

The

FOYER

Federation



# THE BIG QUESTIONS

APRIL/MAY 2024



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The Big Questions is the Foyer Federation's bi-annual survey of young people living in our member Foyers/supported accommodation services. In April 2024, we received a total of 141 responses from 25 Foyers.

The responses came from YMCA Basingstoke, Bath, Birchwood, Braintree, Bridge Foyer, Coops Foyer, YMCA Cheshire, YMCA Crouch End, Doncaster, Dove Cott, YMCA Eastbourne, Endeavour Foyer, Enfield Foyer, Milton Keynes YMCA, Monarch Court YMCA, Ravenhead Foyer, Salford, Sheffield, South Lakes, Springboard Foyer, Swan House, Torbay Foyer, Verve Place and Whitehaven.

The diverse range of responses highlights the unique experiences and perspectives of young people in Foyers across different regions, providing useful insights into the challenges and opportunities they encounter.



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# RESPONSES:

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## 1. How long have you lived at the service?

Duration	National Average
6 months - 1 year	30%
Between 1-2 years	30%
Less than 6 months	28%
Between 2-3 years	8%
More than 3 years	4%

## 2. We want to influence decision makers to improve the systems that affect young people. What are the three biggest challenges facing young people today?

	Spring 24	Autumn 23	Spring 23	Summer 22
Mental health	65% ↑	56%	68%	77%
Cost of living	57% ↓	66%	75%	31%
Housing	45% ↓	50%	38%	45%
Employment	30% ↑	24%	27%	36%
Relationships	16% ↑	14%	13%	14%
Substance use	14% ↑	13%	10%	20%
Loneliness	10% ↓	13%	10%	18%
Social Media	11% -	11%	3%	24%

The cost of living has been young people's biggest concern over the last year, but in spring 2024 mental health received the greatest number of responses. Housing and employment are also still big challenges, and the number of young people reporting difficulties finding or keeping work has increased. It is likely that the combined pressures of the increased cost of living, housing crisis and lack of employment options are contributing to young people's mental ill health.

Outside of the top responses, young people also said access to education, social inequality, physical health, citizenship status, and violence and abuse were big challenges.

### 3. Which of the following do you think needs to improve the most?

	Issue
#1	Affordable move-on accommodation, including for employed people
#2	Universal credit and wages rising to meet cost-of-living increases
#3	More suitable options for emergency and temporary accommodation
#4	Accessible and person-centred physical and mental health support
#5	Access to wellbeing opportunities, such as sports and leisure facilities
#6	Fair access to opportunities for employment
#7	Access to quality, flexible education opportunities

Young people's top priorities were affordable move-on accommodation, income rising to meet the cost of living, and better temporary housing options. We know that, while these needs are not being met, it can be challenging for young people to begin exploring wellbeing, education and employment opportunities – likely the reason these were voted lower on the scale.

### 4. What do you think is positive for young people right now?

	Spring 24	Autumn 23	Spring 23	Summer 22
Support	17% ↑	16%	10%	9%
Community and connections	16% ↑	12%	13%	13%
Activities and hobbies	15% ↑	6%	9%	8%
Nothing	14% ↑	10%	10%	10%
Education	11% ↑	9%	13%	9%
Personal growth	7%	-	-	-
Mental health	6%	-	3%	5%
Employment	5% ↓	10%	10%	13%
Having a say and Being Heard	5%	-	-	-
Diversity and Inclusion	3%	-	-	-
Spirituality	1%	-	-	-

It is positive to see young people increasingly valuing the support they receive in the Foyer and from others, increasing by 7% since last year's survey.

Community and connections also rose by 4% compared to last year, reflecting young people's growing appreciation for relationships with others. Other positives mentioned included access to nature and green spaces, achieving goals, building boundaries around social media, spirituality, an increase in safe LGBTQI+ spaces, and having their voice heard.

