

Spotlight on Baca

We are a social enterprise in Loughborough. We have been providing supported accommodation, education and training for young unaccompanied asylum seekers aged between 16 and 18 years old for more than a decade. The housing we provide is a huge part of the wrap-around support that we offer.

In recent years, demand for our services has grown. In 2015, we supported 12 migrants, and in 2019 this figure rose to 27. The immigration landscape is very volatile.

Before we received the loan from SASH, we were reliant on a student rental market. Loughborough has a large student population. Many houses are let on annual contracts with rents increasing on each renewal. Often, we had to vacate houses because landlords decided to rent to students. Finding quality accommodation was also challenging - the better housing almost always being very highly priced. We knew we had to re-think our strategy.

The £1.75m SASH loan gave us the opportunity to transform our work by bringing all but one of our properties into ownership.

Many of the young people we support are victims of trafficking or have fled war, and they are emotionally, physically, and socially, extremely vulnerable. Buying properties gives us long-term stability, and gives the young people better accommodation, with minimal transitional change.

The loan has also allowed us to purchase move-on accommodation for the first time in our history. There is currently a lack of move-on accommodation available for young asylum seekers when they are transitioning from care. But it is

critical as it avoids an abrupt end to the supported housing we are able to give. It takes time for them to be accepted on to the social housing registry, despite having been granted indefinite leave to remain. Our new housing helps address this.

We bought our first property with the SASH loan in May 2020 and were able to house three girls there. One of them had been rescued from trafficking. She told us that she felt like the house was a home and that the people in it felt like family to her.

With the SASH-funded housing, we have been able to focus on making it homely and more personal because we know we have it long term - and this does influence the way people use the space. It is such a contrast to rented accommodation which tends to be very monotone.

Now more than ever, due to COVID-19, property ownership gives us more security as we don't need to worry about landlords giving us notice to leave. Purchasing has also been easier as we are essentially a cash buyer through the SASH loan. The flexibility in the repayments and the shared void risk has also been very reassuring. The loan has also helped to increase local authorities' and funders' confidence in Baca because there is a recognition that we have more control over how we operate.

Jimmy Zachariah
CEO, Baca

