Hudswell Project with the Flanagans\_FINAL CUT Aug 11th 2021

[00:00:00] Welcome to Communities Building Homes, a new podcast brought to you by community led homes North Yorkshire and East Riding.

In this podcast, we're meeting people who are at the forefront of doing, supporting and enabling communities to make great housing. Building new homes or refurbishing old People who are truly making homes to live in and meeting local housing need.

I'm journalist and presenter, peg Alexander, and my guests today are the Flanagan family, John and Laura. Now, in this episode of the podcast, we want you to actually hear about the difference that community-led housing makes to individual families and individual life. So I've come on a gorgeous summer's.

Today to the beautiful village of Hudswell, near Richmond in North Yorkshire on the edge of the [00:01:00] Yorkshire Dales. This is a village which knows all about the community coming together to make things happen. In 2010, the community took over the local pub, the Georgian Dragon, as a community and award winning pub.

And it also now houses a small shop and a library. But it's also a village that's successfully created some community led housing. And one of the homes now rented by the Flanagans, Laura and John, welcome to the podcast. Hello. Hello. Oh, thank you so much for inviting me to your home. Now we're sitting outside because we're being COVID safe and also because the sun's shining and it's gorgeous.

It's lovely. Had a little drive through on the way here. Describe the village to me. It is absolutely gorgeous. It's a long road. That's for sure. Um, it's just a lovely village. Really. There's, um, lovely people in there. It's got some amazing views. You've got woodlands, but, um, over there, it's just really, really nice.

Yeah. And there's, there's also a lot of, um, A lot of places to [00:02:00] take the kids in the sense of, uh, there's the park down the road. Um, Hayley absolutely loves that. How old's Hayley? Oh, she's a year old. She's, uh, well, she's almost a year and a half now. So she's just, I saw her earlier, she's just toddling around, isn't she?

Yeah, she exploratory stage, isn't she? Yes, the stage where you have to chase around the park to make sure that she doesn't do anything, uh, too dangerous. Yeah. But, um, she absolutely loves walking around Hudswell, to be honest. We've, uh, we took her for a walk down in Hudswell Woods, actually, the other week, didn't we?

Yeah. And that was absolutely wonderful. Like, I mean, there's about 150 odd steps, but To get there. that kind of got me a little bit, but Because you're actually not far off having twins. Oh, yeah, no, not far off at all. I've got, what, about six to eight weeks to go and yeah, so we'll have, we'll have three of them soon.

And people may be able to tell from your accents that, uh, you're, you're not from round these air parts, but I don't know [00:03:00] why that suddenly sort of went a bit crumble there, didn't it? It is automatic, isn't it? It is. When I try and go northern, I'm the same. I go south. Sort of like Bristol area type of shit.

So, you're not from, you've not got, let's put it this way, you've not got accents of Bristol. the Yorkshire Dales, but your family is so connected here, isn't it John? Come on, tell us about the way that your family and Hudswell are completely interconnected. Well, my family moved up here a few years ago just to get away from a few things down in Eastbourne.

They managed to do a housing swap, didn't they? Yeah, they managed to do a house swap. Yeah, so somebody from here wanted to move down there and my mum obviously wanted to move up here, so she took the opportunity she got to move up here and it was ever since then as she's She's loved it. She's absolutely loved it.

And I've been up and down from here a few times. I stayed down in Eastbourne to finish my college and things like that. [00:04:00] But I moved up here and I dragged many people up here to move up here. You said your brother's been here, your gran came. My sister's moved up here now as well. She moved up here a couple of years ago.

So my whole family. Your gran came and lived in the village. Yeah, my gran came. She came here because she got rather ill. She lived in Glasgow and she got rather ill. So my mom decided to try and get her here as quick as possible so that she could look after her and the house became available, um, through community housing and again, took the opportunity as quick as she could.

