

# An Evaluation of The Mix Money Helpline

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Funded by



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## 1 Executive Summary

### Description of the programme

The Mix was awarded a grant to launch The Mix Money Helpline, a multi-channel financial support service for young people aged 16-25 facing financial issues at key life transition stages in their lives provided by trained volunteers via phone, webchat and email.

Following the discovery that separating money issues from other issues young people face is difficult as money issues are often intertwined with other problems, the helpline design was adapted. The money advice has been embedded into the existing helpline support for the under 25s dealing with a wide range of issues.

Over the course of this programme The Mix supported 88,446 young people with money and financial worries.

### The study

Key research question was: *To what extent can The Mix's helpline staffed by peer volunteers and the money information available on the website impact on the financial capability of 16-25 year olds?*

The outcomes measured, taken from The Financial Capability Outcomes Framework developed by NPC, included:

- self confidence in managing money
- attitudes to receiving advice
- attitudes to money

A pre and post design was used. The evaluation method consisted of a short survey to money service users at the time of accessing the service, either via telephone or online, and a short-term online follow-up survey administered 2 weeks later. In total 43 responses were received to both the initial and follow-up surveys. Impact of the service on their financial capability was also discussed with a small number of volunteers.

The evaluation also aimed to review how the helpline and online money content is being used; to create an evidence base on which to further develop our services; determine whether users use different channels for different topics; and collect learnings from implementation. To answer these questions a mixed method approach was utilised using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The evaluation took place between July 2017 and June 2018.

## Key findings

### Outcome evaluation

- While overall self-confidence in managing money did not change significantly, there is evidence that accessing the service significantly increases feeling of being in control of finances and being organised with day-to-day money
- The service contributed to an increase in knowing how to seek financial advice, and in young people feeling that they can make a difference to their financial situation, in both cases a significant improvement was observed
- Signposting worked well, with over 9 in 10 of respondents contacting at least some of the organisations suggested to them
- The findings above are based on a small sample of respondents (43) somewhat limiting the evidence strength

### Process evaluation

While there were 13,330 interactions on the helpline between July 2017 and May 2018, there were 825 (6%) instances where the main issue was money. This is somewhat lower than originally envisaged, however, there were 280 other instances where money issue was addressed but not as the main issue. Phone was the most popular channel of accessing the helpline, with the top two money issues discussed including benefits (49%) and money management (40%).

Around one in ten users accessing The Mix's website accessed the money pages; with 430,599 page views of the money related content being made during the 11 month period. The most frequently visited topics included jobseekers allowance (17%) and emergency support (14%). People were directed to the Mix's money web content from over 25 different websites, with the largest numbers coming from [advicenow.org.uk](http://advicenow.org.uk).

Currently, there are 117 volunteers working on the helpline. Some 462 applications were received between July 2017 and May 2018, with 174 volunteers starting their training, and 70 volunteers being inducted into their jobs.

Insights from the focus groups show that young people are interested to learn more about saving for the future, how to budget, and how to balance spending on essentials, social life and other non-essentials. They would like more information on taxes or financial products such as pensions. Many suggested that more information about money management should be taught at schools.

Impulsive spending, peer pressure (to have the latest tech), societal values (consumption), or social pressure (to buy an expensive present) that lead to overspending were reappearing themes in the discussions. Young people want to learn how to avoid these behaviors that lead to issues with money. Experience with The Mix was positive, with participants accessing the service finding the information useful.

As noted, the helpline design has been changed compared to the original vision, with the financial support being fully integrated into the existing helpline rather than being a stand-

alone service. As a result The Mix can provide more holistic support to young people as the money issues are often intertwined with other problems.

