

**Citizens Advice
Financial Inclusion Fund**

Financial capability pilot

Evaluation report

July 2009

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Research and Consultancy

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July 2009.

CITIZENS ADVICE FINANCIAL INCLUSION FUND

FINANCIAL CAPABILITY PILOT

Executive Summary

Headline summary

- The Pilot has directly trained 2,500 people.
- It is projected that at least 20,000 service users will be reached in the short term by the cascade of information and possibly more than 40,000 over a full year
- Overall, the targets for training intermediaries were exceeded by 30%
- The numbers of service users reached were 64% of the target
- The project was cost effective. Unit costs compare favourably with previous projects
- The confidence of intermediaries in supporting service users with financial capability issues increased by 95%
- The Pilot has contributed directly to Government goals of comprehensive access to increasing consumer confidence and capacity to prevent avoidable financial problems
- The Pilot and the impact evaluation would have benefited from a longer timescale.

Introduction

In 2008, Citizens Advice was funded by the Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR) to run a pilot project delivering training on a group and one to one basis for service users, and group training for front line workers supporting service users, who may be excluded from mainstream financial services

The FinCap project (as it became known) sought to reach out to groups of users and frontline workers by taking training to them, aiming to improve their capacity and encourage them to pass on the learning to friends and colleagues.

The project began in August 2008 and, following a set up period, delivery began in October 2008. Ten Citizens Advice Bureaux in the Northeast and Yorkshire and Humberside were recruited for the Pilot. Advisors were seconded from existing bureaux / FIF (Financial Inclusion Fund) caseworker or externally recruited on a full or part time basis.

The Pilot was originally intended to end in March 2009 but was extended to July 2009 pending a decision from BERR about a further extension. For various reasons five bureaux were unable to continue beyond March but the project continues in the remaining bureaux.

Project outputs

Up to the end of May 2009, Pilot bureaux had:

- Delivered 458 training events
- Trained staff from 111 service providers
- Trained 1,083 service users
- Trained 1,433 intermediaries (front line service delivery staff)
- Through the intermediaries, information reached an estimated 20,000 service users in the three months following their training and potentially more in the longer term.

Project outcomes

The main outcomes were:

- Intermediaries who were very/ fairly confident to support service users on financial issues increased from 48% to 94% following training
- Service users who were very/fairly confident in managing their finances increased from 60% to 89% following training
- The actions service users were most likely to take following training was to
 - Set up a budget
 - Change fuel supplier
 - Change how they borrow.

The training courses brought together a range of organisations working in an area providing an opportunity to share experiences and build links. The networking has contributed to improved referral arrangements and strengthened links with CABx specialist money advice services. It has also strengthened the ability of front line workers to offer a timely first response to people who need debt advice or financial capability support. .

Value for money

The unit cost per trainee including all costs was under £100, comparing favourably with a cost £105, excluding central costs, for a previous project in 2006.

When calculated to include the cascading of the training by the trained intermediaries to service users the unit cost was £11.

Over time, the unit cost would reduce with the initial investment in training and materials spread over a longer period. It is estimated that this could reduce the unit cost by up to 10%.

Calculating value for money more comprehensively would take into account other project outcomes, principally improved referral arrangements and the reported increase in referrals as a result of the training.

Lessons from the Pilot

The principal lessons from the Pilot are:

- Training 2500 service users and intermediaries and through the latter potentially reaching a further 20,000 service users is a significant achievement
- Intermediaries value the training and believe it will increase their capacity to support service users
- The use of staff from Citizens Advice Bureaux, who are skilled and experienced in debt and financial capability work, was a key success factor
- There are inherent difficulties in reaching service users particularly those who are not linked to existing groups of users or to support organisations and requires:
 - Longer time scales
 - An incremental approach, i.e. working out from small groups or individuals through 'word of mouth' contact and/or
 - Developing relationships with existing groups to build their confidence to discuss financial issues
- Both CABx and trainees have benefited from the wider networking opportunities opened up by the training
- For any similar future pilots a longer set up phase is needed allowing more time for transfer of roles, peer learning and support.

Recommendations

The current uncertainty about the continuation of the project or a definite end date is causing problems, as trainers are unsure of how far ahead they can commit themselves. In the meantime, there is an increasing demand for financial capability and debt advice that adds urgency to the need for a decision.

The FinCap Pilot has created a nucleus of skilled trainers who are meeting an identifiable demand and need for financial capability training for intermediaries from a wide range of services. Cascading knowledge to service users is likely to have a long-term impact on their financial capability. There is a strong case for continuing the training to reach other services and to maintain the knowledge of already trained intermediaries.

Our headline recommendations are to:

- Stage 1: Continue current training activity for a period sufficient to meet the current demand from intermediary workers and for bureaux to assess the level of longer term demand
- Stage 2: Assess the level of activity required to provide development training to ensure that services are kept up to date. For example:
 - Specific courses for new staff

- Periodic contact with trained services to identify new or emerging needs i.e. 'health checks'
- Courses on new topics or more in depth training as requested by services.
- Use the current core of trainers as a resource to assist other bureaux that wish to develop training in their own areas

Reaching and engaging service users directly may require a less target driven approach. Current methods of working through services to reach their users should be continued but reaching unattached service users may need a more ad hoc approach by exploiting opportunities as they arise and being equipped to respond.

Our recommendations are to:

- Continue to offer training to formal groups and encourage service providers to introduce such training
- Use the groups to identify means and methods to reach other members of their communities
- Build in to group training the opportunity for participants to have a one to one session after the event, either at that time or at an arranged time. (This will extend the time to be allowed for the event but it may encourage others to attend and help overcome an individual's reticence to discuss money issues in an open session)
- Consider alternatives to terms such as 'education' or 'training' or anything that is in anyway suggestive that people need extra help

Further recommendations are made in the report to address the internal management delivery issues.

Introduction

Project background

1. In 2008, Citizens Advice was funded by the Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR) to run a pilot project delivering training on a group and one to one basis for service users, and group training for front line workers supporting service users, who may be excluded from mainstream financial services
2. The emphasis on group training differentiated the project from a parallel project run by Capitalise, a London wide partnership including CABx, that focused on delivering financial capability support and advice as an integral part of debt advice and which is being separately evaluated.
3. The FinCap project (as it became known) sought to reach out to groups of users and frontline workers by taking training to them, aiming to improve their capacity and encourage them to pass on the learning to friends and colleagues.
4. Financial Inclusion Fund supported bureaux in Yorkshire, Humberside, and the north east were invited to participate in a pilot project to deliver financial capability training to individuals and groups of people within financially excluded groups and to front line workers in contact with them or supporting them.
5. The plan was to second on either a full or part time basis current FIF supported debt advisors to deliver the training. Ten bureaux volunteered to participate and, during July and August, the seconded advisors were trained in training delivery, use of training materials and marketing. During this period and up to the start of the Pilot in October 2008, FIF advisors began preparing and marketing the courses to local groups and individuals in their area.
6. The Pilot was initially planned to run from October 2008 to March 2009 inclusive but towards the end of the period agreement was reached to extend the Pilot to the end of July or possibly longer dependant a decision to be made in July informed by the independent evaluation.

