

**Quids in:  
The impact of financial skills training  
for social housing tenants**

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## Executive summary

Over the period June 2011 to March 2012, Bedworth, Rugby and Nuneaton CAB (BRANCAB) delivered a financial skills training programme free-of-charge to tenants of Orbit Heart of England Housing Association (OHE). The aim of the training was to improve the money management skills and general financial awareness of OHE tenants. The training was available to tenants living in two locations in dispersed housing stock. It was not targeted specifically at tenants in rent arrears or at a particular group of tenants (such as lone parents). Participation in the training was voluntary.

The aim of this evaluation was to measure the impact for OHE’s social housing tenants of BRANCAB’s financial skills training. The evaluation had a number of important features to achieve this. First, the evaluation was designed around the materials used in the financial skills training. This meant that the outcome measures assessed in the evaluation matched the outcomes that the training aimed to achieve. Second, baseline surveys were carried out with OHE tenants who took part in BRANCAB’s financial skills training, but crucially also with a comparison group of OHE tenants who lived in areas where the training was not offered. Third, follow-up surveys of tenant learners and the comparison group of tenants were conducted between six and eight weeks after the baseline survey. This approach helps us to say with reasonable certainty whether or not any changes observed among the tenant learners were caused by the training.

	Tenant learners	Comparison group
<b>Location</b>	Rugby, Stratford	Hinckley, Leamington Spa/Warwick area
<b>Intervention</b>	Financial skills training, typically one session lasting one to two hours delivered by a skilled CAB Financial Capability Worker	None
<b>Baseline research</b>	Short self-completion questionnaire before training  Short self-completion CAB questionnaire immediately after training	Short self-completion questionnaire administered by fieldwork agency
<b>Follow-up research</b>	Follow-up telephone interview 6-8 weeks after baseline survey  Follow-up qualitative interviews with 20 tenant learners at least 3-4 months after training	Follow-up telephone interview 6-8 weeks after baseline survey

## Tenant engagement

Even with an experienced delivery team and expert advisors, tenant engagement was the biggest single challenge. Three levels of activity were required to identify interested tenants and sign them up: general awareness-raising, targeted marketing and one-to-one follow-up to ‘close the deal’. Personal contact with tenants by BRANCAB and OHE staff, including cold-calling by telephone and at

tenants' homes, was the most effective method of tenant engagement. Printed materials, mail-outs to tenants, local media coverage and drop-in sessions were not very effective.

The original delivery target was 300 OHE tenants to receive financial skills training over approximately nine months. This assumed that the majority of training would take place in workshops. In the event, because of tenants' strong preference for one-to-one training and slow take-up, the target was reduced to 150 tenants. This revised target was achieved over approximately 10 months (June 2011 to mid-March 2012). The majority of tenant learners (71 per cent) took part in one-to-one financial skills training.

### **Key characteristics of tenants who took part in BRANCAB's financial skills training**

As with previous training that BRANCAB had delivered, women comprised 70 per cent of the tenant learners. The majority of tenant learners were either aged between 25 and 45 (38 per cent) or 45 or over (39 per cent). Two-thirds (66 per cent) of learners lived in households with no earned income. Because of this, levels of household income were generally low. Over half (52 per cent) lived in households with net incomes less than £200 per week. Many tenants reported that they struggled to keep up with their household bills and commitments.

### **Tenants' satisfaction with the training**

Tenant learners were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences. Almost all of them (99 per cent) were satisfied with the training they took part in. And the great majority (94 per cent) said they would recommend the training to a friend, neighbour or relative.

Tenant learners were pleasantly surprised by the training, both in terms of its delivery and the content. BRANCAB's Financial Capability Development Worker made it more fun and entertaining than they had anticipated. They valued his friendly and relaxed approach, but also his knowledge about money matters. He covered topics in depth and offered lots of practical tips about saving money that they had not been aware of.

### **The outcomes and impacts financial skills training**

The baseline survey indicated that tenant learners were not necessarily bad money managers. But there was clearly room for improvement, as evidenced by their average scores for making ends meet and keeping track of money. Prior to the training, the majority of tenant learners were banked. Most had no savings but credit use was common.

Six to eight weeks after the baseline survey, both tenant learners and the comparison group had seen improvements in their average scores for making ends meet and keeping track of money. The improvement was, however, almost four times greater among the tenant learners than the comparison group. Even controlling for the baseline scores, the tenant learners scored better than the comparison group in the follow-up survey.

The survey data also indicated some very positive behaviour changes. The majority of tenant learners (76 per cent) had taken some action in relation to money matters in the time since the baseline survey, compared with only 43 per cent of the comparison group. All other things being equal, tenant learners had nearly seven times higher odds of taking some kind of action compared

with the comparison group. Where tenant learners had taken action, this was in all cases a direct result of BRANCAB's financial skills training.

In terms of specific changes, 78 per cent of tenant learners had changed how they managed their money since the training, compared with 36 per cent of the comparison group. These changes resulted in positive monetary benefits for tenants, most commonly through a reduction in outgoings. Tenant learners had six times higher odds of achieving financial benefits than the comparison group. They were on average £10 a week better off as a result of their actions. Tenant learners who received training on a one-to-one basis were more likely to have achieved financial benefits than those who took part in a workshop. Qualitative interviews with tenant learners showed that these behaviour changes had persisted several months after BRANCAB's financial skills training.

Another major change related to tenant learners' saving behaviour. One in five tenant learners (20 per cent) had made some change to their saving behaviour since BRANCAB's financial skills training, compared with only 11 per cent of the comparison group. Most notably, 22 per cent of tenant learners had either started to save or planned to do so. This was twice as many as the comparison group. Another 14 per cent of tenant learners had increased the amount they already saved or planned to do so, compared to just three per cent of the comparison group. On average, tenant learners who changed their saving behaviour were saving an extra £11 per week. In the qualitative interviews, tenant learners talked about saving up for a family holiday, for car insurance, or to help them buy a car to improve their chances of finding work.

BRANCAB's financial skills training also prompted some tenant learners' to make changes to the financial products they held. In the six to eight weeks since the training, 13 per cent of tenant learners had either opened or switched bank account or opened a credit union account, compared with three per cent of the comparison group. Another 18 per cent of tenant learners planned to open a credit union account. None of the comparison group had any such plans. Apart from the potential to access more affordable credit from a credit union, none of the survey findings in relation to borrowing or debt showed any statistically significant changes.

As well as behaviour changes, tenant learners were far more financially confident as a result of the training. In the six to eight weeks since the baseline, 71 per cent reported some positive change in financial confidence, compared with just 13 per cent of the comparison group. These changes were particularly pronounced in relation to money management skills and financial control.

### **The impact of financial skills training for social landlords**

Using OHE's rent account data, we compared levels of rent arrears in July 2011 (around the time BRANCAB started to deliver its financial skills training) and May 2012 (around two months after the financial skills training had finished). Despite an apparent improvement in rent arrears over time for tenant learners, the change was not statistically significant and within the context of this research could not be attributed to the CAB financial skills training.

Even so, the positive changes made by tenant learners following the training, and the financial benefits they enjoyed as a result, can help to make their household finances more sustainable going

forward. This in turn makes it more likely that they will be able to meet their rent payments or repay rent arrears, provided that their incomes do not fall or their rent or other major outgoings increase.

The benefits of the training were not confined to tenant learners either. The majority had shared ideas and information from the training with friends and family members, who stood to gain in the same way as tenant learners had done.

A rough estimate of the costs of the training indicates that it was more expensive than the average CAB financial skills training programme. This is undoubtedly because the majority of BRANCAB's training was delivered one-to-one with tenants, rather than in workshops as had been planned. That said, there is evidence from the evaluation that BRANCAB's financial skills training was more effective in helping tenant learners achieve financial benefits from better money management when it was delivered in one-to-one sessions than when it was delivered in workshops.

But however it was delivered, BRANCAB's financial skills training resulted in tenant learners making changes in their lives that improved not only their financial situation but also their quality of life.

On balance, therefore, there does seem to be a case for social landlords to become involved in financial skills training for their tenants. The lessons from the project can help landlords identify an approach that suits their needs and the needs of their tenants. There is also scope to reduce the costs of financial skills training based on the experiences of BRANCAB and OHE.

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## About the project

Santander plc funded this project, which was led by Citizens Advice. The deliver partners for the financial skills training were Bedworth, Rugby and Nuneaton CAB and Orbit Heart of England Housing Association. The University of Bristol's Personal Finance Research Centre was the research partner. As members of the project advisory group, the Chartered Institute of Housing, Wales and West Housing Association and the Money Advice Service provided expert advice and guidance to the project.

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# 1 Introduction

In 2010/11, 4.6 million UK households lived in social housing provided by local authorities or housing associations. This equates to 17 per cent of all households (DWP, 2012). These households very often live on low incomes: three times as many households in the social rented sector receive income-related benefits than households generally (69 per cent compared with 24 per cent respectively) (DWP, 2012). Social housing tenants also have a high risk of being financially excluded from products and services that others take for granted, such as bank and savings accounts and home contents insurance. The financial and social costs of operating outside the financial mainstream can be high (Kempson and Whyley, 1999). In addition, social housing tenants are susceptible to lower levels of financial capability, which has implications for their ability to manage money, plan ahead, choose and use appropriate financial products, and stay informed about financial matters (Atkinson, McKay, Kempson and Collard, 2006).

There is therefore a strong case for helping social tenants make the most of the money they have, through a combination of better access to appropriate financial services and improved financial knowledge and skills. If tenants are better able to manage their money, they are more likely to maintain their tenancy and to experience knock-on benefits in terms of their health and well-being. Social housing landlords benefit from lower rent arrears and cost savings as a result of fewer failed tenancies (Chartered Institute of Housing, 2011). Landlords may also achieve a reasonable return on their investment in financial inclusion initiatives (National Housing Federation, 2010). The proposed payment of Housing Benefit direct to social housing tenants (rather than to landlords) from October 2013 has greatly increased the impetus for social housing landlords to help their tenants manage their money effectively.

## 1.1 Evaluation aims

The aim of this research was to evaluate the impact for social housing tenants of a financial skills training programme. The training was available free-of-charge to tenants living in two locations. It was not targeted specifically at tenants in rent arrears or at a particular group of tenants (such as lone parents). Participation in the training was voluntary.

While financial education and financial skills training has become increasingly popular in the UK, there is little robust evidence to indicate what effect (if any) it has (Atkinson, 2008) or how cost-effective it is. This evaluation had a number of important features to help measure the impact of financial skills training:

1. A comparison group of social housing tenants that did not receive financial skills training. The use of a comparison group helps us to establish whether or not any impacts were a result of the financial skills training. In other words, would these impacts have occurred anyway?
2. Before-and-after surveys of social housing tenants who participated in the financial skills training and the comparison group that did not. Before-and-after surveys allow us to examine the additional knowledge, experience or skills that have been gained as a result of

the financial skills training, compared to a baseline measure before any training took place. This means that we have a better chance of capturing real changes that have occurred.

3. The evaluation was designed around the materials used in the financial skills training. This means that the outcome measures assessed in the evaluation match the outcomes that the training aimed to achieve.