And yeah, so I've pretty much had all my immediate family live here. So it's It's great. And you really integrated in the village, the whole family. Your mum volunteers, your dad volunteers. My dad volunteers, my brother used to do the paper round up here. He's, my other brother used to work in the pub. He's done a few, few little dishy jobs there.

Yeah, we've, it's just great really. Laura, you were living down in Eastbourne, start of the pandemic. You're living in one [00:05:00] room with a little baby. Yeah, no, that was very, very difficult to be honest. Um, having, um, Well, we had a family next door to us in the next room, didn't we? Yeah. Um, and we had, it was a five room house share, which, um, so we had four different families in the same, in the same house, sharing the same bathroom, same kitchen.

It was quite trying, especially when we wanted to go in the kitchen and do some cooking and we'd find somebody else using everything and we were like, okay, we'll come back later then. Very frustrating. And obviously, during, during the lockdown. because it's been COVID and things like that, that not everybody can was complying with the rules and the housework.

So we would be trying to isolate and then there'd be people that weren't isolating whilst we were trying to. So it was, it was right. It was, it was difficult. So it's really difficult. You're away from family. You've got a young baby. We obviously couldn't get any support from other people because they couldn't live around us.

My mum lived in Worthing and obviously we were in [00:06:00] Eastbourne, so Worthing is, it's still quite a drive. And during the whole pandemic lockdown and everything we couldn't We couldn't have her drive down and help us at any point really. And also she works full time so it didn't really, didn't really bide well for us.

It was, it was a struggle. You know, the area is lovely, absolutely lovely. We've got beach five minutes away from us. It is expensive. So how much, if you'd been looking to get your own flat, say because you've got a two bed house here, if you've been looking to get a two bed property down in Eastbourne, how much would you have been looking at then?

Well, just before we got offered this place, I was looking on Rightmove and I, I saw, um, it was between, it was between eight and nine hundred for a one bed. So over a grand. So I mean it would have been over a grand for a two bedroom that was actually sufficient for us. So it wasn't plausible down there at all.

No, really difficult. So you made a decision, you wanted to be back with your family, back, you know, in the place that's been your home off and on for years, [00:07:00] John. You wanted to come back here. Um, where you live is part of three community homes in the village, but there's also other community homes as well, isn't there in the village?

Tell us the story about how you ended up there. Well, my gran lived in one of the other three community houses and when she sadly passed away, we did get offered one of those houses but it was more, more made for someone of elderly age and the house that we're currently in was Liv, uh, was occupied by someone who could have done with some, a house like that.

So she got offered it instead. But as soon, soon as she had taken that, we were offered her house. So we took it as soon as we could. It was absolutely, you know, we couldn't, we couldn't deny it, could we? We, we had couldn't say no, we could. You wouldn't have been fair on Haley. No, definitely not. And I mean, you're, you're working, John, obviously, you're about to have two more babies.

How important is it to you that the, the home that you've got is two bed home with this gorgeous garden in [00:08:00] this lovely village, but it's at an affordable rent? Oh, it's very, very important. I mean, even, even though I'm working and things like that with our, our economy at the minute, it is, you know, we, we have been struggling, but.

You know, being in here has helped us out a hell of a lot. We've got a lot more money because down there, again, our rent was more expensive than what we are here for a bedroom. So if it, I mean, if we didn't have this house, we probably wouldn't be in the village. That was my next question really, was if it wasn't for the community house, given that you wanted to be in this village, you wanted to be near family, would you have been able to get back here?

Probably not. I mean, without the community housing, we have had a look at some of the houses that are up for rent round in the village and they are more expensive than what we get here. I mean, community housing has made it a hell of a lot cheaper for us to live and it's helped us out loads, absolutely loads.

And obviously with two more babies on the way as well, we could do with as much money as we could get. And if we were living anywhere else. [00:09:00] probably wouldn't have as much money. We would not have any disposable income if we were living somewhere else. Like this, this is a complete godsend, really. I mean, it's got solar panels as well, which makes.

