

Community Money Mentors Final Report: Embedding the sustainability model

TOYNBEE
HALL



Foreword

Community Money Mentors is an accredited peer-to-peer financial skills and mentoring programme, designed to build confident money management self-help capacity within low income communities at risk of financial hardship and exclusion. It was first developed with Tower Hamlets community members in 2010 with National Lottery Reaching Communities funding, and subsequently expanded to include a train-the-trainer model for course graduates, as well as testing a range of delivery models, including digital, across a London-wide partnership hub model, and with employers in and outside of London. The latest phase of the programme has, with continued Big Lottery Fund support, explored the potential to move away from large-scale grant funding towards a more agile, self-sustaining delivery model, including testing variations of the course in response to user and commissioner feedback and the new learning environment and financial hardship created by the pandemic. The sustainability phase has been hard hit by the impact of the pandemic, which significantly limited the project's ability to engage low income community members in training delivery and learning, and limited the capacity of institutional partners to plan future programmes and commit funding. Nevertheless, this phase has provided useful learning for growing a sustainable model which we will be able to build on in coming years. This report shares our learning and our future plans for the Money Mentor programme.

Summary

Sustainability infrastructure

- We've built sustainability infrastructure in order to work towards the delivery of paid- for courses to provide an income stream to make on-going delivery of Money Mentors sustainable. Working with Toynbee Hall's Head of Business Development, we have created a market development system, fully furnished with marketing emails, sales collateral, and a customised CRM to manage the interactions with individuals. This is continuing to support the marketing and promotion beyond the length of this grant.
- We've continued to support Teach It Grads, who have maintained connection with the programme. Throughout this we have continued to engage with Trainers to establish what capacity they have and design support to meet that level. This has included providing training to 4 Teach it Trainers to deliver an adapted Digital Money Mentors short course. Two of the trainers helped us test the blended short course we delivered, and others are now also delivering adapted versions, including to commissioning organisations they have identified and developed into contracts. .
- This is particularly impressive as we have found that a large part of the Teach It trainer group have experienced significant challenges and life changes during lockdown which has impacted their capacity to participate in the project. A further benefit is that others have found paid work in roles through using the skills, knowledge and experience developed through the journey from Community Money Mentor to Teach It Trainer to provide support to residents/service users around money issues.
- We have not yet reached a point for financial sustainability, but continue to work towards it. The length of the pandemic, as well as continued uncertainty over lockdowns and the economic outlook, has meant that it is taking months rather than weeks to turn initial interest into confirmed commissions. There is significant interest from housing associations in running courses, particularly for staff, though marketing feedback has included concerns around learner recruitment and staff resourcing to turn

learning into on-going support. Organisations are still showing interest, but the amount of work to secure confirmed contracts is significant and the pace is slow. However, one substantial contract with a housing provider would provide enough financial security to allow us to continue to grow the programme towards financial sustainability.

- We have earned income funds to cover four additional months of business development by our Programme Manager at 0.5 FTE capacity, with the aim of turning pipeline leads into confirmed commissions.
- The pandemic had a significant impact on course delivery and in particular recruitment; planned courses were repeatedly postponed or cancelled as both trainers and learners experienced disruption due to the pandemic. As we emerge from the pandemic, we are hopeful that potential commissioners will be more confident to commit funds, and that there will be fewer course cancellations.

Course and channel adaptations to respond to the new context of the pandemic

- With the increased level of economic uncertainty and new challenges around learners' ability to commit to the full length Community Money Mentors course, we adapted the content to create a shorter version, delivered remotely via Zoom and our e-learning platform. We have piloted this course with an initial six learners to test whether the shortened length is able to deliver comparable levels of impact to the full course.
- Participants completing the short course all reported increased knowledge and improved wellbeing.
- 'Needs and wants', where participants learn to assess what in their own budget is essential expenditure and what is discretionary, was regularly referenced as the learning that had the most immediate impact on their behaviour and had been adopted widely and shared amongst peers and families. Being able to take control of their own expenditure gave participants a sense of control with practical positive impact on their short-term financial wellbeing.

