



A New Horizon for Youth Foyers

Strategy 2025-2030





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Section 1

The Foyer Federation

We are a national charity that supports young people who can't live at home.



Introduction: Our vision, mission and values

The Foyer Federation team, trustees and partners are driven by a **VISION** that all young people who can't live at home can realise their power and purpose.

Our **MISSION** is to support the development of transformational living and learning communities for young people experiencing homelessness.

Our way of 'being' and 'doing' is underpinned by our core **VALUES** of being loving, authentic, brave, savvy and maverick.



Our Spheres of Impact

Over the years we've discovered that we have the most impact when we work with and across the ecosystem that Foyers operate within. This is shown in our **'Spheres of Impact'** diagram:



Advantaged Thinking is our asset-based approach and belief that a person's strengths – not their circumstances – should shape their future. Through our influencing work we are always aiming to create and improve the systems in society to ensure they strengthen the pathway for young people.

The Foyer Federation works with our network of providers who run Foyers or who have adopted the principles of a Foyer. We provide service development support flanked by innovative programmes, targeted training, communities of practice and direct youth engagement to ensure the Foyers in our Federation can flourish.

Foyers provide an alternative to hostel accommodation with an integrated housing, learning and development environment. They are transformational places of purpose, designed with and for young people.



Young people who live in Foyers are at the heart of everything we do. They inspire us with their strengths, experiences and energy, and we work with them to develop their power and tackle solutions to common challenges they face.

