



**‘STEPPING FORWARD: PERFORMING ARTS FOR LIFE’ PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE LAUNCHES ACROSS UK**

***Local Authorities can now offer pioneering programme to young people in care to support personal development and create potential future career opportunities***

**PRESS RELEASE — AYLESBURY, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE — 28 February 2025:** [The Share Foundation](#), in partnership with [Tring Park School for the Performing Arts](#) and the [Rothschild Foundation](#), is today launching a first-of-its-kind online performing arts video course to provide young people in care aged 13-17 with an accessible introduction to the performing arts. The programme encourages young people to try a variety of different disciplines such as dance, acting, singing and backstage technical skills.

With arts enrichment widely known to provide lifelong benefits such as building confidence, well-being and resilience, this programme offers an incredible opportunity for some of the most disadvantaged young people in the UK and is accessible for free through the local authorities that sign up. There are already thirteen local authorities set to offer the Stepping Forward programme across England, with many more already in talks with a view to providing it to their young people imminently.

In 2022/23, there were approximately 107,000 children in care in the UK, an increase of 8 per cent in the last five years<sup>1</sup>. Stepping Forward will run alongside The Share Foundation's already successful incentivised learning scheme, the [Stepladder Plus](#) life skills programme, for young people in care aged 15 – 17 years. The new course was created in collaboration with leading vocational school Tring Park School for the Performing Arts and produced by media company [Particle6](#), and will not only work to support personal development but also connect young people in care to a wider network of performing arts resources and organisations at a local level.

Scripts and filming for the six-step online programme were completed with guidance from a focus group of inspirational young people in care and an advisory group chaired by Andy Wright OBE, Trustee for West Midlands Children in Care Foundation, Chair of ARC and ASCL Council Members. Key elements of the programme include an introduction to performing arts, delving deeper into the four different disciplines, gaining hands-on experience through workshops and an in-depth discussion on backstage roles. Those taking part will be able to earn up to £200, with £25 on offer for each stage completed and a bonus of £50 for full completion of all six steps. The course can also count towards the Arts Award qualification for those also studying this.

A group of eight young people in care have been trialling the course since January, Khia, one of the young people involved in the trial explains; “Being part of the Stepping Forward course trial phase has been an amazing experience for me. It's given me the chance to express myself through the performing arts and discover talents I didn't know I had. The support and



encouragement has really boosted my confidence and I am excited to continue the course and discover even more skills I can use for the future.”

Featuring notable performers such as, Zoe Lister (Hollyoaks, The Worst Witch), Pandora Christie (Heart Radio), Mo Jamil (The Voice UK), and soprano Jennifer France, the course brings these industry experts together. Artists speak in the ‘In Conversation With....’ section of the course, where they each discuss their individual journeys to becoming performing arts professionals, and share their own care experience. There are a series of brilliantly engaging short videos, exclusive professional lead workshops, quizzes, opinion-seeking questions to help the young people develop ideas and lots of useful resources, including how those studying the course can take their performing arts skills further.

Emeka Sesay, a successful actor who has starred in Top Boy and The Power, and is a care leaver himself, explains why he was keen to get involved in this initiative, “I am thrilled to be part of the Stepping Forward course because I truly believe in the transformative power of the performing arts. Growing up, the arts provided me with a sense of purpose and confidence, and I want to share that experience with young people in care. This course is a fantastic opportunity for them to explore their own creativity and discover new possibilities for their future.”

Gavin Oldham OBE, Chair of Trustees at The Share Foundation, commented: “We are delighted with how the course trial has been going and are confident that it will provide a strong accompaniment to our Stepladder Plus programme. Incentivised learning has already been shown to provide a real attitudinal transformation as young people progress through our programmes. We believe adding this element to Stepping Forward will be crucial in engaging with young people in care due to the confidence and sense of enjoyment that the performing arts provide. We encourage local authorities with an interest in expanding their existing performing arts initiatives and the transferable skills gained thereby to contact us, so we can work together to help these young people fully embrace the benefits on offer.”

