



PUTTING YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF YOUR SERVICE

TAKEAWAYS AND FEEDBACK FROM YOUNG PEOPLE
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



SPEAK UP. BE HEARD. CREATE CHANGE.

The Foyer Federation's 2019 Power Up residential took place in October, with 10 young people attending from nine Foyers based all around the UK.

They took part in activities and workshops designed to get them out of their comfort zones and facing new challenges. The focus of the residential was to:

- Build confidence
- Deepen communication skills
- Make new connections
- Develop leadership skills

Over the two nights and three days, they were encouraged to share their thoughts about their Foyers, including what they love, what they'd change and their vision of a dream Foyer. This will influence The Foyer Federation's strategy for 2020.

In this report, we'll outline the key learnings and make recommendations, based on the young people's views, about how Foyers can demonstrate a culture of genuine listening and action to encourage young people to speak up.



FEEDBACK FOR FOYERS

We asked the young people four questions to get them thinking about their Foyers:

1. What do you like about your Foyer?
2. What don't you like about your Foyer?
3. What have you heard about other Foyers that you'd like to see in yours?
4. What would make your Foyer a place you'd choose?

What do you like about your Foyer?

Every young person likes that their Foyer provides them with a safe home. Many mentioned their fantastic support workers or other staff by name, and they feel cared for and supported by those individuals.

They enjoy Foyer-run activities and workshops, noting that even when an event isn't well attended, it makes a difference to those people who come. This proves the benefit of putting on regular events and persevering through times of low engagement. Calling on your staff team's skills can help to create a variety of activities that capture young people's interest.

"I like the classes that improve social skills and the cooking classes."

Overall, the young people feel supported. They feel that staff work with them well through difficulties, and they appreciate that staff will attend appointments with them, or simply have a chat and be social.



What don't you like about your Foyer?

The responses to this question varied depending on the Foyer's facilities and the young person's circumstances. Things that came up included:

- 24-hour CCTV
- Rules for under-18s differing from rules for 18+ residents
- Not being in control of their own access to the building
- Lack of engagement from other young people
- Language barriers between young people and non-support staff

Some themes were mentioned more frequently. Many of the young people spoke about their anxieties around move-on. Some feel the financial impact of getting a full-time job can be a deterrent. They discussed having a small pot of funding set aside to make this transition easier. Others said they are being moved on before they feel ready, although they're ticking the boxes for readiness for independent living.

"I'd like more things to do as a group."

Consistent communication between staff and residents was flagged as something that could improve, specifically about repairs and upcoming events. Some services provide an app for communicating about rent and repairs, which young people expressed interest in. Another suggestion was a central pin board for sharing information and updates between staff and residents.

Finally, young people feel there are some staff members who could demonstrate trust, respect and genuine concern more readily. They noticed a disparity in the level of care and interest shown by different staff members across the support team, and identified this as something that negatively impacts them.

What have you heard about other Foyers that you'd like to see in yours?

The responses varied depending on each Foyer's rules and facilities.

The ideas that young people felt would have the biggest impact are below. If you see something here that your Foyer isn't already doing, consider addressing it with a working group of resident representatives. Involving young people in the discussion and conclusion ensures they feel listened to, even if a change cannot be made.

- Guests able to stay later than 9pm
- Guests able to stay overnight
- The rules for under-18s being significantly different than those for over-18s
- More flexible opening times for facilities like laundry to accommodate work schedules
- Greater choice of events and trips
- Introduction of facilities like pool tables, IT suites and in-room Wi-Fi
- Adding security gates to the building
- Improvements to the building
- An app for tracking rent and repairs

"I like the way staff speak to you and guide you. They go at your pace."





What would make your Foyer a place you'd choose?

This question gave residents a chance to be creative and come up with a dream shopping list for their Foyers. With their responses, the young people are challenging Foyers to think big and be creative, using their Advantaged Thinking approach to develop new opportunities.

Things to reduce

- Drug use, negativity and noise

Things to increase

- Cross-Foyer activities
- Freedom and flexibility
- Group activities like movie nights
- Downtime facilities like pool tables
- Caring and respectful staff
- Sharing news and ideas
- Complete all the actions from monthly meetings and communicate this

Fresh ideas

- Have a member of support staff working at night so that young people with mental health issues can have a chat rather than going straight to the hospital. This could help to reduce the number of serious incidents
- Foyer exchange holidays. Swap rooms with someone at a different Foyer in the UK or in France for a less costly way to travel with support if needed
- Put up an ideas board to make it easy for residents to suggest activities and gauge interest
- Book services like hairdressers to come into the Foyer to reduce anxiety about these self-care tasks
- A system to make the step up in rent more manageable when you have a full-time job
- A pen pal system for Foyers around the country to develop new connections and build relationships

SIX CHALLENGES

Based on this feedback from young people and the conversations had during activities, we've created a list of six challenges to help Foyers amplify youth voices, develop truly youth-led services and deepen meaningful engagement with young people. Each challenge is tied to one of the **Seven Tests of Advantaged Thinking**, which keep your service and staff focused on the best possible outcomes for young people.

1. Put young people at the forefront of shaping your service

Whether leading on events or discussing rules about guests, giving young people a sense of ownership and decision-making power builds a relationship founded on a level of genuine trust. This demonstrates that you **INVOLVE** young people in their own solutions.

2. Create a central, public, easy-to-use communication system for residents and staff

It might not be possible to make an app, but a pin board or folder in the lobby is an easy way to improve communication, track progress of ideas and keep everyone accountable for the ways they **TALK** to and about young people.

3. Practise and protect your Advantaged Thinking staff culture

The positive impact of Advantaged Thinking staff shone through young people's feedback clearly, and they felt it deeply when this was lacking.

Advantaged Thinking HR tools, processes and training keep your staff on track and create team consistency across your **WORK** with young people.

4. Develop a calendar of regular group events

The feedback from young people strongly supports the benefits of group events so people can socialise and have fun. If you want to cover more serious subjects, surrounding them with a fun activity can help to increase engagement. This is a way to **INVEST** resources in helping young people thrive, not just cope.

5. Explain the reasons why, and update!

Involve young people in discussions and let them know why something can or can't be done. Give regular updates about progress, even if nothing's happened, to show it's not been forgotten and that you **UNDERSTAND** the importance for young people.

6. Deepen support for young people finding full-time work or moving on

Getting a job or being ready to move on should be a celebration of progress, but it comes with barriers that can deter young people or feel like a punishment. Simple changes like flexible opening hours for facilities can make working feel more accessible, as well as greater investments like a pot of cash for furniture, reduced rent for workers or a hand paying for travel. Support of this kind shows that you **BELIEVE** in young people and their transition into thriving independence.

THANK YOU TO...

The **Listening Fund** for providing finances and guidance that enabled us to deepen and broaden our communication with young people.

The **young people** who attended the residential and shared their views and opinions with us, helping to shape the six challenges to Foyers and The Foyer Federation's strategy for 2020 and beyond.

The **Foyers** who challenged young people to try something new:

- Braintree Foyer, SAHA
- Bridge Foyer, Your Housing Group
- CHADD On-Route Foyer
- Coops Foyer, Your Housing Group
- Croydon Foyer, Oasis Community Housing
- Derby Foyer, YMCA Derbyshire
- Exeter Foyer, Stonewater
- Ravenhead Foyer, Your Housing Group
- Verve Place, Your Housing Group