### Points to consider

Methodological limitations relating to the outcomes surveys:

- As non-random convenient sampling was used, selection bias might have occurred
- Fairly small sample size (43) and no comparison group limit the evidence strength
- The follow-up time period for the evaluation was limited
- The vast majority of people completing the outcome survey used website; it is not certain whether the outcomes for the helpline would be the same

### Key recommendations

- Consideration of a follow up service which will allow underlying financial issues to be addressed after immediate emergencies have been resolved
- Applying a holistic approach where a range of issues can be addressed simultaneously
- Introducing basic money skills and knowledge into the curriculum in schools
- Developing more material specifically targeted towards young people around:
  - Saving
  - Budgeting
  - Balancing spending on essentials and non-essentials
  - Information on taxes and financial products such as pensions
- Ensuring that materials are user-friendly, easy to understand and in formats suitable for young people such as videos and e-learning
- Disseminating information from sources which are known and trusted by young people
- Developing strategies and narratives which address the roots of financial and money issues

## 2 Overview of project

The Mix was awarded a grant to launch **The Mix Money Helpline**, a multi-channel financial support service for young people aged 16-25 years facing financial issues at key life transition stages in their lives.

It was proposed that we would do that in the following ways:

- Development and building of a Nottingham Helpline Hub
  - Building a specialist financial support team to work across our UK-wide digital and helpline support services
  - Increasing our number of volunteers
- Researching and establishing key financial referral partners
- Developing the financial literacy of our volunteers delivering the helpline
- Ongoing development of content
- Testing efficiency of channels e.g. text

The Mix Money Helpline was launched on 1st July 2017. Originally, it was envisioned that the Money helpline would be a standalone service based in Nottingham separate from the well-established London based helpline that deals with wide range of issues that under 25s might experience. A separate number was created for the Money helpline.

Having launched the Nottingham helpline focusing purely on the money service, it became obvious that it was difficult to determine the main issue or reason for contact before it was made. It is often difficult to separate money issues from other issues as money issues are frequently intertwined with other problems such as homelessness or addiction. This resulted in the Nottingham hub receiving a low number of contacts. To ensure the efficiency of both helplines, it was decided that volunteers staffing both helplines would be trained in how to deal with enquiries concerning financial issues, and all would answer any type of enquiry.

The main **target audience** consists of:

- young people aged 16-25 years old facing financial issues at key life transition stages
- volunteers - we specifically targeted NYEET young people as volunteers for the financial hub as well as students, job seekers and young people already in the workplace within the Nottingham area. We wanted to have a diverse group of young people volunteering with us, to reflect the diversity of the youth population and the issues they face.

The following **channels** are used to deliver the service

- **Telephone helpline**, this involved scaling up/extending an existing intervention service developed using the MAS framework. Staff and volunteers were trained to support young people with issues relating to financial capability for this project. Specialist signposting and outreach were specifically developed for this project to support young people to better access services.

- **One to one webchat**, this involved scaling up/extending an existing intervention. Staff and volunteers were trained to support young people with issues relating to financial capability for this project.
- **Web content**, this involved development of new and existing content for young people to support them with issues relating to financial capability
- **Email**, this involved scaling up/extending an existing intervention service. Staff and volunteers were trained to support young people with issues relating to financial capability for this project.

The intervention is focused on exploring problems of the person getting in touch to help them identify issues they need help with, along with providing emotional support and signposting. People using the service lead on what they want to do next, whether it is having a chat, receiving information on organisations that may be able to help or a warm handover involving putting them in touch with partner organisations.

### 3 Overview of the evaluation approach

The Mix has been funded by MAS to run a financial support helpline; we were required to evaluate the service in terms of its impact and process.

The key research question was:

**To what extent can The Mix's helpline staffed by peer volunteers and the money information available on the website impact on the financial capability of 16-25 year olds?**

The evaluation aimed to generate new data concentrating on what works for young adults in terms of financial capability. Along with looking at outcomes, the aim was also to:

- Review how the helpline and online content is being used; and what population groups are being reached
- To create an evidence base on which to further develop and/or expand our services specifically through looking at the types of support they seek or need during key transition points e.g. leaving school, moving to higher education, finding their first job, leaving home for the first times.
- Determine whether users use different channels for different topics and urgency of their questions.
- Collect learnings on what worked well and less well

To answer the questions above a mixed method approach was utilised using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

#### 3.1 Outcome evaluation

The outcome evaluation focused on assessment of individual change in attitudes to finances and financial management. A pre and post design was used to determine the effect.

To measure the impact of the service, the evaluation method consisted of a short survey to money service users at the time of accessing the service, either via telephone or online, and a short-term online follow-up survey. An incentive – £5 Amazon voucher - was used. Voucher was given to people who completed the initial survey, but there was no incentive for the follow-up survey. The work was carried out by the external consultant Icarus.

