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Foyers in the UK and France – Comparisons and Contrasts

Abstract

The Foyer movement in the UK developed from the early 1990s as a response to inter-related youth problems of homelessness, unemployment and limited training and recreation facilities. In an attempt to 're-enfranchise' large numbers of disaffected young people a strategy of providing accommodation, training and other facilities was pursued based upon an understanding of French successes.

France has a long tradition of Foyers providing accommodation and support dating back to the mid nineteenth century, although developments over the past 20 year period perhaps represent the most interesting period from the UK perspective. During this time many French Foyers have increased their range of activities and introduced new practice and governance. This paper focuses on both the UK and French experiences of Foyers and highlights some comparisons and contrasts.

The paper looks first at the evolution of the French Foyer system, highlighting its objectives, governance, tensions and current role. This analysis raises issues about the reasons for the development and evolution of Foyers and their potential which are directly relevant to the success or failure of the UK initiatives.

The UK element of the paper is based on research at a national level and from case studies of a variety of different schemes that have been developed since 1992, when the UK Foyer Federation set a target for the development of 100 new Foyers by the turn of the century.   It sets out the principles upon which Foyers have been based and examines both their evolving role and the problems that have been encountered.

Whilst there are clearly marked differences between the two countries in funding regimes, cultures and governance, it is also apparent that there are many similarities. Of particular relevance is the more recent French strategy of combining accommodation, training and other client support services (such as personal development and careers guidance). In particular, like the French Foyer movement, the UK one is trying to position itself somewhere on the spectrum of liberalism and interventionism in ways that are acceptable to young people and government alike.

1.   **Introduction**

In the UK Foyers are a relatively new policy which aims to help young people through a package of assistance including housing, training and other support to help ensure independent living and improved employment opportunities. The policy is modelled on the French Foyer system which has a very much longer history and a far wider constituency, introduced in response to the pressures of rural urban migration in the nineteenth century but also taking on new roles in the later part of the twentieth. The objective of this paper is to examine the development of the two systems to see what lessons can be learned about what works and why, and especially how the UK can learn from French experience better to provide for vulnerable young people.

Clearly France and the UK represent two different cultures and approaches to housing policy, but both countries have to face similar housing problems among low income households and the exclusion of many of their most vulnerable groups from the employment market. Young people are particularly at the mercy of housing shortages, high housing costs, social exclusion and a lack of suitable employment. In France the attainment of any employment can be a major issue for many young people, whilst within the UK experience an imbalance between earnings and housing costs is currently seen as more important. The recent story of Foyers in both countries reflects attempts to overcome some of these problems.

Foyer provision in France is considerable. The Union des Foyers de Jeunes Travailleurs (UFJT) provided 36,029 flats or bed spaces in 2003.   Foyers vary in size, as well as the types of services offered – from 30 bed spaces to over 200, with the majority offering only accommodation services, whilst others provide a whole range of support and training. Approximately 15 percent of provision is in normal houses ('logements diffus') rather than in hostels.   In 2003, 200,000 young people received support from these Foyers. There is a high proportion of young people in French Foyers with lower than average educational attainment (only 50 percent of young people in French Foyers had completed high school, compared to 69 percent in the population as a whole). Of the total number of Foyers approximately one third (accounting for 12,174 bed spaces/flats) have been updated in recent years to include support in addition to basic accommodation.

In the UK young persons' accommodation is not so heavily concentrated in Foyers as in France.   In 2004 there were 120 Foyers in the UK (represented by the UK Foyer Federation), providing 4,654 bed spaces, supporting approximately 10,000 young people per year (Foyer Federation statistics, 2004).   Other sources of support and accommodation in addition to Foyers include the YMCA movement and more general supported hostel provision. As a result, Foyers in the UK tend to represent a distinct solution to youth problems, rather than the main form of provision – which focuses strongly not only on accommodation, but also resident support, life-skills training and more general training courses. In this respect the UK Foyers more closely resemble the updated French Foyers. On this comparison the total bed spaces provided by UK Foyers

is approximately a third of the French total. UK Foyers also generally tend to be smaller, with most having fewer than 80 bed spaces.

Two contrasting evolutionary paths can be observed in the two countries. The methodologies pursued studying of the two approaches are therefore rather different. In the French case the long tradition of Foyer provision requires an analysis based on historical evolution, with the aim of understanding recent developments. The UK methodology tends to focus more on the specific reasons for the development of Foyers in the 1990s, and the ways they have evolved to meet the aspirations of both government and young people.

In this paper we therefore first set out some of the history of Foyers in France concentrating on the particular role played by Foyers for young people. This leads to a clarification of the term Foyer as well as a discussion of the benefits and problems associated with the range of approaches which come under the general heading of 'Foyers' in France. The development of Foyers in the UK is then reviewed and the similarities and dissimilarities with the French approach highlighted. Finally, the article brings out some implications for the future development of Foyers in the UK and the broader provision of accommodation with support for young people and others in need of assistance.

## 2.	The Evolution of Foyers in France

The Early Years

In France the term Foyer describes a set of establishments which offer accommodation and services to residents who, for one reason or another, are not able to access their own accommodation. The term 'Foyer' designates a place containing a fire (referring to heat and food) but also implies a collective development (which means that it is counted by the French statistical system in the same group of collective households as prisons, hospitals, university halls of residence and retirement homes). In France the term 'Foyer' is rarely used on its own. Instead it is coupled with a word describing the relevant group for which it caters, such as migrant workers, children in need of protection, ex-offenders, lone mothers and so on. If the notion of the Foyer represents a space and a form of organisation, the designation of the type of Foyer is determined by the attributes of the group that lives there. In this sense, Foyers tend to be seen as both a description of the physical form and as a social designation of their residents (Bastien and Bataille, 1998).

