

**How does Practitioners' Usage of
Deterministic Language Impact Youth
Foyer Residents?**

Preregistration Report

by Winter Washbrook

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This preregistration report follows a free-to-access template (Delyea, 2023) to ensure that as much information about the study as possible is provided. Internal and external reliability and validity are of utmost importance, to ensure that this research is as useful and replicable as possible both to the Foyer Federation and to any other agencies or individuals that may take interest.

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Description

In the UK, Foyers are youth supported housing aimed at providing holistic support to young people who have experienced homelessness (Foyer Federation, 2024b). Over 30 years ago, the Foyer Federation was founded as an organisation aimed at radicalising the UK's approach to supported housing for young adults and adolescents, later developing an asset-, or strengths-, based approach called "Advantaged Thinking" (Foyer Federation, 2024). Implementing this approach has highlighted the importance of effective and accessible communication to best represent the residents of these Foyers and their experiences. Performing quantitative and qualitative research into how residents respond to different terminology and communication styles therefore is a vital step toward ensuring Foyers represent and support their residents to achieve the best outcomes.

Determinism in this context refers to the notion that language used by practitioners (people working in Foyers or with residents) can influence the perception of free will that the resident has regarding personal experiences and situations. Motivation refers to a resident's willingness to engage with practitioners and other support offered within their Foyer. A literature review by Srivastava (2019) outlines several components of effective communication, finding that health literacy and stigma were important factors to consider, emphasising the necessity of careful consideration of terminology and language. For improving health literacy, Srivastava suggests this may look like using easy to understand (or "plain") language; meanwhile, for combatting stigma, they emphasise individual-focused practices, as using labels based on conditions or how much they follow "modifications"

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correlates to worsened health behaviour outcomes for patients. Labelling theory dictates that people often modify their own behaviour to align with labels they are given, as words significantly impact perceptions and attitudes (Palmer, 2018). When discussing marginalised populations, linguistic choices may generate emotional reactions, creating barriers to understanding while also reinforcing potentially harmful stereotypes. Palmer suggests that categorical labels alone do not carry positive or negative connotations; they are products of social influences, consequently suggesting that deviance itself is socially constructed.

Bearing this in mind, it seems imperative to explore the impact that language used to refer to Foyer residents can have on self-perception and motivation to engage with practitioners.

Impact

Existing research into the linguistic preferences of individual supported-housing residents and how these influence their outcomes is severely lacking, particularly in relation to the UK supported housing market. Performing this research would provide vital insight into the power of language, and strengthen scientific understanding of cultural expectations, prejudices, and beliefs of a highly vulnerable population of the UK.

Hypothesis and Nature of Study

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The alternative hypothesis of this research is that using resident-first language either with or about residents will have significantly higher resident preference and motivation to engage in work with their Foyer over critical or pathological language.

The nature of this study does not require any manipulation of variables; therefore, this research is observational.

No deception will be necessary, any information surrounding the study will be shared with the participants before any questions are completed.

Study Design and Data Collection

This study will be cross-sectional, in the form of a questionnaire, allowing for a wide range of data samples from as many Foyers and regions as possible. This also acts in accordance with personal limitations, as accessible resources are not sufficient to perform a longitudinal study, and the high attrition rate of participants within such would lower the final data sample count significantly, which can be avoided through the cross-sectional approach.

For this research, participants will be required to live in a registered youth Foyer and be aged 18 or over. They will be recruited through snowball sampling, achieved through networking with practitioners at Foyers associated with the Foyer Federation, requesting they pass it on to any residents they feel may be interested in participating. There is no required limit for the sample size; data submissions will only be accepted for a month following publication of the questionnaire. As of the date of submitting this preregistration report, the questionnaire has not been made public; data have not been collected, accessed, or analysed.

Measured Variables

For this study, the independent variable will be the terminology, while the outcome, or dependent, variable will be the participants' perceptions of the language used. This will be measured through asking participants questions such as "How do you feel when you are referred to [by practitioners, by friends, etc] using the following language?" accompanied by various Likert scales (E.G., 1-7, 1 being very uncomfortable, 7 being very comfortable).

Awareness of the response biases these scales are susceptible to (Kreitchmann et al., 2019) such as central tendency bias, acquiescence bias, and social desirability bias, will play a central role within the creation of the questions to ensure results are as valid as possible. An example of how these will be navigated is that words will be categorised based on the perceptual expectations of the researcher and then put into a random order to reduce the chances of participants anticipating expectations and responding in line with those over genuine feelings.

For qualitative data, participants will be asked to expand on their response to the Likert-scale questions, but they do not have to respond. This will largely cover the motivational aspect, through open questions such as "do words shape your willingness to engage?" and "what is important for you when communicating with staff at your Foyer?". These questions both directly and indirectly provide explanations for why people may not appear motivated such as when engaging in social events, following pathway plans, etc.

Ethical Considerations

Due to the potential for disclosure of sensitive information within the responses, close monitoring of the research from Foyer Federation representatives, particularly the Head of Communications, will occur. This ensures that information remains confidential, and that the risk for harm is minimised. Consistent adherence to the Foyer Federation's safeguarding and privacy policies (Hart & Craddock, 2024; Foyer Federation, 2025) will be ensured through frequent meetings between the researcher and the Head of Communications, amongst other staff members, to analyse and critique current methodological decisions and developments. Navigating the potential for mental distress requires careful consideration of the terminology used within the study. Therefore, all terminology participants are assessing will be surrounding broader topics affecting a wide range of Foyer residents, rather than more specified language that may correlate too heavily with their past experiences. Within both the introductory and conclusionary information, mental health support services will be listed for people to contact if they feel negatively impacted by the study. There will also be encouragement to speak to support workers within their respective Foyers where possible.

Statistical Models

For any quantitative data, there will likely be a skewed distribution, with no manipulation occurring within the study, and each individual contributing data to both "participant-first" (or strengths-based) and "professional-first" (or detriment-based) groups. The means of each participant's responses per terminology category will be used for analysis. Due to the

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use of Likert scales, whether the data is interval or ordinal is ambiguous; at this moment, the Wilcoxon rank sum test assumptions appear to align most with the data, but correlational analysis in the form of a Chi-Squared Goodness of Fit may be more appropriate (Brown, 2020).

For any qualitative data, a combination of analytical techniques will be utilised, specifically thematic analysis – identification of common themes -- and interpretative phenomenological analysis – attempting to adopt the perspective of the individual to best understand their experiences. Interpretation of repeated themes within the qualitative responses is necessary; it is vital to ensure the complexity of individual perspectives is at the forefront of any analytical processes.

Costs

Financial costs of this research should be negligible; most costs incurred from this research will take the form of physical labour. This will include time spent by the researcher writing up questions and the final article; networking to various Foyers nationally to encourage participation; frequent conversations between the researcher and the Foyer Federation; and internal conversations between different Foyer Federation staff.

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