



# GROWING TOGETHER

ANNUAL REVIEW

2023

An illustration of a tree with a thick trunk and a dense network of roots extending into the ground. The background shows a garden with a white picket fence, green grass, and some purple flowers. The overall color palette is green and blue.

# INTRODUCTION

This year was defined by positive momentum and growth. Between April and December, the Foyer Federation team grew from four to nine. A new Head of Learning and Impact brought the senior leadership team to four, an Operations and Projects Assistant joined to streamline our processes and practices, and a Communications and Membership Officer, Programme Manager and Network and Youth Engagement Manager added new talents and experience to the network team.

Our network grew too, with five new members strengthening our community with their knowledge, creativity and drive to continually learn and improve. Six Foyers newly began their quality development and accreditation journey, deepening their commitment to provide the best possible service for young people.

Securing new funding enabled us to grow our impact. The National Lottery Reaching Communities Funding will support the development of a nationwide Advantaged Thinking learning community, co-created with young people and staff. LandAid has enabled us to provide grants of up to £1000 to 100 young people to cover costs associated with moving into independent accommodation. We've launched a new programme, ReRooted, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing thanks to funding from UK Youth's Thriving Minds programme and CHK Foundation. Generous donors enabled 35 talent bonds to be gifted to young people for them to develop their skills and pursue their passions.

The level of influence and involvement young people have within the Foyer Federation grew this year too. We heard from more young people than ever before through our Big Questions survey, which received 126 responses. A total of 42 young people contributed to designing our programmes, 12 young people made funding decisions alongside our staff as part of grantmaking panels, young people from seven Foyers engaged with making change at a local level through the Youth Power Fund, and three young people were influential in guiding our organisation as Trustees.

Lastly, we grew the movement for Advantaged Thinking further with a new brand and logo, and an exciting website in the works! Watch this space in 2023-24.





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## CHAIR'S REPORT

I have been Chair of the Foyer Federation for just over a year now and I have to admit, I've been impressed with our small charity's culture and ambition to consistently punch above its weight. Through a purpose-driven motivation and values-led activity, we've increased the scope and influence of our work in line with our strategy.

Foyers have had to work harder than ever this year to level the playing field for young people who can't live at home. The consistent quality-assured services they provide are needed more now than ever. As a Board of Trustees, we've had the pleasure of seeing the progress young people have made this year, as well as witnessing the healthy relationships, resources and opportunities Foyers deliver day in and day out.

I'm delighted at the progress the Foyer Federation has made this year and the needs we've been able to meet. The team have secured programme funding to drive our mission forward and address complex issues such as mental health, learning and financial support for move-on, as well as building on last year's foundational work on youth power in and beyond our network.

It's clear from recent discussions with Joel and the team, and the regular conversations we have with our network, young people and partners, that there are large barriers still to overcome to create the Advantaged Thinking environment and ecosystem we know young people need to thrive. Next year we'll continue to grow and embed this year's work supporting, nurturing and challenging Foyers and creating new opportunities with and for young people. For now though, let's take a little bit of time to reflect on and celebrate the achievements this year!

**Alastair Wilson**  
Chair of the Board of Trustees



# CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S SUMMARY

It's been an exciting, energy-packed year with so much evidence of growth in the Foyer movement despite the new challenges they've faced – primarily through the increased cost of living. Foyers have embraced the need for youth-led practices and culture, worked with us to tackle the barriers and inequalities faced by young people, and committed to new learning and development journeys as they've engaged in our programmes and communities of practice.

At the Foyer Federation we've been working as any good gardener would by creating the right conditions for organic growth within the Foyer network. It's been a year where we are proud to see the fruit of our labour:

- 🍏 establishing a new staff team and structure with roles, experience and skills that are closely matched to the needs and aspirations of Foyers and young people.
- 🍏 building and developing trusting relationships and partnerships with funders, housing associations and Foyers that are aligned with an Advantaged Thinking vision for young people.
- 🍏 actively listening to young people and practitioners and tweaking our activities to respond to unexpected issues or new opportunities for positive change.
- 🍏 creating new systems, tools and resources to help reach a wider group and deliver significant impact over the long term.

We are two years into our current three-year strategy and the garden is beginning to flourish. There are many climatic conditions, weeds and pests that we still need to tackle, but as a network and movement I have confidence we can do it. I value the openness, generosity and trust that our Foyers have, both with us and with the wider community and I know that together we will cultivate a brighter future for young people in Foyers.

