

Money Talks

Evaluating life-events focused money guidance

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Funded by



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Executive summary

Project summary

- We tested a life-event focused money guidance service for working-age people. This was delivered at scale across Wales in local communities (outside the workplace), reaching more than 1,800 clients between May-December 2017.
- This involved delivering one-to-one money guidance support to individuals experiencing a change in their health circumstance, their employment or a breakdown in relationship. Clients have been referred into the service from external partner organisations and other local Citizens Advice.
- Our intervention was offered in two-parts, over the course of 2-4 weeks, primarily delivered face-to-face but also by telephone.
- This is the first time life-events focused guidance has been tested at scale in the UK.

Summary of evaluation approach

- We are looking to understand whether delivering life-event tailored financial capability support to clients that are experiencing a life event (either a health issue, relationship breakdown or change in employment circumstance) is more effective at improving financial capability than face to face advice alone (not delivering life event focused financial capability support), and what works when testing and delivering this at scale.
- Our research combines both outcomes and process evaluation - and where possible, looks at impact evaluation. This ensures we capture details of any changes we make to individuals' financial capability, but also have the ability to understand how and why this is achieved.
- We have carried out baseline and follow-up outcomes research with Citizens Advice clients who did not receive the life-event focused financial capability intervention (comparison group) to compare to our Money Talks intervention (treatment group). The treatment group had 1,336 baseline surveys and 664 follow ups. The comparison group contained 3,273 baselines and 165 follow ups.¹
- We've decided on this approach having exhausted other comparison group options and considering the ethical implications. We have carefully considered our methodology to ensure our approach is valid.
- Our evaluation is being delivered by our in-house impact and evaluation team, with guidance from our Evaluation Learning Partner, Ipsos MORI.

Outcomes measured

- Clients engaged in financial capability support (MAS Outcomes: Accessibility and motivation)
- Improved financial capability across Citizens Advice measures: keeping track of money; controlled spending; having enough money to live; planning ahead with money; looking for the best deals; and staying informed about money services. (MAS Outcomes: including, ability to live adequately within their means, managing well day-to-day).
- Improved client confidence in taking action on money matters, also a Citizens Advice

¹The fact that for each group, the same cohort of people is assessed at baseline and follow up, gives the analysis more statistical power than if the analysis had been comparing two different groups of people at baseline and follow up.

- financial capability measure (MAS Outcomes: Financial attitudes and motivations)
- Wider benefits to client as a result of financial capability support
- Sustained improved client financial capability (where possible)

Key findings:

Money Talks was more effective at improving people's financial capability than the comparator (face to face advice). When clients' financial capability scores were tracked from baseline to follow up, changes in scores were statistically significantly greater for Money Talks clients than they were for the comparison group². This was the case across all financial capability measures. Our statistical analysis shows that the most important and influential driving factor behind changes in scores was whether someone was in the Money Talks group or the comparison group³.

Most Money Talks clients reported a positive change in their financial capability. When changes in financial capability scores across all measures were aggregated for each client, 74% had a net positive change in their financial capability⁴. Average financial capability scores increased significantly in every financial capability area in the Money Talks group, but the most pronounced changes were reported in supporting areas of financial capability⁵. The areas with the greatest increases were staying informed about money services and confidence - this is particularly important given that these areas were identified as key areas of need for clients at baseline.

A significant change was observed in Money Talks clients' wellbeing - average wellbeing scores increased from 4.6 to 5.9 on the ONS personal wellbeing scale of 0-10. These changes were also significantly greater than changes observed in the comparison group.

Our evidence would suggest that for the treatment group supported by Money Talks that it delivered improvements and was viewed as an effective and worthwhile service. It has been delivered to 86% of target figures and reached its intended audience, with 98% of clients were experiencing at least one of our three chosen life events. Configuring the service to be life-focused has taken ongoing work with referral partners to embed the service and ensure appropriate referrals. A focus on listening and empathy has emerged as an important component of delivery, alongside relevant information and subject-knowledge. While the service has been delivered in two sessions, this may not be required by all clients. Instead the service could be re-structured to deliver the number of sessions people actually require and will engage with, while retaining the option for further contact. In the future, broadening our

² Calculated using wilcoxon rank tests - comparing the changes in scores of Money Talks clients and comparison clients.

³ We ran maximal regression models on each of the 13 areas of financial capability, looking at changes in financial capability scores by age, gender, ethnicity, health status and group (treatment or comparison). The most significant driving factor behind people's changes in scores was whether they were in the treatment or comparison group.

⁴ 5% had no overall change, and 20% of clients recorded a negative change. Where there were negative changes, they were likely to be marginal. Just 2% of clients had an overall negative change exceeding -1, as opposed to 34% of clients who saw a positive change of more than +1 on the 7 point scale.

⁵ By core areas of financial capability, we mean the areas that are important for day to day money management - for example keeping track of ingoings and outgoings, controlling spending, and having enough money to cover the basics needed to live. Supporting areas of financial capability are slightly more long term in focus, for example staying informed about money services, planning ahead with money and looking for the best deals.

referral criteria to a broader range of life events, may better reflect the actuality of people's circumstances and widen take-up, while retaining the benefits of delivering a personalised service.

Summary of considerations of methodological limitations, relevance, transferability and replicability

- During the course of delivering Money Talks, we have continually considered whether our evaluation is generating the necessary data required to draw conclusions.
- On balance, the evaluation approach that we have adopted has been proportionate and delivered useful findings, with learnings for the future.
- Using a quasi-experimental method as an alternative to a full RCT has enabled us to deliver this project with meaningful results. This approach could be used as an alternative for organisations looking to use a comparator to better understand their impact, but who are unable to restrict access to services for a cohort of clients.
- We have had a short window to pilot and evaluate this service, and as our process evaluation covers, it did take time for the service to embed and become a mature service. This has implications on how much data we have been able to collect - for example, overall volumes of client data, as well as when and how it has been possible to evaluate the service at full capacity. With less client data than initially anticipated, we have had to be careful in what findings we draw from our data. Wherever possible, we have used statistical analysis to check the validity of our findings.
- Our evaluation measures – designed to align with MAS' Outcomes Framework - have proven to be a short and effective way of capturing client capability during delivery. We will be doing further testing and iterations them, based on the experiencing of using them in this project, for use in future research and evaluation projects.
- We are also looking into the potential to carry out further follow-up research with our clients to investigate longer term sustainability of outcomes.

1. Overview of project

What Money Talks was aiming to achieve

We tested a life-event focused money guidance service for working-age people. This was delivered at scale across Wales in local communities (outside the workplace).

The challenge of engagement

The benefits to improving an individual's financial capability are widely documented, but what is less widely known by service deliverers is how best to engage individuals in interventions. The challenge of trying to engage individuals in financial capability activities is one that Citizens Advice has experienced, both through delivering localised money guidance and existing services through our local network.

For example, feedback from our frontline advisers - including for the preceding money guidance services in Wales⁶ - was that there could be a lack of engagement with generalist content, and there was a need to tailor their support more directly to people's circumstances.

We understand that it is vital to make the most of opportunities to engage clients, particularly at a time when having the appropriate skills, knowledge and mindset to manage financial circumstances is imperative in mitigating further problems. It is also crucial for service-deliverers to be able to plan appropriate, effective and efficient services that individuals will engage with.

Using life events as a trigger

Existing evidence - detailed later in our evaluation approach (section two) - suggests that there may be an appetite or need for money guidance during life events.

Before Money Talks, offering education services aimed at improving skills, knowledge and mindset during key life events had been untested. It was therefore unknown whether this would actively engage individuals; how content can be tailored to specific life events; or whether such a service would be effective at improving their financial capability.

In delivering Money Talks, Citizens Advice has focused on the following three life events:

- experiencing a health issue,
- relationship breakup, and
- a change in employment circumstance.

We decided on these by considering:

- What life events might be most relevant to a financial capability intervention;
- The types of partnerships and referrals we could develop in Wales, either through local or national contacts - some of these were already formed through the previous service (see our process evaluation, section four) and;
- subject areas of interest to the Money Advice Service.

We also examined our internal research into the proportions of our local clients experiencing different types of life events immediately before advice, to get a sense of how people typically seek support around the time (if not specifically because) of a life event. 4 in 5 Citizens Advice

⁶ This was from a feedback workshop with frontline advisers in preparation for developing Money Talks.

clients are experiencing some form of life change before advice: 46% were experiencing a health issue, 15% a relationship or family issue; and 28% a change in employment status.⁷

In planning the service, our modelling allowed for a smaller subset of people (< 10%) that were experiencing a 'life event' to access the service, as a top-up of clients that might be referred, helping us with our overall understanding of delivering a service to those experiencing a life event.

Our theory of change

We developed an initial theory of change during evaluation planning, and have expanded on this during service redesign.

	Money Talks	Assumptions
Problem (need)	Experiencing a major life change - such as losing your job - can lead to practical problems if someone is not able to adapt and manage their new situation quickly. Often this involves evaluating personal circumstances, including finances. Having the appropriate skills, knowledge and mindset is imperative in mitigating further problems.	Those experiencing life events have lower levels of financial capability than required to manage their circumstances.
Inputs	<p>People are offered one-to-one financial capability support to ensure they have the right money skills to manage their current circumstances.</p> <p>This guidance should be tailored to their life event. This will help to engage them to take up the offer of support. It will also help in the session and after, by ensuring the guidance is relevant to them and they can take action based on it.</p> <p>Working with external partners to identify people experiencing life events will help target money guidance at those in need in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Those experiencing a life event will want to (and be able to) engage with money guidance in the midst of their circumstances.</p> <p>We will be able to engage external partners to refer clients through to a life-events focused money guidance service.</p>
Activities	<p>Money Talks involves two sessions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The first session is primarily delivered face-to-face, where their circumstances and financial capability are assessed. Relevant practical information is then delivered based on client need, and next steps decided - including referrals to specific advice provision where necessary. 2. A pre-booked second session is primarily delivered by telephone 2-4 weeks later (where a client can be re-engaged). The clients' capability and circumstances are re-assessed, and they are provided further information where required. <p>Further sessions can be delivered as necessary - we can also refer to specialist advice services as required.</p>	<p>Clients' typically require more than one session.</p> <p>We will be able to re-engage clients with money guidance.</p>
Outcomes	Following money guidance, a client sees an improvement in knowledge and behaviour around their money skills: keeping track of money; controlled spending; having enough money to live; planning ahead with money;	Clients are able to convert the information and actions into practice within their lives.

⁷ Citizens Advice outcomes and impact research, 2017

	<p>looking for the best deals; and staying informed about money services.</p> <p>They also see an improvement in their confidence to take action in their money matters.</p> <p>This leads to wider improvements in their circumstances, including their personal wellbeing, and ability to manage their life event without negative financial consequences.</p>	<p>Improving money skills has an impact on clients' wider circumstances and capacity to manage.</p>
Impact	<p>Clients are able to apply their money skills in the future - and feel better prepared for similar life events.</p>	<p>Outcomes are sustained in the longer term.</p>

The version above of our theory of change was developed over three workshops in collaboration with local Citizens Advice managers, advisers and national Citizens Advice service design, subject and evaluation specialists.

At the end of this report, we have produced a final summary theory of change based on our learnings from Money Talks on what a future life-events financial capability service could reasonably deliver.

How this works in practice - Steve's experience of Money Talks



Steve had long term health problems, but at 54 was starting full time work as he was very worried about losing his house. He was referred to the Money Talks service at his Remploy office to find out what help was available and to gain more information on his pension options.

His Money Guide referred him for a benefit check over the phone to check his eligibility for Working Tax Credits and advised him how to access help from his local Citizens Advice if he needed help completing any applications. He was provided with information on final salary pension schemes and advised to contact his pension administrators for more information on his pension projections and to find out if he could take his pension early through ill health.

The Money Guide followed up with Steve 3 weeks later when he'd started work. He'd contacted his pension administrators and was considering transferring his pension - his Money Guide directed him to information on the MAS website on looking for a financial adviser and informed him of the key questions to ask. Through his benefits check he been advised that he could apply for Working Tax Credits to increase his income and was given further information from the Money Guide on where to go for help completing the pack he'd received.

Steve is grateful for the support provided - he is already finding full time work difficult, but is now hopeful he can access his pension within the next year on ill health grounds which would enable him to reduce his hours.

Adaptations to activities and outcomes over the project lifetime

There have been few changes to our intended outcomes and activities during the course of the project - we have listed any adaptations in our process evaluation. We will also explore the practical barriers associated with delivering this form of money guidance as part of our process evaluation, including understanding the constraints of piloting this service and the impact of local context on delivery.

Background context

Previous money guidance services

We have run a Welsh money guidance service in Wales since April 2011, initially funded by the Money Advice Service and then Welsh Government from September 2016 - April 2017. Between these two funding periods the service continued with a similar model, the only difference being that, in the latter version, advisers had more flexibility so that for example conversations with clients could be less scripted.

