

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee
DATE	30 August 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Aberdeen Foyer Visit
REPORT NUMBER	CUS/23/267
DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Jacqui McKenzie
REPORT AUTHOR	Paul Tytler
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with a report following the Committee visit to Aberdeen Foyer on 21 June 2023.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Notes the report at Appendix 1 provided by Aberdeen Foyer; and
- 2.2 Thank all those at Aberdeen Foyer, including the many staff, volunteers and participants, who welcomed the Committee and provided an informative and interesting afternoon.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 On 21st June 2023, the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee visited Aberdeen Foyer as part of the programme of visits to key organisations. Information provided as part of the visit is attached at Appendix 1.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	None	None	L	Yes
Compliance	None	None	L	Yes
Operational	None	None	L	Yes
Financial	None	None	L	Yes
Reputational	None	None	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	None	None	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2022-2023</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	There is no proposal in this report
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	There is no proposal in this report
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	There is no proposal in this report
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	There is no proposal in this report

Regional and City Strategies	There is no proposal in this report
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9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	It is confirmed by Chief Officer Jacqui McKenzie no Integrated Impact Assessment is required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 N/A

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1 Report from Aberdeen Foyer of Committee Visit

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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On 21st June, Aberdeen Foyer welcomed a visit from Aberdeen City Council's Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee to find out more about our services and how we are working alongside people and communities across the region. The following paper sets out to capture what was shared on the day.

Aberdeen Foyer is on a mission to end youth homelessness and prevent and alleviate the impact of poverty on young people and adults across northeast Scotland. Child poverty is increasing, and the long tail of the global pandemic combined with the impact of climate change and cost of living crisis continues to generate heightened social, political and economic uncertainty.

Aberdeen Foyer exists to create positive and lasting change working alongside people experiencing tough life challenges and the wider system to address and prevent *the root causes of poverty* and youth homelessness across local communities in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

our vision is for people to thrive, feel connected and included in their community, where everyone has a safe, decent place to call home and access to resources to live a good life.

our mission every day is to support people to discover their potential, overcome challenges, and build their own positive future.

We believe there is no limit to what people can achieve in their lives.



Our way of working

We serve and work alongside young people from age 12-25 and adults of all working ages (16-67) living in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire who are experiencing tough life situations that make it difficult to achieve a good life and a positive future. Decades of experience has taught us that every person's journey is different, that people's problems are often complex and their skills and talents always unique.

Across all our services we start where someone is at and get alongside them to understand and find solutions around any immediate challenges whilst getting to know people's strengths, stories and aspirations. We encourage trusting relationships and support people to build confidence and self-awareness, ensuring access to opportunities and resources they might need to achieve their goals in life, find their purpose and feel valued. We understand the importance of community, of having a sense of belonging and solidarity with others as a way of developing self-esteem and have built this into our range of learning programmes and ways of working across our services.

Developed by the Foyer Federation, Advantaged Thinking is our strengths-based philosophy and challenges deficit-based thinking. It offers a different starting point that identifies, nurtures and invests in each person's skills and talents connecting them to overcoming challenges and achieving their goals and positive futures.

We appreciate our services are part of a wider system and to improve outcomes we need to understand collectively and work collaboratively. The Reboot initiative nurtures a systems thinking approach to tackling the complex social problems that are causing young people to disengage from education at critical points in their lives. Reboot is an offer and an invitation to stakeholders to come together to let go existing paradigms and experience working experimentally, identifying opportunities to act differently as they emerge. Through improving understanding of the problem spaces, we create opportunities to think critically and creatively together. This way of working has been and continues to be experimental and emergent.

We believe change can only happen when people work together, which is why we nurture trusted partnerships and collaborative working as part of the local community, with people who benefit from our services and with stakeholders locally and nationally.

What we do

The Foyer model grew out of a need for young people in post war Europe to have a safe place to call home and support to learn and engage in employment. This model is still as relevant today. Having a safe place to call home is the cornerstone to what we do and we provide a variety of integrated programmes and services which combine to provide wraparound support for young people and adults around 6 key areas:

- **Youth Housing**
- **Foyer Futures**
- **Learning**
- **Employability**
- **Fitmind Psychology and Counselling Service**
- **Communities**

We offer a holistic approach creating opportunity for people to have, and exercise, choice in their lives. Each of our services offers support to address significant challenges people might be facing and inspiration and resources to shape their own future. By wrapping around the people who use our services, we navigate and change the system with them, based on their needs and aspirations.

Service Managers and Team Leaders provided an overview of the 6 Teams and about their current service delivery:

Foyer Youth Housing – working to ensure that homelessness for young people is rare, brief and non-recurring.

