work	30	16	15	10	6	12	13	12	14	12	11	6	8	34	113%
Graduates get better work	10	1	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	8	80%
People attain, retain or improve housing	10	8	11	8	8	10	13	8	7	14	10	8	7	28	280%
Graduates improve professional and social networks	30	8	17	27	19	20	18	12	9	15	18	16	17	38	127%
Graduates supported	50	22	26	29	24	24	29	20	22	45	39	19	22	50	100%
Graduates secure work throughout project	15	1	1	2	1	4	1	1	0	2	1	0	1	15	100%

Finding and attaining work

We have supported **34** different graduates to attain, retain or improve work. Fifteen individuals have moved into their first job since the project commenced, a further 8 have been supported into better roles. The roles are varied, with 50% part-time roles, 25% full-time and the remainder comprising self-employed and zero-hour contracts.

Roles are varied, with the majority (62%) being in the hospitality industry, 24% in the charity/social care sector, and 14% in administrative roles.

As a progression project, the team encouraged and supported our graduates to consider what 'good work' might look like for them and how they might achieve that. This includes salary, a secure contract and opportunities to move into

more senior roles within their chosen field. We supported eight graduates into 'better work', something especially important given the high number of graduates experiencing financial hardship despite being in work.

Housing

We have supported **28** different graduates with some aspect of housing need, which is almost three times the number originally anticipated. Secure and affordable housing opportunities remain scarce across London and this area has been incredibly challenging and resource intensive for the small team. Our graduates live in various types of housing: 40% are local authority or housing association tenants, 18% rent within the private rental sector and the remainder are in a mixture of temporary accommodation, supported living or other accommodation.

This year, we successfully secured **five new tenancies for previously homeless graduates**. Three of these were starter tenancies which will convert to a permanent agreement following the graduate successfully demonstrating 12 months of managing rent and bills. Given the current extreme shortage of secure and affordable housing in London, the team are happy that after several years of insecure accommodation, hostels or street homelessness, our graduates now finally have a home to call their own.

We continued to advocate for our graduates with housing issues, helping 14 individuals retain their tenancies and avoid eviction. The main issues we supported with were addressing their arrears, advocating on their behalf with landlords, utility companies and councils (council tax). We stood by graduates to voice their safety concerns around anti-social behaviour and inappropriate housing, holding landlords to account. We supported graduates to set up standing orders to manage their fixed payments. We intervened in extreme cases, providing financial support to five graduates in crisis and successfully avoiding immediate eviction and legal action. We provided support to help 26 graduates improve their housing situation. This included maintenance and repairs and purchasing items to improve living conditions such as furniture, fridges and ovens. A recurring issue has been around damp and mould especially in Local Authority and Housing Association properties.

“Housing is an area that cannot be ignored when supporting people; a safe home should be a basic right for everyone. Seeing graduates living in unsafe conditions, and just accepting these conditions is frustrating and disheartening. Many graduates work incredibly hard to make their properties a safe haven, and to see them ruined by damp and mould is awful. Navigating housing repairs and complaints can be complex and slow, but we have found success in having local MP’s and Environmental Health advocating on our graduates’ behalf. A highlight for me is doing home visits and seeing graduates settled and happy in their homes.”

Jig Maidment Progression Manager

Increasing social networks

We have seen an increase in social isolation amongst our graduates; possibly a knock on from the pandemic, and also due to the financial impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Few graduates can afford to spend on social activities or anything which is not related to rent, bills, commuting and food. We know that this has a negative impact on mental wellbeing. More graduates are making connections online, increasing risk of scams and sometimes also a cause of increased isolation. We have seen several local grass roots charities and community centres closing or cutting back on services due to funding cuts. This limits opportunities to interact, socialise and offer a change of environment.