In its latest iteration, the Welsh Government funded Money Guidance Service helped people make financial decisions by offering face to face money guidance sessions across Wales. Our trained advisers helped people to manage their money day to day, plan for monthly outgoings and explain money matters in an easy to understand way. Money guidance sessions aimed to take around 45 minutes and included information on a number of topics including budgeting and saving, credit and borrowing, mortgages, insurance, pensions and retirement planning.

Clients left their session with an action plan so they knew what to do next and, if further support was needed, could arrange follow-up sessions. The Money Guidance Service was completely sales-free and did not provide regulated advice or recommend specific products or services.

Service redesign

Money Talks is the product of undertaking a service design process to refocus money guidance delivery on life events and scale up delivery. As we were working within the 'scale and evaluate' section of the What Works Fund we were not undertaking a complete redesign process, rather building on the structure and learning from the previous services. This involved working with potential clients, partners and local Citizens Advice teams to understand their needs and investigate how the service could be effectively tailored to the specified life events.

Over the design period ideas, models and materials were tested and refined through a structured series of workshops, resulting in a new delivery model and extensive set of delivery materials, guidance and promotional materials. These were further iterated during live testing in the pilot delivery period.

⁸ Based on available information, we have produced a short report documenting our learnings from delivering general money guidance in Wales, under a different funding stream. This covers: what was delivered; the difference we made; the service in practice; recommendations for future services. Citizens Advice, Satdeep Grewal (2017): *Money Guidance - Evaluation Report - included in the technical annex to this report*

Outline of service design process

Feb 2017	Service Design	Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop interview activities/questions • Interviews with potential partners, potential clients, and local Citizens Advice (including those not currently delivering the service) • Interviews supported by Citizens Advice team
		Research definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify barriers and opportunities from research • Define needs of user groups - clients, local Citizens Advice, partners • Design principles
		Solution development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design service components • Develop supporting requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Skills/training ◦ Infrastructure/systems ◦ Promotional materials ◦ Delivery materials • Prototype materials and test with partners and potential clients • Relationship development
May	Delivery and Evaluation	Pilot and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine materials • Awareness raising with referral organisations • Deliver life events service to clients • Project monitoring and reporting
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake process monitoring • Undertake evaluation follow-ups with clients • Knowledge share between delivery organisations
Jan-April 2018		Close	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete delivery • Develop evaluation reports • Share results of pilot

The service was delivered across Wales by seven local Citizens Advice, operating across eight broad areas. It took referrals from external partner agencies (such as Job Centres) as well as local Citizens Advice. This support was offered on a one-to-one basis, and delivered face-to-face was offered in local Citizens Advice offices or outreach community locations. Many staff transitioned from the existing service. This meant that we gained - and also had to navigate - their institutional memory of previous service delivery, which had different targets and aims. All delivery staff were re-trained to focus on delivering this life-events focused guidance according to the service blueprint.

Given the scale of our service and the variety of localities we work out of, delivering a service at scale across Wales has provided the opportunity to understand the general applicability of this service, something we typically aim to do when evaluating Citizens Advice services.

Aligning service design and evaluation

The service and evaluation were designed alongside each other, to be fully aligned and integrated. Specific service alterations were made to enable the evaluation:

Measures used as part of delivery	Citizens Advice financial capability measures are used as part of triage (as designed), to baseline clients and enable service delivery.
Refined focus on three life events	In conjunction with MAS, a decision was taken to focus on three key life events rather than a broader life events service.
Two-part service delivery	To enable follow-up measurement, the service was designed and pitched as having two parts to clients. While learnings from the previous service highlighted often the need for more than one session, this formalised the process.

2. Overview of the evaluation approach

We are responding to the following What Works policy question -

How can we help working age adults to improve their financial capability, develop budgeting and tracking habits, build up a savings buffer to withstand financial shocks and/or set financial goals for key life events?

Our primary research question

Our overarching research aim is to test whether delivering life-event tailored financial capability support to clients that are experiencing a life event (either a health issue, relationship breakdown or change in employment circumstance) is more effective at improving financial capability than not delivering any financial capability intervention, and; what works when testing and delivering this at scale.

To support this, we also developed subsidiary evaluation questions:

- A. Is the life-event model of engagement and delivery effective in improving people's financial capability?
- B. What works well within this model and if/how this varies for different target groups?
- C. Where evidence is available, which life events are the most effective and appropriate triggers for increasing the financial capability of those experiencing them?
- D. How can a money guidance service be successfully tailored to the life event of the client?
- E. Where possible, how can a model work across different channels (e.g. face to face, phone and Skype) to meet the needs of the client?
- F. How can you actively engage organisations outside of the financial advice world (those making referrals) with financial capability support for their clients?

How our evaluation complements existing research

Existing evidence suggests that there may be an appetite or need for money guidance during life events. This is the opportunity to complement this with evaluation learning on the impact of practical delivery of life-events focused money guidance.

We know from Citizens Advice policy research into advice gaps that 48% of people said they⁹ would have taken money advice at one key moment in their lives if they had been offered it. That equates to 23 million people missing out on the benefits of money advice at one stage in their lives. Of this, 44% said they would have taken advice had it been offered when they were seriously ill, 37% when experiencing relationship breakdown and 35% when starting or changing jobs.

Furthermore, the 2015 UK Financial Capability Survey identified a 'broader need to encourage better preparation for life events among most of the [Welsh] population', identifying a target market and need for a broad service that addresses this issue.¹⁰

⁹ Citizens Advice (2015), *The Four Advice Gaps*

¹⁰ Money Advice Service (2015), *Financial Capability in Wales 2015: Initial results from the 2015 UK Financial Capability Survey*

Our evaluation approach

Our research combines outcomes and process evaluation - and where possible, looks at impact evaluation. This ensures we capture details of any changes we make to individuals' financial capability, but also have the ability to understand how and why this is achieved.

Quasi-experimental approach to outcomes evaluation

We carried out baseline and follow-up outcomes research with Citizens Advice clients who did not receive the life-event focused financial capability intervention (comparison group) to compare to our Money Talks intervention (treatment group). This involved scaling up an existing approach that we have used to understand the baseline needs of Citizens Advice clients and any changes to their capability.¹¹

Clients surveyed for the comparison group had visited a local Citizens Advice about a particular issue (e.g. debt, benefits, housing etc.) and received advice, but did not receive the financial capability intervention we were testing. For context, our advice is aimed at resolving the specific problem that the individual came in about - e.g. preventing housing eviction - rather than understanding and improving overall financial capability.

This research acted as a comparison group, but was not a formal Randomised Control Trial (RCT) - all clients that engaged with us had received some level of support.¹² We decided on this approach following exhausting other comparison group options and considering the ethical implications. We have carefully considered our methodology to ensure our approach is valid:

- We have focused on face-to-face clients as we already have established research practices for this channel and this reflects the access route for Money Talks. This is despite our service operating over a variety of channels.
- Our comparative research uses the same financial capability measures as Money Talks. This is supplemented with additional information useful for analysis, as well as client profile data captured in our CRM.
- We have also taken steps to reduce contamination between the comparison research and Money Talks dataset. For example, we ran the comparison research in local Citizens Advice not delivering Money Talks, and also checked the two sample groups for overlapping clients.

Further details of the comparison group, our data volumes, and how it compared to the group who received Money Talks, can be found in our outcomes evaluation (section three).

Evaluation delivery

Our evaluation was delivered by our in-house impact and evaluation team, with guidance from our Evaluation Learning Partner, Ipsos MORI.

¹¹ Citizens Advice (2017), *Understanding money skills*

¹² From '*Our approach to understanding what works for Citizens Advice*': Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) are often considered the best way to understand if an intervention or project has directly caused any measured outcomes, but they are very resource intensive to deliver as project delivery needs to be strictly controlled to ensure experimental conditions are followed. It is unlikely that our Impact and Evaluation team would conduct an RCT, not only due to resource constraints and the diversity of service delivery across our vast network, but because we do not deny services to clients who need support. However, we do employ quasi-experimental approaches using matched samples or pre / post testing of samples where appropriate.

Citizens Advice has developed an approach that delivers meaningful findings that help with organisational decision-making, through actionable and realist evaluation techniques. We're able to blend the advantages of an internal understanding of our service and delivery context, with independent and methodological rigour.

The in-house evaluation team are able to blend their understanding of Citizens Advice service delivery and its context, while maintaining objectivity by:

- Maintaining distance from frontline delivery;
- Setting out clear success criteria at the beginning of projects; and
- Adopting mixed methods approaches rather than relying on data from a single source.

Evaluation methodology

Our research combines outcomes and process evaluation.

Outcomes evaluation

Outcomes and indicators	Key indicators
Clients engaged in financial capability support (MAS Outcomes: Accessibility and motivation)	Service volumes (from first contact)
Improved financial capability across Citizens Advice measures: keeping track of money; controlled spending; having enough money to live; planning ahead with money; looking for the best deals; and staying informed about money services. (MAS Outcomes: including, ability to live adequately within their means, managing well day-to-day)	Improved - and to a greater extent than comparison
Improved client confidence in taking action on money matters (also a Citizens Advice financial capability measure) (MAS Outcomes: Financial attitudes and motivations)	Improved - and to a greater extent than comparison
Wider benefits to client as a result of financial capability support	Change in client wellbeing
Sustained improved client financial capability	Over time (where possible)

Outcomes data collection

Evidence (see process evaluation)	Mechanism
Service volumes	Management information: First sessions - overall and by life event Second sessions - overall and by life event
Client engagement	Service volume analysis (from Management Information) Looking at any differences across pilot duration

Citizens Advice's financial capability areas and measures

Our financial capability areas and measures have been developed as part of a year long programme to define the interlinking aspects of financial capability, developing measures that have been tested and validated with experts and through our research. They have been designed to align with outcomes in the MAS UK Financial Capability Strategy Adult Outcomes Framework (and signposted as part of the financial capability evaluation toolkit developed).¹³ They also form part of Citizens Advice's commitment to shared measurement.

Following testing, these measures were used in 2016 as part of Citizens Advice's financial capability and numeracy research that baselined the knowledge, behaviour and mindset of over 1,000 face-to-face clients across England and Wales.

They are shown in further detail below in the key findings of our outcomes evaluation.

Evidence	Mechanism	Our data
Baseline assessment with Money Talks clients at first session	Assessment of client financial capability during first session Assessment of personal client wellbeing (ONS Life Satisfaction)	Full scores for 1,336 clients Comparison to comparison group and national population
Second (and final) assessment with Money Talks clients at second session	Assessment of client capability and wellbeing during second session (where occurs, 45-50% retention)	Full scores for 664 clients Comparison to comparison group and national population
Research with comparison group of local Citizens Advice clients not receiving Money Talks	Baseline assessment done on paper survey; follow-up completed through online survey.	Initial scores for 3,273 clients Follow-up scores for 165 clients

¹³ New Philanthropy Capital/Inspiring Impact (2013), [*Blueprint for Shared Measurement*](#).

Our work was featured as a case study, detailing our experience in designing and implementing shared measures to systematically understand the outcomes we achieve for our clients within our case management system.

Process evaluation

Citizens Advice's case management systems enable us to routinely and systematically capture detailed information about our client volumes, demographics and issues.

Evidence	Mechanism
Number of sessions and clients reached	Management information across project.
Process mapping and resource use	Triangulating information from management information; process diaries completed by Money Guides; adviser feedback and observation visits to delivery sites.
Session content	Quality of advice assessment - undertaken twice during project - based on case note analysis. Additional information triangulated from process mapping and feedback.
Money Guides feedback	<p>Mixed methods (monthly reporting forms, interim online survey, workshop focus groups, in-depth-interviews).</p> <p>Alongside other engagement activities (formal and informal), we have asked service deliverers to provide monthly feedback on key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delivery challenges ● Delivery opportunities ● Work undertaken with values and partners ● Innovation ● Feedback on specific life event focuses. <p>Using themes emerging from our regular reporting, we have also captured direct feedback from our Money Guides, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What's working well ● What's working less well ● Feedback on impact of focusing on life events - challenges and opportunities.
National project team feedback	Throughout project and lessons learnt session.
Referral Partner feedback	10 in-depth interviews with 9 referral partners (external and other local Citizens Advice), across different life event focuses
Client feedback and user experience	<p>Mixed methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Census style feedback forms at the end of session ● In-depth client interviews undertaken by external research partner (24), 3-5 months after support, focusing on experience of the service and to unpick how we might make a difference, and longer term impact. <p>Clients were from across different life events, delivery centres, and engagement levels.</p>

3. Key findings: Outcomes Evaluation

What were people's needs when they came to us?

- The majority of Money Talks clients scored low or average in at least one area of financial capability, meaning most clients needed at least some support.
- Clients tended to demonstrate relatively good financial capability in core areas like keeping track of money, and needed more help to improve supporting areas like planning ahead and staying up to date with information about money services.
- 4 in 5 clients scored high in at least one area, meaning that most clients reported at least some money skills, but the majority of these still had room for improvement.
- Confidence was an area of particularly acute need - more so than knowledge and behaviour. This is pertinent given the focus on life events, and the need to adapt to current circumstances and take action on money matters.