Key Service Facts:

- We provide 27 individual tenancies for young people aged 16-25 years at Trinity Court.
- All referrals come via Aberdeen City Council Homeless Team.
- Average stay is 6-8 months
- Young people are provided with support and assistance in budgeting, cooking, cleaning and claiming benefits
- All young people have access to other Foyer services – counselling, digital and financial inclusion offering wraparound support.
- Move on support now included in commissioned service which supports a stronger transition and so far, has led to sustained tenancies.
- Work with partners to enhance service offer, e.g. Homeless Practice Nurse, ADA, various food donations (e.g. Social Bite, Pret a Manger)

Over the last 2 years, Aberdeen Foyer has worked closely with Children and Young People's Social Work teams to support the arrival and integration of young unaccompanied asylum seekers. To date we have supported 15 young people and provided move on support for 4 of them (others supported by Social Work). We currently hold 6 spaces to ensure a rapid response and working with the Homeless team to manage increasing demand.

We aim to find youth focused solutions to ensuring homelessness for young people is rare, brief and non-recurring. We have set up Nightstop, a community hosting initiative jointly commissioned with Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council to support a regional approach. It has taken time to build a bank of community hosts and are now actively offering this service to young people.

Early intervention and prevention is a key aspect of our work and for the last 2 years we have been piloting Upstream a screening tool that helps identify risks around homelessness with NESCOL at

their Altens campus. We are about to launch a second pilot in Northfield Academy. The tool helps to identify the key risks individual young people may be experiencing that could result in them becoming homeless in the future. We are drawing on the learning from Upstream Wales and Upstream Australia.

Our work directly support LOIP Outcome 11.5 to Reduce youth homelessness by 6% by 2023 (which was achieved).

Foyer Futures

Key Service Facts:

- Work with young people aged 12 – 24 facing tough life situations who have disengaged with education
- Support to build confidence, develop talents, plan for their future and achieve their goals in getting there.
- We provide personalised 1-to-1 support and group work.
- Positive outcomes may include: reengagement with education, achieving accredited qualifications, making positive steps into employment and training and improved confidence and wellbeing.

Our team consistently achieves over 90% engagement with referrals with 75% achieving positive outcomes. We are working with between 80 – 100 young people at any time across the city.

We support young people from across the city taking referrals through schools, Fitlike Hubs, Outreach Team, other third sector partners and self-referrals. Current demand is high and we are having to work with young people for longer. So much so that we have a waiting list for the first time in the 12 years we have operated this service. Most young people we are supporting have completely disengaged with education and levels of social anxiety and suicide ideation are common.

We are also seeing riskier behaviour increase and use of alcohol and substances increasing. We work in partnership with ADA, funded through Aberdeen City ADP providing early intervention support for young people in local communities who may be affected by alcohol/substance use – their own and those around them. **This links directly to achieving LOIP Outcome 12.1.**

Foyer Learning

The Learning Team delivers three different college accredited programmes: REACH, Prince's Trust Team Programme and Foyer Families in partnership with NESCOL. Each programme runs three times a year with the exception of Foyer Families which deliver twice a year due to it being longer and avoiding summer holidays.

REACH is open to all aged 16+ who are feeling isolated in their community for various reasons, e.g. substance use, mental health, changing life circumstances. REACH offers a 12-week course, 4

days per week that gradually nurtures confidence, connection, teamwork and learning new skills and connecting with existing talents. A key outcome for people is feeling connected to their local community – a sense of belonging which is key to positive wellbeing.

Prince's Trust Team Programme is delivered over 12 weeks Programme offering young people aged 16-25 years an opportunity to experience feeling part of a team, gain qualifications, do outward bound activities and engage in work experience.

Foyer Families offers parents with children aged 12 and under an opportunity to engage in a part time (3 days per week) college accredited (City and Guilds) programme aimed at increasing their confidence, supporting peer connection and support, a safe space to learn and develop their skills and talents as individuals and as parents. Across 16 weeks both online and in person each parent is supported to engage in a variety of activities that have a focus on self-care, personal development and parenting (both as individuals and coming together as families) and learning e.g. child development. Our practitioners are PEEP trained. Free childcare and digital kit is offered.



All learning programmes identify and develop a community project which could be tidying up a community space, painting and refreshing community spaces, etc. Each team fundraises to pay for the project before carrying it out. Over the last year across all 3 learning programmes approximately £15K has been raised by participants which is spent directly in local communities. E.g. Our REACH team from Spring 23 repainted the Sea Cadets space and in turn they kindly hosted the REACH team's graduation ceremony.