To measure the shift in young people financial capabilities, five questions from The Financial Capability Outcomes Framework for Adults were used. These were asked at baseline and again in a follow-up survey. The framework was developed by the Financial Capability Strategy for the UK in collaboration with New Philanthropy Capital and contains a selection of outcomes, indicators and questions for use in surveys to measure changes in people's Financial Capability. The five questions focus on self confidence in managing money, attitudes to receiving advice and attitudes to money.

The evaluation utilised non-random convenient sampling.. Paired t-test was used to analyse the data to determine whether the results show any significant changes. The sample breakdown and evaluation approach can be seen in the table below.

Sample and evaluation method			
Method	Source	Details	Responses
<b>Initial survey:</b>	Young people	Young people accessing the service between July 2017 and April 2018 were asked to complete five questions related to their self-confidence in managing money, attitudes to receiving advice and attitudes to money (Appendix 1).	<b>229</b>
<b>Short-term follow-up online survey</b>	Young people who agree to take part in follow up	Young people were invited to take part in a follow-up survey two weeks after they contacted the service. Those consenting to follow up were sent a link to an online survey by email or text. The survey consisted of the same five questions as the initial survey plus additional items regarding action taken (Appendix 1)	<b>43</b>

Findings from the focus groups were used to illustrate the link between the Mix's intervention and outcomes observed.

A small number of interviews with volunteers working on the helpline were conducted to find about the impact of the e-learning package and delivering the service on their financial capabilities.

### 3.2 Process evaluation

There are several elements that fall under the process evaluation:

## Operational information

To see how the service has been utilised, and what population is being reached, a range of data have been monitored and analysed. This includes users' demographic data (age, gender, geography), channel used for accessing the service, alongside other data such as initial feeling, and information on refers and where people were referred to.

Not all the categories have been collected for all the service users, nonetheless a good volume of data have been obtained.

Operational information on volunteers staffing the helpline has also been collected and analysed.

## New evidence base

To create an evidence base on which to further develop our services four online focus groups were conducted; two with young people (16-24 years old) who did not use The Mix and two with young people who used The Mix Money service. Each group had between 5 and 10 participants, both males and females were represented. The content has been analysed using thematic analysis. Additionally, we were interested to find out whether the information received from The Mix was useful and helped.

## Semantic analysis

Content from helpline, webchats and emails have been analysed using topic analysis by channel and language to see whether young people use different channels for queries on different topics and queries of different severity/urgency.

## Learnings from implementation

Project document analysis and an interview with the Project Manager were conducted to answer the following questions:

- Was the project delivered as originally anticipated?
- How effective were the project delivery processes in enabling the project to be successful?
- What did not work and why? What worked well and why?
- How could these processes be improved in future?
- What are the main learnings made?

### 3.3 Changes from the original evaluation design

As a far smaller sample for the outcome survey was obtained than originally planned, the online focus groups with service users also look at the impact of the money service and implementation of advice in their daily life.

Originally, it was envisioned that volunteers would also complete the outcome survey at two time points. However, due to operational reasons no baseline survey was conducted with volunteers. Instead, we carried out depth interviews with a small number of volunteers to find about the impact of the training they received and delivering the service on their financial capabilities.

Finally, as at the time of writing this report the money service has been in operation for under a year and a major change to its design has been introduced during that time, carrying out economic evaluation did not feel appropriate. It takes time for a new service to fully embed, as it takes time for outcomes to fully materialise. If economic evaluation is required, it is suggested for this to be postponed until two years after the money service launch.

## 4 Key Findings: Outcome Evaluation

### 4.1 Evaluation method and sample

In order to determine the extent our new money service staffed by peer volunteers impacted on the financial capability of 16-25 year olds, a survey was carried out with a sample of service users at two points. The survey included five questions from The Financial Capability Outcomes Framework for Adults. The survey was administered firstly before the users accessed the service and again two weeks after contacting the service.

The vast majority of the follow-up interviews (94%) were from young people that visited the money information on the website, therefore the findings below reflect outcomes for this channel mainly. Information on age was completed only by 3 respondents for the follow-up survey, with all of them being under 25 years old.