Did we see a change in people's financial capability?

- Money Talks (treatment group) was more effective at improving people's financial capability than face to face advice alone (comparison group).
- Whether someone was in the treatment or comparison group was the most important driving factor behind changes in financial capability scores (as opposed to demographic factors).
- Money Talks enabled clients to make progress in all areas of financial capability.
- There was a bigger improvement observed in supporting areas of financial capability, like looking for the best deals, than in core areas like managing money.
- The biggest change was observed in confidence - this is particularly important given that this area was identified as an area of acute need.
- Financial capability scores improved regardless of which life event was experienced.

What other outcomes were there?

- Improvements in wellbeing were significantly greater for Money Talks clients than for clients in the comparison group.
- A significant improvement was observed in Money Talks clients' wellbeing - this is important as those with the lowest wellbeing scores demonstrated the lowest levels of financial capability.
- Most clients we spoke to said that they felt more confident in managing future life circumstances.
- Most clients we spoke to said that they had more money to spend or more control of their finances as a result of the help they got from Money Talks.

How we define and measure financial capability

Financial capability means a person having the right money skills to deal with the everyday as well as manage big changes in their life. This can be complex and nuanced and involves having the right knowledge, skills and mindset to make good financial decisions and take action at the right time.

Local Citizens Advice clients share many characteristics with the general population - for example age, gender and ethnicity. However, they differ in some important ways in terms of individual characteristics, needs and life circumstances - crucially including that local Citizens Advice clients are four times as likely to be on a low income. Having a low income can mean you need to spend a lot of time on 'core' financial capability areas: keeping track of money day to day, controlling spending and making sure you have enough money to live. Meanwhile the 'supporting' financial capability areas: shopping around, planning ahead with money and staying informed about money services - can fall by the wayside. Focusing on a single characteristic isn't enough to capture the significant financial challenges that our clients face on a day-to-day basis.

As a result, we have developed a multi-faceted definition of financial capability, tailored to be meaningful and appropriate for our clients and services.

The Citizens Advice financial capability areas

	Keeping track of money		Having enough money to live		Looking for the best deals	
	Controlled spending		Planning ahead with money		Staying informed	

Using our financial capability areas to assess need

We developed each financial capability area alongside a set of associated questions with seven point scales so clients can indicate their score for each, looking in turn at knowledge, actions and mindset. These are a set of distances-travelled measures, enabling us to track changes in clients' financial capability. The diagram below outlines how we defined high, average and low scores in each area.

	Low score			Average	High score		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Knowledge	No knowledge	No to some knowledge	Some knowledge	Some to good knowledge	Good knowledge	Good to excellent knowledge	Excellent knowledge
Actions	Never	Never to sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes to often	Often	Often to very often	Very often
Mindset	No confidence	None to some confidence	Some confidence	Some to good confidence	Good confidence	Good to high confidence	High confidence

How these measures have been applied to this project

Money Talks

- Clients were assessed at the start of their first session using our measures.
- They were contacted again 2-4 weeks later. During their second session they were asked to complete the assessment again, to measure the distance travelled.

Control research (local Citizens Advice clients not receiving Money Talks)

- Clients were asked to complete a baseline survey before receiving advice.
- Where they had given their consent, they were contacted by email 2-4 weeks later and asked to complete a follow-up survey.

Our data

Data source As featured in analysis below	No. of 1st scores	No. of 2nd scores	Time period
Money Talks	1,336	664	April - December 2017

Data source	No. of 1st scores	No. of clients who gave email address & consent	No. of 2nd scores	Time period
Comparison group	3,273	1,246	165	October 2017 - February 2018

For the comparison group, the group of local Citizens Advice involved in the research uploaded 3,273 baseline surveys. However after isolating clients who gave their consent to be contacted, and who gave a valid email address, we were left with a follow up sample of 1,246. We then achieved a 13% response rate via email leaving us with 165 follow up responses.

Comparative research

Conducting a baseline and follow up survey of face to face clients from the Citizens Advice network provided us with a comparison group, but this was not a formal randomised control trial (see page 9). As well as recruiting research locations to be as comparable as possible, we have also carried out post-testing of our samples to understand their comparability, deploying statistical tests where relevant.

On balance, our comparison group remains the closest comparator available to our Money Talks service. There are some differences between the service populations, which is unsurprising - after all, they perform different functions. We have summarised this below. This does not mean that comparison between the two groups is inappropriate - just that any differences between the groups should be borne in mind when reporting the differences in financial capability scores between the two groups. Based on this and our volumes of data, we have drawn conclusions carefully.

Demographics

The groups were directly comparable in terms of gender split, however there were some differences in the demographics of Money Talks clients compared to the comparison group, which can be explained by the life-events focus of the Money Talks service¹⁴:

- Money Talks clients were likely to be slightly older.
- Money Talks clients were less likely to be BAME.
- Money Talks clients were slightly less likely than comparison group clients to have a disability, but they were much more likely to have a long-term health condition
- Comparison group clients were less likely to own their own home.

Baseline financial capability needs

The financial capability scores of comparison group clients were more polarised than Money Talks clients. comparison group clients were more likely to score low across all measures, and indeed to score high across all measures. They were also less likely than Money Talks clients to rate themselves high in some areas and low in others.

- 65% scored low in at least one area (compared to 74% for Money Talks)
- 70% scored high in at least one area (compared to 81% for Money Talks)
- 15% scored low across all measures (compared to 7% for Money Talks)
- 20% scored high across all measures (compared to 14% for Money Talks)

Similarly to Money Talks, the three areas where need was most acute were:

- Knowledge of money services (understanding information about services like banking, benefits and loans)
- How often clients stay informed about their money services
- Confidence to take action on money matters

Analysis of comparative data

A range of descriptive and statistical analysis was used once comparison data was collected. The descriptive analysis includes average scores, distribution of scores, numbers and proportions scoring low, average and high in each area, net change in financial capability and movement between low, average and high scores.

Statistical analysis undertaken:

- Chi squared tests were used to compare demographics of different populations (e.g. from Money Talks clients to all Welsh clients over the same period).

¹⁴ Chi squared tests were conducted to compare the observed values from Money Talks clients to the expected values based on National Survey data. This measured whether or not the observed values for each demographic area fell within the bounds of what we might expect based on the comparison group. P values from these tests can be found in the technical annex.

- Cross tabulations and confidence intervals were used to compare differences in low and high financial capability scores recorded by different demographic groups, and those experiencing different life events.
- Wilcoxon rank tests were used to measure both differences in wellbeing between different groups, and to compare the changes in average scores of Money Talks clients and comparison group clients¹⁵.
- We ran a total of 13 different linear regression models, looking at each of our 13 financial capability areas in turn. In every financial capability area, when we controlled for demographic differences between the groups, the significant differences in changes to financial capability scores between the treatment and comparison groups still remained¹⁶.

What are people’s needs when they come to us?

Understanding people’s initial needs when they access the service helps us better understand who the service is being delivered to, as well as put into context any later changes and whether needs are being met.

On being referred to the Money Talks service, clients demonstrated mixed levels of need. Many clients actually demonstrated good levels of financial capability in some areas - 4 in 5 clients recorded at least one high score - dispelling a simple assumption that experiencing a life event would correlate with low financial capability across all areas. However, our evidence also shows that for most clients there was room for improvement.



Generally, Money Talks clients demonstrated higher financial capability in core areas such as keeping track of money and controlling spending. Meanwhile in supporting financial capability areas clients were much more likely to record low scores. For a significant minority of clients though, support to improve financial capability was especially pressing - 7% of clients scored low across all measures. There were 3 main areas where need was most acute:

¹⁵ T tests were considered as an option to calculate whether or not differences were statistically significant, but as the data was not normally distributed, the decision was taken to conduct Wilcoxon rank tests as they would more accurately reflect the differences between comparison and treatment groups.

¹⁶ P values for each maximal regression model are shown in the technical annex.



Knowledge about money services
like banking,
benefits and loans



How often clients stay up to date
with the main
information about
these money
services



Confidence
to take action on
money matters

This echoes findings from our 2017 report¹⁷, which identified the same three areas as the needs that were most acute for face-to-face Citizens Advice clients.

Figure 1a. Proportions of clients scoring low, average and high for each financial capability area in their first Money Talks assessment¹⁸

Financial Capability	Area	Scored High (5 to 7)	Scored Average (4)	Scored Low (1 to 3)
Keeping Track Of Money	Knowledge	57%	16%	27%
Keeping Track Of Money	Behaviour	60%	13%	27%
Controlled Spending	Knowledge	60%	16%	24%
Controlled Spending	Behaviour	56%	14%	31%
Having Enough Money To Live	Knowledge	56%	18%	27%
Having Enough Money To Live	Behaviour	47%	16%	36%
Planning Ahead With Money	Knowledge	54%	15%	31%
Planning Ahead With Money	Behaviour	53%	12%	36%
Looking For The Best Deals	Knowledge	63%	12%	24%
Looking For The Best Deals	Behaviour	60%	11%	29%
Staying Informed About Money Services	Knowledge	36%	15%	49%
Staying Informed About Money Services	Behaviour	30%	14%	56%

¹⁷ Citizens Advice (2017), *Understanding money skills*.

¹⁸Table shows all Money Talks baseline assessments, not just those who had a follow up assessment. A table showing the matched baseline scores of the treatment group can be found in the technical annex.

Confidence	38%	15%	47%
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Differences between clients' knowledge, behaviour and confidence

On average, knowledge scores were likely to be marginally higher than behaviour scores for Money Talks clients in their first assessment - average scores were 4.55 for knowledge and 4.45 for behaviour.

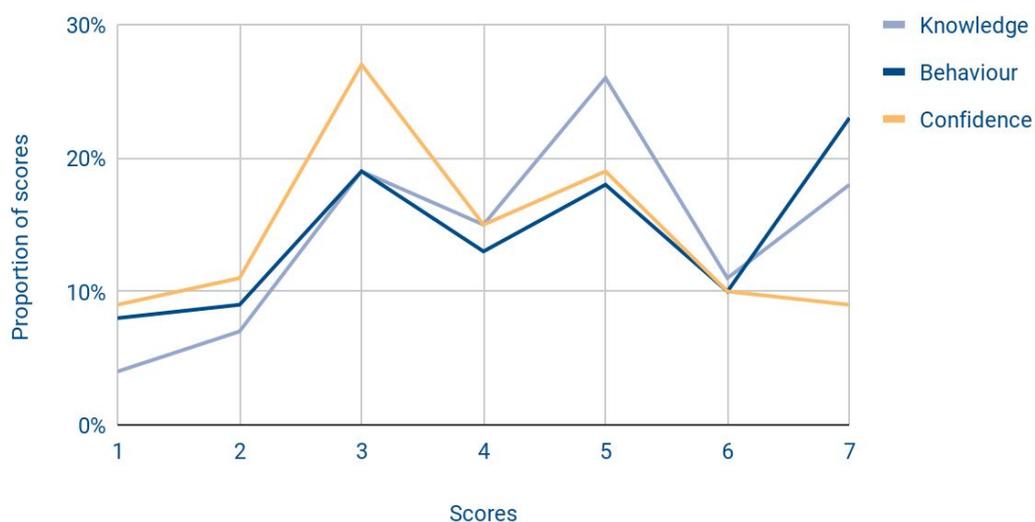
In terms of how the scores were distributed however, there were some key differences:

- Clients who recorded high scores for behaviour were most likely to be at the top end of the scale, with scores of 7.
- Meanwhile the largest proportion of those who recorded high scores for knowledge were only just in the high bracket, with scores of 5. For these clients, this suggests that there was still room for improvement.

The trend was slightly different for confidence:

- Clients were more likely to record a low score for confidence than they were for knowledge and behaviour measures.
- Of those who recorded low scores for confidence, they were most likely to record a score of 3, suggesting that, for many, they do at least have some confidence.
- A significant minority (9%) recorded a confidence score of 1, suggesting that these are the clients with the most acute needs.

Figure 1b. Money Talks first assessment - distribution of knowledge, behaviour and confidence scores



Confidence is key

Having the right mindset is crucial to putting financially capable behaviours into practice effectively. Previous Money Advice Service research has identified financial confidence as “by far the most important” enabler/inhibitor of financial wellbeing¹⁹. Our own research from 2017 also identified confidence as a crucial area of need, and one which underpinned all other financial capability areas.

¹⁹ Money Advice Service (2016) *Measuring financial capability- identifying the building blocks*.

For clients who recorded high scores for knowledge, but low scores for behaviour (how often they take action) and for confidence, low confidence may act as a barrier to them taking action. If people don't act because of their lack of confidence, the fact that they display good levels of knowledge may be irrelevant.



"Information isn't enough for people who are really on their knees... really it's the confidence issues of the client".