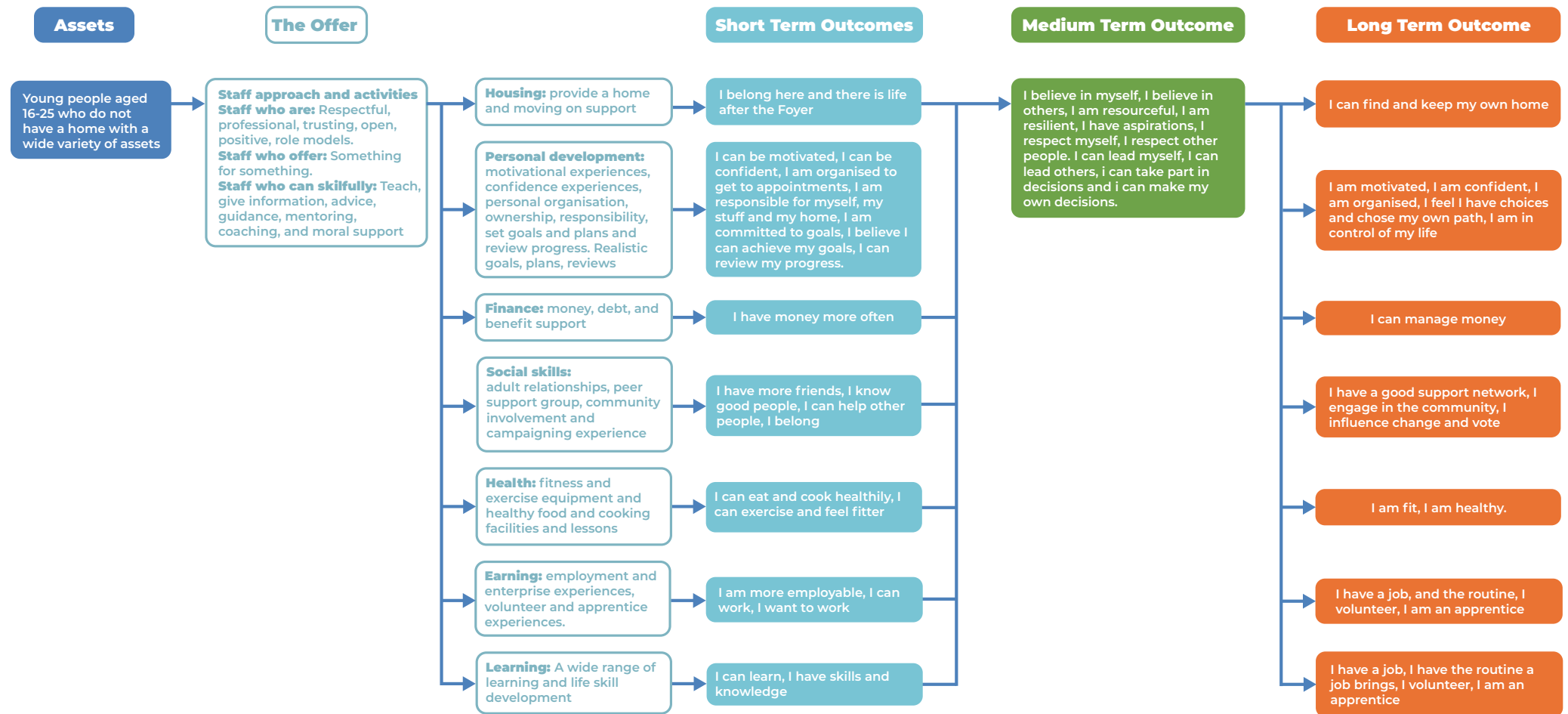
The impact of Foyers

Our Theory of Change for local Foyers was designed with young people and in partnership with the University of Cumbria. The model takes an Advantaged Thinking approach to change starting with the aspirations and assets that young people have and working out the offer needed to help them grow them.

Through the research, we discovered that, while living in a Foyer, young people want to progress seven main areas of their lives: housing, learning, employability, finance, social skills, health and personal development. We work with Foyers to ensure that their delivery model, activities and systems enable young people to progress in these seven areas.



Theory of Change



Section 2

A Vision and Strategy Towards 2030



Introduction: A New Horizon for Youth Foyers

A vibrant and energised future for Foyers so young people who can't live at home get the best possible opportunities.

For too long, Foyers have been the unsung heroes of the youth supported housing sector, achieving huge impact in the lives of young people with very little resource, investment or acknowledgement.

As governments have changed, funding has been pulled from local authorities, and housing associations have merged, Foyers have either been closed, underfunded or over relied on to provide reactive services dealing with failures in the wider system.

However, the reason Foyers exist and work is the same today as it was during their inception in 1992: they provide young people who can't live at

home with the opportunity to be part of a safe, thriving community where they can realise their power and purpose.

We aim to grow the presence of Foyers in all areas of the United Kingdom as an alternative to becoming homeless, ensuring Foyers continue to provide transformational living and learning environments for young people who need them.

We're heading towards a new horizon for youth Foyers!

The Current Landscape

In January 2022, our *Adventures in Advantaged Thinking* publication described what is possible when we see the world differently. But in recent years, new obstacles have made it harder for young people to move forward.

The fallout from the pandemic has exacerbated young people's mental health struggles and had a negative impact on employment and education options. The cost of living crisis has made it difficult to afford housing and day-to-day living for young people with little to no parental support.

A lack of suitable affordable housing has been a barrier for young people who are ready to take their next step from the Foyer – where can they move on to?



Foyers have found it challenging to recruit and retain passionate Advantaged Thinking staff since the difficult Covid years. They have also, in many cases, experienced tensions with their parent Housing Associations, which has restricted growth and innovation through rigid contract models, corporate bureaucracy and a disconnect from their social mission. It's been tough for the Foyer approach to thrive within this harsher landscape of austerity and compromise.

However, the fact remains that:

- Foyers are transformational places where young people can realise their power and purpose, and flourish.
- Staff working in Foyers are creative, passionate and determined, and have a hugely positive impact in young people's lives.
- Young people are powerful, insightful and driven to make a change in the world.

A New Horizon for Youth Foyers

Our 2030 vision and strategy for youth Foyers has four calls to action:



1 Power our Foyers

Our Foyers are transformational places. Let's give them the tools they need to thrive.

This aim focuses on the Foyers themselves and the organisations that run them.



Fuel the Foyer offer

Build capacity and create opportunities for the Foyer network to deliver an Advantaged Thinking Foyer offer.

Key Tasks:

- Reignite and grow the capacity of Foyers to deliver learning, enterprise and skill development.
- Improve access to employment and work experience.
- Support Foyers to open up new housing and move on pathways.

Sustain quality services

Develop, monitor and validate the quality of Foyer services supporting them to build Advantaged Thinking culture and practice that is transformational for young people.

Key Tasks:

- Re-establish the value of our quality development programme to support Foyers to go beyond compliance and strive for excellence.
- Transition the existing accredited Foyers to the new offer and build a pipeline of new services who want to go on an Advantaged Thinking quality journey.
- Support Foyers to open up new housing and move on pathways.