**Joel Lewis**  
Chief Executive of the Foyer Federation



# OUR IMPACT

## THE FOYER COMMUNITY



**AGED 16-17**  
**31.9%**  
(0.1% decrease)

**AGED 18-20**  
**49%**  
(6% increase)

**AGED 21-25**  
**19%**  
(6% decrease)

**FROM AN ETHNIC  
MINORITY**  
**25.6%**  
(6.6% increase)

Previous experience  
of care system:  
**29.7%**  
(9.7% increase)

Previous involvement with  
the justice system:  
**15.5%**  
(2.5% decrease)

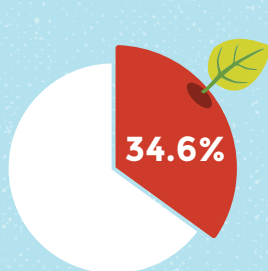
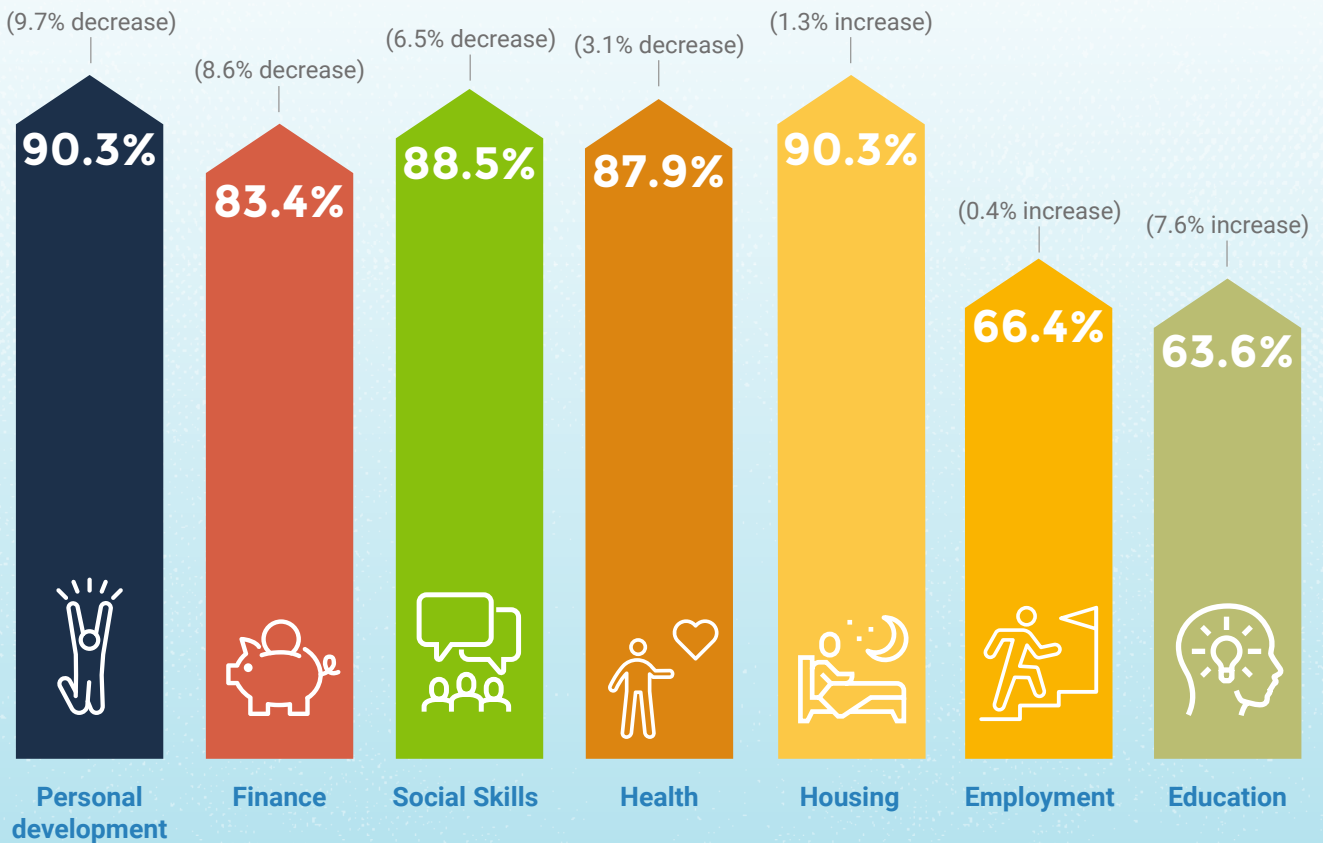
Refugee / asylum seeker  
/ unaccompanied minor:  
**14.6%**  
(5.6% increase)

