

# Poole Quay Foyer – Healthy Transitions

## Introduction

This report details the findings of case study research undertaken by the national evaluators of the Poole Quay Foyer – Healthy Transitions project. The project is part of a wider programme developed and funded by the Foyer Federation. The overall portfolio aims to foster a holistic approach to addressing well-being within all Foyers and to improve the personal and social well-being of Foyer residents (e.g. increasing their consumption of healthy, well budgeted food, improving their level of physical activity and fitness, and addressing their emotional well-being).

### *Poole Quay Foyer*

The Quay Foyer is a UK registered charity operating in Poole, Dorset. They provide accommodation, personal support and access to activities, training and employment opportunities for disadvantaged, socially excluded young people aged 16-25. The Quay Foyer opened in October 1999 and will be celebrating their 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday this year.

### *The Foyer Federation*

The Foyer Federation's mission is to turn young people's experiences of disadvantage into solutions that support this transition to adult independence. The Foyer Federation develops and encourages new approaches to supporting young people at risk, including developing 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. The organisation's ambition is to become the organisation best known for leadership and excellence in developing services for vulnerable young people as they make the transition from adolescence to independent adulthood.

### *The Healthy Transitions project*

The Healthy Transitions project is a three year programme, developed and funded by the Foyer Federation, using well-being fund monies from the Big Lottery Fund. The programme was developed by the Foyer Federation so that all Foyers across England could participate in the programme and, as such, the Foyer Federation could develop and pilot new ways to embed a holistic approach to fostering a positive sense of well-being amongst Foyer residents.

Although the broad structure of the programme was developed by the Foyer Federation, there was scope in the design for individual Foyers to input into how the programme would operate in their particular context, and shape the nature of the activities that took place.

## Background and rationale

At programme level, the Foyer Federation's Healthy Transitions project aims to embed a focus on holistic health into the way that disadvantaged young people are supported in accommodation based settings.

At the individual Foyer level, the intention is to assist young people to achieve positive life and personal transitions, including healthy eating, physical activity, and emotional well-being (mental health). Achieving these types of outcomes will ensure that, by the age of 25, young people are connected into healthy support networks, cultures and lifestyles. Healthy Transitions has been developed in response to evidence that most young people living in Foyers experience significant barriers to health and well-being, including:

- ❑ a history of poor health, specifically malnourishment, high incidence of smoking, alcohol and drug use, and lack of physical activity;
- ❑ difficulties in accessing support either because it is only available in a crisis or because past negative experiences get in the way;
- ❑ inability to access services that are appropriate to or fully meet their needs.

This is supported by evidence collected and collated by the Foyer Federation (e.g. research in the *Working Together* report published in 2001 and the evaluation of *Strong Minded* in 2005, confirm that disadvantaged young people are more likely to have poorer health than those from more secure and better-off families). Such problems may have led to homelessness in the first place, be the result of homelessness, or be a barrier to future progression, but the circle is self-perpetuating and it is often the task of Foyers to break it by addressing health issues within local situations and resources. To care for both the present and future health of young people making life transitions, Foyer's recognise that they need to find ways not only to help young people manage health issues, but also to promote positive well-being and healthy living.

The Healthy Transition project run by Poole Quay Foyer has been developed with all three of these issues in mind. In particular, the staff team at the Quay Foyer are experienced at working with vulnerable and excluded young people who present multiple physical and mental health issues and have, in the past, had negative experiences. Staff are also able to work with the young people to overcome barriers related to chaotic lifestyles and previous negative experiences, and the ability to form partnerships and create links with service providers to help residents access the support and services they need. The Healthy Transitions project provides resources for this type of support to be offered as a matter of course, over and above the current activity levels (e.g. for all Foyers to explore well-being systematically and in a holistic manner through life coaching and activities to support life coaching).

Although the programme has been developed centrally by the Foyer Federation to support and embed a holistic focus on health and well-being into supported accommodation settings, it has been designed in such a way that each individual Foyer that signs up to the programme, can pick a specialist pathway and develop activities that suit their settings and residents. There are three pathways to choose from – physical activity, healthy eating or mental health. All three are then complemented by the life coaching, which looks at the goals and aspirations of young people with regards to these three areas. The programme in Poole runs from November 2007 to August 2010.