2 Activate our Community

The Foyer network is a thriving community. Let's equip our people to do more.

This aim focuses on the people that work and live within Foyers.



Cultivate a thriving community of practice

Facilitate a network of Foyer professionals who can share learning, inspire innovation and drive collaboration within the community.

Key Tasks:

- Deliver opportunities for peer learning and sharing best practice among Foyer staff drawing on insights from our programmes.
- Drive collaboration and engagement between those engaged in the quality development programme.
- Convene leaders within Foyers to build their resilience, connectedness and creativity.

Nurture the Foyer workforce

Develop a tenacious, resilient, skilled and visionary workforce of Advantaged Thinkers for youth supported housing.

Key Tasks:

- Increase engagement in our Advantaged Thinking leadership, resilience and skills development offer for the Foyer network.
- Explore innovative approaches to developing the future Foyer workforce, activating lived and learned experience.

Amplify youth voice nationally

Collaborate with young people to increase their involvement and influence with, through and beyond the Foyer Federation.

Key Tasks:

- Develop systems, programmes, processes and culture that enable young people to co-design and lead within the Foyer Federation.
- Partner with others to challenge and campaign to reduce inequalities for young people.
- Enable young people to share their skills, stories and achievements through our platforms and networks.



3 Grow our Movement

Foyers proactively help break the cycle of youth homelessness. Let's broaden the impact of Foyers and reach more young people.

This aim focuses on making change happen within the wider ecosystem that Foyers operate within and improving the pathway into and out of Foyers.



Advocate for Foyers

Raise awareness of Foyers as a transformative part of the youth housing pathway and advocate for secure, sustainable and consistent investment in the approach.

Key Tasks:

- Use research and data to evidence the impact of Foyers to key stakeholders.
- Define and share what good looks like in youth supported housing with local commissioners.
- Promote and grow the Foyer brand and approach partnering with peers in the youth homelessness sector.

Grow and restore the Foyer network

Grow the Foyer network so it's accessible to all young people who can benefit from it.

Key Tasks:

- Determine who is - and who wants to be - part of the Foyer movement, challenging non-members who are Foyer by name to step in or step out..
- Communicate the vision of the Foyer offer to local youth supported housing projects.
- Drive investment in new Foyers in geographical areas where there are no Foyers.
- Pilot new Foyers for young people with specialised or specific support needs, e.g. people who identify as LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, single parents.

Unite the Advantaged Thinking movement

Unite, grow and guide a worldwide Advantaged Thinking movement for good.

Key Tasks:

- Promote the Advantaged Thinking approach and identity to key stakeholders.
- Create space for Advantaged Thinkers to come together online and in person.



4 Strengthen the Foyer Federation

The Foyer Federation safeguards and develops the Foyer approach in the UK.

Let's ensure it has the right foundation to build on.

This aim focuses on the elements that the Foyer Federation needs to be sustainable and effective as a national charity.

The right people

Nurture and grow the staff and trustee team to effectively deliver the strategic aims in line with our values.

Key Tasks:

- Develop the trustee board to provide expertise in line with the new strategy.
- Ensure young people continue to share power at all levels of the organisation.
- Build the diversity, skills and experience of the staff team.
- Create and shape new and existing staff roles to deliver the strategy effectively .

The right income

Build a diverse and sustainable income base to deliver the strategy in line with the mission.

Key Tasks:

- Develop new income streams that enable the core charitable activities to be sustained and grown, including corporate partnerships, government grants and regular donations.
- Grow the amount and percentage mix of our earned income, including membership, training and the strategic partner offer.
- Effectively communicate a compelling case for investment in the Foyer Federation to future funders.

The right systems

Implement and improve systems, processes and central operations to maximise the effectiveness of our activities and demonstrate the breadth and depth of our impact.

Key Tasks:

- Develop better internal systems for relationship management of our member network.
- Expand the reach and effectiveness of our communications.
- Develop more robust ways to track the impact of our work and share it with others.
- Improve our HR, finance and operational processes, ensuring staff have what they need when they need it.