Money Guide

When Money Talks clients came to us, their confidence tended to lag behind their knowledge and behaviour. For clients who scored high in knowledge and behaviour areas, but low in confidence, the issue wasn't necessarily that low confidence was acting as a barrier to them exhibiting financially capable behaviours - they may just have lacked the confidence that what they were doing was right.

This is particularly important given the life event focus of Money Talks. Certain life events can have severe impacts on people's confidence (as shown in the section below). Building this confidence back up was a key aim of the service.



"I've always been pretty good with money and investments, unfortunately I lapsed into a bad situation and financially I couldn't control my spending or pay bills... They have managed to make me understand how to get myself right money wise and pay back the people I owe. Sort out my mortgage and that. Helped me out financially and mentally as well".

Money Talks client

Our process evaluation explores the conditions in which we manage and may improve low confidence.

Financial capability varies for those with different life events

We also see differences in need between different groups of clients. People's money skills do not exist in isolation - certain demographics, as well as whatever life event the client is experiencing, can have an influence on how they report their financial capability at a given time. The financial capability scores recorded by clients should be considered in the context of their lives.

Our evidence shows that this could particularly be the case for those experiencing a change in their health circumstances - or even where there was lower wellbeing.

- Those experiencing a health-related life event were significantly more likely than those who weren't to record low scores for managing money behaviour, having enough money to live behaviour, looking for the best deals behaviour and confidence.
- Similarly, clients with mental health problems were significantly more likely to record low scores in every measure of financial capability, with the biggest differences

observed in controlled spending, having enough money to live, and confidence (62% report low confidence, compared to 44% of those without mental health problems).

- When the financial capability scores of those with the lowest wellbeing (0-3 on a 1-10 scale) are isolated, the proportion scoring low across all measures doubles to 14%, and these clients are 15% more likely to say they lack confidence taking action on their money matters.

Do we see a change in people’s financial capability?

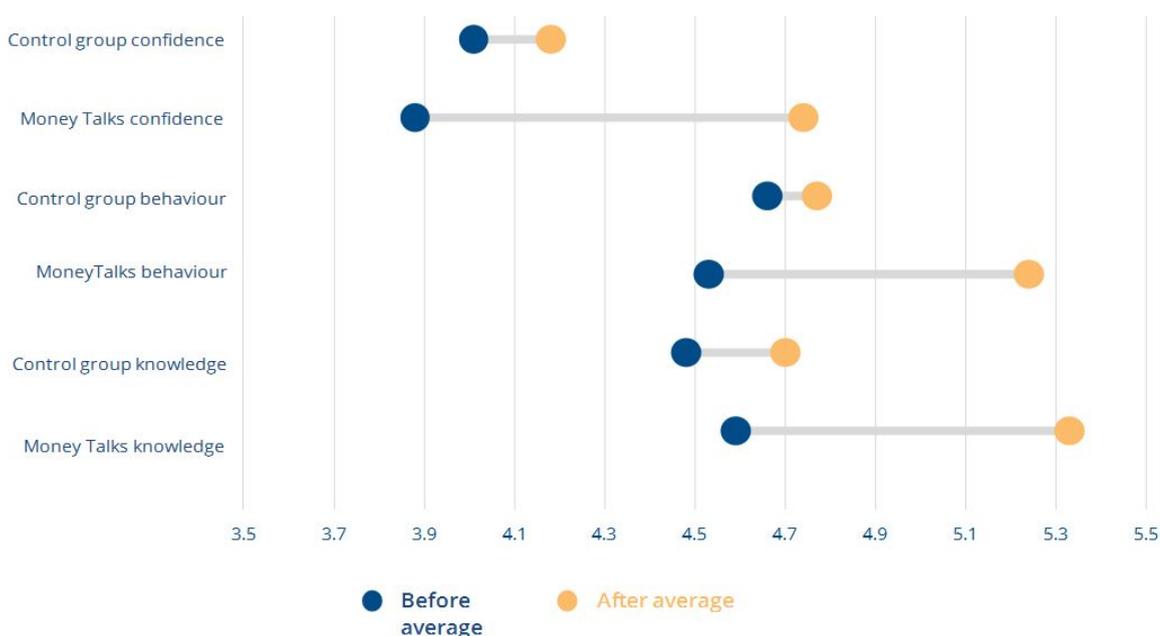
Improvements in financial capability were significantly greater for Money Talks clients

We compared the changes in scores for comparison group clients against those of Money Talks (treatment group) clients to judge how effective Money Talks was in improving people’s financial capability. We aggregated knowledge and behaviour scores by taking a mean knowledge score for each client (across 6 knowledge measures), and a mean behaviour score for each client across the the 6 behaviour measures.

After baseline and follow up scores of each client were matched up, we calculated the difference in scores for each client, and compared the differences in scores of comparison group clients to the differences in scores for the treatment group. We then conducted statistical testing to discover if the differences between the two groups were significant.²⁰

Changes in confidence, and aggregated average knowledge scores and behaviour scores were significantly greater for Money Talks clients than for the comparison group.

Figure 2a. Average knowledge, behaviour and confidence scores in baseline and follow up assessments - Money Talks vs comparison group



²⁰ Changes in scores of control and treatment groups were tested using Wilcoxon rank tests. We considered using t tests to test for significance but as the data was not normally distributed, we took the decision to use Wilcoxon rank tests.

Change in scores by financial capability area

We calculated change in average scores across all financial capability measures for each client in comparison and treatment groups, and tested the difference between the two groups. Change in overall average scores was significantly greater for Money Talks clients than for the comparison group²¹.

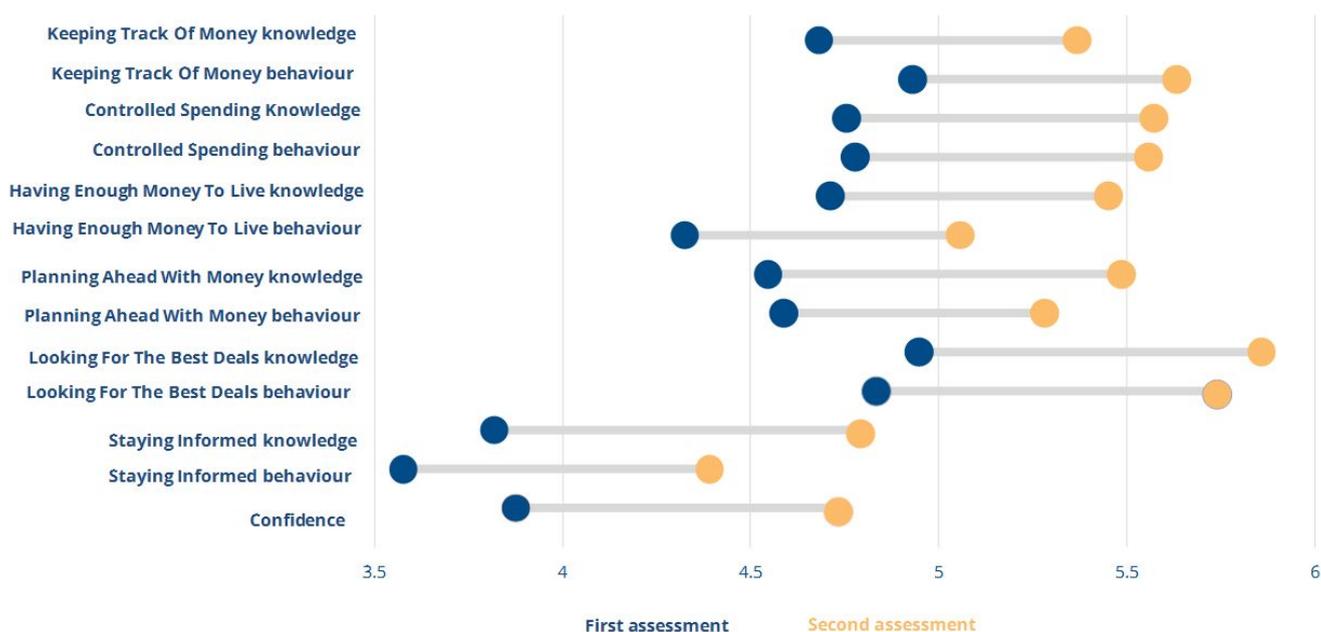
This means that we can be confident that Money Talks was more effective at improving people's financial capability and wellbeing than face to face advice alone.

In the Money Talks group:

- **74% of clients recorded a net positive change in financial capability** (calculated by aggregating changes in scores across all measures for each client, and observing how many were >0)
- **Average score (across all measures) - 4.51 → 5.22 (+0.71) - P value: <0.01**
 - Average knowledge score - 4.59 → 5.33 (+0.74)
 - Average behaviour score - 4.53 → 5.24 (+0.72)
 - Average confidence score - 3.88 → 4.71 (+0.86)
- **55% of clients recorded a higher confidence score in the second assessment** - more than any other financial capability area

In the Money Talks group, financial capability scores improved significantly in all areas.

Figure 2b. Chart showing changes in average score in each financial capability area for the treatment (Money Talks) group



²¹ P value: <0.01.

Figure 2c. Chart showing changes in average score in each financial capability area for the comparison group



As the chart shows, comparison group clients did make progress in most financial capability areas, but also that changes in scores were much smaller for the comparison group than the treatment group in every financial capability area.

We used statistical testing to calculate the difference in score change between the comparison and treatment groups.

Changes in scores were significantly greater for Money Talks (treatment group) clients than for comparison group clients in every area of financial capability, apart from 'Having enough money to live' (knowledge), where there was still a difference in scores.

Figure 2d. Significant differences between changes in scores were for the treatment group compared to the comparison group (anything <0.05 is significant).

Financial capability area	Wilcoxon rank test P value ²²
Managing money knowledge	0.024
Managing money behaviour	0.014
Controlled spending knowledge	0.033
Controlled spending behaviour	0.040
Having enough money to live knowledge	0.052 ²³
Having enough money to live behaviour	0.019

²² We chose to conduct Wilcoxon rank tests as the score changes were not normally distributed.

²³ This was the only area where differences between changes in scores between comparison and treatment groups were not significant at the 95% significance level. It was however still significant at the 90% level.

Planning ahead knowledge	0.010
Planning ahead behaviour	0.039
Looking for the best deals knowledge	<0.01
Looking for the best deals behaviour	0.014
Staying informed knowledge	<0.01
Staying informed behaviour	0.011
Confidence	<0.01

In addition to the wilcoxon rank test, we also ran 13 different linear regression models, looking at each of our 13 financial capability areas in turn. The outcome we were measuring was the difference between baseline and follow up scores. Across the vast majority of the financial capability measures, the client demographic factors we looked at did not have a significant bearing on how far clients' financial capability scores move between their baseline and follow up assessments.

In every financial capability area, the most significant driving factor in how far clients moved between their baseline and follow up assessments was whether they were in the treatment group (Money Talks) or comparison group. In every area, those in the Money Talks group progressed significantly more than those in the comparison group (P values <0.01 in all areas)

²⁴.

Change in low/average/high financial capability scores

Money Talks clients reported change in their financial capability in all areas. From the first assessment to the second, we saw increased high scores across all financial capability measures.

The biggest changes:

- Planning ahead knowledge -> +26%
- Staying informed knowledge -> +26%
- Having enough money to live knowledge -> +24%
- Controlled spending knowledge -> +22%

Areas with lowest change in high scores:

- Controlled spending behaviour -> +18%
- Planning ahead behaviour -> +18%
- Keeping track of money behaviour -> +18%

These areas still all saw sizeable increases in high scores, which still suggests that Money Talks was effective in these areas. They may have improved slightly less than other areas because (with the exception of staying informed), these were the areas that clients scored highest in before their first session - suggesting that there could have been less room for improvement.

²⁴ P values from the regression models can be found in section 3f of the technical annex.

Figure 2e. Proportion of clients scoring low, average and high in each financial capability area in second Money Talks session and % change from the first assessment²⁵

Financial Capability	Area	Scored high	% change	Scored average	% change	Scored low	% change
Keeping Track Of Money	Knowledge	78%	19%	10%	-5%	12%	-14%
Keeping Track Of Money	Behaviour	81%	18%	7%	-5%	12%	-13%
Controlled Spending	Knowledge	83%	22%	8%	-9%	9%	-13%
Controlled Spending	Behaviour	78%	18%	8%	-4%	14%	-14%
Having Enough Money To Live	Knowledge	84%	24%	7%	-8%	9%	-15%
Having Enough Money To Live	Behaviour	68%	20%	12%	-3%	19%	-17%
Planning Ahead With Money	Knowledge	82%	26%	8%	-7%	9%	-19%
Planning Ahead With Money	Behaviour	74%	18%	7%	-3%	19%	-14%
Looking For The Best Deals	Knowledge	87%	22%	5%	-7%	8%	-16%
Looking For The Best Deals	Behaviour	81%	20%	5%	-4%	14%	-15%
Staying Informed About Your Money Services	Knowledge	63%	26%	11%	-3%	26%	-23%
Staying Informed About Your Money Services	Behaviour	53%	21%	12%	-2%	35%	-19%
Confidence		61%	23%	16%	0%	22%	-23%

As well as seeing the increases in high scores, we can also see that the proportions of low scores have decreased following life event focused money guidance. Confidence and staying informed about money services knowledge are the areas where we saw the biggest reduction in low scores (both -23%). This is particularly important given that these were identified as two key areas of need for clients.