### 4.2 Findings on financial confidence

Three questions were taken from the Financial Capability Outcomes framework to measure self-confidence in managing money:

- *'How confident do you feel in managing your money?'* This was measured on a 0-10 scale, with a higher score indicating higher confidence.
- *'I feel in control of my finances'* This was measured on a five-point Likert scale (1-5) ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with a higher score indicating higher levels of control.
- *'I am very organised when it comes to managing my money day to day'*. Again, this was measured on a five-point Likert scale as above.

#### Initial survey

The average score for self-rated confidence in managing their money for the 229 young people who completed the initial survey was 6.66. A large proportion of people, 96 (42%), scored themselves as highly confident (8-10 on the scale). A much smaller proportion of people, 16 (7%) scored themselves as low in confidence (0-2 on the scale). This indicates the majority of young people felt they had a good amount of confidence in managing their money prior to accessing the service.

Consistent with this, 158 young people (69%) answered that they strongly agreed or slightly agreed they felt in control of their finances and were organised with managing money; 49 people (21%) strongly disagreed and slightly disagreed.

#### Follow-up survey

The average score for initial self-rated confidence in managing money for the sample of people (43) completing both the initial and follow up survey differed to that of the total sample for the initial survey and was significantly higher at 8.47.

As displayed in table 2 below, initial scores for control of finances and feeling organised with managing money were also higher. This demonstrates that selection bias is likely to have occurred as the results indicate the young people completing the follow up survey felt more confident in managing their money prior to accessing the service in comparison to the total sample.

The average score at follow up for self-rated confidence in managing money was somewhat higher (8.98) compared to the baseline (8.47), however there was no statistically significant change in this indicator.

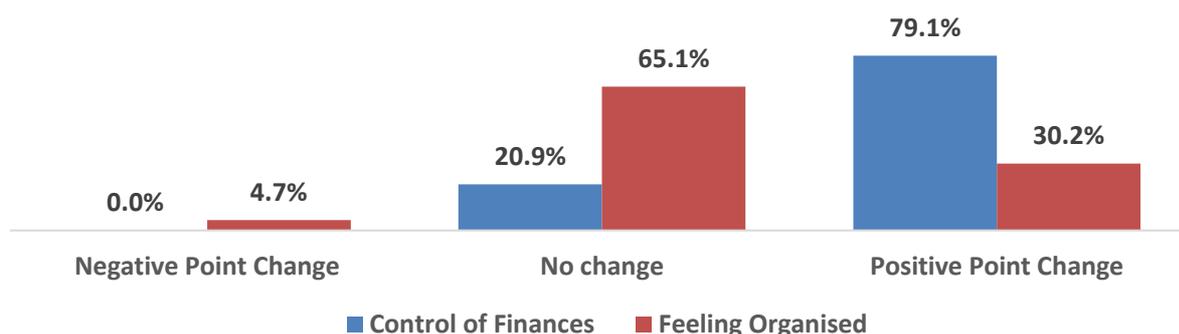
There has also been an improvement in scores for feeling in control of finances and organised with managing money; both improvements were statistically significant. It appears that these indicators captured different elements of self-confidence.

Average self-confidence scores at the time of accessing the service and at follow up					
	Score range	Initial Score Average (Total Sample, n=229)	Initial Score Average (follow up sample, n=43)	Follow up Score Average (follow up sample, n=43)	Difference
Confidence in Managing Money	0-10	6.66	8.47	8.98	0.51
Control of Finances	1-5	3.61	3.93	4.84	0.91*
Organised with managing money	1-5	3.73	4.49	4.84	0.35*

\*Statistically Significant Difference

As shown in Chart 1 below, a high proportion of the sample (34, 80%) progressed one or more points along the scale for feeling in control of finances, with 9 (21%) giving the same answer as the initial survey. A lower proportion of young people progressed along the scale for feeling organised, with 13 (30%) reporting this. Most people (28, 65%) reported no change, with two (8%) reporting a negative point change.