However, we also saw a rise in the percentage of young people who responded with 'nothing positive' (from 10% to 14%). This alongside growing needs around mental health and the cost of living is a cause of concern.



The responses to this question are submitted through a free text box. We have grouped the responses above to identify trends, and you can find each response in the appendix at the end of this document.

## 5. What do you think is worrying for young people right now?

	Spring 24	Autumn 23	Spring 23	Summer 22
Cost of living	40% ↓	59%	37%	45%
Housing	16% ↑	14%	7%	10%
Mental health	14% ↑	5%	13%	18%
The future	7% ↑	6%	3%	4%
Government / broken system	5% ↓	7%	2%	4%
Social media	6% ↑	5%	3%	8%
Employment	4% ↓	6%	6%	6%
Violent crime	4% ↓	5%	6%	6%

Cost of living has been the most significant worry for those surveyed since 2022. The decrease from 37% in spring 2023 to 40% Spring 2024 suggested some stabilisation, or that other issues such as housing and mental health have become more pressing. There was a significant increase in concern about housing over the last year, rising from 7% to 16%, suggesting that young people seeking to move into their own permanent residences continue to face barriers.

Those worried about mental health increased by nine percentage points between autumn 2023 and spring 2024, going back to similar levels of concern from Spring 2023.. One young person who noted the connection between the cost of living crisis and mental health said: “Cost of living is affecting people’s mental health a huge amount and it’s making people feel lonely and worried to speak about their issues and that’s when people resort to violence, substance abuse etc.”

The responses to this question are submitted through a free text box. We have grouped the responses above to identify trends, and you can find each response in full in the appendix.

## 6. Rate staff in your Foyer/service around the following areas:

	Area of choice	Poor		Average	Excellent	
		1	2	3	4	5
#1	Knowledge (how to refer young people to onward services or opportunities)	1%	2%	9%	38%	50%
#2	Compassion (showing care and acceptance that is free from judgement)	1%	4%	8%	26%	61%
#3	Professionalism (having clear boundaries)	1%	2%	12%	25%	60%
#4	Communication (staff listening well and being clear)	1%	3%	13%	32%	51%
#5	Availability (how easily young people can speak to staff)	1%	2%	15%	28%	54%
#6	Collaboration (involving young people in decisions)	2%	6%	15%	30%	47%
#7	Efficiency (how quickly staff respond and get things done)	1%	9%	19%	32%	39%

We asked young people to rate staff in the following areas: a score of 1 or 2 is defined as poor, a score of 3 is defined as average and a score of 4 or 5 is defined as excellent. In order from most highly rated to lowest is knowledge (88%), Compassion (87%), Professionalism (85%), Communication (82%), Availability (82%), Collaboration (77%), and Efficiency (71%).

**#1 Knowledge** was the highest-rated area with 88% of young people giving either a four or a five rating, this reflects that staff are well-equipped to guide young people towards further services and opportunities in Foyers. Around 9% of young people rated this area as average (three on the scale) suggesting there are some minor areas of improvement for ensuring staff are well equipped to refer young people onto onward services and opportunities.

**#2 Compassion** was the second highest-rated area, the majority of young people (87%) rated staff highly for showing care and acceptance that is free from judgement, indicating that staff consistently showed empathy for young people living in Foyers. Very few young people felt staff lacked compassion, and only 8% rated staff compassion as average (three on the scale)

**#3 Professionalism** was the third highest-rated area with 85% of young people rating staff ability to implement boundaries as excellent, reflecting the ability of staff to maintain healthy and respectful working relationships with young people in Foyers. However we can start to see an increase in the average (three on the scale) ratings, with a moderate portion (12%) feeling that staff professionalism was not excellent.

**#4 Communication**, similarly 83% of young people felt that staff communicated clearly and listened well which is a strength. Same as professionalism, 12% of young people gave an average rating (three on the scale). We can see that some young people may feel there are gaps in how well staff communicate or listen to them, which suggests some further exploration is needed in Foyers.