Diagnosed mental  
health problem:  
**27.5%**  
(10.5% decrease)

Had no diagnosis but faced  
mental health challenges:  
**36.9%**



# YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROGRESS



**Started part-time work**  
(22.6% increase)



**Started full-time work**  
(16% increase)



**Started a new qualification**

\*The 2022-23 data is based on figures from 26 services either endorsed or certificated over 2022-23 supporting 861 young people.



## OUR VISION

At the Foyer Federation, our vision is a truly equitable society in which young people have an equal chance to realise their power and purpose. We believe that a person's strengths, not their circumstances, should shape their future.

We look forward to a future in which all young people take complete ownership and leadership of their futures, and develop the strengths and talents needed for a fulfilling life.

## OUR MISSION

We want young people to thrive – not just survive. All young people should have the chance to realise their potential, harness their power and achieve a fulfilling, loving, sustainable adulthood.

We work with young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness through a UK-wide network of Foyers, which provide safe accommodation and a nurturing environment in which residents can live, learn and work.

Our mission is to offer innovation, programme delivery and capacity-building support to ensure the Foyer network continues to secure the best outcomes for 16-25-year-olds who can't live at home. Through our quality development framework, engaging programmes and targeted training, we model a whole-person approach to empowering young people.

Advantaged Thinking is our asset-based philosophy and it guides everything we do, encouraging young people to aim high, dream big and fulfil their ambitions. It focuses on young people's strengths and talents and asks them to view their futures through that lens rather than using deficit-based labels and perceptions.



# OUR VALUES

We have five core values that every member of our team upholds in all aspects of our work:



## Authentic

Authentic leadership is about sticking to your values, being comfortable in your own skin and not trying to be someone you're not.



## Brave

Courage is about having the quiet inner confidence to stand up for what really matters to you.



## Loving

Love is at the heart of all we do. It means genuinely looking out for the world around us, and knowing when to be tough and when to be kind.



## Maverick

Mavericks are born to be original, quirky and maybe even a bit unpopular to shake things up and make them better.



## Savvy

Savviness isn't a science; it's a mindset. It's about being smart and creative, while keeping one eye on the now and one at the end of the game.

# OUR OBJECTIVES 2021-24

Our strategic three-year plan centres around the following four objectives, or 'rooms' in the Home for Advantaged Thinking:

1. Create a space for young people to realise their power and purpose through opportunities for leadership and activism.
2. Develop the capacity, quality and impact of youth services.
3. Communicate and promote a vision for Advantaged Thinking to create the right environment for young people to realise their power and purpose.
4. Grow an Advantaged Thinking network that connects thinkers and doers, fosters learning and shares inspiration.

The Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, in accordance with section 17 of the Charities' Act 2011, sets out two key principles:

1. The organisation must have an identifiable benefit and
2. The benefit must be to the public or a section of the public.

Trustees have reviewed the vision and mission of the charity in the light of this guidance and have been mindful of it when setting the aims and objectives for the coming year. They believe the activities of the Charity and the achievements detailed in this report clearly demonstrate that the Charity meets both these requirements.



## ROOM A YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND ACTIVISM

**A space for young people to realise their power and purpose through opportunities for youth leadership and activism.**

### **Developing personal power and influence**

The Big Questions, our regular survey for young people, received 126 responses from 14 of our member services – the biggest response yet. The cost of living rose sharply as young people's greatest concern (44% shared this as a worry), and mental health was noted as their biggest challenge (76.9%). On a positive note, 68% of young people feel confident to tell their Foyer what they think and see change happen as a result – an encouraging result that shows young people have trust in their services and are being meaningfully listened to.



*“You’re not just giving people like me an opportunity they might otherwise not have had, but you’re changing lives. Your kindness and the kindness of everyone who is involved in the Talent Bonds scheme are giving people like me the ability to know that we are worth something, people believe in us and want to help us.”*

Talent Bond Recipient



In response to the cost of living concerns young people expressed, we launched the **Moving On Up fund**. Supported by **LandAid**, we will award **100** young people up to **£1000** towards the costs of moving out of the Foyer. Between January and March 2023, 20 young people received funding for paying deposits or rent in advance, utilities in advance, white goods, and essentials like moving vans and packing boxes. 80 more young people will receive funding in 2023-24.