Okay, that's really good. It does make our electric a lot cheaper. Have you noticed that? Yes. Yes. No, it makes a massive difference. Even up in North Yorkshire. Yeah. Yeah. Even up in North Yorkshire. Yeah. I mean, oil, I mean, that's again, it's, it's, it's different. There's no gas around here. No, there's no gas. I think it's all oil.

Yeah. Oil run. But even that's a lot cheaper. put in the long run in electricity. Well, we've done we found that it's worked out a lot cheaper than we have had in the past. Like I mean, when we, cause we lived, um, we lived in Richmond marketplace a few years back and um, we were paying about 70 a week for our electricity cause we were on a key meter and it's It was electric heating, electric everything.

Um, so it was costing us 70 quid a week. And at the moment we're paying like [00:10:00] 28 pound a month for our electric. So I mean, definitely can't be complaining. And we're in credit with that as well. Oh yeah. Great. Oh yeah. Brilliant. So it works out a lot better up here. Yeah. I mean, when we first sat down and started talking, you talked to me, both of you about the fact that this is community housing really straight up.

What, what are the difference other than the fact that you, you know, you've got your solar panels because obviously they cared about that when they redid the house and, and the fact that you get the affordable rent. Has it made you feel more part of the community? The fact that it is community housing, has it, has it made a difference?

Oh, definitely. I mean, everybody in the village talks to us and especially with knowing other people that are in community houses as well, we, we know pretty much, Everyone that lives in the community houses around here and they are the it does make you that you all come together because I mean we're really friends with Caroline and David who again are in a community house and they've helped us out they were the ones that gave us some of our toys for Oh yeah [00:11:00] they've actually given us toys.

We're constantly chopping and changing toys and you know you're parroting tips and things like that so it's great to know other people that are in the community house it does bring you together. into the community. People get you involved in everything. Everybody that walks past tells, says hello to you and things like that.

Whereas I don't think, you know, if we were just some random strangers moving into the village, you know, you don't feel like you feel like you're impacting on the community, but when you're in one of the communities, I don't know what, it just gives you that sudden feeling that you're like, Oh, Yeah, the community type thing.

Yeah. And of course, obviously you've got, got the home because of the family connections and having been around here an awful lot as well before. I mean, this feels like it is a very community minded village. I was looking back at the history of how the three houses that you're in, which are three up here, but as we were saying, not the only community houses and you know, there is a, the community charity has had some land and it's had the houses that kind of [00:12:00] everybody pulled together.

And there was. community meetings where people might, if they had concerns about the idea of creating affordable housing in the village, could, could raise their concerns but still the community themselves came together and I know one of the things that they said was a worry that some of the houses have been built in the village but then they get sold at a really high price to people coming in making it really difficult for people who want to stay in the village.

It does, it does make it difficult to stay in the village when other places are very, very, very expensive. Especially when you're, you know, you're on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales, you know, you're in one of the most beautiful parts. I was gonna say that the country, but I'll go for it and say one of the most beautiful parts of the world.

And then, you know, you, you. You're in such an ideal place and it's really tough, I think, I can imagine it's really tough for people who've grown up here to be able to stay here to get, you know, once they've got their own families and. Want to have their own house. Oh yeah, definitely. [00:13:00] I mean, like I was saying about Caroline and David, they've all grown up in this village and they haven't really wanted to move away from it.

And I remember Caroline and David actually did move away from the village, but then they got offered the community. I think it was the one that Nicola lives in, which is her sister. They were offered that one, and as soon as they offered that one, they've been in the village since. That's the thing, when you're in a community housing, you're You're pretty much set for life because if they can find you a more suitable house, they will find you a more suitable house.

pretty certain if they had four bedroom, three, four bedroom houses. I'm not even sure if they do, but if they did, they'd probably be offering as it. Yeah. Now that your family's growing. Yeah. Does it worry you that, I mean, some people feel, you know, the need to own your own home is the most important thing in life.

