



**East of England Financial Capability
and Inclusion Project**

Final Report of Evaluation

Rocket Science UK Ltd
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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the final phase evaluation of the East of England Financial Capability and Inclusion project.

The findings of this report relate to all of the evaluation strands, which together explore:

- ‘project-level performance and impact’, which identifies and analyses the delivery experiences of, and effects upon, beneficiaries (end users of financial capability training) and front line workers;
- ‘programme performance and impact’, which explores the extent to which individual components of the programme are contributing to its *overall* aims and objectives;
- the regional impact of the programme, which analyses the financial savings and benefits accruing from raising financial capability, calculated using an economic impact model, which was constructed at the mid-point of the programme; and
- the collective reflections of Citizens Advice and project partners.

It also reviews the performance of the County Financial Capability Forums, which have become well established within the region’s six counties.

This report draws upon bodies of evidence that have been collected throughout the whole programme period, but focuses in particular and where appropriate, upon evidence gathered during the final stages of the programme.

Beneficiary Profile

- The programme provided financial capability training for a total of 930 beneficiaries. 28% received six or more hours of training.
- There was an almost exactly equal split between unemployed and economically inactive beneficiaries (51% were economically inactive). 64% of unemployed beneficiaries had been unemployed for a year or longer and 26.5% for over 3 years.
- 17% had no qualifications.
- 53% of beneficiaries were aged between 26-49 and 28% were aged 50 or over, 136 were aged between 18 and 25 and 33 were below eighteen years of age.
- Most beneficiaries (76%) were White British (704). The next largest ethnic groups trained were Black African (36) white and black Caribbean (24) and Indian (18). 158 beneficiaries were from BAME groups.
- 58% of beneficiaries were female.
- 22% were lone parents. 42% had a disability or long term health condition.
- 107 beneficiaries received job search support. 67% of those supported were economically inactive.

Overall, this beneficiary profile points to very effective outreach into the programme target groups, particularly into communities of disabled people.

Front Line Worker Profile

- 580 front line workers have been trained.
- 54% of those supported have received training sessions that total six hours.

The employer organisations/ client focus of front line workers supported through the project is as follows:

Front line worker client group	Percentage of front line workers
Social housing tenants	22
Parents and families	21
People with disabilities/health problems	19
Unemployed	10
Women's groups and refugees	5
BME or migrant groups	4
Credit Union members	4
Offenders and ex offenders	3
Local authority customers	2
All community groups	2
Older people	2
Carers	2
Homeless people	0.8

Programme Performance & Impact

Performance against targets

Ultimately, the programme over-achieved its beneficiaries trained programme target of 800 by 16%. This is an excellent outcome and underlines significant and consistent efforts made by providers to pursue existing leads as well as adopt new and different marketing strategies. It also over-achieved its front line workers trained programme target of 400 by 45%, which is also a significant outcome. It also over-achieved its target for training over 50s by 78%; its BAME communities target of 120 by 9%; its lone parents target by 111% and its disabled people target by 123%. This reflects an excellent level of engagement with target communities. EEDA's final audit report noted of the programme's equal opportunity cross cutting performance that 'this performance is excellent and all target percentages have been exceeded, in some cases by substantial levels'.

The programme fell slightly short of its beneficiary job search support target of 120 by 14. The reasons for this were a combination of beneficiary forms being discounted by EEDA because six contained errors; and unemployed beneficiaries tended to be receiving job search support *already* as part of the employment interventions with which they were already engaged. Also, the circumstances of beneficiaries who were economically inactive meant that, generally, they did not require this type of support. Additionally, although programme referrals to credit unions and debt advice exceeded targets, referrals to other agencies for job search fell short (51 against a target of 100).

Delivery partner experiences

The programme generated significant learning in terms of successful approaches and challenges around marketing, designing and delivering the training. This included:

Effective approaches for marketing and recruitment

- The extensive use of existing contacts with organisations – ideally with whom there are already regular and productive working links and that have project managers that have the time and resource to actively promote the training to their clients.
- The investment of considerable time in building relationships with those organisations – right through from initial contact to completion of delivery.
- Conveying clearly and comprehensively the benefits of training, and delivering training to, front line workers first as gateways to beneficiary recruitment. A convincing ‘initial sell’ can create an effective internal and external marketeer of that individual and their organisation.
- Personal contact – ideally verbal communication – and working from the outset with key decision makers from potential ‘feeder’ organisations.
- Fully and accurately identifying training needs prior to course design and being clear that delivery will be customised to requirements.
- Wherever possible, piggyback existing groups (of beneficiaries) rather than try to create new ones.
- Recruitment from target groups worked best where partners engaged with organisations that already have relationships with BAME groups, disabled people and individuals within rural communities, in order to support their recruitment drives.

Effective approaches to training delivery

- Avoid ‘chalk and talk’ and optimise use of interactive technology wherever possible (eg. response handsets);
- Maximise opportunities for group discussion and the sharing of information and individual stories and, wherever possible, relate topics to clients’ personal circumstances;
- Provide handouts and information packs in order to encourage later reflection;
- Go for relaxed, non-institutional environments and be ‘fleet of foot’ in delivering the training. In some cases, there may be a need to alter training elements during delivery if the beneficiaries’ needs are to be met.

Challenges to delivery

- The preparation work involved in the development stage was of a scale that was unexpected by most (eg. scoping the offer, designing the course materials, marketing the training, negotiating with clients and logistics such as organising and checking venues);
- Working with beneficiary referrals where individuals had felt ‘forced’ to attend. ‘Willing’ participants better engage with the training;

Sustainable benefits for partners

Connecting to new organisations and networks and deepening existing relationships were the most widely quoted benefits, with building greater knowledge of communities and greater financial capability skills and knowledge also being particularly welcomed. The area where most felt that organisational impact was lowest was in the ability to exert influence over local authorities or other stakeholders.

Feedback from beneficiaries

Beneficiary feedback on the quality and relevance of the training provided is overwhelmingly positive and the response to a beneficiary postal survey encapsulates the spirit of feedback that was received throughout the programme period. Highlights include:

- 97% of beneficiaries said that they would recommend the training to others;
- Confidence in managing money rose from an average of 3.1 out of a potential top score of 5 prior to training, to 3.9 immediately after. Confidence levels of those responding to a follow up impact survey which took place some time after training were expressed as either 4 or five out of a potential top score of 5, by 78% of beneficiaries.
- Beneficiaries reported that they particularly appreciated the following from the training:
 - The non-judgmental, sensitive and empathetic style of staff who were friendly, open and helpful and the non-threatening delivery environment;
 - The great deal of content that was delivered, clearly and competently, and in a relatively short amount of time;
 - The visual aids and interactive elements, that created interest and captured their imagination and many particularly valued the discussion elements;
 - Practical information on other help available (including credit unions) and other benefits that beneficiaries could claim was particularly valued.

90% of the 108 beneficiaries responding to the impact survey articulated 171 actions that they had taken following training to change their money management practices, the highest proportion (67%) saying that they had set up a budget. A range of wider 'social' benefits were expressed, including 76% claiming reduced stress as a benefit.

Feedback from front line workers

Front line workers' feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 85% of those surveyed during the final evaluation phase, reporting that they would recommend the training to colleagues.

Frontline workers reported that their knowledge about financial inclusion/ capability issues had increased as a result of the training from an average of 3.1 out a possible high of 5 before the training, to 4.3 after. They also reported a similar rise in their confidence in identifying individuals in need of support around money issues following the sessions.

95.7% of those providing feedback indicated that the worker felt more confident about referring clients for help with money issues.

The average satisfaction with the delivery of the courses was 4.5 out of a potential highest score of 5 - a very positive rating.

Comments highlighted on the feedback forms were overwhelmingly positive and the comments of the majority may be summarised as follows:

- Most felt that the course content was comprehensive, relevant, easy to follow, inclusive in style, informative, interesting and very useful. Particular strengths included:
 - the breadth of content – it was good to get an overview of such a wide range of factors;
 - the interactive games – these made a potentially dry subject interesting and engaging;
- Many noted that the information was important to their clients but also to themselves and their families;
- People clearly enjoyed learning from each other, sharing knowledge and experiences.
- The considerable knowledge and experience of the trainers was also widely acknowledged – in some cases the trainers came from the same background as the participants, enabling the trainer to really contextualise and tailor the training.

In terms of what could have worked better, some commented that the level at which the training was pitched was either too high or too low for them personally and that some would have welcomed more, and some less, detail. Some also stated that resource packs would have been helpful – indicating that training was not uniformly accompanied by training materials that can be taken away and considered at a later stage.

The County Financial Capability and Inclusion Forums

Attendance

The programme involved support for six county financial capability and inclusion forums; enabling the programme to promote the visibility of, and cross-organisation and cross-sector collaboration around, financial inclusion across the region.

Each held between five and seven meetings throughout the programme period and the range of organisations attending has been encouraging. Typically, forums have attracted representatives from:

- Housing Associations.
- Credit Unions.
- Voluntary sector and charitable organisations, including Citizens Advice Bureaux and organisations focusing support on specific groups.
- Enterprise agencies.
- Local statutory organisations including Jobcentre Plus.
- Local authorities – housing departments, social services, trading standards, money advice services, local strategic partnerships.

An average of 46 individuals across all of the forums, have attended at least one meeting. Those with lower overall attendance tended to achieve a higher number of multiple attendances from individuals – an important distinction, because one of the struggles quoted by forum leads was the difficulty in achieving consistent attendance.

By programme end, a good balance had been achieved between strategic and operational level staff attendance, indicating that the forums were valued both as an opportunity to

share materials, insights, ideas and contacts at the operational level as well as a wider opportunity to influence strategy development.

Performance against objectives

All forums were able to demonstrate good progress in achieving their objectives, which collectively aim to:

- Stimulate knowledge sharing amongst members and import and export learning between members and external organisations.
- Create partnerships between agencies and a better understanding of the respective roles and remits of each; notably, how they promote and impact upon financial inclusion.
- Lobby and influence organisations and individuals in ways that will create a sustainable impact around raising awareness of financial capability issues and shaping the priorities and funding decisions of organisations that can contribute to the agenda.

Objectives around lobbying and influencing were the most challenging for the forums. A major contributory factor in this has been the change of government in May 2010, and the associated rapid changes to elements of infrastructure with which forums had been trying to engage.

Relationship between the forums and other financial capability infrastructure

The co-ordinator has been working to achieve a better fit between the regional financial capability forum and financial inclusion group in terms of co-ordinating meetings to enhance the efficiency and timeliness of information sharing. This has included articulating the respective roles of the county and regional financial capability forums. The county forum agenda is more fluid than that of the regional forum and reflects much more on local needs, which differ across the region. Establishing a framework whereby the county and regional forums have clear and distinctive roles and work to mutual benefit is, as a result, quite complex and will require more work. Actions designed to address this are included in the programme sustainability plan.

Exploring the economic impact of the project

The efficiency and effectiveness with which individuals manage their money is likely to improve if their financial capability skills are raised and they act upon financial advice. This means prioritising and paying off debts, starting to save and making the most of their savings by placing them in higher interest investments, and maximising income through accessing benefits. It also means seeking cheaper ways of paying bills and borrowing money.

Assuming that 20 per cent of the individuals involved in the Financial Capability project act on the financial advice and training they received through the project for the next five years, the overall impact of the project will be:

- Each individual will be **£5,000** better off, of this £500 will be in the form of savings;
- At the project level, **£930,000** of additional income will have been 'saved';
- At the regional economy level, the cumulative impact of the project will be **£1,162,025**.
- The financial return of the project is **£4.50 for every £1 spent on training**.

Programme sustainability

Project sustainability

The unsettled funding environment for financial inclusion was clearly undermining partners' ability to plan for the future. However, at the time of reporting, eight partners had confirmed that they intended to continue to train beneficiaries. Two confirmed that they would not and one said that it was a possibility. Five partners confirmed that they intended to continue to train front line workers. Four confirmed that they would not and three said that it was a possibility.

Funding was being sought and three partners confirmed that they would charge for training where this was not covered by core budgets.

Forum sustainability

The forums have each been considering a number of options for continuing following cessation of programme funding. These options have included:

- Continuing on an in-kind/voluntary support basis;
- Joining with another local forum/network;
- Using the Regional forum for best practice sharing and information about funding opportunities; and
- Establishing a 'virtual' solution;

With the exception of the Bedfordshire forum, there have been significant successes in securing the forums' short to medium term future.

The significant efforts to continue the work of the forums and the achievements of most to continue, either independently or in collaboration with partners, is testimony to the high value that the project leads and members place upon their work to date and their potential to do more in future.

Legacy tools

A set of legacy tools has been developed, which represent a comprehensive legacy of written materials aimed at disseminating learning from the East of England Financial Capability and Inclusion programme and providing organisations with a role in promoting and delivering financial capability support to continue and develop their services. These include guides to available grant funding; involving volunteers, outreach to vulnerable communities; and training resources and the importance of financial capability as a route to sustainable employment.

1. Introduction

Rocket Science was commissioned to undertake the evaluation of the East of England Financial Capability and Inclusion project, which was delivered by Citizens Advice in conjunction with partner organisations in the East of England.

The aims of the project were to:

- deliver financial capability and inclusion training and job search assistance services to unemployed and economically inactive people (beneficiaries) and the frontline workers who support them across the East of England, with particular emphasis on locations exhibiting high levels of financial exclusion; and
- build capacity for financial capability delivery through accredited training for trainers and county-based financial capability and inclusion forums.

The project was supported through European Social Fund (ESF) Priority 1 of the East of England regional allocation, the underpinning aim of which is to 'extend employment opportunities'. The Priority focuses resource upon people who are unemployed or who have become inactive in the labour market.

The European Social Fund (ESF) provides the employment element of the Competitiveness and Employment objective of the European Structural Funds programme. It was set up to help reduce differences in living standards between the regions of the European Union (EU) by: reducing unemployment; improving and developing the skills of employed people; and investing in industrial or rural areas which are in decline.

The findings of this report relate to all of the evaluation strands, which together explore:

- 'project-level performance and impact', which identifies and analyses the delivery experiences of, and effects upon, beneficiaries (end users of financial capability training) and front line workers;
- 'programme performance and impact', which explores the extent to which individual components of the programme are contributing to its *overall* aims and objectives;
- the regional impact of the programme, which analyses the financial savings and benefits accruing from raising financial capability, calculated using an economic impact model that was constructed at the mid-point of the programme; and
- the collective reflections of Citizens Advice and project partners.

It also reviews the performance of the County Financial Capability Forums, which have become well established within the region's six counties.

This report draws upon bodies of evidence that have been collected throughout the whole programme period, but focuses in particular and where appropriate, upon evidence gathered during the final stages of the programme; notably in relation to satisfaction levels regarding the Financial Inclusion Forums which have evolved and matured over the

programme period and the practical impact of the programme upon the day to day life of beneficiaries.

This report benefits from the emergence of a clear set of views and evidence on the actual and potential impact of the programme. Beneficiaries, front line workers and the Financial Capability Forum members and leads have all been able to articulate insights into the successes and struggles of the programme of which they have had direct experience.

1.1 Defining Terms

The key terms used in this report are defined below:

- ‘Unemployed’ refers to people who are actively seeking work and available to start a job within a period of two weeks.
- ‘Economically inactive’ refers to people who are currently not in work and who are either not seeking work or unavailable to start work.
- A ‘front line worker’ may be a volunteer or full time staff member of an organisation that provides services to the public. The key focus of the front line worker’s role is to engage directly with members of the public.
- A ‘beneficiary’ is an unemployed or economically inactive person who is the recipient of support designed to enhance their personal financial capability.
- ‘Financial capability’ refers to the degree to which an individual exhibits the skills, knowledge and behaviours required in order to ensure and sustain their own financial stability. This project aims to enhance peoples’ financial capability by putting people in control of their money and giving them the knowledge and confidence to make choices that are right for them around, for example, potential financial packages and services, budgeting and saving and borrowing.

1.2 Method statement

The evaluation has drawn upon six key information sources:

- *Data review* – Beneficiaries and front line workers are asked to complete monitoring proformas on their experiences of receiving financial capability training. The responses have been organised and analysed to enable: the development of profiles of training recipients; measurement of satisfaction with the course; and the capture of general feedback provided within open text boxes.
- *Three beneficiary questionnaire surveys* – the monitoring forms requested beneficiary contact details and beneficiaries were sent a questionnaire inviting them to tell us about their experiences of the training and their views on the legacy of the support they had received. An initial survey was undertaken by CHS, one of the project partners, and the others by Rocket Science. A total of 108 responses were received; giving us feedback on the practical changes that have resulted to people’s lives based upon a 12% sample of the total beneficiary cohort.
- *Front line worker focus groups and online surveys* – we facilitated focus groups and ran an online survey of the organisations sending workers for training. The focus groups helped us to develop more detailed insights into the opinions and experiences of front line workers and explore the legacy of the training.

- *Provider survey* – we conducted a questionnaire survey of project delivery partners in order to elicit their views on their rationale for becoming involved in the programme, their delivery successes and struggles and key lessons learned.
- *Financial Capability Forums member feedback and sustainability plans* – we conducted a final forum member online survey and reviewed end of programme feedback from forum leads on the extent to which forums were achieving their stated aims as well as their sustainability plans.
- *End of programme monitoring data* – we reviewed the final monitoring data prepared by Citizens Advice for the funder, the East of England Development Agency.

Appendix A provides a more detailed description of the above information sources including more information on sample sizes.

2. Programme Performance & Impact

In this section we analyse the programme's impact, which includes:

- analysing performance against targets for both beneficiaries and front line workers;
- discussions with providers to find out their views on the impacts of the programme; and
- an analysis of the performance of the programme in targeting geographical financial exclusion hotspots.

2.1 Performance against targets

2.1.1 Beneficiary targets

The programme overall has over-achieved its committed beneficiary training targets, marking a significant shift from the position recorded in the mid-point evaluation, which noted a shortfall of 20% against the target engagement figure for the first four delivery quarters.

Several rationales were posited for the shortfall against target at the mid-point stage:

- In the early stages of delivery, a significant amount of time was required for the development and adaptation of training materials, the planning and development of marketing materials and project planning, rather than delivering to clients.
- Many of the beneficiaries who would be eligible for support lead chaotic lifestyles and this tends often to have an adverse knock-on effect in terms of timekeeping and keeping appointments.
- There is a significant propensity for beneficiaries who have accepted the offer of training, ultimately to fail to attend. This, inevitably, impacts upon project planning and the achievement of targets.
- Beneficiaries tend to be far more interested in getting help to address their own specific financial issues and debt problems rather than receiving preventative support.
- Quite a lot of beneficiaries who have expressed interest in receiving support have, in fact, been ineligible i.e. employed.

Ultimately the programme trained a total of 930 beneficiaries, over-achieving its programme target of 800 by 16%. This is an excellent outcome and underlines significant and consistent efforts made by providers to pursue existing leads as well as adopting new and different marketing strategies.

The mid-point evaluation noted that providers were struggling to deliver six hours or more of training to beneficiaries, either as a single session or breaking this down into smaller modules over a longer period, with only just over 1/3rd of beneficiaries receiving 6 hours or more. Within the context of the above, Citizens Advice approached EEDA with a view to reducing the support duration requirement down from six hours in order to achieve an eligible beneficiary support outcome. EEDA concurred that revising this target would not

compromise the delivery of high quality outcomes and noted in the Audit Report compiled following the February 2011 programme monitoring visit, that “although two of the targets¹ may not be achieved, it was considered that the project had reacted to the demand and needs of the participants rather than the defined targets and has provided participants with the products, information and guidance required”. Notwithstanding this, 28% of beneficiaries did, in fact, receive six or more hours of training through the programme.

The following table summarises the performance of each partner in achieving their beneficiary support targets.