- Remoted delivery using a digital version of the course did allow the course to be delivered under movement restrictions. This method of delivery also meant that some participants reported the secondary benefit of learning to use online resources such as video calls, but this did also exclude some prospective participants from taking part at all where their digital capability or access was too limited.
- Participants and trainers felt the digital version had other benefits over in-person delivery, such as increased flexibility, but the remote nature of the learning also had downsides. These included the more spontaneous social interactions, peer support and sharing of experiences through informal conversations that a physical classroom environment allows. Some participants even mentioned these as the biggest motivations to taking the course, so their absence was significant.
- The digital platform had limitations which meant document submissions and assessments had to be done outside of the platform. This increased the workload for trainers and made completing the qualification requirements more challenging for learners than the traditional classroom delivery channel, where the trainer would be present at the end of each session to support with admin.
- Half of the participants were keen to undertake further learning and progression, especially in more specialised areas such as debt management.

Recommendations

- To continue to offer our content across different formats – digital, in person, and hybrid
- To continue to build flexibility into the course by creating separate modules which can be studied over a period of time and combined into a full course and accreditation as appropriate
- To improve our e-learning digital platform further to be more self-contained, including document submission and progress tracking
- To develop additional materials to include videos of previous participants and others with lived experience

- To re-establish face to face group courses to increase secondary benefits such as reduced isolation, socialising, networking and experience-sharing
- To create clearer and improved links to other support and courses, utilising existing links such a Wiser Adviser to provide participants with further learning opportunities and progression
- To create more targeted courses for particular groups such as young people, care leavers and prisoners
- To continue market engagement to identify funded courses within other sectors where particular interest in staff training was demonstrated
- To continue to explore pilots with housing associations to test potential return on investment though reduced cost such as collections and arrears
- To explore with local partners and funders the option of integrating what we have learned through multiple iterations of Money Mentors into an East London systems thinking, anti-poverty financial resilience partnership programme
- To explore the feasibility and cost benefit analysis of developing a more customisable learning management system across the organisation

Introduction

Community Money Mentors is an accredited financial wellbeing peer mentoring programme, developed by Toynbee Hall in 2010 in partnership with local partners and Tower Hamlets residents with limited formal qualifications and/or living on a low income. The programme incorporates an initial money management course to improve financial knowledge and skills, followed by support to share learning with graduates' families and friends, and within their personal and professional communities. The programme has now been delivered across multiple locations to over 900 learners, and has reached in excess of 5000 people through peer mentoring amongst learners' networks and communities.

An [internal evaluation](#)¹ and subsequent [independent evaluation](#)² of the programme by Salford University both demonstrated that it had a significant impact on learners' financial wellbeing. But it also showed that learners graduated the programme with newfound confidence in their ability to learn and, often, to participate in formal education and /or the labour market. We wanted to build on this outcome by creating opportunities for graduates to become Money Mentor trainers themselves, and so we developed a 'train the trainer' programme, called *Teach It*, so that graduates could share their knowledge even further, with participants running their own independent courses using the course materials and format. And since the funding environment makes it difficult to secure continued funding for on-going tried and tested, rather than new, delivery programmes, we wanted to test whether we could solve the funding challenge through creating a self-employed trainer model for the Teach It graduates, supported by us to secure and deliver their courses, but paid by commissioning organisations for individual courses. Our hypothesis was (and still is) that long-term we are more likely to be able to secure funding for individual courses through selling them to commissioning organisations than through seeking larger

¹ Toynbee Hall, 2015: The Money Mentors Programme, An evaluation report by Toynbee Hall

² University of Salford, 2016: An independent evaluation of the Community Money Mentors programme

delivery grants (though the latter are better in terms of income predictability and employment security).

With vital support from the National Lottery Community Fund, we launched this new phase to explore and test these new models of working and sustainability. The course had been funded through various iterations of delivery by a range of funders, but in a climate of highly competitive and finite funding, it was clear to us that there was a need to find a more sustainable model to fund the programme long-term. In this latest report, then, we wanted to assess both the impact of course variations we have made during the pandemic, and the extent to which this model of peer trainers, and well as peer mentors, is both effective and sustainable.

We also developed a digital version to allow parts of the course to be completed remotely online, with the aim of increasing accessibility and reach for learners who could not always attend in person. A blended model utilising a combination of digital and in-person materials and channels was planned before the impact of the pandemic hit, but this became even more essential when face to face lessons could not happen due to successive lockdowns. However, despite our growing digital delivery capacity, the pandemic nevertheless had a significant impact on the project's ability to recruit and deliver courses amongst the lowest income groups we wanted to reach, and this report takes this important external context into account.