**#5 Availability** was rated fairly well, with 82% of young people rating it as excellent. However we start to see a further increase in average ratings in this area, with 15% of young people rating a three.

**#6 Collaboration** saw 77% of young people voting staff as excellent for involving them in decisions, reflecting a positive inclusiveness across the network. However, this area also received the highest number of poor ratings (one and two on the scale) and 15% of young people giving average ratings. In recent years, some Foyers, such as those engaged in the Youth Power Fund, have invested deeply in sharing power with young people, while others may be earlier in this journey. Involving young people meaningfully in decision making has huge benefits not just for those young people, but for the wider service. Our recent impact analysis and top tips blog are helpful tools to use however far along your service is. We invite Foyers to hand over more decision-making power to young people or reflect on the way decisions are made and communicated with young people in Foyers.

**#7 Efficiency** was the lowest-rated area which showed varying degrees of satisfaction and suggested there were opportunities for improving systems, processes and effective time management. Young people also highlighted a need for staff to increase their local knowledge on how to refer on to services and outside opportunities.

## 7. Share a time a staff member went the extra mile to support or inspire you

68% of young people told us inspiring stories about how staff in their Foyer went over and above, from accompanying them on therapeutic walks to ensuring they felt empowered in their personal growth journeys.

***“[She] has been my rock and got me through some really difficult situations that when I first moved in did not think I would be able to put it behind me.”***



## 8. Is there an area of the Foyer you would like to have more choice over?

Area of choice	%
The house rules	38%
Your bedroom (furniture, decoration, or location)	33%
The activities on offer (type and timing)	29%
The facilities and equipment at the Foyer	26%
The decoration of the building	23%
The use of communal spaces (resident lounge or garden)	21%
Room checks (day, time, and procedure)	17%
The learning and training options on offer	15%
How new staff are chosen	13%
Budget decisions	13%
Who your support worker is	12%
How staff communicate with you	11%
The interview and induction process	11%
Keyword sessions (day, time, and format)	9%
Other	1%

Most young people we surveyed said they wanted more control over house rules. Foyers could consider engaging residents in discussions or surveys about the house rules and review how they are applied and affect young people.

The second most selected answer was bedroom personalisation (furniture, decoration, or location), reflecting a desire for personal autonomy and a space that feels more like 'home'.

The 'other' category responses included more choice over housing options for move-on accommodation, while one person said they did not feel they needed more choice.

## 9. What gives you a sense of achievement or purpose in your life?

Area of choice	%	Example
Community and connections	20%	"Family make me feel good and its important to look after them"
Career and education	20%	"Being able to work"
Reaching personal goals	12%	"Having a routine"
Hobbies and interests	11%	"Football makes me happy"
Self-discovery and growth	8%	"Learning something new and seeing my progress"
Creativity and self-expression	7%	"Created artwork for a classroom"
Housing and independence	6%	"Getting my own place"
Don't know / Nothing	7%	"Nothing"
Helping others	4%	"When I support my friends when they are at their lowest. I know how that feels when you are low and have no one there to help."
Leadership / Having a say	2%	"Becoming a Vice-Chairman of The Foyer Fishing community."
Spirituality	2%	"Overcame a challenge and praying to God"
Mental Health / Wellbeing	1%	"Settling down and improving mental health"

20% of young people placed a high level of value on family, friends and romantic relationships, alongside being part of a wider community of support. 20% also said that employment and education gave them a sense of purpose in life. Both of these indicate that ensuring access to community buildings, and education and work training programmes, continue to be vital for young people.

## 10. Are you currently in employment, education or training?

Response Option	%
Yes	39%
No	34%
I am working towards it	28%

A significant portion were already on a path to self-improvement or career development, and 28% were working towards engagement and may need additional support to achieve their goals. However 34% were not engaged in employment, education, or training, indicating a substantial number were still facing complex barriers.