Partner	Total beneficiaries supported (% of original target achieved)	Number of individuals receiving 6 hours training	% of beneficiaries who were unemployed	% of beneficiaries who were economically inactive
Bedfordshire CAB *	39 (48)	4	28	72
Luton CAB	89 (105)	10	44	56
CHS Group	170 (102)	42	18	82
Basildon CAB	179 (99)	44	75	25
Colchester CAB	17 (40)	12	76	24
Holdfast Credit Union	42 (90)	18	34	66
Cornerstone Trust	43 (102)	25	37	63
Ipswich and Suffolk Credit Union (supported by 2 partners)	55 (114)	2	4	96
North East Suffolk CAB	31 (79)	0	100	0
Three Rivers CAB	62 (102)	23	29	71
Watford Women’s Centre	22 (96)	8	59	41
Diss, Thetford and District CAB	69 (100)	7	78	22
Yare Valley CAB	0	0	0	0
Weetu	75 (97)	21	65	35
Norfolk Credit Union	41 (100)	41	100	0

Where underperformance against beneficiary support targets is particularly significant, this has resulted from staffing or organisational issues which could not have been predicted or mitigated or an overall reduction in targets negotiated at the programme mid-point. Other rationales include over-achievement of front line worker targets offsetting underperformance and an instance where beneficiaries consistently committed to attend and then failed to do so. It is understood also that EEDA rejected the eligibility of a number of individual beneficiary supports because the form completed by the beneficiary was missing some detail; thus a greater number of individuals have actually been trained than is reflected in the programme’s final out-turn.

¹ Number of people assisted to get a job and the provision of 6 or more hours of support.

Providers right across the partnership struggled with providing six hours or more of support, with the exception of Norfolk Credit Union which managed to achieve this for all of the beneficiaries it supported.

The programme included a target of job search support for 120 beneficiaries. A total of 107 beneficiaries were directly supported, 67% of whom were economically inactive. There were two key reasons for this slight shortfall:

- Six beneficiary forms were discounted by EEDA for errors; and
- Secondly, although the principle of combining job search and financial capability support is a robust one, the fit between financial capability and job search support in the way envisaged through this programme, did not work for all beneficiaries. Those who were unemployed tended to be receiving job search support *already* as part of the employment interventions with which they were already engaged and it did not reflect the current needs of those who were economically inactive.

The programme also had targets for referrals to other support. 51 (against a target of 100) were referred for job search; 57 to a credit union (against a target of 50); 65 for debt advice (against a target of 50); and 30 to other services.

2.1.2 Front line worker targets

The programme has significantly exceeded its targets for training front line workers. A total of 580 have been trained, exceeding the target of 400 by 45%, with most providers meeting or exceeding their targets. Providers have generally found it easier to deliver six hours of training for front line workers, with 54% of those supported receiving training sessions that total six hours.

Partner	Total front line workers supported (% of original target achieved)	% of frontline workers receiving 6 hours training
Bedfordshire CAB	19 (48)	100
Luton CAB	39 (99)	15
CHS Group	118 (219)	43
Basildon CAB	83 (99)	59
Colchester CAB	45 (214)	77
Holdfast Credit Union	32 (152)	31
Ipswich and Suffolk Credit Union	2 (8)	0
North East Suffolk CAB	41 (205)	15
Three Rivers CAB	34 (115)	76
Hertfordshire Community Foundation	46 (104)	52
Diss, Thetford and District CAB	29 (127)	16
Yare Valley CAB	26 (76)	100
Weetu	42 (123)	100
Norfolk Credit Union	14 (100)	100

As in the case of performance against beneficiary targets, where underperformance is particularly significant, this has resulted from unpredictable staffing or organisational issues or an overall reduction in targets negotiated at the programme mid-point.

The front line workers receiving the training came from 128 organisations, representing and connecting with a wide range of beneficiary groups.

The front line workers were asked to estimate how many people they would reach during a year. The collective total estimated was 23,576, indicating that the programme has achieved a substantial actual and potential reach into its communities of interest.

Although the programme succeeded in over-achieving its targets for both beneficiaries and front line workers trained, it was clear from the very early stages of delivery that it would be a much more challenging task to engage beneficiaries than front line workers. This was partly due to issues arising from the characteristics of the beneficiary client groups targeted and partly because there were clear operational and delivery efficiency gains to be had from focusing early efforts upon engaging front line workers. The theory was born out in the reality of providers' experiences. The key reasons for this were reported as part of the mid-point evaluation, but given that one of the purposes of this final report is to reflect upon the experiences of delivering the programme as a whole, the insights are summarised again below.

- Organising the timely recruitment of beneficiaries from an array of backgrounds and with a range of different interests onto training is, logistically, arguably far more demanding than the recruitment of front line workers. Front line workers are more accustomed to accommodating professional development into their working world, particularly within the context of a fast-changing policy and legislative environment.
- Training of front line workers, first, significantly enhances the ability of providers to recruit beneficiaries onto financial capability support. Providing support to front line workers prior to large scale recruitment of beneficiaries is commonly regarded as good practice and the associated knowledge and confidence they gain in relation to the subject enhances their ability to promote the training and its associated benefits to beneficiaries.
- Front line worker sessions are delivered to groups of workers from organisations, commonly with an in-house worker acting as a 'promoter' or facilitator for the engagement; supporting the training provider in a range of aspects of planning and logistics, including timing and attendance. This makes it easier to plan the sessions and guarantee attendance than when the sessions are being delivered to a group of individual beneficiaries with different demands on their time.

2.2 Partner Discussions

As part of the final phase of the evaluation we conducted a questionnaire survey of project partners asking them to reflect on their experiences of the programme as a whole; from developing their individual approaches right through to identifying the legacy for their organisations. 13 providers responded to the survey, including three who were new to financial capability training delivery prior to this programme. We also facilitated a workshop in order to enable some collective reflection of the highs and lows of the programme and the relative benefits that have come from partnership working. This section explores the outcome of these reflections and includes some key insights that have been articulated during the course of previous phases of the evaluation.

2.2.1 Motivations for becoming involved in the project

Partners quoted a range of reasons for applying to deliver the project and a range of aspirations for both their project and the programme as a whole. The following opportunities identified included the potential to:

- scale up capacity generally and, in particular, to permeate deeper into communities with whom they did not previously have a relationship;
- extend the geographical reach of their organisations, supported in part by the potential to deliver training in venues additional to their own;
- instil a preventative, pro-active approach into tackling financial exclusion, which they considered to be more valuable and effective than a reactive model;
- extend and develop the skills, knowledge and experience of staff and their wider organisation;
- raise awareness about and the profile of financial capability amongst key strategic and partner agencies;
- enable individual organisations with complementary objectives to work increasingly in partnership and in different ways in order to tackle complex issues;
- operate as part of a consortium and to connect up in a positive way with a key funder;
- develop some fresh thinking around financial capability and consider mechanisms and opportunities for sustaining this important work – the opportunity for the county-level forums to lead to productive partnerships was seen as important; and
- create some great experiences of financial capability support for beneficiaries within a region where delivery in this field had not been of uniformly high quality.

Partners also welcomed the complementary and valuable addition that the programme could offer to their core operations. The programme also chimed with their recognition that financial capability is crucial to improving the life chances of individuals and they were also confident that they had the right skills and experience to do a great job.

2.2.2 Marketing the training and recruitment

Marketing techniques

Partners felt that getting marketing right was key and critical to getting the projects off on the right foot. Some had pursued some resource-intensive and time-consuming ‘blind alleys’. Key areas of learning include the following:

- The extensive use of existing contacts with organisations – ideally with whom there are already regular and productive working links – as well as connecting with previous client organisations was crucial for both beneficiary and front line worker recruitment;
- Personal contact – ideally verbal communication – works much better than non-verbal communication including flier emails. It was generally agreed that fliers and poster campaigns were helpful only as complementary support to more intensive and direct approaches. A strong view was expressed that poster advertising to beneficiaries tended only to work well when they were placed within partner organisations, where front line workers could bring the posters to the beneficiaries’ attention and help the beneficiary sign up for training if appropriate;

- It is important to factor in sufficient time to build upon relationships with partner organisations – not just in the initial contact stage, but right up to completion of delivery;
- It was also important to connect with the key decision-maker within the organisation from the outset – a convincing ‘initial sell’ can create an effective internal and external marketer of that individual and organisation. Some partners took learning materials, handouts and evidence of good news stories to their first client meeting as an aide to stimulating interest;
- Cold calling was of limited value;
- Recruit front line workers first. If they can be convinced of the benefits, they will market the programme and broker relationships with beneficiaries;
- It is important to engage fully and effectively with the client organisation in order to identify training needs and be clear about willingness to customise delivery to their requirements; and
- Wherever possible, piggyback existing groups (of beneficiaries) rather than try to create a new one.

We asked partners to estimate how many organisations they had approached during the course of their marketing campaigns. Seven had approached between 10 and 20 organisations; 2 had approached between 20 and 25 and three had approached more than 80. This gives a sense of the intensity of effort required in preparing the ground for the programme.

The above relate chiefly to the recruitment of beneficiaries. Front line workers were much easier to engage and one provider felt that a more overt and intensive marketing campaign targeting front line workers would yield unserviceable demand.

The most and least effective recruitment source organisations

The relative experiences of each partner varied, according to the area within which they operate. The shape of the infrastructure with which they could potentially connect and the relative responsiveness of the particular ‘feeder agencies’ was, inevitably, different. However, the following characteristics and types of organisation emerged as the most successful recruitment organisations:

- Those that already had an established support group;
- Those with project managers have the capacity to actively market the project to their clients;
- Organisations supporting people with mental health and learning difficulties. Children’s Centres, Sure Start, churches and access to employment support organisations were particularly highlighted.

The least successful recruitment sources included:

- Organisations that had to bring together a new group of beneficiaries rather than facilitate piggybacking of existing groups;
- New Children’s Centres that, as yet, lacked a core group of parents attending classes or that lacked the space to accommodate training on-site;
- Organisations where front line workers trained and went on to train beneficiaries themselves rather than refer them back to partners;

- Organisations that exercised excessive pressure upon clients to attend; and
- Public libraries.

Organisations that were successful for some and not for others included housing associations (although some performed well in terms of co-ordinating groups of tenants and harnessing the support of tenant board members in order to raise awareness), Probation Service and other organisations supporting ex-offenders; and Community and Voluntary Sector networks and organisations – possibly because they viewed the projects as potential competition.

Success factors for recruiting people with disabilities

Particular success factors for recruiting people with disabilities included:

- Connecting with organisations supporting people with disabilities and committing to significant up-front relationship building in order to harness the trust of the organisation. An ability to demonstrate a clear understanding of some of the beneficiaries' key needs and 'what works' in supporting them was also key as was an ability to customise delivery in order to accommodate these in practical ways including the incorporation of significant visual content into the training materials.
- Connecting with rehabilitation services where people were available for extended periods of time; and
- Offering training in venues frequented by disabled people.

Success factors for recruiting people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups

Key and critical here was the need to build upon existing relationships with organisations supporting BAME communities and with community elders who are key influencers within those communities. Partners with well established relationships based upon a culture of regular interaction and trust with BAME communities were most successful in this regard.

Other successful approaches include the appointment of interpreters to support delivery to beneficiaries with low levels of English.

Success factors for recruiting with rural communities

During the initial stages, the programme struggled to connect with communities within rural areas. In common with the success factors for engaging with BAME communities, partners with well-established networks and working connections with organisations within rural areas have been most successful. Other effective approaches included CHS Group delivering training from Children's Centres with catchments covering rural areas. They were less successful, however, in working through carers networks, but this may have been because connections with these were less well established rather than an indication that carers networks may not prove effective in future.

2.2.3 Designing the training

Partners told us that they had used a range of source materials in designing the training. These included:

- Citizens Advice resources including 'Managing Your Money', 'Managing Debt' and 'Energy Best Deal';
- Office of Fair Trading 'Saving for Christmas' materials;
- Financial Services Authority booklets and materials;
- Pointers from NIACE training;
- Imported learning from Financial Capability Forum meetings; and
- Adaptation of materials that partners had used previously.

Partners' generally created a portfolio of learning materials from which they were able to select appropriate elements, depending upon the particular needs and interests of the group to be trained. In practice, the materials were continuously adapted, building upon a growing body of knowledge about which materials and techniques were proving most and least effective. The inclusion of interactive tools and techniques – quizzes, games and visual materials - proved particularly effective.

It was generally felt that although designing the training together with other development work required considerable, and sometimes a disheartening level of investment and effort, significant up-front work reaps benefits for delivery in the round.

2.2.4 Delivering the training

What worked well?

The following methods were quoted by partners as being particularly effective:

- Avoid 'chalk and talk' and optimise use of interactive technology wherever possible (eg. response handsets);
- Maximise opportunities for group discussion and the sharing of information and individual stories;
- Wherever possible, relate topics to clients' personal circumstances;
- Provide handouts and information packs in order to encourage later reflection;
- Go for relaxed, non-institutional environments;
- Be 'fleet of foot' in delivering the training. In some cases, there may be a need to alter training elements during delivery if the beneficiaries' needs are to be met;

What was less successful?

- Some partners felt that the requirement to work with groups rather than provide 1:1 support to individuals effectively excluded some of the most vulnerable people from participating in the training;
- Referrals where individuals had felt 'forced' to attend eg. by other agencies supporting them into work or the Probation Service. 'Willing' participants better engage with the training;
- The preparation work involved in the development stage was of a scale that was unexpected by most (eg. scoping the offer, designing the course materials, marketing

the training, negotiating with clients and logistics such as organising and checking venues);

- There were too many forms for participants to complete for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Beneficiaries frequently questioned how the information would be used, which was a threat to trust relationships and literacy and ESOL-related barriers faced by some beneficiaries meant that completing the forms was a struggle for some beneficiaries and partners alike;
- The scale of issues connected with supporting enhanced financial capability had resulted, in some instances, in partners trying to pack too much into the training;
- Some groups were a struggle to train. These included some NEET groups, people with mental health issues who were clearly in a state of high distress, young mums with childcare and other friends and family relationship issues that sometimes proved disruptive to course delivery, late-comers and individuals prone to behaving in a disruptive way;
- Some people attending training who were technically ineligible; and
- The relatively high incidence of people committing to attending training and them failing to attend.

We asked partners to give us an estimate of how many people who had originally committed to the training, failed to attend. The results were as follows:

Number of beneficiaries	Number of partners confirming level of absence	Number of front line workers	Number of partners confirming level of absence
1 - 9	1	0	2
2 - 10	3	1 - 10	9
11 - 20	5		
21 – 30	1		
30 - 40	2		

Partners quoted the following as being important success factors in achieving beneficiary attendance at a first session:

- Ensure that the course labelling is phrased in a positive and accessible way that makes it clear what will be provided at the sessions. Importantly, avoid the word ‘debt’ - the negative connotations of which can be a real deterrent and also ‘finance or financial’ which can evoke images that are too ‘high level’ for some beneficiaries to relate to;
- Train in an environment that is familiar to the learner, thus, avoiding the need for them to travel too much more than they would normally;
- As a general rule, limit beneficiary training sessions to three hours – which differed to front line workers who tended to favour longer (up to six hour) sessions, limiting the need for successive sessions and further calls on their time;
- Schedule sessions so that, as much as possible, they mirror beneficiary needs – piggybacking existing groups is a clear example of this – and be prepared to run sessions out of work hours. Different times tended to suit different beneficiary groups. Eg. older people and people suffering from depression favoured afternoons, but Children’s Centres generally preferred mornings;

- Include topics that have been consistently popular with beneficiaries; notably, ‘Managing your Money’-type courses which supported beneficiaries to get their finances into order;
- Provide incentives such as vouchers, energy monitors or a raffle draw;
- Provide food and refreshments;

In terms of maintaining beneficiaries’ involvement over a series of sessions, partners suggested that the following had worked for them:

- Limit the number of sessions that people would need to attend in order to drive up their financial capability to a level required for it to impact upon their day to day lives;
- Make it clear to beneficiaries that the second/third session will be very much customised to their particular needs; thus moving away from general to more specific issues that chime with their particular interests. Eg. a significant number of Papworth Hospital-based beneficiaries were expecting sizeable compensation payments, so the training delivered to this group had a large focus on savings and investments. Training provided at Children’s Centres looked at financial capability from a parent’s perspective, including budgeting for young mums;
- Make it clear that people will be given a chance to catch up if they miss one of a series of sessions ie. provide a recap’ at the beginning of each new session;
- Provide certificates or other incentives (eg. vouchers) that reward continued engagement.

We also asked partners to estimate how many people were ineligible within the context of the programme output definitions. The results were as follows:

Number of beneficiaries	Number of partners confirming level of absence
None	3
1 - 5	5
5 - 10	3
16	1

What would partners do differently?

Partners confirmed that, if they had their time over again, they would make the following differences to their delivery methods:

- Begin a delivery relationship with an organisation by booking in small chunks of training, rather than investing unrealistically in trying to achieve a series of six hour sessions;
- Approach more pre-established groups earlier in the programme;
- Ensure that the course title is clear and reflects the content of the training in order to guide and manage expectations;
- Focus to a greater degree on mental health groups as feeder routes; and
- Design delivery so that beneficiaries have the space between sessions to do their own independent working and reflection.

2.2.5 (How) did beneficiary referrals work?

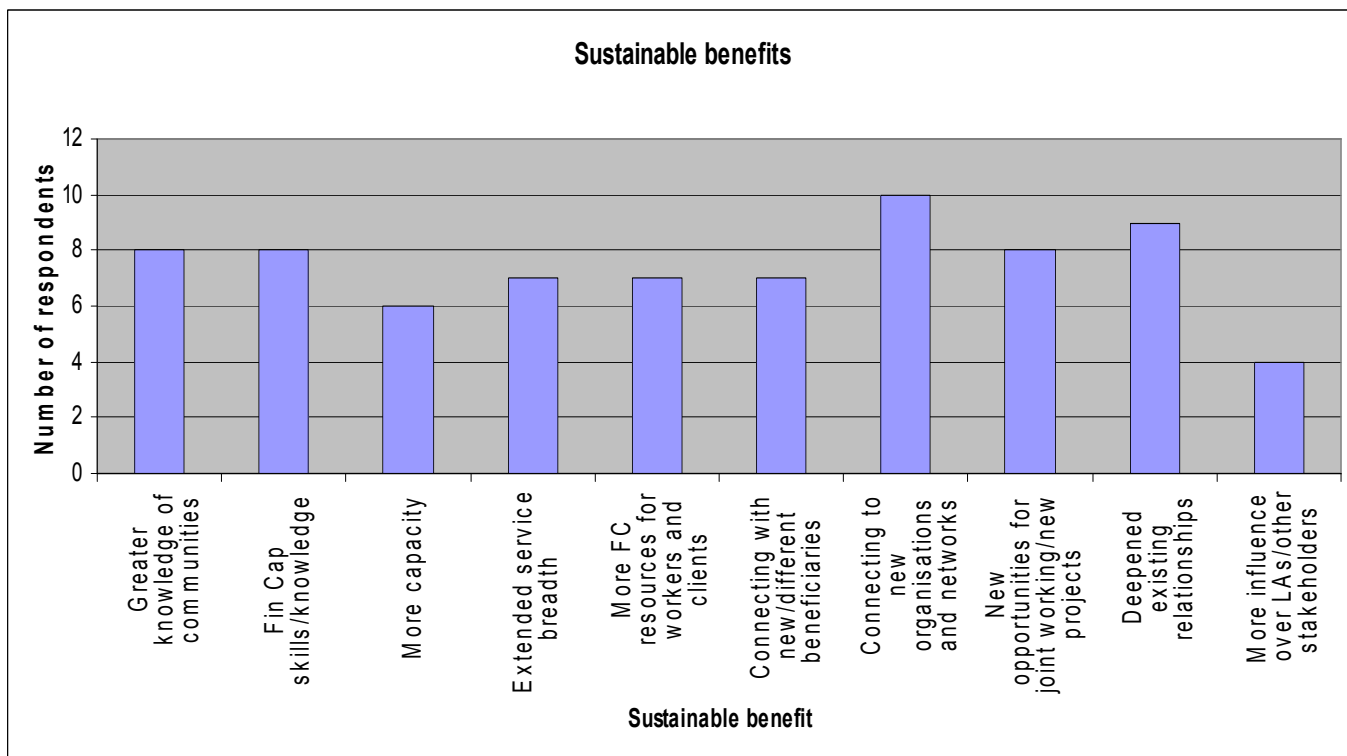
Successfully making referrals was an area where most providers struggled in terms of identifying specific follow up activity with a beneficiary and monitoring whether the beneficiary had followed it through. A referral process was designed at the start of the project which proved difficult to implement. Programme partners considered this procedure to be overly complex, resource-intensive and cumbersome. The key reasons for this being that it entailed completion of detailed documentation over and above that already required for ESF monitoring purposes; there was no incentive for the organisation to which the referral was made to respond because they were not contractually bound to so; and there was no shared database or network facility on which to record the data, relying instead upon manual procedures.