Throughout the design and implementation of the project, the research team worked closely with Bedworth, Rugby and Nuneaton CAB (BRANCAB), which was responsible for delivering the financial skills training, and Orbit Heart of England Housing Association (OHE), whose tenants received financial skills training and also made up the comparison group that did not receive any training.

## 1.2 Evaluation methods

The evaluation comprised a mixed-methods approach, using quantitative and qualitative research techniques.

In order to establish a baseline of tenants' financial knowledge and skills, we conducted a self-completion survey of tenants who took part in the training (tenant learners) and the comparison group who did not. Tenants who were approached about taking part in the financial skills training reacted positively to the idea of participating in an initiative that was being independently evaluated. As a result, asking tenants to complete the baseline survey before they took part in the training did not prove to be a barrier to engagement. Tenants who participated in the training also completed a CAB satisfaction survey immediately after they had taken part in the training.

To find out what changes had occurred over time, we conducted follow-up telephone surveys of tenant learners and the comparison group six to eight weeks after the baseline survey.

In addition, we carried out qualitative in-depth interviews with 20 tenant learners at least three to four months after they had taken part in BRANCAB's financial skills training, to find out about any longer-term impacts on their financial skills. The research with tenants is summarised in Table 1. Further details are provided in the Technical Appendix.

**Table 1: Summary of research methods**

	Tenant learners	Comparison group
<b>Location</b>	Rugby, Stratford	Hinckley, Leamington Spa/Warwick area
<b>Baseline</b>	Short self-completion questionnaire before training  Short self-completion CAB questionnaire immediately after training	Short self-completion questionnaire administered by fieldwork agency
<b>Follow-up</b>	Follow-up telephone interview 6-8 weeks after baseline survey  Follow-up qualitative interviews with 20 tenant learners at least 3-4 months after training	Follow-up telephone interview 6-8 weeks after baseline survey

We also interviewed staff from BRANCAB and OHE during the course of the project, to understand their views and experiences about setting up and running this type of training. For social housing landlords, reducing rent arrears (or at least preventing any increase) is a major driver for getting involved in financial skills training for their tenants. The before-and-after surveys therefore asked tenants about rent arrears. We analysed anonymised rent account data for tenant learners and the comparison group as well.

### **1.3 This report**

Section 2 describes the training that was delivered to tenants, including the delivery partners, the target locations and audiences, the structure and content of the training, and how tenants were recruited to take part in the training. It also considers the lessons for other organisations that are interested in delivering similar training.

In Section 3, we use the baseline survey data to examine the levels of financial skills among tenants prior to the training. We looked at four main areas: money management; borrowing and saving; whether tenants were financially excluded; and whether they had rent arrears.

Section 4 draws on the survey data and in-depth interviews with tenant learners to explore their views about the financial skills training they took part in. In Section 5, we move on to look at the impacts of financial skills training on social housing tenants, compared with tenants who did not take part in the training. The social landlord's perspective is provided in Section 6, including whether the training had any impact on levels of rent arrears. Our conclusions are set out in Section 7.

The Appendix Tables referred to in the report are provided in a separate volume.

## 2 Delivering financial skills training to social housing tenants

This project involved the delivery of financial skills training free-of-charge to social housing tenants in two locations over a finite time period. The target audience for the training was a general population of tenants, rather than specific groups such as tenants in rent arrears or lone parents. Participation in the training was voluntary.

The delivery partners for the financial skills training were Bedworth, Rugby and Nuneaton CAB (BRANCAB), which was responsible for delivering the financial skills training, and Orbit Heart of England Housing Association (OHE), whose tenants received financial skills training. The comparison group used in the evaluation comprised OHE tenants who did not receive financial skills training.

### 2.1 BRANCAB

BRANCAB comprises a network of three CAB (Nuneaton and Bedworth, Rugby and Tamworth) that provide advice to communities in Warwickshire. Since 2010, BRANCAB has worked with social housing providers to deliver financial skills training to tenants and frontline workers. It has also run other financial skills training for specific groups of people including single parents, disadvantaged young adults, and people with mental health problems. It is the lead organisation for the West Midlands Financial Capability Forum and a member of the Warwickshire Financial Inclusion Partnership.

For this project, the training was mainly delivered by BRANCAB's Financial Capability Development Worker, an experienced financial skills trainer and a member of the Institute for Learning (the professional body for teachers, tutors, trainers and student teachers in the further education and skills sector). In addition, Stratford CAB's Financial Capability Development Officer was involved in delivering training between January and March 2012, when the project was rolled out to tenants in Stratford as well as Rugby.

### 2.2 Orbit Heart of England Housing Association (OHE)

As part of the Orbit Group, OHE manages around 16,500 properties in Warwickshire, Coventry and parts of the West Midlands. In this project, OHE's Financial Inclusion Manager and one of its Money Advisors were heavily involved in promoting the financial skills training to tenants. This included helping to raise awareness of the training among housing officers and other frontline workers. The Financial Inclusion Manager was also instrumental in achieving buy-in to the project from the OHE senior management team.

*'It's not a benevolent scheme, purely a business decision. It's about getting people to pay their rent.'*

For OHE, a key driver for being involved in the project was to help tenants manage their money effectively and to enable them to pay their rent on time. It was also keen to take proactive steps to help its tenants, and to be seen as more than just a landlord.

## 2.3 Target areas

BRANCAB's financial skills training was delivered to OHE tenants in Rugby and Stratford.

In Rugby, the majority of OHE's residential properties (about 70 per cent) are houses, with terraced houses making up more than half of them. Flats make up most of the rest (25 per cent).<sup>1</sup>

The picture is rather different in Stratford.

Across Stratford as a whole (Stratford Town and North plus Stratford South), OHE's residential properties mainly comprise houses (54 per cent, with terraced houses again in the majority), along with flats (27 per cent) but also a significant number of bungalows (18 per cent). This reflects the older age profile of OHE's Stratford tenants compared with Rugby (see below).



OHE property: The Beeches

The nature of the housing stock proved a challenge for identifying and recruiting tenants to the training. First, OHE's housing stock is widely dispersed across Rugby and Stratford, with few substantial clusters of homes in any one location. As a result, house-to-house promotion of the training was time-consuming. Second and possibly linked to its dispersed housing stock, OHE had few tenants groups or community centres that BRANCAB could piggy-back on to promote the training. This in turn reduced the opportunities for word-of-mouth promotion of the training through community organisations or communities of interest, such as lone parent groups.

## 2.4 Profile of OHE tenants

The socio-demographic characteristics of tenants that took part in BRANCAB's financial skills training are described in Section 3. They were drawn from OHE tenants living in Rugby and Stratford, areas that have rather different tenant profiles (Table 2). The main differences stem from the fact that Stratford tenants are generally older than their counterparts in Rugby: the average tenant in Stratford is 52 years old, compared with 37 in Rugby. In keeping with this, Stratford tenants are much more likely to be retired from work or unable to work because of poor health or disability than those in Rugby. In terms of household composition, the proportion of lone parents is almost five times higher in Rugby than Stratford (33 per cent compared with seven per cent).

Age differences may also help explain the higher rate of tenant turnover in Rugby compared with Stratford. The proportion of rent arrears is higher among Rugby tenants as well: 3.31% of the rent due compared with 2.69% in Stratford and 3.14% across OHE tenants as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Residential properties exclude garages and commercial units.

<sup>2</sup> These are net rent arrears, which take into account arrears created by problems with Housing Benefit payments.

**Table 2: OHE tenant profiles for Rugby and Stratford**

Percentages	Rugby	Stratford	OHE
<b>Number of tenants</b>	891	5,170	12,615
<b>Average age</b>	37	52	47
<b>Household composition</b>			
Lone parent	33	7	15
Single person, aged 60 or under	25	20	24
Single person, aged 60 or over	5	23	15
<b>Employment situation (new tenants only)</b>			
In full-time or part-time work	40	31	30
Looking for work	20	13	18
Retired	2	11	5
Unable to work due to ill-health or disability	6	13	9
<b>Black and minority ethnic households</b>	13	4	9
<b>Tenancy turnover (based on exits)</b>	15	9	10
<b>Net rent arrears</b>	3.31	2.69	3.14

Source: OHE administrative data. This information relates to 2010-2011, before the financial skills training commenced.

## 2.5 Content and structure of BRANCAB's financial skills training

The overall aim of BRANCAB's financial skills training was to improve the money management skills and general financial awareness of OHE tenants. This would enable tenants to maximise their available income, help them access and use appropriate financial products and in turn avoid financial difficulties.

In devising the training programme, BRANCAB built on materials that it had developed for similar projects in the past. These were tailored to meet the specific objectives of this project (shown in Box 1), with input from a training specialist funded by Citizens Advice. To test the training materials, a pilot workshop was run in June 2011.

Tenants who took part in the training were given a financial skills toolkit to take away with them, comprising an electronic calculator and a folder containing copies of the materials used in the training such as calculation and budget sheets.

### Box 1: Objectives for BRANCAB's financial skills training

By the end of the training, tenants will be able to:

- Describe their attitudes to money and identify their strengths/weaknesses in managing money
- Identify the difference between needs and wants when it comes to spending and what these are
- Identify what are priority bills and the consequences of not paying these bills
- Identify ways to make money go further
- Keep track of spending using a spending diary
- Describe some of the benefits of having a bank account
- Describe the main types of bank accounts that are available
- Identify sources of more affordable credit
- Use APRs and AERs to make informed choices when borrowing and saving
- Describe some of the benefits of budgeting
- Convert figures from one time frame to another to put in a budget sheet
- Complete a budget sheet
- Describe how and where they might save
- Identify further sources of information and help on money matters

BRANCAB's original aim was to deliver the training in two 45 minute workshops. The two workshops were scheduled to take place a week apart to give tenants an opportunity to put the toolkit to practical use and discuss their views and experiences of it in the second workshop.

In the event, despite trying the range of promotion and recruitment strategies described below, it proved extremely difficult to convene training workshops. As a result, the majority of tenants (71 per cent) received training one-to-one rather than in a group setting. As we go on to discuss, this much more resource-intensive approach had implications for the number of tenants that received training.

One-to-one training was either delivered in tenants' homes, the CAB or another community venue. BRANCAB adopted a flexible approach to covering the training materials in the one-to-one sessions, depending on the needs and preferences of tenants. In most cases it was delivered in one longer session rather than the two 45 minute sessions that were originally planned.

Tenants preferred to receive training one-to-one mainly for reasons of confidentiality. One-to-one training in the home was also valued by tenants with disabilities or mobility problems.

Where it was possible to deliver training in group sessions, this generally occurred where there were clusters of OHE homes. For example, one workshop was run with a group of older tenants living in a sheltered housing scheme. Another involved younger tenants who all lived in the same block of flats. Again, in most cases the training was delivered over the course of one longer session, rather than two sessions.

## 2.6 Promotion and recruitment

Between them, Citizens Advice, BRANCAB and the project advisory group have a great deal of experience delivering financial skills training to social housing tenants and other people on low incomes. From the outset, therefore, tenant engagement was recognised as the single biggest challenge. A number of factors added to the challenge, some specific to the project, others not.

First, the target audience was defined by geography (Rugby and Stratford) rather than being a particular community or interest group. Second, as noted above, OHE's housing stock is dispersed

across these areas and has few existing groups or hubs that BRANCAB could engage with. Third, it was expected that tenants' receptiveness to the training might be hampered by a general wariness of authority, their perceptions of OHE as a landlord and lack of confidence about money matters.