We awarded small grants of up to **£300**, called **talent bonds**, to **35** young people to invest directly in their skills and strengths. We received 49 applications for grants, and the funding decisions were made by a panel of young people who had previously received talent bonds. Young people’s funding requests included equipment to enable a trained barber to return to work, tools to learn woodworking and furniture restoration, and recording equipment to create a podcast.

To support **digital inclusion**, we sent **free Vodafone SIM cards** to over **70%** of the young people in our network as part of a collaboration between **LandAid** and **Vodafone**. With the support of **Deloitte**, we were also able to make **50 free laptops** available for young people to use in Foyers. Digital access helps young people to stay connected with friends and family, apply for work and continue developing the skills they want to grow, nurturing their personal power.

### Sharing power with young people in Foyers

**Seven Foyers** completed their first year as part of the **Youth Power Fund** – a grantmaking programme focused on sharing power with young people in supported housing services, which is supported by **Blagrave Trust**. A learning cohort of staff and young people from the funded services met three times to share successes, challenges and learn from each other. Each of the seven Foyers has made positive progress with their systems, structures and/or culture to embed youth power and leadership long term. We will share our own learnings throughout the programme so that all Foyers can benefit.



## ROOM A CONTINUED

We delivered **Powering Up Youth training**, which explores youth power and promotes service-level reflection, to 50 members of Foyer staff (and some young people) from eight services. We worked with two talented young trainers as co-facilitators of these workshops, one of whom was new to the role this year.



*"It has been a really positive experience being able to express and speak about problems that are affecting our society today and being able to speak about it and find solutions as a group."*

Power Pioneer



This year we welcomed a new **Young Trustee, Nathalie Tolmie-Thomson**, to our Board of Trustees. Nathalie studied psychology and works in marketing and communications, and she also brings to our governance her first-hand experience of homelessness as a young person. Her insights and passion for young people have made her a valuable asset to the team.

### Growing power in the community and beyond

Following the on-and-off years of the pandemic, we were able to bring 14 young people from seven Foyers together to build campaigning and changemaking skills through our **Power Pioneers** programme. We partnered with **Sheila McKechnie Foundation** to host a residential and follow-up workshops building young people's skills and confidence to affect change in their Foyer and community. One young person successfully campaigned to improve recycling in her service using the skills and confidence she built through Power Pioneers.



*"When a young person is made homeless, in that moment we have an opportunity to stop further damage from happening - especially with the way the Foyer Federation wants to do things. There is such potential to completely transform a huge section of society from getting to that damaged place. As long as the people that fund us continue to believe in it, I think we can do incredible things."*

Nathalie Tolmie-Thomson,  
Foyer Federation Young Trustee



## ROOM B QUALITY AND IMPACT

**Where we develop the capacity, quality and impact of youth services.**

### **Developing quality services**

36 services are committed to developing quality and improving practice through our accreditation. Of these, 26 were recertified, six were new to the journey, and four continued working towards certification in the following year. These services have committed to working with young people in an Advantaged Thinking way and, through use of our tools, one-to-one support and impact framework, evaluating their progress and learning each year.

12 Foyers received the highest level of certification in either one or both key areas – strategically and/or operationally strong. These services are:

- Your Housing Group Foyers (Bridge, Coops, Ravenhead, Verve Place)
- Newhaven Foyer (SAHA)
- Manchester Foyer (Mosscafe St Vincent)
- On-Route Foyer (CHADD)
- Sheffield Foyer (Guinness)
- Cork Foyer
- Whitehaven Foyer (Riverside)
- Enfield Foyer (Christian Action Housing)
- YMCA Derbyshire



*“The process of going through accreditation has created safe nurturing spaces for our young people, our team and the organisation as a whole to work together more openly. The focus on improving and learning – doing better – has brought huge motivation and energy to everyone involved. The process and ethos of using Advantaged Thinking within that has been as valuable as achieving the tangible results at the end. It’s changed us from the inside out – it’s been heartfelt and values based change”*

Anna Walsh, Chief Executive Officer  
– CHADD (from AT Publication)



## Growing confidence and capacity

This year, 282 members of staff from our network accessed our **training** offer to develop their professional skills and reflect on their wider service offer. We offer three core packages: Advantaged Thinking, Coaching and Powering Up Youth.