The complex factors of the pandemic's impact on low income and excluded communities for both peer trainers and potential learners, ranging from Covid symptoms, to poor mental health, to digital exclusion, to lack of space to study remotely, all meant that planned courses were repeatedly cancelled or postponed, and so in the end only one course during this period has been fully completed, with 6 participants completing the course. It is therefore important to note that previous versions of the course have provided evaluations with much higher samples of learners to enable more statistical analysis, and the small

number of participants in this new sample has meant this would not be appropriate method in this instance. Therefore this evaluation adds more qualitative data and stories to the existing evidence, and focuses instead on process and delivery learning in the particular context of the challenging environment the pandemic created. The evaluation brings together and assesses the work done to understand the future sustainability of the programme.

The evaluation draws on interviews with learners, significant change stories, and interviews with project staff, with particular focus on the methods of delivery and processes. It also utilises the evidence collected in previous cohorts to support and better understand the impact of the Community Money Mentors course, acknowledging the limitations of the small number of participants in this latest cohort.

This report also includes a review of the work undertaken to explore sustainable delivery models and commercial opportunities. A tailored version of the course was commissioned by Tai Tarian, a Welsh housing association, for their frontline staff who support residents experiencing financial hardship. This tailored course has been piloted and adapted based on staff feedback, but full delivery was postponed multiple times due to Covid restrictions in Wales and England, including an in-person session being cancelled just minutes after starting when a learner tested positive for Covid. At the time of writing this programme of delivery is underway again, but unfortunately not in time for its impact to be assessed and included in this report. Bespoke versions were also designed and delivered to front line staff in a local authority, and the community bankers staffing the new pilot community banking hubs, set up in response to the Access to Cash Review. These commissions demonstrate the potential opportunities and demand in different areas and for different audiences, which are also examined through the work undertaken.

Impact of the shorter course

The evaluation has looked to some extent at the impact on participants of a new, shorter version of the Community Money Mentors course, specifically looking at financial capability, wellbeing and confidence, as well as any secondary benefits. It should be noted that the available data is limited due to repeated course cancellations and postponements, and the analysis is therefore done through the lens of testing a new approach.

The latest course was not only delivered remotely, which is discussed in more detail further in the report, but was also a shortened version of the original course; the short version is 5 weeks of 3 hours per session, in comparison to the original timeline duration which was 12 weeks and 60 hours of guided learning. This change was made as the length of the original course and the time commitment required had excluded some learners from starting or completing the course. In the context of the pandemic, when potential learners had even less certainty and predictability in their lives than usual, we wanted to be able to offer high impact content in the shortest possible time commitment.

“[A shorter online course] can make it more accessible for some where available time during the day is limited and could be a barrier e.g. for parents who may attend a course in between taking their children to school/nursery and collecting them later” – Programme Manager

It was felt a more condensed course could also be more attractive to potential commissioning organisations.

“Early conversations indicated that whilst it was clear that they could see the benefits that could be generated from an extended period of engagement provided through the full course and the impacts that we had achieved, a shorter course could be easier for them to organise, fund, and deliver in the coming months given the challenges that they were facing.” – Programme Manager

The modules selected were those that focused on providing the most direct and immediate financial benefit in the context of the particular pressures faced as the temporary support measures which had been put in place during the pandemic came to an end.

“Both ourselves and potential partners were aware of the increased challenges that households who were already struggling pre pandemic could find themselves facing as the UC uplift was withdrawn, furlough came to an end, and energy prices increased. A more concentrated period of engagement focused on the key Financial Capability building skills developed in the core Personal Budgeting and Money Management Unit and supplemented with 1-1 support could form a more effective intervention and reach more people given the challenges emerging post lockdowns.” – Programme Manager

There were also practical reasons for the selection of modules to include as some carried different credits to ensure the accreditation standards were met.

There were however some concerns of what could be lost from a shorter course:

“There has always been a question about the number of sessions and length of engagement with CMM and DMM is similar in structure. The extended engagement seems to provide more time for the longer-term impact to happen and some report the course as being transformational.” – Programme Manager

The shorter course means shorter engagement, with the reduction in the potential wider impact this can have, but this could be mitigated by a series of shorter courses to cover the traditional full course. Further evidence of this, the benefits and interest are discussed later in the report.