As has been described, the Foyer Federation is supporting the vast majority of its member Foyers to participate in the programme at some point throughout the three years. The first year of the programme focused on healthy eating, the second year on fitness and physical health, and the third year on emotional well-being. Health experts were appointed with specialist knowledge of these three areas to act as Health Ambassadors. They have worked with young people across England, including a young person representing the views of LGBT youth, to design and implement new and innovative initiatives with Foyers in their specific specialist area.

## **Project design and delivery**

### **Objectives**

The Healthy Transition project in Poole is following the healthy eating pathway and, as such, has the following principle aims and objectives:

- ❑ to increase residents' awareness of nutrition;
- ❑ to provide young people with basic cooking skills, health and safety information for kitchens, food hygiene information, and knowledge about food choices;
- ❑ to provide residents and other vulnerable young people with the ability to put this knowledge into action when designing and cooking meals;
- ❑ to enable young people to budget for healthy meals and understanding how to make their money go further;
- ❑ to widen young people's choice of food, including regular portions of fruit and vegetables.

The programme also aims to embed life coaching within the Foyer and ensure that all residents are offered the opportunity to set healthy living goals and develop a well-being action plan which will address lifestyle, social and environmental determinants of ill health and reduced levels of well-being.

The objectives set by the Quay Foyer are well developed in order to address the initial rationale as set out in the Foyer Federation's bid to the Big Lottery Fund and in their research and practice.

There is a clear link back to the original rationale from these objectives (e.g. the project objectives will help to improve Foyer residents' understanding of healthy eating and their ability to buy, prepare and cook healthy meals for themselves and their friends). The Healthy Transitions project also encourages residents to be more active and proactive in living a healthy lifestyle (e.g. encouraging them to take up sport or stop smoking) and encouraging a more supportive and holistic approach to emotional well-being through the life coaching and a holistic approach to well-being.

The objectives also link clearly back to the Big Lottery Fund's ambitions for the programme:

- ❑ people enjoying improved mental well-being;
- ❑ people being more physically active;
- ❑ people eating more healthily.

Similarly, the project level objectives also link with the wider Foyer Federation strategic objective, which is for Foyers to address health and well-being improvement in a more focused and structured way, bringing together all three strands. The Foyer Federation also wish to assess the impact of these various different concepts, approaches and interventions used to promote health and well-being in the Foyers. This is set out in the following paragraph taken from the Foyer Federation bid to the Big Lottery Fund.

'Young people's transition to independence is marked by the process of constructing an adult identity through the way they eat, think, feel, act, and respond to the outside world, while at the same time overcoming significant negative behavioural habits from the past that often leave them lacking the confidence, support, self-awareness and understanding to make a step change in their lives. Healthy Transitions focuses on supporting this process by developing holistic approaches to health as the key determinant in building an individual's locus of control and level of application to achieve successful outcomes.'

### **Inputs**

Poole Quay Foyer received £8,375 worth of funding from the Big Lottery Fund in Year 1, and £3,652 in Year 2. The funding has supported the Foyer to employ additional staff, although the majority of this funding has come from the Foyer's host housing association, Raglan. The majority of the funding has been used to support activities with residents, including cooking lesson and taster days.

### **Activities**

In Year 1, residents benefited from the cooking skills course that included nutritional advice and meal plans. During these cooking skills classes, individuals learnt about nutritional foods and how to cook popular and healthy foods. In Years 1 and 2, residents also took part in life coaching and taster sessions. Year 2 is just coming to an end.



Poole Quay Foyer has been the preliminary delivery agent for all activities, with three members of staff taking primary responsibility for the cooking course and taster sessions; other Foyer staff have also participated in the taster sessions. The Foyer staff also delivered cooking sessions in partnership with the Leaving Care Team at Poole Borough Council for young people moving on from local authority care.



As well as the cooking sessions and the life coaching, the Healthy Transitions funding also provided for six taster sessions. The six taster sessions that have taken place over the last two years have been tennis, ice skating, a picnic on Brown Sea Island, a trip to the beach, Go Ape (an outdoor assault course) and a trip to Monkey World. The taster sessions are all designed to promote well-being by focusing on one or more of the three strands – healthy eating, physical exercise or emotional well-being (e.g. the trip to Go Ape was designed to help increase physical exercise and build the young people's confidence). Each taster session is then linked back at a later date to the life coaching and the individual's goals.