Section 3

Insights and findings

You will be happy to know that we didn't simply pluck these aims and objectives out of thin air or after a few too many orange juices. In fact, we have drawn from insights discovered during the lifetime of the previous strategy as well as in a more intense information gathering, consultation and co-design phase during late 2023 and early 2024.



Insights from young people

Using our Big Questions Survey that goes out to young people in the Foyer network every 6 months, we've been able to see the changing needs and aspirations of young people who can't live at home. It also enables us to highlight the power a Foyer can have in changing the lives of young people:

"The Foyer provides a stage where you can exchange your life experience with people our age and it provides various recreational and interactive activities that build our skills and confidence."

See Appendix A for all the insights from our Big Questions Survey

We are also in regular dialogue with young people living in Foyers through our programmes, network events and training. We gathered a group of these young people to have a more detailed conversation about our future strategy and here are some of the highlights from that conversation:

Foyers can and should:

"Give you what you need for the future"

"Be a safe space that allows failure without punishment"

"Help people be better in a community.... [and] make lifelong friends"

"[Be a place] where change happens"

See Appendix B for all the insights from our young person strategy consultation

Through our conversations with young people we firmed up our objectives to:

- Nurture the Foyer workforce
- Amplify youth voice
- Fuel the Foyer offer.

Insights from Foyer staff

Our annual membership survey, regular network events, quality review meetings and programmes learning cohorts provide quality and quantity of opportunity to hear about the challenges and developments within our network of Foyers. We have also conducted specific strategy consultations with our Strategic Partner members, Foyer Managers and direct delivery staff.

Some of the insights shared included:

"Young people are not just recipients of support; they should be actively involved in the decision making process"

"A Foyer's aim is to be a transformative part of a young person's life journey"

"The physical environment should be designed to encourage self expression and creativity including personalising their own living spaces"

"Oneness and togetherness are at the heart of Foyers with staff and residents working as a team to create a sense of unity and belonging"

See Appendix C for more insights from one of our consultations with staff

Our conversations with staff helped to firm up our objectives to:

- Advocate for Foyers
- Sustain quality services.

Insights from partners and friends

We held a gathering of partners, trustees, young people and Foyer staff in November 2023 to feed in strategic insights, learning and reflections to a wider group, and have an open conversation about the early formation of our plans.

The first session focussed on what a successful pathway could look like for a young person in 2030 and what things are currently missing that prevent that from happening.

Highlights included:

“A system that is on their side”

“A non-punitive housing offer”

“An empathy-led society”

“Good routes to employment across all geographical locations”

“Opportunities to upskill”

The second session looked at our draft aims and objectives and asked, ‘where should we focus our energy and time?’

It was clear that a lot of the current work we are delivering is having a significant impact with services, staff and young people.

The areas that stood out as needing further development from this consultation were:

- Influencing and advocacy to raise awareness of the critical role of Foyers, including developing the brand and identity nationally.
- Building a more robust evidence base for Foyers that attracts future investment
- Strengthening the transformative role of Foyers by building their capacity to deliver, and broadening the learning and development offer.

See Appendix D for more insights from our Strategy Consultation event.

Insights from our team and trustees

Over the last year, we have taken time out to have regular strategic discussions with our team and our trustees. Here are a few of the thoughts and questions that have come from those conversations laid out in a SWOT format:

Strengths

- We are agile, nimble and we respond quickly to the needs and aspirations of the network and young people.
- We have established a mission-driven culture that authentically reflects our values.
- We are trustworthy in delivering a quality offer and have a good reputation within and outside our network.
- We are creative, reflective and not afraid to admit mistakes and change.
- We have a committed and passionate network who advocate for young people.
- We have a dedicated and creative team that works relationally not transactionally.
- We have a diverse income model and savvy approach to development.

Weaknesses

- We have a tendency to take on too much work as we are very zealous, ambitious and passionate about the cause.
- We can rush to develop new things before fully evaluating previous work.
- We don't shout about the impact of Foyers or the Foyer Federation enough.
- Our team is balanced towards delivery and may need more resources in operations, comms and development.
- We can do more to evidence the value of Foyers.
- We need to ensure our activities work in harmony with each other and we don't create silos.
- We don't have enough of a seat at the policy table and need to grow our ability to influence.