Both the year 1 and year 3 evaluation reports demonstrated the original course increased knowledge, improved money management skills, enhanced saving

habits and increased confidence of those taking part and these results are replicated for the 6 participants that completed the pilot remote delivery digital version.

Only 3 of the 6 participants stated that before the course they regularly planned how much they should be spending and on what, which increased to all 6 participants in the end surveys. This is in line with previous evaluations, which saw a rise from 57% to 87% from pre and post surveys respectively. While the sample is very small, it does provide a suggestion that the impact remained despite the shorter course in the particular module topics that remained, providing useful encouragement to continue piloting this shortened version.

During the in-depth interviews with learners, all of the interviewees mentioned this aspect as bringing an improvement which they have already been able to implement, all referencing the lessons on 'needs and wants' which helps learners assess which products and services are essentials and which are discretionary, and thus supports them to make better decisions and prioritise spending.

"I didn't think it was gonna be that beneficial to me as where I worked in the past I did some debt management as part of support work... but I was quite surprised I did learn more than I thought.. For example I never ever, when budgeting, looked at needs and wants, I and thought, wow if I'd know that a few years ago I might have a few more pounds in my pocket..." – Money Mentors Graduate

There was a clear theme that this was an area of particular benefit and that before doing the lesson all had considered some 'wants' as 'needs' prior to the lesson and that this new way of looking at spending had allowed them to make savings and avoid arrears. While none felt they had overspent on items they didn't need, they were all able to identify things they had considered essential which they now realised they could reduce or remove spending on in order to priorities actual needs. This in turn had made them more confident and less

worried about money as they were more able to pay the costs that were most likely to have negative consequences.

Some learners explained they had started setting out weekly budgets during the course and were still continuing.

“..And now I doing it (saving)... piggy bank... [the programme manager] mentioned it... you do your shopping and you round it up and it goes on your savings.”

The feedback on the course content and material was generally positive, although some learners felt some of it was very basic and would have liked more advanced content on particular areas. Financial scams and online security were topics that were mentioned as areas learners felt were missing, though staff did feedback that this content does exist in other versions of the Money Mentors course.

“I would say there should be more, as everything is now quite digital, about spending online and security, making sure you’re spending money on secure sites not be scammed”. – Money Mentor Graduate.

Having modules separately accessible would also provide flexibility that prevented some from completing the course.

“It would be good if [the learners] could access other modules that they were interested in. There would also be people that couldn’t continue for various reasons, such as work, they could also pick it up modules again. – Money Mentor Trainer

It was also mentioned by learners and the programme manager that some of the online content could be made more engaging, for example through including videos of people sharing their experiences and acting out scenarios.

“I’m a visual learner that’s just how I learn... I really like performances or roles plays or mini-videos about scenarios.” – Money Mentors Graduate

“I think as we develop the online platform we could really add to the course content and include videos of other sharing their experience that way you get some of the lived experience and that’s really valuable and a key part of the approach” – Programme Manager

This initial feedback indicates that the shorter course was still having a positive impact on learners, despite some of the challenges faced working remotely. The shorter course, perhaps unsurprisingly, did however mean there were some topics not included that learners would have liked to cover.

Learning Progression

Additional learning and progression was mentioned by two of the interviewed participants, who would be keen to continue with further learning and undertake more specialised courses on topics such as debt and scams so that they could take the accredited course further and gain the qualification. They felt this would not only improve their own money management but add to their skills and qualifications to improve employability and increase income. The learners also expressed a desire for further learning and progression in particular to be able to support others more.

“I would’ve liked to have done more specific stuff on debt cos I’ve been in debt before I wanted to forewarn [young people] that these are the traps that you could go in to and this has given me structure on how I can explain it better”.

“I definitely think that if there was another course I would like to do it. You can learn how to budget but there’s also that debt aspect, people might be stuck in debt and not know how to get out of it, so an extra unit or an advanced course would definitely help”.

“...someone who’s already done the course, spreading the knowledge or giving the information and teaching other people would be beneficial as you’ve done it yourself”

This was backed up by one of the trainers, who was also a former graduate of the Money Mentors Teach it course.

“[Some learners] wanted more the further information... people were asking if there was anything else”

“We have in the past offered volunteering opportunities and they’ve done Wiser Adviser training I know they did that at Centre 70 and a couple [at Toynbee Hall]... that was really good, it’s win win”.