The foundations of Foyers can be placed as early as the first third of the 19th century, when there were a range of private initiatives arising from a variety of religious and philosophical ideas (Galland and Louis, 1984). Thereafter the history of Foyer development closely matches the different phases of industrialisation and urbanisation in France, being intimately linked to national and international migration, the characteristics

of local property markets (specifically the provision of inexpensive lodgings) and to the types of employment available within the various localities.

The development of the movement is also closely linked to varying ideologies. Under the Second Empire (1851-1870) and the Third Republic (1871-1940) the movement was driven by a current of Social Catholicism. Its aim was to preserve youth from moral corruption and to help overcome material difficulties via a solid support mechanism[i]. Progressively the idea began to win support among the business and enterprise class, and lodgings for young workers were seen as being useful for both the economy and the social order. Over the years the idea of involving education and training became central, although debates on priorities continued within the movement. In addition there was a strand which emphasised solidarity and emancipation, based on collective responsibility and the assumed importance of the working class (Gaspard, 1995; Galland and Louis, 1984).

These different strands were reflected in different types of organisation. Foyers developed by the Christian Youth Workers (J.O.C.), founded in 1926, emphasised collective engagement and responsibility. Those organised within the Union Nationale Interfédérale des Oeuvres Privées Sanitaires et Sociales (UNIOPSS), also started in 1926, insisted on the necessity to respond to needs and came to represent a vast network of Foyers whose objectives were to address the problems of young workers for whom, in contrast to students, there was very limited accommodation. Many such workers were

resorting to living rough or finding accommodation in slum areas which was seen as encouraging unsocial and criminal behaviour.

During the Vichy government the emphasis moved away from economic and social issues and once again tended to focus upon the moral development of youth. The result was the first Foyer of Young Workers (FJT) founded in 1941 supported by government. This put pressure on initiatives such as the J.O.C. which had increasingly to fight to preserve independence.

The Post-War Experience

After the Second World War the numbers of young people needing accommodation increased dramatically and major intervention by the state appeared increasingly essential. In the census of 1954 there were 3.3 million migrants to cities while a study conducted by the JOC showed that in 1955 30% of young workers lived away from their parental home. In the census of 1962 it was found that 44% of migrants were under 25 years of age (Galland and Louis, 1982). This had important financial implications for the Health Ministry (and also for the Ministry of Work and Education) and the FJT was seen as an essential tool to ensure the accommodation and protection of youth[ii]. Part of the governments' response to this problem in 1955 was to give statutory responsibility to HLM[iii] Offices to construct buildings suitable for Foyer use and to rent them to appropriate organisations. Foyers were thus enabled to benefit from special credit arrangements.

The first of these Foyers were developed in the Paris region, where a quarter of all young people then defined as isolated in France were living. These were large capacity Foyers, usually exceeding 325 bed spaces and they were run by the Association for the Lodging of Young Workers (ALJT) – founded in 1957. Conceived as "instruments of the social accomplishment of industrialisation" (Galland and Louis, 1984), their orientation was based less on education than on economics. It was in this policy and economic environment that two major organisational structures developed: the Union of Foyers for Young Workers and Workers founded by Guy Hoist in 1955, and SONACOTRA – a grand business enterprise to provide accommodation for immigrant workers, set up in 1957[iv] whose role was less educational and more about ensuring accommodation for the required labour force. Thus the introduction of public subsidy resulted in a decreased emphasis on education and the increased promotion of social and professional concerns, although religious, moral, social and economic emphases continued to be of importance (Gaspard, 1995)[v].

The number of isolated young people continued to increase dramatically: 600,000 in 1965, rising to 700,000 in 1968. The tensions between the public sector and the Christian movement also multiplied and was coupled with an increasing emphasis on moral and life style issues. As a result of increasing social and political change and the near revolution of 1968, the objectives of the FJT became more and more congruent with broader concerns - in particular, the argument that it was necessary to ensure education on matters of citizenship started to take hold. In this context the Movement for Popular

Education (Culture and Liberty), one of the principal initiators involved in the formation of many Foyers, was of particular significance.

Even so, the growing role of government and the importance of subsidy meant that much of the capacity to develop Foyers continued to be based on accommodation provision. They also generated pressures for increasingly centralised management. As early as the end of the 1970s certain Foyers began to be forced by budgetary pressures to eliminate many collective services such as restaurants, social and educational activities. Moreover, buildings were becoming dilapidated. In the FJT, as well as in the Foyers of migrant workers, strikes and occupations became more common as residents campaigned for increased rights and more control. Often the response to this was a more careful selection of those offered places at Foyers in order to limit these problems. In particular, young people and the unemployed were refused access to certain Foyers. At the same time other Foyers grew up specialising in subsidised accommodation for particular needs – notably for troubled youth. As a result of these different strands of development, by the beginning of the 1980s Olivier Galland and M.V. Louis (1984) suggested that Foyers could be categorised into 3 main groups – paternalistic accommodation provision; paternalistic broader provision; and basic hostel accommodation.

Within the first group there were three distinct types: the "Protection Foyers", generally intended for girls, in which the idea of moral and social support was preserved but included many prohibitions[vi]; the "Redressment Foyers" which welcomed young people in severe difficulties and provided them with cheap or free accommodation often of very

poor quality; and the "Foyer Centres d'Hébergement" which depended entirely on public funding and attempted to stretch these subsidies to diversify the range of those supported, e.g. to include refugees. In this group the educational element was reduced almost to zero, and the standards of comfort were very low.