Participating bureaux

Bradford

Grimsby – until end of March when staff member went on maternity leave

Gateshead – until end of March – pressure of debt work

Hull

Middlesbrough

Newcastle – Until end of March when staff member left, hoping to re-start when new staff member recruited

Redcar - until end of March – pressure of debt work

Sheffield - ditto

Stockton

Wansbeck.

Evaluation

7. The evaluation brief was to:
 - Measure the impact of the BERR funded Financial Capability Pilot being conducted through ten bureaux from July 2008 to July 2009;
 - Assess the experience of participating bureaux including the quality of support received from Citizens Advice and of the provided training materials.
8. Bob Widdowson, Research and Consultancy, was commissioned to carry out the evaluation. Because of uncertainty about the eventual length of the Pilot the start of the evaluation was delayed until April with a final report due in July 2009.
9. The methodology included interviews with bureaux staff, frontline workers and key staff within Citizens Advice as well as analysis of feedback data from training participants and bureaux returns. Interviews were semi structured using a topic guide that was sent to interviewees prior to the interview.
10. Two meetings were held with project staff; the first at an early stage in the evaluation and a second meeting to obtain feedback on an outline report.
11. Interviews were also conducted with service user participants but the numbers of those giving consent to contact by the evaluation team was low and making contact and arranging interviews has proved difficult.
12. However, a significant percentage completed feedback forms at the end of their training, which provided sufficient evidence to assess the impact of the training.

Project context

13. In 2007, the H.M. Treasury published *Financial capability: The Government's long term approach*, outlining the Government's approach to improving financial capability. A range of Government programmes is focused on improving financial capability, particularly to help those who are most vulnerable to the consequences of poor financial decisions.
14. The Government's aim is for consumers to play a more active role in the financial services market and to equip them to plan ahead, access information, and know when to seek advice. Citizens Advice has embarked on several initiatives to develop its financial capability work. It is committed to an objective that by 2010 all bureaux will be involved in delivery of financial education in their communities. In 2007, it helped establish 14 regional financial capability forums covering all of England and Wales. Bureaux or other community partners usually lead the forums which meet three or four times a year.
15. In 2008, 185 bureaux reported that they delivered financial skills projects in their communities to improve the financial skills of adults and young people, reaching a wide range of communities from ex-offenders to migrant workers. Bureaux work with a wide range of local partner agencies to reach learners and deliver effective programmes. These include agencies from the health, housing, social, community, training and education, regeneration and corporate sectors.

16. Many bureaux also provide financial skills training to front-line workers in other agencies, so they can better support their clients.

Meeting the targets

17. The Pilot's targets for the period October to March 2009 were for a full time equivalent (FTE) FIF worker to train:

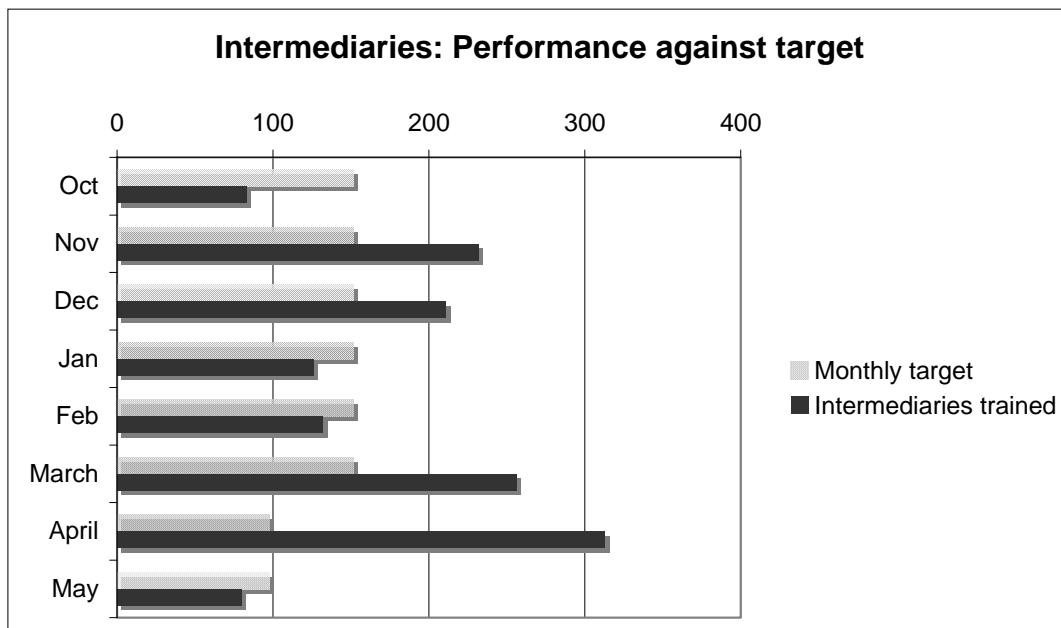
- 130 frontline staff (intermediaries) working with financially excluded groups.
- 200 service users within financially excluded groups

18. During this period, seven FTE (3 full time and 8 part time) advisers were seconded or recruited translating into an overall target of 1400 service users and 910 intermediaries. As the Pilot continued beyond March, the targets have been stretched although only five bureaux have continued beyond March seconding 4.5 FTE staff.

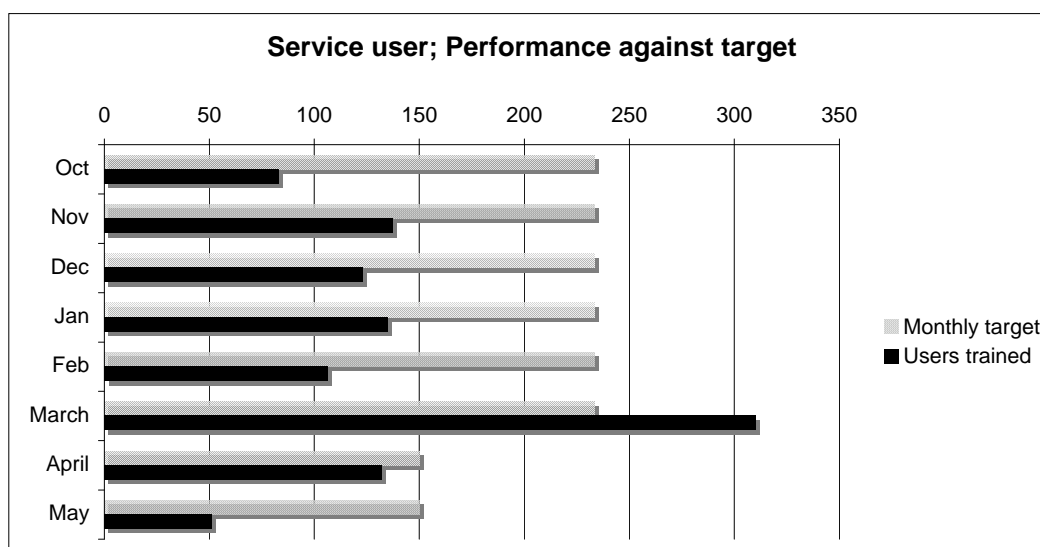
19. The table below illustrates the targets and outputs.