Foyer Employability

Key service Facts:

- We continue to see fair employment as a key factor in alleviating poverty.
- Work with 16-67 years
- Employability support is wider than moving into work. For many tackling immediate issues is essential before people are able to think about and feel confident in moving into work. We provide access to food, digital kits and bursaries (cash first approach)
- Work with a variety of local employers, DWP, other training providers and college to provide accredited sector-based training where there is known vacancies.

- Currently supporting 135 individuals; 20 are undergoing sector-based training and 29 are receiving in work support.

Funding for employability support has changed and is moving to more piecemeal commissioning which makes it harder for longer term planning and ensuring stability of support as it is often time limited to a few weeks. Fair Start ends in March 2024 leaving a significant gap in the city. At present the unemployment rate is low however higher levels of vacancies. The challenge can be matching people to opportunities they wish to and are qualified to take up.

Ensuring benefits checks and supporting people access eligible income is carried out across all teams. We work with existing resources including ACC's own FIT team, CAB and CFINE's Safe team. **Foyer's Financial Inclusion team** also provides additional support and expert knowledge for our teams and clients. With Funding from City Council to provide cash first support between June 22 to April 23 we supported 260 individuals which were made up of:

- 50 families (26 of which are lone parents and 8 of which are aged 16-24)
- 160 young people aged 16-24 (26 are part of families, the awards made on behalf of the family)
- 11 individuals with disabilities
- 39 Minority Ethnic households

We provided:

78 Fuel top ups

87 hardship grants

39 household items

56 other essentials, eg warm clothing

From June last year to June 23 the service has supported 128 individuals achieve financial gains to the value of £26,430, some benefit applications are still awaiting an outcome. 19 individuals have been supported to renegotiate their energy debt with three receiving a grant towards reducing their debt.

Fitmind Psychology and Counselling Service

Our Foyer Health team recently rebranded to Foyer Fitmind to better reflect the development of our psychological and psychotherapeutic services.

Key service Facts:

- Counselling service for Aberdeen residents aged 16+
- Multiple referrals routes from professionals and self-referrals.
- Currently two trained counsellors and 10 postgrad student placements.
- Clients are matched after an initial conversation to fit the appropriate modality, age and availability and desired delivery: in-person or online. Parents of small children benefit from online option.
- Offering up to 12 sessions is the standard per client, but sometimes increased to 18. Clients can also be referred back after a 3-month break.
- Fitmind provides support to other Foyer teams: a counsellor is present at Trinity Court (Housing) once per week and Fitmind contribute to Foyer Families curriculum by delivering sessions on child development.
- Our resident Educational Psychologist is on hand to provide direct support E.g. recent Foyer Futures client supported with a distorted sleeping pattern.
- Fitmind has developed a variety of resources and training that is deepening our team's relational practices leading to improved service outcomes.
- Fitmind are now offering learning and training to external partners.
- Fitmind have been a key partner in Suicide Prevention for over 10 years and regularly support awareness raising and training.

On receiving multiple referrals from our Communities Team who support those with experience of community justice, Fitmind Counselling identified a need amongst prisoners on remand. Whilst on remand people have no access to NHS counselling services. Since January 23 we have been visiting HMP Grampian one day per week offering counselling sessions which has had a positive response. Counselling for many continues post release and is offering a key relationship in their rehabilitation.

Foyer Communities

Our multidisciplinary team get to know local communities where people are experiencing high levels of poverty. We seek to work with local communities to co-create solutions and support/resource options resulting in a variety of interventions that are short and longer term. Building trust takes time and it is resulting in emerging activities that are driven by people living in those communities.

Key service facts:

- E.g. through community engagement, young people identified they wanted support with their wellbeing. We piloted a programme with a group in 2022 and are now delivering this on a regular basis. Just recently the last cohort revamped a shelter at the beach (see below).
- We have recently added Living Life to The Full (LLTTF) a short course designed to help people build confidence and skills to self-manage their health conditions and life circumstances
- The team are skilled in delivering 1-to-1 support and engaging people in NESCOL accredited learning as a means of initial first steps enabling people to feel more confident to be able to tackle existing challenges and becoming college students too.
- Have just started a new pilot with Torry GP surgery with Foyer Communities staff based there once a week. GP staff can book in clients who they feel may benefit from our support, the team carry out the initial interview to assess their needs and discuss the support available than can ensure a warm handover to other Foyer or community services. We are also delivering CPD sessions to the Surgery teams on a regular basis.
- Following corporate support and donations through Kier Construction and Veitchi Flooring we have revamped our Marywell kitchen offering free breakfast on a daily basis and lunch twice a week open to all. The Kitchen is run by staff and talented volunteers and since being reopened by the Lord Provost in May has served over 600 breakfasts and 360 lunches.
- 6 new mobile cooking units have just been purchased and will use to engage people in local communities around cooking where there is little access.
- Our Digital Inclusion coach delivers a weekly digital café as well as outreach support across local communities improving digital skills.
- For a number of years, we have had a great partnership with Aberdeen City's parks and hundreds of individuals have benefited from access to our Grove Allotment and the therapeutic space that growing plants and vegetables brings. During the pandemic a team of four volunteers worked a timetable – all are in recovery and stated this kept them living.