“Tricky...official system very fiddly and involved too many bits of paper”

They, therefore, tended to approach referrals in a more ‘ad hoc’ and flexible way, which included providing beneficiaries with contact details for, and information about, other support organisations and directly providing appointments for some (although these were not always pursued). Where referrals entailed signposting to support elsewhere within their own organisation or a partner with whom they had a close working relationship, this was easier to facilitate and track. The referral worked most effectively when the recipient became actively involved in supporting the client through the transition (hence, the relative ease of the internal referral process or referral between organisations that were accustomed to working closely). Fundamentally, however, the effectiveness of this more ad hoc process was dependent upon the rigour of the recipient organisation in confirming client contact and subsequent take-up of support.

2.2.6 Sustainable benefits for the provider partners

We asked provider partners to tell us about the key sustainable benefits for their organisation, based on a set checklist. The graph below demonstrates the result.



Connecting to new organisations and networks and deepening existing relationships were the leading responses, with building greater knowledge of communities and greater financial capability skills and knowledge also scoring highly. The lowest score was recorded against having more influence over local authorities or other stakeholders.

When asked about outcomes that they have hoped for, but were not quite achieved two key items emerged.

- A frustration that there was still a need to 'sell' financial capability to end users and that considerable efforts were required in order to create demand. A practical suggestion posited that could address this was more extensive use of general demand for ICT as an engagement tool. This had worked in other financial capability projects in which the partner suggesting this had previously been engaged; and
- That, despite a high level of customisation and flexibility, the development of a truly 'demand-led' rather than 'supply driven' model of financial capability learning is still a little way off.

2.2.7 Support from Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice played a key and pivotal role in this programme and it was clear from the outset that its performance would be critical in pulling the provider partnership together, facilitating the sharing of information across partners and embedding the networking infrastructure represented by the six county forums. We asked partners to tell us what was particularly effective and what could have improved in terms of the level and quality of support provided by Citizens Advice.

We asked partners to rate the support they had been given by Citizens Advice on a scale of one to five, where one = poor and five = excellent.

11 of the 13 respondents rated the support at five (denoting excellent), with two rating support at 4.

The project co-ordinator was singled out for unanimous praise and was commended for the high quality of support she had provided across a range of project management roles.

- Supporting the development of training:

"Liz was wonderful with putting me in contact with other trainers with experience in a particular area, pointing me towards training material, support when the going got rough etc"

- Creating connections:

"I have found her contacts with major regional/national organisations particularly helpful".

- Responsive:

"Whenever I asked a question about the project, it was quickly and efficiently answered"

- Balancing the need to be supportive and flexible with the need to sure the programme delivers on time and to target.

“Liz and Lynne have both worked tirelessly to support us all on the monitoring of this project which was far more than any other project I have worked on”

Additional issues raised included:

- Provision of, and signposting to, helpful training materials;
- The effectiveness of the Forums in supporting individuals and organisations to network, provide the building blocks for partnership working and support organisations to win more work; and
- Access to helpful and knowledgeable people beyond the project co-ordinator.

Suggestions for improvement were, essentially, twofold and offered by two providers. The first concerned partner training. It was felt that more could have been done to support organisations that were already experienced in delivering financial capability training, to take their delivery to the next level by supporting them to customise approaches to the needs of specific client groups and facilitating a higher level of training for providers generally. Regret was also expressed by one provider that the NIACE-delivered training and accreditation support could have been delivered in a more fluid and timely way and that Citizens Advice would have been important here.

The above represents a real endorsement of the quality of Citizens Advice’s performance and demonstrates very clearly that it achieved the right balance between adopting a flexible and supportive approach to partners with its responsibility to keep the performance of the project as a whole on track; in line with its role as accountable body for the programme.

Collaborative working

One of the underpinning rationales for the programme was to raise the profile and awareness of the potential benefits of financial capability support through enhancing partnership working across the region. There is clear evidence that the forums have made considerable strides towards bringing together staff at the operational and strategic levels across a wide range of organisations and evidencing collaborative working that has resulted directly from new relationships.

The benefits of partnership working at the programme partner level, however, are not so clear. Citizens Advice has provided the essential gel to the programme partnership, sharing experience across providers and connecting up partners around particular issues of mutual benefit as appropriate and as the opportunity arose. Feedback from partners received through this evaluation would indicate that the sharing of experiences, expertise and knowledge between partners was patchy, with some feeling that their efforts were not reciprocated sufficiently to motivate them to be proactive in establishing and maintaining relationships with programme partners.

2.3 Geographical targeting

An underpinning objective of the programme was to target ‘hotspots’ for financial exclusion in the East of England. Previous work by Rocket Science identified the location of these.

The mid-point evaluation found that the majority of financial exclusion hotspots were being reached by the organisations delivering the programme and engagement of beneficiaries within these was effective in the south and centre of the region. However, at that time, there are significant areas in the far north and more rural areas that did not have beneficiaries or providers in close proximity. Engagement levels in North and North West Norfolk, in particular, were relatively low. At the time of submitting the October headline report, significant improvements had been made in targeting rural communities, according to the Commission for Rural Communities' definitions and this was maintained to programme end.

3. Beneficiaries & Front-line Workers Feedback & Impact

The two target groups for the programme were beneficiaries and front line workers. In this section we look at the impact of the training from the perspectives of both. This section draws upon findings from three questionnaire surveys of beneficiaries, beneficiary and front line worker details and feedback forms, telephone interviews with beneficiaries, a focus group conducted with front line workers in March 2011, a frontline worker online survey and Citizens Advice monitoring and claims data collated by Citizens Advice.

3.1 Beneficiaries

In this section we provide an analysis of who the beneficiaries were and explore the impacts of the training from their perspective.

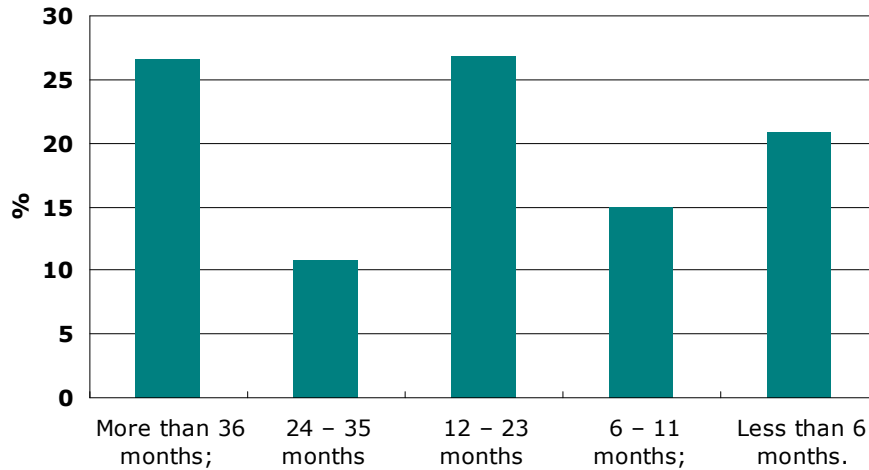
3.1.1 Beneficiary profile

There is an almost equal split between beneficiaries who were unemployed and those who are economically inactive (51% were economically inactive). The programme target envisaged that more than twice the number of economically inactive people would be supported than those who were unemployed. It is possible that the number of economically inactive people supported is, actually, higher than the total number recorded, because at the beginning of the programme, it was revealed that some beneficiaries who had defined themselves as 'unemployed' were not, in fact, available to start work within a two-week period. Further guidance was provided on the definition of unemployment and economic inactivity in order to address this.

Notwithstanding this, experiences from initiatives designed to target worklessness demonstrate that it is far more challenging to engage with economically inactive people than those who are already engaged with services designed to support the return to work. Within this context, although the programme fell a little short in this respect, it is considered that the achievement of 85% of the target number of economically inactive people constitutes a considerable success. In addition, it should be noted that the programme targets were set prior to the escalation of unemployment levels associated with the current recession. It is possible that a fuller understanding of sheer scale of unemployment on the horizon at the time when targets were set may have resulted in an adjustment to the balance between unemployed and economically inactive support targets.

The following chart shows unemployment duration.

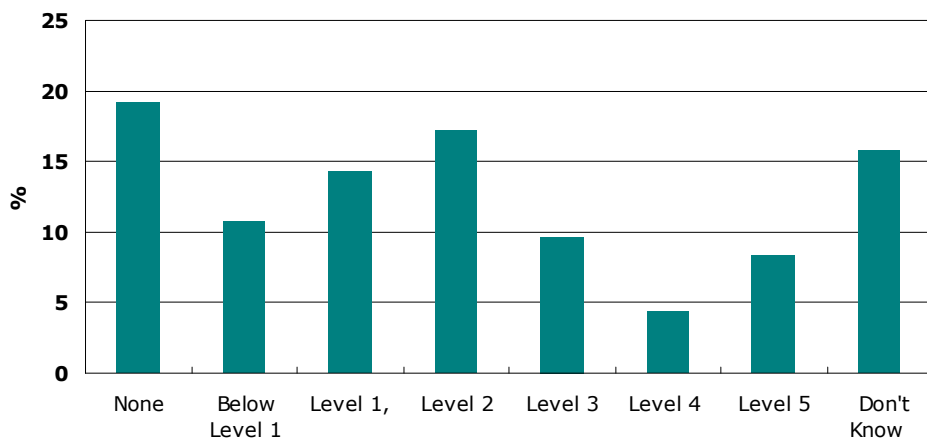
Of those unemployed - duration of unemployment



64% of unemployed beneficiaries have been out of work for a year or longer and 26.5% have been unemployed for more than 36 months.

The chart below shows the qualification levels that beneficiaries reported on their details forms. The highest number of responses were recorded against the 'no qualification' category and a high number also reported that they did not know what qualifications they had, which might mask higher numbers with low or no qualifications than claimed.

Qualifications



58% of beneficiaries were female. The largest beneficiary age group was between 26 and 49 (491). 136 were aged between 18 and 25 and 33 were below eighteen years of age. 28% of beneficiaries were over 50 (exceeding the programme target for this by 78%).

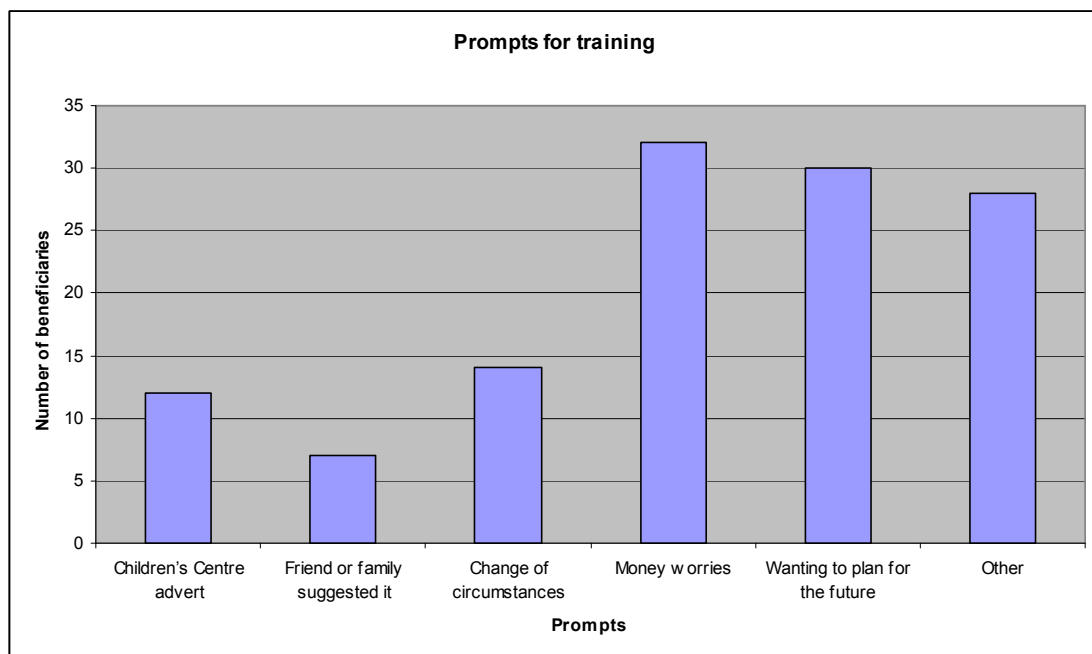
Most beneficiaries (76%) were White British (704). The next largest ethnic groups trained were Black African (36) and Black Caribbean (18) and Indian (18). The programme over-achieved its BAME target of 128 beneficiaries by 23%. This was facilitated, in part, by sub-contracting Menter, the regional minority ethnic group network, to work with CHS and

WEETU to engage with BAME groups. 22% were lone parents (exceeding the target by 111%) and 42% had a disability or long term health condition (exceeding the target by 123%). Overall, this points to very effective outreach into the target groups, particularly into communities of disabled people.

The beneficiary profile reflects the personal and socio-economic characteristics that research has identified as signalling a likelihood of being financially excluded and having lower levels of financial capability. They include: being female; being a single parent; belonging to an ethnic minority; being under 45; and being economically inactive. This would indicate that client group targeting has been effective.

3.1.2 Reasons for taking the training

The graph below shows the response of the 103 of the 108 beneficiaries responding to our surveys², who told us that what prompted them to take the training.

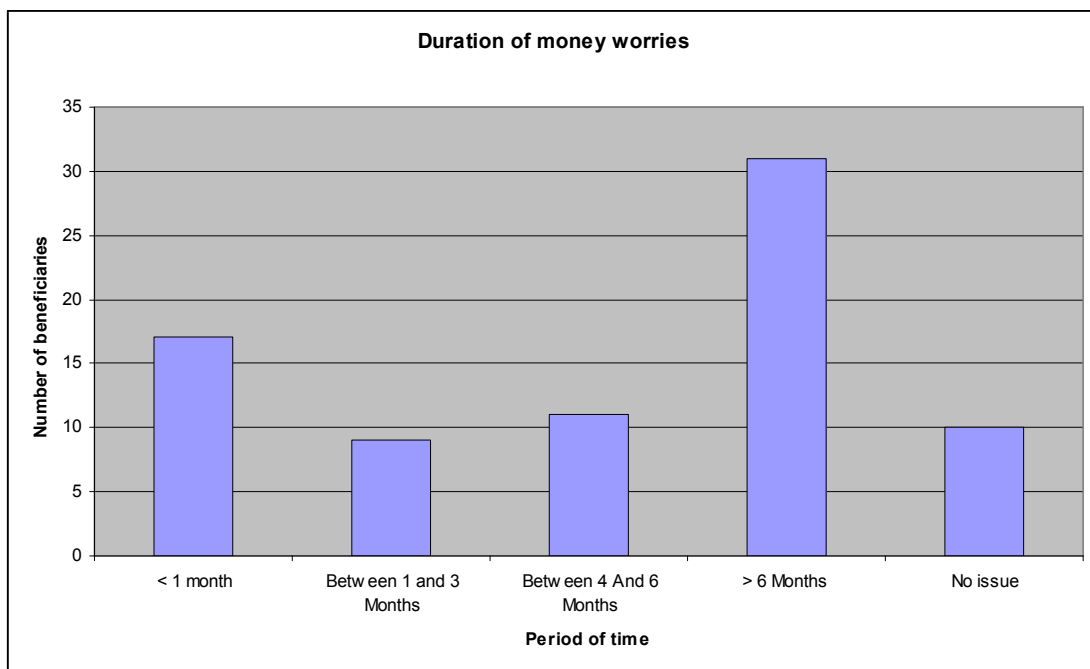


Most beneficiaries who attended the financial training sessions did so as a result of money worries, wishing to plan for the future or quoted a response other than that contained within the questionnaire options. The 'other' options included referrals and recommendations from other organisations including access to employment providers and health-related support organisations (MIND, Jobcentre Plus, A4E, Probation Service, Credit Union, YMCA and other charitable organisations). Other reasons for undertaking training included the need to learn more about how to stretch money on benefits and in two cases, to enhance their ability to support people as a volunteer.

² The surveys asked about beneficiaries' background money-related issues and reasons for training, satisfaction with the course, any other benefits they have perceived and what future support should consist of.

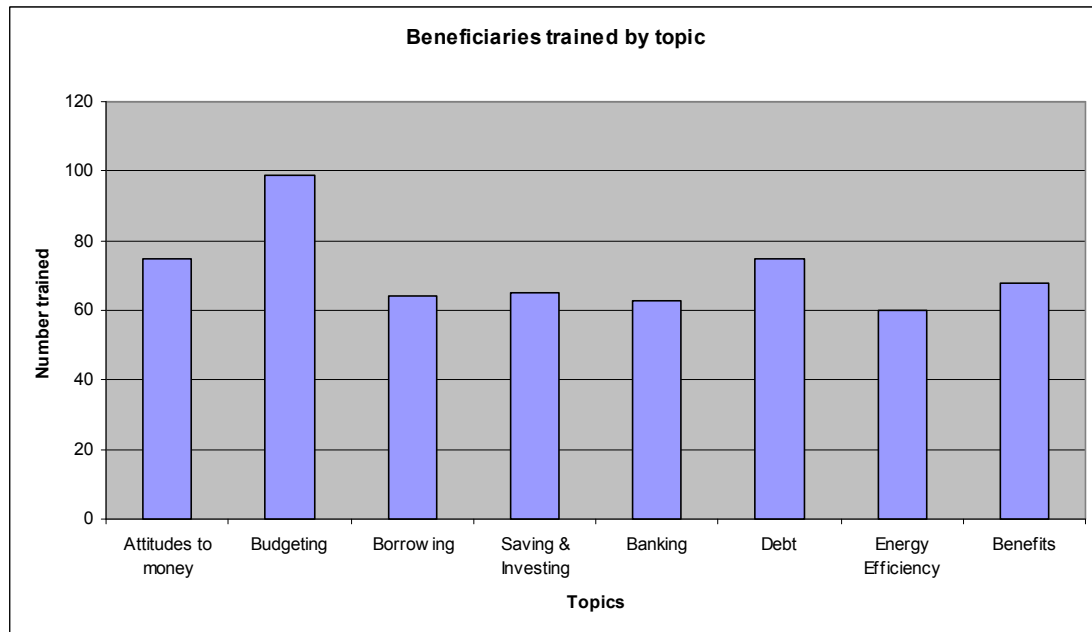
3.1.3 Duration of money-related worries

86 people responded to a survey question asking how long they had been experiencing money worries. The responses are shown in the graph below. 10 respondents were not experiencing money worries, but a significant proportion had been for over six months (31). Some of the beneficiaries interviewed in earlier phases of the evaluation cited long-term debt issues, some for as long as 10 years. Beneficiaries who were suffering the effects of long-term debt reported that it was adversely affecting their day to day life, which included stress, worry, depression, adverse credit ratings which was preventing the purchase of higher value goods, and feeling constrained financially because most of their available income was being used to pay off service debts.



Beneficiaries interviewed also expressed a wish to have more money to be able to spend on luxuries and disposables or family members.

3.1.4 Training topics



The 104 people who told us in the surveys which types of training they had received reported a roughly equal split of support across a wide range of topic categories, with budgeting receiving a slightly higher response. This spread is reflected also in the beneficiary feedback forms that were submitted on completion of each training session (993 forms submitted, representing multiple sessions by some individuals).

The breakdown of sessions across partner agencies as reported in the beneficiary feedback forms is shown in the table below.

