

# How do young people experience our values and culture?

## What young people told us

## What we are doing in response

## Response from Communities and Property Services

Residents place a high value on their relationship with their keyworker, and the less formal relationships they have with other staff such as night workers.

- More Than a Room, YMCA DLG's support model, emphasises the importance of relationships between young people and their keyworker, but also the relationships they have with night staff, volunteers, ancillary staff and all the staff who regularly work in the housing projects.

Incidental and informal interactions, familiar faces and caring questions such as 'how are you?' were highly valued.

- More Than a Room sets out expectations for staff about how they should be interacting with residents and sets out the values that underpin our approach to services eg maximising choice and control, focussing on assets, rather than deficits, and co-producing support plans with residents.

Residents want more support with lifeskills and specific tasks such budgeting, shopping, cooking, etc.

- A key component of More Than a Room is the groupwork and activities programme which includes two modules on lifeskills, Life Smart and Life Admin; residents must satisfactorily complete each module before they can be agreed for move on. We are developing an app that will enable residents to map the progress they are making in all the essential elements of the support programme.

Residents want to be able to choose their keyworker.

- As part of our commitment to maximising choice and control, we will offer residents the opportunity to choose their key worker wherever practicable.

Spending time with staff and other young people in projects was important – residents were anxious about anything that might reduce contact time.

- Keywork and groupwork are essential parts of our More Than a Room offer, but the model also allows for more time for informal interaction and familial activities such as shared meals. We are committed to getting staff out from behind their desks so that they can spend more time with residents.

Keywork often seems formulaic as it can be too focussed on paperwork and form-filling.

- Some of our contracts require us to spend a certain amount of time in one to one support – keywork – but we are looking at how we can keep paperwork to a minimum, reduce the amount of times we ask for the same or similar information, put the emphasis on the conversation and be led by the young person so that we are spending time on what's important to them.

The physical environment in which young people accessed services makes a difference to how our values come across.

- We want all our housing projects to be homes that young people are proud to live in and staff proud to work in, so we have agreed a programme of investment in all our projects over the next five years; in the meantime we are redecorating lounges, kitchens, halls and stairwells with bright colours, and for communal areas we are buying new furniture, chosen with residents, that is homely and comfortable. Managers are being encouraged to spend their budgets on homely touches like welcome mats, and reduce anything that gives projects an institutional feel, like noticeboards, signage, etc.

Residents want projects to have a homely and welcoming feel, with a daily structure, shared meals and group activities.

- A core part of More Than a Room is a daily and weekly support timetable which includes shared meals, essential sessions on lifeskills and work and learning, and group activities, such as games nights, that replicate family-like experiences.

Head office, Reed House, is not young person-friendly.

- Reed House has had significant investment to make it more young person-friendly with bright colours, new furniture, pictures, and a new reception area.

Residents saw group activities as an opportunity to find new friends, share difficult experiences and strengthen a feeling of community.

- More Than a Room recognises the importance of group activities in helping residents find new friends, learn from each other, and strengthen the feeling of community, particularly through the Our Patch, Mix It, and It's All About Me programmes. All projects should have in place a resident steering group which works with staff to determine a project-specific weekly calendar which meets the needs, wishes and aspirations of young people who live there.

Young people felt we didn't talk about or genuinely value the diversity of our staff and client group.

- We are beginning to address this through the Our Patch, Mix It, It's All About Me and Arts Hub programmes, where there is scope to explore issues of identity and diversity. Opportunities to cook together also enable residents to learn about each other's' culture. However, we recognise that we have more work to do to build staff confidence around identifying and challenging discrimination and homophobic and racist behaviour and language. We also need to look more closely at how we are meeting the needs of residents with disabilities.

Becoming independent and moving on was a key concern for residents; the focus on moving on was important but shouldn't be at the expense of feeling secure and 'at home'.

- More Than a Room provides a planned and structured approach to equipping residents with the skills and knowledge they need to move on and sustain a tenancy; we emphasise the goal of moving on from day one of the service, but we need to ensure that we do this at the same time as ensuring young people feel safe, secure and 'at home' in our projects.

Residents believed rent levels for move on accommodation to be prohibitive.

- We are developing a rent policy that sets out the rationale for different rent levels in different sorts of housing. Skills Advisors are able to carry out in-work benefit calculations with young people to demonstrate how much they will need to contribute to rent when they move on and are working.

Residents felt that support did not fully prepare them for independence and wanted more opportunities to practice lifeskills.

- See above – preparing residents to move on and providing opportunities to practice lifeskills is a core part of More Than a Room.

Residents were inspired by being listened to and seeing opportunities to grow and develop professionally.

- As part of the development of More Than a Room we plan to develop Inspiration Stations in each project which provide information about what's going on in each project, and tell stories about young people who have moved on and/or achieved a success, and young people in the media who are making a difference.

Young people want to know that when they feedback this will be listened to and acted upon.

- We are setting up More Than a Room steering groups in all projects and will monitor how often these take place and how what comes out of the group impacts on the More Than a Room programme and services generally.

Young people felt YMCA DLG should be influencing national policy.

- We are investing in new posts to enable us to campaign more effectively, and in developing and implementing an Influencing and Involvement Strategy.

Residents want YMCA DLG to do more to cultivate positive relationships with the community.

- YMCA DLG participates in a number of events aimed at cultivating positive relationships with the community, eg Artists' Open House and Pride in Brighton and Hove. More Than a Room recognises the importance of welcoming local communities into the larger housing projects and making space available for local statutory and voluntary organisations, as well as welcoming volunteers across all aspects of our services to support and enhance service delivery. In the smaller projects we need to make more of an effort to invite neighbours and communities to events like coffee mornings, barbecues, exhibitions.

Residents were concerned about the perceptions they faced as a result of living in supported housing.

- By welcoming local communities into the larger housing projects, making space available for local statutory and voluntary organisations, and encouraging young people to get involved in things going on in their local community, we aim to challenge the negative perceptions some people have about young people living in supported housing. As an organisation we need to get better about supporting young people to tell their stories, celebrate the progress they are making towards independence and showcase their successes.