Opportunities

- We have built up significant knowledge and experience in youth power and leadership within supported housing - we can use this to help others.
- We are building closer relationships with the homelessness and housing sector. We can capitalise on this to ensure we fight for young people's needs and rights.
- There is a lack of commonality and understanding over what good looks like in youth supported housing - we can help convene and work with others to grow their knowledge and make better decisions.
- The Foyer brand is under utilised and misunderstood in certain areas - we can flip this to create new opportunities for young people.
- We have the opportunity to use our data to shape future provision.
- We can bring local partners and commissioners together to create better pathways for young people.
- We have years of experience in youth supported housing and the ability to reposition ourselves as an expert and authority in this space.
- Our training, resources and approach can reach a wider audience outside Foyers.

Threats

- The new supported housing regulations and current Ofsted regulations create a focus on compliance and keeping minimum standards over proactively pursuing quality and aspirational services. This threatens to sideline the impact of our quality development work.
- The lack of local funding for Foyers alongside the increase in needs for young people presenting for accommodation has created a more reactive and short term delivery model - this threatens the heart of the Foyer approach that is focussed on long term impact to enable young people to transition into adulthood.

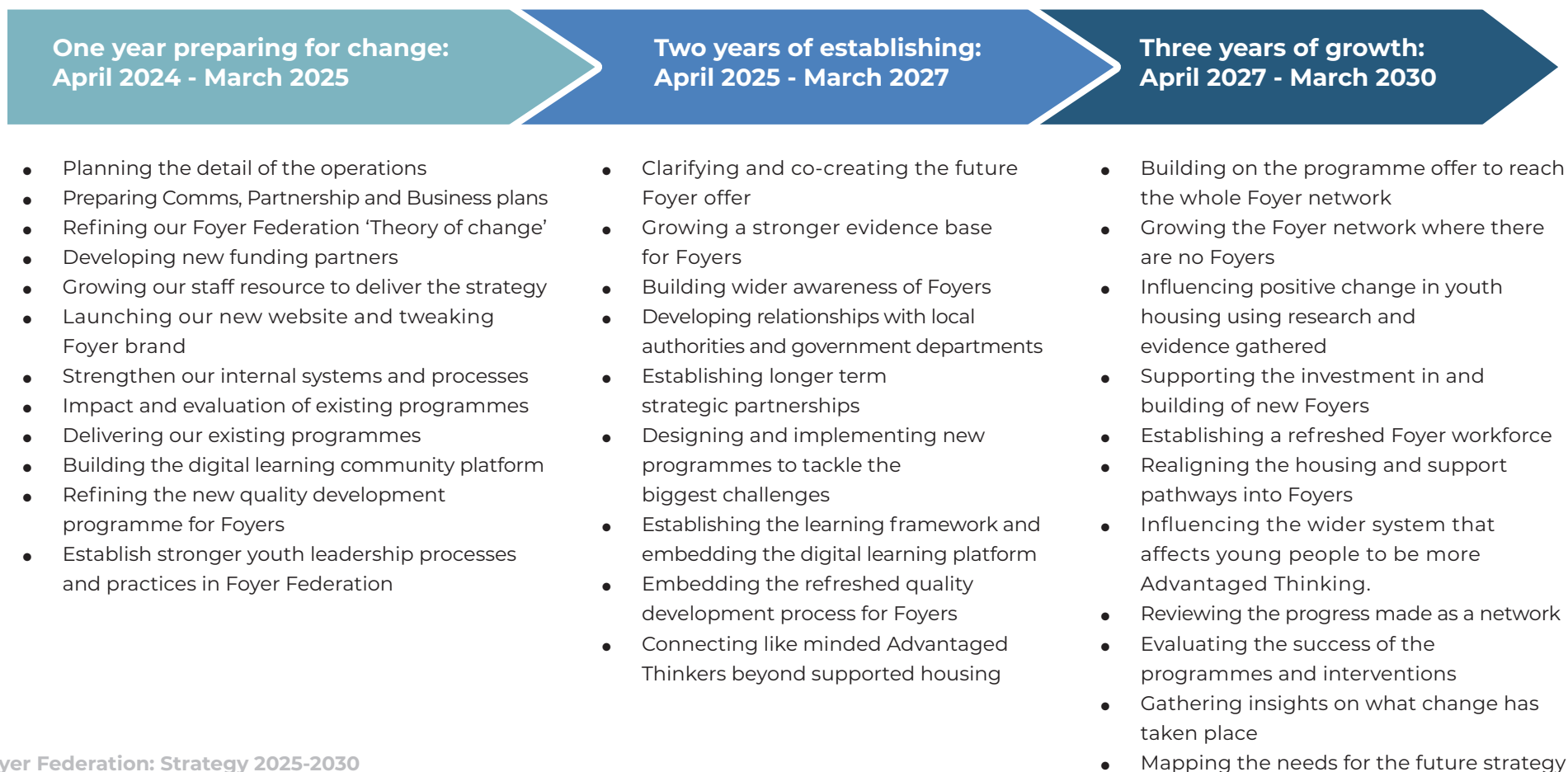
Section 4

Putting it into action



Timeline: When do we want this to happen?

Below is a rough estimation of how things could progress across the strategic time period. As with all plans, it's wise to hold them lightly and be able to respond to rising challenges and opportunities. The descriptions show when we expect the bulk of the work to be done but there will of course be some activities / tasks that continue to happen throughout the whole period.



Resources: What do we need to achieve the strategy?

Grow our team

We will focus on strengthening the areas where we have the least resources to enable us to achieve the strategic aims quicker including:

- Developing and recruiting staff to lead on communications, brand development and policy influence.
- Developing and recruiting staff to support network growth.
- Working with experts to strengthen our marketing, digital presence and strategic influence in the sector.



Increase our Partnerships

As a small team working on a national level we want to create savvy partnerships that work for both organisations. This is a starter for ten on what we want to grow but we will create a full partnership strategy within the first year of preparation:

- Work side by side with like-minded youth supported housing and homelessness organisations to campaign on the issues affecting young people who can't live at home.
- Build strong relationships with national infrastructure organisations who have a larger policy team and can benefit from the insights from our network and keep us better informed and connected to policy issues.