The second group of Foyers was that typified by the 'Foyer Educatif' and the 'Social Help Foyers'. These maintained strong controls over individuals and set strict educational and social requirements. This group of Foyers may well be the only one that did not renounce its social and educational functions. However, they often faced strong resistance from their residents and at certain times had to cope with extreme cases of group resistance.

Finally, there was the "Foyer hôtel", which modelled itself on university accommodation and basically provided an accommodation service for young people in employment. By definition these aimed simply to house young people with very low support needs.

The diversity of arrangements was seen by Government as unacceptable. They saw the need to organise provision in a more structured way and this led to the development of an Agreement Framework in 1989, between the Ministry of Social Matters and Integration, the Ministry of Housing, the Register of Deposits and Consignments (CDC), the National Union of the Federations of Organisms to Moderate Rents (UNFOHLM), the UFJT and the National Register of Family Allocation (CNAF). Within this framework new strategies were developed. More than 150 existing Foyers redefined their social goals to

include providing a functioning network of locally-based resources for the common use by the entire local network. This, in turn, enabled a more centralised support service where young people could be put in touch with appropriate accommodation to meet their needs in suitable locations. The result was that accommodation responsibilities and associated services were uncoupled so that each was provided by different partners (elected representatives, volunteers, professionals, local government services, hotels and private leasors). Thus the recent evolution of the Foyer movement highlights a switch away from provision by single organisations to one where Foyers are seen as fitting into a network of local and city-wide services[vii]. In particular the old style of large Foyer has often been physically modified, with more lodgings situated in general housing and with fewer units in the Foyers themselves. At the same time, restaurants and various social services have become dispersed across a variety of other associations and locations.

As a result of these changes a rather different, but still three way, typology for Foyers has been proposed. This concentrates on the occupants' status and completely excludes the educational and moral aspects of Foyer provision. It distinguishes between a 'hôtel type', simply providing student style accommodation; a 'co-location type', where the collective basis remains strong; and a 'mixed type', with some element of both (Conan & Salignon, 1994).

The Current Position: New Challenges – Innovation and Resistance

At the turn of the century it remains the case that most young people in France do not have sufficient income to find independent accommodation in the private rented market, where cheap rooms are in great demand (Arbonville, 2000).   Many therefore see themselves as constrained to extend their time with their parents, or to seek out a place provided by a university or a Foyer. However the types of people being accommodated has changed almost out of all recognition since 1980. In 1980, 82 percent of the residents were in employment and half of those were considered to be in professional occupations (Galland and Louis, 1984). Of residents in UFJT Foyers near the end of the century less than 20 percent are employed, 40 percent do not have the right to employment (because they are immigrants), 10 percent are unemployed, 10 percent are apprentices and 20 percent are students (source UFJT)[viii].

It is hardly surprising that the perceptions of the needs and preferences of youth have changed radically in the last few years. As a result the problems being experienced by the FJT, in particular, relate not just to financing and objectives, but also to the changing vision of residents and potential residents. Beyond the great variety of youth issues, most authors emphasise the disaffection of the young with regard to Foyers particularly in relation to the collectivity attributes that are still one element of Foyer accommodation. As early as 1965, only 9% of isolated young people wished to live in a FJT, while 58% of those who lived in a FJT cited lack of independence as the main problem. "They want us

to be responsible, but they give us few rights." – is the view that many young people express.

This feeling of disempowerment reinforces young people's negative attitudes, whilst the decline in the average age of residents generates a situation where it is ever more difficult to manage the accommodation. In this respect the statutory devices supporting Foyers are perceived more as means of perpetuating institutions than as supporting youth, in part because a proportion of these young people no longer trust "the world built by the adults".

One particular aspect is an outcome of young people paying to reside in Foyers. When they pay they feel they are more able to claim their rights than when they were reliant upon the Foyer for all support. When they pay, residents feel they should have the right to choose; to benefit from the services they want; to decorate the walls of their rooms, etc. These new "consumers" often perceive the rules relating to entry and the checking of rooms as an intrusion. And as life style changes everywhere, the need for living space and the privatisation of that space tends to increase while, with society continuing to promote individuality, some of the rules of the Foyers seem obsolete.

But the lack of popularity of traditional Foyers and their constraints does not necessarily reflect a willingness among youth to integrate with other types of households or to invent new norms, something like "a random culture" (Rouleau and Berger, 1991). A part of the movement of the FJT that has been at the heart of the recent innovations has attempted to

mix different types of young people and has been seen as one of the most positive experiences of life in the Foyers through effective integration (Bastien and Bataille, 1998). However, this interpretation can be questioned: spatial proximity does not always lead to closer connections, as testified by the difficulties and the tensions experienced in certain Foyers. In these Foyers, the presence of people with very different backgrounds can lead to discrimination and injustice among the most fragile residents.

A rather different problem is that the Foyer designation can create stigmatisation for the residents. This in turn reinforces the limited opportunities available to specific population groups (Ballain and Jacquier, 1987). Young people, for example, are aware that it is often preferable not to mention a Foyer address if they are dealing with a bank or employer. However, it is also important to stress that the perception of Foyers tends to vary from place to place and it is the good or bad local reputation of the FJT (Young Workers' Foyer) that makes all the difference. This highlights the fact that the term Foyer in France remains multiple, diverse and heterogeneous.

The crisis in identity and role among Foyers has however offered new opportunities for the Foyer movement in France[ix]. The Government's circular (Number 96-753) of December 1996, relating to Foyers for young workers, redefined their mission and encouraged the FJT to take on the challenge of providing social residences[x]. In this transformation, the FJT is not alone. If youth is of growing importance, the population of ageing migrant workers (who when younger were the traditional clientele) cannot be neglected, as well as refugees and homeless people. The housing offered to all these

categories is insufficient.   Many Foyers are being transformed to meet these new challenges. In some cases they are becoming social residences with higher rents and in others they are setting up new internal structures and redefining objectives.