Partner	Participants (% of total)	Sessions (% of total)	Average and (max) sessions per participant
Basildon CAB	23.4	21.9	1.3 (3)
Bedfordshire CAB	5.5	5.4	1.4 (3)
CHS Group	18.5	21.5	1.6 (6)
Colchester CAB	1.9	1.5	1.2 (2)
Cornerstone Trust	6.1	9.6	2.2 (7)
Diss, Thetford and District CAB	8.9	7.5	1.2 (2)
Hertfordshire Community Foundation	4.3	3.7	1.2 (2)
Holdfast Credit Union	4.8	4.6	1.4 (3)
Ipswich CAB	5.6	5.2	1.3 (3)
Luton CAB	7.4	7.1	1.4 (3)
North East Suffolk CAB	0.9	0.6	1.0 (1)
Norfolk Credit Union	4.0	3.1	1.1 (2)
Weetu	5.8	5.7	1.4 (4)
Watford Women's Centre	3.0	2.5	1.1 (2)

The 993³ beneficiary feedback forms that clearly recorded the number of hours per session indicated the following:

Up to 1 hour – 22 sessions	Between 4 and 5 hours – 77 sessions
Between 1 and 2 hours – 523 sessions	Between 5 and 6 hours – 50 sessions
Between 2 and 3 hours – 305 sessions	Between 6 and 7 hours – 1 session
Between 4 and 5 hours – 15 sessions	

In terms of referrals to other support, arising from the training, end of programme monitoring data suggested that 51 related to job search, 55 related to debt advice, 65 were referred to a Credit Union and that there were 30 referrals to 'other' sources of support some of which were unspecified. Those that were defined included support for anger management, ESOL, study advice, general CAB and benefits advice, further access to jobs support and other types of training including ICT.

³ Note that beneficiaries were asked to complete feedback forms for each training session received. Therefore, multiple forms will have been completed and analysed for some beneficiaries.

3.1.5 Satisfaction with the training

Beneficiary feedback on the quality and relevance of the training provided is overwhelmingly positive.

Of the 102 individuals who responded to the survey question asking whether they would recommend the training to others, 97 said they would. Five said that they would not, but the comments of two of these respondents around other training aspects would suggest that they may have indicated a negative response in error and one of the other five felt so confident about the knowledge he had gained that he would be in a position to relay what he had learned to his friends and family himself. Taking these factors into consideration, it would be fair to say that 97% respondents would recommend the training to others.

Beneficiaries expanded upon what they particularly appreciated and enjoyed about the training. These are summarised below:

- The non-judgmental, sensitive and empathetic style of staff who were friendly, open and helpful;
- The non-threatening delivery environment;
- A great deal of content was delivered, clearly and competently, in a relatively short amount of time;
- The visual aids and interactive elements created interest and captured their imagination – many beneficiaries particularly valued the discussion elements as this contributed to reducing their sense of isolation;
- Practical information on other help available (including credit unions) and other benefits that beneficiaries could claim was particularly valued.

“Practical, useful information that I could relate to my situation”

“It gave me some new direction and an end to bills getting on top”

There were very few negative comments, with the majority of beneficiaries unable to identify any shortcomings. Some would have appreciated a longer session with more time given to each topic element covered because they struggled to get to grips with the range and depth of information on offer. Some felt that more could be covered in the time.

A limited number of suggestions for improvement were offered, but included the provision of a one-to-one interview facility following the training – although the time constraints on this were recognised and dealing swiftly and effectively with disruptive people.

An interesting and strong view was expressed that training similar to that delivered through the programme should be rolled out more widely as a prevention tool.

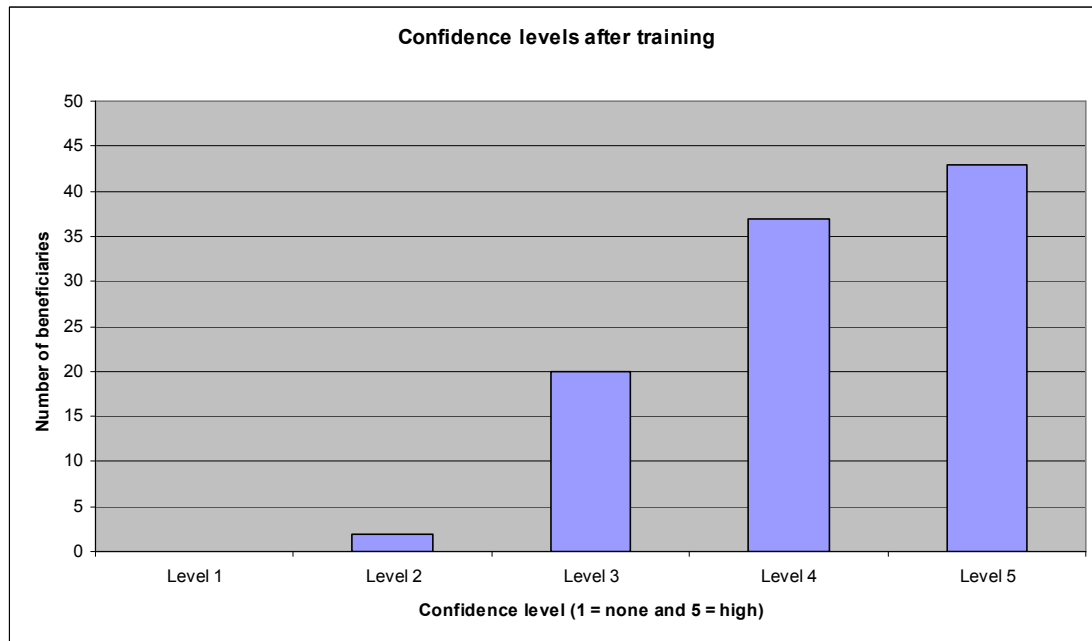
“A course similar should be used in schools, colleges and also as soon as someone is unemployed. Children should learn this before they make mistakes”.

3.1.6 Impact on confidence levels

Of the 610 beneficiaries completing 747 participant feedback forms asking them to describe their confidence levels on a scale of one (very low) to high (excellent) before and after the

training, they reported a rise in confidence levels from an average of 3.1 before training to 3.9 after a session.

Beneficiaries responding to the questionnaire survey were asked to rate their current level of confidence in managing their day to day finances. The responses of the 102 people who replied to this question are demonstrated in the graph below:



78% scored themselves either at levels four or five, which is an excellent result particularly as the questionnaire survey aims to elicit the practical impact of the training upon beneficiaries' day to day lives and the ways in which it has supported them individually to cope and move forward.

Participants provided reasons for their responses. Those scoring higher quoted evidence of better money management (eg. thinking before making lists/making lists before buying); greater knowledge generally; having more and better everyday tools to cope and plan; and less fear about confronting debts.

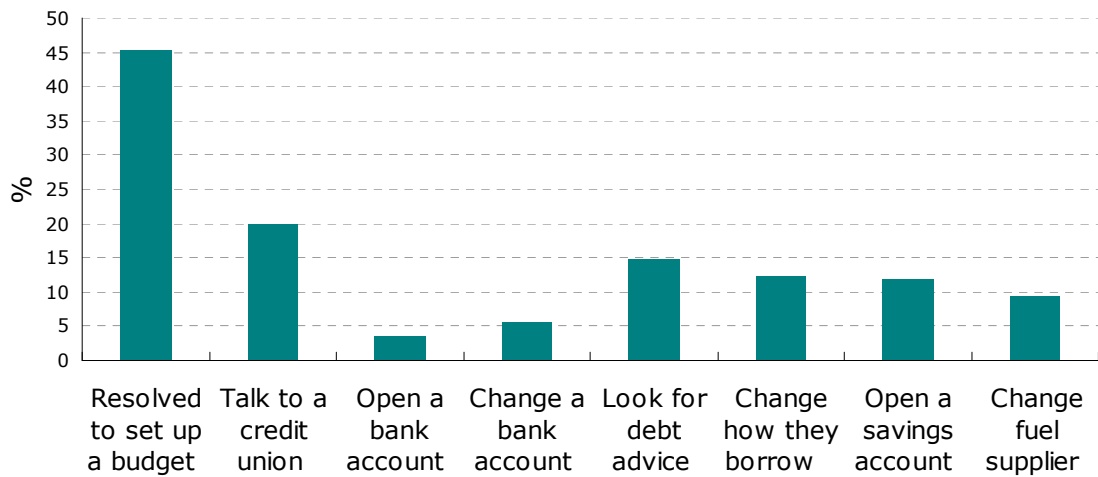
"I have information I can look back on and tools to change my spending/saving habits"

"Because the problems are now in my hands and I can deal with them"

"I can now plan ahead more easily"

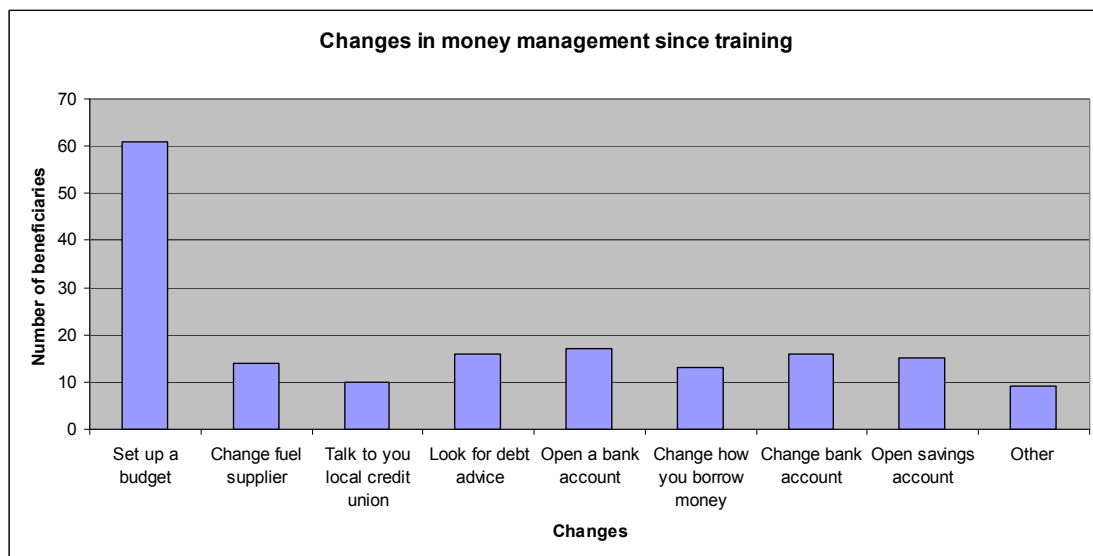
3.1.7 Behaviour change and legacy

According to the beneficiary feedback forms completed at the end of each training session, on completion of training, beneficiaries planned the following money management changes.



Although beneficiaries recorded responses against all of the options suggested, the highest proportion was recorded against resolving to set up a budget, followed by talking to a credit union and seeking individual debt advice..

90 of the beneficiaries responding to the questionnaire survey told us about the practical changes that they had actually made in the way they manage their money since undertaking the training. The responses indicated that of this sample, a total of 171 practical actions had been taken. This is demonstrated below:



The response was highest against setting up a budget, with 61 (67%) confirming that they had done this. 'Other' actions included:

- Contacting a house insurance company;
- Contacting all creditors and arranging reasonable monthly payments;
- Prioritising debts in accordance with importance;
- Keeping a close eye on bank statements;

- Supporting others; and
- Not being reliant on others.

“Not re-mortgaged and got into more financial strife”.

Beneficiaries interviewed as part of earlier evaluation phases reported improvements in the general management of their finances after attending the training sessions. Many stated that they had started to budget their money and, as a result, had experienced increases in their disposable income at the end of the month. Particular enthusiasm was expressed by beneficiaries regarding engagement with credit unions, largely because they had previously been unaware of how attractive their rates and terms for loans were.

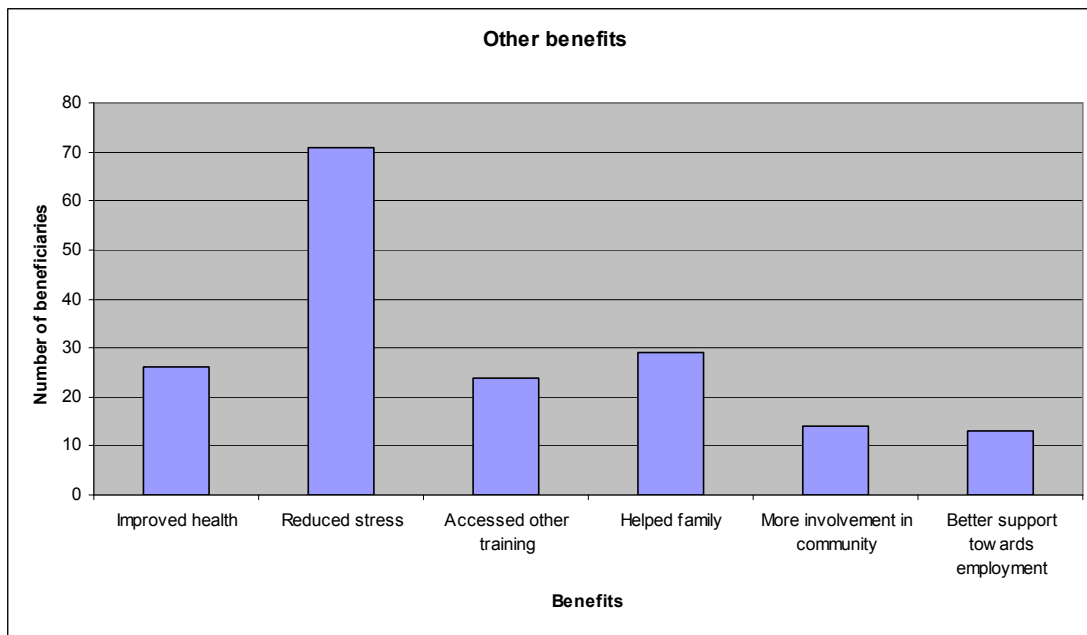
There is evidence also that some beneficiaries had taken multiple actions as a result of the training. One young beneficiary had made considerable changes to her life after attending the courses. She opened both a current and a saving account, opened a joint account with her partner, joined her local credit union and encouraged her partner to open an ISA. These changes have given her the independence to move out of her parent’s house, which previously seemed unlikely.

Beneficiaries were asked to tell us what proportion of the changes they could attribute to the training they had received. 71 people responded. 40 beneficiaries told us that they had made **all of the changes** because of the training. 31 told us that **some of the changes** were the result of the training.

We also asked beneficiaries where they would go for help if the training had not been available. The vast majority reported that they had no idea and would probably not have engaged with support at all. Other avenues quoted included Citizens Advice, family and friends and Jobcentre Plus.

3.1.8 Wider benefits

94 beneficiaries responding to the questionnaire survey told us about the wider benefits that they had gained from the training. Their responses are demonstrated in the graph below:

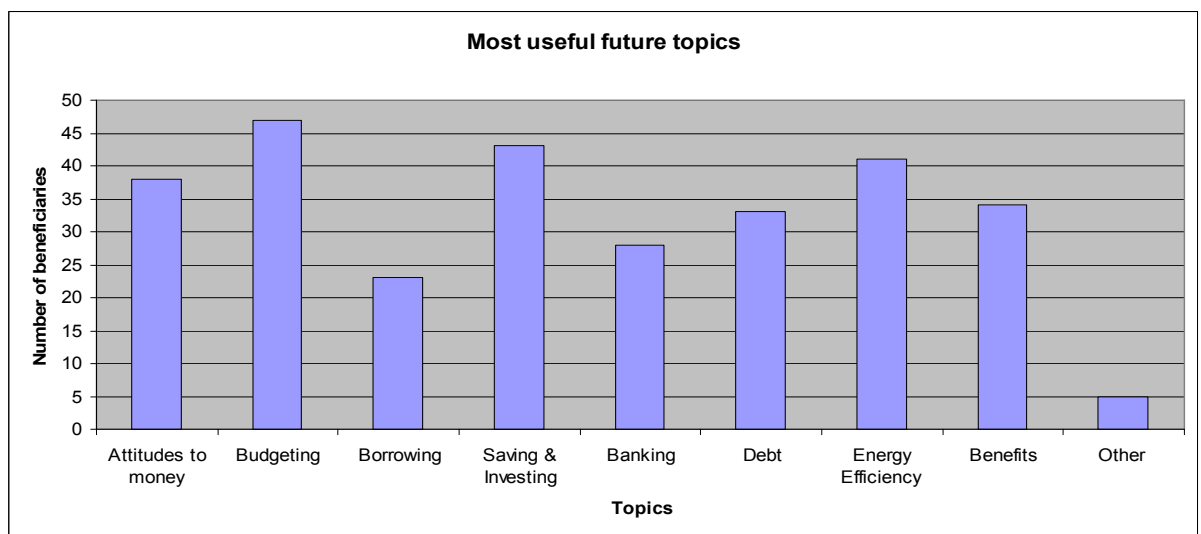


The highest response was recorded against reduced stress, with 71 (76%) respondents claiming this as a benefit. If this response level is extrapolated across the total beneficiary cohort, the programme would have resulted in reducing the stress levels of 660 people.

Between 13 and 30 respondents in the survey sample reported benefits across the other areas. Between 24 and 29 beneficiaries reported benefits against improved health, help for the family and accessing other training.

3.1.9 Support topics for the future

94 participants surveyed told us which support topics they felt would have most impact as part of future support programmes. They responded as follows:



Budgeting, attitudes to money, saving and investing and energy efficiency were all identified as being important by 38 and 47 respondents. ‘Other’ topics included a focus on retirement and benefits that are not widely known, such as ‘guardian’s allowance’.

3.2 Front Line Workers

3.2.1 Motivation

The front line workers receiving the training came from 128 organisations, representing and connecting with a wide range of beneficiary groups. Front line workers were asked to assign themselves to one of a set selection of categories, according to their main client group. The responses are summarised in the table below.

Front line worker client group	Percentage of front line workers
Social housing tenants	22
Parents and families	21
People with disabilities/health problems	19
Unemployed	10
Women’s groups and refugees	5
BME or migrant groups	4
Credit Union members	4
Offenders and ex offenders	3
Local authority customers	2
All community groups	2
Older people	2
Carers	2
Homeless people	0.8

Housing association front line workers tended to be outreach, rent officers or support workers. Those working with the unemployed are primarily advisers. Frontline workers working with parents and families and people with disabilities and health problems perform a range of roles, from organising activities to providing specialist advice.

Front line workers undertook the training mainly because they thought it would help them deliver more and better services to their clients:

“I thought it would be beneficial to customers I see”

“To gain knowledge and enable me to provide good advice to people on debt management”

“We have a lot of referrals of people who are experiencing financial hardship”

There was an awareness that financial capability support chimed very much with the direction of travel of government policy and that there was a need to be abreast of what it involves and how to provide it well.

“Financial Inclusion is very much at the forefront of the Governments thinking. We are always keen to ensure that our tenants have access to appropriate information in order to maximise their income”.

“Everything changes so fast – it is good to keep up with knowledge”

“I will take any training that can help me do my job better”

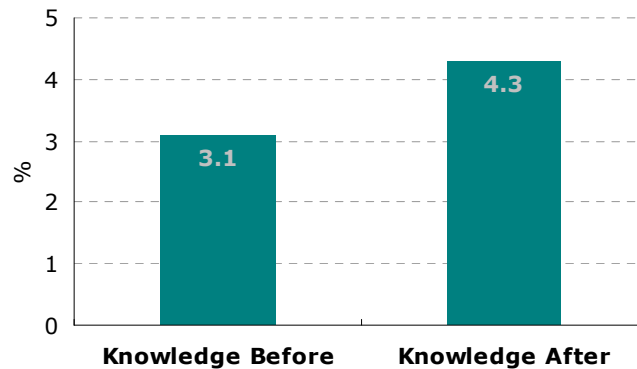
Many told us that their managers had suggested they should attend:

“Both myself & my manager thought it might be useful/beneficial to attend”

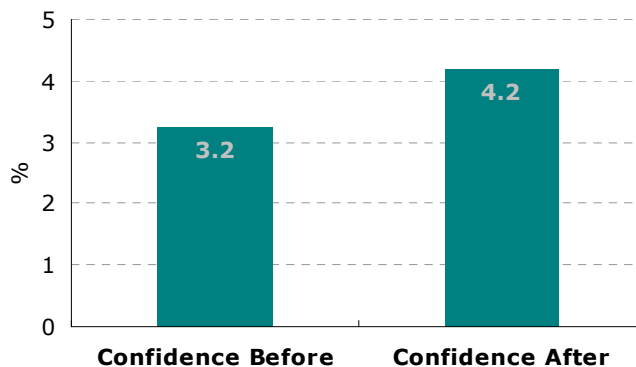
3.2.2 Views on the training

378 front line workers completed 431 feedback forms following training.