The trainer told us that a lot of the things people wanted to learn were included in the longer course previously delivered and that there should be an option to do the rest.

“[Some learners] wanted more and they were asking about other things but the things they were asking about were in the 12 week course.... If there was something else offered like a follow on then I think that would be good”

This would also help ensure ongoing engagement and improve learners’ ability to progress in the course by fitting around other commitments, which in the past has caused people to drop out of the longer courses at various stages. The primary reasons given for not completing previous courses were having new work opportunities and care giving responsibilities.

Digital Learning

The new short course was originally designed with a blend of digital learning and in person learning, but the on-going pandemic restrictions meant the course had to be delivered entirely remotely. This created its own delivery challenges which are discussed in more detail in the Process section. It also had mixed implications for the participants. At least half of the participants had not used video conference software, in this case Zoom. While they were not entirely comfortable, they felt they also expressed growing confidence as the course progressed and thought that it was a good skill to learn. Nonetheless, all

participants expressed a preference for the majority, if not all, of the course to take place in person in a classroom so that they could more easily chat informally and share thoughts and experiences.

“I would definitely [have preferred to do it face to face] I didn’t like Zoom, still don’t like Zoom but I know it’s the way forward, whether we like it or not, so for me it was helpful. I can see how it’s beneficial to those who can’t get out and about but I’m a carer and indoors a lot, so it would’ve been nice to have gotten away from my environment”

“Getting to use Zoom was a bit sticky for me but I’m getting the hang of it.”

“For me, I don’t know if it’s just Zoom culture or the way it is but it doesn’t help people to connect as well. We was in a group but it didn’t feel like we were in a group cos if you were sitting together you would interact better. Some people didn’t talk up and some didn’t have their video on which I understand.” - Money Mentors Graduate

It has to be acknowledged that, without the digital and remote version, it would have been impossible to deliver any course at all and the flexibility it provides could potentially help those previously excluded due to the timing and length of the course during the day.

“The big advantage a digital version provides it removes some of the barriers, such as geographical, which will also help with sustainability....” – Programme Manager

The digital version did though exclude some who were not confident or able to access the online version.

“many of the people we work with are not digitally native and we’re at the beginning of that ourselves we have quite a few challenges but there are solutions as digital is becoming an emergent part of people’s lives it’s another thing to make available especially after lockdown... hopefully [after

pandemic restrictions] we can offer a real blended approach to keep some of the benefits each ways” – Programme Manager

The trainers also saw this first hand.

“One of the learners kept coming in as she couldn’t navigate the computer. She shared lots of stories and came in 3 times, [the programme manager] spent loads of time one to one with her to try and help her through it but in the end she said I can’t do this. There were others that weren’t interested once they knew it [was online] so it shows many people are excluded by technology.” – Money Mentors Trainer

Therefore a mixed approach would seem to be the best way ensure the widest coverage and provide flexibility and accessibility for different groups and situations.

While the surveys and interviews do demonstrate the short course is likely having a positive impact for the participants, particularly as an addition to existing evidence, the low numbers do mean the strength of the evidence is limited and more testing is required to be able to say with certainty that the adapted course is having a similar level of impact for learners as previous evaluations have proven for the full course.

Janet's Story

Before going on this course, my financial life was upside down and in turmoil.

I wasn't opening any of my letters. I was not paying any of my bills on time. As soon as I received my JSA, within a day I was broke. I was regularly borrowing small sums of money from friends and family of up to £20. I was getting letters threatening court action. I received a notice seeking repossession of my council property because I was in rent arrears. My direct debits would bounce because there were no funds in my bank account.

Today, having acquired the knowledge and skills from the course and having successfully completed the course my life is completely different. I have set up direct debits for most of my bills and standing orders. I make sure there is enough money in my bank account to pay my bills and living expenses.

I visited the CAB to make arrangements for my dual fuel and to negotiate a more cost effective price plan. I am now paying £113 a month. This includes my usage and debt owed. I have contacted Stepchange and I have made arrangements to pay my creditors £5 per month each. I set up a payment plan with my landlord where I pay with standing order for my service charge and £7 per month towards my rent arrears. I have started saving £10 per week for emergencies and a few things I would like in the future.

Today I feel good. I feel like I am in control of my finances and my finances are no longer in control of me.

And best of all my head is no longer buried in the sand!