Distribution of scores

The charts below show the change in distribution of scores for Money Talks clients from their first assessment to their second.

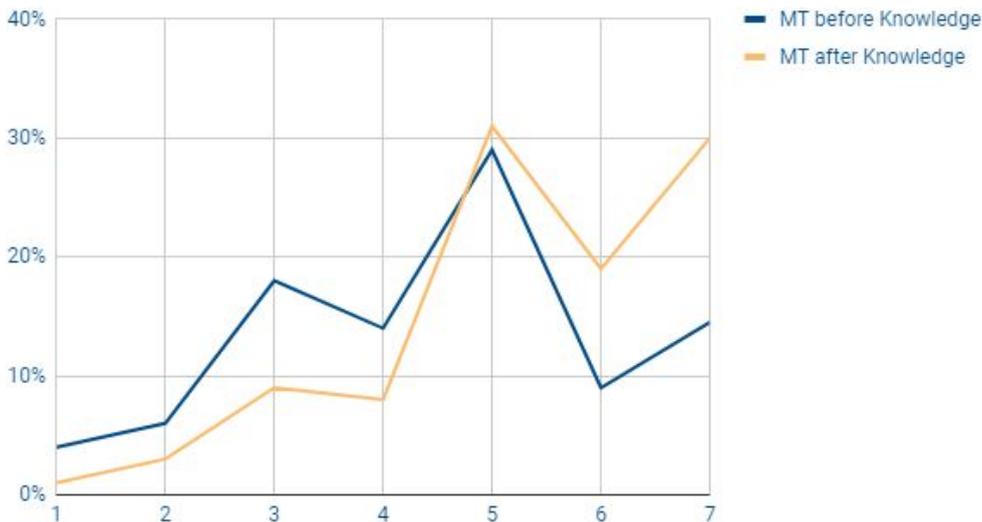
Knowledge

Average knowledge scores improved from the first Money Talks session to the second. We aggregated knowledge scores and found:

²⁵ See section 3d in the technical annex for a breakdown of baseline and follow up scores in the comparison group.

- 3% scored 1 in their second assessment, compared to 9% in their first.
- The proportions of those scoring 1, 2, 3 and 4 reduced.
- There remained a spike at 5, suggesting that many of the people in the high category still had room to improve.
- The proportion of those scoring 6 and 7 increased - in the second assessment 30% of scores were 7s, compared to 19% in the first.

Figure 2f. Aggregated Money Talks knowledge: distribution of scores in first & second sessions



Behaviour

- Behaviour scores also improved, although less so than for knowledge, as can be seen by the fact that the before/after lines are closer to each other than for knowledge.
- The biggest difference between before/after is in scores of 7, the proportion of which increased from 25% to 36%.

Figure 2g. Aggregated Money Talks behaviour: distribution of scores - first & second sessions

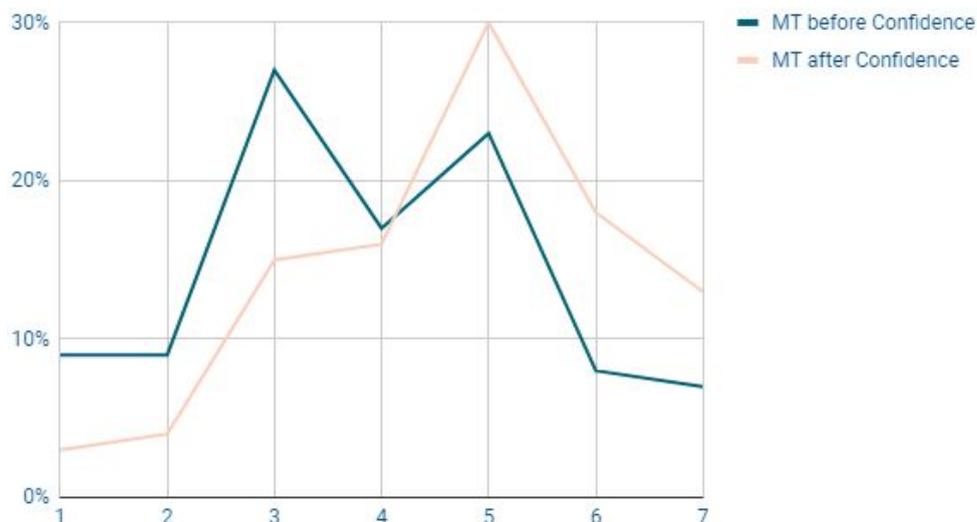


Confidence

- Proportions of low confidence scores all decreased, while high scores all increased.
- In the first assessment, for confidence the highest proportion of clients scored 3, whereas in the second assessment there was a peak at 5. This suggests that many of

those who were just in the low bracket in their first assessment are now in the high - but most still with room for improvement.

Figure 2h. Money Talks confidence: distribution of scores - first & second sessions



As previously discussed, confidence is a key area of need for clients, and was a particular focus of Money Talks. Confidence was the area that average scores increased most, and where the most clients saw a positive change.

Of those who rated their confidence as low in their first session, by the second session, 24% had moved to average, and 35% had moved into the high bracket. In other words, of low scorers, Money Talks moved nearly 3 in 5 out of that bracket by the second session. 42% remained 'low' by the second session, but most made at least some progress - for example the proportion of clients with a score of 1 dropped from 9% to 3%.

Are there any differences in outcomes by life event?

As this was a life events focused service, it is important to understand whether or not these outcomes were shared by people experiencing different life events.

While we had over 650 clients who completed more than one session of Money Talks, once the data is cut by different life events, the extent to which we can draw concrete conclusions is somewhat limited. However, where we have used statistical tests, client volumes are taken into account in the calculation.

Although life events affect people in different ways, a positive change in financial capability is observed, regardless of what life event someone has experienced. There are, however, some slight differences across different life events:

- For clients experiencing a health issue, financial capability still increased across every measure. The wellbeing of these clients also increased from an average of 4.2 before, to 5.6 after - a significant change (P value: <0.01)²⁶.
- Similarly, clients reporting mental health problems saw a significant increase their average wellbeing from 3.3 to 5.1 (P value: <0.01). These clients also saw average

²⁶ Changes in wellbeing calculated using a t test assuming unequal variances.

increases in financial capability across all measures, with confidence and controlled spending behaviour the areas with the biggest improvements.

- Clients who had experienced a relationship breakdown progressed in every area of financial capability, and there was a significant increase in their wellbeing (P value: 0.04).
- Clients who had experienced a change of employment progressed in every area of financial capability, and there was an increase in average wellbeing, although not statistically significant (P value: 0.11).

Are there other non-financial outcomes following Money Talks?

As noted in our theory of change, accessing support is likely to lead to other non-financial outcomes as an impact of guidance. The primary focus of measurement has been looking at changes to financial capability, but we have also looked at other changes too where possible.

Changes in client wellbeing

Another area that we have measured is personal wellbeing, using the ONS life satisfaction measure, which enables us to monitor changes in wellbeing on a 0-10 scale before and after guidance. Given the focus on life events, this measure is particularly pertinent.

Before Money Talks

In 2017, the national average wellbeing score, indicated by the 'how satisfied are you with our life nowadays' question, was 7.7 out of 10²⁷. For Money Talks clients, the average wellbeing score before their first session was significantly below this, at 4.6.

There are indications that low wellbeing correlates with low financial capability. The average wellbeing score of those who scored low in all financial capability measures was just 2.7. Of all Money Talks clients who recorded a wellbeing score of 0-3 before their first session:

- **58% scored low for how often they have enough money to cover the basics needed to live** (21% more than for all Money Talks clients)
- **62% reported low confidence** (14% more than for all Money Talks clients)
- **63% scored low for how often they stay informed about their money services** (6% more than for all Money Talks clients)

After Money Talks

When clients' scores from the first assessment and the second were matched up, we were able to track the change in wellbeing for each client.

- **Wellbeing increased for 57% of clients**
- **Average wellbeing score changed from 4.6 to 5.9**
- Changes in wellbeing scores were statistically significant (meaning we can be 95% certain this change did not occur by chance). P value: <0.01²⁸.

Our process evaluation explores the conditions that may have helped with this change.

²⁷ ONS (2017) *Personal well-being in the UK: October 2016 to September 2017*.

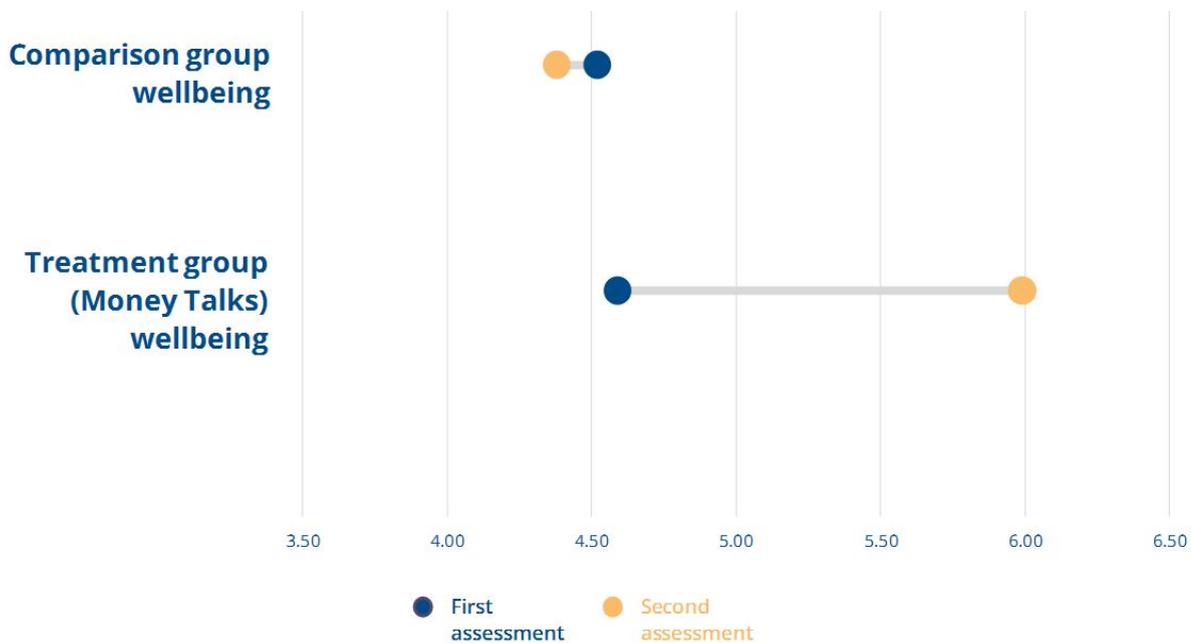
²⁸ This was calculated using a t test assuming unequal variances.

Changes in wellbeing

As well as testing how significant changes in financial capability scores were for the treatment group compared to the comparison group, we also tested the difference between the two groups' changes in wellbeing scores from baseline to follow up.

Changes in wellbeing scores were significantly greater for Money Talks clients than for comparison group clients²⁹.

Figure 2i. Changes in average wellbeing scores for the comparison group and the treatment group



Tangible differences to finances and circumstances

We have also carried out in-depth follow-up interviews with 24 clients 3-5 months after support to understand how they felt about the service, and unpick where and why it might have made a difference.³⁰ We broadly sampled clients from across the range of services, with differing levels of support and life events.

Short term

In the period following Money Talks, these clients highlighted that they:

- Often had more money
- Were more control of their circumstances
- That this was primarily due to the support they received from Money Talks rather than other factors.

Longer term and sustainability

²⁹ P value: <0.01.

³⁰ Full breakdown of client qualitative responses given in technical annex.

This also provided the chance to look for indicators of any longer term differences around people's ability - a topic we hope to explore in further follow-up research.

- 20 in 24 clients said that they felt more confident about taking action on their money matters - 9 in 24 much more confident.
- 18 in 24 clients said that they felt more confident in managing future life circumstances.

When further questioned about this, we can see a split in responses. Some clients mentioned that they felt they knew what to do in the future, whereas a significant number highlighted that they would now know about and feel able to access support if required at a later point.

In conjunction with our process findings, this tells us a few things about what outcomes we can reasonably expect from a discrete money guidance intervention:

- The primary focus of the service has been on stabilising people's situations at the point of a life event - and process observation and adviser feedback has highlighted that sessions have needed to be client-led and focused on a client's immediate situation rather than longer term goals in the first instance.
- With a focus on short term actions being able to connect clients through to additional services where needed, and embed the knowledge of when to access support in the future, can be seen as further positive outcomes of the service.

4. Key findings: Process Evaluation

Our evidence would suggest that for the treatment group supported by Money Talks that it delivered improvements and was viewed as an effective and worthwhile service.