	FTE staff	Service user target	Number achieved	Intermediaries target	Number achieved
Oct- March	7	1400	894	910	1040
April - May	4.5	300	189	195	393
Total		1700	1083	1105	1433

20. Although not without its own difficulties, **the target for intermediaries was exceeded by 30%**. Looked at over the period it can be seen that the target has been exceeded in a number of months as shown below.



21. Training intermediaries, although taking time to set up, has proved popular and appears to have developed a market that is eager for more training. Some trainers reported an initial scepticism among some agencies about the need for and the value of such training but report that this was soon overcome.
22. Meeting service user targets has proved more difficult. Among the reasons to emerge from the evaluation are:
 - Poor take up of training opportunities by service users
 - Reliance on third parties to promote the training to service users
 - Additional time needed to develop contacts and promote the training to vulnerable groups often unconnected to existing services
 - Reluctance by service users to take part because of people thinking they are in debt
 - Insufficient time allowed in the Pilot to develop links with service users particularly those unconnected with an existing group e.g. Sure Start.
23. The limited time available for set up meant that in some bureaux training for service users did not get fully underway until the January – March period. Time was needed to market the Pilot, agree and arrange courses and to allow sufficient time for third parties hosting courses to recruit participants.
24. The chart below suggests that the investment of time began to produce results but not until the expected end of the Pilot in March. The momentum then slackened again due



to uncertainty over future funding.

25. Bureaux found that, if they were to meet the targets, working through existing groups rather than attempting to recruit individuals proved more productive. This may be a perverse effect of the targets in that often those most in need of training may not be connected to existing groups. They may only be reached over time by methodically building up a 'constituency' of users who would in turn promote the training to friends and neighbours by word of mouth, often the most effective form of publicity.
26. One trainer quoted the example of a course she ran in a local community centre-

Only 3 or 4 women turned up every week but they really got a lot out of the sessions. All of them told me that they had lost money through the Farepak collapse last year, that they had borrowed money from Shopcheck or Provident as a result and that they were now in debt. They told me that many people in the area won't seek help with their money problems because they are worried that they will be 'told off' for getting into debt or that the advisers would be 'stuck up'. Running the sessions enabled me to put across a different image of the CAB and re-assure them that debt advisers from the CAB are there to help.

As a result, some of them booked in for one-to-one debt advice sessions and they were going to tell their friends and neighbours about the help that is out there. They were really shocked about the APR rates of the doorstep lenders and before the sessions started, they didn't know what APR was or how loans worked. By the end of the 4 weeks, all of them had joined the local credit union, had opened a Christmas savings account and were adamant they were not going to borrow from the doorstep lenders again.

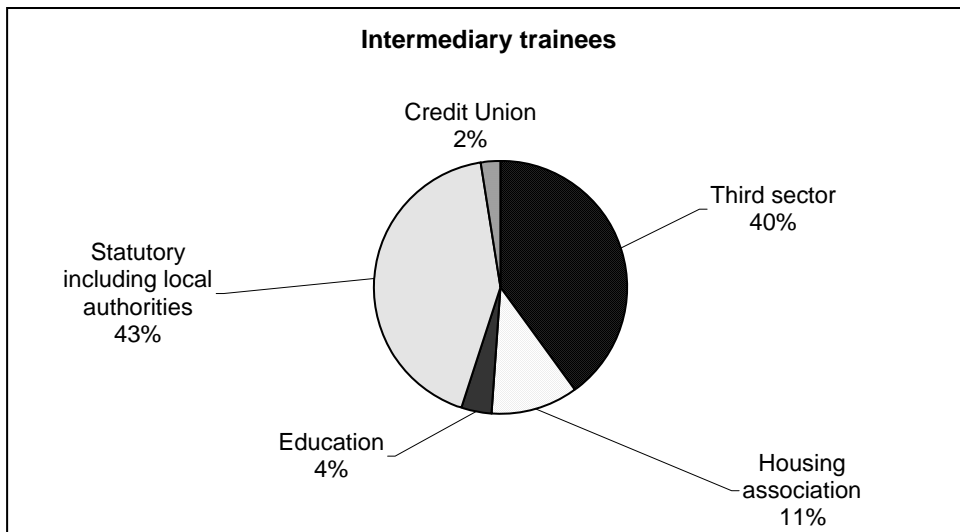
Trainee analysis

27. A total 458 training events for intermediaries and service users via one to one or group training have been held since October 2008 as shown below:

One to one service user training	220
Service user group training events	81
Intermediaries training events	157
Total training events	458
No of organisations attending training	111

Intermediaries

(Based on 716 feedback forms)



Organisations

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Advice services | Housing support services |
| Carer support | Job Centre Plus |
| Childrens Centres | Learning disability services |
| Credit unions | Parent support |
| Education welfare | Prison services |
| Employment support | Probation Services |
| Energy advice | Refugee groups |
| Foyer | Services for older people |
| Housing associations | Tenants Support |
| Housing management organisations | |

Service users

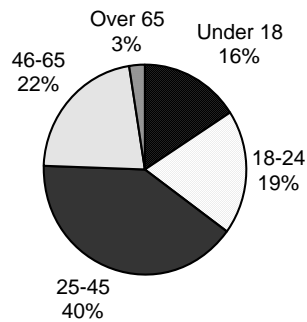
(Based on 492 feedback forms)

Gender

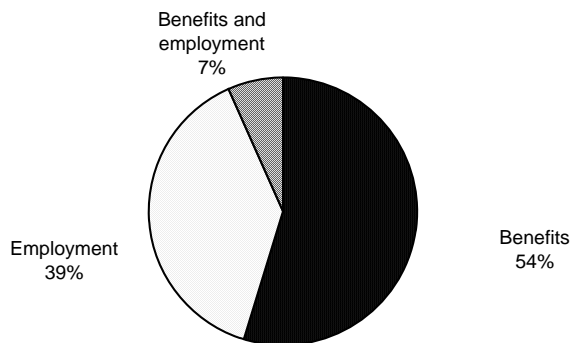
Male – 41%

Female - 59%

Service user: Age profile



Income source (Base: 350)