Simon Larter-Evans, Principal of Tring Park School for the Performing Arts, said: “We take great pride in our partnership on this project and are hopeful that it will contribute to a future where every young person, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to engage with and benefit from power of the performing arts.”

Please visit: [www.sharefound.org/steppingforward](http://www.sharefound.org/steppingforward) for more information, or watch our introductory video at <https://youtu.be/yKDBr5xMtDY>

**-ENDS-**

**Notes to editors:**

Photos available from the official launch event on 28 February 2025

Interviews available on request



Following an extensive feasibility study conducted by Lucy Perman MBE and Imogen Ashby, backed by a total investment of £260,000 supported jointly by The Rothschild Foundation and a Charities Aid Foundation Donor Advised Fund, the course will serve as a platform that connects young people in care with performing arts education resources across the country. It will act as the glue uniting national organisations such as The Big House, Care to Dance, and Tring Park School, as well as supporting the work of the National Association of Virtual School Heads and The Mighty Creatives.

#### **About The Share Foundation**

The Share Foundation has operated the Junior ISA scheme for young people in care throughout the United Kingdom on behalf of the Department for Education since 2012 and the Child Trust Fund scheme for young people in care since 2017. It has developed the Stepladder Plus life skills programme as an incentivised learning course to run alongside these starter capital accounts, accessible throughout the United Kingdom. 1,450 young people have participated thus far with 63% completing at least four of the six steps. Survey analysis of these is showing that their NEET rate at 19 years old is less than 25% compared to the average 39% for adult care leavers. <https://www.sharefound.org/>

#### **About Tring Park School for the Performing Arts**

Tring Park School's vision is to be the pre-eminent centre of excellence for training and educating the next generation of the most versatile performance artists. Offering world-class vocational training in dance, musical theatre, acting and commercial music, the boarding and day school based in Hertfordshire UK offers a pathway to industry alongside a robust academic provision. Welcoming pupils from 7 to 19 years old, the school aims to provide this unique breadth of education and training to talented young people from all backgrounds and extends its specialist facilities and teaching experience to children and young adults across the wider community. [www.tringpark.com](http://www.tringpark.com)

#### **About Rothschild Foundation**

The Rothschild Foundation is a charity supporting arts and heritage, the environment, and social welfare by awarding grants, fostering dialogue and debate, and through our support of Waddesdon Manor. The Foundation is Chaired by Dame Hannah Rothschild DBE, and managed by a board of Trustees, including other members of the Rothschild family. The Rothschild Foundation offers grants for the benefit of Buckinghamshire delivering our commitment to address the needs of local communities. Beyond Buckinghamshire, the Foundation supports major initiatives which encourage enjoyment of the UK's rich cultural heritage. For more information about the Rothschild Foundation and its grants programme, visit <https://rothschildfoundation.org.uk/>, or follow on Facebook or LinkedIn.

#### **About Particle6**

Founded in 2015 by Eline van der Velden, Particle6 connects diverse audiences with content that's educational, provocative, and exciting. By blending its team's backgrounds in science,



ROTHSCHILD  
FOUNDATION

**PARTICLE6**  
PRODUCTIONS

comedy, and drama with cutting-edge technology, Particle6 creates innovative storytelling experiences. Their viral successes include the Gender Bias Riddle (14M views on BBC Three) and Putting It Out There (10M views on BBC Three). They regularly collaborate with BBC Bitesize and BBC Teach, with credits including the Imperial War Museum's WW2 series and Ivy's Plant Shop. Particle6 has won a Gold Telly Award and a Best Online Comedy Lovie Award. As an eco-conscious company certified by Albert Sustainable Production, it is committed to reducing global carbon emissions through storytelling. Recognised as a Pact Future30 company, a BFI Global Screenfund Awardee and they have been part of the Channel4 Emerging Indie Fund and Creative UK's Female Founders scheme.

#### Contacts:

Gavin Oldham OBE for The Share Foundation [gavin.oldham@sharefound.org](mailto:gavin.oldham@sharefound.org)

Simon Larter Evans for Tring Park School [media@tringpark.com](mailto:media@tringpark.com)

Eline van der Velden for Particle6 [eline@particle6.com](mailto:eline@particle6.com)