### 10a. If you answered no, are you open to exploring your available options?

Response Option	%
Definitely ready to explore my options	36%
Willing but not ready to explore my options	36%
Somewhat ready to explore my options	18%
Not ready, and not interested in exploring my options	7%

Of those young people not currently in employment, education or training, 36% said they were ready to explore their options, and 18% were somewhat ready – a very encouraging response showing progress being made. It is important that Foyers have proactive support in place for these young people to take the next step. Another 36% said that while they were not currently in employment, education, or training, or ready yet, they will eventually be willing to look at what is available, suggesting they require preparatory support and gradual encouragement.

Out of the 34% of young people who said they are not currently in employment, education or training only 7% said they were not ready and not interested in exploring their options, these young people may need deeper, personalised support to overcome significant barriers or motivation.

### 10b. Is there anything that would support you to achieve your dreams/aspirations?

Response Option	%
Healing from the past	61%
Building my self-belief and confidence	49%
Getting help with my mental health	49%
Increasing my level of motivation	42%
More opportunities in my local area	35%
Overcoming fear of failure	33%
Less obstacles within the system	30%
More money and budgeting skills	30%
Support with physical health needs	26%
More contacts and connections	16%
More encouragement	16%
More experience to build my CV, i.e. volunteering	9%
None of the above	2%

For those who said they were not currently in employment, education or training, 61% said that healing from past experiences was crucial to help them develop in this area. This suggested trauma or negative past experiences may be a barrier to their current progress.

49% of young people placed a high value on building their self-belief and confidence.



The demand for help with healing from the past, in connection with building self-confidence, suggested that emotional and psychological support is just as important as practical skills. This highlights the importance of the holistic approach Foyers take to working with young people.

*This data is pulled from the young people who told us they are not currently in employment, education or training.*

## 11. Thinking about your goals, which of these statements describes how you set them?

Response Option	%
Something I decide on with my key worker	48%
Something I set for myself	45%
Something my key worker sets and I agree to	6%

Nearly half (48%) of the young people said that they set their goals collaboratively with their keyworker, indicating the effectiveness of Foyers to coach young people in achieving their aspirations.

A significant portion (46%) set their own goals, highlighting a strong sense of independence and self-direction.

A smaller group (6%) said they more heavily relied on goals set by their key worker, which they then agreed to. This suggests that some young people are still in need of structured guidance and presents an opportunity for Foyers to reflect on whether any more can be done to empower young people to set their own goals. The Foyer Federation's coaching training can be a supportive step in growing coaching skills within staff teams.