**190 staff were trained in Advantaged Thinking**, which provides a practical exploration of our core methodology and approach. We delivered **Powering Up Youth to 51 people**, facilitating an exploration of theories of youth power and an opportunity to reflect on the service. Coaching, an interactive, practical session focused on growing the skills needed to work with young people, reached 41 members of Foyer staff. On average, 96% of attendees would recommend our training to colleagues.

In response to consistent feedback from staff and young people about the need for support with mental health, we began the **ReRooted programme**, funded by UK Youth and CHK Foundation. Running over three years, it’s aimed at building the capacity of Foyer staff to work with young people who have faced multiple challenges, including experience of care and ill mental health. We consulted 64 people from 25 Foyers to ensure the programme meets both the realities of Foyer life and the ambitions of staff and young people. ReRooted was launched in March at two Foyer Connect events, which gave staff a taster of the programme. Next year, the focus will be on trauma-informed practice and raising awareness and knowledge of mental health, all through the lens of Advantaged Thinking.





## ROOM C INFLUENCE

**Where we communicate and promote a vision of Advantaged Thinking that creates the right environment for young people to realise their power and purpose.**

**Promoting Foyers and advocating for change**

Our website and social media channels continue to be spaces to celebrate the impact of Foyers and the skills and achievements of young people. We shared young people's direct experiences to amplify their voices in the wider world, shouted about the successes of Foyers from our network, and promoted the creativity and innovation members brought to our programmes and events.

We used our online spaces to advocate on issues affecting young people, from the requirement for voters to have ID to the upcoming regulations for housing for young people leaving care aged 16-17. We believe this is a key role we can play in shaping a society that listens to and understands the concerns of young people.







## Celebrating young people

**The Room for Young People** awards returned for its fifth year celebrating the achievements of young people from across the country. Hosted at The Clayton Hotel, Birmingham, the ceremony was an inspiring and enjoyable evening filled with performances from talented young people. Across the six award categories, seven winners and three top champions came from within the Foyer network.



## Growing the Advantaged Thinking movement

Following the release of our *Adventures in Advantaged Thinking* publication in January 2022, we shared targeted articles and social media posts each month until November 2023. Each one focused on the learnings from a new chapter and broke down the key ideas to take away, introducing AT to a wider audience.

In July, we held an online AT event to celebrate 30 years of the Foyer Federation. Advantaged Thinkers from the network were invited to share their experiences and successes from their work, and a young person spoke to the 75 attendees about why youth power and involvement is so important to them. Our Chief Executive Joel Lewis shared an inspiring vision of the future and invited each person to take away an action to contribute to an AT society.



We made significant progress in developing a brand for Advantaged Thinking that people in all roles and sectors can join together behind. We began working with a digital design organisation to create an interactive, educational and inspirational website to grow awareness and engagement with AT, and a fresh logo, brand and identity people can connect with. We hope to launch next year.



## Strengthening shared knowledge in the sector

To amplify the collective voice of Foyers in sector-wide learning, we worked with the **Centre for Youth Impact** to promote their study into how young people are supported to speak on issues that affect them. Foyers were encouraged to respond so their practices can form part of the overall picture of how young people make decisions that affect the services they interact with.



*"I was nominated and shortlisted for a Room for Young People award, when I first found out I was so excited, it's my best achievement so far. It proves that people with disabilities don't have to hold back and with the right support they can achieve what they want to achieve."*

Leo, Crewe YMCA



Celebrating 30 Years



*"Before I had heard the words 'Advantaged Thinking', I knew what it was. It was the way I instinctively wanted to work with people. It was also the way that I preferred people to work with me."*

Kate Hitchcock, Paul Hamlyn Foundation



## ROOM D COMMUNITY

**Where we grow an Advantaged Thinking network that connects thinkers and doers, fosters learning and shares inspiration.**

### **Bringing our members together**

This year, our network of Foyers grew from 51 to 56 – a thriving community! Through the year, we hosted a calendar of events to create space for our network to connect, learn and get inspired. In May, we ran our first Foyer Connects, aimed at staff in direct delivery roles. 26 staff from 13 Foyers discussed mental health, practical approaches to working with young people and tools to take away. The Ideas Lab brought together senior staff from 10 services to find creative solutions to common challenges. Our Great Gatherings in Liverpool and Brighton were attended by 44 people from 21 Foyers to explore key topics like youth power, mental health and wellbeing, and working with young people seeking asylum (including a toolkit created by YMCA Crewe).