Ethnicity

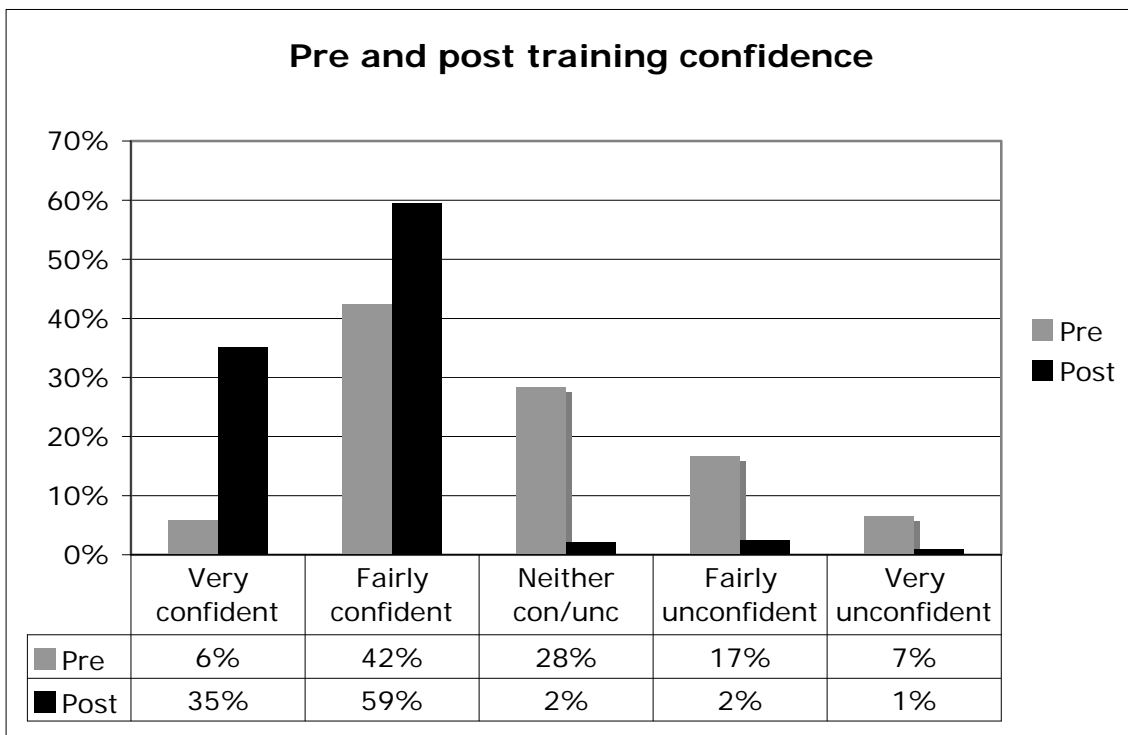
African	6%
Indian	6%
Other	6%
Pakistani	3%
White & Asian	1%
White British	78%

Measuring the impact

28. At the end of the training session, participants were asked to complete a feedback form giving their assessment of the impact of the course and how they would use the information gained. The form also allowed them to indicate consent to further contact by the evaluators by providing contact details.
29. The evaluation team analysed 716 feedback forms (50%) from intermediaries and 492 (46%) from service users –overall a good return rate from both groups of trainees. Follow up interviews were held with 20 intermediaries and 26 service users.

Intermediaries

30. Participants were asked to rate their confidence in supporting service users on financial issues before and after the training. **The results show a dramatic increase in confidence, with those who were very or fairly confident increasing from 48% to 94%, an increase of 95%, as shown below:**

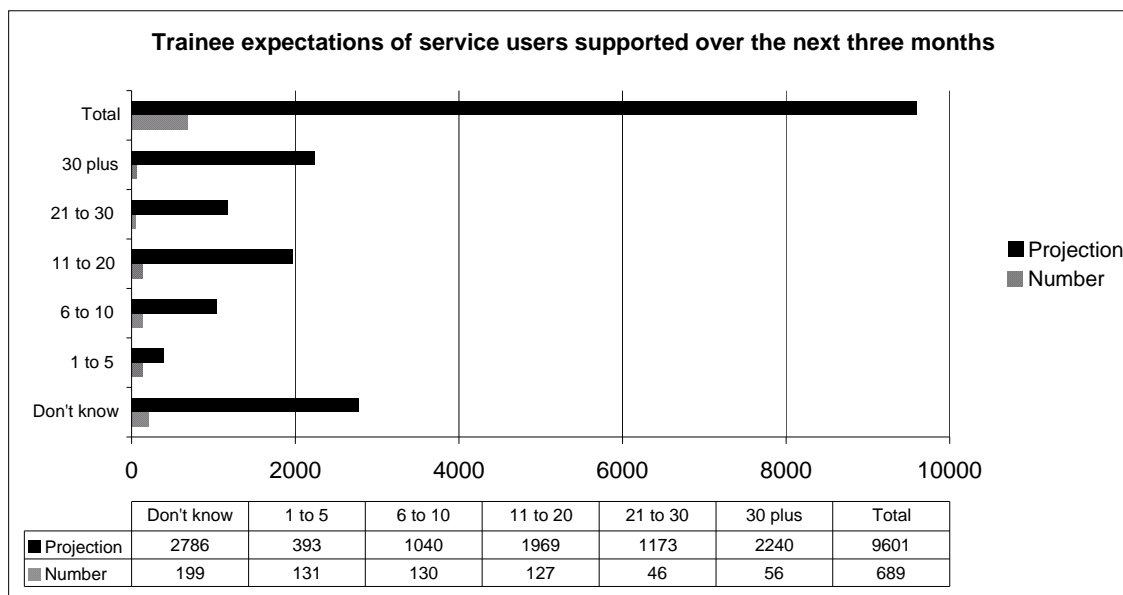


31. Intermediaries were also asked how many of their users they expected to be better able to support over the three months following the training. The options given were:

- 1 to 5
- 6 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30

- 30 plus
- Don't know

32. The following projection is based on:
- Taking a median point for each category except for 30 plus and the 'don't knows'
 - Using a notional figure of 40 for the '30 plus' category
 - Using the average of all other categories -14- for the 'don't knows'



33. **In the three months immediately following their training, the number of service users intermediaries completing feedback forms expected to support was 9601, an average of 14 per intermediary. Calculating this across all intermediaries trained (1433), the projected total would be just under 20,000.**
34. Over a full year, the numbers would be much higher. Using a conservative estimate by simply doubling the numbers the total would be closer to 40,000 with an individual ratio of 1:28
35. Citizens Advice's working assumption, based on other projects, of a 1:15 ratio is fully supported by this finding and in relation to longer term impact is could well be too moderate.
36. In addition, 95% said they would definitely or probably share the information they had gained with colleagues. Although unquantifiable, this gives strongly indicates a reach well beyond the quantifiable total and would also suggest that the ratio is greater than Citizens Advice' assumption.
37. Taking the training to organisations with the opportunity for colleagues to learn together was also beneficial.

CAB provided three training sessions for more than 80 Neighbourhood Housing Officers on 'Helping your clients get debt advice', 'Helping your clients keep track of money' and 'Helping your clients get to grips with credit, saving and banking'. The staff that attended work predominantly in the most deprived areas of the city and deal regularly with tenants who have rent arrears. Some the workers were sceptical at the outset of the sessions, having the view that people on benefit have it easy, with comments like 'they don't pay their rent but they all have big flat screen TVs!'