Frontline workers reported that their **knowledge** about financial inclusion/ capability issues had increased as a result of the training. Their average before/after training score rose from 3.1 to 4.3 where 1 = poor and 5 = excellent.



The also reported that their **confidence** in identifying individuals in need of support around money issues following the sessions with average before/after training score rising from 3.2 to 4.2.



95.7% of feedback forms analysed indicated that the worker felt more confident about referring clients for help with money issues.

The average satisfaction with the delivery of the courses was 4.5 out of a potential highest score of 5 - a very positive rating.

Comments highlighted on the feedback forms were overwhelmingly positive and are summarised as follows:

- Delivery was excellent, easy to follow and participants felt involved;
- Many found the course content excellent or very good, commenting that it was very informative, very interesting and very useful. Particular strengths included:
 - the breadth of content – it was good to get an overview of such a wide range of factors;
 - the interactive games – these made a potentially dry subject interesting and engaging;
- Many noted that the information was important to their clients but also to themselves and their families;
- People clearly enjoyed learning from each other, sharing knowledge and experiences.
- The considerable knowledge and experience of the trainers was also widely acknowledged – in some cases the trainers came from the same background as the participants, enabling the trainer to really contextualise and tailor the training - *The trainer came from a Housing Association and subsequently understood where many of the workers were coming from*. *“The trainers understood the reality of being a front line worker”*.

There were some suggestions for how things could improve:

- A formal information pack would be useful – some felt that there were insufficient hand outs; and
- Some felt it was rushed, and several wanted more time to absorb the information and reflect upon it.

Some concerns were also raised:

- Some front line workers found that they either couldn't take everything on board or that some topics were not covered in enough depth;
- The training could have been better tailored to the audience in some instances - front line workers have varying levels of knowledge and, as a result, some found the training too difficult where others found more limited elements of training to be useful. One provider interviewed during an earlier phase of the evaluation did note that it was difficult to know quite where to pitch the level of training because recipients had different levels of prior-knowledge of financial capability.

One particular area of concern, which is a key learning point, was expressed at the final evaluation focus group, conducted with an access to employment provider. In this instance, front line workers were used, quite appropriately, as a gateway to providing training for beneficiaries. The front line workers received mixed feedback from beneficiaries. The key reason for this is that a number of beneficiaries felt that the training marketing materials did not properly convey the level at which the training would be pitched. Some expected the support to help them prepare for self employment, whereas in reality, the training was aimed at providing a much more basic level of competence in money management. Some felt that the training was not suitable for them because their money management skills were sufficient. Both these factors point to the need for marketing materials to be clear (which has already been acknowledged by providers) and to ensure that front line workers are

provided with sufficient insights into the training to manage the expectations of their clients. The front line workers expressed an additional concern within the above contexts regarding their briefing by the training provider. They had been informed that beneficiaries would be offered one-to-one support following the group training. This did not happen. They say that beneficiaries were contacted following training, but for monitoring purposes rather than to offer follow-up support. Although the provision of one-to-one support is not integral to this financial capability programme, the offer made in this instance did unrealistically raise expectations.

3.2.3 The legacy of the training

In order to supplement information elicited through the training course feedback forms we conducted an online survey of front line workers as part of the final evaluation phase. We received 21 responses from front line workers supported by 8 of the programme's providers. Respondents were involved in supporting all of the programme's 14 key client groups. 47% of respondents mainly supported unemployed people, RSL residents, people with disabilities and health problems and parents and families.

Again, they were very positive about the training they had received, with 18 out of 21 saying they would recommend the training to colleagues. They offered the following additional insights:

Where would they have gone to for support had they not been offered the training?

Had they not had access to the training, most said that they would have gone to Citizens Advice or conducted an internet search in order to find information. 3 people were not sure where they would have obtained the information. The remainder said they would consult colleagues.

Would front line workers undertake further training?

53% felt they would do more training as a result, but only 3 felt that this would be an accredited course. It is interesting to contrast this with feedback from the final focus group, where people expressed a much higher propensity to pursue additional training. They felt that they would be expected in the future to be able to provide more rounded support to clients, and they would need a greater understanding of how effectively to diagnose the need for financial capability support and provide directly more detailed insights themselves. Within this context, they were very keen to find out about accredited training available to support this.

Significance of financial capability as part of their organisation's core work

13 of the 21 respondents said that financial capability was provided by their organisation on an ad hoc basis. Four stated that it was a core area of their work and four stated it was not part of their service.

53% of respondents considered that the significance of financial capability for their organisation would grow. 9 respondents did not know whether this would be the case.



67% would like their organisation's involvement in financial capability to grow. 43% had no opinion on this.

4. County Financial Capability and Inclusion Forums

In this section we reflect upon the performance of the six county financial capability and inclusion forums, which have been key to enabling the programme to promote the visibility of, and cross-organisation and cross-sector collaboration around, financial inclusion across the region. We have drawn upon the results of a final online survey of forum members, one-to-one conversations held with the forum leads during earlier phases of the evaluation, the monitoring returns submitted by the forum leads and the sustainability plans produced for each forum.

4.1 Evolution of the Forums

4.1.1 Promotion and attendance

The Forums are open to all individuals from organisations across the private, public or voluntary and community sectors, with an interest in financial capability and inclusion and who are willing to work in partnership to promote its visibility within their county.

Some of the forums built upon pre-existing structures, but this programme enabled them to be taken to the next level in terms of scale and reach.

Each Forum has an assigned 'lead', who has overall co-ordination responsibility and chairs each meeting. The forum leads were pivotal in engaging members; initially drawing upon their own contacts and networks. Guidance and support to attract members and to frame the forums' was provided in this regard from Citizens Advice and its regional financial capability lead. As the forums matured over the programme period, leads have reported that members have increasingly taken up the promotion mantle and engaged their own colleagues and contacts and raised awareness of the forums amongst their own networks. Also, forum leads and members worked together, initially, to identify gaps in attendance and target organisations that they felt would both benefit from, and contribute to, the value of the forums.

Each forum has held between five and seven meetings. The number of individuals who have attended at least one forum meeting and the number of attendees at each meeting are set out in the table below.

Forum	Individuals attending at least one meeting	Number at 1 st meeting	Number at 2 nd meeting	Number at 3 rd meeting	Number at 4 th meeting	Number at 5 th meeting	Number at 6 th meeting	Number at 7 th meeting
Bedfordshire	65	10	26	27	11	16	12	
Essex	42	11	17	15	18	14		
Norfolk	38	11	19	19	18	10	9	
Hertfordshire	50	5	16	10	9	12		
Cambridge and Peterborough	53	10	14	21	14	13	18	13
Suffolk	29	8	7	10	9	10	8	

Attendance peaked at meetings two and three. It dropped a little from meeting four.

Although the total number of individuals attending at least one meeting varies across the Forums and some – notably Bedfordshire – has attracted a higher number of different individuals to its meetings, it should be noted that Norfolk and Suffolk, which attracted a lower number of individuals, have achieved a higher number of multiple attendances. Rather than criticise their value, most members who stated reasons for not continuing to attend the Forums have generally given other rationales. For example, their roles were about to change; they were going to leave their organisations; or that it would be more appropriate for other staff members to attend.

The range of organisations has been encouraging. Initially, some forums had more organisations represented from one sector than another, but that was mainly a result of the scope of Forum Lead’s original contacts. As the forums have become more established a greater range of organisations has become involved. Forums typically have representation from:

- Housing Associations;
- Credit Unions;
- Voluntary sector and charitable organisations, including Citizens Advice Bureaux and organisations focusing support on specific groups;
- Enterprise agencies;
- Local statutory organisations including Jobcentre Plus; and
- Local authorities – housing departments, social services, trading standards, money advice services, local strategic partnerships.

The mid-point evaluation noted that the range of people attending included more front line workers than strategic employees. “[It is] generally front line workers who seem to be more interested so they can take stuff away and implement it”. At programme end, the attendance by more strategic level stakeholders and influencers - including local and county level authorities - had increased. This suggests that the perception of the forums’ value has broadened from being an opportunity for sharing materials, ideas, insights and contacts in order to inform practical delivery, to a wider opportunity to influence the development of strategy.

4.2 Performance of the Forums against their objectives

4.2.1 Programme-wide objectives

The programme defined a set of programme-wide objectives for the forums. These objectives are outlined below:

1. Bring together people from a wide range of occupations and sectors who have a prime or secondary interest in financial inclusion, including those who have undertaken the frontline worker training.
2. Provide a support structure to bring together the frontline workers participating in the project.
3. Provide a key place for organisations to feed into activities, share experiences and exchange learning.
4. Support delivery partners to be able to shape and personalise training to a local area.
5. Promote and actively encourage partnership working, which includes joining up existing local delivery and working in partnership to address gaps in provision such as leading the development of collaborative external funding bids.
6. Share and develop a better understanding of financial inclusion at a sub-regional level including through to Local Area Agreements, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Sustainable Communities Strategies.
7. Support the development of county, unitary and district financial inclusion strategies.
8. Promote the project at a county level and lobby for financial inclusion to be included across a range of public, private and third sector delivery.
9. Provide a direct link into the existing regional financial capability forums enabling initiatives/actions to be rolled out to county level.

One of the initial tasks for each Forum was to consult its membership and create a set of 'sub-objectives' for its own actions. These needed to be customised to the needs of the county, but consistent with and contributing to the overarching programme wide objectives for the forums.

Each of the forum leads have compiled a sustainability plan, which reflect upon how the forum has responded to its objectives and the options for going forward. We have drawn upon these plans in the findings set out below within the three broad categories of knowledge sharing, creating partnerships and a better understanding of partners and lobbying and influencing.

4.2.2 Knowledge sharing

The forums facilitated knowledge sharing across members, imported knowledge from external organisations and disseminated insights and learning to external partners in a number of ways:

They organised presentations from speakers from a range of organisations (including forum members) on a variety of topics that were pertinent to the financial capability and inclusion agenda. The topics selected demonstrated efforts to engage members with the following:

- The priorities, initiatives and ways of working of strategic level authorities whose core role focused upon financial inclusion as well as those of other organisations that members would wish to influence in order to raise the profile of financial inclusion. Presenting organisations include the Department of Work and Pensions Financial Inclusion team, Local Strategic Partnerships, local authority Adult Community Learning Services and organisations external to the region including Shepherd's Bush Housing Group on their Financial Inclusion Strategy.
- Reaching excluded communities. Examples include insights from the Commission for Rural Communities on how statutory partners and other stakeholders have successfully reached excluded communities and how Credit Unions work to connect with isolated communities.
- Sharing of good practice. Examples include: Mini financial capability sessions at forum meetings to demonstrate good practice; scoping and pursuing the delivery of a peer observation project, enabling financial capability trainers and potential trainers to share techniques by enabling the latter to observe sessions.
- The availability of materials and tools to support financial capability: Examples include presentations from the Financial Services Authority/Consumer Financial Education Body on their initiatives to promote financial capability and materials they can provide to support other organisations to do so, as well as presentations from more local stakeholders including Bright Green in Suffolk.

4.2.3 Creating partnerships and better understanding of partners

The forums have clearly stimulated the creation of partnerships and a shared understanding across members about who is involved in financial inclusion and how. The forums have:

- Created networking opportunities for members to connect with each other, provide member updates and build relationships that have continued outside of the forum arena.
- Mapped, in some cases, financial inclusion and capability activities, starting with those of forum members, and shared these with strategic agencies involved in, and beyond, the forums.
- Created connections between forum members and wider organisations with financial inclusion strategies – eg. Norfolk forum facilitated workshops with the Norfolk Strategic Partnership.
- Facilitated practical joint working between members on specific projects. Eg. in Essex, Braintree CAB, Holdfast Credit Union & Greenfields Housing have developed practical

working relationships and Basildon CAB has delivered training to Rochford housing & Circle Anglia as a direct result of connections made through the forum. In Norfolk, the 'Norwich Group' has set up a working party to explore delivery in schools and will be rolling this out in partnership. Cambridgeshire Forum has connected members to housing associations within the area to explore how they can work together better in order to deliver more effective services and make better use of available resources. Outcomes have included the development of joint funding applications for members to deliver services on an SLA basis with housing associations.

4.2.4 Lobbying and Influencing

One of the more challenging aspects of the forums' work has been lobbying organisations and individuals in ways that will create a sustainable impact around raising awareness of financial capability issues and shaping the priorities and funding decisions of organisations that can contribute to the agenda. A major contributory factor in this has been the change of government in May 2010, and the associated rapid changes to elements of infrastructure with which forums had been trying to engage; notable here being the Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements.

That said, the wide range of strategic level organisations that the forums have succeeded in attracting to the meetings is testimony to efforts and results here although, generally, some forums have struggled to consistently engage with local authorities and PCTs.

There are also examples of forum leads and members succeeding in gaining audiences with key influencers. e.g. The outcome of financial capability mapping of activities in Norwich was presented at a meeting with the local Member of Parliament and other key stakeholders in Norwich in order to raise the profile of financial inclusion work within the sub-region.

The above outcomes around partnership working in particular, have demonstrated the forums' ability to win over hearts and minds to extend financial capability within the region.

In addition to the work of the forums around lobbying and influencing, during the course of the programme's delivery, the programme co-ordinator has sought advice from the regional Government Office and EEDA in order to identify the key strategic stakeholder agendas that the project needs to engage with in order to enhance the embedding of financial capability support across the region, particularly worklessness and child poverty assessments. She has actively pursued opportunities to meet with appropriate persons from key regional agencies that need to be influenced in order to make this happen.

It was noted at the mid-point evaluation stage that an example of how this project has had influence on connecting the financial capability agendas and the work of other agencies has been its success in engaging Jobcentre Plus, particularly at the regional, strategic level. Although it had been a member of the Regional Financial Inclusion group, Jobcentre Plus had previously been more distant from the financial capability support field, but became engaged with this programme at the regional level from its inception. It is an active member of the project steering group, attends the Regional Financial Capability Forum and has encouraged lobbying of Prime Contractors to incorporate financial inclusion within their support packages. Strategic staff also facilitated links between the programme and Job Centre managers, resulting in front line worker training pilots. It should be noted here that the potential for a programme of this scale (i.e. the number of training places available for

front line workers) to have a major impact upon such a large organisation at the local level, is relatively limited. This was recognised right at the outset of the programme and in the interests of engaging front line workers from as many different organisations as possible across the East of England, it was agreed that training for Jobcentre Plus front line workers would need to be restricted. That said, it is clear that the programme has been successful in building great relationships between financial capability-focused organisations and Jobcentre Plus at the strategic and operational levels. This is an excellent result, particularly within the context of the inter-relationship between financial capability and success in gaining and retaining work.

4.3 Connections with the Regional Financial Capability and Inclusion Forum and the Financial Inclusion Group

The county forum leads attend the regional forum in order to facilitate a two-way exchange of information on financial capability issues between the two forum levels. At the mid-point evaluation stage, it was noted at the county forum level, that there should be more - and more consistent - attendance by county forum members at the regional forum. There was also a strong sense amongst forum leads that there is a need for a clearer distinction between the roles of the regional forum and the county forums and that if this failed to happen, it could be to the detriment of both.

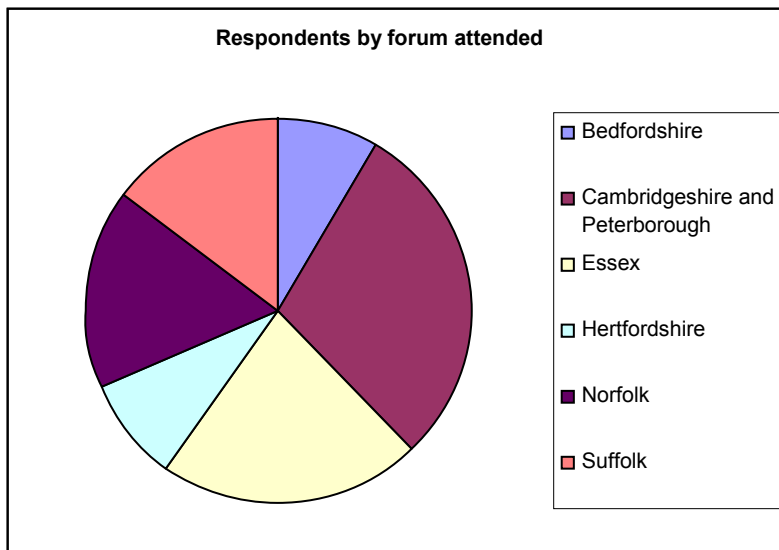
The co-ordinator has been working to achieve a better fit between the regional financial capability forum and financial inclusion group in terms of co-ordinating meetings to exchange the efficiency and timeliness of information sharing. Part of the context to this included articulating the respective roles of the county and regional financial capability forums. The county forum agenda is more fluid than that of the regional forum and reflects much more on local needs, which differ across the region. Citizens Advice acknowledges that more work needs to be done to maintain communication between the county and regional forums and actions to address this are included in the project sustainability plan.

4.4 County Forum Member Perspectives

Rocket Science conducted an online survey of county forum members in order to elicit the reasons for their interest in attending the meetings; their perceptions on the benefits they were deriving from them; their thoughts on the potential for the forums to influence policy and strategy and the question of forum sustainability.

4.4.1 Who responded?

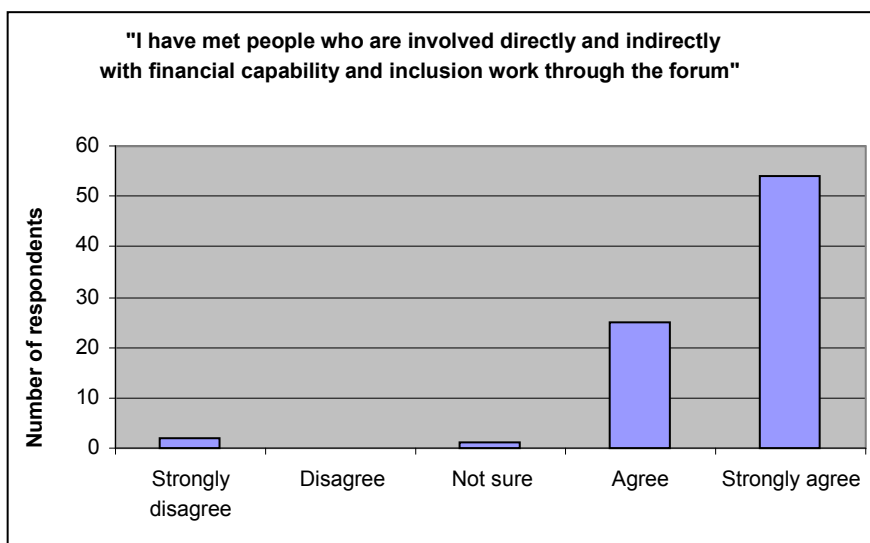
81 responses to the survey were received. Responses were received from members from all six forums and most (24 out of the 81) had attended the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough forum, followed by Essex with 18. The following chart shows which forums the member respondents had attended.