A wide range of promotional activities were tried over the course of the project by BRANCAB and OHE, with varying degrees of success. These can be categorised into (1) general awareness-raising, (2) targeted marketing and (3) one-to-one follow-up. All three levels of activity are needed for effective promotion. Based on the experiences of BRANCAB and OHE, there are a number of learning points for other social housing landlords and advice providers interested in delivering financial skills training (see section 2.9).

### **2.6.1 General awareness-raising**

Two types of broad-brush activities were used to raise general awareness among tenants about the financial skills training: one involved personal contact, the other did not.

In terms of personal contact, BRANCAB briefed frontline workers about its financial skills training programme, such as OHE staff, CAB advisors, and Children's Centre staff who deal with tenants on a day-to-day basis. This was time-intensive but generally effective. Notably, OHE's tenant support workers and housing officers proved better placed to promote the financial skills training to tenants than reception staff or facilities management staff.<sup>3</sup> This is because support workers and housing officers have opportunities to build relationships with tenants over time.

The fact that tenants were offered a financial incentive for taking part in the project evaluation encouraged frontline staff to promote the financial skills training. Without the financial incentive, they felt the training would be harder to 'sell'. Similarly, it was important for frontline staff to understand what the financial skills training was about, and the benefits it could offer tenants. This might involve, for example, staff taking part in a 'taster' training session themselves.

Tenants were entered into a £500 prize draw (with three prizes of £350, £100 and £50) and received shopping vouchers worth £10 for completing the follow-up telephone survey.

From experience, BRANCAB anticipated strong engagement and commitment from local Children's Centres. In the event, cutbacks in Children's Centres services as a result of public spending cuts meant they had to (reluctantly) restrict their involvement.

Less effective were one-off awareness-raising sessions with statutory, voluntary and community agencies such as the local Primary Care Trust, Salvation Army and Adult Education Forum. While these organisations had OHE tenants among their clients, they were perhaps less likely to deal with them on a day-to-day basis.

The second type of activity to raise general awareness comprised printed information in the form of leaflets, news items in the OHE tenant newsletter, and items on local radio and in the local press.

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<sup>3</sup> In Rugby, where most of the training was delivered, OHE had a team of five staff working 'on the ground' with tenants, comprising three housing officers, one tenant support worker and one maintenance surveyor. There was a similar team in Stratford.



These proved less effective than personal contact. For example, 3,300 leaflets were distributed to Rugby and Stratford tenants with the regular OHE tenant newsletter. These produced very few responses from tenants, although they may have helped raise awareness of the project more generally. The same leaflets were also distributed through OHE and CAB offices.

In the latter stages of the project, information about the training was included in the ‘on hold’ message that tenants heard when they called the central OHE telephone number. As it was introduced at a late stage, it is difficult to say how effective this approach might be. However, none of the tenants who took part in the training said they had heard about it in this way.

The learning points in relation to general awareness-raising are summarised in Table 3.

**Table 3: Activities to raise general awareness about the training**

What worked	What worked less well	Learning points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal briefing for OHE tenant support workers and housing officers</li> <li>Personal briefing for CAB advisors and other agencies e.g. Children’s Centre staff</li> <li>Financial incentive to make the ‘sell’ easier for staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal briefing for OHE reception and facilities management staff</li> <li>Leaflets</li> <li>Local radio/press</li> <li>One-off sessions with statutory, voluntary and community agencies</li> <li>Information via ‘on hold’ telephone message</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get buy-in at senior level from housing provider to facilitate resource allocation</li> <li>Engage frontline staff before any training is delivered.</li> <li>Do not assume staff have prior knowledge</li> <li>Demonstrate to staff what the training offers and how it can help tenants</li> <li>Take account of priorities and resource constraints among local agencies</li> </ul>

## 2.7 Targeted marketing

Unlike the broad-brush activities described above, targeted marketing refers to activities that directly engaged individual OHE tenants or groups of tenants. Again, these included activities that involved personal contact and those that did not.

Once they had been briefed about the financial skills training, OHE tenant support workers and housing officers were in a good position to publicize the training on routine visits to tenants. The promotional leaflet was a useful tool in this respect. The point at which new tenants took possession of their home was a particularly valuable opportunity to promote the training. Where there were clusters of tenants, for example in particular housing developments or blocks of flats, OHE and BRANCAB had some success in organising workshops for groups of tenants, including friendship groups.

In the second half of the training delivery period (from around November 2011), two OHE housing officers set aside time each week to cold-call tenants about the training, with the aid of a telephone script. This proved to be an effective means of engaging and recruiting tenants. The housing officers were able to make 40 to 50 telephone calls in an hour. Once they had made contact on the telephone, they typically received a positive response from between 10 and 15 of the tenants they spoke to. About half of the tenants who responded positively went on to take part in the training (see below).

Similarly, cold-calling on the doorstep was successful in generating interest in the training. BRANCAB's Financial Capability Development Worker, with support from a marketing professional, spent two or three days 'door knocking' tenants in areas with clusters of OHE properties. In total, they visited in the region of 350 houses, from which they identified around 50 tenants who were interested in the training. Between 20 and 30 of the interested tenants went on to take part in the training. In some cases, the training was offered there-and-then if this was convenient for the tenant.

Cold-calling is an effective way of engaging tenants who have no common bond other than where they live and their landlord. For every 100 tenants cold-called, roughly between six and ten went on to take part in the training.

BRANCAB and OHE staff also took advantage of planned events such as Christmas parties for tenants and charitable events (such as Children in Need) to promote the training to tenants on a one-to-one basis.

As with general awareness-raising, printed information sent out to individual households generated relatively little interest in the training. Early on in the project (June 2011), OHE mailed out individual letters to around 300 named householders in Rugby, with a form for tenants to return if they were interested in taking part in the training. Only 11 tenants (about four per cent) opted to take part in the training as a result. Information sent out by OHE's Money Advice Team to its clients in Rugby and Stratford resulted in five tenants taking up the offer of training. Early on in the project, drop-in training sessions advertised by BRANCAB in community locations (such as CAB, Children's Centres and community centres) did not yield any responses at all.

The learning points in relation to targeted marketing are summarised in Table 4.

**Table 4: Targeted marketing**

What worked	What worked less well	Learning points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion by housing officers and tenant support workers, using printed materials</li> <li>• Cold-calling visits to tenants' homes</li> <li>• Cold-calling tenants on the phone</li> <li>• Piggy-backing on other events</li> <li>• Flexible approach e.g. offer training there-and-then</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mail-outs to tenants</li> <li>• Drop-in sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the target audience is not an existing group or community of interest, one-to-one contact is essential</li> <li>• Tenants need to hear about the training first hand, and what it can offer them</li> <li>• Prioritise tenant clusters in order to maximize word-of-mouth referrals</li> </ul>

## 2.8 One-to-one follow-up to close the deal

While telephone cold-calling was an effective way of generating interest among tenants, the initial telephone call had to be followed-up in person, in order to sign-up interested tenants for the training. BRANCAB visited tenants in person within two or three days of the initial telephone call.

Just as with cold-calling at tenants' homes, during the visit BRANCAB focused as much time explaining to tenants how they could access the training (e.g. how long it would take, where it would take place) as selling the content and potential benefits of the training.

Rather than simply make a verbal arrangement, BRANCAB also confirmed the details of the training session in writing to the tenant. The written confirmation that tenants received was a useful 'commitment device' and meant that few tenants dropped out of the training once they had agreed to participate.

The fact that training was often carried out in the tenant's home also helped minimise the number of drop-outs. The CAB brand, which tenants recognised and trusted, meant they were comfortable inviting the Financial Capability Development Worker into their home.

### **Cold-calling at tenants' homes: some practical tips**

- Let the social landlord know what you're doing and where. And show tenants photo ID.
- Householders assume you want to sell them something. You have about 15 seconds to stop them shutting the door on you.
- Start the pitch with something like *'I'm glad I caught you in, my name is John Smith from the Citizens Advice Bureau. Have you heard of us?'*
- If the training is part of a research project, mention this.
- Keep references to the social landlord to a minimum.
- Spend as much time consolidating what you've said as getting the tenant to sign up for the training. For example, ask tenants to repeat back to you the time, date and venue of the training session. Write this information in a duplicate book and leave them a copy, as well as keeping a copy yourself.

In order to encourage word-of-mouth recommendations from tenants who had taken part in the training, a 'refer-a-friend' scheme was introduced in the latter part of the project (from October 2011). Tenant learners received a shopping voucher worth £10 for each friend or family member (aged 18 or over) they referred to BRANCAB that went on to attend the training. Referrals were limited to two people from the tenant's own household.

Approximately half of the 150 tenant learners were told about the refer-a-friend scheme and a total of 15 tenants were recruited to the training this way. The learning points in relation to one-to-one follow-up are summarised in Table 5.

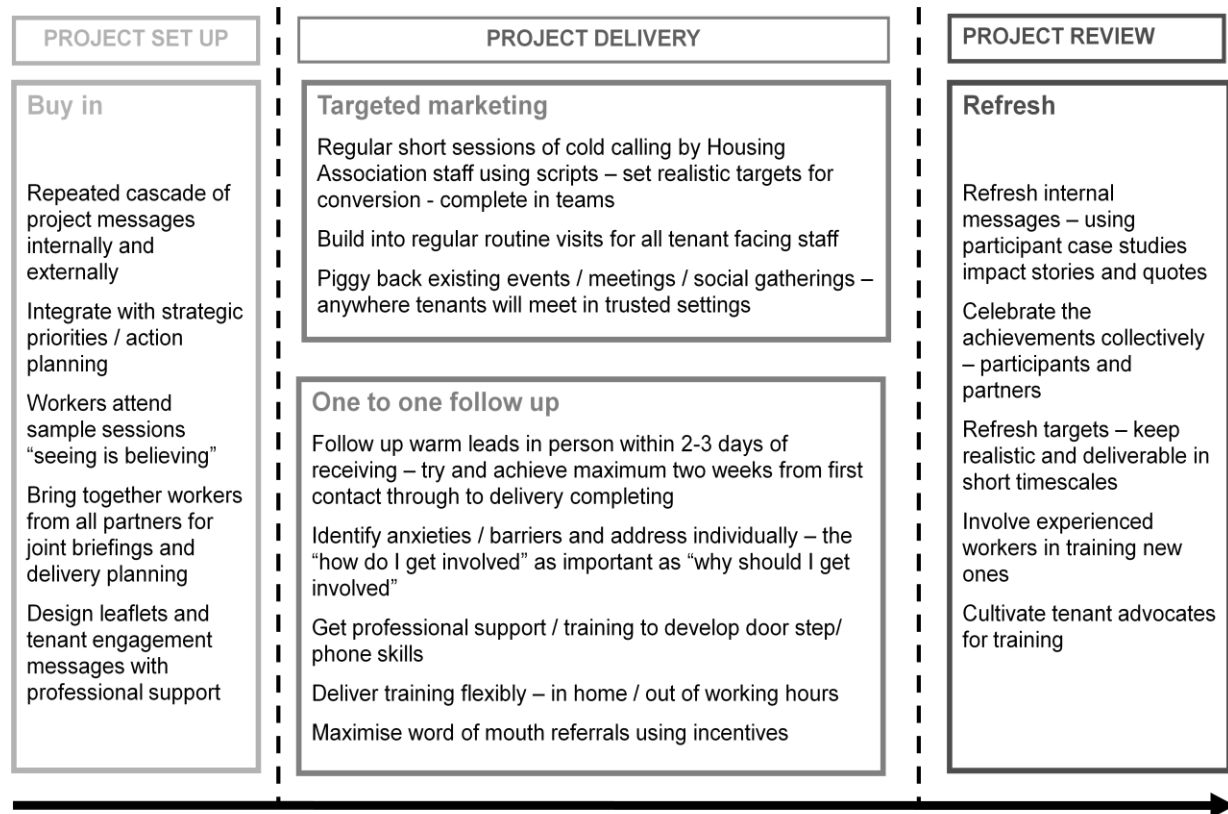
**Table 5: One-to-one follow-up to close the deal**

What worked	What worked less well	Learning points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal visit to tenant within 2-3 days of telephone cold-call</li> <li>• Tenants make a written commitment to training</li> <li>• Focus as much on how tenants can access the training as the content and potential benefits</li> <li>• Encourage referrals e.g. through refer-a-friend schemes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All one-to-one contact was effective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 71% of training delivered on 1:1 basis, which was effective but time and resource intensive</li> <li>• Difficult to replicate on larger scale over longer time period without significant resources</li> </ul>

## 2.9 With the benefit of hindsight: what we learned about tenant engagement

Even though BRANCAB and the project advisory group had a wealth of experience delivering financial skills training, there were still important lessons about tenant engagement. These related particularly to engaging tenants whose only common bond is their landlord and the area they live in. The overall message was that generating demand for financial skills training required fairly intensive personal contact from the outset: from raising awareness, to identifying interested tenants, signing them up for training and ultimately delivering the training. Figure 1 outlines what approach the delivery partners would take next time to maximise tenant participation.

**Figure 1: Securing tenant participation: what would we do next time?**



BRANCAB’s Financial Capability Development Worker was primarily responsible for both promoting and delivering the financial skills training. In hindsight, and resources permitting, it would have been better to share the workload between a small team of CAB advisors (including paid workers and volunteers). This extra capacity would have allowed promotion and training to continue over periods of staff sickness or leave and, just as importantly, would have helped relieve the pressure on the Financial Capability Development Worker. BRANCAB and OHE also absorbed the administration for the project and, more particularly, for the evaluation. Some additional administrative support would undoubtedly have been valuable.

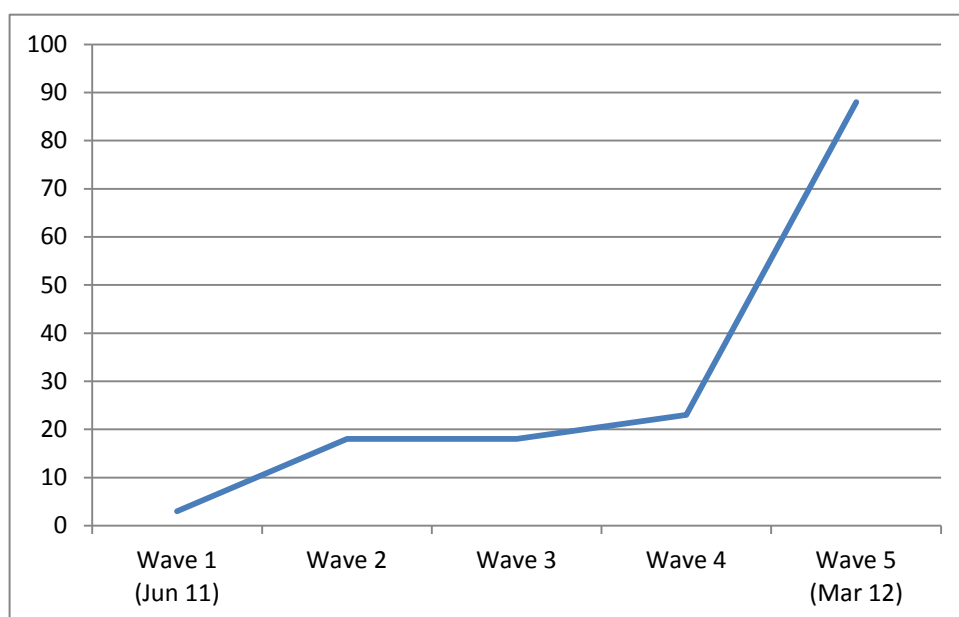
There were also lessons with regard to project management. There was a general consensus among the delivery partners that the project would have benefited from stronger leadership early on, supported by clear expectations and responsibilities for each partner. For example, there was some initial confusion about roles and responsibilities for promoting and recruiting tenants to the training. In the event, OHE staff played a far greater part in this than they had originally anticipated which had knock-on resource implications for them. At the same time, the delivery partners had to respond flexibly and creatively to the challenges that occurred over the course of the project. Effective communication between the delivery partners and the research team was important, and regularly scheduled conference calls proved helpful in this respect.

## 2.10 Take-up of BRANCAB's financial skills training

The original target for the project was 300 OHE tenants to receive financial skills training over approximately nine months. This target assumed that the majority of training would take place in workshops, with between six and eight tenants per workshop.

Tenants' strong preference for one-to-one training limited the number that could receive training to three or four per day at the very most. Recruitment of tenants to the training was also slower than expected. As a result, the target was reduced to 150 tenants and the training delivery period extended. BRANCAB achieved this revised target over approximately 10 months (June 2011 to mid-March 2012).<sup>4</sup> Figure 2 shows the take-up of training by tenants over that period.

**Figure 2: Take-up of financial skills training, June 2011-March 2012 (number of tenant learners)**



Source: Baseline survey of tenant learners

The baseline survey confirms that the majority of tenants (55 per cent) were told about the training by an OHE housing officer, tenant support worker or a CAB advisor (including the Financial Capability Development Worker). Only a small proportion (20 per cent) had heard about the training through OHE's mail-out to tenants, its tenant newsletter or a community event organised by OHE.

For tenants who took part in the training, one of the main attractions was to find out about ways to save money. Several tenants who took part in the qualitative interviews were also motivated to take up the training because they had money worries. These ranged from general concerns about their financial situation, through to some tenants who had serious debt problems or were facing a drop in income. A few tenants in the qualitative interviews were already getting advice from a CAB about debt problems and/or welfare benefits. They had been referred to BRANCAB's financial skills training by their CAB advisor.

<sup>4</sup> One learner was excluded from the analysis because they were not an OHE tenant. The sample size for the baseline survey of tenant learners is therefore 149 not 150.

### 3 Profile and financial skills of tenant learners

BRANCAB's previous experience was that women were more likely to take advantage of financial skills training than men. This was borne out, with women comprising 70 per cent of the tenant learners. The majority of tenant learners were either aged between 25 and 45 (38 per cent) or 45 or over (39 per cent). Tenants aged under 25 made up around one-fifth (19 per cent) of learners.

Four in ten learners (39 per cent) lived in households without any children, dominated by single-adult households (25 per cent). Of those with children, most (32 per cent) were lone parent households.

Two-thirds (66 per cent) of learners lived in households with no earned income. In keeping with this, levels of household were generally low. Over half (52 per cent) lived in households with net incomes less than £200 per week. Around six in ten (56 per cent) received full Housing Benefit.

Most of the learners who took part in the financial skills training had been OHE tenants for a relatively short period of time: 27 per cent for less than a year and 41 per cent for between one and five years. Two in ten (17 per cent) were being supported by an OHE tenant support worker.

#### 3.1 Creating a baseline: Levels of financial skills before the training

In order to assess the outcomes and impacts of BRANCAB's financial skills training programme, the questions asked in the baseline survey were designed to mirror the content of the training. As the main focus of the training was on money management (e.g. saving money, being a savvy shopper), the survey therefore asked how well tenants were able to make ends meet and keep track of their finances. Learners were also asked about banking, borrowing and saving. The baseline and follow-up questionnaires are provided in the Technical Appendix.

##### 3.1.1 Money management

The FSA's Baseline Survey of Financial Capability (Atkinson, McKay, Kempson and Collard, 2006) identified two components to the skill of money management: making ends meet and keeping track of your finances. Tenant learners were asked about both in the baseline survey.

To assess how well tenants were making ends meet before they took part in BRANCAB's financial skills training, they were asked (1) how organised they were when it came to managing their money and (2) how well they were keeping up with bills and credit commitments.

Overall, two-thirds (67 per cent) of tenant learners agreed with the statement '*I am very organised at managing my money*'. The other 31 per cent did not agree. Even so, only 20 per cent of tenant learners were keeping up-to-date with their bills and credit commitments without any difficulties. For most, keeping up with bills and payments was a struggle at least some of the time. Over a quarter of them (28 per cent) showed signs of serious financial stress, having fallen behind with some or many of their bills (Table 6).

In other words, while tenant learners generally felt they were competent money managers, they struggled to manage on the incomes that they had.

We created a composite score from these two questions which showed that tenant learners scored on average 3.3 out of a possible 6.0 for making ends meet (Table 6).

To see how well they kept track of their day-to-day finances, tenants were asked (1) how closely they planned their spending when they received their income, (2) how accurately they knew how much money they had and (3) whether or not they kept a record of their spending.

Most tenant learners (66 per cent) said they planned their spending very or fairly closely. And the majority (90 per cent) had at least a rough idea of how much money they had. But fewer than half of tenant learners (45 per cent) kept any record of their spending. When these three measures were taken together, tenant learners scored an average 3.0 out of a possible 6.0 for keeping track of their finances (Table 6).

**Table 6: Money management skills**

Column percentages	Tenant learners
<b><i>Making ends meet (average score 3.3 out of 6.0)</i></b>	
<b>(1) 'I am very organised at managing my money'</b>	
Agree	67
Disagree	31
Not stated	1
<b>(2) How well are you keeping up with your bills and commitments?</b>	
Keeping up, no difficulties	20
Keeping up, but it's a struggle from time-to-time	34
Keeping up, but it's a constant struggle	18
Falling behind with some of them	17
Falling behind with many of them	11
Not stated	1
<b><i>Keeping track of finances (average score 3.0 out of 6.0)</i></b>	
<b>(1) When you receive your income, how closely do you plan how you will spend it?</b>	
Very closely	26
Fairly closely	40
Not very closely	20
Do not plan at all	14
Not stated	0
<b>(2) How accurately do you know how much money you have at present, excluding savings?</b>	
I have no idea at all	7
I have a rough idea	52
I know to within a pound or two	38
Not stated	2
<b>(3) Do you normally keep a record of the amount you spend on food and other day-to-day spending (e.g. keep receipts, record in cheque book)</b>	
Yes, I keep a record	45
No, I don't keep a record	55
<hr/>	
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>149</b>

Source: Baseline survey of tenants learners



Before they undertook BRANCAB’s financial skills training, the majority of tenants (91 per cent) reported taking some sort of action to make their money go further (Appendix Table A1). The three most common were:

- Turning off lights or power when they were not in use (reported by 68 per cent of tenant learners)
- Looking out for special offers (66 per cent)
- Shopping around for food and groceries (54 per cent).

On average, then, tenant learners were middle-of-the-road when it came to money management. They were by no means bad money managers but at the same time there was clearly room for improvement. Around one in ten (12 per cent) tenants reported that they were in rent arrears at the baseline survey.<sup>5</sup>

### **3.1.2 Banking, borrowing and saving**

As well as helping tenants improve their money management skills, BRANCAB’s financial skills training was designed to make tenants more aware of sources of affordable credit, different types of bank and savings accounts and how to choose financial products that were appropriate for them. The baseline survey therefore asked about tenants’ banking, borrowing and saving, and their confidence in choosing financial products.

The great majority of tenant learners (92 per cent) had a current or basic bank account. Only a small proportion (eight per cent) was completely unbanked, defined as having no bank account and no credit union account either (Appendix Table A2).

- ❖ 65% of tenant learners had some form of borrowing.
- ❖ 60% had no savings.

Most tenant learners (65 per cent) had some form of borrowing at the time of the baseline survey; the other 35 per cent had no borrowing. The most common types of borrowing were:

- Being overdrawn on a bank account (25 per cent of tenant learners)
- An outstanding balance on a credit or store card (23 per cent)
- Buying goods on credit from a mail order catalogue (19 per cent).

Around one in ten tenants (12 per cent) had a loan from a home credit company (such as Provident Financial or Shopacheck). About as many tenants had a personal loan from a bank or building society (15 per cent) as from a friend or family member (14 per cent). Two in ten (17 per cent) were repaying a Social Fund Budgeting Loan (Appendix Table A3).

In terms of access to more affordable credit, only four per cent of tenant learners were members of a credit union (Appendix Table A4). One per cent had a loan from a credit union (Appendix Table A3).

Again, there were signs that some tenant learners were at risk of financial difficulty. A quarter (26 per cent) felt that they had borrowed more than they could really afford. A further 23 per cent felt their level of borrowing was about right, and would not want to borrow any more (Appendix Table A3).

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<sup>5</sup> Tenants who paid some or all of their rent themselves were asked about rent arrears in the follow-up survey.

The picture was almost the complete reverse when it came to savings. The majority of tenant learners (60 per cent) had no savings at all. Only 40 per cent had any savings (either in an account or saved informally). The most common types of savings account were an ordinary deposit account with a bank, building society or credit union (24 per cent) and ISAs (13 per cent). About one in ten tenants (nine per cent) had cash saved at home (Appendix Table A5).

On the whole, tenant learners were fairly confident before the training that they were able to choose financial products that were right for them. About half (46 per cent) reported feeling fairly confident; 16 per cent were very confident. Most of the rest were not very confident (23 per cent) as opposed to not at all confident (14 per cent) (Appendix Table A6).

## 4 Tenant learners views about BRANCAB's financial skills training

The tenants who took part in the financial skills training were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences. In the follow-up survey, almost all tenant learners (99 per cent) were satisfied with the training they had received. Most of them were very satisfied (82 per cent). And the great majority (94 per cent) said they would recommend the training to a friend, neighbour or relative.

The qualitative interviews with tenant learners indicated that most were not quite sure what to expect from the training. Some of them had recent experience of getting help from the CAB, mainly in relation to money matters. Apart from this, none of them had taken part in financial skills training of this kind before.

They were pleasantly surprised by the training, both in terms of its delivery and the content. They spoke highly of BRANCAB's Financial Capability Development Worker, who made it more fun and entertaining than they had anticipated. They valued his friendly and relaxed approach, but also his knowledge about money matters. He covered topics in depth and offered lots of practical tips about saving money that they had not been aware of.

### What did tenant learners think about BRANCAB's financial skills training?

- It wasn't *'a lot of nagging... you shouldn't do this'*.
- It was relaxed and informal: *'it was just like chatting to your friend', 'very kind, a friend not a person in a suit, very laid back'*.
- It was fun: *'we had a laugh!'*
- It covered topics in detail: *'I thought he was going to come round and give me a load of leaflets and leave in five minutes', 'very thorough'*.
- It offered practical advice: *'I got a lot more out of it than I expected'*.

Source: Qualitative interviews with tenant learners

The qualitative interviews included about equal numbers of tenants who had attended a workshop and those that had received help and advice on a one-to-one basis. Workshop participants generally had no concerns about taking part in a group discussion with other tenants they did not know. One tenant felt that the small group she took part in (with five people) was conducive to asking questions, in a way that a larger group might not be. Another noted the opportunity to ask questions of BRANCAB's Financial Capability Development Worker privately at the end of the workshop.

Only one workshop participant had any qualms about asking questions in a group setting. This was because she was embarrassed about her money problems, which she said made her feel like *'the lowest of the low'*. The opportunity to talk about their personal money worries was clearly valued by a number of tenant learners who had taken part in one-to-one training.

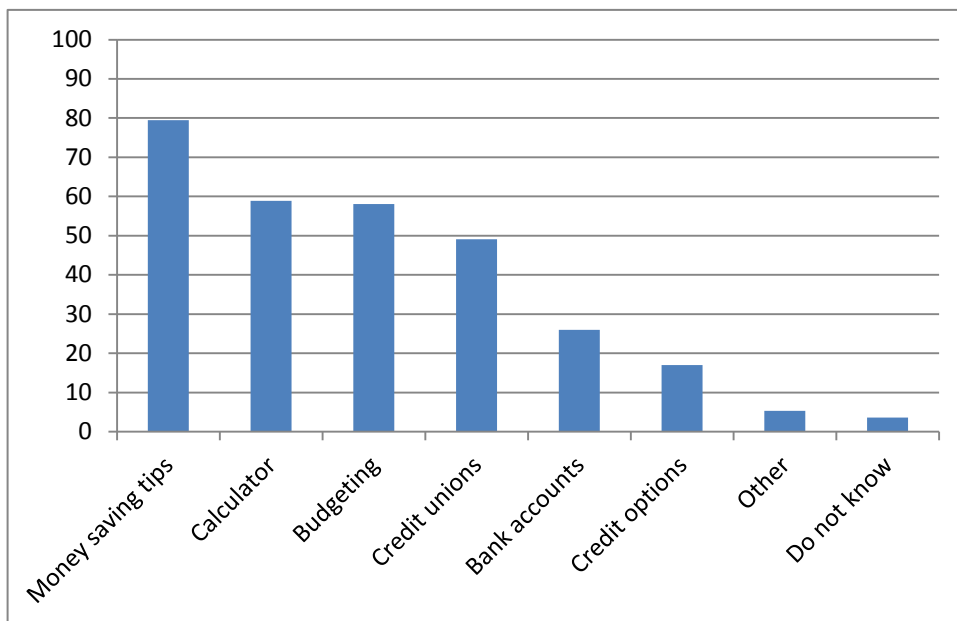
#### 4.1 What did tenant learners find most and least useful about the training?

As Figure 3 shows, the most useful aspects of BRANCAB’s financial skills training mentioned by learners in the follow-up survey were:

- Money saving tips (mentioned by 79 per cent )
- Electronic calculator which came with the toolkit they received (59 per cent)
- Information and advice about budgeting (58 per cent)
- Information about credit unions (49 per cent).<sup>6</sup>

In the qualitative interviews, it was clear that tips on food shopping, such as shopping around and the time of day when foodstuffs are reduced by supermarkets, had stuck in people’s minds. Help with planning and prioritising was also mentioned: ‘Do you want it? Do you need it?’

**Figure 3: Most useful aspects of the training (% response)**



Source: Follow-up survey of tenant learners

About half of learners (46 per cent) found all aspects of the training useful. The parts of the training that other tenants found less useful included:

- Information and advice about credit options (29 per cent)
- Information and advice about bank accounts (25 per cent).

As we saw in section 3.1.2, the majority of tenant learners were already banked and a high proportion of them were using some form of credit. This might account for the lower levels of interest in these topics among some tenants.

The follow-up survey indicated that BRANCAB’s financial skills training provided the information and advice that tenants wanted or expected to receive. Only a small proportion (six per cent) said they

<sup>6</sup> The responses sum to more than 100 per cent because tenants could give more than one answer.

would have liked additional information or advice. This tended to focus on welfare benefits and financial advice.

## **4.2 Levels of interest in financial skills training among other tenants**

The evidence from this and other similar projects highlights the significant challenge of tenant engagement in financial skills training. As we saw in section 3, BRANCAB and OHE invested significant time and effort promoting the training and recruiting tenants who were interested. The broad target audience for the training undoubtedly added to the task.

OHE tenants in the comparison group (who did not receive any training) were asked if they would be interested in a free course run by the CAB to help them make the most of their money. Their response gives some idea of the scale of the task faced by organisations interested in delivering similar financial skills training. Around six in ten tenants in the comparison group (58 per cent) said they would not be interested in this type of training.

Further analysis showed some relationship between household income and interest in financial skills training.<sup>7</sup> OHE tenants with net household incomes of between £100 and £299 were more likely to express interest in taking part in training than those with lower or higher incomes, all other things being equal. No other socio-demographic characteristics were significant in predicting whether or not tenants in the comparison group were interested in the training.

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<sup>7</sup> We used a statistical technique called regression analysis to examine the extent to which characteristics related to the comparison group's interest in financial skills training, after holding constant the influence of all other characteristics included in the analysis.

## 5 The outcomes and impacts of BRANCAB's financial skills training

The popularity of financial skills training has grown significantly in the UK and elsewhere. For practical and resource reasons, evaluation of this training is often limited (at best) to an assessment of the outcomes for learners, gauged for example by a survey carried out once the training has been delivered. This approach does not take into account the position of learners before they participated in the training, however. Nor does it take into account the possibility that outcomes and impacts were the result of some other compounding factor, rather than the training.

This project was designed to overcome these issues, by conducting before-and-after surveys that were closely aligned to BRANCAB's financial skills training materials. These surveys were conducted with OHE tenants who took part in the financial skills training, but importantly also with a comparison group of OHE tenants who lived in areas where the training was not offered. The follow-up surveys of tenant learners and the comparison group were conducted six to eight weeks after the baseline survey.

This approach allowed us to see what happened to tenants who did not take part in the training, as far as their financial skills were concerned. It means that we can say with reasonable certainty whether or not any changes we observe among the tenant learners were caused by the training and not some other factor (Atkinson, 2008). Full details about the comparison group of OHE tenants are provided in the Technical Appendix.

### 5.1 Changes in the financial skills of tenant learners

Prior to BRANCAB's financial skills training, tenant learners generally considered themselves to be good money managers, but nonetheless found it a struggle to keep up with bills and commitments. Tenants' low household income is likely to be the main explanation for this apparent contradiction.

The great majority of tenant learners (94 per cent) had not received any advice or training on money matters other than BRANCAB's financial skills training. Similarly, only six per cent of the comparison group of tenants had ever had advice or training on money matters (although obviously they had not taken part in BRANCAB's financial skills training either).

As we described in section 3, our measure of money management skills comprised two components: making ends meet and keeping track. Analysis of the survey data showed positive changes in both these aspects of tenants' money management skills between the baseline and the follow-up interviews.

Both the tenant learners and the comparison group of tenants saw improvements in their ability to *make ends meet* between the time of the baseline and the follow-up survey (Table 7). These changes over time were statistically significant; in other words, they were unlikely to have occurred by chance. But while both groups had experienced positive changes in their ability to make ends meet, this change was almost four times greater among the tenant learners than the comparison group (a mean difference of 1.1 compared with 0.3 respectively, Table 7).

When it came to *keeping track* of their finances, only the tenant learners saw positive changes between the baseline and follow-up surveys that were statistically significant. Their average mean score had increased from 3.0 before the training to 4.0 at the time of the follow-up survey. In contrast, while the comparison group also saw their average score increase, this change was not statistically significant (Table 7).

Further analysis showed that, even when we controlled for the baseline scores (and their socio-demographic characteristics), the tenant learners scored better six to eight weeks after the training than the comparison group on both money management measures. This demonstrates that BRANCAB’s financial skills training was effective in helping tenant learners improve their money management skills, over and above any improvements they would have experienced anyway.

**Table 7: Money management scores: changes since baseline**

		Mean score at baseline	Mean score at follow-up	Mean difference (follow up – baseline)	Sample size
<b>Making ends meet</b>	Learners*	3.5	4.5	1.1	113
	Comparison group*	3.9	4.2	0.3	129
<b>Keeping track</b>	Learners*	3.0	4.0	1.1	113
	Comparison group	3.4	3.7	0.3	129

Source: Baseline and follow-up surveys of tenant learners and comparison group

\* indicates statistically significant change between baseline and follow up ( $p < .05$ ). The maximum score possible on each measure is 6.0. The scores are rounded to one decimal place.

## 5.2 Behaviour change

Another important aspect of evaluating financial skills training is to measure any behaviour changes that occur as a result of the training. We therefore asked tenant learners and the comparison group about any actions they had taken in the six to eight weeks since the baseline survey.

The survey analysis indicated some very positive behaviour changes among tenant learners that were far more pronounced than among the comparison group. Overall, three-quarters of tenant learners (76 per cent) had taken some form of action in relation to money matters since they completed the training. This compared with only 43 per cent of the comparison group.<sup>8</sup> Among the tenant learners who had taken actions, this was in all cases as a direct result of BRANCAB’s financial skills training.

Further analysis showed that two factors strongly predicted tenants making any changes to the way they managed their money, all other things being equal. The first factor was whether or not tenants had taken part in BRANCAB’s financial skills training. Tenant learners had nearly seven times higher odds of making some kind of change to their behaviour compared with the comparison group. The

<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise stated, we have only reported differences between the tenant learners and the comparison group that are statistically significant. A statistically significant difference is one that is not likely to have occurred by chance.

second factor was earned income. Tenants living in a household with earned income had seven times higher odds of making changes to their money management compared with tenants in households with no earned income (Appendix Table A7).

Separate analysis, based only on the data for tenant learners, showed that the method of delivering the training (workshop or one-to-one) did not affect the likelihood of tenants taking action in terms of how they managed their money after they had taken part in the training.

The following sections explore in more detail the behaviour changes that occurred, starting with the use of BRANCAB's financial skills toolkit by tenant learners.

### **5.2.1 Use of BRANCAB's financial skills toolkit**

Tenants who took part in the training were given a financial skills toolkit to take away with them, comprising an electronic calculator and a folder containing copies of the materials used in the training such as calculation and budget sheets.

Six to eight weeks after they had taken part in BRANCAB's financial skills training, 83 per cent of learners were using the toolkit in their everyday lives; the other 17 per cent were not. The most popular elements of the toolkit were:

- Information sheets, used by 74 per cent of learners
- Worksheets e.g. budget planner, meal planner, used by 63 per cent
- Electronic calculator, used by 61 per cent.

In the qualitative interviews, which took place at least three to four months after the training, most of the tenant learners were still using the toolkit, either regularly or for reference. Several learners used the calculator regularly to check their budgets or household accounts, or took it grocery shopping with them to check their bill was right.

### **5.2.2 Changes to money management**

The majority of tenant learners (78 per cent) had changed their money management behaviours in some way since the training. The same was true of only 36 per cent of the comparison group. These changes spanned a range of activities, from budgeting, to shopping around more, planning meals, and reducing spending on household bills. For example:

- 55 per cent of tenant learners had started to use money saving tips, compared with just five per cent of the comparison group.
- 50 per cent had started to shop around more, compared with 19 per cent of the comparison group.
- 46 per cent had reduced their spending on shopping, compared with 22 per cent of the comparison group.
- 28 per cent had started budgeting, compared with two per cent of the comparison group.
- 24 per cent had reduced spending on household bills or payments, compared with nine per cent of the comparison group (Appendix Table A8).



Even more importantly, these behaviour changes resulted in positive monetary benefits for tenants. Nearly eight in ten tenant learners who had taken any action had benefited financially in some way as a result of changes to their money management (76 per cent), compared with 56 per cent of tenants in the comparison group who had acted.

The most common financial gain involved a reduction in outgoings. The survey data gives some indication of the amounts involved: on average, tenant learners who had experienced some monetary benefit as a result of their actions were £10 per week better off.<sup>9</sup> Further analysis showed that tenant learners had six times higher odds of experiencing monetary gains since the baseline survey, compared with tenants in the comparison group (Appendix Table A9).

*'If we can get the shopping cheaper, it gives me more money to spend on my kids when they need things.'*

Separate analysis, based only on the data for tenant learners, showed that BRANCAB's one-to-one training was more likely to deliver financial benefits than workshops.

Tenant learners who took part in one-to-one financial skills training had almost 12 times higher odds of experiencing a monetary gain compared with those who attended a workshop. Additional training or advice was also a significant predictor (Appendix Table 10).

The qualitative interviews with tenant learners, which took place at least three to four months after the training, indicated that these behaviour changes had persisted. In some cases, the training had been the catalyst for major changes in the way tenants managed their money.

Tenant learners talked about changes to their shopping habits in the qualitative interviews, such as using a shopping list rather than *'grabbing everything that's on offer whether you need it or not'*, and buying own-brand rather than branded groceries.

Some had changed their methods of bill payment, for example changing the dates that direct debits were paid to coincide with payday. One woman had started to prioritise paying her rent and Council Tax above other non-priority creditors as a result of the training. Others were planning ahead more, for example for annual costs such as an MOT or car insurance.

For tenant learners who considered themselves to be good money managers already, the training had nonetheless given them useful additional tips or an extra *'boost'* or *'nudge'* to tighten up their money management.

*'I seem to be saving quite a bit with the help that I had'*

The savings that tenant learners were able to make week-to-week through budgeting or more careful money management meant they had more money in their pocket to spend on other things, like treats for themselves or their family, such as a trip to the cinema or a meal out. They had fewer weeks every month when they had to juggle their finances or *'rob Peter to pay Paul'*. And they were able to put money aside for Christmas or unexpected bills.

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<sup>9</sup> The average reported here is the median amount, which is the middle value. Note that this figure is based on a small sample size.

### **5.2.3 Changes to banking, borrowing and saving**

When it came to banking, borrowing and saving, the biggest change among tenant learners six to eight weeks after the baseline survey was in relation to their savings behaviour. One in five tenant learners (20 per cent) had changed their saving behaviour in some way since BRANCAB's financial skills training, compared with only 11 per cent of tenants in the comparison group. Notably:

- 12 per cent of tenant learners had *started* to save, compared with seven per cent of the comparison group. Another 10 per cent of tenant learners planned to start saving, compared with four per cent of the comparison group.
- 10 per cent of tenant learners had *increased* the amount they already saved, compared with only one per cent in the comparison group. Another four per cent of tenant learners planned to increase the amount they saved, compared with two per cent in the comparison group (Appendix Table A11).

The survey data gives some indication of the amounts involved: on average, tenant learners who changed their saving behaviour were saving an extra £11 per week than they previously had been.<sup>10</sup> In the qualitative interviews, tenant learners who had started to save, or to save more, talked about saving up for a family holiday, for car insurance, or to help them buy a car to improve their chances of finding work.

The majority of tenant learners (92 per cent) already had a current or basic bank account before they took part in BRANCAB's financial skills training. Most tenants in the comparison group (87 per cent) were also banked. Even so, six to eight weeks after they had completed BRANCAB's financial skills training, 13 per cent of tenant learners had either opened or switched bank account or opened a credit union account. Only three per cent of tenants in the comparison group had done so. In addition, another 18 per cent of tenant learners planned to open a credit union account. None of the comparison group had any such plans.

Apart from joining a credit union, none of the survey findings in relation to borrowing or debt showed any statistically significant changes. Very few tenants, either learners or comparison group, had taken out any new credit in the previous six to eight weeks (arguably a positive finding in itself). In the qualitative interviews, one tenant learner described how she had used her savings to repay a home credit loan, and was now saving more each week as a result.

When it came to financial difficulties, 10 per cent of tenant learners had taken action to sort out their debt problems, for example by contacting their creditors or seeking help from a debt advisor. A similar proportion of the comparison group (six per cent) had done the same. This difference between the two groups was not statistically significant. In other words, tenant learners may have taken this action anyway, even if they had not taken part in the training.

### **5.2.4 Changes in income**

Only a small proportion of tenants had managed to increase their household income (or tried to) in the six to eight weeks since the baseline survey (13 per cent of tenant learners and 15 per cent of

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<sup>10</sup> The average reported here is the median amount, which is the middle value. Note that this figure is based on a small sample size.

tenants in the comparison group). Moreover, the apparent difference between the tenant learners and the comparison group was not statistically significant. In other words, these changes might have happened irrespective of BRANCAB’s financial skills training.

The fact that a majority of tenants did not increase their income (or try to) is not surprising. There would be relatively few options to help tenants increase their income either from employment, social security benefits or tax credits, particularly in the short term.

### 5.3 Financial confidence

Tenants were asked a series of questions in the follow-up survey about how confident they felt in relation to different aspects of money matters. Overall, 71 per cent of tenant learners reported positive change in financial confidence, compared with just 13 per cent of the comparison group. Positive changes were particularly pronounced in relation to money management skills and financial control (Table 8).

**Table 8: Changes in financial confidence**

Column percentages		Tenant learners	Comparison group
Money management skills*	Worse	0	4
	About the same	35	85
	Better	65	11
Control of finances*	Less in control	0	4
	About the same	43	85
	More in control	57	11
Financial security*	Less secure	1	12
	About the same	58	81
	More secure	41	7
Worry about money*	More worried	5	17
	About the same	54	74
	Less worried	41	9
Confidence in choosing financial products*	Less confident	0	2
	About the same	53	94
	More confident	47	4
Net change across all measures <sup>1*</sup>	Positive	71	13
	Neutral/negative	29	87
<b>Sample size</b>		<b>113</b>	<b>129</b>

Source: Follow-up surveys of tenant learners and comparison group

\* indicates that there are statistically significant differences between groups ( $p < .05$  in Pearson chi-sq)

<sup>1</sup>Net change refers to where respondents gave more positive responses than negative ones to the five questions

Further analysis showed that participation in BRANCAB’s financial skills training was a highly significant predictor of improved financial confidence (Appendix Table A12). As a result, tenant learners had 23 times higher odds of reporting some improvement in their financial confidence compared with tenants in the comparison group. And receiving any training or advice (or any *additional* training or advice in the case of tenant learners) also had an effect, if less pronounced. Consequently, tenants who reported any advice or training, other than BRANCAB’s financial skills

training, had six times higher odds of feeling more financially confident than those tenants who had received none, all other things being equal.

Separate analysis, based only on the survey data for tenant learners, indicated that how the financial skills training was delivered (one-to-one or workshop) did not have a significant influence on changes to financial confidence.

The qualitative interviews give an indication of the positive benefits of increased financial confidence. Tenant learners talked about feeling less worried about money as a result of the positive changes they had made. Being able to set money aside for big bills or to save up for a holiday had the added psychological benefit of making tenants feel more financially secure. And, as we saw earlier, it meant that tenants had a bit more money to spend on the nicer things in life, like a family trip to the cinema or swimming pool or a meal out.

*'It's nice to look at my bank account at the end of the month and see a few quid in there.'*

#### **5.4 Use of information and advice**

Tenant learners were asked in the follow-up survey if they had shared information from BRANCAB's financial skills training with anyone else. Nearly six in ten (58 per cent) had done so.

The qualitative interviews indicated that some tenant learners had shared their new-found knowledge and skills orally with friends or family. Others had shared printed information from BRANCAB's financial skills training toolkit. One tenant learner, for example, had talked to her adult siblings (who had big families) about ways of cutting their grocery bills. Another had shared money management tips with her adult daughter, who had gone on to save money by changing her food shopping habits and also passed the information to her own friends.

One other possible impact of financial skills training is that it prompts learners to use other sources of information and advice, for example to help them deal with money matters or to choose financial products that meet their needs.

58 per cent of tenant learners had shared the information from BRANCAB's financial skills training with friends or family.

In the follow-up survey, tenants were asked if they had used any sources of information or guidance on money matters in the last six to eight weeks (other than BRANCAB's toolkit in the case of tenant learners). Nearly four times as many tenant learners said they had, compared with tenants in the comparison group (30 per cent of tenant learners, compared with eight per cent of the comparison group). And most of them said this was a direct result of BRANCAB's financial skills training.

By far the most common source of information used by tenant learners was the internet, including sites such as [www.moneysavingexpert.co.uk](http://www.moneysavingexpert.co.uk) and price comparison sites. The qualitative interviews showed that tenant learners had used price comparison sites to compare the cost of insurance and utility prices.

### **5.4.1 Using the CAB**

Most of the tenant learners in the qualitative interviews were aware of the CAB, and about half of them had used the CAB at some time in their lives. Several had been referred by a CAB advisor to BRANCAB's financial skills training.

Where tenants had used the CAB in the past, their experience of BRANCAB's financial skills training generally reinforced already positive views. In one case, however, BRANCAB's Financial Capability Development Worker helped to turn-around previous negative views of the CAB (based on a long wait for advice).

For some tenants who had not used the CAB before, taking part in the financial skills training helped to dispel some misperceptions. Several people were under the impression that the CAB service was only for people who had '*hit rock bottom*' and were surprised to hear that anyone could seek advice from a CAB. A few did not realise until they took part in the training that the CAB service helps people sort out money problems.

## 6 The impact of financial skills training for social landlords

Rent arrears are a primary concern for housing associations and local authority housing providers, particularly as Housing Benefit will be paid direct to tenants from October 2013. This is a key driver for OHE's and other social landlords' involvement in financial inclusion and financial skills initiatives. There may be some knock-on benefits as well, for example tenants may perceive their landlord more positively if they provide access to free training on an unconditional basis.

### 6.1 Rent arrears

OHE administrative data from 2011 indicates that net rent arrears in Rugby were 3.31% and 2.69% in Stratford, as a proportion of the rent due. In the evaluation we looked at rent arrears in two ways: using the survey data we had collected (i.e. tenants' self-reported arrears) and also using OHE's rent account data.

In the follow-up survey, tenants who paid some or all of their rent themselves were asked whether they had been in rent arrears at the time of the baseline survey and whether they were in rent arrears now. Although the survey data showed an apparent reduction in the number of tenant learners in rent arrears at the follow-up survey compared with the baseline survey (from 12 per cent to eight per cent) this was not statistically significant. Neither was the reduction among the comparison group (15 per cent to 14 per cent) significant. In other words, if rent arrears were positively affected by the training, the effect was not large enough to be detected with the sample size available. The apparent differences *between* the two groups (for the baseline and the follow-up measures) were also not statistically significant.

We were also able to look at patterns of rent arrears using OHE's rent account data. We compared levels of rent arrears in July 2011 (around the time BRANCAB first started to deliver its financial skills training) and May 2012 (around two months after the financial skills training had finished). Like the survey data, the apparent differences between the tenant learners and the comparison group at the baseline and follow-up were not statistically significant. The apparent improvement in arrears over time was not statistically significant either (Table 9).

**Table 9: Changes in levels of rent arrears**

Percentages	Tenant learners <sup>ns</sup>	Comparison group <sup>ns</sup>
Not in rent arrears in July 2011 <sup>ns</sup>	23	30
Not in rent arrears in May 2012 <sup>ns</sup>	27	32
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>189</b>

Source: OHE rent account data for tenant learners and comparison group

<sup>ns</sup> the apparent differences between the groups and the changes over time in the level of rent arrears were not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ).

Regression analysis using the OHE rent account data confirmed that the apparent improvement in the level of rent arrears was not statistically significant. The analysis also showed that none of the

socio-demographic characteristics of tenants predicted being in arrears in May 2012. The only factor that had any explanatory power was whether or not tenants had a history of rent arrears. All other things being equal, if a tenant was not in rent arrears in July 2011, then they had nearly 36 times higher odds of not being in arrears in May 2012 either, compared with someone who was in rent arrears in July 2011 (Appendix Table A13).

More broadly, tenants' ability to meet their rent payments is affected by their financial skills as well as their level of household income and other factors. The positive behaviour changes among tenant learners described in earlier sections can help improve their capacity to meet their rent payments (or to repay rent arrears), as the following case studies illustrate.

### **The impact of BRANCAB's financial skills training: Two case studies**

#### **Janet's story**

Janet is in her late 40s and lives with her husband and children. They are just about keeping up with the bills, but before BRANCAB's financial skills training she was concerned about their finances and often had what she called '*skint weeks*'.

Because of her limited mobility, Janet was offered a one-to-one training session in her own home. BRANCAB's Financial Capability Development Worker was there for around two hours. Janet found the session very helpful and positive, and credits it with significantly changing the way she thinks about money matters. The training gave her the impetus to start managing her money more effectively, by keeping a detailed spreadsheet of the household's incomings and outgoings.

Janet found the tips on shopping particularly useful. Since the training several months ago, she has changed the stores where she shops, buys fewer branded goods, buys in bulk and plans family meals. As a result of these changes, she is able to save around £20 a week into a high interest savings account (which she opened following the training) and feels far more secure about her finances than before. She has passed on the tips she learned from the training to several members of her family, including one who went on to attend the financial skills training as well.

### **Anne's story**

Anne works part-time as a shop assistant. She recently reduced her working hours to care for her husband. This created financial difficulties for them, which prompted Anne to seek help from the CAB. In turn, the CAB advisor told her about BRANCAB's financial skills training.

Anne attended a training session with about 10 other people. The group setting was OK, but she was too embarrassed to ask questions about her own situation in front of other people. She found the advice and information helpful, *'it all made sense'*. She has found it hard to put some of the advice into practice, however, because their main problem is lack of money.

Even so, Anne has made some changes to the way she manages her money as a result of the training. Primarily she has changed the way she pays her bills, to ensure that her priority bills (rent, Council Tax) are paid first as soon as her earnings are paid into her account. This has left her feeling more *'relaxed'* about managing her money. She has also put some of the money saving tips into practice. While she still isn't able to save any money, she feels that their finances are less of *'a juggling act'*. Anne would like the training to be run on a drop-in basis, like a *'support group'*, where she would feel more comfortable asking questions.

Source: Qualitative interviews with tenant learners. Names and personal details have been changed.

## **6.2 Views about Orbit Heart of England Housing Association**

Orbit Heart of England's 2012 tenant survey shows that overall tenant satisfaction with their landlord was 82 per cent, up from 78 per cent in 2011. Compared with a benchmark group of large housing providers, OHE's performance was in the top quartile for the four measures that are tracked: overall satisfaction, satisfaction with views being taken into account, satisfaction with neighbourhood and satisfaction with quality of home.

Most of the tenant learners who took part in the qualitative interviews for this study either had a positive view about OHE as a landlord, or did not have a view one way or the other (generally because they had had little contact with OHE). A few tenants expressed negative views about OHE in the qualitative interviews, generally because of delays sorting out things like repairs or because they were in rent arrears.

Regardless of what they thought about OHE as a landlord, the tenant learners in the qualitative interviews expressed very positive views about OHE's involvement in providing financial skills training to tenants through BRANCAB. Some were surprised but pleased that OHE had taken this initiative. It also marked OHE out from being *'just a normal housing association'*. Others recognised that it made good business sense for OHE to help tenants manage their money, in an effort to keep down rent arrears.

*'The people who live in their houses are struggling for money.'*

*'Lots of people could benefit.'*

## **6.3 Is there a case for landlords to provide financial skills training?**

The overall aim of BRANCAB's financial skills training was to improve the money management skills and general financial awareness of OHE tenants. This in turn would enable tenants to maximise their



available income, help them access and use appropriate financial products and in turn avoid financial difficulties.

The evaluation shows that BRANCAB's financial skills training succeeded in meeting its objectives. In the longer term, the additional skills and confidence that tenants gained as a result of the training should help them manage the finite amount of money they have.

It was not within the remit of the evaluation to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of BRANCAB's financial skills training. We can, however, give a rough idea of the cost of the training per tenant learner. This is based on the majority of training taking place in one-to-one sessions. The evaluation demonstrated quite clearly that BRANCAB's one-to-one training was more effective than workshops at prompting tenants to act and in turn to benefit financially from their actions.

The financial skills project ran over the course of a year (including set-up time) from February 2011 to March 2012. The training was delivered between June 2011 and March 2012. BRANCAB's full-time Financial Capability Development Worker (who was already in post) worked approximately two days a week on the project for the first half, and four days a week for the second half.

Taking into account the direct costs of BRANCAB's financial skills training<sup>11</sup>, the cost per tenant learner was £132 (or £125 per training session). This does not take into account the time spent by OHE staff on the project, which was not possible to quantify.

This is more expensive per learner than a typical CAB financial skills training programme, but the cost reflects the intensive outreach that was required within the short delivery window and the fact that the bulk of the delivery was one-to-one rather than group sessions. It is also important to remember that the one-to-one training received by OHE tenant learners was more likely to deliver positive, tangible financial benefits than a workshop. In addition, BRANCAB and OHE invested time in the early stages of the project testing a range of strategies before settling on a model of engagement that worked well with a general population of tenants. Other landlords and training providers can therefore benefit by using the same or a similar model of engagement.

This rough cost also does not take into account the added value of the financial skills training, in terms of the shared learning that took place among tenants in the local community. Around six in ten tenant learners (58 per cent) shared some of the information or learning from the BRANCAB training with friends or family members. We have not attempted to quantify this benefit, as we do not know how much learning the tenant learners shared with others.

The evaluation suggests different approaches that social landlords and training providers can take to reduce the direct costs of financial skills training, based on the learning about tenant engagement described in earlier sections. The main one is to routinise methods of tenant engagement and to focus on personal contact rather than printed materials. This might include:

- Targeting new tenants when they take up their tenancy.
- Asking housing officers and tenant support workers to promote training in routine visits or contacts with existing tenants.