The nature of the beneficiary group also meant that the taster sessions enabled the young people to do something they would otherwise not be able to do because of money or, in some cases, to undertake an activity they would not think to do either because they were not aware of its accessibility or because they would not think to undertake an activity like that. In short, all the sessions were designed to help widen the young people's horizons, improve their confidence and awareness of activities available on their doorstep, and therefore enhance residents' emotional well-being. The taster sessions are quite structured in order to get the young people working together, trying new activities and experiences (e.g. on the trip to Brownsea Island, as well enjoying a day out together, the residents also completed a natural sculpture/art challenge and a scavenger hunt).



All residents were able to access the cooking sessions, although for reasons of safety and equipment numbers, individual cooking sessions were limited to two, and priority was given to those who were willing to attend all six sessions. However, the times and dates for these six sessions were very flexible and did not necessarily follow week from week. Instead they were very flexible and designed to fit with the lifestyles of those residents involved. For the taster sessions, these were also open to residents, their friends and some family members on a first come first served basis. However, where possible, the sessions were designed to include all those who had expressed an interest in the session.

The portfolio has supported the programme in Poole Quay Foyer, albeit from a distance. That said, there have been Healthy Transitions network meetings which both staff and a small number of residents have been able to attend; staff and residents found these both enjoyable and informative.

## Performance

### Outputs

In Year 1, 41 residents benefited from the cooking skills course that included nutritional advice and meal plans. During these cooking skills classes, individuals would learn about nutritional foods and how to cook popular and healthy foods. At the end of the course, participants would plan a one week nutritional food shop for £20, where the tutor would accompany them on a shopping trip, helping them to learn how to read food labels.

In Year 2, 23 people took part in life coaching; slightly below target, owing to Foyer staff being slightly over ambitious as to the number of people they could life coach, partially due to a slower than anticipated turn around of residents in the Foyer. In terms of the cooking, the sessions were limited to two people at a time due to space and equipment; however staff had hoped to find a larger commercial kitchen in which to operate in order to work with more than two people at a time.

### **Outcomes**

A wide range of positive outcomes were identified by residents of Poole Quay Foyer. It was made clear that these were positive outcomes experienced as a result of participating in the Healthy Transitions project. The outcomes included:

- ❑ increased confidence;
- ❑ the opportunity to meet new people and socialise with other residents;
- ❑ develop new friendships.

*'The activities mean I spend less time alone and I'm more involved in what's going on.'*

*'They have provided me with opportunities to talk to my key worker in an informal setting – we talk about things other than the Foyer.'*

All but one of the residents we spoke to (15) said they had a better understanding of what is meant by well-being as a result of being engaged with the Healthy Transitions project. They also felt they had a better understanding of the importance of well-being, in particular the connections between healthy eating, physical activity and emotional well-being. Many reported that they now realised that well-being is about all of these elements and that and negative behaviour with regard to one will affect all three.

A number of residents also reported feeling more comfortable about looking after themselves in terms of healthy eating, exercise, being independent and budgeting (e.g. many of the young people have learnt more about healthy food and have been more adventurous in their choices).

*'I used to live off take-aways and ready meals.'*  
*'The cooking sessions have helped me to eat better.'*  
*'The shopping trip was really helpful.'*

Others said they have learnt how to buy healthy but cheap food and are better at budgeting as a result of the cooking session, with some saying that the focus on healthy eating had helped them to lose weight and address eating disorders that they had suffered from in the past; several also reported passing their food hygiene course.

*'In the past I just wouldn't eat for a few days because I'd used all my money at the start of the week.'*

*'I am healthier I have lost 4 stone in a year.... I know what I should and shouldn't be eating.'*

The Healthy Transitions project in Poole has also had an impact on the physical health and fitness of the residents. Several residents said they were now fitter, with many more tuned into the benefits of exercise and more likely to exercise for fun with their friends (e.g. by playing volleyball on the beach as they had done in one of the taster sessions). Others said they now walk a lot more than before, realising that this is a cheap and easy form of exercise.

*'I walk everywhere, which makes me feel good because I am saving money, getting fit and losing weight. The walk to college is about 50 minutes each way, and I go every day, I love it because I see different things like the park and it's had a big impact on my health. It's rare I don't walk, only if it's really, really wet.'*

Several residents (mainly men) had gained their Level 1 FA football coaching qualification and now play regularly for the Foyer team. One resident has now gone onto start the Level 2 FA coaching course at Bournemouth Athletic Football Club. There is also a women's football team and a disability team that practice and play regularly. As such, these residents felt they had learnt more skills and, importantly, were able to pass these skills onto other young people wishing to play football.