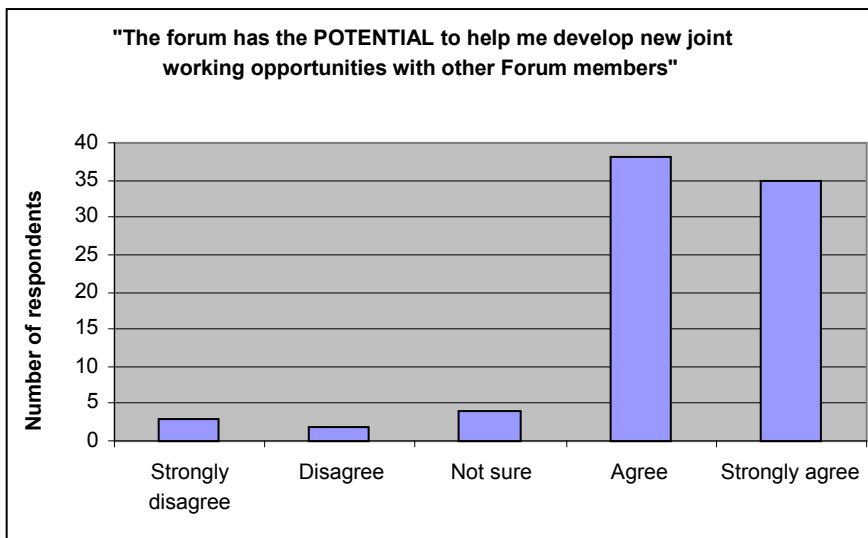
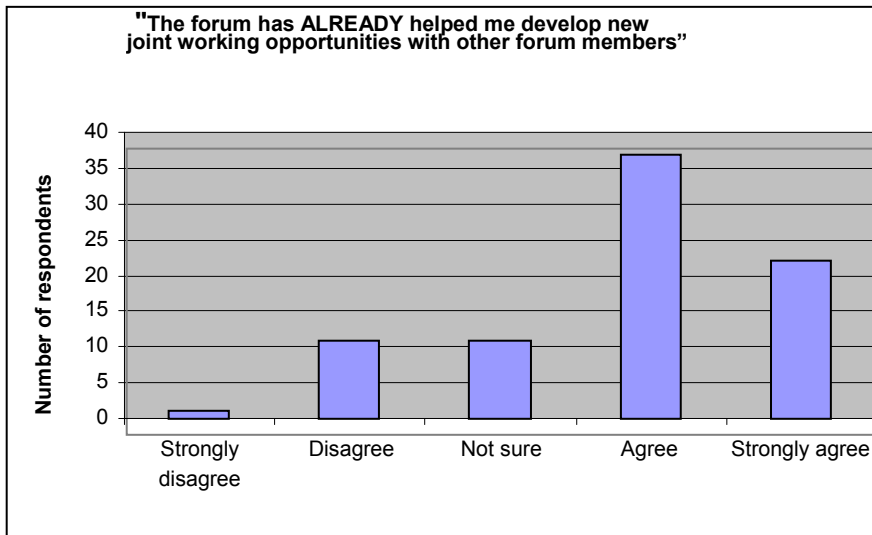
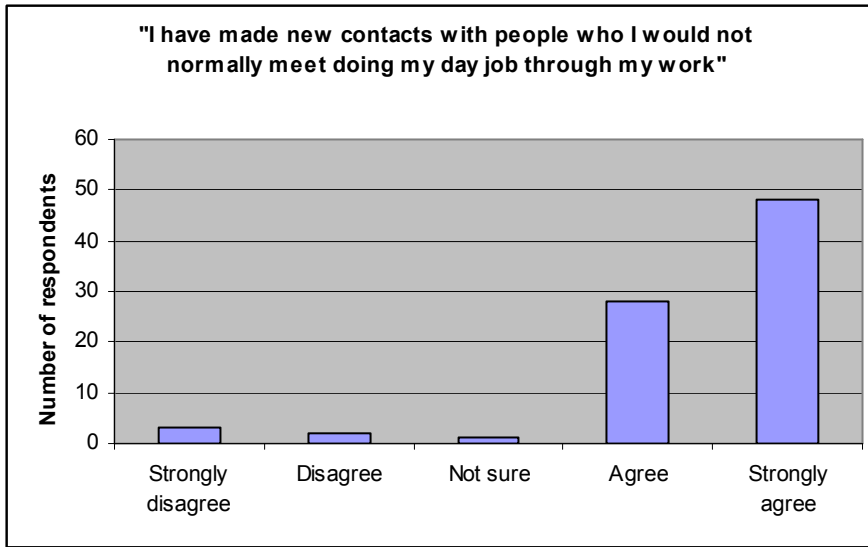


27 respondents were *practitioners* who directly deliver financial capability and inclusion work, 26 respondents were *strategic managers* of organisations providing financial capability support and 25 worked within organisations providing a different service but whose clients would benefit from financial capability support. The remaining four respondents included two community development workers and a secretary of a local advice forum.

4.4.2 Facilitating networking and building connections

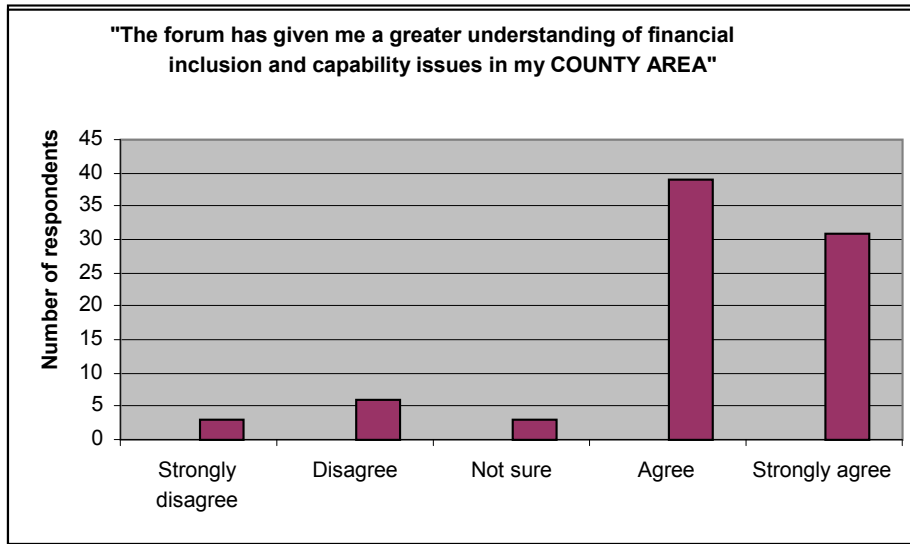
Members were asked to articulate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements in relation to the extent to which the forums had enabled them to make contacts and connections with other people and organisations. The survey results are encapsulated in the following bar charts and speak for themselves, with an overwhelming majority of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statements.



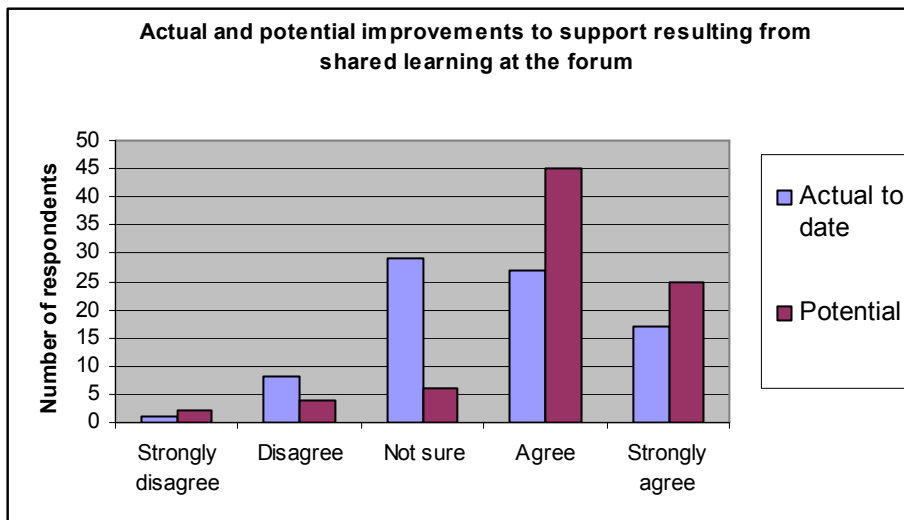


4.4.3 Knowledge and Learning

Members were asked to comment upon the degree to which the Forums have increased their understanding of financial inclusion and capability issues in their area and the potential for the support they provide to improve as a result of the shared learning gained through the Forum. Again, the results were very positive.



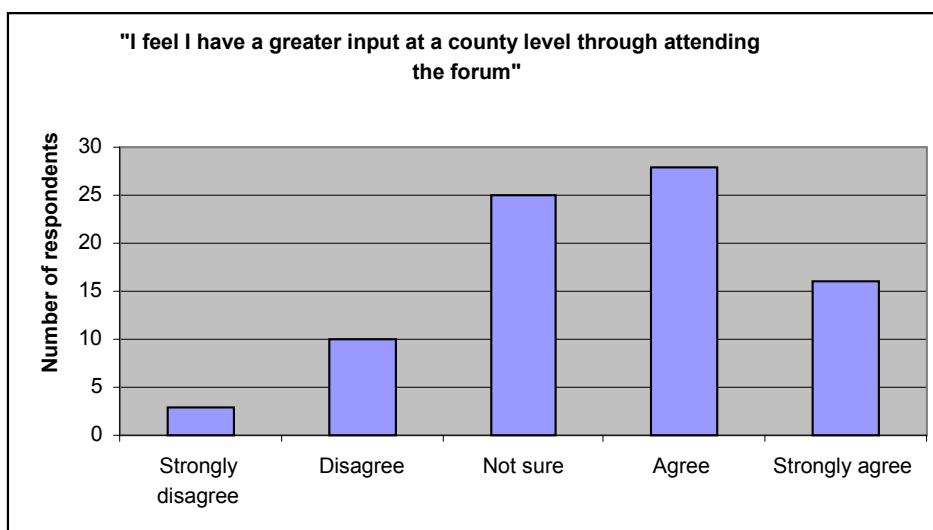
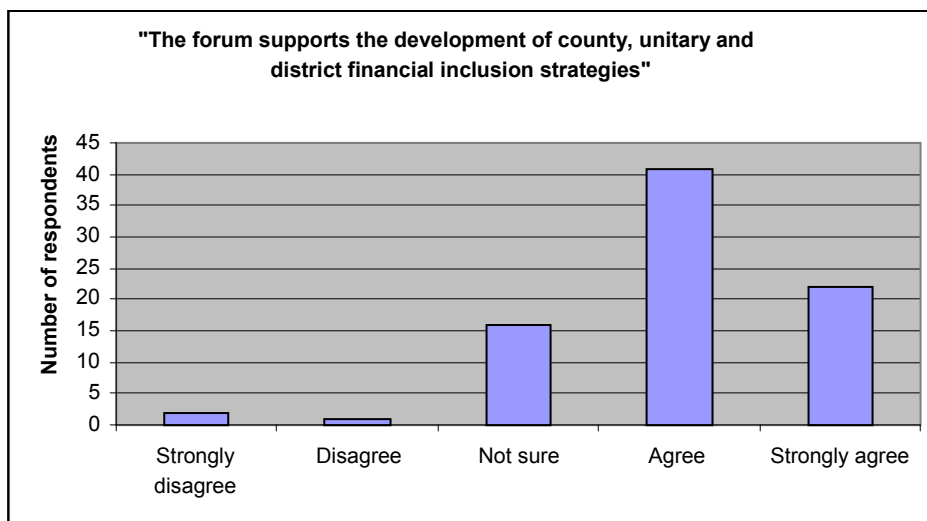
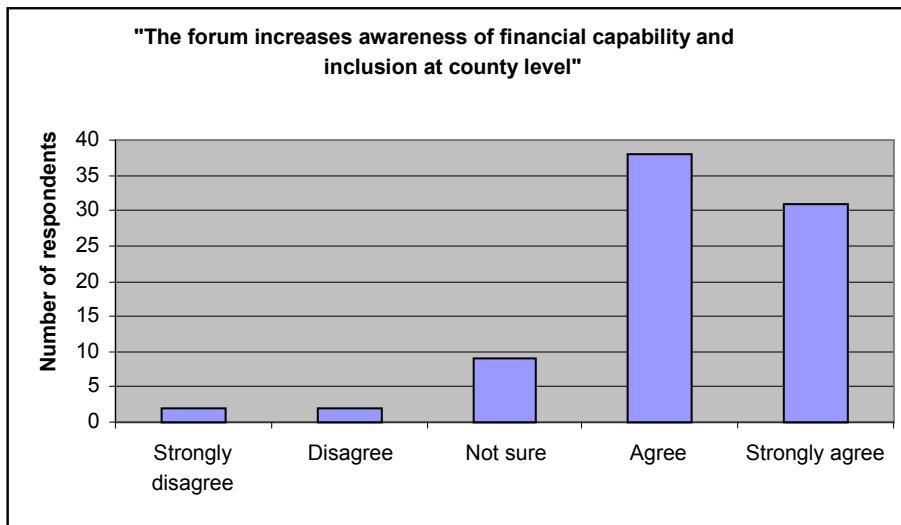
The table below demonstrates the strong sense amongst forum members that the shared learning facilitated by the Forums has not only had a positive impact upon the quality of current support to date, but has considerable potential to result in additional support improvements in the future.



4.4.4 Lobbying and Influencing

Members were also asked for their perceptions on the extent to which the forums facilitated awareness raising around financial capability and financial inclusion and associated strategy.

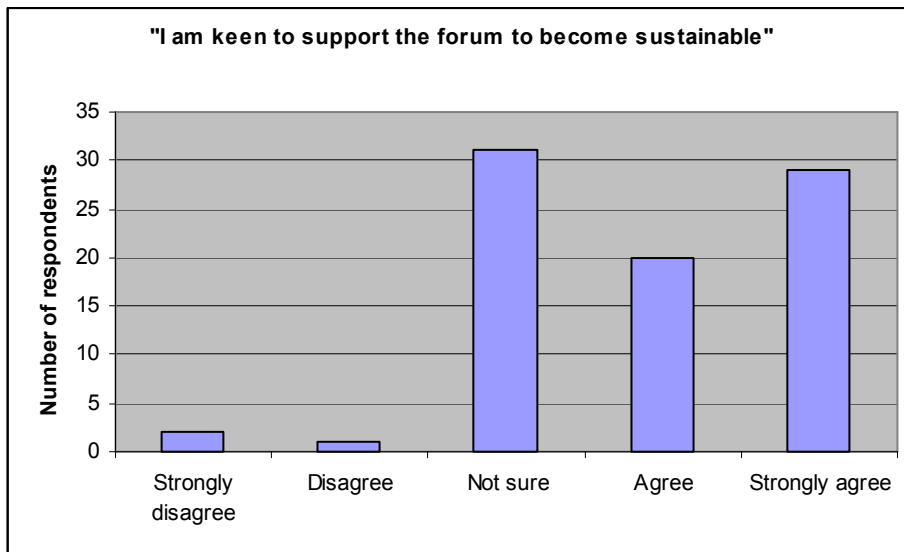
Again, the results were overwhelmingly positive, although people were a little less certain about the degree to which they, personally, were able to influence at county level.



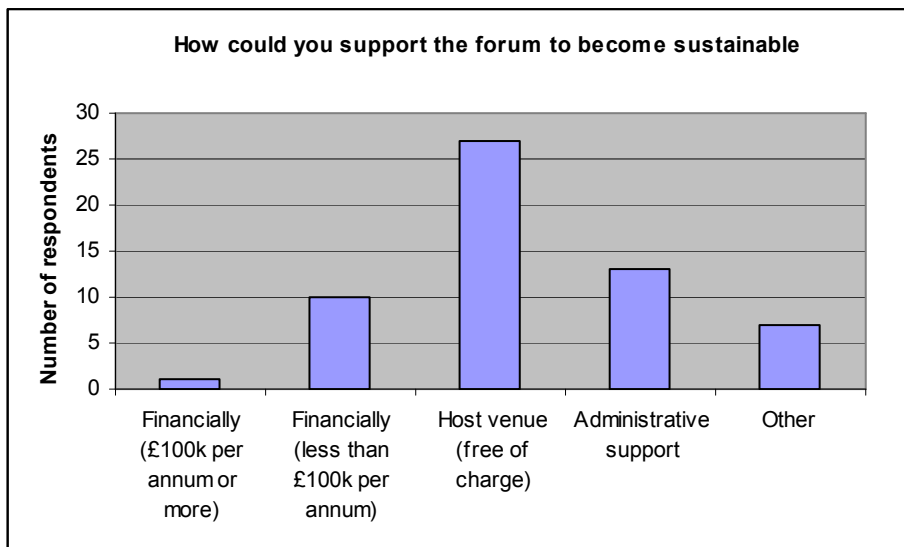
4.4.5 The future of the forums

87% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that county forums were important to the future development of financial capability and inclusion throughout the county and 78% agreed or strongly agreed that it was important to have a county as well as a regional financial capability forum.

Finally, members were asked how keen they were to support the forums to become sustainable.



60% stated that they agreed or strongly agreed, with 40% saying that they were 'not sure'. Members were also asked how they could do this in practice. The results indicated a focus upon 'in kind' rather than cash contributions:



'Other' support included:

- To lead and arrange the forums and seek funding;
- Organise the [Bedfordshire] forum under the umbrella of the Bedfordshire Advice Forum;
- Potential to provide funding, depending upon homeless and other grant settlements;
- Connecting up to the fuel poverty agenda and associated financial opportunities;
- Provision of materials for forum members;
- Support for funding submissions.

4.4.6 Other comments

Members offered the following additional insights:

- Updates from the Forum lead are useful, in addition to the formal meetings;
- "In an environment where partnership working is an essential element for many funding proposals it is essential that we have the mechanisms to work closely together which the forum provides";
- Keen to explore the potential for Community Learning to reinforce the financial capability training that CAB provides, through closer collaboration with CABs;
- There is potential to make more of the forums. This could include collating together all of the financial capability and inclusion priorities of the members and identifying common themes and then discussing the potential for joining up resources to address themes and priorities. Measuring the effectiveness of these approaches would be a powerful tool to lobby for funding and the buy-in of other organisations;
- "Needs to review its aims and objectives in the new economic context";
- "... I have not been convinced that the body is inclusive and welcoming enough to encourage and support the third sector. Especially in encouraging mutuality and cooperation with unpaid workers";

4.5 Front line worker perspectives on the forums

Five out of the 21 respondents to the final online frontline worker (as distinct from the *forum member*) survey had heard of the forums and one had attended. A further 12 said that although they were not previously aware of the forums, they would like to hear more. Both the level of awareness of the forums and the level of interest expressed in finding out more had dropped a little from the feedback incorporated into the mid-point evaluation report.

Only one person attending the final evaluation focus group had heard of the forums. This was consistent with findings from the focus groups contributing to the mid-point evaluation. However, all were keen to find out more.

" They sound interesting, especially with the new work programme coming along... where we will be expected to provide more all round advice rather than signposting"

5. The Economic Impact Model

5.1 Setting the Context and Parameters

One of the tasks of this evaluation was to explore the regional impact of the programme in terms of the financial savings and benefits that would result from the financial capability training provided.

However, before attempting to do this some key issues and caveats need to be noted at the outset. Whilst the EEDA Financial Capability programme has clearly achieved significant benefits for beneficiaries according to the feedback provided, it is important to bear in mind the practical constraints upon the programme to, firstly, achieve *significant* impacts across the region given its scale and duration; and, secondly, to isolate and accurately demonstrate *practical impacts* for beneficiaries through detailed and long-term tracking.

Within this context, we have developed an economic impact model using a range of robust research into the impact of other financial capability programmes and the financial and social costs of low financial capability, as well as the feedback data available to us through this programme.

We acknowledge that some may consider the financial impact that is suggested in this section to be more or less favourable than is practical or reasonable for a programme of this size to achieve. Ultimately, the quality and reliability of 'any finding' based on modelled data is open to question and 'real life testing' using actual data. We do, however, consider that the model that we have developed and the assumptions behind it are robust and will stand up to scrutiny.

The next section explores the financial and social costs of low levels of financial capability before setting out an approach and its findings for determining the impacts of support at the individual, project and regional level. In doing this we use actual findings and feedback from the project's beneficiaries as well as findings from other research looking at the impact of financial capability projects.

5.2 What are the costs of low levels of financial capability?

Over the recent period there has been a growing body of research and evidence that has highlighted the costs, both financial and social, of low levels of financial capability. This evidence is summarised below⁴.

Research by Toynbee Hall has revealed that, generally, unemployed people exhibit lower levels of financial capability than employed people and also found particular elements of financial capability where this was more pronounced. *"A far greater proportion of the*

⁴ This section draws on an excellent discussion paper prepared by Scottish Government Financial Inclusion Team: "Achieving Better Co-ordination in Scotland", August 2010

employed respondents (64.7%) exhibit high financial capability than the unemployed respondents (38.7%). Those in employment are therefore twice as likely to exhibit high financial capability.”⁵

However, the research also noted that whilst financial exclusion and attendant lack of financial capability are cited as causes of lower employability, and vice versa, the nature of the relationship is not clear. “Cause and effect are difficult to ascertain owing to the complex nature of entrenched social exclusion.” The impact, however, is clear; the reinforcement of poverty and social exclusion.