Process

The key learning from this phase is in understanding the processes of the new delivery model tested by the team and the participants.

The context of the difficult environment for all community projects created by the pandemic cannot be ignored and clearly had a huge effect on the project that was trying to establish new ways of working. The impact of the pandemic itself and the restrictions that came with it caused problems not only for the participants but also for the organisation and the staff as any absences, delays and barriers were felt more acutely in what is a relatively small project team with a finite timeline for testing and learning.

The start date for delivering the new digital courses was initially delayed as they first had to be developed with an external partner and then signed off by the accreditation provider to ensure they met the formal assessment criteria. This phase happened during the first few months of lockdown, which also made progress slow.

There were also some limitations of the digital platform which meant much of the work for submissions and assessments had to be done outside of the platform. Further work to bring some of this within the functionality of the platform would clearly streamline the course, providing efficiency and clarity for all parties.

“One of the problems that we’ve had is that people need to submit for the assessment. At the moment it was really designed for in person learning, so that is we’d have printed course books and we’d be able to kind of like work with learners on that, but with this they’re having to email and we’re having to email back with the comments, sometimes you ’d have to do one-to-ones but we’re working towards with the developers is getting a really integrated automated course book ... and integrating that within zoom and running them alongside the platform.”

“What would be beneficial is to have all the assessment and questions in a learning management system so they have all the resources rather than [the staff] having to send them out and chase to get them back... currently [the platform] doesn’t have that capability” - Community Money Mentors Programme Manager

Learners also mentioned this also meant they were sometimes unclear if they had submitted everything that was required and uncertain of when they would receive responses and results.

“The online content was a bit confusing... you’d do one part online and then you’d have to do other bits not online sent in so it felt there was doubling up”

“I think that when people hand in the work in that maybe [project staff] need to give a timeframe, maybe acknowledgement that it has been handed in and say something like ‘give us a week or two to get back to you’. I feel like that element was missed cos you’d send an email then not always hear anything and think oh what’s going on... I didn’t know if I’d passed certain aspects” – Money Mentors Graduate

A more fully rounded system that centralises the submissions with confirmations, updates and guidance would resolve this with less need for manual processes from project staff, which in the circumstance was challenging even with a small cohort. With a scaled up version with many more learners this would be difficult to maintain effectively even in normal working circumstances.

Increased scale would also help create a larger project delivery team which would mitigate any impact of staff absences.

Creating a more flexible version of the online platform would also allow the course to be more easily customised and updated without the need for developer intervention each time and the additional cost this incurs. This would

be particularly important if courses were to be regularly updated and targeted for different groups, which in turn makes the course more desirable to more audiences and potential commissioning organisations. This could also potentially save money as it could be used across different parts of the organisation.

“[Toynbee Hall’s legal advice manager] came to me to enquire about the system we were using as she wanted to do training around legal advice but had no learning management system to do it on. So with [a customisable learning management] you could design all sorts of courses”

“To make this effective we need to be able to flex [the course] quite a lot. So the solution would be to have something we could manage more our end... then we could update the library of materials and topics and create different combinations. Otherwise [the developer] is going to have to do it each time and they’re gonna charge”. – Programme Manager

It would therefore be worth exploring upfront costs and how this would reduce ongoing costs, as well as identifying other areas where such a system could be utilised to improve economies of scale and provide further value.

Additional sustainability work

In this phase of the Community Money Mentors programme, significant work was done to explore ways to ensure the course is sustainable with a particular focus on identifying and developing sustainable funding for the programme. The project manager worked closely with other Toynbee Hall staff, including Toynbee Hall’s Head of Commercial, to identify possible commercial ways of funding the course. The course had previous success within the housing association sector and this was explored as a staff training model helping frontline housing staff to provide support to their residents. At the time of writing a course was being delivered with a housing association in Wales, with the potential to replicate the model elsewhere. It was also felt that this type of course could be targeted at other organisations providing frontline support to individuals.

“I talked to [the programme manager] about ways that he may be able to improve engagement with people who are likely use and take Money Mentors on as a course. Then later on I got involved more directly with helping develop a marketing plan, from that we tested for a period, got some reasonable responses, so extended that and brought in a marketing development role who went out contacting as many people as she could... and we got a lot of leads... we also did some desk research to find leads who we contacted... we then met with some to discuss the course at a high level to try and understand what their likely needs were and gauge interest”

Toynbee Hall Head of Commercial

A Market Development Assistant trainee role was created and a local community resident was engaged to fulfil the role, primarily to engage with and identify potential customers. During this phase, around 450 named contacts were identified and contacted. This resulted in 40 positive responses showing solid interest, with twelve telephone meetings to explore commissions.