Chart 1: Proportion of participants in follow-up survey reporting negative change, no change and positive change for control of finances and feeling organised



### Key Findings: Self Confidence in Managing Money

- The average confidence in managing money score for those completing the initial survey only was 6.66 (out of ten).
- The average score at initial survey for those completing both surveys was 8.47. There was not a significant change in this score at the follow-up survey.
- There was a significant change in score at follow up on feeling in control of finances and feeling organised.
- The largest change in score with most people reporting a positive point change was for feeling in control of finances.

### 4.3 Attitudes to receiving advice

One item taken from the Financial Capability Outcomes framework measured attitudes to receiving advice:

*'When it comes to financial advice I don't know where to start'*. This was measured on a five-point Likert scale (1-5) ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. As this is a negatively phrased item it was reverse scored, therefore meaning that a higher score indicates a high level of knowing how to seek advice.

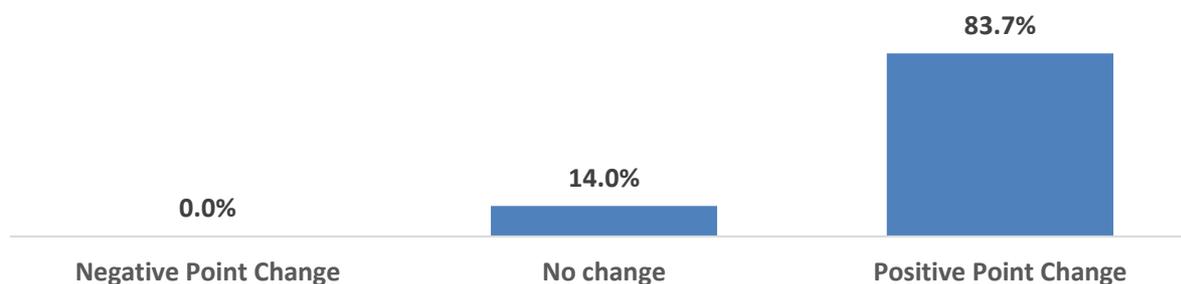
#### Initial survey

The average score was 2.24, indicating that the majority of people, (154, 67%), slightly agreed or strongly agreed that they don't know where to start with financial advice. A fifth (49, 22%) slightly disagreed or strongly disagreed they didn't know where to start.

#### Follow-up survey

The average initial score for the follow up sample was 1.67. Again, this is different to the total sample initial score; however, unlike self-confidence in managing money it is lower. The average score at follow up was 4.05 and was found to be statistically significantly different to the initial score. This means that following the use of The Mix's service people had much clearer idea of where to start when it comes to financial advice. As demonstrated in Chart 2, a very high proportion of young people progressed one or more points on this scale (36, 84%), with 20 (47%), progressing three points. Only 6 (14%) gave the same answer as in the initial survey and no negative movement was reported.

**Chart 2: Proportion of participants in follow up survey reporting negative change, no change and positive change for knowing how to seek advice**



### Key findings: Attitudes to Receiving Advice

- For participants completing the initial survey only, two thirds stated they didn't know where to start with financial advice.
- For those completing both surveys there was a **significant difference** in average scores between initial and follow up surveys in knowing how to seek advice with an increase from 1.67 to 4.05. This indicates that due to the service received people had much clearer idea of where to start when it comes to financial advice
- Compared to the other outcomes more people, 47% (20), progressed three points along the scale on this indicator.

## 4.4 Attitudes to money

One item taken from the Financial Capability Outcomes framework measured attitudes to money:

*'Nothing I do will make much difference to my financial situation'*. This was measured on a five-point Likert scale (1-5) ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. As this is a negatively phrased item it was reverse scored, therefore meaning that a higher score indicates a high level of being able to make a difference to their financial situation.