5.2.1 Financial Costs

A report for Save the Children⁶ provides an overall summary of what they view as the costs of poverty – a “Poverty Premium”- including the higher cost of insurance from living in a deprived area, lacking basic financial products, and using pay-as-you-go rather than a pre-pay mobile phone.

The overall conclusion from the Report is that the **Poverty Premium is approximately £1000 per year**, i.e. the notional amount of additional money that a poor household pays for the same goods and services over a year. In reality, the actual amount paid by a particular household depends on their specific circumstances, e.g. household size, whether or not they have a car, whether they are in debt, whether they have a bank account etc.

	Typical costs	Costs to low-income households
One expensive consumer good	£159.99	£405
One £500 loan	£539.00	£825
Three cashed £200 cheques	£0.00	£49.50
Annual gas bill	£609.70	£673.70
Annual electricity bill	£339.30	£368.20
One mobile phone	£315.96	£395.44
Home contents insurance	£465.85	£618.80
Car insurance	£475.48	£571.55
Total	£2,905.28	£3,907.19
Poverty Premium		£1,001.91

Some of these are explored in more detail below.

Purchase of consumer goods

Customers with poor credit histories will struggle to buy electrical goods and other products with credit and will have difficulty in saving to buy them outright. Some stores have specialised in catering for this market, offering “white goods” almost exclusively on credit, at

⁵ Toynbee Hall (2008) *Employability and Financial Inclusion: Examining the Links*

⁶ Strelitz, J. (2009) *The Poverty Premium: How poor households pay more for essential goods and services*, Save the Children, Family Welfare Association, London.

high interest rates. The best known example is Brighthouse (www.brighthouse.co.uk). With a typical APR of 29.9%, goods bought from Brighthouse can attract a total payment of up to twice the immediate cash price.

An example is a typical small fridge-freezer, advertised on the Brighthouse website at £238.40 for immediate cash payment. At three years worth of weekly £2.20 payments, the overall cost rises to £343.20. When the cost of the (optional, but heavily sold) service cover is included, the total cost rises to **£529 – a premium of 122% over the original cash price**⁷.

Borrowing

There is a range of cheap borrowing options available to many people: low-interest overdrafts, low-cost personal loans and credit cards with free interest on purchases and balance transfers for limited time periods. The options for people on low incomes who do not have bank accounts and who have poor credit ratings – and are therefore refused bank loans and credit cards – are much more limited. Home credit or doorstep lenders remain popular with many people on low incomes. **Studies have found home credit or doorstep lenders APRs were generally in excess of 100 per cent and often above 300 per cent.** The total cost of loans varies from £30 per £100 to £100 per £100 borrowed, depending upon the length of the loan.

There is an emerging market in sub-prime credit cards, aimed at those on low incomes or with poor credit history. These cards are increasingly important, with more commercial activity taking place over the telephone or internet. Provident Personal Credit now offers a Visa credit card with 177 percent APR – a similar rate to doorstep loans.

Access to Bank accounts

People who do not have access to bank accounts can face difficulties in securing employment, getting paid, receiving benefits and undertaking other financial transactions. Most employers prefer to pay by direct transfer into a bank account, rather than by cheque or cash. Even if a person is able to find an employer who is willing to pay by cheque, non-bank cheque cashing services will take a commission of the order of 4% on the value of every cheque cashed. For a person with a full-time job earning the National Minimum Wage, with a gross annual salary of £11,460, these cheque-cashing fees would total more than **£450 per year**.

In addition, those with a bank account often suffer costs as a result of not using the account efficiently. For example, 44% (and 54% of those in the lowest income quartile) of newly banked consumers use their accounts solely to receive pay or benefits, withdrawing the money and operating in cash and therefore not gaining the wider benefits of account holding⁸.

⁷ All prices taken from Brighthouse website July 2010

⁸ Financial Inclusion Task Force (2010) *Mainstreaming Financial Inclusion: Managing Money and Access to Banking*

Pre-Payment meters

In 2009, customers using pre-payment meters paid an average of **£215 per year** more for energy than those paying by direct debit, according to Transact, a consortium of debt advice agencies. Pre-payment meters are typically only installed in homes of people who have had difficulty with energy bills in the past, meaning that those in greatest need of affordable energy have some of the highest prices imposed upon them. Customers who have pre-payment meters installed are not always aware that there could be a cheaper option available for their energy, and satisfaction rates with pre-payment meters are relatively high.

5.2.2 Social costs

In addition to the financial costs to the individuals, families and communities directly involved, there are other social costs associated with a lack of financial capability. Whilst these are well known and well documented through research, quantifying these costs is extremely difficult.

Financial Capability and Stress

A lack of financial capability, leading to debt, can result in health problems. Evidence from AXA⁹ suggests that a quarter of all adults in the UK have hidden or concealed the amount of debt that they have from a partner or family member because they fear their reaction. AXA¹⁰ also suggest that in 2006, 3.8m people across the UK had taken time off work as a result of money worries. On the very conservative assumptions that each of these people took only 1 day off work, and that they earned only the minimum wage, the first-order costs to the economy of the lost working time would be in the order of £165m per year.

Additionally, there is a considerable body of research that indicates that the psychological state of those most vulnerable to financial difficulties may well suffer. Families with young children living in disadvantaged areas are at particular risk in this respect. An FSA study¹¹ based upon interviews with 8,000 mothers of three year olds living in the most deprived areas of England noted that:

“In this sample of mostly disadvantaged mothers of young children living in disadvantaged communities, there were clear relationships between our index of financial capability and all five psychological state measures. Higher financial capability was associated with higher life satisfaction, lower depression, less malaise, higher self esteem and higher locus of control”.

Another FSA study¹² noted that:

“There is a strong association between financial capability and psychological wellbeing and also between changes in financial capability and changes in

⁹ http://www.axa.co.uk/media-centre/media-releases/news-story?id=20091112_1200

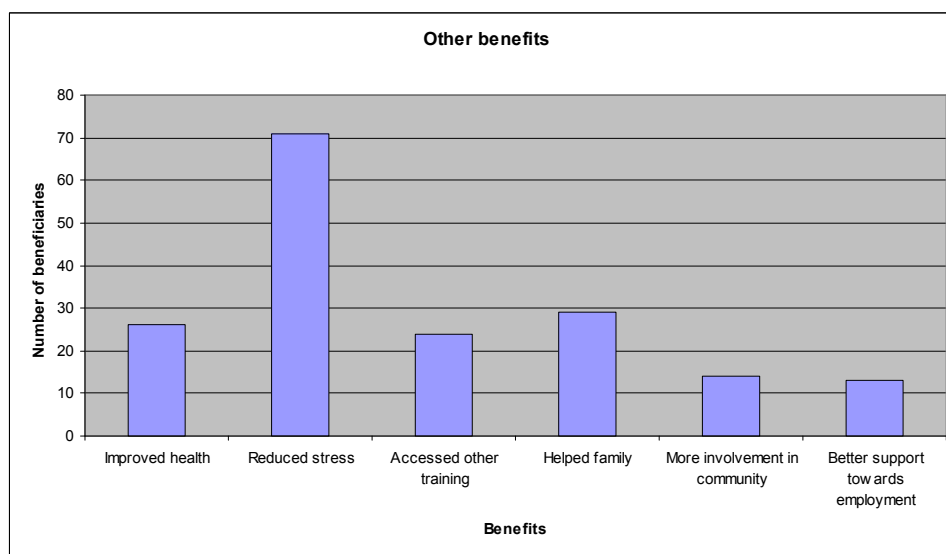
¹⁰ http://www.axa.co.uk/media-centre/media-releases/news-story?id=20060120_0900

¹¹ FSA (2008) Financial Capability and Psychological Well-being in Mothers of Young Children in Poor Areas in England (2008)

¹² FSA (2009) Financial capability and wellbeing: Evidence from the BHPS

psychological wellbeing. We find that greater financial incapability is associated with greater mental stress, lower reported life satisfaction, and a greater likelihood of reporting health problems associated with anxiety or depression . . . Moving an individual with relatively low levels of financial capability to an average level of capability improves their psychological wellbeing by about 6% (compared to an 8% deterioration in wellbeing associated with being divorced, and a 10% deterioration from being unemployed)."

The findings from the Programme reflect the findings of this broader research. As shown in section 3.1.9, project beneficiaries responding to the questionnaire survey stated the wider benefits that they had gained from the training – reduced stress, helped family relationships, improved general health.



The highest response was recorded against reduced stress, with 76% of respondents claiming this as a benefit. If this response level is extrapolated across the total beneficiary cohort, the programme would have resulted in reducing the stress levels of 660 people.

5.3 Determining the economic impact of the programme

The efficiency and effectiveness with which individuals manage their money is likely to improve if their financial capability skills are raised and they act upon financial advice. This means prioritising and paying off debts, starting to save and/or making the most of their savings by placing them in higher interest investments, and maximising income through accessing benefits. It also means seeking cheaper ways of paying bills and borrowing money.

These benefits are **cumulative and long-term**, in theory lasting the rest of a person's life, as opposed to being one-off and immediate¹³. It is this distinction that differentiates financial

¹³ In many instances they may be both, i.e. changes are made in response to a particular crisis or situation which are then continued with once the crisis has been resolved.

capability from financial debt advice and most other crisis-orientated support. According to the Resolution Foundation if low to median earners act on financial advice, over the longer-term they are more likely to:

“save more overall, shift more of their savings from short term to medium and long term investments. They are also likely to invest more heavily in protection products, and build up larger pensions pots with which to purchase an annuity at retirement. Although their consumption is likely to rise on the whole due to greater personal wealth¹⁴, they reduce their credit card and other forms of unsecured debt considerably.”¹⁵

5.3.1 The Challenges

Determining the economic impact of financial capability training presents a challenge because of the nature of the intervention, i.e. it is about trying to change behaviours and mind-sets for long-term gain rather than resolving a specific short-term issue which has an immediate financial gain e.g. crisis debt resolution. This has been borne out through the interviews with, and survey feedback from, programme beneficiaries, with many stating that important outcomes from the training have been to raise their awareness of, and boost their confidence in, addressing financial issues (see section 3.1.6). Whilst these are likely to have ‘life-time’ effects it is difficult in the short-term to monetise them.

That said the evaluation has revealed a number of actions that beneficiaries have stated they are already putting into practice, which should produce positive financial outcomes such as setting up a budget, changing fuel suppliers, looking for debt advice, opening and/or changing bank accounts, and opening a savings account (see section 3.1.7). These actions have been used to inform the detail of the model and assumptions that underpin it.

5.3.2 Overcoming the challenges

In order to build as robust an economic impact model as possible, and in particular to provide a strong rationale for the model’s operating assumptions – the percentages of those acting upon the training they’ve received and the financial benefits they are likely to accrue over a certain period – we have combined evidence drawn from the project’s beneficiaries with evidence from a number of respectable sources that have undertaken extensive research into the impact of advice and training and its potential impact on the local and regional economy (see boxes 1 and 2).

Using this combination of evidence enables us to confidently move beyond the limitations that would be imposed by relying solely on actual project data or third party evidence.

¹⁴ The increase in personal wealth comes about from improved savings behaviour and securing better deals on financial products. For more details on how much a person would be better off over his or her lifetime if acting on advice, see *A National Dividend*, Resolution Foundation, London 2006

¹⁵ Resolution Foundation (2006) *A national dividend: The economic impact of financial advice*

Box 1: Leeds City Council Financial Inclusion Initiatives Economic impact and regeneration in city economies

Research commissioned by Leeds City Council in order to understand the economic impact of their financial inclusion work found that it delivers up to £26 million of increased disposable income to the city of Leeds and an impact on the regional economy of over £28million. This is achieved through interventions such as providing access to affordable credit, increased benefit up-take and reduced financing costs through debt advice. This economic impact is produced from total operating costs of £3.3 million, which means that for every £1 invested in financial inclusion initiatives £8.40 is generated for the regional economy.

http://www.leeds.gov.uk/Advice_and_benefits/Community_advice/Financial_inclusion_project_Research_2009_on_Economic_impact_of_initiatives.aspx

Box 2: Thoresen Review – Economic Impact Assessment for Money Guidance

The Thoresen Review carried out a detailed cost benefit analysis in relation to Money Guidance and the analysis was updated using data from the pathfinders to produce the impact assessment for the Financial Services Act. Benefits delivered to consumers, government, the financial services industry, the wider economy and society from the Money Guidance service alone are estimated at £644m a year, when averaged out over a lifetime, while the average annual cost of CFEB is £79m.

The cost benefit analysis identifies benefits for consumers, the financial services industry and for government:

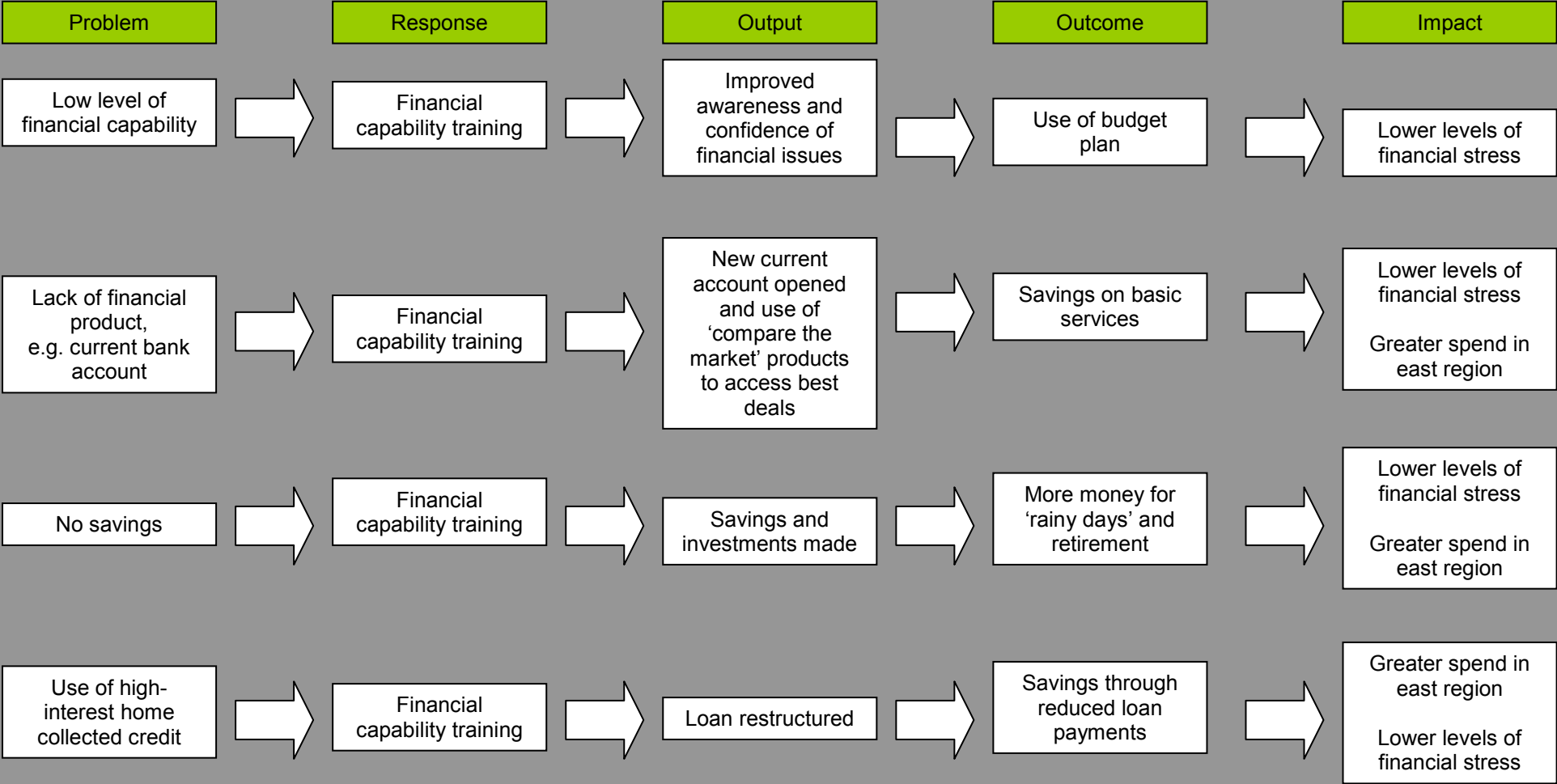
- Benefits to **consumers** and their families are measured in terms of better budgeting, management of debt, “shopping around”, investment in pensions and increased protection. By helping people manage their finances better and plan for the future, financial capability interventions can help them to avoid the distress of financial difficulty and improve their financial and overall wellbeing.
- The **financial services industry** will benefit from more informed and capable consumers resulting in a reduction in the cost of default, reduced marketing and distribution costs, increased propensity to purchase financial products and reputational benefits as consumers understand the industry better.
- Examples of the long term benefit to **Government** are savings in the funding for debt advice agencies, increased take up of benefits and a decrease in pension credit in future years and increased tax receipts from the increase in financial services product holding.

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/thoresenreview_final.pdf

5.3.3 Building the links between the problems and the outcomes

The diagram below sets out the logic model we have used to frame the connections and relationships between the various elements of the programme.

Economic Impact Logic Model



5.3.4 Assumptions used to build the Model

As noted in the previous section we have had to make several assumptions in order to model the economic impact of the project. This is standard practice in developing models and whilst the details of the assumptions can be challenged and amended, the use of assumptions cannot.

The assumptions used within our model are:

- 20% of individuals receiving training will act on the information and advice provided as part of the training. This percentage reflects a balance between two sets of evidence:
 - The feedback from beneficiaries of this programme in relation to the practical actions that they have undertaken as a result of the training received. The percentages of beneficiaries making the changes range between 12–16% across the different actions highlighted;
 - The findings from other studies of the take-up of financial advice, which find that up to 25% of any target group receiving financial advice actually act on the advice provided¹⁶;
- Those individuals that act on the advice will accrue ‘savings’ of on average £1,000 per annum from their changed behaviours and actions. This is an average position; in reality some individuals will ‘save’ more and some will save less;
- These benefits will last for at least five years. This assumption tries to capture the longer-term impact that improving the levels of financial capability with individuals has. In practice, if a person alters their financial decision-making which results in real changes to how they manage their money, the resulting benefits may last for the remainder of their life. Indeed, some changes may result in further changes that have additional positive impacts e.g. better budgeting may result, initially, in surpluses being used to repay debts, but over time these may be placed into a savings account and ultimately invested in a tax-free ISA. For example, one young beneficiary had made considerable changes to her life after attending the courses. She opened both a current and a savings account, opened a joint account with her partner, joined her local credit union and encouraged her partner to open an ISA. On the other hand external shocks or crises, e.g. divorce or job loss may undo the training’s benefits, returning the individual to their pre-training situation.
- All the additional income generated is spent within the region¹⁷.

In terms of defending the assumptions our position is that whilst they could be challenged for being ‘slightly optimistic’, e.g. 20% should really be 16%, or five years should really be 2 years, or the savings accrued should be £600 not £1,000, each assumption is within the range set out by existing evidence and is therefore defensible.

5.3.5 The Findings

Financial Impact of the Programme

930 beneficiaries in total have been trained through the programme.

¹⁶ This percentage draws on the empirical findings of this project and also on the findings from other studies of the effect of financial advice, notably Resolution Foundation (2006) *A national dividend: The economic impact of financial advice*

¹⁷ We recognise this is not realistic but this assumption has been for simplicity sake and in lieu of better data on regional leakage.

Based on the assumption that 186 individuals (20 per cent) will act upon the advice and training they have received and will continue to do for at least five years the economic impact of the programme over five years will be:

- **Each individual will be £5,000 better off.**
- **At the programme level, £930,000 of additional income will have been ‘saved’.**

In terms of how this increase in disposable income will be spent, the Family Resources Survey (FRS) data suggests that approximately **£500 will be in the form of savings**. This figure assumes that the spending habits of the programme’s beneficiaries match those of the individuals in the Family Resources Survey’s (FRS) lowest income decile.