These conversations and responses provided some key learnings:

1. Staff training is highly sought after – the majority of interest was in this area, rather than for courses for community members/service users etc.
2. Concerns about commitment levels required for residents was high due to the length of the standard Community Money Mentor course. This is a common response due to the fact that the majority of commissioners have had poor previous experience of service user engagement. Understandably, they are usually surprised at the length and intensity of the Community Money Mentors programmes and need convincing that learners will engage. However there is also merit at this early stage in considering alternative structures, delivery mechanisms and shorter courses to develop the commissioning relationship.
3. Peer training seemed to resonate with a number of organisations, as peer –based and community engagement programmes are becoming more common and desirable.

4. Although there are currently no confirmed commissions from these leads, the licence model was of interest.
5. Toyndee Hall would also need to be able to offer an option for people to do a course independently rather than via in-house as many organisations were keen but too small to have enough staff to deliver the course to a whole cohort.

This market scoping and development work demonstrated that, while there is a desire to provide training, to be of value to as many organisations as possible the courses would need to be tailored to meet different organisational needs and priorities and alleviate concerns raised. The size of the organisation, its capacity and available resources and infrastructure would all need to be considered in appropriate course designs to provide the most effective options. The previously mentioned requirement of building in flexibility and control in course content, formats and particularly systems would make the offer more viable and attractive for more organisations.

However, this level of adaptation requires significant ongoing investment in programme management and course design. It was felt there was sufficient interest to continue to engage further and begin to implement some of the requirements / feedback into project design but that it would require support and resources.

“We would need to look at how we support a go to market plan for a significant period to fully test the market and start to convert business... It needs some time and resource.”

For housing associations, the barrier to recruiting participants from their residents and the potential time and resources that the organisation may have to invest to do so was cited as a concern and instead made staff training more attractive to many. Given the evidence of the impact the course can have on individual's financial situation, the next step is to capture the data to make a clear business case, documenting cost savings to organisations through reduced arrears,

collection and evictions that may mitigate any additional cost of resourcing. Further testing and piloting with a housing association would be required to fully understand these potential returns on investment. Being able to demonstrate this would be incredibly valuable.

While there was real interest in our offer, at the time of writing this report none of the engagements had resulted in agreements to deliver. Toynbee Hall's Head of Commercial explained the timing of the enquires was challenging as it was outside commissioning and budgeting periods and the majority of interested contacts had given timing as a reason not to be able to commit yet. It was also noted that initial, sometimes strong interest, went cold without obvious explanation. Other priorities and the ongoing challenges faced by the pandemic and the timing could be a reason but this was not confirmed. Linking the work into the Money and Pensions Service Money Guides programme would also be a useful step for building awareness of the Money Mentor programme.

One USP of the Community Money Mentor programme is the progression route for learners, from community member to money mentor to trainer, through the trainer the trainer approach called 'Teach It', where learners who had completed the course would take further training to deliver the course themselves independently utilising the course content and materials. In the third phase of the programme development, we trained 40 CMM graduates to be Trainers, and this fourth phase aimed to support these graduates to become self-employed trainers, with on-going support from Toynbee Hall to secure and deliver courses. Some Teach It graduates have already been successful, but the impact of the pandemic on mental and physical health, along with the need to look after family members and earn a stable income, has so far prevented the majority from being able to pursue their training roles. Nevertheless, six Teach It graduates are still active, and the evaluation team spoke to a trainer that had successfully delivered the longer course, as well as the new short course.

As the previous evaluation had highlighted, the trainers needed further support to organise, fund and deliver their own courses.

“there was significant frustration among Teach It graduates about the lack of business development training, in terms of marketing, and identifying and approaching organisations to fund their classes, and many felt this held them back” – Teach It Evaluation, 2016

Further training on some of these topics was therefore commissioned, and Teach It graduates have access to a trainer and coach with extensive expertise in developing independent training income. We will continue to provide this support to graduates who have the time and capacity to deliver training, in order to help them develop their confidence and experience in securing independent contracts.