However, by the end of the 3 sessions, many of them said they now had a better understanding of why their tenants fall behind with their bills, how they could help tenants draw up a realistic budget and pass on tips relating to borrowing and money saving. Many of them said that they would try and pass on as much information to their tenants as they could and that they had also found the sessions personally useful. The FIF Project has also seen an increase in the number of referrals from the housing officers as a result.

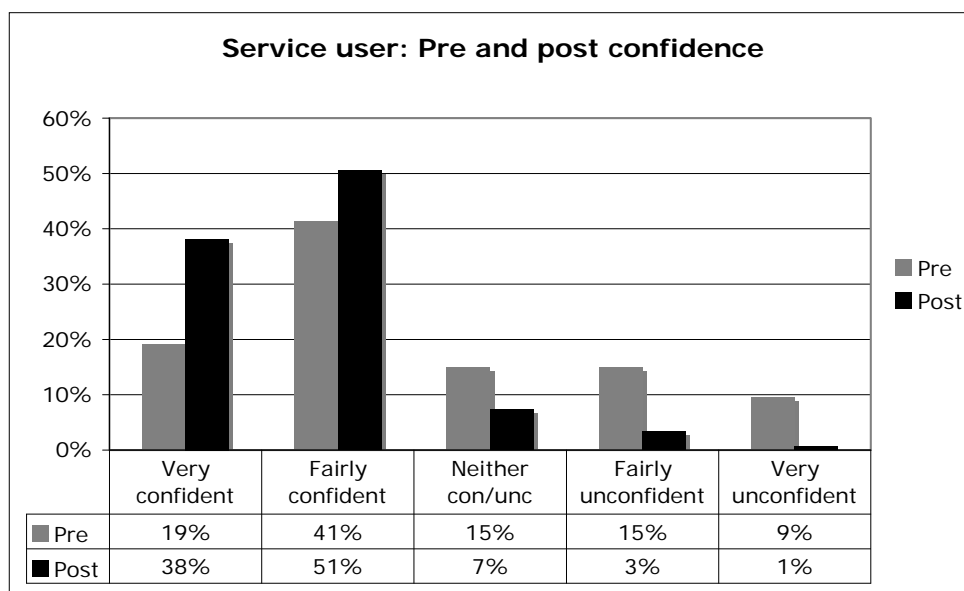
38. The local authority's Training Manager said the courses were very popular and the results were already having an impact on rent arrears – *"housing officers can more easily identify sources of help and now work in partnership with tenants to resolve problems"*. He said that he is regularly required to assess the impact of training and quantify the benefits but *'this one was easy (to assess). I wish they were all like this'*.
39. It is reasonable to conclude that the training has proved effective in increasing confidence and that the learning will be taken back into organisations to assist the organisations' users.
40. **The evaluation interviews identified other outcomes, principally the value of the training in developing links between services and improving understanding of the work of bureaux.**
41. The training courses brought together a range of organisations working in an area and provide an opportunity to share experiences and build links. The networking benefit was mentioned by a number of respondents as a major outcome from the events.
42. The CAB trainers also identified this benefit. For example, one said that he had made contact with many organisations he had no prior knowledge of. The reality of day to work within his bureau meant there was little time or resource to develop networks. The Pilot had established new links with the result that the bureau was now getting referrals through agreed arrangements rather than, as before, agencies simply sending people to them without appointment and the client having to spend time waiting to be seen. This improvement in referral arrangements was, he thought, a key outcome of the Pilot.
43. **Secondly, the opportunity to meet with CABx trainers and hear about the range of bureaux services and the specialist help they could offer was welcomed by many intermediary respondents.** Several said that the best way they could help their clients was by effective signposting - *'we need to know whom we can refer to and what they are offering'*.
44. An Age Concern service arranged three courses for its staff. The manager said that her staff would not and could not be debt advisors but they needed the skills to gather the right information to make effective referrals. The training brought a better understanding of the processes of debt advice and the necessary information they should gather from

a client to improve referral practice. She said it was important to trust an organisation before they referred someone to it and the training helped to build that trust.

45. Her comments were echoed by many other respondents and underline an important lesson about the value of the training, which is that its principal benefit may not be to transfer skills but to raise awareness. The intermediaries could not or would not want to replace the advice offered by CABx by offering it directly. For many it would be beyond their job remit, while others were cautious about crossing a line into advice, for example insurance implications, and were aware of the dangers of straying into specialist advice.
46. Raising awareness of financial issues and of when and who to refer to for help builds capacity and strengthens the infrastructure of effective money advice. Improved referrals directly benefits service users, helps to focus the work of specialist services such as FIF workers and strengthens the ability of front line workers to offer a first response.
47. This will contribute to the objective set in H.M. Treasury's Financial Inclusion Action Plan 2008-2011 that 'The Government's goal is that everyone should have the information, support and confidence they need to prevent avoidable financial difficulty, and to know where to turn if they do find themselves in financial distress.'

Service users

48. As with intermediaries, service users were also asked to rate their confidence in managing their finances before and after the training. Feedback was received from 454 service users. **The chart below again shows a significant increase in confidence with those who were very or fairly confident increasing from 60% to 89%, with a 100% increase in the numbers who were very confident.**

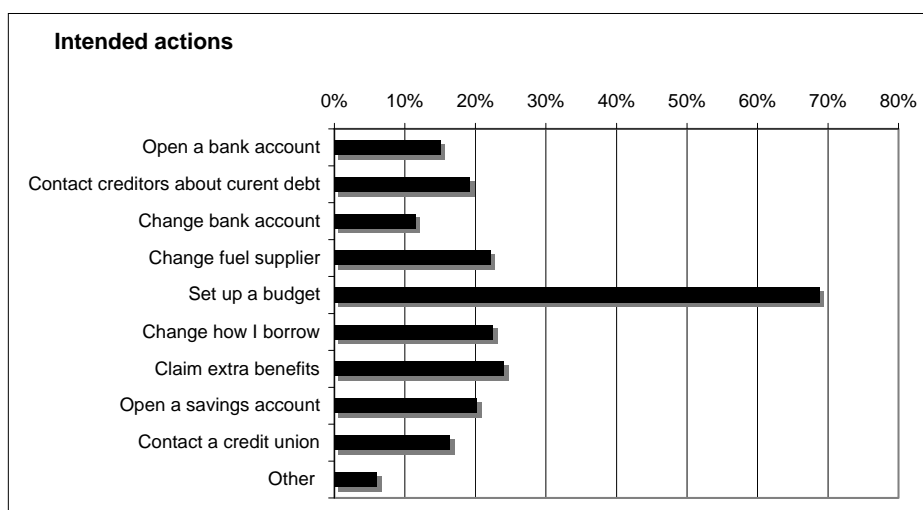


49. Although significant, the increase is less dramatic than that for intermediaries for which there is no clear explanation but it is important to note that the assessment is not objective but self assessed. Also, the majority of service users were part of an existing

group and consequently may be better informed, because of the support to the group, than unattached users.

