

## Foyers for young people

In 1992, a pilot project was set up to build two new foyers and introduce support services in five YMCA hostels with the aim of developing an integrated approach to youth homelessness and unemployment. An evaluation of the two-year pilot period, conducted by Deborah Quilgars (York University) and Isobel Anderson (Stirling University), found that:

**f** Foyers demonstrated successes in combining accommodation with job search and training advice services. However, the financial structures used could not easily be replicated to develop a network of foyers:

The housing associations successfully developed complex capital and revenue funding packages for the purpose-built foyers, but these were dependent on donations from charitable trusts, internal subsidies and development funding.

YMCA foyers were able to develop support services, but they were dependent on development funding; no adequate long-term funding mechanism for this work existed.

**f** The YMCAs became foyers mainly through setting up new employment and training support services in existing hostels, with funding from the Employment Department.

**f** More than 500 young people took part in the pilot, mostly in job search and training schemes. 130 full-time and 40 part-time jobs were found during the first 18 months of operation. Many required quite intensive support; and a flexible, client-centred approach was essential.

**f** Most young people found the support services useful and the foyer approach reached young people who might not have used more formal, employment services. Mostly, this was achieved without making use of the services a condition of residence. Young people felt strongly that participation should not be a requirement in their residence agreement.

**f** Effective inter-agency co-operation, essential to an integrated approach, was achieved in the pilot, particularly at the national level.

**f** Areas which required further development included training in life-skills, education and help finding more permanent housing. These services would require additional resources.

**f** The pilot foyers assisted less skilled young people to compete for existing employment and housing opportunities. Reliable, integrated funding mechanisms - for revenue as well as capital - would be required to sustain a network of foyers in the longer term.

## The foyer concept

The idea of foyers was based on the existing French network of *foyers pour jeunes travailleurs* (hostels for young workers). Foyers were seen as a possible model for tackling the dual problems of youth unemployment and homelessness. In 1992, a pilot project was set up in Britain to develop foyers, consisting of five existing YMCAs, and two new purpose-built foyers being developed by housing associations.

There is no simple definition of the word 'foyer'. In the pilot, foyer came to mean both a building (the hostel) and a philosophy (an approach to meeting young people's needs). Whilst drawing on the French idea, the British pilot foyers developed in their own way, responding to a specific cultural context. They became closely associated with the provision of employment and training services within a hostel environment.

A broad consensus was achieved that the aim of the foyer pilots was to provide an *integrated* approach to tackling young people's housing and employment problems in their transition to adulthood. However, agencies involved in the pilot had a range of ideas on how to put this theory into practice. For example, some agencies favoured a preventive approach, with the foyer catering for a mix of young workers and a small proportion of people from a disadvantaged background, whilst others felt a responsive approach was required to offer support to a more vulnerable group of young homeless and unemployed people.

## The YMCA foyers

### ***Becoming a foyer***

As the YMCAs were already providing accommodation and a range of activities, the key element in their transition to foyers was the establishment of additional support services related to employment and training. The main funding for the new services came from Employment Service, Employment Department and Training and Enterprise Council development budgets. Approximately £40,000 was made available to each foyer in its first year. This typically provided 1-2 new members of staff and basic equipment to set up a job search and training advice facility on site. A detailed framework for delivering services was also developed, involving referral, assessment and action planning, reviews and help with moving on.

The transition to foyers required the introduction of the new concept to both staff and residents. The pilot identified a need for more thorough staff training and improved consultation with residents. The degree of integration of new services into existing structures varied, and was a source of tension in some cases. However, integrated organisational structures did not necessarily match with higher user satisfaction or more people moving into jobs.

## ***Operation of foyer support services***

664 young people were referred to the foyer support services in the first 18 months, with 519 taking up the support. Most of these were accepted by staff, with only a few being considered unsuitable. Some young people decided for themselves that they did not wish to use the services.

Two hostels undertook joint assessments for accommodation and employment and training support services. Only one foyer had a contract which explicitly tied use of the services to residency at the hostel. Rather, most YMCAs encouraged young people to get involved. There was a very good take-up of services in all foyers.

The new foyer support services were primarily targeted at unemployed people in housing need. Therefore, in hostels with a 'balanced community' (of workers, students and unemployed people), only a proportion of residents were using the new services. Few non-residents used the services. The characteristics of foyer participants were as follows:

- 67% were aged between 18-25, with 7% aged 16 or 17.
- 83% were male, 17% female.
- 10% were from a minority ethnic group, with 90% describing themselves as white.
- 88% were unemployed, with 60% out of work for six months or more.

Participants were quite a disadvantaged group of people, for example, at some time in the past:

- 15% had been in care
- 42% had been in trouble with the police
- 47% had slept rough.

The YMCA foyers adopted a flexible, client-centred approach to providing services. Most foyers operated a 'drop-in' resource area. Young people were helped to look for work and find training (Figure 1), as well as address personal and social issues. Whilst many people took temporary jobs, staff stressed the importance of ultimately helping young people find appropriate training and employment. 130 full-time and 40 part-time jobs were found during the 18 months.

64% of those starting had left the support services by the end of the 18 months. A quarter left with a job and move-on accommodation. Others left the foyer for a variety of reasons, for example to go to college or move back to their parents or home town. Some left due to rent arrears or another breach in their tenancy agreement, highlighting a problem of tying service use to accommodation. Very few left due to a failure to use the services as a condition of residency.

The job search and training services were developed throughout the pilot period. However, other crucial areas like life-skills training and

Figure 1: Employment and training activities

<i>Number of participants starting activity</i>	
Job search	280
Employment Training	51
Employment Action	35
Youth Training	11
Other training	91
Other work experience	61
Literacy and numeracy	15
Temporary work	72
Full-time job	130
Part-time job	40

assistance with move-on accommodation were only tackled towards the end of the pilot. This was largely a reflection of the original funding mechanism, and the need to secure additional funds to carry out other areas of work.

### **Views of young people**

Most young people interviewed had found the foyer support services useful. Some clients felt they had undertaken training, job search or employment which they would not have done without the foyer, or would have done less intensively or with less enthusiasm.

Young people appreciated the support and respect offered to them by staff, and many said they preferred the foyer approach to more formal government programmes. However, young people felt strongly that participation should be voluntary and not a condition of their stay in the hostel. A number of improvements were identified by participants, including more links with employers, more help with finding move-on accommodation and better publicity.

### **Purpose-built foyers**

The housing associations, London and Quadrant Housing Trust and North British HA, sought to develop foyers with high quality accommodation and a mix of private and shared space. The chosen locations in Lambeth (Camberwell) and Salford had good communications and facilities. The managing agents, Centrepoint and the YWCA, were chosen for their extensive experience in working with young people.

The main source of capital funding for these foyers was Housing Association Grant from the Housing Corporation. However, substantial sums also had to be found from charitable and commercial sources, as well as housing association reserves, to make the schemes viable (Figure 2). These additional sources were required to cover the non-housing activities of the scheme, and to eradicate the need for loan finance which would have led to unreasonably high rents for young people.

Figure 2: Capital costs of pilot purpose-built foyers

<i>Camberwell foyer</i>	
Housing Corporation	3,300,000
City Challenge	250,000
Charitable trust 1	650,000
Charitable trust 2	100,000
HA reserves	105,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,405,000</b>
<i>Salford foyer</i>	
Housing Corporation	1,370,000
Sponsorship (charitable and private)	250,000
HA reserves	250,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,870,000</b>

The foyers raised revenue finance from a large number of sources including: Employment Service and Training and Enterprise Council development funding, the European Social Fund, City Challenge, local authority grants, charities, private sector, Special Needs Management Allowance on 25-30% of beds, as well as future rental income.