There can be many interpretations of the position at the beginning of the twenty-first century. On the one hand, the partnership and the sharing of local accommodation and other resources together with round table procedures among local actors is helping to facilitate appropriate housing for young people. The "Foyer Soleil" is one example that permits the functioning of a diffuse system of Foyers that work with the collective Foyers and with local accommodation and other services to provide a more holistic approach. The transformation brought about by the partnership of local authority powers and responsibility to house young people with private financing leads to new forms of governance.   However, the diminution of public financing and initiatives makes the overall task more daunting.

Also of importance is the fact that most Foyers do not fall within mainstream housing law (in particular housing contracts and subletting).   One way forward consistent with the partnership approach has been the practice of "bail glissant"[xi] that permit subletting to young people through an intermediary association that assumes responsibility.

Finally new actors (elected locals, volunteers, professional teams, local public services, associations, hotels and private founders) are helping to develop micro-projects which are not necessarily restricted to housing agencies, but include, for instance, support centres

and individualised services. But a fundamental remains that none of these initiatives bring with them the resources to meet legal responsibilities, let alone develop the new roles that Foyers might fulfil.

Thus new strategies are undoubtedly influencing and transforming former Foyers ('residences sociales') into new forms of 'Foyer-logement', which are supposed to be more adapted to modern demands. In this respect the Abbe Pierre Foundation (Hotellerie sociale et logements meubles. Des solutions alternatives? Guide pour l'action, Fondation Abbe Pierre pour le Logement des Defavorises, FAPIL, September 1997) noted:

> "With an increasingly precarious and diversified homeless population collective facilities such as the Social Readjustment and Lodging Houses (les Centres d'Hebergement et de Readaption Sociale – CHRS), Foyers for Migrant Workers (les Foyers de Travailleurs Migrants – FTM) and Foyers for Young Workers (les Foyers de Jeunes Travailleurs – FJT) are adapting and renewing their strategies. The example of the FJT is particularly revealing in illustrating this change. This organization no longer limits its mission to the provision of lodging facilities, but has extended its field of intervention to the wider problems of youth in an effort to help young people develop more life-skills."(Translated from the French.)

Nevertheless, the changes do not seem able to provide a satisfactory answer to these "new needs":

> "Although these changes led to a policy of diversification of their mission and their occupants, they do not appear to be able to encourage a skeptical public to

resort to collective structures, which they in fact see as constraining rather than liberating a young population in its search for housing. In this respect the new developments appear suited only to better meet the original aims of Foyers and not to face the continuing increasing need." (Translated from: 'Hotellerie sociale et logements meubles. Des solutions alternative? Guide pour l'action, Fondation Abbe Pierre pour le Logement des Defavorises, FAPIL, September 1997).

Thus it can thus be argued that the restructuring of the French Foyers towards a more divers and multi-agency approach appears to be delivering success. However, quantitatively speaking they are too few; there are still major tensions between government objectives and young peoples' aspirations and most importantly inadequate funding to provide for those in need for accommodation, employment and training. In 2004 the main reason why young people were looking for a Foyer, according to their responses to surveys (67%), remains that of getting closer to labour markets and the possibilities of training.

Implications for the UK System

What is most obvious from the review of the development of Foyers in France is that they are very broadly based, embracing a whole range of provision often with additional support for a wide range of vulnerable people. Much of this assistance has been concentrated on mobile groups – not just young people, but also migrant workers and refugees. The Foyer idea is also applied to those in need of accommodation unrelated to

jobs or training – including older people as well as the vulnerable young. What is equally clear is that it was never central to the Foyer movement to provide in-house job specific education and training. Rather the accommodation tended to be located in relation to existing jobs and the education element concentrated on citizenship and life skills.

Foyers in France were equally never simply about narrowly defined categories of residents as in the UK but far more about collectivity and the forms of organisation and governance on the one hand and the provision of housing and other services on the other.

Lodgings for young workers became important in part because of the rapid rural/urban migration arising from the restructuring and relocation of employment. The idea that some provision was available for students but not for those starting their first (often low-paid) employment away from home was also of relevance here – but the problems of moral and social vulnerability for those without appropriate housing were also seen as central. Thus, accommodation at a distance from the parental home, collective living and an element of social control all lay at the core of the development of Foyers in France - rather than education and training as such.

The tensions between providing accommodation to ensure an adequate supply of labour; the importance of collectivity and social control; and the growing pressures for independent living and independent choice have increased over the last decades, in part because of social change but also because of the changing role of government and its funding. Of particular importance here has been the interface between the objectives of

charitable organisations, central government funding, local government responsibility and the changing needs of the vulnerable young. The fact that, over the last decade, the emphasis has moved away from the physical provision of collective accommodation to local networks of support for young people together with assisted access to mainstream housing reflects these differing pressures. The way forward is seen to be significantly in terms of partnership among local agencies in enabling independent living rather than education, training and access to employment.

3.   The Development of UK Foyers

Although Foyers are a relatively new initiative in the UK, other charitable organisations have played many of the same roles as those undertaken by Foyers in France – since the 19th century. This was most notable in the context of assistance to clearly defined vulnerable groups (professional women, lone mothers, ex-offenders) by charities and housing associations. The YMCA and its sister the YWCA were of particular importance in providing accommodation for the mobile young. However there was no directly comparable growth in either the provision of accommodation for young people or in Federations of providers, such as was found in France, during the inter-war and post-war periods. This was mainly because the UK's experience with respect to international and rural/urban migration among young people was very different. In addition, some employers (particularly public sector employers) provided hostel accommodation for

significant numbers of trainees and young professionals (Department of Environment, 1976).