50. Service users were also asked to indicate what actions they were likely to take following the training. The feedback form gave a list of options from which the user could select any number. Over 90% of users, completing the form indicated one or more actions they intended to take. **The chart below shows that setting up a budget was the most selected action with other options evenly spread.** Some comments included:

I will set up a Xmas savings account
I will think before borrowing from now on
I am now much more aware of priority debts
Never get a credit card!



51. Evaluators sought to test the actions through interviews with those who agreed to further contact. Experience has shown that actions may not immediately follow such interventions but may happen over a longer period. Therefore, a key question was to ask if there was any action they had taken or failed to take in the past they would not now do as a result of the training.

52. Among the responses received were:

I would apply for working tax credits
Yes, get in contact with the bailiffs
I would have looked at combining utilities sooner to get dual fuel benefits

53. Feedback forms were received from 492 service users (46% of the total) of whom 64 (13%) agreed to further contact. However making contact proved problematic. Users were asked to provide contact phone numbers and/or email addresses. Almost 30% proved to be redundant by the time contact was attempted. Of the remaining 46 users, 26 were successfully contacted either over the 'phone, or where that failed by email. Email contacts were sent a short questionnaire for them to complete and five responded by this means. The balance did not respond to messages left (up to 3 or 4) or emails sent.

54. The methodology for getting feedback needs to be reviewed. Very few users gave landline numbers but instead relied on mobile phones and email address both of which have a high 'churn rate'.
55. The results from such a small sample can only be indicative.
 - Most found the training beneficial particularly on budgeting and priority debts
 - A half said they would take different actions than in the past e.g. confront a problem earlier
 - A half said they had taken some action as a result e.g. budgeting
 - Three quarters said they would pass on the information to family and friends
 - Most were lukewarm about further training preferring to consider the information they already had before making further commitments.
56. The overall impression from the interviews is that although most thought the training was beneficial and appreciated it, their level of interest in learning more was not high.
57. The majority of service users were trained as part of an existing group with CAB training often delivered as one amongst a number of other training events. For example, one CAB trainer was asked to do a session for a group of young people who were on a two-week training course. She said, 'As part of a programme that includes rock climbing and abseiling, an afternoon of budgeting exercises didn't seem like the most exciting prospect to some of the young people and some were initially reluctant to get involved'.
58. Perhaps for this reason many service users contacted found it difficult to recall the training with any clarity or to identify the impact it may have had. Any impact beyond implanting some thoughts for later germination may need to be assessed over a longer period than this Pilot allows.
59. Another factor was the feedback form was in some cases completed by service users with learning disabilities and refugees/ migrant workers with poor English language skills. Using other techniques rather than feedback forms should be considered. One suggestion was that advocacy workers could be asked to assist with feedback from people with learning disabilities.
60. Several Intermediaries cited the difficulties of covering financial issues with users as a group. A childrens centre worker felt that groups needed to be well established for its members to be confident enough to discuss financial issues. Others said that the training can at first sight be thought condescending or, if it is someone else's decision that an individual attends the session, e.g. training for the job seekers, and the trainee feels under an obligation, it may lessen their commitment to the learning.
61. Reaching out to users is essential but most trainers expressed the view that it was a lengthier process than this Pilot allowed. It required a developmental approach building on work with individuals or small groups to roll out to others – similar to the concept of community champions.
62. One bureau manager felt that it might be more successful if it was an integral part of the FIF debt workers role by allowing time to offer one to one training consequent to their

63. Reaching service users particularly those who are not already in contact with services is obviously a challenge. Bureaux and intermediaries felt that raising the awareness of intermediaries had made a good start and this would inevitably impact on service users over time, but was very difficult to measure at this stage.
64. It is also important to recognise that many people in the target group are have other vulnerabilites, e.g. learning disabilities or those with poor English language skills. While bureaux trainers have successfully reached a number of these groups through the Pilot, considerable investment of time and effort will be needed to meet the challenge these groups present.

Delivering the Pilot

Set up

65. **Bureaux staff were almost unanimous in their view that insufficient time had been allowed for marketing and developing the Pilot.** In some cases, the delivery phase did not get fully underway until the later stages of the Pilot because of the need to generate publicity materials, promote the training and get it timetabled by partner organisations. The timing of the set up phase coinciding with the summer holiday season added to the difficulty.
66. One initial problem was disengaging staff from their existing debt advice caseload, as some longer-term clients were reluctant to see another advisor. Also, although days were allotted during the set-up phase most were taken up with training. This left little time for marketing and development. The FIF workers' targets for their debt work did not begin to be reduced until September.
67. The FinCap targets were applied in full from October and some trainers felt that a lead in phase with reduced targets would have allowed more time for development, and sharing the development of training and publicity materials. This might have helped those bureaux that were struggling to keep up. It would also have given more opportunity for bureaux to feedback on materials.
68. The response to the marketing training was mixed. Some felt it was too generalised and not tailored to the trainers' local circumstances or experience and some trainers questioned the feasibility of applying marketing techniques to a subject such as financial capability. The concept is little understood and is frequently interpreted as relating to debt issues. Using terms such as 'education' or 'training' can also have a negative effect. Once again, the developmental approach was thought to be the most effective means of promotion.
69. Some trainers complained that the lack of centrally provided publicity material had handicapped the Pilot at the start. Bureaux developed their own material, which some felt was wasted duplicate effort. In fact, templates were provided during the induction training but in the haste to set up the project these may have been overlooked.

Support

70. **Some bureaux staff felt that the lines of communication were confusing.** Although there is a FinCap team responsible for the Pilot, they felt unsure about the divisions of responsibility and who should be contacted about a particular issue. Also, FIF workers, some of whom were part time on the FinCap Pilot, had separate lines of communication on FIF issues to the separate FIF programme support team at Citizens Advice
71. Some trainers looked for support internally adding to the pressure on bureaux managers who were also involved in other initiatives such as the launch of the Money Guidance Pathfinder and dealing with the growth in recession-driven debt enquires that coincided with the Pilot.