The task of putting together the complex capital and revenue mixed funding packages proved both labour-intensive and challenging. At least one foyer-dedicated officer was required to work alongside the usual housing association development team to secure the funding and develop the support service structures.

### **Multi-agency working**

The foyer initiative attracted support from a large number of agencies, diverse in purpose, including government departments, the voluntary sector, housing providers and the private sector. In addition, a Foyer Federation for Youth was set up to develop and promote foyers in Britain. Overall, a high level of inter-agency co-operation was achieved, particularly at the national level.

The effectiveness of inter-agency relationships was more varied at a local level. The YMCAs developed new links with a range of organisations, although links with employers were slow to develop. Overall, the pilot YMCAs would have benefited from the development of an earlier networking and marketing strategy. The purpose-built foyers, in contrast, were able to establish a network of contacts in the development period. Inter-agency workings were facilitated by the establishment of a local project steering group.

Inter-agency links ensured that duplication of local resources was avoided, possible financial support was identified, and expertise available to the foyer was maximised. However, some issues did arise, such as the need to reconcile sometimes differing perspectives on how the foyer should operate.

Employer contacts proved to be useful, although support in kind was more forthcoming than direct finance or offers of employment.

### Looking ahead

The pilot did not identify an obvious long-term funding framework for foyers. Difficulties with capital funding, particularly on the non-housing part of the scheme, leading to the reliance on significant charitable donations and internal housing association subsidies, questioned the scope for replicating the purpose-built foyers.

Revenue funding for the foyer support services was also unresolved: both YMCA foyers and purpose-built foyers relied on development funding, with follow-on funding proving problematic to secure. The new Single Regeneration Budget (from April 1994 combining 20 budgets including ES and TEC development funds) had been suggested as a possible future source of development funding for new schemes. Employment Service Jobclub programme money was the only suggestion for mainstream funding, but this did not appear to be flexible enough to facilitate the integrated foyer approach required.

The YMCA foyers demonstrated that integrated services for young homeless and unemployed people could be delivered in a quality hostel setting. To successfully develop a network of foyers, reliable, integrated funding mechanisms would also be required. At the local level, the development of individual foyers should be part of a co-ordinated strategy to meet recognised needs and should take full account of the expressed needs and aspirations of young people.

The foyers provided a mechanism to help less able young people to compete for existing training, employment and housing opportunities. Whilst they were successful in starting to change attitudes (for example, of employers to homeless people), they could not change wider structural factors like the level of unemployment and housing provision, and their success was directly influenced by these factors.

### About the study

The research involved evaluating the operation of five pilot YMCA foyers and the development of two pilot new build foyers. The research included staff

interviews, monitoring of clients using the YMCA foyer support services, interviews with young people, an employer telephone survey and examination of background information.

### Further information

A full report, *Foyers for young people: Evaluation of a pilot initiative*, is published by the Centre for Housing Policy, University of York (price £10.00).

#### Related *Findings*

The following *Findings* look at related issues:

#### **Housing**

- 54** Support for young women homeless because of sexual abuse (Jan 92)
- 57** Provision of supported housing by housing associations (Mar 92)
- 66** Day centres for single homeless people (Sept 92)
- 68** The effect of housing costs on young people's lifestyles (Oct 92)
- 85** Local authority responses to women and children escaping from domestic violence (Apr 93)
- 89** Young people at risk of homelessness (May 93)
- 102** Converting empty offices into flats (Dec 93)
- 108** Young people in and out of the housing market (Mar 94)
- 116** Self-build schemes for homeless young people (Jun 94)
- 127** Advice services for single homeless people in London (Sept 94)
- 140** Creating local jobs from construction expenditure (Mar 95)

#### **Social Policy**

- 70** Family support for young people setting up home (Jan 95)
- 72** The difficulties of setting up home for young single mothers (Feb 95)

For further information on these and other Findings, contact Sally Corrie on 01904 654328 (direct line for publications queries; an answerphone may be operating).



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