### Initial survey

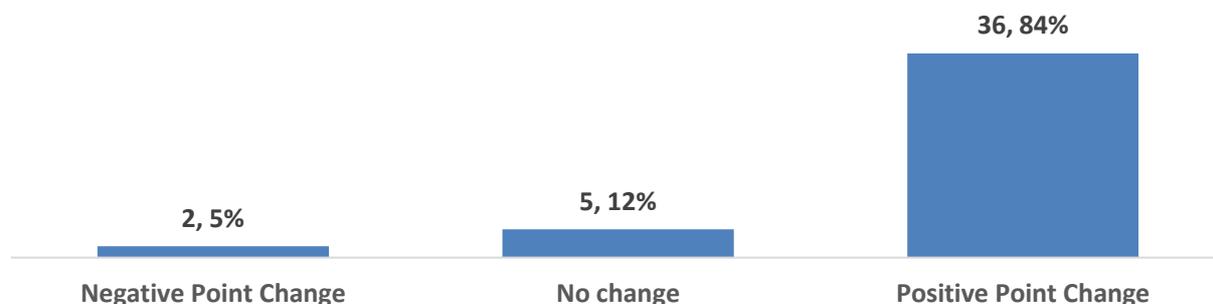
The average score was 2.61. About half of young people, (122, 53%), slightly agreed or strongly agreed that they felt they could not make a difference to their financial situation. A smaller proportion, (87, 38%) slightly disagreed or strongly disagreed.

### Follow-up survey

The average initial score for the follow up sample was 1.6. Again, this is lower than the average total sample initial score. The average score at follow up was 4.0 and was also found to be statistically significantly different to the initial score. This means that having received the support people were more likely to believe that they can take actions to improve their financial situation. Similarly, to attitudes to advice, a high proportion of young people progressed one or more points on this scale (36, 84%), with 16 (37%) progressing

three points. Five (12%) gave the same answer as in the initial survey and two (5%) regressed on the scale.

**Chart 3: Proportion of participants in follow up survey reporting negative change, no change and positive change for feeling like they could make a difference to their financial situation**



### Key Findings: Attitudes to Money

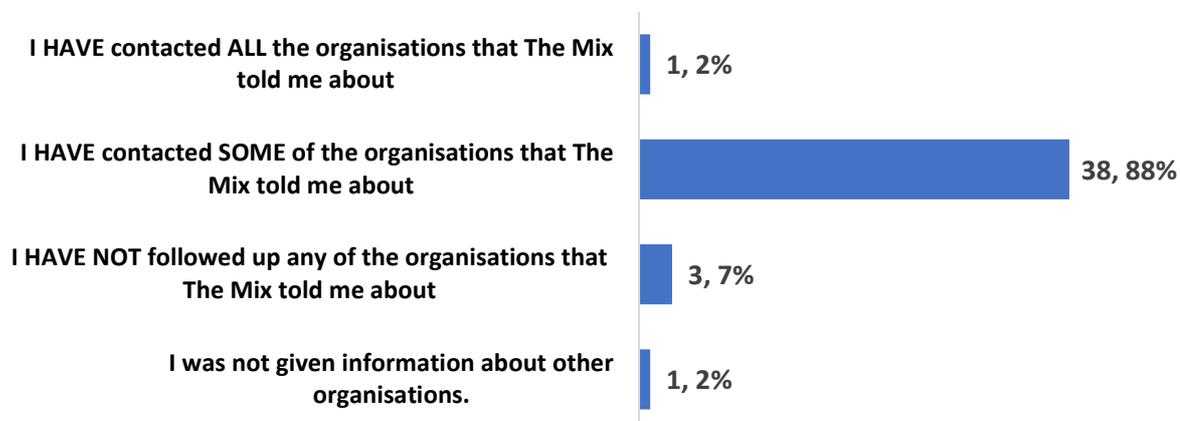
- For participants completing the initial survey only, half stated they could not make a difference to their financial situation.
- For those completing both surveys there was a **significant difference** in average scores between initial and follow-up surveys in feeling they could make a difference, with an increase from 1.6 to 4.0. This means that having received support people were more likely to believe that they can take actions to improve their financial situation. This was the largest improvement in average scores across all the outcomes.
- Compared to the other outcomes, the highest proportion of people, (36, 84%), progressed one or more points along the scale.

## 4.5 Accessing sources of support

In the follow-up survey, young people were asked if they had previously spoken to anyone else about their financial situation. A large proportion, 38 (88%), had spoken to family and friends; a much smaller proportion had spoken to another support organisation or the company they are in debt to (1, 2%). For some young people (5, 12%), accessing The Mix support was the first time they have spoken to anybody.

