

## **The Role of Third Sector Innovation: Personalisation of Education and Learning, Call for Evidence**

### **Response from the Foyer Federation 22 January 2010**

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#### **About the Foyer Federation**

1. For over a decade, the Foyer Federation has helped turn young people's experiences of disadvantage into solutions that support their transition into adult independence. We develop transformational programmes and campaigns that fill gaps in community services and inspire policy and decision makers to make a more effective investment in young people. The direct experience of vulnerable young people and those working with them helps inform our understanding of the barriers facing young people and develop new approaches to overcome them. Until now, our work has largely been channelled through integrated learning and accommodation centres, often known as Foyers. Foyers now operate in over 130 urban and rural communities across the UK, providing safe, quality assured environments, where experts reconnect vulnerable young people with personal development opportunities.

#### **Priority 1**

**How can the third sector offer choice and influence to children and young people through greater participation?**

2. Foyers provide accommodation to young people from the ages 16-25 years although there is much more to a Foyer service than simply housing as the provision is a response to local needs. The largest provision is a 210 bed-space in East London and the smallest being a 5 bed-space provision in rural Cornwall. The Foyer provision ensures a young person receives personal development support, learning, employment and health services. This package of intensive support is provided to young people across the UK in over 130 local communities enabling young people to make their journey from adolescence to independent adulthood.
  - 2.1. The essence of the Foyer service does not lie in the range of provisions but in the concept of conditionality. With conditionality, there is a 'something for something' deal in which participation is paramount as the commitment of

the young person to engage through participation is critical to ensure a smooth transition from adolescence to independent adulthood.

- 2.2. It is fair to suggest that the third sector plays a critical role in providing opportunities for children and young people who are distant from mainstream services. The barriers that often face third sector organisations tend to lie in the funding streams, the inability to sustain themselves, their lack of resource and capacity, inequitable relationships in commissioning arrangements, and most importantly, not having the necessary awareness of how to overcome such barriers.
- 2.3. In our experience, we find that young people are often unaware of the choice and range of services that are currently available to them. We suggest that, rather than a lack of choice per se, it is often lack of awareness of these current options that is a barrier to success. An important role played by Foyers in this respect is that played by Keyworkers, who work on a one-to-one basis with their clients over a handful of hours per week, and help them to 'navigate' their way through the often bewildering array of services, benefits and support that can be accessed. The role of the Third Sector as a 'service navigator' therefore seems to us to be the key in terms of raising awareness and increasing choice.
- 2.4. Commissioners have a critical role to play in helping the third sector overcome these barriers. The Foyer Federation strongly recommends a joined up approach whereby the relationship between commissioner, service provider and client is strongly connected so that services are tailored to meet the needs of the client. If truly joined-up commissioning arrangements were in place for services relating to young people, then providers would find it easier to properly integrate their service offer, thereby providing a better and more 'personalised' service to clients and leading to fewer 'precipices', where the support in place is suddenly withdrawn. This in turn would lead to fewer young people experiencing repeat episodes of homelessness, poor mental health, offending, and unemployment.
- 2.5. The Foyer Federation does have untapped potential to offer choice and influence to young people through its role as an organisation that is committed to 'raising the bar' under its new Accredited scheme. The Foyer Accreditation Scheme enshrines the Foyer ethos and is formally endorsed by the Department of Local Communities and enables providers to map against both the Supporting People Quality Assured Framework and Every Child Matters outcomes. Moreover, the scheme provides the Foyer Federation with an evidence base that is not yet being tapped into by policy and decision makers.

### **Example 1: MyNav project**

The Foyer Federation's MyNav project demonstrates how choice and influence can be offered through participation of education and learning. By participating in workshops, young learners address 5 key questions of: Where have I been? Who am I? Where am I going? What do I need to get there? How am I progressing?

MyNav offers young adults both a practical and digital framework to map out their life and shape the best routes towards an enriched future, sharing their stories and supporting each other along the way. MyNav will help equip young adults to take control of their individual transition, enabling them to participate in different learning communities at a local, national and virtual level, and to learn from each other, sharing the routes they take in their lives.

The MyNav journey offers participants access to a local and national 'PowerPack' of learning opportunities through which they can identify, develop and track the skills and resources they need to navigate their transitions. Participants will be able to add their own unique talent offers into the PowerPack and build online portfolios, similar to those found on social networking sites to demonstrate their transitional achievements.

### **Example 2: Creating a Better Youth Offer**

Funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, this project explores the relationship between the investment in young people, the personal returns they achieve and the impact they can make on the communities in which they live. In doing so, the young people will be identifying, understanding and communicating their investment needs. A positive social behaviour contract as a 'transformational deal' will be developed and an evidence base will be set up to influence potential 'investors' to commit the resources required to support young people's aspirations. The findings will then be communicated at a National Investment Forum. This Forum will be led by young people where key learning messages will be assessed, collected evidence will be reviewed and recommendations for different audiences to influence change will be identified.

### **Example 3 Foyer Learning Ambassadors**

The Foyer Federation's Learning Ambassadors are able to advocate their creative approach through the network in order to effectively promote behaviour change.