72. The compressed time for set up, trainers' need to acquire new skills at the same time as having to balance or disengage from existing casework and the pressure to meet targets from day one of the project inevitably exposed gaps in support. Also, the trainers, in most cases, were working at a distance from other colleagues in the Pilot, which presented its own challenges in communicating across a diverse group.
73. Another factor was that the trainers with few exceptions were working on the Pilot in isolation from other staff within their bureaux making the need for external support more vital.
74. The Pilot's short time-scale made it difficult to weld the trainers into a team that could be largely self-supporting through sharing materials and good practice. While efforts were made to equip trainers, by providing them with the necessary skills and tools, including appointing a 'mentor' to assist individual trainers, they were not wholly effective.
75. For its part, Citizens Advice produced an induction briefing, contact information and other support material at the outset of the Pilot and opportunities were regularly available through meetings of the Pilot bureaux organised by Citizens Advice and the financial capability forums for information sharing and learning.
76. One reason for the confusion could be that it was too much, too quickly. The staff were mostly new to training and marketing and were having to disengage relatively quickly from their work as FIF advisors. The short set up time relied too heavily on marketing to meet targets when a more phased approach with graduated targets allowing trainers to make personal approaches to potential trainees' organisations might have been more effective.
77. The 'mentor' role, while useful, lacked capacity being available only one day per week to cover ten bureaux across a region. During the set up phase, the project might have benefited from more support for the potential trainers and bureaux managers that was less reliant on distant communication by phone or email.
78. **If the Pilot is to continue, Citizens Advice should review its support and management arrangements, taking account of the experience of the Pilot, to increase the capacity to support the bureaux and the trainers.**

Training materials

79. **The training materials provided centrally by Citizens Advice were well received and feedback from trainees was very positive.** Some trainers adapted the materials according to the type of group they were using them with. In adapting them for different abilities, they had to tread a fine line between the material being too basic for some individuals or groups or too complex for others.
80. This experience should be drawn on for their future development particularly in relation to different ability groups such as those with learning disabilities or people with poor literacy and numeracy skills. In discussion with trainers, it was felt that specific training on how to work with particular groups would be beneficial.
81. Several trainers felt that although the content was good the quality of design and appearance could be improved to present a more professional image.

Training delivery

82. **The trainers commended the training given during the set up phase to provide them with training skills and the quality of the training they subsequently gave was evident in the feedback from trainees.**
83. Comments included:
- *Well presented and in plain English*
 - *Excellent presentation Course was useful and materials were the best ever given out on a training course*
 - *Feel able to signpost families to services that can help them*
 - *Very good. Easy to follow with good information and the pack was very helpful. A good mix of fun and active learning.*
 - *I have never had training as good as this before – it has given staff an insight into what can be done to help people in debt.*
 - *I go on a lot of training but this was much better. It was practical and directly helpful.*
84. Several interviewees commented that the strength of the training was its delivery by experienced debt advisors who brought a breadth of experience to the subject. They felt their use of anecdotal material drawn from experience added authority to the training.
85. **Feedback from trainers and through the evaluation interviews suggests a surprisingly low level of awareness even amongst professional staff.** Several interviewees said they had benefited personally from the training. For many it was the first financial education training they have had.
86. The fact that it was free training was a positive incentive. Many beneficiaries were charities and as one said ‘we do not have the resources to access training at a high level, we always need access to free or low cost training’. Also, free training may have brought in organisations that might not otherwise have prioritised such training. One interviewee said that although free training was not an overriding factor it did encourage her management to support it.
87. All of the intermediaries interviewed endorsed the need for the training. It raised their awareness of financial issues but beyond that, it gave them extra tools to support to their clients. *‘It was good to learn about ways to pay off debts. It will reduce my need to refer clients and will enable me to provide a first response. I am now more confident to do this’.*
88. This comment underlines an important point. Such training cannot, and in many cases should not, seek to transform intermediaries into skilled advisors but instead equip them with adequate diagnostic skills to give a first response and to work with the client to secure appropriate advice and help. A parent support advisor said that many of the cases she encountered were at crisis stage but the training *‘has given me the confidence to do an initial response’.*

89. This will extend the reach of specialist services such as CABx and hopefully enable earlier identification of problems before they reach crisis point. Several Pilot bureaux reported an increase in referrals resulting from the training.
90. It may also better focus the attention of organisations on what they can contribute to tackling financial exclusion whether through improved partnership working or building up their own internal capability.
91. Several trainers identified a problem of 'no-shows' or late cancellations as a particular frustration. Some trainers have overbooked courses to allow for cancellations. One trainer said that in one month she had five courses cancelled and was over booking to ensure that her time was fully utilised.
92. One suggestion was that a cancellation fee could be imposed on partner organisations to alleviate the problem. This could tarnish the attraction of free training and may make some organisation nervous of committing to training for fear of incurring penalties. One option would be to formalise arrangements by asking partner organisation to sign a written agreement that includes terms such as a minimum notice period of cancellation.
93. Prior to the training event, say a week, organisations could be asked to confirm the events time and place, the number of participants and any special needs. This will add to administration but hopefully be balanced by savings in time lost through cancellations.

Current position

94. The Pilot was originally due to end in March 2009 but has now been extended until at least July pending a decision on a possible extension. Inevitably, this has led to uncertainty and, although some bureaux are booking courses beyond this date, others are limiting future bookings until the situation is clearer.
95. The end of March also saw several of the original bureaux end their participation. Two withdrew because staff had left, one because the staff member began maternity leave, and two to meet increasing pressure from debt work. However, most wish to continue if resources become available as they strongly support the concept. One bureau said that they would restart once a replacement staff member was in post.
96. The lifetime of the Pilot has coincided with a dramatic climb in debt enquires possibly related to the recession. One bureau manager said they were now getting 55 new debt cases a week, with average multiple debts of between £15-17,000, a third more than a year ago. The pressure on bureaux is growing and it is understandable if they feel the need to commit their existing resources to meeting that pressure at the expense of preventative work.
97. **The 'stop/start' nature of the Pilot has hampered forward planning.** With no decision on any extension beyond July 2009 and with the summer holiday period looming the Pilot is inevitably winding down. Therefore, any further extension will need to take account of this by allowing some bureaux time to restart.
98. **The overwhelming wish expressed by intermediaries was for more training of this kind.** They value the increased ability it gives them to support their users. The Pilot has set in train an increased awareness among intermediaries that has already led to

Value for money

99. Citizens Advice assessed the cost of the project to the end of May as £250,000. The figure comprises bureaux costs (£220,000) and central costs e.g., training and support, (£30,000).
100. The total number of people trained – users and intermediaries – was 2516, **a unit cost of under £100 per person directly trained.**
101. If the numbers directly trained are added to the numbers of service users projected to be supported by trained intermediaries - 20,000 – a total of 22,516, **the overall unit cost is £11.**
102. Evaluation of a previous project¹, which ran for three years calculated a unit cost of £105 *excluding* central costs for direct training. **The Pilot's unit cost of under £100 per trainee including central costs compares very well.**
103. Over time, the unit cost would reduce with the initial investment in training and materials spread over a longer period. It is estimated that this could reduce the unit cost by up to 10%.
104. Value for money cannot be judged solely by unit cost. A more detailed analysis would need to take account of other project outcomes principally improved referral arrangements and the reported increase in referrals as a result of the training. If the training has resulted in earlier interventions and improved opportunities to tackle or prevent crisis debt, there is obviously a consequent cost benefit in efficiency and effectiveness, which can be measured over time.