Does it worry? Cause this home that you're in. You're never going to be able to buy it. There's no right to buy it because the community, the schemers set it up so that they're always going to stay as [00:14:00] affordable, rented. Does that worry you? Or do you go, no, we've got the home that we No, not really. No, it doesn't worry me.

The way I see it, if I was to buy a property myself, I've got to deal with everything that goes wrong with it. Whereas we've got the community to help us with this one. You know, if something, if our boiler breaks, if we, if we owned our house, we probably wouldn't be able to afford. Oh yeah. No. Boilers can cost a fortune, can't we?

Oh, yes. We've the community there to help us to, to help us. And you've got security. Yeah. Yeah. That's the thing. It means that somebody else is managing the property rather than like, if there's any wear and tear that's. You know, normal, then they'll come and help us deal with it. Like we did actually have a, we had a little leak in our kitchen.

Um, a little, I think it was a couple of months after we moved in and it was almost instantly that Annie was over here having a look at it and she called the plumber and it was sorted instantly. And if, if it was our own house, we would have had to do all of that ourselves. Like there's, um, there's a great channel four film.

[00:15:00] Um, it's a George Clark. I don't know. He does that amazing places and he goes off to this. This council housing scheme in Vienna, I mean you should see it, this scheme in Vienna is unbelievable. And it's entitled, it's often on social media, it's entitled as it's the best council housing scheme in the world.

I mean, they've got gyms and swimming pools and they've got their own TV station and radio. I mean it's, this housing scheme is unbelievable. There's a father and son and a father and daughter, they live separately, you know, the daughter, I don't know, she's in her thirties or whatever, and they have separate flats.

And he says that question to them, you know, but what about owning your own home? And they just go, why would we want to own our own home when somebody else looks after all of this? And we've got the security of knowing that this is still our home. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. I do worry that we've lost that concept and idea quite a lot.

Yeah. I think we have to be honest, I honestly couldn't imagine what it would be like for us to, you know, be worrying about things like boilers, worrying about our [00:16:00] security and things like that. If we were having to do it on our own, we, we would, we would be struggling probably. I wouldn't surprise you.

Yeah. The thing is, if I, if I was ever to own my own home, it would be a point where I had some savings aside so that if anything did go wrong, you know, you've got a backup plan. But it's a lot harder in this day and age. Oh, it is. To get to that point anyway. So yeah, I mean, I don't want to be too personal with you, but it sounds to me like from the way you described where you were living beforehand and had then, you know, knew about to have twins and you know, you've, you've got a little girl already.

That sounds to me like your life would just be so different if you were still stuck. Oh no, it would be. I could not imagine. I could not imagine if we were still stuck in that, in that room, it would have been horrendous. Cause I mean, we. You know obviously living in a small space with anyone, no matter how much you love them.

Yeah. Still drives you a little bit insane. Even in a big space. [00:17:00] Yeah, I think I drove John a bit mad and he drove me a bit mad. But, like, as soon as we got here, like, everything sort of calmed down again. Because we were like, oh, we've actually got, we've got our own room. Like, we can actually, you know, you can de stress on your own.

You don't have to have someone in your face all the time. Come out in the garden. you know, chill out for a minute and compose yourself. I think, I think if I'd have found out that I was pregnant and still been in that room, I would have been in a complete panic. Like I, cause I think it was like cabin fever and what was it like a month?

It was less than a month after we'd moved up that I found out, wasn't it? Right. So it's really, really quick. And also, as I say, we're sitting here and I can feel the sun on my back. It's absolutely gorgeous here. Lovely weather and you've got these great toys for Hayley, uh, which I love the idea of the fact that you're saying, you know, you're sharing toys around as well because that's one of the things, isn't it?