Young people were also asked to report on whether they had followed up on the information given by The Mix about another organisation that could help. As seen in chart 4 below, most people (39, 91%) reported that they had followed up on all or some of the advice.

**Chart 4: If you were given some information by The Mix about other organisations that could help you, which of the following statements is true? (n=43)**



To explore why people may not have followed up on the advice, young people were asked ‘*If you have not contacted any organisations, can you tell us why that might be?*’ The majority said this was due to not having had time (41, 95%) and a small proportion said that it was because they were confused (1, 3%).

### Key Findings: Accessing Sources of Support

- Most young people, (38, 88%), reported that they had spoken to friends and family about their financial situation before speaking to The Mix. Few had spoken to another support organisation or the company they are in debt to.
- Nearly all young people, (39, 91%), followed up on the advice given and contacted some or all the organisations given.
- The biggest barrier to acting was not having enough time to do so.

## 4.6 Whether would recommend The Mix

In the follow-up survey, young people were asked a broad question about whether they would recommend The Mix to a friend, as a gauge of experience in contacting The Mix service. 100% of the 43 people completing the follow-up survey said that they would definitely recommend it.

### Key Findings: The Mix Service

- 100% of people said that they would definitely recommend The Mix to a friend

## 4.7 Conclusions

Although a small sample size (43) limits the evidence strength, a number of conclusions can be drawn.

**First, there is strong evidence that The Mix's service contributed to an increase in knowing how to seek financial advice, and in young people feeling that they can make a difference to their financial situation.**

The scores for both questions increased by the most of all the outcomes, indicating that the service had a significant impact on empowering young people to make changes, and feeling that they can make a difference. Accessing advice services and being given financial information, even if not acted upon, increases knowledge of support available and means young people have the resources to act both now and in the future. The helpline provides people with information on organisations that may be able to help solve their problem. As the majority of respondents said that they didn't know where to start with financial advice; this part of the intervention is crucial to its success. Signposting people to organisations able to help show them that there might be an achievable solution to their problem and how to go about solving it.

The scores were also the lowest of all the outcomes at the initial survey, demonstrating the greatest need in this area. The average scores for the follow-up sample were lower than those completing the initial survey only, suggesting that young people who were most in need of advice were those who were most willing to complete the follow-up survey.

**Second, while overall self-confidence in managing money did not change significantly, there is evidence that accessing the service increases feeling of being in control of finances and being organised with day to day money.** While all three outcomes came under the same higher-level outcome of self-confidence within the Financial Capability Framework, there were significant improvements in feeling in control of finances and being organised but not for self-confidence scores.

Perhaps the act of seeking help by accessing the service increases the feeling of being in control of finances. An increase in scores in being organised with money demonstrates the value of the service in providing a gateway to developing money related skills. Indeed, the website provides advice, ideas and strategies on dealing with financial issues, which were found useful by the focus group participants. Additionally, emotional support on the helpline focusing on providing positive feedback in relation to seeking help might also play a role here.

The lack of significant change in self-reported financial confidence may be due to two factors. The first is that the average score for those completing the follow up was high to be begin with (8.5) giving little room for improvement. The second is that self-confidence may take some time to develop and a two-week follow-up period is not long enough to capture this. Feeling in control of finances and being organised with money if maintained over a period of time are likely to result in an overall increase in feeling confident in managing money.

**Signposting worked well, with over 9 in 10 people contacting the organisations suggested to them.** This indicates that when using the service most young people are ready to make changes and act upon advice given. Some people reported that time was a significant barrier. This perhaps indicates that some people may need longer than the follow-up period of two weeks to act and could also indicate competing priorities in young people's lives.

These findings provide evidence for the What Works fund indicating that accessing The Mix money service helps with increasing knowledge on how to seek financial advice, and increase in feeling that people can make a difference to their financial situation. It provides evidence that accessing the service increases feeling of being in control of finances and being organised with day to day money.

Control or comparator group was not used to provide evidence on attribution. However, findings from focus groups show that young people found the help useful and some applied it successfully in their daily life, confirming the link between the Mix's intervention and outcomes.