Our process evaluation and experience of delivery have highlighted areas for improvement and refinement that could deliver greater impact. We could now undertake further design work to improve on the benchmark set.

This process evaluation is based on the following data:

- Management information on the number of sessions and clients reached
- Process mapping and resource use - triangulating information from management information; process diaries completed by Money Guides; adviser feedback and observation visits to delivery sites.
- Feedback from Money Guides using mixed methods (monthly reporting forms, interim online survey, workshop focus groups with staff, in-depth-interviews).
- Feedback from referral partners - 10 in-depth interviews with 9 partners (external and other local Citizens Advice); and
- Feedback from clients - census style feedback forms, as well as 24 in-depth client interviews undertaken by external research partner, 3-5 months after support.

How we are defining success

Ultimately, we wanted to understand and evaluate whether Money Talks is an appropriate and effective intervention to improve people's financial capability at a critical time in their life. We also, where possible, want to determine whether it is as effective as it could be. Where it is working less well, or there are any barriers that need to be overcome or critical junctures within project delivery, there is an opportunity for further service improvement.

To be considered appropriate and effective, the delivery process of Money Talks needed to:

- Identify and refer those in need of support during a life-event
- Engage clients to take-up our offer of life-events focused money guidance
- Provide money guidance that identifies and meets clients' needs

Money Talks is the successor to a previous Welsh money guidance service, and this is important context for considering success. Particularly in the initial phases, we are considering what it takes to reconfigure and and scale an existing service.

Overview of intended service process

The diagram and tables below outline the intended service model and the rationale for the key stages in the process. This links through to our theory of change and assumptions about how we can improve clients' engagement with money guidance.



High level service blueprint and rationale

	Key processes	Rationale
Awareness	<p>Promotion of service through tailored leaflets for each life event</p> <p>Poster and information leaflet used with partners to promote service</p> <p>Presentation pack to partners to inform them of the service and how to get involved</p>	<p>Setting clear expectations for the client about the support they can receive and how this can help someone in their situation. This should support engagement with the service (from clients and partners)</p>
Referral	<p>Flexibility in the delivery location of the service - co-location with partners and within Local Citizens Advice</p> <p>New partnerships developed to support people at appropriate points in their life events</p>	<p>Co-locating services in partner organisations allows for an easy and trusted referral for the client and an easy process for the partner</p> <p>Working out of external organisations allows Money Guides to get local knowledge of what's going on in an area (e.g. employers making redundancies)</p>
Booking	<p>Local phone and email bookings</p> <p>National referral route through relevant targeted pages of Citizens Advice website</p>	<p>Demand for national booking service very low so focusing on local route. Local contacts also support relationships with local partners</p> <p>Providing national referral route through Citizens Advice website to target clients looking at life event issues online</p>
Pre-appointment	<p>Appointment reminder formalised before first and any subsequent appointments (phone, email, letter and text options)</p> <p>Structured way of reminding client what they need to bring to the session to maximise what can be achieved in that session</p> <p>Referrals made at this point if critical issues need to be addressed before Money Talks appointment is appropriate</p>	<p>Allows testing of ways of reducing drop-outs and cancellations through the language and channels used</p> <p>Referrals out for critical issues ensures that client is at the right stage to really benefit from a Money Talks appointment and that they can access specialist support for urgent issues first if needed</p>
First appointment	<p>Money skills evaluation questions</p>	<p>Money skills evaluation questions</p>

	<p>determine client needs and shape the session</p> <p>Client able to tell their story and there's flex to tailor the session to their circumstances</p> <p>80 new life event guidance materials and 280 general fincap materials available</p> <p>Consistent approach to looking at entitlements</p> <p>Action plan tied to money skills areas</p> <p>Post appointment check-in scheduled and reminder card provided</p> <p>Flexibility in session length - up to 75 mins</p> <p>Referrals to specialist services</p>	<p>support the Money Guide to understand and meet the needs of the client, as well as capturing baseline data</p> <p>Tailored materials support clients in understanding and navigating all implications of their life event and addressing their priorities. They also normalise the experience, e.g. 'other people in your situation found these things helpful'</p> <p>Clients are able to tell their story</p> <p>Flexibility in the topics covered, action taken and length of session allows the service to be more tailored</p> <p>Addressing benefits entitlements in a structured way stops this issue from becoming a blocker to other support</p> <p>Better onward referrals to other services means a better client journey</p> <p>Tying money skills areas into action plan grounds them in practical ways forward</p>
Follow-up appointment	<p>Phone call or face to face follow up appointment between Money Guide and client to check-in on how client is getting on and what further support they need (if any). This takes place 2-3 weeks after the first appointment</p> <p>Review and update of the action plan</p> <p>Money skills evaluation questions completed by client at end of call to measure progress</p> <p>Client booked in for further appointment if appropriate</p> <p>Referrals to specialist services where needed</p>	<p>Maintains trusted relationship and enables follow-up on actions and support to achieve them where needed</p> <p>Allows for developments in the client's circumstances</p> <p>Supports the evaluation</p>
Additional appointments (if required)	<p>Further appointments 2-4 weeks after the follow-up appointment if required</p> <p>Action plan and progress reviewed and updated</p> <p>On phone or face-to-face depending on client need</p> <p>Life event tailored materials used</p> <p>If not already covered in first session, opportunities for developing savings buffer explored</p>	<p>Allows for further support where the client needs this, delivered by a channel which is appropriate for them</p> <p>Allows the Money Guide to progress the client past immediate urgent issues and onto future planning and more aspirational goals, e.g saving</p> <p>Supports the evaluation</p>

	Money skills evaluation questions completed at end of the session to measure progress	
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How is this different to our normal advice and support service offer?

While clients turning to the Citizens Advice service may be experiencing life events, our advice delivery is focused on addressing the presenting problem, and is structured around that issue (eg debt, housing, employment) rather than someone’s circumstances. For money guidance - such as the previous Welsh money guidance service - the guidance and materials provided to clients are generalistic, focusing on how to improve money skills rather than being tailored to a particular set of circumstances.

Overall, how effective was project delivery?

Delivering against targets

Overall, through engaging with new and pre-existing referral partners, we have been able to engage clients with life-events focused money guidance and meet demand for the service - proving our assumption that people would engage with the service.

It took time for the service to embed, as we had to develop referral pathways suitable for the life events that we focused on - and we saw our targets improve over the course of the project.³¹

Figure 3a - management information from service delivery

	1st sessions	2nd sessions	3rd sessions	4th sessions	5th sessions
Delivery	1,813	906	83	15	1
Target	2,112	1,120			
Delivery against target	86%	81%			
Retention (1st session to 2nd session)		45%**			

**While the retention figure is 50% for the pilot course, this takes into account primarily second session delivery in December 2017 as the service was winding down. Retention consistently stood at 45% for the main duration of the pilot.

**Our service delivery targets were based on our understanding of delivering similar services, and meeting the data requirements of the evaluation. As such, we set the retention rate at 60% between the first and second session - an experiment given that we had not had a follow-up offer formally in place before, with learnings noted below.

There is also some evidence that we saw an improvement in client engagement with Money Talks compared to previous money guidance services in the same area:

- The previous Welsh service saw a combined cancellation/no show rate was 15.4%;
- This has dropped to 10.8% in Money Talks for first sessions and 11.5% for second sessions. No show rates have dropped from 12% to 4.9% (first sessions).

³¹ Full breakdown is available in the technical annex.

The factors that influenced this change could be due to better communication between clients and Money Guides, more engagement with the service or adaptations in project reporting.

This is the first time we have offered a two part money guidance service - in part in response to feedback from the previous service that longer was needed with clients, and in part to add data collection of client outcomes for this research. It has proved difficult to engage all clients in both stages of the programme - but we have still maintained fair levels of clients through the programme.

- We have seen a 45-50% retention rate between first and second sessions.
- There is some variance in this between different types of life events - it has been slightly easier to retain clients experiencing a change in their health.
- We have been able to achieve channel shift as part of delivering second sessions - with 60% of second sessions delivered by phone (compared to 96% of first sessions delivered face-to-face).

Reaching our target group

Money Talks was delivered to its primary intended audience: 98% of those that received support were experiencing at least one of the three target life events.

We had aimed to see equal numbers of our specified three life events. However, we consistently found it easier to initially engage clients experiencing health and employment circumstances rather than relationships. This seems to be less of a factor around retention.

Figure 3b - management Information on service delivery

	1st sessions	2nd sessions	Retention (1st session to 2nd session)
Health	748	393	53%
Employment	681	345	51%
Relationships	384	171	45%
Specific life events total	1,813	906	50%

This can likely be explained in two ways:

- Service deliverer feedback throughout the project consistently stated that there were challenges in finding suitable referral pathways for relationship issues.³² Attempts were made to improve this through innovation in referral partners, eg working closely with family solicitors to engage people at the right time.
- Referral partner feedback indicated that it was often relationship issues that were considered particularly negative, and clients were less likely to be ready to engage with support until a later stage.³³ This supports feedback from Money Guides that stated that clients were often dealing with complex and challenging circumstances.

Delivering a quality service

Over the course of the project, we have drawn on Citizens Advice processes that monitor and review the quality and appropriateness of our services, using our case recording. In June, quality assessments were carried out on one case from each outlet (total of 7 cases) to provide some early feedback. A similar exercise was undertaken 6 months later.

³² Ongoing monthly project reporting

³³ In-depth referral partner feedback

On both occasions, Money Talks was judged as performing to the necessary standards, with a score of 71% (or 'green'). The summary findings were:

- Overall good score achieved
- Good case recording – this was largely clear/concise
- Effective and clear use of appropriate information sources

Our in-depth client interviews also suggest that people have a positive experience of the service: 23 in 24 were likely or very likely to recommend the service, with no major improvements highlighted.³⁴ As part of this, they cited the programme's relevancy, and that it was helpful and informative, while providing direction and reassurance.

What worked well

Working with referral partners

We have been able to maintain and develop new referral partners - alongside internal referrals through our local Citizens Advice - enabling a service to be run across Wales.

Feedback has been very positive about Money Talks - all partners interviewed said that they would like to be involved if the the Money Talks service ran again.³⁵ The capacity to work within local partners' existing systems was highlighted as important in developing and maintaining good partnerships - none of the referral partners we spoke to had to change any of their systems in order to work with Money Talks.³⁶

Partner feedback also emphasised:

- Having the capacity to make referrals to a specialist organisation took the pressure off their own processes and resources
- They appreciated the flexibility of service delivery (eg in booking appointments, or having Money Guides on site)
- Several organisations commented that a key selling point was the face-to-face, one-to-one nature of the service, as they felt their clients were being looked after
- They also saw the benefit for clients - as one partner expressed, it enabled clients 'to see the way forward'.



"Clients who took part in Money Talks felt that they could make informed choices. Now Money Talks is finished the cog is missing from the process."

Referral partner

This service has had a tighter referral pathway than previous services, and it was necessary to target referral partners based on their capacity to refer clients that matched our life-events criteria. We have therefore seen shifts in referral partners from our previous money guidance service, with a mix of specialist and generalist agencies.

³⁴ In-depth client interviews: the remaining client was unlikely to recommend the service as while they were still glad to receive service, and the issue was that they were on a low income and unable to significantly improve their financial situation.

³⁵ In-depth interviews with referral partners.

³⁶ In-depth interviews with referral partners.

Feedback from Money Guides throughout the pilot was the need to monitor closely whether partners were generating the necessary referrals to merit the resource being put into making the relationship work. Sometimes this meant deprioritising the development of particular partnerships which were not delivering against expectations.

Figure 3c: management information focusing on major referral routes

Referral agency	Money Talks	Previous service	Commentary
Advice agency (local Citizens Advice)	37%	27%	Increase most likely due to services being more linked into local Citizens Advice than previously.
Charity/ Not For Profit	5%	17%	Decrease could be due to local links being lost in the transition of services or because the life events focus no longer fitted this client base.
Jobcentre Plus	24%	17%	Increase likely to be due to the life events focus on employment.
Training Provider/ Work Programme	21%	25%	Decrease could be due to local links being lost in the transition of services or because the life events focus did not always fit this client base.
Other	7%	13%	Decrease could be due to local links being lost in the transition of services, because the life events focus did not always fit the client base. It is worth noting that we received referrals from health related organisations and children's centres in some areas that we didn't access in the previous service, again most likely due to the life events focus.
Drop-in / Self referred	6%	0%	This is much greater than in previous services and seemed to be steadily increasing, This would suggest that clients were self-identifying with the idea of experiencing a life event - promotional activities previously asked 'do you need money guidance'. It may also suggest promotion/word of mouth/brand recognition increased.