## 12. How can you currently make your voice heard in your Foyer?

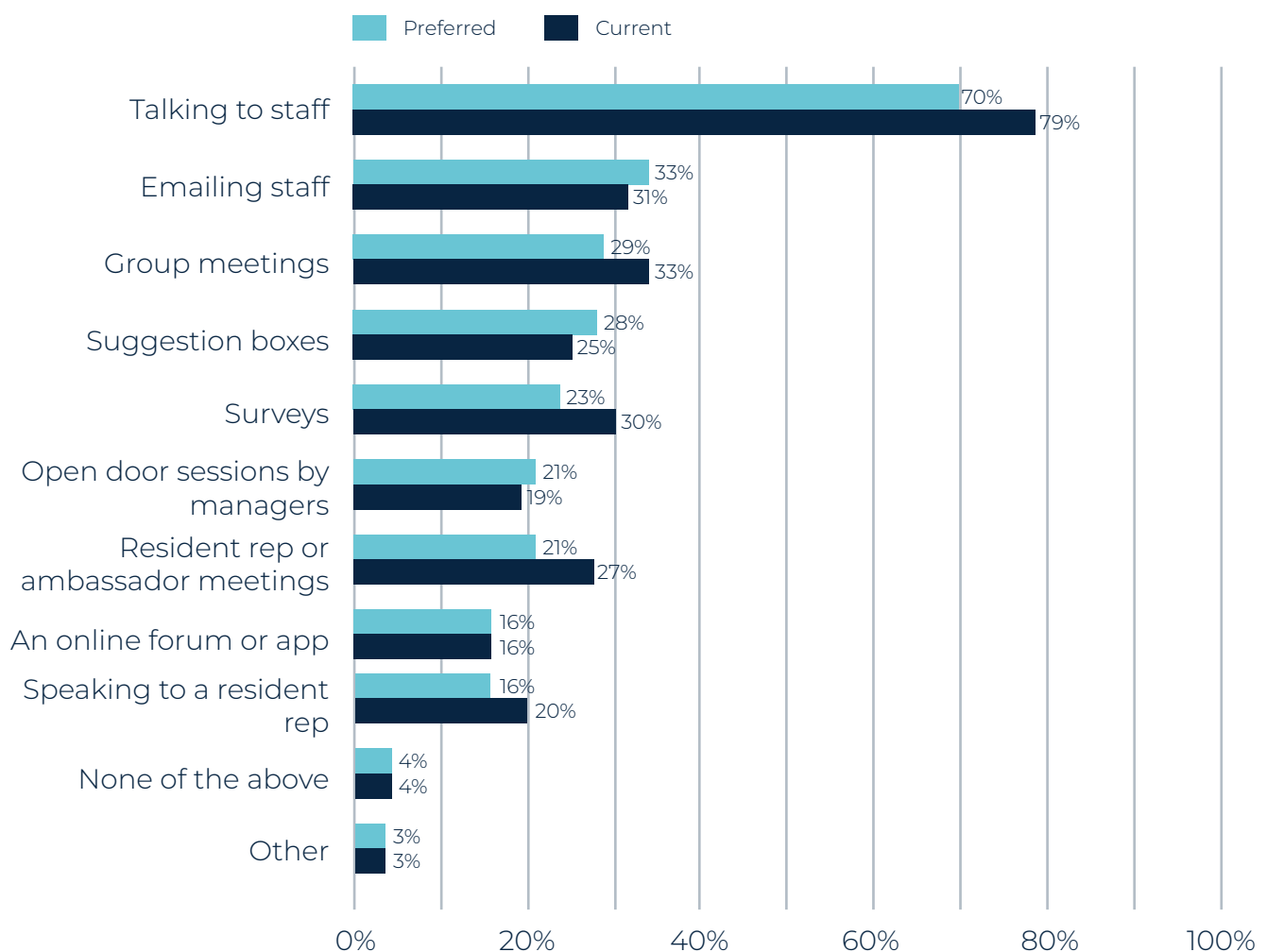
	Spring 24	Autumn 23	Spring 23	Summer 22
Talking to staff	79% ↑	74%	65%	59%
Group meetings	33% ↑	21%	–	–
Emailing staff	31% ↑	17%	25%	16%
Ambassador meetings	30% ↑	25%	31%	18%
Suggestion boxes	27% ↓	29%	28%	26%
Speaking to a resident rep	25% ↑	16%	19%	6%
Open door sessions by managers	20% -	20%	28%	11%
Surveys	19% ↓	23%	24%	19%
An online forum or app	16% ↓	17%	19.80%	21%
None of the above	4%	-	-	-
Other	3%	-	-	-

When asked about how they can make their voices heard, 79% of young people said via direct interactions with staff – a significant increase from 65% in spring 2023.

We have also started to see a trend towards more direct and personalised communication channels, with young people increasingly opting for interactions with staff, group meetings, speaking with a resident rep, or within a group meeting. More formal or less direct methods such as surveys, suggestion boxes and online forums were less popular.

*The “other” responses include socialising with residents and staff, indifference or lack of opinion*

### 13. How would you prefer to make your voice heard?



This question highlights a comparison between how young people in Foyers currently make their voices heard in Foyers and how they would prefer to.