Our 22 volunteer mentors continued to play a hugely important role in supporting graduates. As a small team, we benefitted from the additional capacity, with several mentors really 'stepping up' to offer expertise in areas such as HR, coaching and IT support. The mentors met with their mentee regularly, with texts in between, providing encouragement and practical advice and support on their journey into work and home. They visited new places together such as parks, museums and exhibitions to open up new experiences and inspiration for conversations and curiosity. Many of our graduates now feel more confident to explore different areas of London and try out new cultural venues, where previously they may not have felt able to. We hosted a bespoke workshop for mentors run by Homeless Link focusing on trauma informed practice, to update their skills and knowledge with evidence-based tools and techniques. All mentor matches were formally closed at the end of the project, with mentees and mentors taking time to reflect upon and celebrate how far they had come on their journey since leaving the Employment Academy.

Financial challenges for graduates

We have noticed a sharp increase in the number of graduates who are employed but still living on the edge of poverty. This is largely down to the cost of living, and London Living Wage not being enough to live on, let alone Minimum Wage. We supported graduates in severe crisis, awarding hardship payments allocated to food vouchers, debt support and

rent arrears. Our progression support worker, successfully advocated on behalf of a graduate with high physical health needs, overturning an unfair decision and winning an appeal to have Personal Independent Payments awarded. This has made a huge difference meaning the graduate can now afford pay for support in his home to carry out basic cleaning and cooking tasks. Only A Pavement Away runs a small grants programme, which we were able to signpost graduates to, to support with training courses and work equipment.

Volunteer mentor and financial advisor Peter Thompson, ran a series of 121 finance clinics for our graduates to guide them through areas including setting a budget, savings and debt. Our graduates found this beneficial helping them to recognise areas where they can make their income work better for them and improve their overall financial wellbeing.

Legacy of the Barnabas Project

The final six months of the project were carefully planned to ensure a smooth wind down and signposting of graduates (if needed). The team focused on ensuring that all graduates were empowered with the skills, tools and confidence to maintain their stability in work and home once the project ceased. The team supported graduates with final meetings and reflected on their progress, resilience and journey during their time with the programme.

We are proud of the outcomes attained due to the highly tailored support we were able to provide each graduate in the short time frame of 12 months. None of this would have been possible without the generosity of Greg Mangham, founder CEO of Only Pavement Away, who agreed to host the project. We benefitted enormously from his supportive and welcoming team who provided valuable job opportunities, learning and development support and grants to our graduates. As we reflect on the past year, we recognise now more than ever, how housing, employment, financial security and mental health intersect. We believe that much of the project's success was due to the way the team were able to work holistically, leveraging in support from many different sources to provide targeted and bespoke support for individuals.

On behalf of the team and graduates we support; we would like to thank you for your tremendous support throughout this year. We hope that you will agree that the positive impact that this project has made in the lives of individuals has been significant, especially given the challenging circumstances.

“Being involved in this legacy project of HoSB has been such a privilege, and being able to continue to work under the HoSB model of good work, good home and networks has been very special; this is a model I strongly believe in and the outcomes show its success – I will keep talking about and take with me into my next role. Our graduates are some of the most resilient people I have met, and I am honoured they trusted us to run this project and support them on their journeys out of homelessness.” Jig Maidment, Progression Manager

“Thinking back to January 2024, it is cause for celebration that we have achieved this additional year of progression support and have now brought the project to an end, as always planned. Our graduates are well prepared for the transition away from the project, and they have given us the greatest compliment and hope by doing so with grace, humour and motivation. To our supporters who backed us at that critical point when the Barnabas Project was an idea borne out of crisis, thank you. The spirit of encouragement from the House of St Barnabas was ever present and will stay with us.” Ceri Sheppard, Project Advisor

We would like to end the report with some words of heartfelt thanks from our graduates. We simply would not have achieved this without you.

“As the project comes to its final stage, I want to thank you again for everything. I’ll always be grateful for the kindness and guidance you’ve shown me.”

“You all worked really hard to ensure many of us who arrived at HoSB, often in a state of despair, to rediscover our worth and talents.”

“I can’t thank you and the whole team of HOSB enough for helping me get back on track.”

“God bless HOSB and all its lovely Staff, Mentors and Organisations.”

Thank you