The team also deliver support to those who are on Community Payback Orders working closely with Community Justice. Over 22-23 out of a possible 2328.50 hours the team supported individuals to complete 1897.50 of payback orders focusing on employability skills

Across the last year 98 out of 123 referrals engaged with the voluntary programme (80%). Of these:

- 13 secured employment to date (directly supporting the LOIP Project Charter Project Ref 10.2 and surpassing target)
- 38 completed qualifications including CSCS, C&G units
- 16 moved on to other Foyer training programmes
- 18 referred to counselling



Foyer Social Enterprises

Our businesses provide valuable income to support the work of the Foyer, raise the profile of the organisation in the wider community and provide employment, work experience and training opportunities. All profit from our commercial ventures supports the wider work of the Foyer.

Foyer Graphics provide high quality design services to clients across all sectors - businesses large and small. Services include branding / logos / design for print / digital design / animation. www.foyergraphics.com

Roadwise Driver Training is a Community Interest Company (CIC) providing various driver development programmes from learner driving tuition through to a range of driver safety training for young drivers, company employees and individuals who want to improve their driving skills or those who have, or wish to have, a career as a driving instructor. www.roadwisedrivertraining.co.uk

Immediate Outcomes from the Visit

We would like to take the opportunity to thank those who visited the Foyer and engaged with staff and people using Foyer services. Within 24 hours of the visit, our Foyer REACH team received a donation to their fundraising efforts to support their community project in Tullos Community Garden. In addition, a young person from the Princes Trust Team 66 was supported to connect to the local fire brigade having expressed interest in a career with the fire service. In both instances, people felt listened to and that their time in meeting with the committee mattered. This was much appreciated.

Key Questions and Challenges for the Committee

The committee tasked us with sharing key questions and challenges in tackling poverty and inequalities across the city:

1. Tackling poverty and youth homelessness is complex. Safe homes are key. We are keeping a watching brief on the developing legislation around Prevention Duties for Homelessness as a lever for supporting 'Ask and Act' duties across all public sector

bodies. *How might the work of the committee tie back to the Ending Homelessness in Aberdeen Working Group and what would Ask and Act look like across the public and third sector locally?*

2. *How might public procurement improve the lever of Fair Work Practices to support more employers to ensure they are achieving Living Wage and Community Benefit clauses to support jobs and apprenticeships (as appropriate)?*
3. Fair Work Employment remains a key factor in lifting yourself out of poverty. Employability support is wider than moving into work. It can often be the first form of contact that people are able to engage with and for many that we work with the first steps are dealing with immediate issues that are preventing them from being able to think about moving into work, e.g. debt, mental health issues, poverty. Our employability teams are supported by other Foyer services - counselling, financial and digital inclusion and learning resources. *How might the committee ensure that employability support provision across the city is held as a key essential factor in alleviating poverty and that resources take people's needs locally into account in the service design? How does this link to Community Wealth Building Strategy?*
4. *Linked to q.3 is access to affordable childcare – what can be done to build on access and flexibility?*
5. The cost of living continues to increase with food costs especially rising dramatically at rates even higher than general inflation. The numbers of people living in deep poverty (40% or below of the median household income) continues to increase (estimated at around 460,000 people across Scotland in 2017-20) and the economic uncertainty around rents, mortgage payments is driving uncertainty around housing (26% increase in homeless presentations in Aberdeen in the last 12 months). Geopolitical unrest and potential changes to national and local government make it hard to gauge which policies will develop and impact further. Arrears are increasing and little in the way of safety nets. When every day becomes an all-consuming battle to afford essentials and deal with the effects of hardship including negative mental wellbeing, threat of eviction and fear around provision for your children, these become a barrier to securing employment. Based on our experience being able to provide immediate relief can open up further solutions and space to think about solutions. Flexible Family Fund and Cash First approach are both Scottish Government funding possibilities. *How might the committee support cash first initiatives with linked support that offers flexibility and lived experience to drive solutions?*

To find out more about Aberdeen Foyer please go to www.aberdeenfoyer.com and/or follow our social media channels on Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook.