

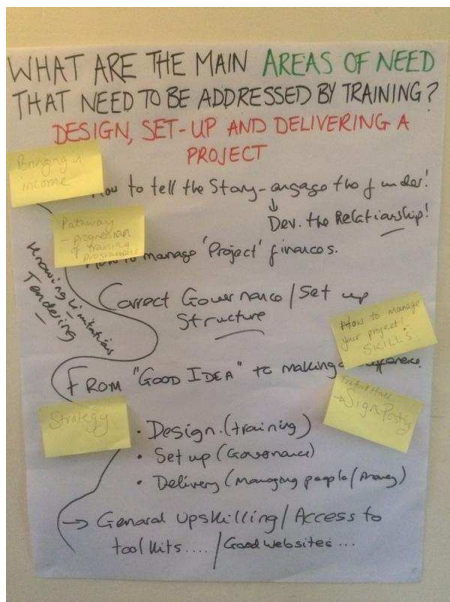


Trafford Hall

National Communities Resource Centre

Trafford Hall Consultation Day

Thursday 13th November 2014



National Communities Resource Centre, Trafford Hall, Ince Lane, Wimbolds Trafford, CH2 4JP

www.traffordhall.com

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	1
Financial Inclusion	2
What are the areas of need that need to be addressed by training?	2
What impacts will be made at a community level if we deliver training on this topic?.....	4
What difference will the training make to you and the people you are supporting?	5
Healthy Eating.....	5
What are the areas of need that need to be addressed by training?	6
What impacts will be made at a community level if we deliver training on this topic?.....	7
What difference will the training make to you and the people you are supporting?	8
Fuel Poverty	9
What are the areas of need that need to be addressed by training?	9
What impacts will be made at a community level if we deliver training on this topic?.....	10
What difference will the training make to you and the people you are supporting?	10
Designing, Setting Up and Running a Project	11
What are the areas of need that need to be addressed by training?	12
What impacts will be made at a community level if we deliver training on this topic?.....	13
What difference will the training make to you and the people you are supporting?	14
Training Feedback	14
Residential Training	15
➤ What has Trafford Hall done in the last two years that you feel we should be proud of and why?	16
➤ What makes Trafford Hall different from other training providers?.....	16
➤ What other training could Trafford Hall offer you and your community?.....	17
Conclusion.....	19

Executive Summary

This report evaluates the views and perspectives of delegates at Trafford Hall's Consultation Day. The information provides insight into the issues facing disadvantaged communities, which will be used to shape future training programmes. Our research is based on feedback from 42 grass-roots social activists from around the UK, and the information gathered during the event is written up in this report. The most urgent and reoccurring themes include:

- Widespread financial exclusion; a need to address a shortfall of money management skills and resilience in the face of economic pressures, particularly among young people.
- Issues surrounding the introduction of Universal Credit; many benefit recipients will struggle to budget as they are not used to being paid monthly, the new system may cause more tenants to face eviction and rent arrears as payments will no longer go directly to landlords, and those without internet access could struggle to complete online applications.
- The need to approach the issue fuel poverty holistically rather than as a single issue; looking at the wider causes and implications.
- The need to engage young people through healthy eating projects and initiatives; food can be an effective engagement tool and can be utilised to help address a range of other issues.
- The shortfall of skills and confidence needed to design, set up and run a community projects. More support is needed to help motivated community activists turn project ideas into a reality.
- The need for training around developing soft skills such as communication, presentation and networking.

Delegates' feedback about training currently offered at Trafford Hall highlighted the benefits of training residentially; our courses provide delegates with the opportunity to network with other like-minded people, and holding courses over a 2 day period allows a broader depth to be covered.

The information gathered throughout the event is crucial to our understanding of the issues facing disadvantaged communities and vital will be for developing further training programmes.

Introduction

The Consultation Day was organised and facilitated by Trafford Hall, in association with Neighbourhood Economics. The event was attended by over 40 social activists from around the UK who work at a grass-roots level and are experts in the issues facing disadvantaged communities. The aim of the consultation event was to help us grow and develop new courses addressing the most important issues facing disadvantaged communities.

We held a series of workshops around themes of Financial Inclusion, Fuel Poverty, Healthy Eating and Designing, and Setting Up and Running a Project. Each workshop began with a brief presentation about the topic being discussed, followed by a discussion about how training could best help people tackle these issues. Information from each of the discussions was noted on flip charts and posters by a facilitator in each of the workshops. Delegates were encouraged to note their ideas throughout the day and to interact with our Twitter feed.

Information gathered from the event is recorded in this document. We asked delegates to answer questions around each of the identified themes about the *areas of need* for training, the *impact* training would have, and the *difference* training would make to the people and communities they support. The information gathered throughout the event will be vital for developing further training and course programmes.

Financial Inclusion

This workshop was presented by PennySmart, a community interest company who provide money advice, education and training services. The issues of 'financial inclusion' were outlined, and then delegates were given the opportunity to discuss how Trafford Hall could play a part in addressing some of these issues/barriers to financial inclusion in their communities.



What are the areas of need that need to be addressed by training?

This question generated a very broad response because the topic of 'financial inclusion' encompasses such a wide range of issues. Delegates identified the most pressing issues facing their communities and specified the areas of need to be addressed by training.

Advice, education and skills:

- Setting up a bank account
- Accessing credit unions
- Filling out application forms
- Understanding the benefit system and keeping up-to-date with changes to entitlements
- Debt management
- Raising awareness of risks of payday loans and loan sharks
- IT skills – digital inclusion is linked to financial inclusion
- Adjusting to changes to benefit payments
- Need a better understanding of 'alternative economy' ideas to help financially excluded people
- Improving communities' understanding of debt – debt can be simple to deal with if you know what to do
- People/counselling skills
- Learning to spot the early warning signs of community members who may be getting into trouble – referring them to appropriate advice/support

Lobbying government, challenging and understanding policy:

- Understanding the implication of the Welfare bill and Universal Credit - many benefit recipients will struggle to budget as they are not used to being paid monthly, and those without internet access could struggle to complete the online applications.
- Zero hour contracts are exploitative and are not addressed by the benefit system
- Voicing the unspoken fears of older members of the community, helping to retain their financial independence with the closure of high street bank branches and local post offices, particularly in rural and semi rural areas.
- Understanding the bigger picture – i.e. the points of view of the government, service users and benefit claimants
- Gathering a new vocabulary – a profound change is needed to help people understand finance and economics
- Need to improve people's awareness of how to get information from officials – who to go to and what to ask

Training:

- Training people to become community mentors
- Engaging young people
- Debunking jargon
- Debt training as people have to wait a long time to see advisors
- Training on how to signpost people to appropriate agencies to help with benefit problems and basic advice on debt problems
- Training on where to obtain cheaper utilities
- Clarification of the confusing jargon around 'Financial inclusion'
- Long term training is needed - more effective than short term
- Peer support/supervision - training community mentors or 'life coaches'
- Not just about having knowledge – it is just as important to have the skills to deliver sessions
- Debt must not be seen as an isolated problem

What impacts will be made at a community level if we deliver training on this topic?

- Better able to manage money
- Greater understanding and confidence in managing money
- People would be more confident in asking/answering questions
- Greater awareness of how to deal with problems
- Improved understanding of the effects of debt and how to deal efficiently with it
- Greater confidence to tackle personal problems
- Reduced stress
- Communities empowered to pass on information by holding workshops and training days
- Greater awareness of ethics of companies helping/offering to help a community
- Reduced element of fear of financial problems
- Greater financial independence; self esteem will be retained, which in turn keeps peoples' wellbeing at a high level
- Greater confidence in the benefit system
- Greater access to banking facilities i.e. banks, credit unions
- Better understanding of the way their local authority/landlord works
- Reduced pressures of financial hardship as people become more knowledgeable
- Reduced travel and phone costs as information is available more locally
- Communities more confident in scrutinising local authorities – making sure they are delivering value for money
- Reduced risk of eviction of tenants; reduced rent arrears and greater support available to sustain their tenancies
- Reduced debt
- Increased access to benefits – greater awareness of entitlements
- People and communities will be financially better off
- Improved health – reduced pressure on the NHS
- Greater self respect

What difference will the training make to you and the people you are supporting?

- People will become more informed about financial matters
- Improved ability to manage own debts without relying on support
- Able to access free advice when needed, rather than paying for expensive advice services
- Awareness of the cutbacks being made to services such as playgroups, youth groups, etc.
- Residents encouraged to share information and knowledge with their peers, i.e. updating community member on changes to benefit legislation
- Debunked idea that financial problems/financial illiteracy apply to only one sector of society; it actually applies to all sectors (people confuse poverty and debt)
- The better informed the community leaders are, the better the chances are of life improvement for all
- Help empower and strengthen community groups
- Communities more able to influence service providers and government
- A more financially included youth
- More positive, inclusive communities
- Involved residents more likely to hold workshops and community training events
- Improved physical and mental health
- Increased scrutiny of social landlords

Healthy Eating

This workshop began with a presentation by representatives of the Young People's Support Foundation about promoting healthy eating in communities. The presentation focused on practical ways to promote healthy eating whilst also engaging communities, particularly young NEET people. Delegates were prompted to discuss the issues of healthy eating in low income communities. Feedback from the group was directed around set questions to find out the areas of need to be addressed by training, the impacts that could be made by training, and the difference training could make to the communities they work with.



What are the areas of need that need to be addressed by training?

The delegates stressed that education is key to tackling the issues of healthy eating on a limited budget, and the most effective way to achieve this is through practical, hands-on, learning methods around;

- cooking lessons using healthy, affordable recipes
- ways to reduce food waste
- home economics
- 'back to basics' training
- budgeting
- the benefits of using of slow cookers
- food hygiene/safety
- portion planning
- cooking for one (self sufficiency)
- how to prepare food parcels
- allergy advice
- the importance of recycling
- training people to become trainers in their own communities
- how to become a mentor
- opportunities to follow-up training

The need to engage communities, particularly young people, was made clear in each of the workshops. Training should be aimed at;

- providing engagement tools
- encouraging social/cultural cohesion
- targeting specific age ranges; young and older people, but especially the 16-25 age group
- developing 'people' skills
- understanding the 'value exchange' - how to incentivise
- providing peer support
- using real life examples to inspire others
- encouraging young people to get involved in future projects
- building rapport with young people

Important to deal with the issue holistically;

- encouraging behavioural change
- combining low-level messages
- training must also have secondary benefits such as improving communication skills
- developing awareness of complex personal issues that might come up in course of delivery
- healthy eating is about more than just food; issues of mental health, income, environment, wellbeing etc. are also crucial

What impacts will be made at a community level if we deliver training on this topic?

Responses to this question highlighted that as well as a transfer of practical skills and knowledge; training around healthy eating should also have a wider impact on communities, including;

- encouraging community spirit and engagement
- providing a platform for communities to socialise and integrate
- bringing people together to share ideas and recipes
- increasing overall health and wellbeing
- providing service users new opportunities

- promoting health and well-being through food is a catalyst for new projects and initiatives
- may help people to identify a 'market' for a new community project
- improved use of community resources, e.g. using community centres for cookery courses
- encouraging local stores to donate goods to community groups

What difference will the training make to you and the people you are supporting?

Delegates made it clear that training focused on healthy eating would have a range of benefits towards the people they support locally, including;

- a wider skill set/knowledge base
- being better able to organise volunteers to plan and hold healthy eating sessions
- improved cultural awareness/sensitivity
- better informed, engaged, youth generation
- community engagement first, healthy eating second
- more confidence in understanding different dietary needs and government messages
- boosting enthusiasm
- helping to solve national health issues, relieving pressure on the health service
- cascading learning to others

Fuel Poverty

This workshop was presented by Bruce Gillham, who attended a course at Trafford Hall two years ago and received a grant for an initiative to help his community. Bruce used his grant to buy 30 slow cookers for people who were reliant on food banks. He also taught people affordable, healthy recipes which could be replicated at home using their slow cookers. This provided struggling people with a fuel-efficient means to cook affordable, nutritious meals. Bruce's project enabled disadvantaged people to significantly reduce fuel and food costs; this benefitted around 200 people. Bruce's story prompted discussion about different ways to reduce the impact of fuel poverty, and how people could make a difference in their communities.



What are the areas of need that need to be addressed by training?

Education and awareness were identified as the main areas of need to be addressed by training. Delegates thought that there should be training around;

- how to save money to afford bills
- how to access appropriate advice
- awareness of energy costs, e.g. the cost of leaving a light bulb on for an hour
- helping people plan-ahead their lifestyles
- energy saving tips e.g. wearing extra clothes, draft insulating, heating efficiency, fitting more efficient shower heads, use of timers, smart meters and energy efficient light bulbs
- hands-on, practical training
- energy-efficient cooking techniques e.g. using steamers and slow cookers
- water efficiency techniques
- solar energy advice and guidance
- sharing accurate, practical information; e.g. how to change your provider if you are on a meter
- empowering people to share their own knowledge and expertise
- links to food banks and collaborative approaches – joined up training for joined up community solutions

- benefit take-up campaigns
- challenging the impact of fuel poverty on young people
- 1 to 1 training needed to help on an individual level
- addressing the problem of inertia
- communication needs to be improved in order to share learning and advice
- advice on how to lobby the power industry and the government

It was made clear that fuel poverty should not be seen as a problem on its own. It is important to recognise that different issues interlink with fuel poverty, e.g. mental health, well-being, education, age, confidence, etc.

What impacts will be made at a community level if we deliver training on this topic?

- Community cohesion
- Cascading of information and practice
- Improved budgeting skills
- Lower fuel bills
- Less debt
- Greater long-term financial planning
- Better informed communities
- More comfort at home
- Communities more confident in working together for change
- More accessible advice
- Energy suppliers more inclined to share information/advice with communities
- Communities would become more motivated to help each other
- Tips and skills learnt can be passed on from course delegates to other community volunteers

What difference will the training make to you and the people you are supporting?

- Improved skills and self-help approaches
- Improved awareness of how to access help, advice and other services
- Reduced stress and improved mental health

- Community activists will become inspired by other peoples' stories e.g. Bruce's slow cooker project
- People will make sure they receive all of their entitlements
- Knowing what NOT to do
- Greater personal dignity – not charity dependent
- Decrease in poverty
- More money available for other things as less is spent on bills
- Greater pride in local communities

Designing, Setting Up and Running a Project

This workshop was presented by Chris Murray from Create the Way, a charity that works to with long-term unemployed people to build employability skills though workshops in bicycle mechanics and other practical skills. The Create the Way project was partly funded by a grant from Trafford Hall and provides an excellent example of how a grant can be utilised to develop and sustain a community project. Many of the delegates felt that people lacked the confidence and skill-set to design, set up and run a community project; therefore this workshop was useful for establishing how training could be beneficial.



What are the areas of need that need to be addressed by training?

Delegates made it clear that there is a need to improve fundraising abilities and increase people's confidence and know-how in setting up and running community projects.

Fundraising:

- Knowing where to get money from – accessing various sources of funding – applying for the right amount of funding
- Managing grants and sustaining self-generated income
- Managing project finances
- Confidence building – not being disheartened when a bid is unsuccessful
- How to conduct effective market research to demonstrate that the project is unique and needed
- How to develop SMART targets/outcomes
- How to prepare funding bids and demonstrate a need for the work
- Registering with the charity commission – knowing what work is involved in setting up
- Setting realistic goals; knowing a project is feasible
- How to tell your story
- How to engage funders and build a good working relationship/reputation

Setting up:

- How to transform a passion into practical action
- Having the confidence to take an idea to the next level
- Choosing the right pathway
- Knowing what constitutes a 'social enterprise'
- How to develop a strategy/business plan
- Knowing the correct way to govern a project
- Knowing what is needed to set up e.g. documents, insurance, etc.
- Understanding different cultures and being sensitive to different issues/circumstances
- Developing a sustainable enterprise that works to generate its own income