- Create one or two strategic partnerships that have the potential to help us achieve more than one of our objectives in a more effective way, improving the depth, breadth or speed of the outcome.
- Develop local and national corporate partnerships that increase the offer young people can access whilst living in a Foyer, helping them to realise their ambitions and explore new opportunities and experiences.
- Create stronger connections with the parent organisations that run Foyers, challenging them to invest in their current services, build new services in areas that need them, and supporting them to do it.

Improve our Systems

We will continue to make our processes and systems more efficient, focussed and effective to help us organise our work, share our impact and evaluate where to focus our time and energy:

- Develop clearer ways of capturing the direct impact that Foyers have with young people, finding a consistent way to show distance travelled across the diverse network of providers.
- Make local Foyer data trends and impact more visible and accessible to them and to others.
- Strengthen our database and communication systems to ensure all our network gets the right information and support needed.

Indicators of success: What will good look like?

Power our Foyers

- Foyers are sustainably funded for 5+ years.
- Foyers deliver consistent progression outcomes in housing, learning and employment or enterprise.
- Foyers are delivering the highest quality youth housing offer in the country and are recognised by local authorities for doing so.

Activate our Community

- Foyer staff are well connected and collaborating on national campaigns, initiatives and innovation.
- Foyer staff are motivated, inspirational and skilled in youth work, coaching and asset-based working.
- A higher percentage of the staff working in Foyers have lived experience of homelessness.
- Young people who have experienced homelessness have a significant say in the policies, systems and services that affect their lives.

Grow our Movement

- Commissioners recognise Foyers as the 'gold standard' in communal youth supported housing.
- Every local authority region can signpost to a quality assured Foyer within their area.
- The preventive pathway to reduce homelessness includes Foyers as a key option available for a young person threatened with homelessness alongside others.
- The Advantaged Thinking approach is more widely used amongst professionals to improve the culture and practices within organisations and reduce deficit based approaches.

How can you get involved?

Are you an organisation, individual or collective that resonates with some or all of our aims and objectives? Do you have an idea of something we can do together that would make things better? Would you like to fund, support or work alongside us to make sure young people who can't live at home can truly realise their power and purpose?

However big or small your idea is let's have a chat...

Please email inbox@foyer.net to start the conversation

The Foyer Federation is registered in England and Wales under company number 2699839 at Work.Life, Core Building, 30 Brown Street, Manchester, M2 1DH. The charity is registered under charity number 1040482.

