

Why I Am Backing MacDonald Buchanan House

December 17, 2021



Top Right Global Esteem winning The Final Furlong Podcast Handicap (Class 5) at Yarmouth, in August 2020

Bottom Albert House Stables in Newmarket

I still remember my first day at the races vividly. In 1994, when I was studying for my PhD in Psychiatry at Cambridge, I decided to go to Newmarket Racecourse for a day's break from work. What I'd thought would be one day of light relief sparked a lifelong passion. I realised quickly that there is nothing like the British racing day experience. It was not just the thrill of the races that enamoured me; as I joined the other race-goers socialising and soaking in the vibrant atmosphere, I felt I was joining a community that had grown around this age-old tradition.

Through the many visits I have made to Newmarket Races since that first day in 1994, and to most of the other 59 racecourses across the UK, I have become familiar with its racing community. In doing so, I have come to understand some of the issues that young jockeys and stable staff face as they enter the racing world. For many, entering horse racing at a very young age means being away from home for the first time, which can bring its own

challenges. For some, this may mean they could end up feeling isolated or lonely, and experience associated mental health issues.

Racing Homes, the housing charity of Racing Welfare, has recognised this need and established MacDonald Buchanan House in the heart of Newmarket's racing community. The House aims to provide safe, affordable, supervised housing to young racing staff, with a particular focus on the youngest members of the racing community with the greatest need for support. MacDonald Buchanan House is a bridge between racing school and independent living for its tenants, providing them with the skills to help them establish homes for themselves in the future.

I have pledged to support MacDonald Buchanan House for three years, in a £100k package commencing in January 2022. Through this donation, the House will employ a specialist Housing Support Officer, who acts as a custodian to the tenants and supports each of them with whatever help they might need, from learning how to budget for living expenses to developing cooking and DIY skills. These key life skills are vital in helping the young people to flourish in their personal and professional lives.

I am delighted to back this project for the next three years. As a passionate racing fan and owner of Albert House Stables, I know the importance of supporting all the great people who make racing happen. Young people come into racing with a love of horses and a desire to share in the excitement of winning races, but they have not always been well supported and they can be vulnerable in their personal lives. I believe in nurturing talent, looking after our own and being a force for good in our local community. This project makes a real difference and sets an example that should be copied elsewhere in racing communities.

I encourage all racing fans to think about the value of their own racing community, how it contributes to the race day experience, and to support it where they can. The people in racing make the magic for us – it's important that we give them our best too.

- Dr. Johnny Hon