Running the project:

- Knowing how to recruit volunteers and keep them involved
- Utilising the skill-set of volunteers
- Training people internally within the project e.g. health and safety, safeguarding, ensuring people are safe during sessions
- Training in communication, presentation and IT skills

- Encouraging help from other community groups or local businesses
- Managing the project's image – using the media and social media for telling the project's story and for interacting with the public
- Setting up a management committee

What impacts will be made at a community level if we deliver training on this topic?

- People would become more confident in progressing an idea and setting up a community project
- Training in time management and planning would help leaders maintain their project
- Training would enable people to gain advice and skills to assist in sessions
- Training will enable people to pass on what they have learnt to their community - to empower them to get involved and do things for themselves
- Better able to measure the effectiveness of work; baseline research at the start, surveying and opinions may be useful
- Better able to monitor progress and outcomes (may be able to get help from local universities etc)
- Services provided to local people who need it most in a particular area, i.e. healthy eating for people living alone
- Greater awareness of local difference
- Residential training provides a chance for project leaders to learn and then come back for more advanced follow-up training
- Greater confidence for those you are supporting
- More sustainable community projects
- More tenants/residents will be encouraged get involved if it is in their interest to do so
- Utilised support from other organisations

What difference will the training make to you and the people you are supporting?

- People will become more confident in setting up a project
- Project volunteers develop employability skills
- Properly planned and presented sessions would keep peoples' attention and enable them to take in more helpful information
- Bringing people together to socialise, learn and share skills to assist others
- Greater understanding of the difficulties of running such an organisation
- Communities become more empowered to make positive change
- People will get more out of funding to improve the well being of members of their community
- Greater understanding of the benefits for the organisations that help your project
- Better able to demonstrate the benefits that the project will bring e.g. more jobs, engagement, skills development, cohesion, income generation for future projects, support for disadvantaged
- Understanding that projects need to be beneficial to everyone involved
- Well run projects will deal with community issues in the most effective way possible

Training Feedback

Most of the consultation day attendees have received training at Trafford Hall in the past and are keen to participate in future courses. To help us understand the benefits of the training we provide, we asked delegates to tell us about why they choose to come to Trafford Hall and what makes us stand out from other training providers. We value the thoughts of the people we work with and make sure they are at the heart of what we do; therefore we welcome feedback and new ideas about what training is needed in future. We asked delegates to complete application forms at the end of the event and to note down their ideas on posters in each of the breakout rooms. Responses were honest, inspiring and very insightful.

Residential Training

The training we provide is unique because we deliver it residentially at Trafford Hall; therefore it is important to understand its value. The feedback we received demonstrates that residential training is highly beneficial to learning and that it provides important networking opportunities for community activists. By holding courses over a two-day period, a broader range of content can be covered and training is not rushed. However, it was also emphasised by delegates that it may be beneficial to hold courses over a longer period, depending on the depth of the course. Delegates expressed the benefits of practical, hands-on training, but also believe it is important to acknowledge that people respond differently to various learning methods, i.e. visual, practical, reading, group work, etc. The networking opportunities provided by training residentially are seen as an advantage over other types of training; participants are able to learn from the experience of other like-minded people, often gaining confidence and inspiration from hearing about the work other people have done in their own community. Interacting with other community activists from around the country helps participants to develop an empathetic understanding of the problems faced by other communities; this generates a sense of solidarity and enhances motivation. It was suggested that follow-up support could be beneficial for some courses, depending on the topic and depth of the training. An online forum for trainees was suggested as a way to receive extra guidance and a chance for further interaction between participants after attending. The information we received regarding the structure of training will be vital for shaping the delivery of future training at Trafford Hall.