When comparing how young people made their voices heard with how they would prefer to, there was good alignment. We saw some differences emerge, which highlights opportunities for improving communication and engagement strategies. Several communication methods were currently used more than young people would prefer.

While talking to staff remains the most common method of communication, there's a notable gap between preference (70%) and current practice (79%). This suggests that while many young people still value direct communication, fewer would prefer it as the dominant or primary method.

#### 14. How well does your Foyer listen to what you think and act on it?

	Spring 24	Autumn 23	Spring 23	Summer 22
I tell them what I think and things happen as a result	69% ↑	65%	55%	68%
I tell them what I think but it takes a long time for things to change or I'm not kept up to date	13% ↓	18%	24%	19%
I tell them what I think but it's very rare that anything changes as a result	12% ↓	11%	13%	6%
I could tell them what I think but I don't because I doubt they would do anything	6% ↑	5%	5%	4.8%
I don't even try to tell them what I think because they don't want to listen	0% ↓	0.9%	3%	2%

The percentage of young people who felt listened to and saw actions taken as a result of their conversations increased to 69%, up from 55% in spring 2023. This improvement suggested a significant positive trend in Foyers' commitment and ability to listen to and respond to young people's voices.

The proportion of young people who experienced delays or poor communication decreased from 24% in spring 2023 to 12%. This reduction is promising, and Foyers should remain focused on monitoring and refining their communication practices to ensure continued progress.

There remained some scepticism about the ability of Foyers to listen to and act on young people's feedback, with only a slight rise from 4.7% in spring 2023 to 6% in spring 2024. This highlights a potential area for improvement.

The percentage of young people who avoided sharing their thoughts due to a belief that Foyers won't listen has dropped to 0% from 3% within the last year. This decrease indicates growing trust in Foyers' commitment to listening and responding to young people, reflecting overall positive changes in how feedback is handled.



## 15. What activities are on offer at your Foyer?

Most Mentioned	Area of choice
#1	Cooking
#2	Art and creative sessions
#3	Trips and outings
#4	Sports and fitness
#5	Educational and life skills
#6	Social and recreational activities
#7	Gardening
#8	Support and counselling
#9	Unsure or don't engage
#10	Inreach community services/groups
#11	Chaplaincy/Faith

The most frequently mentioned activity on offer to the young people was cooking – it's clear that this activity is popular in Foyers, alongside creative sessions such as art and crafts. We saw that support/counselling activities that sit outside of keywork sessions are less available in Foyers. Young people have told us that mental health support is a top priority, and that healing from the past is the biggest barrier for young people in achieving their goals.

## 16. How could activities be more engaging and accessible

Area of choice	%	Example
Improved communication and notification	18%	"Being invited or a knock on my door"
More activities, variety or fun	16%	"There could be more on offer"
Satisfied with current activities	13%	"To be honest we are well informed with activities going on or to come"
Don't know / unsure	13%	"Don't know at the moment"
Timing of activities	12%	"Maybe weekend things and later in the evening"
Inclusivity and flexibility	11%	"Smaller numbers – because of anxiety"
Specific suggestions	10%	"Make a list and each resident has to engage in one activity a week"
Suggestions for more resources	7%	"More funding needed for the staff."

When asked about how to make activities more engaging and accessible, 18% of young people highlighted the importance of being properly notified about sessions and improving communication methods. Young people mentioned that a variety of communication methods could be used, such as personal invitations, notifications, door

knocking, posters, text messages or making regular time tables available. Overall, young people said they needed regular, consistent communication about sessions through a variety of channels.

Around 13% of young people also said they were currently happy with what was on offer in their Foyer, while 16% said there was a demand to cater for a wider range of interests and demographics. Young people suggested offering a variety of activities such as gender exclusive group sessions, sessions focused on physical and mental health, offsite events, and activities for all cultural backgrounds.