Toys last for a certain amount of time in your kid's life and then they can go somewhere else and you can all keep sharing them. And the good thing is, is there's no point in them [00:18:00] going to Wales. She's got everything, she's got a swing, she's got a little car, she's got a tractor, she's got a trampoline, she's got a little doll's house, she's got it all.

Yeah, she's got everything. She's got it all. Plants that she likes to destroy. Oh yeah, she's destroyed our sunflowers. Absolutely. But they were hers anyway. So I can't really complain. Yeah, they were hers. But yeah, she's destroyed them yesterday. We had her out in the garden and um, We had some little sunflowers.

We've got one or two left, I think. I think we've got one left now. and literally just flinging them about and pulling the compost off of them. Yeah, because she's trying to work out how the world works, isn't she? Oh, she is. She is brilliant. She loves it though. She does love it. And again, another thing, when we were down south, we didn't have a garden, you know.

Yeah, she didn't have that, uh, freedom to explore as often. Like, I mean, she, she can just tell us that she wants to go outside now and she can actually just come out rather than us having to get ready for Go into the park or something else, you know, beach. Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. Lovely. Um, I'm hoping the [00:19:00] winds just decided to come now.

Uh, so let's hope that this, uh, means we can still hear what we're saying. I just wanted to finish by sort of asking you both really, if, if someone's listening to this, who's thinking about maybe setting up a community housing scheme, give, give them your kind of passion plea on what difference they'll be making to people's lives.

That's a big question. Sell it, sell it to them. Tell them that they'd be changing the world. People who are thinking about running community led housing, do it. Because you are helping people out, whether you think you're not or not, you are. Because there are people like us, who are in sticky situations, that they can't get out of.

Because You know, they haven't got enough money or they don't know the right people or things like that. It is You're helping people It's incredible really to help [00:20:00] To help people who are on low income because in today's today's day and age It is very hard to get yourself up the ladder on income like I mean most jobs a minimum wage and if you're lucky you get a bit more and but like on minimum wage you don't really get much opportunity to get a nice place to live.

If you've got the finance and the facilities to actually do that, then it's incredible to help out any sort of struggling family. Like, I mean, you wouldn't, you don't want kids having to grow up in, you know, Like a bedroom with their parents. It's it's not really a great upbringing that I can't imagine I'm glad Haley's young enough to not have to remember that part It's also helping the communities that it is happening in as well I mean it's gonna help your community out if you do something like that people are going to be more inclined to Come visit the community because you're helping other people out and things.

People will be able to stay. Yeah, and your people will be able to stay. That's the thing. [00:21:00] Whereas if, you know, if it wasn't about, it would be a lot harder. That's for sure. Yeah. I mean, I don't know what I'd do without the community housing because I've got all my family around me. I've got all the support I need.

from me. I've got friends, you've got the community to back you up. You've got toys. We've got toys. Yeah, we've got plenty of toys. You've got a garden. You've got a garden. Literally the most amazing thing about coming here. I was like, garden. It's fair to say it has changed your life. Oh God, yeah. It definitely has.

100%. A hundred percent. I couldn't live in a place without a garden. Now that I've lived in one , like I, I haven't had a garden in Bloom. I can't think how long since you lived in Wick? Since, since I lived with my mom when I was like just coming outta my teenage years. Yeah, so I mean. Having a garden is a big difference, like, massively.

It's nice to sit in a private area of your own outside. And do you ever, do you ever think, maybe this is too far in the future, because obviously [00:22:00] Hayley's the only one, but do you ever think about Hayley and, and your other two children, that in the future, they'll maybe Have a home here and maybe they'll bring up their children.

That would be incredible if they could actually get a nice affordable house as well. So I've got like three different generations of the Flanagans around in Hodsworth, it'd be great. That would be brilliant. It would. Thank you so much for your time. It's been an absolute pleasure and delight to meet you both, thank you.

Good luck with the birth of the new baby. Thank you, I think I'm going to need it.

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