We asked delegates a number of questions about our work and the delivery of training:

➤ **What has Trafford Hall done in the last two years that you feel we should be proud of and why?**

“Trafford Hall has given me confidence and self esteem. I love coming here because the staff are so helpful and friendly”

“You should be very proud to know you have helped a lot of people”

“Your courses and trainers have turned me from an ignorant, gibbering wreck, 2 years ago, to a trained, knowledgeable and confident team member, growing in confidence and ‘setting me on fire’ after each course”

“They offer a good venue and the rooms and catering are excellent”

“The trainers are all very good”

“I am proud that Trafford Hall has fitted a biomass heating system”

“The help given when applying for grants”

“A high quality of training”

“Extremely good value and always good, knowledgeable, and able instructors”

“Grant applications are very useful”

“Trafford Hall have given me confidence and the ability to express myself and I can’t say enough about the quality of the training. The trainers are great and the courses are amazing. I can feel Trafford Hall is behind me when I’m talking to committees and groups”

➤ **What makes Trafford Hall different from other training providers?**

“Environmentally friendly in as many aspects as possible”

“Being in a group and working at Trafford Hall. The people are always there to help if they can”

“Friendly atmosphere and approachable facilitators make for a safe environment within which to share both good and bad experiences to aid learning within groups and networks”

“Trafford Hall helps you to think of ideas in unthought-of ways”

“Inclusive environment”

“It gives you a chance to meet other Housing Associations and network with them”

“A high quality of training and an opportunity to network and learn from the experience of other tenants”

“A way of meeting other tenants”

“Trafford Hall gives you an opportunity to mingle with other people and they provide all the things you need and make you feel comfortable”

➤ **What other training could Trafford Hall offer you and your community?**

This question generated a range of suggestions for future training courses, including:

- How to manage finances; budgeting skills, setting up bank accounts, knowing where to seek advice
- How to help other people fill out forms and understand benefit entitlements
- Debunking the jargon of “financial inclusion”
- Holding courses to help people to understand large government documents, i.e. about benefit entitlements and other policies, by simplifying and condensing text
- Lobbying training – how to hold government to account, how ask questions to politicians and professionals
- Training in how to set up and run a workshop presentation; e.g. using IT software to design presentations
- Trafford Hall could hold more conferences/think-tanks enabling community workers and volunteers to share ideas and network
- Fundraising training; writing and planning bids, knowing how to answer questions and access grants.
- Training in how to encourage greater involvement/engagement of community members, especially young people.
- How to organise community events
- How to sit on a committee; listening, participating and scrutinising skills
- Communication and leadership training
- Understanding the economy of sustainable regeneration

- Administrative skills including minute taking, setting agendas, roles and responsibilities
- Practical, hands-on education for young people
- Health, safety and wellbeing in the community; e.g. first aid courses
- More residential training, sometimes for 3 days instead of 2 (depending on depth of course)
- Training people to become trainers in their community
- Knowing how to direct training around fuel poverty
- Knowing where to refer people for advice regarding poverty and debt
- Healthy eating in the community; practical hands-on training engaging young people
- Food waste courses
- How to provide safeguarding training for volunteers
- How to recruit and retain volunteers for tenant panels
- Understanding cultural differences; encouraging greater tolerance and social cohesion
- Training in how to tackle community-level issues of alcohol and drug abuse
- Online home-study course to follow-on from training at Trafford Hall
- A web-based forum for trainees
- Training on how to network; who to approach and talk to, and what to achieve from it.

Conclusion

The Consultation Day generated extremely insightful feedback from social activists who work at a grass-roots level and have an expert knowledge of the issues facing disadvantaged communities. The flexibility of the workshops allowed discussions to open up to new ideas and sub-themes; this provided a broader understanding of each of the topics. A number of repeated ideas emerged throughout the event, highlighting an urgency to act on specific concerns and to ensure training addresses the most critical issues. The most critical issues identified were; financial exclusion of vulnerable people, uncertainties about the impact of new welfare reforms, difficulties with engaging young people, insufficient confidence and skills required for running community projects, and a shortfall of 'soft' skills i.e. communication and networking. It became clear throughout the event that all of the themes are closely interlinked; therefore it is important to think holistically when it comes to developing training.