Five years later, despite the pandemic impacting on people’s ability to work, two Teach It graduates have recently secured and taught independent courses at different sites, showing this model can work if well supported. They also not only brought their own experiences but also their unique insights and connections. One trainer told us about some of the successes they had.

“I was at the Community shop and also Centre 70 where there was always people that wanted to do the course... It benefits everybody... [The staff at the organisation] would help me recruit and we’d pass on people who’d then volunteer or do other training” - Course Trainer and Teach It Graduate

There was also a common theme from both learners and trainers about the potential to have more targeted courses for particular groups and almost universal agreement that young people would be one of the most important groups. As is common when discussing financial skills training, there is a strong belief that we need to offer young people effective financial education before they leave school and become independent. Young people leaving care are

particularly in need of being able to manage money and interact with financial services with confidence.

“I was thinking this would be excellent at schools... that’s the most vital time... I definitely think you should be doing it at schools”

“I think for young people, getting them to think about money is important, as when they go out in to the world they are not prepared and I’ve come across a lot of young people, especially those that have been in care and they haven’t been taught anything about budgeting and spending so they get thrown out into the world and a lot of them could end up on the streets cos they don’t know about paying bills, budgeting things like that... and there are people that will take advantage of them*”

*This is backed up by an All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness report, 2017 which states the ‘One third of care leavers become homeless in the first two years immediately after they leave care’. Whilst the cause of homelessness will not necessarily always be financial capability, strong financial skills are essential for living independently with confidence.

“If they are given money for the first time... they aren’t always going to think about [budgeting and wants and needs]. I know a young girl who comes to the youth club and she was given a flat and money but suddenly had to pay her own rent and bills and then lost her home and her mum also suffered. Young people will be happy to do the digital course and then come together for graduation or some social action would build relationships”

Finally, the cost of living crisis has highlighted on the national stage how many families are in precarious financial circumstances. East London remains an area of multiple deprivation, and in Tower Hamlets, 56% of children are living in poverty – the highest rate in London. Community Money Mentors began as a Tower Hamlets programme, designed with the local community to address self-identified needs around financial exclusion and hardship. We think the time is

right to explore integrating what we have learned through multiple iterations of Money Mentors into an East London systems thinking, anti-poverty financial resilience programme, working with partner organisations such as the Bromley by Bow Centre, Limehouse Project, Quaker Social Action and other community hubs and support organisations. This would include resourcing each school with trained Community Money Mentors, and giving all parents of new starters access to the Money Mentors programme, as part of a holistic and systemic programme tackling child and adult poverty. We are now actively exploring this approach with partners.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the pandemic has had a significant impact on our ability to grow the sustainability of the Community Money Mentors programme; the combination of having to move to digital delivery, along with such uncertainty for commissioner, learners and trainers, reduced our ability to deliver courses at scale. The small number of participants in our latest pilot for the shortened course also limited the ability to provide robust impact measures for the course directly. But the circumstances did provide rich and valuable learning on the different approaches, especially with regard to the new delivery channel of digital learning. In the challenging environment and with digital delivery relatively new to the Money Mentor project, being able to produce and deliver a new course at all was itself an achievement, although not without its issues. We have identified areas for further development, including for building on the existing infrastructure and continued development of the online learning platform. We can see there are many advantages to a digital version of the course and that a more flexible system which could be customised more easily and independently would also provide the ability to update and tailor courses without need of additional developer time and costs. That said, even with a fully functional standalone system, it is not a substitute for the many of the benefits and accessibility needs provided by face to face learning and therefore we will continue to use both

delivery methods, or a combination of the two, to ensure inclusive accessibility and wider impact.

There are clearly opportunities to create tailored versions of the course targeted to specific groups and levels, some of which are already being tested. This could potentially make the course more relevant and therefore particularly attractive to companies and organisations working with particular groups. We will continue to focus on working with housing associations and local authorities, since these providers work directly with people living on low income who often also experience high levels of financial exclusion, and therefore offer the greatest opportunities for being able to create large scale impact.

We are particularly grateful for the generous support provided by the National Lottery Community Fund, which has enabled us to continue testing different formats and channels for delivery, and to build our knowledge and capacity for moving towards a different funding model in order to make the programme more sustainable. The pandemic years have made that work all the more challenging, and we are therefore grateful for your consistent and patient support.

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