In the late 1960s and 1970s the UK saw growing pressures to expand the provision of accommodation for single people and particularly vulnerable young people, from housing charities such as Crisis (founded in 1967 to highlight the plight of London's homeless population). This increasing emphasis on vulnerable youth was strengthened in the Homelessness Act 1977. There was however no specific concern about housing linked to employment and training, in part because of relatively good local employment opportunities at that time.

During the next two decades, a range of pressures affected both the demands among young people to live separately and their capacity to do so. Some of the resulting problems have, in turn, led government to accept the need for intervention to help ensure appropriate provision for particular groups. These pressures have included: changing labour market opportunities associated with the decline in agriculture and manufacturing industry and the growth of service industries, which have meant that people may need to leave home to seek work; parallel developments in education which have resulted in more young people leaving home to complete their education and training; increasing problems of family breakdown, drugs and anti-social behaviour, which are often associated with young people leaving home and significantly with increases in homelessness among younger people; expansion of the legal responsibilities placed on local authorities and other agencies to ensure that vulnerable young people have a secure

home base; increasing housing costs as compared to the incomes available to younger lower skilled workers, making access to mainstream housing more difficult; cutbacks in housing benefit for younger households; and more general reductions in supply side subsidies to social housing.

The first four problems resulted in an expanded demand for housing among younger people, whilst the last three increased affordability problems and made it more difficult to expand supply to meet the requirements of younger households. Thus social, housing and labour market factors have come together both to increase aspirations to obtain separate accommodation and to make it more difficult for young people to obtain what they want.

Starting in the later part of the 1980s, these pressures were exacerbated by more fundamental macro-economic trends in the UK including increasing unemployment, and inappropriate skills as well as more structural concerns about supply side constraints on productivity arising from the poor quality of the labour force. Growing unemployment was concentrated among younger people and it became increasingly difficult for poorly skilled young people to gain employment – and equally difficult for them to find acceptable accommodation when they left home (Kavanagh, 1990). It was in this context that the UK government started to look at a portfolio of policies aimed at addressing both the growing problems of housing faced by young people and the need to improve basic skills and labour market potential among this group (Rugg, 1999). On the housing side the main pressures for change came from the increasing, and increasingly visible,

problem of youth homelessness (Anderson, 1999). On the employment side they came from the structural changes in opportunity which removed many of the traditional ways into employment (Rugg, 1999). One way forward for a subset of those in both housing and employment need was to link the provision of accommodation with training and access to job opportunities within secure and managed accommodation.

A shortage of suitable accommodation for young people was exacerbated by the limited availability of single bedroom public sector housing for those not in priority need, coupled with an over-reliance upon an often unaffordable private rented sector (Rugg, 1999). At the same time there was an increasing appreciation that for young people to make a successful transition from youth to adulthood, required access to secure, affordable and ultimately long-term accommodation (Anderson, 1999; Quilgars & Pleace, 1999).

Thus at the same time three distinct pressures were coming together in the UK. First, increasing housing costs, together with growing constraints on housing benefit were making it difficult for young people to find adequate accommodation. Second, rapidly rising unemployment was having a disproportionately high impact on young entrants to the labour market. Third, there were growing concerns about the basic skill levels of large numbers of young people who were leaving education. In addition to these direct pressures more general social trends and rising aspirations meant that independent living was seen as increasingly appropriate.

These pressures of housing, employment and skills encouraged policy makers to develop schemes which attempted to provide holistic solutions. UK policy makers were looking for solutions and the French Foyer concept appeared to offer one type of approach to the problem. Foyer schemes were seen as a possible approach to such problems, in that they were perceived as being able to provide accommodation, training and employment support in one package (Anderson, 1999). The fact that unemployment and homelessness were often linked furthered the argument for UK Foyer developments, in order to break a perceived cycle of, "No home, no job, no home" (The Foyer Federation, 2001).

Foyers in the UK became a reality first through a set of pilot schemes based on YMCA facilities and then through a more comprehensive approach led by government subsidy. Foyers were thus primarily funded as housing schemes and concentrated specifically on young people (excluding migrants).

The broadly accepted definition of what Foyers represent in the UK is set out by Anderson & Quilgars (1995, p.2) as, "An integrated approach to meeting the needs of young people during their transition from dependence to independence by linking affordable accommodation to training and employment." According to this definition Foyers in the UK are seen as combining the key elements of: a target group of 16-25 year olds; affordable, good quality accommodation within a non-institutional framework; vocational training and jobs access support to residents; access to leisure and recreation facilities; providing a safe and secure environment, offering support and stability; and being part of a network in the UK and Europe.

The UK approach clearly had some parallels with the French Foyer system in that the main objective was to provide accommodation and greater security and support, than was otherwise available. However, it differed from the original French approach in that it was concentrated very specifically on young people and their training and labour market needs and not as in France specifically on migrant workers. There was also an important tension in the emphasis on a non-institutional framework, while concentrating additional assistance at the same location and under the same management as the accommodation. Finally the approach was more obviously government led and subsidised than had originally been the case in France.

Early UK Foyer schemes included pilot projects based in Nottingham, Norwich, Wimbledon, St Helens and Romford (Anderson & Quilgars, 1995). These foyers were primarily based in YMCA hostels and represented an expansion of their existing accommodation services to include additional training and employment support. The YMCA pilots had substantial staffing already in place and some were quite large (Nottingham, for example, had 79 bed spaces). Further, they contained services such as cafes, counselling, sports halls, psychotherapy, crèches and educational and arts programmes. The conclusion of the Anderson and Quilgars report (1995) into these pilot schemes was that they had made a positive contribution to relieving youth homelessness and unemployment and in supporting the transition to adulthood. However, it was also emphasised that in a time of high unemployment, the success of the employment schemes

was limited and that future schemes would have to be carefully developed in order to respond more directly to the needs of the young people they aimed to assist.