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<sup>11</sup> The direct costs are staff salary and on-costs for the Financial Capability Development Worker; administrative support; marketing; travel; telephone, stationery, printing and photocopying. It does not include the cost of any financial incentives.

- Routinely cold-calling tenants either in person (by the CAB or other training provider) or by telephone (the landlord).
- Taking advantage of communities of interest that already exist or clusters of homes in the local area to deliver training in small groups (e.g. friendship or family groups).

In addition, landlords are in a position to identify tenants at risk of, or in the early stages of, rent arrears through analysis of rent account data. These tenants could form an important element of any tenant engagement strategy.

Even so, organisations interested in delivering similar financial skills training should set their sights low in terms of tenant engagement. There was not a great deal of appetite for this type of training. Only four in ten tenants in the comparison group were interested in free training on money matters from the CAB, most were not.

## 7 Conclusions

This evaluation assessed the outcomes and impacts of a financial skills training programme delivered by skilled and experienced CAB staff to social housing tenants in two locations. The evaluation was designed to demonstrate whether or not any benefits gained by tenant learners could be attributed to the training. This was achieved by carrying out before-and-after surveys with both tenant learners and a comparison group of tenants who lived in areas where the training was not available.

The evaluation showed clearly that tenant learners derived considerable benefit from the financial skills training. Tenant learners changed their behaviour in a number of important ways as a result of the training. Moreover, they often gained financially as a result of those changes. The evaluation demonstrated that the extent of these changes was attributable to the financial skills training. The same degree of change would not have happened otherwise.

It is important to understand that these positive findings are particular to the training programme that was provided, the way it was delivered, and the trainers who delivered it. We cannot say whether or not another training programme that focused on different money issues and was delivered by different trainers would necessarily achieve the same results.

### 7.1 Outcomes and impacts

The baseline survey indicated that tenant learners were not necessarily bad money managers. But there was clearly room for improvement within the parameters of their household income, as evidenced by their average money management scores. BRANCAB's financial skills training provided the impetus for some tenants to make major changes to how they managed their money day-to-day. Others tightened up their existing skills or benefited from hearing about new tips for saving money.

By improving their money management skills, tenant learners could find themselves with more money in their household coffers. Tenants who had changed the way they managed their money were on average £10 a week better off.<sup>12</sup> This meant they were in a better position to plan ahead for unexpected expenses or for larger costs such as an MOT. They could also afford some of the nicer things in life, like a meal out or a family trip to the cinema.

One of the most striking changes was in relation to saving. Around one in ten tenant learners (12 per cent) had started to save, and another 10 per cent planned to start saving. Others had increased the amount they already saved. Tenants who had changed the way they saved were saving on average an extra £11 per week than before the training.<sup>12</sup> BRANCAB's financial skills training also resulted in greater tenant engagement with the credit union, which had the potential to open up access to more affordable credit as well as a place to save.

The evaluation was more equivocal in terms of the impact on rent arrears of financial skills training. Despite an apparent improvement in rent arrears over time for tenant learners, the change was not statistically significant and within the context of this research could not be attributed to the CAB financial skills training.

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<sup>12</sup> Note that this figure is based on a small sample size.

Even so, the positive changes made by tenant learners following the training, and the financial benefits they enjoyed as a result, can help to make their household finances more sustainable going forward. This in turn makes it more likely that they will be able to meet their rent payments or repay rent arrears, provided that their incomes do not fall or their rent or other major outgoings increase. Just as importantly, tenant learners were far more confident about their financial futures as a result of the training.

The benefits of the training were not confined to tenant learners either. The majority had shared ideas and information from the training with friends and family members, who stood to gain in the same way as tenant learners had done.

## **7.2 Costs and challenges**

BRANCAB's financial skills training programme was successful in delivering its objectives - once tenants had engaged with it. Getting tenants engaged was undoubtedly the biggest challenge, even with highly experienced delivery partners and the help and guidance of experts on the project advisory group. The comparison group survey data helps quantify the extent of the challenge: only four in ten tenants in other areas said they would be interested in free training on money matters provided by the CAB.

The evaluation provides valuable learning about tenant engagement in a situation where the tenants have little in common except for the area in which they live and their landlord. Personal contact (by telephone and in person) was a crucial element in getting tenants on board. Routinising promotion to tenants by housing and CAB staff over a sustained period may also have knock-on effects in terms of generating word-of-mouth recommendations among tenants. Other landlords and training providers can benefit from this learning to reduce the direct costs of marketing and delivering financial skills training.

For similar training programmes run over a longer time period, it should be possible to harness positive experiences and messages from tenant learners to engage others in a similar position. The evaluation shows that relatively simple changes can make a big difference, which is an encouraging and reassuring message for other tenants. Tenant learners themselves could be enthusiastic advocates of financial skills training.

A rough estimate of the costs of the training per tenant learner indicates that it was more expensive than the average CAB financial skills training programme. This is undoubtedly because the majority of BRANCAB's training was delivered one-to-one with tenants, rather than in workshops as had been planned. It also reflects the time BRANCAB and OHE invested in testing different tenant engagement strategies before they found an approach that was effective with a general population of tenants.

That said, there is evidence that BRANCAB's financial skills training was more effective in helping tenant learners achieve financial benefits from better money management when it was delivered in one-to-one sessions than when it was delivered in workshops. But however it was delivered, BRANCAB's financial skills training resulted in tenant learners making changes in their lives that improved not only their financial situation but also their quality of life.

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## Technical appendix

The evaluation of BRANCAB’s financial skills training comprised:

- Self-completion baseline surveys of tenants who took part in BRANCAB’s financial skills training (tenant learners) and a comparison group of tenants who did not take part in the training.
- Self-completion satisfaction survey completed by tenant learners immediately after they had completed the financial skills training.
- Follow-up telephone surveys of tenant learners and the comparison group which were conducted six to eight weeks after the baseline survey by a professional fieldwork company.
- Qualitative telephone depth interviews with 20 tenant learners at least three to four months after they had taken part in BRANCAB’s financial skills training.
- Qualitative telephone and face-to-face interviews with representatives from BRANCAB, Stratford CAB and Orbit Heart of England Housing Association (OHE) who were involved in the promotion and delivery of the financial skills training.

The following sections describe the baseline and follow-up surveys of tenant learners and the comparison group.

### Tenant learners

Tenant learners were recruited from OHE tenants in Rugby and Stratford. The only criteria for tenants to be offered the training was that they lived in a target area and were an OHE tenant. The training was voluntary and free of charge.

In total, 150 people took part in BRANCAB’s financial skills training. We excluded one person from the survey dataset because they were not an OHE tenant. The sample size for the survey analysis was therefore 149.

Tenant learners were asked to self-complete the baseline survey at the beginning of BRANCAB’s financial skills training, before they received any information or advice. They were asked to complete the survey questionnaire themselves, without conferring with anyone else. They could ask the Financial Capability Development Worker for clarification if they did not understand a question. The baseline data for tenant learners was collected between June 2011 and March 2012. Table 1 shows the number of tenant learners completing the baseline survey over that time.

**Table 1: Number of tenant learners over time**

Interview wave	No. tenant learners	% tenant learners
Wave 1 (June 2011)	2	1
Wave 2	18	12
Wave 3	18	12
Wave 4	23	15
Wave 5 (March 2012)	88	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100</b>

The follow-up survey of tenant learners took place six to eight weeks later. They were carried out by telephone by The Research Partnership. The interviews generally took 15 to 20 minutes. Tenant learners were sent a £10 shopping voucher on completion of the follow-up survey interview. They were also entered into a prize draw with prizes of £350, £150 and £50.

The response rate for the follow-up survey of tenant learners is shown in Table 2. The telephone interviewers were unable to contact some tenant learners, for example because of incorrect telephone numbers. Table 2 therefore shows both the start sample and the valid sample.

**Table 2: Response rate for follow-up survey of tenant learners**

Interview wave	Start sample (no. tenants)	Valid sample (no. tenants)	No. follow-up interviews	% tenant learners followed-up
Wave 1	2	2	2	100
Wave 2	18	13	13	100
Wave 3	18	15	10	67
Wave 4	23	23	19	83
Wave 5	88	78	69	88
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>86</b>

### Comparison group of OHE tenants

In order to compare the outcomes and impacts of tenant learners with tenants who had not received BRANCAB’s financial skills training, a comparison group of OHE tenants was recruited from areas where the training was not available.

The first two waves of the comparison group baseline survey were carried out in Hinckley in southwest Leicestershire. Waves three, four and five were carried out in the Leamington Spa/Warwick area. These areas were selected in discussion with OHE, on the basis that they were similar to the areas in which BRANCAB was delivering its financial skills training.

The comparison group of tenants in both areas was identified by OHE from its rent account data. OHE selected a random sample of 300-400 tenants for each wave of survey interviews. The aim was to recruit around 200 of these tenants to complete the baseline survey. Each tenant was sent a letter by OHE informing them about the research and giving them a week to opt out of the survey (which very few did).

Tenants who did not opt out of the research were visited at their home by an interviewer from Swift Research. Those that agreed to take part were asked to complete the baseline survey questionnaire themselves, to replicate the way in which tenant learners completed the baseline survey. The interviewers from Swift Research were on hand to answer questions or provide clarification. Table 3 shows the number of tenants recruited to the comparison group over time.

**Table 3: Number of tenants in the comparison group**

Interview wave	No. comparison group	% comparison group
Wave 1 (June 2011)	40	21
Wave 2	40	21
Wave 3	40	21
Wave 4	38	19
Wave 5 (March 2012)	35	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>

As with the tenant learners, the follow-up survey of the comparison group took place six to eight weeks after they had completed the baseline survey. The interviews took between 15 and 20 minutes and were carried out on the telephone by The Research Partnership. As a thank-you, tenants in the comparison group received a £5 shopping voucher on completion of the baseline survey, and a further £5 voucher on completion of the follow-up survey. Table 4 shows the response rate for the comparison group of tenants.

**Table 4: Response rate for follow-up survey of comparison group**

Interview wave	Start sample (no. tenants)	Valid sample (no. tenants)	No. follow-up interviews	% comparison group followed-up
Wave 1	40	31	24	77
Wave 2	40	29	23	79
Wave 3	40	38	31	82
Wave 4	38	35	27	77
Wave 5	35	32	24	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>78</b>

### Differences between tenant learners and the comparison group of tenants

To ensure that tenants in the comparison group were similar to tenants living in the target areas for BRANCAB's financial skills training, we used information provided by OHE to set interview quotas for the comparison group on age and gender. It was not practical to control for any other characteristics over and above these.

We hoped to adjust the comparison group interview quotas over the period of the project, to take into account the socio-demographic characteristics of tenant learners as they came on stream. In the event, this was not practical because of the slow take-up of BRANCAB's financial skills training in the target areas.

Analysis of the survey data using a statistical technique called regression analysis indicated some differences in the socio-demographic profile of tenant learners compared with the comparison group. Tenant learners were more likely to be aged 45 or older than the comparison group; they



were more likely to be a single parent; and to have been an OHE tenant for only one or two years. These differences are undoubtedly a function of the various tenant engagement strategies tried by BRANCAB and OHE over the course of the project.