Focusing on life events has been a substantial change in the way that money guidance is delivered, requiring partners to adapt how they refer to focus on client circumstances rather than an apparent need for financial capability support. We have had consistent feedback from service deliverers throughout the course of the pilot that this takes careful explanation for partners to take onboard and time to embed the new life-events criteria for referrals.³⁷

We have been able to work with referral partners to do this, with the following actions identified as helpful learning points for how to do this well:

- Additional presentations and guidance were issued to many referral partners during the pilot - both to refresh staff and for new joiners where there was staff turnover.
- This included working with partners to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals where clients did not fall within the specific life event criteria (for example, some referred those with finance-related needs).
- In certain areas, service deliverers adapted their referral mechanisms to increase

³⁷ Monthly project reporting from service deliverers

- clarity (eg introducing referral questionnaires).
- While designed for clients, the life event maps developed proved a useful way for Money Guides to explain the service to referral partners.

Reaching a different client base

We have tested a service based on need around a life event, rather than a need to improve low financial capability per se or to solve a financial problem. We are therefore working to a wider definition of who might want or need money guidance, based on the theory that someone's financial capability is not fixed. In general, by identifying clients by event rather than by a problem, this could mean that the service is more preventatively focused.

Clients were referred based on their circumstances, rather than their financial capability. This was reinforced by the fact that any triage of needs occurred in the first Money Talks session, in part using the Citizens Advice financial capability measures. As a result, it is unsurprising that Money Talks clients had higher levels of initial capability than average local Citizens Advice clients,³⁸ and could suggest that a desire to take up the offer of money guidance is not one based solely on acute need and may have wider demand. For example, when asked why they took up the offer of support, clients interviewed reported that their current circumstances made them feel it might be relevant and beneficial, alongside citing more explicit financial difficulties.³⁹ However, as fully detailed above, nearly 75% of clients scored low in at least one area, and only 14% scored high in all areas, suggesting the majority had some areas to improve.

The vast majority of clients - bar those that self-referred - had already accessed some form of advice or support that routed them through to Money Talks. Therefore, you could argue that these clients are already somewhat engaged with taking up support. However, qualitative feedback through our in-depth client interviews indicates that a significant chunk had not accessed money guidance before, or would not have thought to access at this time without a referral through to the service.

The demographic makeup of Money Talks clients suggests that referred clients had underlying vulnerabilities (eg unstable housing, low income), where providing support on money matters may be beneficial (particularly in the context of experiencing a life event). Our Money Talks population had a different demographic profile from that of the Welsh Citizens Advice population of the same period: they were more likely to be older, have a long-term health condition, and either own their own home or have unstable housing (eg staying with friends or relatives).⁴⁰ This can be explained by the life events that clients were experiencing, but may also suggest a slight widening of our client base.

Session content and structure

Feedback and observation from delivery is that the first session is where the primary work occurs with the client and needed to be client-led. These sessions were where the clients' needs are explored and met, with the intention to deliver a tailored set of next steps that a client can act upon (and that the Money Guide can use to engage the client with during the second session). Related to this, of the materials developed specifically for Money Talks, the actions plans were most commonly used during session delivery.

As a result, first sessions tended to be longer (52 minutes compared to 28 minutes⁴¹), and

³⁸ See 'Outcomes evaluation' section

³⁹ In-depth client interviews

⁴⁰ Full demographic breakdown provided in technical annex

⁴¹ From the start of the pilot, the average time taken to complete a first sessions reduced in length by 14mins.

there are fluctuations in session length as Money Guides used the time available to adapt to specific client needs (for instance, relationship first sessions tended to be longer). This flexibility suited most Money Guides, many of whom previously had to work to session target times that might limit what they were able to do for clients.

Money Guides reported that to engage clients in taking action on their financial capability, they had to prioritise dealing with clients' immediate and pressing circumstances first. Not doing this could mean the client was distracted within the session until these issues were acknowledged and managed, primarily by referring to other services (see section below).

Providing emotional support

A key emerging theme was the importance not just of providing clients with information and guidance, but also the importance of taking time to listen and understand their circumstances and provide emotional support. We can speculate that this focus in part may have helped with the improvements in clients' confidence and wellbeing.

As part of workshop focus groups, Money Guides were asked them to describe how they directly or indirectly went about building the confidence of clients. As well as providing all of the relevant information and guidance, they reported purposefully show empathy and listen. Money Guides tried to empower clients and would motivate them to undertake next steps by confirming and validating the clients' knowledge of money matters, providing simple tasks and 'quick wins', as well as clearly explaining the benefits of taking action.

Similarly to confidence building, the main mechanisms used to improve clients' wellbeing were listening to the client, being empathetic rather than sympathetic, building trust and rapport, and empowering the client so they felt able to tackle the issues facing them.



"The most interesting ones for me were when someone had considered that previously their life was pretty horrible, and that by taking the actions that had been agreed in the first interview, that life had improved enormously"

Money Guide

Empathy, empowerment and building confidence were therefore frequently cited by Money Guides as critical skills for doing their job. These are in addition to the skills to provide information and impart knowledge. This is not unusual when working with clients coming to Citizens Advice services, but could be more explicitly built into how staff are recruited and how the service is designed (see 'Policy and Practice').

Identifying the need for further support

Many clients - thanks to their current circumstances or underlying vulnerabilities - required additional support beyond the remit of Money Talks. The service therefore needed to be an access point into other services, primarily into our specialist advice services.

Figure 3d: management information

Total referrals out of Money Talks		737	100%
Local Citizens Advice - debt		138	19%
Local Citizens Advice - benefits		198	27%

This theme was also picked up as part of the Quality of Advice assessment. This noted that the project was dealing with clients who often had multiple needs, including those that required advice in addition to money guidance.

This was a factor considered in Money Talks' project management, and was addressed by:

- Openly discussing and clarifying with Money Guides at an early stage what was and what was not covered within money guidance sessions (even where an adviser may have the qualification to provide additional support) to establish consensus;
- Providing additional guidance to Money Guides to ensure any time limits/emergencies were not missed; moving into other advice areas was avoided; linked issues are identified and appropriate steps are taken;
- Money Guides reported that they found it good practice to manage expectations with clients early on in the session on what the session would be covering.

How delivery processes could be improved

Adaptations made to the service during the delivery period

During the delivery phase, we further developed and iterated the service model and materials based on feedback from the Money Guides, partners and clients. The overall structure of the service did not change - and therefore did not affect our evaluation approach or validity - but we made adaptations to support delivery.

Partners and referrals:

- The three life event criteria were a restriction of the pilot, however it does demonstrate a wider demand for this type of service. We supported the Money Guides to discuss the parameters of the pilot with partners and how to manage referrals which were out of scope.
- National support was provided to enable partnership development, however the structure of some services meant that this was often best managed at a local level. Targeted national promotion of the service was developed to support self-referrals.
- Money Guides were supported to manage mis-referrals with partners and to ensure partners knew where to send clients with other needs.

Service structure

- Money Guides were provided with detailed guidance on how to improve follow-up rates using behavioural insights. Good practice was also shared with the Money Guides to encourage peer learning.
- Due to the scope and duration of the pilot there was little flexibility available on target volumes, however Money Guides were supported and encouraged to 'hack' the service and share what works from their experience of delivering the service with their peers.

Materials and guidance

- To reduce the amount of paperwork required for each client, editable PDFs were developed which could be used electronically with clients.
- The action plan was simplified to allow for more flexibility in how it was used with and by clients.

Processes and systems

- Further guidance was provided to Money Guides to support them in case recording. Additionally creating editable PDF versions of some materials enabled them to save and attach them directly to case records.
- Good practice within the Money Guides was also shared with the Money Guides to encourage peer learning on how to approach asking the evaluation questions and where it may not be appropriate to do so.

Working with partners

Service deliverer feedback indicated that finding and building relationships with partners was not a one-off activity, but instead required dedicated resource throughout the course of the pilot.⁴² While successful relationships have been developed with referral partners, this was resource that had to be factored against achieving service delivery targets. In addition, several deliverers highlighted the short time frame of the service limited their ability to explore more innovative referral pathway opportunities.

There may have been opportunities for closer working that could add additional value to the referral partner and clients, that could be developed in the future with appropriate resourcing:

- Referral partners fed back that they wanted greater access to Money Guides
- Some partners fed back that they would have benefitted from specific details on what happened to a client after a referral was made, as they still had an ongoing relationship with the client (this would need to be balanced against confidentiality considerations).



"Really sad to have lost the service and hope something like that does come up again. We had a really good relationship - it felt like [the Money Guide] was part of our team - we were all one big team working together."

Referral partner

Identifying clients for support

As mentioned, clients were referred based on their circumstances, rather than their financial capability. Referral partners report using a variety of ways to identify clients for support. Any triage of needs occurred in the first Money Talks session, in part using the Citizens Advice financial capability measures. While one of the selling points for the service was alleviating workload pressures for partner, considering how an initial triage might be integrated into making a referral might have the following benefits:

- Identifying the order that clients should receive money guidance or specialist advice in, where a client has pressing circumstances; and
- Provide a starting point for Money Guides to work from, and that full money guidance is best targeted, given there is a lot to cover in the first session.

Life events

Service deliverer feedback does raise questions about the effectiveness of the narrow focus on three specific life events:

⁴² Monthly project reporting from service deliverers

- Many clients receiving Money Talks experienced more than one life event,⁴³ and were therefore harder 'to put neatly in a box' - a pattern that we see similarly across the Citizens Advice service⁴⁴.
- This focus could prove challenging for referral partners to understand and adhere to, requiring additional partnership development resource- and did potentially limit the number of referrals from people that might have benefitted from a tailored service.

Both local Citizens Advice and referral partner feedback indicates that there was no firm consensus about a typical 'stage of life event' clients were being referred at or were willing to take up money guidance.⁴⁵ Usually, it was within a few months of the event occurring, while it was still new. However, where changes had been particularly negative (bereavement, divorce, redundancy), it could be several months after as people needed time to come to terms with the immediate emotional effects. Understanding this could lead to more effective referral pathways, as guidance on when and how to engage clients could be provided.

Session content and structure

While providing the option for more than one session with clients, there have been difficulties in routinely engaging clients in second sessions:

- A recurring theme from Money Guide feedback and project reporting is the difficulty in re-contacting clients, which has led to a reduced number of second sessions. We took on board feedback from Ipsos Mori and the Behavioural Insights Team to try and encourage take-up.
- Money Guides also fed back that in their opinion and diagnosis, not all clients may require a second session - a factor that might play into client re-engagement. However, what is important is the option and that 'the door is left open' for the client. Our in-depth client interviews - including clients that had received more or less support (one to four sessions) - indicate that clients felt that they had been supported to the appropriate level, but liked the option to come back.
- Likewise, Money Guides also fed back that 2-4 weeks might not be the best time for a second session for all clients - but instead checking-in or providing a client the option for further contact might be more appropriate depending on their circumstances.

Seeking second sessions where they might not be most appropriate has implications for the efficiency of service delivery time - we may be over-servicing clients or missing the opportunity to deliver more first sessions or allocate more resource to further follow-ups for those who require them. We'll return to the implications for future services later in the report.

Working out of different settings

While the majority of second sessions were developed on the phone, there have been limited opportunities to test other modes of support, such as Skype. Factoring in time to travel between sessions or to venues was a regular feature for Money Guides, particularly in rural settings, and had to be balanced against time for case preparation, delivery to clients and partnership development work. However, with a future service, this may be something to consider to make delivery more efficient, as well as the potential benefits of improving access to services for clients.

Money Guides also fed back that having to carry service materials with them to different venues was cumbersome, and meant that they tended to prioritise what they really needed to take or would find most useful (eg actions plans). This is useful learning for services that require their delivery staff to be able to be on the move.

⁴³ Adviser feedback and client feedback

⁴⁴ Citizens Advice Outcomes and Impact Research, 2017

⁴⁵ In-depth interviews with referral partners; workshop focus groups with Money Guides.

Improving referral routes through infrastructure development

Bookings for Money Talks by referral partners were made using different mechanisms, based on existing infrastructure available in each local Citizens Advice. Depending on locality, this could mean using a variety of systems or workarounds. While client feedback has been positive about how appointments were made,⁴⁶ this aspect of delivery could be more efficient with an integrated booking system.

Likewise, making ongoing referrals to further support for client was managed locally, and drew on the existing working practices of local offices. This could mean that clients would need to fit into the existing work queues for other services or be re-triaged, making the process less efficient and increasing the risk of drop-out. This is an example of Money Talks not working in vacuum, and instead having to work in conjunction with other services. There is therefore an opportunity for future service design to consider a more efficient referral pathway into other services.

⁴⁶ In-depth client interviews: when asked how appointments were made, most clients commented that appointments were set-up for them, with general satisfaction with this process.

5. Limitations of the evaluation and future evaluation

During the course of delivering Money Talks, we have continually considered whether our evaluation is generating the necessary data required to draw conclusions. We have also considered where we may want to adapt our approach to understand emerging themes. This enables us to get more from the evaluations we deliver.

How we have considered evaluation delivery



For example:

Client wellbeing before and after money guidance

Emerging findings on changes in client wellbeing in our quantitative data

Focusing on this feedback:

- Unpick theme with advisers on what and how this happens
- Unpick with clients directly on what sessions mean to them

Appropriateness of our evaluation approach

On balance, the evaluation approach that we have adopted has been proportionate and delivered useful findings, with learnings for the future.