“

*“I don't care what you want to be – if you want to be an astronaut, I can help you get there!”*

Foyer Connect event participant

”



## A community of learners

We received funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to establish the **Advantaged Thinking Learning Community**, connecting our network together to develop a consistent learning experience for young people wherever they are in the country. The project will be co-created with staff and young people over the next three years, beginning with in-depth consultations, selecting a digital platform, and setting up local youth-led teams.

## Feedback from our members

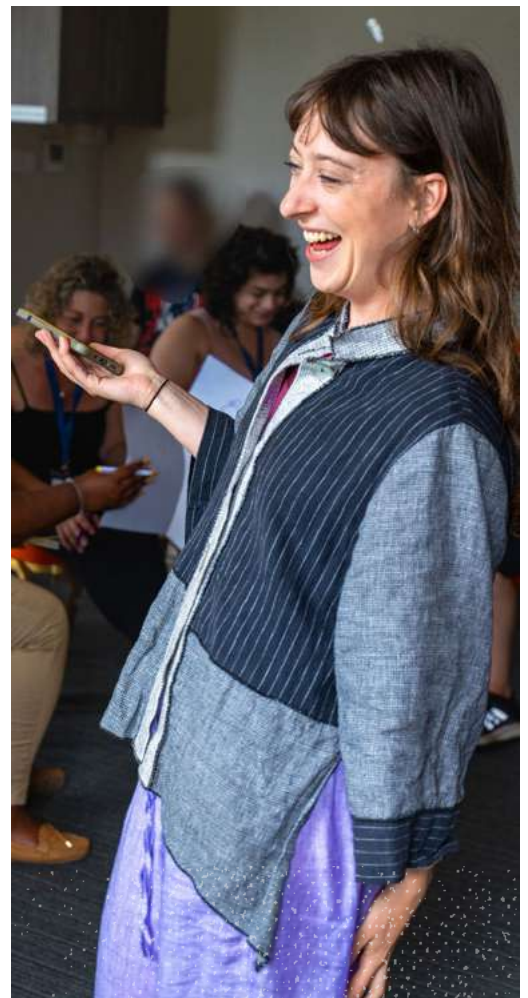
Our **membership survey** gave us lots of valuable insights into what our network values and where we might improve or add to our offer. 30 Foyers responded and of these, 88% rated our offer a 7/10 or higher. Challenges included travelling time to our events, difficulties for 24-hour staff attending training or events, and a need to focus more on the increasing level of need young people have. We have plans to address these in the coming year.

We also heard that the cost of living crisis, mental health support, lack of move-on options and engaging young people in the service offer are the biggest challenges within services. Through the Moving On Up fund, ReRooted, the Youth Power Fund and our events, we are addressing each of these with our members.



*"The Foyer Federation Ideas Lab events are great for challenging your current way of thinking, giving you a fresh perspective and a new mindset. I'd highly recommend an Ideas Lab event to any youth or community worker that is looking for a new way forward with their service delivery".*

Kat Newman, Commissioning Lead,  
YMCA Milton Keynes.



## Thank yous

A big thank you to our members for standing united with us as we grow an Advantaged Thinking vision and movement for young people. Our members are part of the following partner organisations:



Thanks to our Investor members for your ideas, support and engagement in our mission and vision:



## We would also like to thank:

**Paul Hamlyn Foundation, John Ellerman Foundation, Dulverton Trust and Tudor Trust** for their core support enabling us to deliver our strategy and grow our team.

**Blagrove Trust and The Listening Fund** for challenging us to be creative and tip the balance of power in young people's favour – both at the Foyer Federation and in local Foyers.

**The National Lottery, CHK Foundation, UK Youth and LandAid** for enabling us to respond to the needs of our network and young people to offer support in learning, mental health and wellbeing, and the cost of living.

Everyone who invested in our **Talent Bond programme**, showing their belief in young people's potential and talent.

**Colin at Inspirechilli** for sharing his skills and experience with our team and network, and remaining committed to young people and the work of Foyers.

**The Room for Young People partnership group** for working hard to ensure young people in supported housing get recognised for their achievements and progress.

Finally a big thanks **to all the young people** we met this year and that live in Foyers for their constant inspiration and always challenging us to be stronger and more creative.





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