The success of the pilot Foyer schemes led to increasing policy emphasis on expanding the numbers of Foyers in the UK with the help of a range of government subsidies both housing and employment training based. By July 2000 the Foyer Federation noted that there were some 100 designated Foyer schemes in existence (The Foyer Federation, 2001). Around 30% of Foyers were delivering some element of the New Deal for 18-24 year olds (a government programme aimed at assisting people into employment) and most Foyers had close links with one or more Further Education college (The Foyer Federation, 2001). On the other hand, as the Federation noted in its annual review (2001), between 150,000 and 200,000 young people aged 16 to 25 were estimated to be homeless in the sense that they had no settled address. Moreover, the problem was seen to be widely spread throughout the country, with high numbers of homeless young people in rural areas and affluent market towns. The Foyer movement has never been in a position to address the scale or the spatial coverage required. As such it can only be assessed as one element in a broad spectrum of assistance to young people.

The variety of different UK Foyer schemes now operational is considerable. The majority of bed spaces are in metropolitan and large urban areas. Rural Foyer schemes are less common than relatively large town and city Foyers and also very much smaller. Generally these have between 4 and 12 bed spaces within them and facilities tend to be spread throughout a local network of such schemes. Somewhere in between the small

rural and large urban Foyers fall town-based Foyers. These typically have around 30 bedrooms and are very common (Foyer Federation, 1999).

Beyond the basic attributes of accommodation, and access to training and employment information, Foyers in the UK tend to vary dramatically in the degree of support they provide. The YMCA's (2000) study of one Foyer, for example, focused upon a large scheme in the west of London, which catered for a wide variety of young people from many different backgrounds. It noted that many of the young people in Foyers were from disrupted families, had experienced difficulties at school or had run away from home. The emphasis therefore was on lifestyle and independent living skills. The implication was that many of the young people would require significant levels of support above that initially assumed in the Foyer definition of Anderson and Quilgars to survive away from the parental home, let alone to enter the labour market (1995). This picture was borne out by case study research on both rural and urban Foyers which found a similar pattern of provision for young people, especially the very young who needed very significant support (Lovatt & Whitehead, 2002). At one extreme the main Foyer accommodation acted as a hotel for young mobile employees of local firms and in this instance the Foyer managers were thinking of converting to a general needs hostel because of the lack of need for additional support. At the other Foyers were accommodating young people with high levels of support requirements and providing the services require through person-specific funding from the Supporting People programme.

A particularly important issue about where Foyers should be positioned lies in how they should respond to the changing economic environment. The emphasis originally placed on employment related assistance was specific to the extremely high unemployment among younger people in the early 1990s. In these circumstances it proved difficult to achieve the employment objectives of Foyers, even when focusing upon young people who were relatively well-trained and in stable accommodation (Anderson & Quilgars, 1995). With increasing buoyancy in the labour market the need for employment related housing assistance appears now to be of relatively low priority. Instead the emphasis has switched to providing support for young people who need far more assistance than originally envisaged to develop an independent lifestyle. Many Foyers are concentrating on this higher needs group – in part because their management is housing based, which provides a location for the provision of life skills training.

In this context there has been an ever-increasing demand for Foyer services, but also a growing acknowledgement that youth-related issues require both higher levels of core funding and long-term commitment. In this context, Quilgars and Pleace (1999, p.117) stress the imbalance between supply and what is required. In particular young persons' provision has been heavily concentrated on the transitional supported accommodation model, rather than at either the emergency or the more permanent housing ends of the spectrum - where the needs appear greater.

Key Issues for UK Foyers

Research on a number of UK Foyers (Lovatt & Whitehead, 2002; Maginn et al, 2000) has highlighted many common issues. Foyer client groups have changed from the low-needs groups originally envisaged by many early schemes, in part as a result of improvements in the labour market; in part as the result of the growing needs among the vulnerable young. Clients have tended to be younger and in need of far higher levels of support than the original client groups. These 16 and 17 year olds were often seen as having different and more costly support and accommodation requirements to other groups. As a result, in some cases managers were refusing access to the youngest group (16-17 year olds) and/or seeking other clients with lesser/different needs (such as refugees).

One effective role that Foyer schemes play is in terms of basic life-skills training. This has been generally well-received by clients, although some clients with lesser needs felt that whilst Foyers were providing essential skills for living, they were not enabling education and training effectively. Equally it was suggested that training needed to be more 'tailored' to individual needs.

The physical attributes of the often newly built Foyers were generally of high quality but not all of this investment was being effectively used. For example, all the Foyers in the case studies included disabled facilities, although demand for these had been minimal. Equally, communal rooms and equipment were often underused. Of particular relevance was the problem noted by Maginn et al (2000) that capital was easier to raise than

revenue, resulting in some physically impressive schemes being developed but without the funds to run the training or job search elements properly.

Many tenants felt that the communal living arrangements had a mix of advantages and disadvantages. Thus, whilst the Foyers encouraged clients to make new friends and develop life skills, there were also negative aspects relating to noise, cleaning arrangements and unruly behaviour. Access to the schemes was considered straightforward, but the issue of being 'trapped' was raised, in that residents who moved out (or were expelled) without somewhere to move on to, could be classed as 'intentionally homeless' by the relevant local authority. More generally there were issues relating to shortages of move-on accommodation and follow-on support which left many young people with severe problems after receiving support from Foyers.

