

Grow your own advice

Partnership

Who we are: overview

- We are both Black-led and East London based organisations working closely together through practical, grassroots collaboration to support people from diverse ethnic communities to avoid financial crisis through specialist debt and welfare advice.
- We both play a strategic role in increasing the visibility of financially excluded people, working with cross-sector partners to achieve this.
- Seeking to amplify the voices of marginalised communities and tackle structural and systemic inequalities.
- We collaborated to design and deliver the 'Grow Your Own Advice' Incubator programme. It aims to support diverse London-based community organisations to 'grow their own' advice workers – while addressing the gap in provision of community-based debt and welfare advice, particularly for Londoners from diverse ethnic communities.



Our partnership

Who we are

- Our partnership aims to empower diverse London-based community organisations to expand provision of holistic, person-centred advice services, bridging the gap between community-based organisations and specialist provision, with a particular focus on supporting Londoners from diverse ethnic communities.
- By coming together as a partnership, we bring knowledge and expertise to address the pressing needs of our communities.
- This collaborative approach allows us to enhance the quality and impact of our services, mitigate risks, and better allocate resources to support those in need.
- Our shared mission is to create a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable and interlinked support system that uplifts and empowers individuals from all backgrounds.

Why our collective expertise supports this work

- Members recognise that financial exclusion and poverty are interwoven with other wider societal inequalities. Increasingly as organisations we see how these inequalities are impacting those in, or on the edge of, vulnerable financial situations.
- Our partnership represents a diverse array of organisations focused on frontline support that offers a wide range of services to communities across London and is coordinated by two specialist advice agencies.
- Each organisation brings unique expertise and resources in key thematic areas to enable joined up support and holistic approaches.
- Our expertise includes Foodbanks and Food Pantries, Community-Based Research, Debt Advice, Financial Education, Employment Advice, Welfare Advice, Mental Health support, Children and Young People provision and Homelessness and Housing support.

Debt training programme overview

TRAINEE PROFILE

Nine trainees started the Debt advice learning pathway, with six completing the learning programme across 7 months of training. *Three trainees left due to employment opportunities and health reasons.



The trainees are from diverse communities including, Black African, Black Caribbean, Asian British Bangladeshi and White mixed communities.



They are based in North, South and East London and have a mix of lived and professional experience in areas that include counselling, education, community engagement and faith leadership.

TRAINING

- Trainees started in January 2024. Training consisted of 1-day a week training sessions (either online or in-person) with the debt training supervisor, as well as formal 1-2-1 catchups with trainees completed by-weekly training progression and additional support needs.
- The training covered crucial soft skills, theory and mandatory CMA level 1-3 in generalist debt advice training sessions.
- In April 24, learning moved to the observation phase, bridging the theory with advice appointment observations. At this time the trainees volunteered additional 0.5 or 1 day to support this process

WHAT HAS BEEN IMPORTANT

- The need for flexibility and adaptations to support individual time commitments
- All trainees were looking for and aspire to secure employment as quickly as possible
- Getting trainee feedback through the learning journey has been vital



"This was a fantastic opportunity to learn as well as be able to help people, particularly as the need for debt advice continues to grow."

Trainee – Cohort 1

Welfare training programme overview

TRAINING UPDATE

16 trainees have completed the core Welfare Benefits pathway in Year 1. 8 trainees continued on the Money Mentors programme which began in September 2024.

Towards the end of the core Welfare Benefits pathway, focus of training shifted to observing and engaging in Money A+E's casework, which covers both money guidance/budgeting and benefits advice. Trainees complete regular scenario-based activities alongside reflections on their observations and opportunities to participate in delivering welfare benefits advice.

MONEY MENTORS (SEPTEMBER 2024)

Money Mentors is an OCN-accredited course that all continuing candidates have been enrolled on. The programme supports candidates to provide mentoring on money management skills within their communities, helping to build community economic resilience. The programme is formally assessed through coursework.

TRAINING STRUCTURE

- Much like the Debt training pathway, training initially consisted of a 1-day a week of training (online or in person) with the specialist Welfare Benefits training supervisor, scheduled at various different points in the week to suit the needs of candidates.
- This was supplemented by 1-2-1 catch ups and occasional external training delivered online overing core aspects of welfare benefits advice.
- Knowledge-focused sessions have been delivered alongside training on soft skills, data handling and client support.



WHAT HAS BEEN IMPORTANT

- Fully recognising and valuing the lived experience individuals and organisations bring to the training programme – and the diversity of expertise
- The need for flexibility and adaptations to support individual time commitments and pressures.
- Candidates being supported to develop knowledge and skills that will directly enhance employability and employment into roles where advice skills are utilised for the benefit of communities.

Consortia

Programme leads and coordinator of the consortia



GYOA partners