Spending preferences for the lowest income decile by sector (%)

Food and non-alcoholic drinks	16
Alcoholic drinks, tobacco & narcotics	3
Clothing & footwear	4
Housing, fuel and power	21
Household good and services	7
Health	1
Transport	9
Communications	4
Recreation & culture	11
Education	1
Restaurant and hotels	6
Misc good and services	6
Non-consumption spending*	11

Source: Family Resources Survey

*refers to addition to savings, investment, financing costs (loan and mortgage repayments).

Multiplier Effect of the Programme

Work undertaken for Leeds City Council¹⁸, the only type of its kind in the country, on the economic impact of the various financial inclusion initiatives operating in the city calculated a multiplier effect of 1.25 for the region. In other words, for every additional £1 spent in the region as a result of the financial inclusion interventions, an additional £0.25 is spent in the regional economy. This is because businesses receiving this additional income use it to purchase additional goods and services from other businesses in the region.

If we apply this economic multiplier to the EEDA Financial Capability and Inclusion Programme, it would suggest that the cumulative impact of the **additional income generated by the programme will be £1,162,025 over five years**.

¹⁸ Leeds City Council (2008) *Economic Impact of financial inclusion initiatives: the case for Leeds*

	Increase in disposable income at the programme level	Additional impact on regional economy
Programme Activities	£930,000	£1,162,025

Return on Investment

The return on investment is frequently derived as the gain from an action divided by the cost of taking it. It is a useful tool in that it enables comparison and contrast between the relative costs and impacts of different approaches; ultimately supporting the calculation of value for money.

Based on the cumulative impact of the programme we are able to determine the return on investment for every £1 invested through the programme. The table below sets this out.

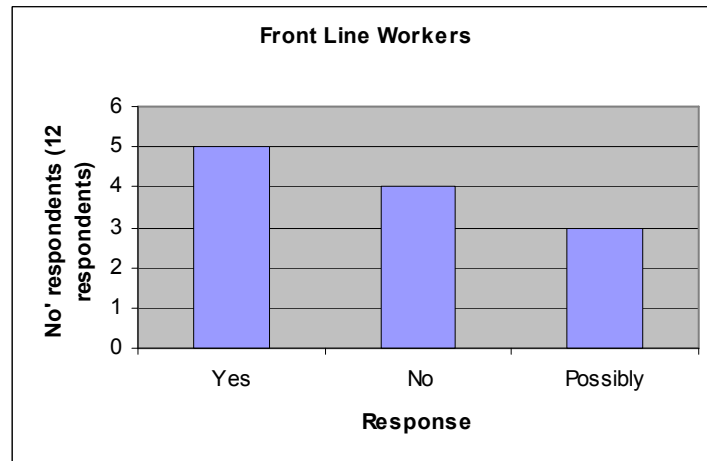
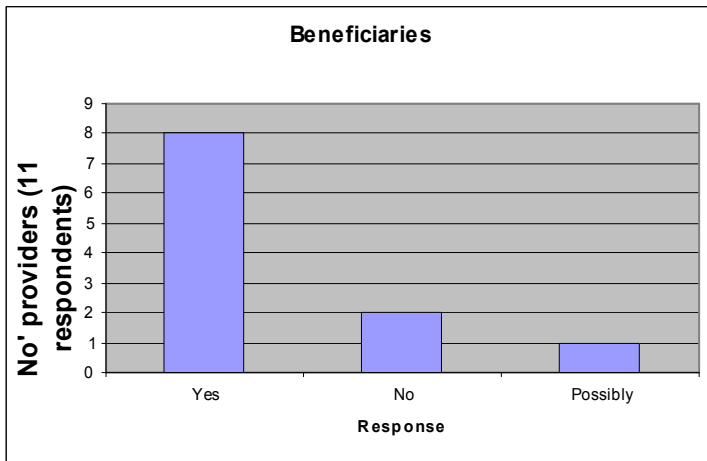
	Programme training and development costs	Cumulative impact on regional economy	Return on investment for every £1 spent
Programme Activities	£257,875	£1,162,025	£4.50

It should be noted that the above programme training and development costs are relatively high because the providers' payments and the central programme management costs reflected the significant resource involved in monitoring European Social Fund sponsored programmes; the need for targeted outreach across communities and within specific locations (notably rural areas); and the significant capacity building work associated with the forums. The input costs for a project with a lower administrative 'burden' and/or more general targets could be significantly lower and, thus, achieve a higher return on investment.

6. Sustainability

6.1 Project Sustainability

Our partner questionnaire survey sought to identify plans for continuing financial capability and inclusion support to beneficiaries and/or front line workers. The stance of the partners who had a reasonably clear insight into this in December 2011 is shown in the following graphs.



Eight of the 11 partners who had responded to whether or not they would continue to train beneficiaries intended to continue to do so. Two confirmed that they would not and one said that it was a possibility.

Five of the 12 partners who responded to whether or not they would continue to train front line workers intended to continue doing so. Four confirmed that they would not and three said that it was a possibility.

Nine providers indicated that external funding would be/is being sought (e.g. community housing trusts, banks, statutory companies, local authority service budgets, DWP Work Programme).

When asked whether they intended to charge for training, three out of eight providers responding to this indicated that they *would not* charge. Three *would* charge for learning not covered by core funding. One said they would *possibly* charge. One provider was exploring whether they would be able to continue delivery through 'Money Guidance'.

The unsettled funding environment for financial inclusion was clearly undermining partners' ability to plan for the future. Sources of funding for 'core delivery' were becoming increasingly under threat with, for example, Citizens Advice narrowly avoiding a significant cut to its own financial inclusion budget for 2011 – 12. As demonstrated by the feedback on forum activity, organisations across the region are clearly looking for new and different ways to work in partnership to apply for available funds and link with core funders for whom they have, not traditionally, sought or received funding.

6.2 County Financial and Inclusion Forum Sustainability

The forums have each been considering a number of options for continuing following cessation of programme funding. These options have included:

- Continuing on an in-kind/voluntary support basis;
- Joining with another local forum/network;
- Using the Regional forum for best practice sharing and information about funding opportunities; and
- Establishing a 'virtual' solution.

The approaches and views of the forums varied, but there has emerged a general sense that the ideal scenario would be for their forum to continue in its current form. There was still work to be done to produce a financial inclusion strategy for the counties and that face to face contact was the best way to achieve this and continue the networking and partnership creation activity that had already proved to work well.

Thought had been given to how to reduce costs, such as ending the provision of lunch, as well as resource elements that would be essential to continuing to achieve its core objectives; notably administration support for identifying venues, organising speakers, membership building - pointing to a need for funding for administrative support.

Potential partner contributions had been investigated, including providing venues for meetings and possibly providing small grants to fund administrative support, although the potential to charge membership subscriptions has been discounted by most due to patchy resource for this across member organisations and the administrative cost of collection.

Key actions being pursued by each forum include:

- Bedfordshire: Consulted members on the appropriateness of linking with Bedfordshire Advice Forum – the most prominent advice forum in Bedfordshire, with around 40 members – and acting as a sub-group to that forum. Unfortunately, this approach has not proved viable.
- Cambridgeshire: CHS will continue to lead and host the forum and support its administration, although it will scan the horizon for funding opportunities to meet costs over time.
- Essex: Basildon CAB is no longer able to lead the forum. Members have established a steering group to investigate options for continuation and members have offered meeting venues. One potential funding source has been identified. Forum members are developing an online facility designed to support members between meetings.
- Hertfordshire: Hertfordshire Training and Development Consortium will continue to lead and co-ordinate the forum. It will be funded for a year through the wider Economic Learning and Participation Project that the Consortium is facilitating for housing associations.
- Norfolk: Diss, Thetford and District CAB is continuing to lead and co-ordinate the forum and £3000 has been secured to sustain the forum over six months, enabling the completion of service mapping and the development of a forum directory. It is actively scanning for potential future funding sources.
- Suffolk: The forum will merge into a newly created Suffolk Advice Network led by the County Council Financial Inclusion Service. The network supports both strategic managers and operational staff.

The significant efforts to continue the work of the forums outlined above and the achievements of most to continue the work of the forums, either independently or in collaboration with partners, is testimony to the high value that the project leads and members place upon their work to date and their potential to do more in future. Within the context of a constricting funding environment, this is an excellent outcome.

6.3 Legacy tools

The project co-ordinator is working on a set of legacy tools and resources including:

- A guide to grant funding for financial capability;

- A guide to costing financial capability projects;
- Ideas on involving volunteers in financial capability;
- Useful tips on outreach to more vulnerable communities;
- Training resources for supporting people out of paid work; and
- A stakeholder summary on why financial capability is crucial in getting people back to work.

Rocket Science has reviewed the above. These guides, collectively, represent a comprehensive legacy of written materials aimed at disseminating learning from the EEDA Financial Capability and Inclusion programme and providing organisations with a role in promoting and delivering financial capability support to continue and develop their services.

7. Reflections and Key Learning Points

7.1 Achievement of committed outputs

The success of the programme in over-achieving its committed beneficiary and front line worker financial capability training targets is an excellent outcome, particularly given the significant struggles that partners were experiencing in engaging beneficiaries at the programme mid-point. This underlines:

- significant and consistent effort and tenacity on the part of providers, to effectively resource the development phase and pursue existing leads and evolve different approaches to marketing and customising the training; and
- clear and decisive action at the programme management level to re-allocate outputs where necessary and engage with additional and, in some cases, specialist agencies (e.g. Menter, the regional BAME network) in order to ensure the programme delivered to target.

The achievement of employment support and referral outcomes did not work so well. Research has demonstrated that combining financial capability and employment support interventions can deliver considerable benefits for individuals. However, the experiences of this programme would indicate that this works to best effect when the two interventions are inextricably connected within the context of a holistic support package rather than relying upon the 'hook' of financial capability to deliver job search support – particularly in the case of this programme, whereby unemployed beneficiaries would already have been engaged with job search support.

7.2 Recruiting to the programme

The programme achieved significant successes in engaging beneficiaries from rural areas and attracting groups of disabled and BAME groups. This worked best through making connections with networks and groups from within those communities of interest who could act as conduits, marketeers and 'trust builders'. Engaging with other partner agencies also resulted in the introduction of new approaches to training delivery. e.g. The BAME network, MENTER, was uncomfortable with the principle of promoting the training solely to unemployed or inactive beneficiaries because they felt that this had the effect of stigmatising the client group. Instead, delivery facilitated through MENTER, was open to all and the marketing for the programme emphasised how the training could help them to help others – and, by implication, themselves.

Generally, the use of existing contacts and networks (particularly organisations that are known to be reliable and trustworthy); getting to the right people within the target organisations (the key decision-makers); demonstrating how the training can and will be customised to the needs of the client (timing, duration, venue); and piggybacking existing groups rather than creating new and different ones, were key and critical planks to successful recruitment of both front line workers and beneficiaries and ensuring that they attend. The approach of recruiting front line workers first, as gateways to beneficiaries, was the most effective route to recruiting beneficiaries.

It was also important to be as precise as possible about the training that would be provided, using clear and accessible language and avoiding terms that might alienate potential trainees e.g. debt, finance or financial. Accurate training 'labelling' was also important from the perspective of managing peoples expectations in terms of the knowledge and benefits they would reasonably be able to extract from the training.

7.3 Design and delivery of the training

The allocation of significant resource to the development phases (getting the training materials and course structures right) and ensuring that the course delivery was as interactive, varied and customised to the clients' interests as possible were important keys to success. It was important to avoid over-loading training sessions and break the training into manageable chunks in order to optimise the learning and make it as enjoyable as possible for beneficiaries in particular.

It proved difficult, however, to pitch the level of the training so that it effectively accommodated different levels of prior knowledge; varying capability to absorb and process information; and different interests across the trainee cohort. This worked best where trainers were prepared to be fleet of foot in the delivery of training; introducing different course elements and adjusting the balance of the topics covered in immediate response to their audience.

7.4 Referrals

The potential for this programme to contribute to the referral of individuals onto complementary support and encourage more joined-up working was of particular interest to EEDA. It is fair to say that, as a result, an overly-bureaucratic and ultimately unworkable process was developed. In the end, referrals were largely made on an ad hoc basis and unless they were internal to the partner organisation or involved a long-term partner with whom they had a close relationship, they were difficult to facilitate and track. There was no incentive for organisations to which referrals were made to confirm whether or not the client had made contact or report on progress because they were not contractually bound to do so. There was also no shared database to support the logging and tracking of referrals. Future programmes might consider using one of the software packages that have been developed to support the tracking of referrals (e.g. Meganexus) and include contractual obligations or at least some financial incentive for providers to make referrals.

7.5 Sustainable benefits

Partners had a variety of motivations for engaging with the programme and reported a range of significant benefits to their organisation that had resulted. Connecting to new organisations and networks and deepening existing relationships were the leading responses, with building greater knowledge of communities and greater financial capability skills and knowledge also scoring highly. Interestingly, enhanced ability to influence local authorities and stakeholders scored lowest in terms of impact. A key area where partners felt that programme had fallen short of their expectations was the extent to which a 'hard sell' of financial capability was still required and that there remained some work before the *need* for financial capability support would translate into *demand*. The ability to influence individuals and organisations to support the raising of the profile of financial capability is important here – the area where partners felt that the impact upon their organisation was lowest.

7.6 Beneficiary perspectives

Feedback from beneficiaries on the training was overwhelmingly positive. Asked to articulate what, in particular, they enjoyed and appreciated about the training, they quoted:

- The non-judgmental, sensitive and empathetic style of staff who were friendly, open and helpful;
- The non-threatening delivery environment;
- A great deal of content was delivered, clearly and competently, in a relatively short amount of time;

- The visual aids and interactive elements created interest and captured their imagination – many beneficiaries particularly valued the discussion elements as this contributed to reducing their sense of isolation;
- Practical information on other help available (including credit unions) and other benefits that beneficiaries could claim was particularly valued.

Based upon the sample of beneficiaries responding to the questionnaire surveys, it is clear that the training has resulted in practical changes in the way they manage their money, with a substantial 67% setting up a budget.

In terms of the types of interventions that beneficiaries felt would be most helpful as part of a future programme, budgeting, attitudes to money, saving and investing and energy efficiency were identified as being most important.

Although feedback has been sought from beneficiaries throughout the programme period, an avenue for this that would warrant additional attention in future programmes would be following up front line workers acting as feeder routes to beneficiaries, in order to ask for any feedback that they receive from clients who have received the training.

7.7 Front line worker perspectives

Front line workers from 128 different organisations received training, most of which worked with social housing tenants, parents and families and people with disabilities/health problems.

Aspects of the training highlighted by front line workers as being particularly beneficial included:

- Delivery was excellent, easy to follow and participants felt involved;
- Many found the course content excellent or very good, commenting that it was very informative, very interesting and very useful. Particular strengths included:
 - the breadth of content – it was good to get an overview of such a wide range of factors;
 - the interactive games – these made a potentially dry subject interesting and engaging;
- Many noted that the information was important to their clients but also to themselves and their families;
- People clearly enjoyed learning from each other, sharing knowledge and experiences.
- The considerable knowledge and experience of the trainers was also widely acknowledged – in some cases the trainers came from the same background as the participants, enabling the trainer to really contextualise and tailor the training - *The trainer came from a Housing Association and subsequently understood where many of the workers were coming from*. *“The trainers understood the reality of being a front line worker”*.

There were some suggestions for how things could improve:

- A formal information pack would be useful – some felt that there were insufficient hand outs; and
- Some felt it was rushed, and several wanted more time to absorb the information and reflect upon it.

Some concerns were also raised:

- Some front line workers found that they either couldn't take everything on board or that some topics were not covered in enough depth;
- The training could have been better tailored to the audience in some instances - front line workers have varying levels of knowledge and, as a result, some found the training too difficult where as others found only small bits of it useful. One provider interviewed during an earlier phases of the evaluation did note that it was difficult to know quite where to pitch the level of training because recipients had different levels of prior knowledge of financial capability.

7.8 County Financial Capability Forums

Each of the six forums held between five and seven meetings. Attendance levels at each forum has, overall, been consistent, although consistency of attendance by specific individuals has been patchy. Representation has been achieved from a range of organisations, enabling the sharing of information and opinions from a wide range of perspectives. Marketing of the forums to potential members has cascaded out from initial efforts by the forum lead, to other members of the forum who then promoted them amongst their contacts and networks. By the programme end, a good balance between strategic and operational level representation had been achieved.

There is clear evidence that the forums have achieved significant benefits for members, in pursuit of their objectives in terms of knowledge sharing; creating partnerships and a better understanding between partners; and lobbying and influencing. The area that the forums found most challenging has been lobbying organisations and individuals in ways that will create a sustainable impact in terms of raising awareness of financial capability issues and shaping the priorities and funding decisions of organisations that can contribute to this agenda. That said, the wide range of strategic level organisations that the forums have successfully attracted is testimony to efforts and results in this respect. It has, however, been difficult to create consistent and productive relationships with PCTs and local authorities.

The capacity of the programme to engage significantly with Jobcentre Plus at the operational level right across the region, was limited in terms of the number of training places available for front line workers. The programme has, however, achieved very good connections at the strategic, regional level.

7.9 The Economic Impact of the Project

Assuming that 20 per cent of the individuals involved in the Financial Capability project act on the financial advice and training they received through the project for the next five years, the overall impact of the project will be:

- Each individual will be **£5,000** better off, of this £500 will be in the form of savings;
- At the project level, **£930,000** of additional income will have been 'saved';
- At the regional economy level, the cumulative impact of the project will be **£1,162, 025**.
- The financial return of the project is **£4.50 for every £1 spent on training**.

7.10 Sustainability

The projects/partners

Eight partners have confirmed their intention to continue to train beneficiaries and two have indicated that they definitely will not.

Five partners have indicated an intention to continue to train front line workers. Five confirmed that they would not and three have said that this is a possibility.

The unsettled funding environment for financial inclusion was clearly undermining partners' ability to plan for the future. However, nine providers have confirmed that they were seeking external funding.

The county financial capability and inclusion forums

There is very strong support from members for the forums to continue, which is a clear indication of value that they place in them. Five of the six forums are actively pursuing practical actions to sustain their activities through a number of methods including:

- merging activities with another network;
- obtaining small amounts of funding to sustain core activities and complete the financial capability activity mapping, which it is hoped will raise awareness of the infrastructure currently in place and flag its potential value to stakeholder organisations that might provide funding or contract out services to providers;
- successfully continuing the forum's functions through other complementary projects;
- developing online network and information sharing options that might be important in future, as connecting tools for forum members; and
- securing 'in-kind' support from members that will enable the continuation of the meetings, including meeting venues and administration resource.

Collaborative working

One of the underpinning rationales for the programme was to raise the profile and awareness of the potential benefits of financial capability support through enhancing partnership working across the region. There is clear evidence that the forums have made considerable strides towards bringing together staff at the operational and strategic levels across a wide range of organisations and evidencing collaborative working that has resulted directly from new relationships.

The benefits of partnership working at the programme partner level, however, are not so clear. Citizens Advice has provided the essential gel to the programme partnership, sharing experience across providers and connecting up partners around particular issues of mutual benefit as appropriate and as the opportunity arose. Feedback from partners received through this evaluation would indicate that the sharing of experiences, expertise and knowledge between partners was patchy, with some feeling that their efforts were not reciprocated sufficiently to motivate them to be proactive in establishing and maintaining relationships with programme partners.

Appendix: Evidence sources used to prepare report

The evaluation has drawn upon the following six key information sources:

- Questionnaire survey responses from 13 programme training provider partners
- A workshop for attended by training providers, which took place in January 2011
- Questionnaire survey responses from 108 beneficiaries
- 993 feedback forms completed by beneficiaries immediately following training, summarising their experiences
- Telephone interviews with six beneficiaries
- 431 feedback forms completed by front line workers immediately following training, summarising their experiences
- Four frontline worker focus groups
- Responses to two front line worker online surveys; one conducted prior to mid-point evaluation reporting and the other conducted in November/December 2011 as part of the final evaluation phase
- Responses to a forum member online survey, conducted in November and December 2010 completed by 81 members
- Final County Forum monitoring forms
- County Forum sustainability plans
- Final (cumulative output/outcome) programme monitoring statistics
- Final programme equality reporting data

Evidence sources for the regional economic impact modelling and analysis are referenced in Section 5.