High rents were a major problem for residents who wished to attain employment. The benefits system, coupled with these rents and complicated claims procedures, meant that it was very easy for residents to accrue large debts and often very difficult to them to retain employment. This problem was partially alleviated by the introduction of Supporting People in 2004, which provided the ability to split support charges and rental charges.

Funding remains a problem. Maginn et al (2000) for instance noted that in general the funding regimes governing the setting up and running of schemes were extremely complex and often worked against one another. Foyer initiatives once completed usually

had to compete for funding with other housing projects while the Supporting People approach to supporting special needs makes no allowance for supply side subsidy.

Overall it was clear that the UK initiatives remained fundamentally housing based, with considerable differences between different Foyers in client groups catered for and services provided. In housing terms Foyers were usually seen as being highly successful. Potential clients were generally put forward because they were in the relevant age group, vulnerable and had accommodation needs. Support has been increasingly concentrated on life skills, together with linkages to employment-based initiatives (such as Connexions and New Deal) where specific additional funding is available. The nature of the client group has meant that the need to provide more resources for accommodation and longer term support is often more pressing than developing education and training services. It also raised important issues about the nature of the contractual relationship between landlord and resident and how to address tensions with respect to individual responsibilities. Finally, because funding has often been concentrated on capital, financial viability is often dependent on the Supporting People regime rather than being oriented towards the labour market.

4.   Comparisons and Conclusions

In any analysis of Foyers it is important to understand their origins and the changing political climate in which they have developed. It is also important to consider how

notions of youth and of perceived needs have evolved as well as the general context of housing markets, welfare and employment policy.

In France the birth of Foyers owed a great deal to increasing rural-urban migration and the fact that many migrants were forced to live in shanty towns and slums on the peripheries of large cities. This in turn led to public health and social control concerns, and at the same time to social and urban planning problems. Similar reasoning lay behind the creation of Foyers for young migrant workers.

The growing emphasis on Foyer type accommodation in the 1980s and 1990s highlights the beginning of a recognition of youth as a specific period of life, with its own problems, needs and qualities. Private sector support for such Foyers was generally linked to the needs of new industrial locations and was therefore seen as a way to support employers and their employees. The reasons for the development of Foyers were thus multiple and related not just to ideals of youth inclusion and education, but to other concerns around employer requirements, the difficulties that many families faced in providing lodgings for their young adult children, and the need for young people to have more independence. At the core of the French Foyer movement there remains a concept of social lodging that provide people with an address, allows geographic mobility, offers low rents and prevents individuals becoming too isolated from their peers and society.

In the post war period the public sector has played an increasing role in providing accommodation for certain sectors of the population, substituting for a private sector which could not offer adequate housing. This central role given to the public sector in

terms of responsibility and funding in France means that the Foyer approach remains in many respects a special case in Europe (Heddy, 1991).

Although the French Foyers have a much longer history than those in the UK, many French Foyers were originally set up with similar aims to the YMCA movement in the UK and their early development can be regarded as similar. Where the major difference comes is in the state's recognition of the problems. The very considerable involvement of the state in France can be traced back to the 1950s and to some degree to the 1940s. In the UK government support for Foyer-specific initiatives was not introduced until the early 1990s.

The Foyer system in France represents a coming together of the state sector, the private sector and what can be termed the voluntary sector (including religious involvement). Arguably, the French example has allowed for more cohesive thinking on Foyer policy, even though there is great diversity among Foyers, owned by a myriad of organisations and having developed and evolved over the 19th and 20th Centuries. In the UK on the other hand, because of the extent to which the state initiated the approach, the range of organisations is much narrower and based strongly in the ethos of social sector housing provision.

The reasons for the development of the French Foyer movement in the post-war period arguably link to the rapid urbanisation of the country. This was not the case in the UK, except to the extent that a small number of charitable organisations aimed at alleviating

some of the worst effects of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation in initiatives which tend to date back from before the 20th Century. Foyers in the UK were a response to a different and specific set of circumstances – very high youth unemployment and growing homelessness among young people. Thus in employment terms the French system was demand based (employers needing the labour), while the UK system was aimed at overcoming supply constraints.

More recently, the change in emphasis in France can be linked to changing economic and social conditions. On the one hand individuals are demanding greater autonomy, whilst at the same time unemployment in France remains high and suitable housing for young people limited. Even so, the groups housed are changing rapidly with far greater emphasis on those outside the labour force.

The current position in France contrasts in some ways with the UK, which is currently experiencing high levels of employment and worsening access to the housing market which might be expected to modify the role played by Foyers. Yet in both countries the emphasis has moved more towards the particularly vulnerable rather than towards housing those looking for or in employment.

In terms of organisational structures French Foyers are responding to the changing environment by switching emphasis towards accommodation provision with often limited services and education – partly in response to the demands of residents; partly because of the increasing emphasis on multi-agency working; and partly because of lack of funding.

The UK Foyers are still in principle concentrating on education, employment and accommodation – the niche they have been formally set up to fill. However, within this general approach a switch can be observed towards a greater emphasis on external providers for education and training (e.g. via local FE colleges) while the extent of life skills training provided within the accommodation is increasing.

UK Foyers were specifically developed to address home-job-training linkages (even though the core emphasis is on the accommodation element). French Foyers are both more diverse and more comprehensive. As a result Foyers in France are clearly a much more mainstream policy vehicle, as can be seen by the ways in which succeeding governments have been able to encourage them to pursue changing policy objectives. An important question in the UK context is whether the Foyer approach can effectively be restructured to addressing changing needs given their rather specific original remits.