¹ Evaluation of the Citizens Advice National Financial Capability Project. Ecotec. 2006

Lessons from the Pilot

105. The Pilot was a short-term project, which commonly presents difficulties of commitment and investment of effort. It depended on advisers new to training who sought to reach out to groups with often a limited awareness of the subject. In eight months, it has trained 2500 service users and intermediaries and through the latter has reached a projected **20,000 service users and potentially at least 40,000 over a full year.**

106. From a standing start, by any measure this is a major achievement. The lessons that emerge are:

- a. CABx have demonstrated a capacity to deliver training that is:
 - i. High calibre
 - ii. Meeting a market need and
 - iii. Will impact on service users
- b. Intermediaries value the training and believe it will increase their capacity to support service users
- c. The use of staff within CABx, where there is a significant skill and experience in debt advice, was a key success factor and was valued by trainees
- d. The training materials have been well received by both trainers and trainees
- e. The experience of using the materials and adapting them for specific circumstances should be drawn on for their future development particularly in relation to different ability groups such as those with learning disabilities or people with poor literacy and numeracy skills
- f. There are inherent difficulties in reaching service users particularly those who are not linked to existing groups of users or to support organisations and those with additional needs, e.g. learning disabilities or poor English language skills.
- g. Development of financial capability training for service users requires:
 - i. Longer time scales
 - ii. An incremental approach, i.e. working out from small groups or individuals through 'word of mouth' contact and/or
 - iii. Developing relationships with existing groups to encourage confidence to discuss financial issues
- h. For any similar future pilots the set up phase needs to be longer to allow for transition and peer learning and should include increased capacity to support bureaux and trainers.
- i. One off training raises questions of sustainability. Intermediaries have indicated a need for continued updating and 'refreshers' and also for further training on other topics and to explore some issues in more depth, e.g. utility costs and prioritising debts.

- j. Procedures for minimising late cancellation of training events need to be considered
- k. The introduction of targets should be incremental rather than imposed from day one to allow for build up
- l. The Pilot has shown that a wide variety of services and organisations can benefit from financial capability training
- m. Both CABx and trainees have benefited from the wider networking opportunities opened up by the training
- n. The majority of front line agencies are not seeking or able to offer detailed financial capability advice but see the main benefits of the training building their capacity to offer a 'first response' and more effective signposting
- o. The training has identified a low level of awareness about many financial capability issues e.g., APR, credit unions, prioritising debt and utilities
- p. 'Free' training is a positive incentive to participation
- q. Training of intermediaries is an effective method of disseminating information.
- r. Financial capability training for adults is not readily available from other sources

107. Both trainers and intermediaries were convinced of the continued need for the training with a number of interviewees asking for regular updates or refresher courses and, of course, training for new staff. There were also suggestions for other topics such as tax, insurance and the financial aspects of relationship break up.

108. However, service users appeared less enthusiastic about further training. Admittedly, this is based on a small sample of interviewees but the low take up of courses experienced by a number of bureaux and the shortfall in meeting the target lends some weight to this conclusion.

109. Also, there may be resistance from service users to 'training' or education' sessions because they deem them to be patronising or implying they have a need which they don't accept. One interviewee said "I need money, not training!"

110. Getting service users to recognise the value of training is a challenge needing, perhaps, an incremental approach taking small steps over a longer period and not driven by short-term targets. Citizens Advice Bureaux can play a key role because of their presence and reputation within nearly every community but need to have the resource to commit to preventative strategies.

111. The current uncertainty about the continuation of the project or a definite end date is causing problems, as trainers are unsure of how far ahead they can commit themselves. In the meantime, there is an increasing need for debt advice that adds urgency to the need for a decision.

112. If the Pilot is to continue, the impact on bureaux' ability to meet debt advice demands will need addressing.

Recommendations

Headline recommendations

1. The FinCap Pilot has created a nucleus of skilled trainers who are meeting an identifiable demand and need for financial capability training for intermediaries in a wide range of services. Cascading knowledge to service users is likely to have a long-term impact on their financial capability. There is a strong case for continuing the training to reach other services and to maintain the knowledge of already trained intermediaries.

Our recommendations are to:

- **Stage 1:** Continue current training activity for a period sufficient to meet the current demand from intermediary workers and for bureaux to assess the level of longer term demand
 - **Stage 2:** Assess the level of activity required to provide development training to ensure that services are kept up to date. For example by
 - Specific courses for new staff
 - Periodic contact with trained services to identify new or emerging needs i.e. 'health checks'
 - Courses on new topics or more in depth training as requested by services
 - Use the current core of trainers as a resource to assist other bureaux that wish to develop training in their own areas
2. Reaching and engaging service users directly may require a less target driven approach. Current methods of working through services to reach service users should be continued but reaching unattached service users may need a more ad hoc approach exploiting opportunities as they arise and being equipped to respond.

Our recommendations are to:

- Continue to offer training to formal groups and encourage service providers to introduce such training
- Use the groups to identify means and methods to reach other members of their communities
- Build in to group training the opportunity for participants to have a one-to-one session after the event, either at that time or at an arranged time. (This will extend the time to be allowed for the event but it may encourage others to attend and overcome an individual's reticence to discuss money issues in an open session)
- Consider alternatives to terms such as 'education' or 'training' or anything that is in anyway suggestive that people need extra help

Other recommendations

Targets

3. Targets should be based on a realistic expectation by the staff required to deliver the project of what they can achieve i.e. bottom up and not top down.
4. Targets should be re-assessed at key stages of a project and revised if they prove impractical or insufficiently ambitious
5. The basis for targets should be clearly explained to delivery staff
6. Targets should be graduated for an agreed implementation stage e.g. the first two months

Set up

7. Projects should be given adequate set up time that allows for:
 - Staff to transfer to new roles
 - Training and support
 - Peer learning i.e. sharing experience, ideas, and problems
 - Development and production of delivery tools
8. Map risk to the project's success and develop responses

Management and communication

9. Regularly reinforce staff briefings and project messages that, for example:
 - Tell staff who to contact about what
 - Set out key stages in the project and when staff will receive updates
 - Give a schedule of meetings throughout the project
 - Set out frequency and mechanisms for reporting

Project delivery

10. To minimise last minute cancellations, agreements to provide training to a partner organisation should be formalised with a simple written agreement to include minimum notice periods for cancellation
11. A reminder notice should be sent one week prior to the training asking the organisation to confirm the training date and location, number of participants and any special needs within the group.
12. Trainers should be given specialist training on working with special needs groups such as those with learning disabilities or low English language skills

Monitoring and evaluation

13. Self assessments forms for feedback after training should include the subject and date of the training
14. More regular monitoring (monthly) would improve management information particularly in signalling risk.
15. Monitoring forms should record course subjects, delivery partners, cancelled courses and reasons.
16. The impact of training for service users can only be measured over a longer time scale. Given the problems of contact information decay a limited assessment may only be possible perhaps by concentrating on a core group of user who have indicated a willingness for future contact. User data collected for this and other similar projects might be used for a separate study to assess long-term impact.