## Priority 2

### How can the third sector be supported to work together, tailoring services around the needs of individual children and young people

3. The Foyer Federation is committed to develop whole systems approaches to support young people in transition and help create an environment in which vulnerable young people are able to articulate their voice and become active and engaged young citizens.
  - 3.1. Foyers are seen to provide services to those young people with 'low to medium' support needs. However, in recent years the population of Foyers has been getting younger as some 50% of young people in Foyers are now 16-18 years compared with 35% four years ago. In addition to this, the needs of young people have been increasing with Foyers providing for 'complex needs' which tend to be a combination of three or more of the following: substance misuse, mental health, offending background, social exclusion and parental abuse. The criteria upon which young people are selected to live in Foyers vary widely, and are dependent on the Foyers' relationships with their local referral agents. Whilst Foyers are developed to the needs of young people within the local community, there are no blanket exclusions, but the types of young people the Foyer can accept are based upon capacity and expertise. We would strongly encourage government initiatives that would support leadership within the service providers, as in many instances, service providers despite having extensive experience in dealing with vulnerable young people lack the leadership skills that enable transformational outcomes.
  - 3.2. In our experience, we have identified three key lessons that demonstrate how the third sector can ensure effective delivery. These are:
    - a. Services should be based upon a holistic approach assessing the needs and addressing the aspirations of the client
    - b. The service expresses an approach that takes account of the reciprocal responsibilities faced by both the young person and the service provider
    - c. The service promotes active and engaged citizenship where the voice of the client is taken into account in the shaping and delivery of service provision.
  - 3.3. There is a real need for organisations involved in supporting vulnerable young people to share information more quickly and effectively if a truly personalised service is to be brought into effect. Those who work in these organisations need better awareness of their responsibilities with regard to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. There is currently a default tendency to withhold information due to a lack of awareness about what can and cannot be shared. This practice can act against the best interests of the individual concerned. There has been progress with the introduction of the

Common Assessment Framework but there is still a great deal of room for improvement.

- 3.4. We recommend funding provision on a longer-term basis as a way of supporting the third sector since short term funding often makes it difficult to identify best practice and effectively learn from previous challenges. Many successful strategies are piloted and then dropped due to lack of funding to demonstrate their impact and to expand their realm of influence. Long-term funding will enable the third sector to be in a better position to appropriately monitor, evaluate and capture best practice. Additionally, a significant amount of time spent on writing grants would be reduced thereby enabling service providers to spend more time working directly with the clients to enhance the personalisation strategy. Long-term funding would also enable interventions to be optimised and developed according to user feedback and for effective strategies to be rolled out to a greater geographical region or to a wider user base, resulting in better outcomes for all service users and society generally. Long term funding would allow for substantial monitoring and evaluation of projects, so that the third sector could prove impact and identify successful strategies. These strategies could then be replicated nationally by either the public or third sector to generate better outcomes throughout the country.
- 3.5. We believe that there needs to be an element of candour about the true costs of providing personalised services. There is, we believe, an economic case to be made that higher investment at an earlier stage will lead ultimately to cost savings for the public purse. Our experience, and that of Foyers, suggests that there is a cost implication to responding to the real needs of individuals, rather than the necessarily artificial 'needs' according to which statutory funding frameworks operate.
- 3.6. In light of the new legislation laid in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 with regard to the funding provisions, we do have concern around the interface between pre and post 19 years, and the impact that a demand led service may have upon the needs of those young people over 19 years, but who have the same needs as those pre 19 years. Without enhancing the culture of dependency, we strongly encourage Government initiatives that enable sustainable funding streams for learning providers so that the needs of the most vulnerable over the age of 19 years are not overlooked.
- 3.7. The Foyer Federation is currently exploring the opportunities of working in partnership with organisations to enable further investments in young people. A joint working approach will not only help ensure best practice but can also ease the funding application process, address the issues of resource and capacity, tailor specific needs and as a result create services of a maximum standard bringing about transformational outcomes. We would therefore

welcome government initiatives that encourage and support the integration of services at a local level.

#### **Example 4 Foyer Health**

Through the Big Lottery Funded Foyer Health Programme, several processes are underway which ensure that Foyers are better linked to local service providers. Firstly, local service providers are invited to a launch party at the local Foyer in their area where they are encouraged to promote their services to the service users and their support staff.

Secondly, The Foyer Federation has produced a Mental Health Toolkit and is currently developing a general Health Toolkit, which takes supported housing staff and management through a process that enables them to identify local service providers and to establish appropriate partnerships with them so that the needs of individual clients can be met more appropriately.

Thirdly, once a young person has determined an achievable goal (SMART) around healthy eating, physical activity or emotional well-being, taster sessions are provided which enable service users to experience activities provided by local service providers and to decide which (if any) of these services will best assist them in achieving their goals.

The subject and content of the taster sessions are determined by consulting service users. Examples include stress or anger management workshops by mental health services, confidence building workshops provided by some PCTs, fitness training provided by British Military Fitness and Food and Mood workshops provided by Sustain.