For several of the residents we spoke to an additional benefit of exercising and eating more healthily was that they had lost weight or become more toned. In some cases, this led to them feeling more confident and positive about their body, which in turn impacted on their mental or emotional well-being.

Overall, many of the residents reported feeling more positive about life and enjoying the opportunities to socialise with other residents and to get out of the Foyer, rather than sitting in their room all day. Residents also said that the taster days were a chance for them to talk to staff and other people they wouldn't otherwise normally meet. The residents who had attended a taster session particularly enjoyed the opportunity to do something different, something that they would not otherwise be able to do, but also the opportunity to socialise with different people and different members of staff. For some, the opportunity to talk to their key worker in an informal atmosphere was particularly useful.

Finally, for a few residents, the taster sessions provided them with a better understanding of the types of activities that were available to them at little or no cost, and how to go about doing them (e.g. prior to participating in the project, some residents would not have thought to go to the beach or have a picnic in the park, despite these being activities that can be undertaken without having to travel far or cost too much money).

### ***Impact on wider conditions***

The support offered Foyer residents the chance to focus on improving their personal and social well-being, by improving their dietary habits and learning about healthy eating and budgeting. This would not be available to anywhere near the same extent if the Healthy Transitions project did not exist. Although the Foyer would still exist, staff would not have the time or resources to support residents in the same way. In particular, the budgeting exercise would not be possible and the taster sessions would not have taken place. These are two key elements of the programme and areas in which the residents feel they have benefited greatly.

The nature of the project means that direct impacts on the wider community are not very strong; however staff have noticed that the residents are generally less bored and frustrated with their lives, which improves behaviour and decreases the likelihood of damage being done to property and the surrounding area. That said this was not a particularly large problem in the past.

In terms of indirect impact on the wider communities, the Healthy Transitions project is helping young people with the transition to independence and to address issues with regard to their well-being that could make this transition more difficult or less successful. As such, it is supporting young people to become healthy, positive members of the community and therefore able to play a valuable role within their local communities. Evidence of this is clear, with residents undertaking training to support their peers and families to live more healthily and to participate in sport and exercise.

The Healthy Transition project also coaches young residents to develop their confidence and enable them to achieve their goals and aspirations. By living a healthier and more positive lifestyle, the young people will be able to contribute more to their communities, such as returning to education, securing employment or undertaking volunteering.

### ***Equality, diversity and engagement***

The project works with almost all residents to some extent, and continues to support ex-residents as well as friends and family of residents. The staff are very experienced in working with and engaging its target group. In this respect, there was no need to focus activities on a particular individual or group; however staff did involve the residents in the development of activities and in selecting the type and nature of the taster sessions to ensure participation.

### ***Additionality and sustainability***

All of those asked said they would not have benefited in the same way if they had not had the extra support from the Foyer. As regards the taster sessions, all said they would not have been able to go or participate in them without the Foyer for administrative and financial support. In terms of the cooking skills, all said they would not have benefited to the same extent, although some would have had one or two cooking skills lessons if it was identified as a priority for them in terms of life skills. They would not have been very extensive and would not have included the budget shop and supermarket lesson, which all those who participated in said they enjoyed and learnt from.

In terms of the life coaching, the residents felt this provided them with an opportunity to think more clearly about what they wanted to achieve in the shorter and longer term and how they might go about doing so. They felt the support provided by staff on this was invaluable, in particular the fact that it was an opportunity to look more holistically at the issues related to well-being and to think about the connections between the strands. In addition, residents said they appreciated the opportunity to talk to someone else other than their key worker about these types of issues.

As regards the taster sessions, residents felt they would have been very unlikely to have been able to organise or afford these activities and experiences without the support of the Healthy Transitions project. Of those who did make the most of the town's free assets, such as the beach, they would not have benefited in the same way because of the wider group activities and challenges that were organised as part of the taster sessions. Poole Quay Foyer staff also made it clear that without the additional Healthy Transitions monies, they would have been unable to run the taster sessions. With this in mind, it was clear that the project generated added value (e.g. benefits over and above what would have happened in any case) for the residents taking part, whether they be health related, social, aspirational or emotional.