<p>Quasi-experimental approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, using a quasi-experimental method as an alternative to a full RCT has enabled us to deliver this project with meaningful results. • With some difficulties re-contacting clients, there has been a need to monitor implications on evaluation data quality - both for Money Talks and our control data. This is one limitation of using a before and after technique in understanding change in client circumstances, where we rely on follow-up methods. • With less client data, we have had to be careful in what we can draw from our data. Wherever possible, we have used statistical analysis to sense check the validity of our findings.
<p>Service delivery constraints</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have had a limited window to pilot and evaluate this service. • This means that we have less time available to fully explore through process evaluation a mature service before wind-down, or investigate emerging hypothesis. • It also means that we have had less of an opportunity to explore the longer term effects on clients.
<p>Impact of evaluation on service delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of recording and reporting required in the project was also higher than could be expected over a longer term project and, whilst the impact of this was minimised wherever possible, it did influence delivery (eg the impact of evaluation measures on session time). • To counter this, we have aimed to prioritise what data we collected, and collected some data through shorter sprints or sampled windows to reduce this skew.

Evaluation measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the first full scale test of Citizens Advice’s financial capability measures, and on balance these have proved to be an effective way of capturing data on clients’ capability in a proportionate and meaningful way. • There is room for improvement - ensuring all measures are clearly understood and relevant to clients, and that we best equipping advisers to feel comfortable using them and further embedding these as part of a triage process.
Data quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The management information captured is dependent on the successful input of data into our CRM and appointment system - this is subject to human error and slippage in recording. • We have taken steps to reduce this through delivering training and monitoring input throughout the pilot.

Learnings that can be taken from our evaluation design

Quasi-experimental approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This approach could be used as an alternative for organisations looking to use a control to better understand their impact, but do not have the resources to carry out an RCT.
Evaluation measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our evaluation measures that we have designed to work for those on low-income to align with MAS’ Financial Capability Outcomes Framework could be used in other similar projects. • They prove to be a short and effective way of capturing client capability during service delivery
Embedding evaluation with service design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service and evaluation were designed alongside each other, to be fully aligned and integrated. • This has proved to be an effective for both processes - and in particular, has made capturing evaluation data a more streamlined process for service deliverers.

Capacity and plans for future evaluations

Future evaluations at Citizens Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We now have a more developed evaluation framework to evaluate financial capability interventions, and a benchmark with which to consider any future service improvements. • As mentioned, it has also enabled us to consider how we can better embed evaluation within design and delivery processes.
Evaluation measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will be doing further testing and iterations of our evaluation measures, based on the experiencing of using them in Money Talks. • These will then be used as part of future research and evaluation projects.
Further research with Money Talks clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are looking into the potential to carry out further follow-up research with our clients to investigate longer term sustainability of outcomes.

6. Implications and Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Key learnings from this project

Delivering this type of activity

Across the 7 organisations delivering the service some local adaptations were made to the service model to support delivery and integrate the service with existing services and partnerships; for example linking referrals from an existing telephone service, or using job shares to meet resourcing needs. This was important to ensure the service worked for a local context and allowed us to test and develop what worked within the model. To ensure the right balance of consistency and space for innovation in future services, we would suggest developing a service framework which defines which elements of the service are fixed and which are flexible. This should encourage innovation, but also protect the elements we have tested and know work well.

All clients were offered a second session with a Money Guide, arranged for 2-4 weeks after the first appointment and 45-50% of clients took up this offer, suggesting significant need for a level on ongoing support from this type of service. This second shorter session acted as a follow-up with the client, supporting their progress and providing the opportunity for further sessions or onward referrals as needed.

The service supported referrals into the service as well as onwards to local Citizens Advice specialist services (particularly benefits and debt services) and other organisations. These processes were managed locally during the pilot, however in future there are opportunities to support referral routes through centrally provided systems which would benefit client journeys as well as tracking and reporting.

The reporting requirements for this project were high to allow for all the evaluation needs to be met - this resulted in longer session write-ups and the use of several recording systems. For future services we would look to streamline requirements and systems to reduce the administrative burden. Money Guides were mindful of having to carry and distribute too much paperwork (particularly where they were moving between several different locations) and whilst electronic versions of materials were available they weren't always used, in some situations due to lack of access to the internet in partner venues. A core set of materials will be refined for future services, along with a specification of the minimum technological requirements for the service to enable more digital working.

Working with this client group

Clients coming to the service were often dealing with very difficult situations and in very emotional states. The empathetic, empowering and confidence building skills of the Money Guides were identified as critical in enabling the client to progress with their issues. For future

services we would like to further explore the role of this emotional support in helping clients build their financial capability. We would also like to look at how we can provide further emotional support to Money Guides to cope with the often challenging information clients share with them over the course of their appointments.



'...some of it is quite dark... people will tell you lots and lots of personal information if they feel comfortable'

Money Guide

Sessions were led by client need and the flexibility of the overall framework of the session supported this by enabling the Money Guide to explore issues appropriately with the client, without being restricted by a set script or process. The majority of clients needed support with benefit and debt issues and we were able to facilitate access to further support where specialist advice was needed on these topics or other specialist areas.

Having choice in delivery channels for first and second appointments was important as it allowed clients to use the channel best suited to their needs and circumstances. Particularly in very rural areas with limited transport the option of phone sessions was more frequently taken up, however it was also identified as useful for clients with access issues more generally.

Having flexibility in the length of sessions was also important as this allowed Money Guides to tailor the sessions to the needs of clients. As Money Guides became more experienced over the course of the pilot the average session length decreased - by the end of the pilot first sessions were on average 14 minutes shorter than at the start.

Clients were often experiencing a combination of issues at any one time. Using the life events as strict 'criteria' for entry to the service, or having targets against each life event, were not felt to be useful and partners in particular found it difficult to adjust to there being only 3 included in the pilot. However using the life events to help frame and tailor the sessions with the clients was felt to be effective in supporting engagement and ensuring relevance for the client.

Working with partners



'It was invaluable - she helped so many of our clients'

Referral Partner

A key feature of the Money Talks service was the development of partnerships to support effective and timely referral routes. The services were also often co-located within partner locations, such as job centres, to allow clients easy access to the support provided by the service. The key benefits partners found in the service were that it offered a specialist independent and impartial service to their clients which enabled them to see a way forward.



'It's the change in people - you can see a little bit of the weight lifted off which at the end of the day makes them far more inclined to progress which is what you want for them.'

Referral Partner

The flexibility within the appointments was welcomed and having a main point of contact made referrals easy and helped to build strong trusted relationships. When partners were recommending the service to clients they found that a key selling point was the face-to-face, 1:1 nature of the service, which ensured they felt their clients were being looked after.

Partners would have liked even more access to the service and their Money Guides, however as Money Guides were often working with multiple partners there wasn't always capacity within the resource levels on the project to support this. For future services we would like to look at how we can provide an appropriate level of feedback without compromising client confidentiality in order to help partners with their ongoing client relationships.

The length and intensity of the pilot posed challenges for local offices in setting up new partnerships, particularly in new areas such as relationship breakdown. For future services we would recommend a longer lead in/set-up phase and service delivery period. This would allow for more partnership development to be incorporated alongside service delivery at a local level, and more support to be provided at a national level.

Partners found the materials produced for the service, particularly one page 'life event maps' which clearly set out what Money Talks could help with, were very useful in helping them to identify appropriate clients for the service. For future services we would look to further develop a 'partner pack' of materials to support delivery.

Wider learning

The delivery and evaluation of this project has provided us with useful learning not only about the impact of the service on clients, but also about the mechanisms for successful delivery. This wider learning has applicability for our organisation, but also for MAS and other organisations who may be commissioning or delivering money guidance services

What we've learned about the role of strategic leadership and delivery

To deliver a high quality service the following need to be in place:

- A balance of consistency and flexibility within the service model, to allow space within delivery for service improvement and innovation
- Delivery and development grounded in ongoing insight and learning, with strong outcomes management
- Ongoing strategic partnership development and relationship management support, in addition to service delivery resourcing

- Clear and effective training and content, with a face-to-face training, space for discussion and ongoing peer-learning
- Integrated systems and infrastructure to be in place before piloting, (eg to enable effective referral processes)

What we've learned about how services can be developed and set up

Designing and establishing effective services requires:

- Integrating the development of the design and the evaluation of the service
- Allowing an appropriate length of time to set-up a new service, particularly to allow new relationships and partnerships to be established
- Using targets appropriately, e.g. ramping up targets as service becomes more established rather than being flat throughout
- Understanding and addressing the limitations that short projects and pilots have for resourcing and wider process change

What we've learned about how we understand and meet client needs

- Ongoing 'what works' processes can be embedded within projects as part of service delivery to enable iterative testing and improvement, realist evaluation and the use of proportionate data and insight
- Service users should be involved in the design and continual development of the service - clients, partners and advisers
- Joined-up and streamlined client journeys enable a client's wider needs to be met in the most effective and efficient way
- The emotional support required by clients should not be understated - advisers should be appropriately skilled, trained and supported in this

Project sustainability

The Money Talks project formally finished delivery at the end of December 2017 and without additional funding delivery was not able to continue after that point. The demand for the service was high and client volumes were continuing to rise over the course of the pilot and we believe the service model was not only sustainable, but met significant unmet need for one to one support at key points in people's lives. There is no similar or equivalent service available for these client groups across Wales.



'Really sad to have lost the service and hope something like that does come up again'
Referral Partner

We spoke with representatives from all areas that we received contact details for, from a range of types of organisations and covering all life events, to gather feedback on their experience of working with the Money Talks service. All responded very positively to the service and would like to be involved if it were to run again.

Whilst the short term nature of the Money Talks project meant that many of the staff delivering the service had to move on after December 2017, the institutional memory, legacy materials and learning from the evaluation could be used to set-up, or further develop and test future money guidance services across England and Wales. Appropriate funding would be required to set-up, manage and deliver these projects.

Future developments of the project

We believe this project has the potential to be developed and further tested in various ways:

- Further developing co-located services to test engagement levels, particularly for clients less involved with other services
- Developing national partnerships with other organisations
- Digitising more processes, including testing engagement with email and messaging
- Testing delivery of the service by Skype (or other video technology)
- Further exploring the emotional and psychological element of money guidance and how this can best be integrated into services and skills

There was demand from partners and clients that the service be scaled up to focus on more life events and this would enable us to support a greater number of clients throughout their lives. To do this we would require the development of relevant partnerships and appropriate tailored materials to address the needs of people going through different life events.

A theory of change for a new service

Problem (need)	Experiencing a major life change or change in circumstances can lead to practical problems if someone is not able to adapt and manage their new situation quickly. Often this involves evaluating personal circumstances, including finances. Having the appropriate skills, knowledge and mindset is imperative in mitigating further problems.
Inputs	<p>People are offered one-to-one financial capability support to ensure they have the right money skills to manage their current circumstances.</p> <p>This guidance should be personal to the individual and their circumstances. This will help to engage them to take up the offer of support. It will also help in the session and after, by ensuring the guidance is relevant to them and they can take action based on it.</p> <p>Working with external partners to identify people experiencing a broad range of different life events will help target money guidance at those in need in a timely manner.</p>
Activities	<p>The number of money guidance sessions varies depending on client need.</p> <p>The first session is primarily delivered face-to-face, where their circumstances and financial capability are assessed, using the financial capability measures and using their life event is used as way of tailoring the conversation. Time is also built into listening to what a client is going through so they feel understood and ready to receive guidance - guiders are given support and training to know how best to do this. Relevant practical and contextual information is then delivered based on client need and what matters to them, and next steps decided.</p>

	<p>Further sessions can be delivered as necessary, using a variety of channels - with greater flexibility on when check-ins occur, to time to fit with the client's circumstances.</p> <p>We can also refer to specialist advice services as required, acting as bridge to holistic and timely support.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Following money guidance, a client sees an improvement in knowledge and behaviour around their money skills: keeping track of money; controlled spending; having enough money to live; planning ahead with money; looking for the best deals; and staying informed about money services.</p> <p>They also see an improvement in their confidence to take action in their money matters.</p> <p>This leads to wider improvements in their circumstances, including their personal wellbeing, and ability to manage their life event without negative financial consequences.</p>
Impact	<p>Clients are able to apply their money skills in the future - as well as know how and when to access support again should they need it - and therefore feel better prepared for similar life events.</p>

Authored by Richard Williams and Siân Whyte.

Acknowledgements

The impact and evaluation team provide evidence and insight to understand what works. We deliver robust evidence on why we are needed and the difference we make to our clients and society, enabling us to demonstrate the overall impact and value of Citizens Advice. We assess service effectiveness, seeking to show what works, why and for whom - to continually improve our service offer to clients. We also work with others in the sector around impact and evaluation, shaping approaches and sharing findings.

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