The issue of segregation and stigmatisation of some Foyer residents in France is of relevance to both countries. It varies from area to area and Foyer to Foyer, although the problems tend to become more common in an environment of high unemployment, where there is greater competition for jobs. In the current UK climate stigmatisation has been less of an issue, although it is clear the Foyers are often not well regarded by those living nearby. A rather different concern is that the UK Foyers tend to find themselves in an expensive accommodation category and ironically this discourages many of their residents from pursuing full-time work or full-time education.

Residents appear to be divided on the values of communal living and collective responsibility. Both in the UK and in France there are strong pressures towards increasing independence and freedom for residents but equally in many cases a need for greater levels of support. Individual contracts are seen as a way forward in the UK, but in France this has been tried to a far greater degree and often found to be inconsistent with expectations and aspirations.

The UK experience in the 1990s suggests that Foyers tend to work most easily with young people with relatively low support needs, who primarily need training, accommodation and employment. In both the UK and France there is a lack of clarity over whether Foyers should in fact be concentrating on those at the margins of employment or rather supporting young people who have higher needs. The two groups require different funding and governance arrangements. Concentrating on more vulnerable groups entails both increased staffing ratios to give more emphasis to individual support needs and reduced training and employment support. In the future Foyers are likely to become more diverse with some providing support for high-needs groups and others tending towards hostel-style provision. But Foyers in both France and the UK will largely have to respond to government policy in terms of priorities, as this remains their main source of income.

Probably the most important distinction between the UK and France is the extent to which Foyers for young workers are part of a much broader and mainstream programme in France, while in the UK they are one type of housing provision offering additional

services. As changes to policy in France work through the system, towards a more flexible multi-agency approach the people lodged in 'residences sociales' are likely to become much more diverse – not just single young people.

In the UK the linking of training, accommodation and employment support is still regarded as the core issue, although the changing policy and macroeconomic environment means that the groups originally targeted, who need relatively little support, are now more readily served by more mainstream programmes. This shifting emphasis means that both the funding streams and the benchmark for assessing value for money are changing rapidly and foyers may need to refocus their positions (Lovatt & Whitehead, 2005). In France the number of traditional Foyer places is diminishing, they are no longer reserved only for young single people and funding appears even more precarious than in the past while accessing normal housing becomes even more difficult. The increase in the length of stays at older Foyers and new 'residences sociales' are testament to this perilous development.

In both countries the emphasis is shifting towards provision of life skills and support at the same time as towards more independent living, in an environment in which young people expect greater independence and freedom. The French system started from a more communal and social control based system than the UK, but has since moved strongly towards a more relaxed approach. Equally while the UK has continued to concentrate on locating accommodation and services together, the French reappraisal of

the role of Foyers has shifted much further down the road towards multi-agency working and floating support. These may well be trends which the UK will follow.

What is clear from this comparison is first that, in the context of young people, there is a far greater richness of experience and more lessons to be learned from the French system than appeared to be the case when the UK first borrowed the term Foyer. Moreover if UK policy makers had better understood that richness many of the problems of development in the UK might have been alleviated. In both countries the Foyer approach appears to be accepted as an appropriate means of providing for younger people away from home. What is less clear is whether government pressure will tend to move more towards emphasising simply the cheaper option of providing accommodation or more towards the more expensive and complex requirements of those with special needs.

End Notes

[i] For example, one of the first establishments, the Cercle Catholique Ouvrier de Montparnasse opened a hostel and restaurant in 1863 under the direction of Albert De Mun.

[ii] By this time it was estimated that some 400 Foyers already existed, providing some 22,000 bedspaces.

[iii] Habitations à Loyers Modérés: french movement for Social Housing

[iv] Created in 1957 to reduce shanty towns occupied by Algerian workers, SONACOTRAL (renamed the SONACOTRA in 1963) is the owner and manager of 397 FTM (Foyers for migrant workers). Since 1994, the SONACOTRA has transformed its Foyers in the "social residences". Its housing capacity represents 57 % of the FTM and 20 % of social residences. The AFTM (Association of Foyers for migrant workers) is another association that manages Foyers. Like the FJT, the FTM are self-financed and rely on subsidised loans and a range of different public grants. Since the 1980s, the numbers of beds offered by the FTM have decreased.

[v] What is not clear is whether there was any connection between the two initiatives. The founders did not necessarily know about the large network of charities that already provided housing to migrant workers. See Paul Tempreau, Gestion économique et vitalité associative. Etude de cas: les Foyers de jeunes travailleurs. Diplôme l'Ecole des Hautes études en Sciences sociales, Paris, dactylographié (needs date).

[vi] The foyers for young offenders are not taken in account in this paper. Refer to « L'Hébergement éducatif », Centre National de Formation et d'Etudes de la Protection Judiciaire de la jeunesse, Vaucresson, 1993.

[vii] By the construction of European networks that wish to facilitate mobility among young people, this networking has recently changed scale. For example, we can cite OEIL (European Organization for social insertion and housing of youth) that already exists in 9 countries, or PRIME-EURORILE.

[viii] It is estimated that a third of the FJT residents have no expectation of a stable future (Actualités HLM, 1997)

[ix] The report of the UFJT shows that the 400 UFJT associations have a capacity of 45 000 rooms and a growing number of diffused housing (5 000 beds). But the network of UFJT associations offers also 50 housing services, 39 formation centers, 40 health offices. 100 000 young people are residents (a third are residents for less than a month, a third stay from a month to six months, and the last third stay for more than six months), 200 000 benefit of at least one of the services offered by the association (UFJT).

[x] The "social residence" permits different types of collective housing, as foyers to be rehabilitated.

[xi] Bail glissant: that is to say a lease made in the name of an association, that could "slip" into the name of the occupant, if he shows he is able to become a full right tenant.

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