In some cases, gains made as a result of the Healthy Transitions project have been complemented by other gains made through Foyer activity, such as My Guide or support to return to education. In these instances, it is not possible to say exactly what element of degree can be attributed to the Healthy Transitions project; however this should not detract from the very positive impact of Healthy Transitions on the lifestyles and ambitions of the residents.

The approach taken by Foyer staff mean the outcomes experienced by the residents are likely to be sustainable, as they are about assisting young people to make changes to their lifestyles by providing them with the skills, information and support to do so. Although the aims of the project are supported by the Foyer's host housing association, Raglan, they are unable to support it financially to any significant level. As such, project staff have developed a funding proposal to the Big Lottery Fund for the Reaching Communities Fund that looks to support the project after the end of the Well-being Programme funding.

## **Processes**

Foyer staff felt their relationship with the Foyer Federation had been strong, and that the project had benefited as a result; that said they appreciated that the relationship was generally light touch, but they knew the staff at the Foyer Federation were there if they needed support or advice. The staff and some residents attended conferences and workshops related to the Healthy Transitions project, where they were able to share experiences and ideas with other Foyers; it was also an opportunity for residents from other Foyers to meet.

### ***Publicity, promotion and engagement***

Because the project was only open to residents, ex-residents who still use the Foyer services, and family or friends of residents, there was little need to publicise or promote the project to get people to participate. Instead, all new residents were compelled to find out about the programme and the initial life coaching as part of their induction; this has helped encourage them to participate more widely in the programme. In addition, the taster sessions were developed in collaboration with residents who provide ideas and, in some cases, helped to organise the sessions.

In terms of wider engagement, the Poole Quay Foyer remains quite self contained, although staff have delivered cooking skills classes in collaboration with the leaving care team. In addition, the Poole Quay Foyer continues to work very closely with a range of other partners, such as Connexions and the Quay Advice Centre; however this is not really linked to the delivery of Healthy Transitions.

### ***Monitoring and evaluation***

The Foyer Federation require each Foyer to record the details of each beneficiary that they work with, in terms of brief demographics and contact information, although for most residents this information is already held and therefore it is easy for the staff to complete it. In addition, staff send copies of the life coaching goals each quarter to the Foyer Federation which are then counted and recorded in terms of the broad areas of focus – healthy eating, physical exercise or emotional well-being. This element is undertaken by the Federation on behalf of the Poole Quay Foyer, so that the Foyer can concentrate on project delivery.

For all taster sessions, there is also a full attendance list which is kept after the event and feedback forms which are used to assess the success of a particular type of activity or event. If needed, these can be used to provide information to the Foyer Federation. The staff at Quay Foyer were particularly positive about the monitoring and evaluation processes that have been developed by the Foyer Federation; they felt it captured what the project was trying to do, yet was light touch and easy for them to do.

## **Conclusions**

### ***Key lessons***

One of the key strengths of this project is its flexibility – it works well for the client group Foyer's work with, many of whom often have chaotic lifestyles. It is also a very inclusive project, as each element can be tailored to support and suit individual resident's needs (e.g. the type of cooking and healthy eating information that is covered in the lesson can also be shaped to suit individual's needs, likes, dislikes and interests, as can the meals that are cooked in the lessons and the life coaching and support that is offered to residents to help them achieve their life goals). It is also a very inclusive programme, with any resident able to get involved. The Healthy Transitions project is also very creative in the way that it develops taster sessions and complimentary activities that fit well with the healthy eating activity and the life coaching that also take place.

### ***Opportunities for the future***

The main element (healthy eating lessons) of the project has now finished, although these are starting again on a smaller scale with different funding. However, if the project was to run the sessions again, they should continue to look for a different kitchen facility, enabling them to run larger sessions with more people. This would mean it would be possible for each person to have more than six lessons and for more cooking related activities to take place after the lessons have finished, such as 'ready steady cook' type competitions, which have proved popular in the past and are relatively easy to organise.

Residents commented that it would be useful if future taster events could be scheduled for the evening and the weekend, to enable those who attend work or college to participate. Although this might prove more difficult in terms of staffing, it should be considered.

The Foyer has also submitted a full bid to the Big Lottery Fund for the Reaching Communities Fund, which draws on their experience of delivering this project and other activities, and tries to embed this holistic approach into all Foyer activities. This is a particularly positive move and suggests that well-being activities will be sustained into the future, if not through the Big Lottery Fund then through other funding.