Finally, the establishment of appropriate partnerships is validated through a stringent accreditation process. Included in this strategy are the following statements:

- The Strategy identifies how the Foyer does, or plans to, engage with local partners and health initiatives to meet the health needs of young people;
- There is evidence of engagement of local health agencies in the development of the strategy;
- The Foyer works in partnership with local health services, healthy living and leisure providers (Evidence of health partnerships, Membership of local health and well-being strategy groups, Information on local health and well-being services readily available).

### Priority 3

#### How can the third sector scale up and mainstream innovative personalised services?

4. Each young person that moves into a Foyer develops, in conference with their support- or key-worker, a tailored package of support that is designed to enable that young person to make a successful transition to independent adulthood. As mentioned above, this tailored support will include housing, learning, health and employment elements. The young person is encouraged to set themselves short, medium and long-term goals that will enable them, wherever possible, to sustain tenancies in the longer term, to enter learning and/or employment and sustain it, and to maximise their physical and emotional health. The young person commits to this programme of development as a condition of continued residence in the Foyer. This 'contract' between the young person and the service then forms the basis of ongoing support. The Foyer Federation provides an extensive package of coaching skills training to staff working directly with young people. This enables staff to use the tools and techniques of coaching to complement the support work with young people, and allows them to enter into a structured dialogue around that young person's long term goals and aspirations.
- 4.1. Foyers provide a 'one-stop shop' site for a range of services that young people may need and the Foyer model comprises two types: integrated and dispersed. The dispersed model is often seen in the rural areas whereby the small accommodation units are located separately from the other provisions and are supported by a central support function, whilst the services of an integrated model are provided on the one site. In both cases the provision offers a range of services against a funding background that separates housing support, learning and skills, employment services and health and social care services. However, our experience tells us that young people do not see their lives in this way - their housing, learning, health and employment issues are experienced as a piece, and they expect support services to treat them as such.
- 4.2. With regard to the provisions laid in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 on raising the participation age, Foyers and their parent organisations such as the Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) are very well placed to help young people continue to participate either through informal learning, apprenticeship schemes and training under the Flexible New Deal. With the right vehicles of support and appropriate funding streams there is ample space for third sector organisations to have their delivery incorporated into mainstream services.
- 4.3. Whilst it is recognised that third sector organisations are better placed to achieve transformational outcomes, the difficulty in scaling up to mainstream

services often lies in funding limitations, resource and capacity and most importantly, not having the accessibility or means in which they can engage with statutory organisations.

#### **Example 5 Foyer Health**

Funded by the Big Lottery, Foyer Health has demonstrated that life coaching is an effective personalisation strategy. In the first year of the programme, 1135 young people in contact with Foyers set themselves a goal to 'take a positive step for their well-being'.

These goals are set by the young people themselves, but many include priorities in the public health policy agenda, such as stopping smoking, losing weight, and eating more healthily. By the end of the first year of the programme 69% of the young people engaged in the programme have successfully completed their goal.

Due to the high turnover of staff in supported housing projects, it is necessary to fund ongoing life coaching training for staff and ideally, ongoing funding for activities which support and inspire young people to achieve these goals. The Foyer Federation has a variety of measures in place to secure this ongoing funding, including providing advice and a quality assurance regime that emphasises the importance of local health partnerships, and making central applications for ongoing funding.

A longer term funding framework and accompanying evaluation strategy would enable the Foyer Federation to assess more closely the impact of the life-coaching intervention on young people's future life chances, and to demonstrate wider impact across a broad range of social policy fields, including employment, learning and skills, and offending.

#### **Example 6 Learning Power Award**

The Foyer Federation was a key partner in the Homeless Sector Pilot, a national project managed by the Learning Skills Council that developed and delivered a 'learning and skills' offer that met the needs of the homelessness sector.

The Foyer Federation's involvement ensured that the qualification, the 'Learning Power Award' that was developed was also fit for purpose for delivery in Foyers, and indeed to date around 20 Foyers continue to use the Award as the conduit for their learning and skills offer.

### **Example 7 The Foyer Federation Working Assets programme**

This programme funded by the Tenant Services Authority demonstrates how innovative personalised services can be replicated at a national level. Through engaging young people, staff and the local community in an inspirational project, The Foyer Federation developed a young person's asset base to complete the project and achieve more independent, employable focused skills and resources. The final phase of the Working Asset framework promotes achievements in the wider community to promote a more positive image of young people. The approach of this strategy is both holistic and personalised, demonstrating how young people can be supported through a positive asset base to shape the terms of an individualised 'deal' which links housing, employment, education, wellbeing and personal development.

### **Conclusion**

We believe that the benefits of personalisation as we have outlined them here are widely accepted by third sector organisations but that there are both institutional barriers and individual reluctance to accept them. For this reason we call for, as a result of this call for evidence, a guidance paper from the Office of the Third Sector that sets out the parameters, and provides examples of best practice, for all commissioners and purchasers of services in education and learning, health and social care and offending in local authorities and government departments.

We would be happy to provide further evidence and practice examples to the OTS in the preparation of such a guidance paper.

*For further information please contact Harman Sandher on [harman@foyer.net](mailto:harman@foyer.net)*