## 17. How interested are you in growing your leadership within your Foyer?

	Spring 24	Autumn 23	Spring 23	Summer 22
I would like to contribute my ideas through a survey or conversations from time to time	43% ↑	37%	33%	41%
I don't want to share my ideas	30% ↑	16%	18%	24%
I would like to be part of a small group of young people committed to leading change	20% ↑	18%	29%	14%
I would like to be invited to decision-making meetings with staff	18% ↓	33%	26%	15%
I would like to be given specific responsibilities and roles in the Foyer, eg interviewing new staff	17% -	17%	18%	12%
I would like to contribute my ideas in group sessions without committing long-term	15% ↓	24%	26%	18%
Other	2% ↓	3%	4%	-

*Other responses included a desire for more informal and collaborative ways to share ideas without hierarchical pressure, having responsibilities they enjoy and favouring a collaborative approach over leadership roles.*

The interest in contributing ideas through surveys or conversations had increased, reflecting a growing enthusiasm among young people for sharing their thoughts in a flexible, low-commitment way.

However we also saw a rise in young people not wanting to share their ideas. While it is important that young people have the ability to opt out of leadership roles if they are not ready, staff could explore why young people are not willing to contribute and explore new strategies.

Interestingly, the data revealed a potential shift in how young people want to engage with leadership and decision-making. While there was an increased interest in being part of small groups leading change, there was also a decline in interest in participating in decision-making meetings with staff.

This trend could suggest that young people might prefer less formal, more collaborative leadership roles over traditional, hierarchical decision-making meetings. We encourage Foyers to consider creating more collaborative and informal leadership opportunities that align with young people's growing interests.

### 18. How do you feel about the future?



Young people in foyers are experiencing mixed emotions about the future, with equal proportions feeling both anxious and hopeful (48.9%), while many also report nervousness (40%), uncertainty (34.8%), and excitement (34.1%), reflecting a blend of optimism and apprehension.

### 19. How interested are you in growing your leadership with the Foyer Federation?

Response Option	Responses	%
Sorry but I am not interested	55	44.00%
Have a say – I would like to share my experiences or offer suggestions	26	21.00%
Get involved – engage in something such as receiving a grant or join a programme	25	20.00%
Collaborate – I would like to design/develop things, making joint decisions	14	11.00%
Lead the way – I want to lead events, deliver training and offer views on future direction	5	4.00%

The data shows that while a significant portion (43.7%) of young people in Foyers are not interested in growing their leadership with the Foyer Federation, there is still notable interest in having a say (20.6%) and getting involved (19.8%) in initiatives like grants or programmes. A smaller, but engaged group is interested in collaborating on decisions (11.1%) or leading events and shaping the organisation's future (4%).



# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Age

Group	%
16	3.0%
17	5.0%
18	5.0%
19	6.0%
20	6.0%
21	6.8%
22	9.0%
23	10.5%
24	14.0%
25	17.0%
26+	18.0%

## Gender Identity

Group	%
Male	48%
Female	43%
Non-binary	60%
Other	1%

## Disability

Group	%
No disability reported	60%
Disability reported	40%

## Religion or Belief

Group	%
None/No Religion	41%
Christian	16%
Atheist	9%
Spiritual	8%
Muslim	7%
Agnostic	5%
Open/questioning	3%
Prefer Not to Say/Don't Know	2%

## Ethnicity

Group	%
White British	80%
Black African	4%
Other Ethnic Group	3%
Black British	2%
Other Black Background	2%
Asian Bangladeshi	2%
Mixed White and Asian	2%
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	2%
Other Mixed Background	2%
Arab	1%
Mixed White and Black African	1%
Other Asian Background	1%

## Sexual Orientation

Group	%
Straight/Heterosexual	64%
Bisexual	14%
Lesbian	11%
Pansexual	4%
Gay	3%
Asexual	1%
Unsure	1%
It's complicated	1%
Non binary	1%



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