*"I actually went to The Mix to look up stuff for home management...Yes, I found it helpful. It was very accessible and easy to understand. There wasn't loads of jargon like on other sites .... Yeah, I learned how to deal with bills and food shopping a bit better."*

In respect to our theory of change for this project (see Appendix 2), these findings suggest that the service is likely to contribute to intermediate outcomes such as improvement in management of feelings about money, and problem solving enabling young people to make informed choices and manage their money well day to day.

Yet, it is important to acknowledge, that it rarely happens that one intervention operates in isolation, and therefore it is likely that other sources, such as advice from family and friends along with other organisations, would contribute to improving these outcomes.

#### 4.8 Outcomes for volunteers

Three volunteers were interviewed face to face or on the phone, using a semi-structured questionnaire, to find out about the impact their training and work on the helpline had for them and their financial capability.

##### Outcomes

There was an improvement for the score on confidence for managing money for one volunteer, with the reason for change being improved knowledge about different organisations that can be accessed in time of need. This volunteer used the information learned at The Mix in her own life. When experiencing problems with her benefit claim, she contacted an organisation that helped her to resolve the issue.

The score remained unchanged for two other participants who felt financially competent before they joined the Mix, and did not need any help.

##### Benefits of working on the helpline

All volunteers said that due to their training and providing support on financial issues they became more aware of the financial support available, which can be useful in time of need. One volunteer has also become more aware about poverty, and problems people living in poverty face.

The overall benefits that work on the helpline brings to volunteers included:

- Developed ability to listen; question; feel empathy and not to judge
- Enjoyment; greater confidence; rewarding; good experience for a future career
- Enjoyment; satisfaction gained from helping other people; feeling of belonging to like-minded group of people; receiving help on further development

### **Changes that the Mix could introduce**

In terms of changes the Mix could make to improve the service, two volunteers mentioned that it could provide them with more training/ information on the benefits system and how it works. Specifically, the disability benefit was highlighted by one respondent. This would help them better understand the problems people are talking about, which in turn would help them to provide better solutions.

One volunteer suggested that the Mix could provide more information on banking for young people opening their first bank account to help them understand the range of bank accounts available, identify a good deal, and how to recognise a bad deal. Also tips on saving money – simple ways how to save small amounts - could be useful.

## 5 Key Findings: Process Evaluation

### 5.1 Operational information

#### Helpline

Originally, it was envisioned that the money helpline would be a standalone service based in Nottingham separate from the London based helpline that deals with wide range of issues that under 25s might experience.

Having launched the Nottingham helpline focusing purely on the money service, it became obvious that often it was difficult to identify the main reason for contact as money prior to it and separate it from other issues. This is because the money issue is often intertwined with other problems such as homelessness or addiction. This resulted at the Nottingham hub receiving a low volume of contacts. In response to this, it was decided that volunteers staffing both helplines would be trained in dealing with enquiries concerning financial issues, and all would answer any type of enquiry.

The intervention is focused on exploring problems of the person getting in touch to help them identify issues they need help with, along with providing emotional support and signposting. People using the service lead on what they want to do next, whether it is having a chat, receiving information on organisations that may be able to help or a warm handover involving putting them in touch with partner organisations.

The table below presents information on the total number of interactions made on the helpline between July 2017 and May 2018, and the total number of interactions where the main issue was money. Please note, there were other interactions where money issues were discussed but as this was not the main issue, these are not included in this figure.

While there were 13,330 interactions on the helpline during the 11-month period, there were 825 (6%) instances where the main issue was money. In comparison, there were 12,455 interactions on the helpline during the same 11-month period in the previous year, indicating that the Mix's reach has increased.

The volume of the instances of support where the main issue was money (825) is somewhat lower than originally expected. This might be because the Mix users are often in crisis needing help with the immediate crisis first (e.g. homelessness). Dealing with the underlying (e.g. financial) issues in such circumstances is often not appropriate. Secondly, multiple issues are often addressed during a single instance of support; in fact, there were 280 instances where money issues were discussed but were not the main issues.

Helpline July 17 - May 18	CALLS	WEBCCHAT	EMAILS	Overall
All interactions	5,812	4,659	2,859	<b>13,330</b>
<b>Number and proportion</b> of interactions where <b>the main issue was money</b>	697 (12%)	88 (2%)	40 (1%)	<b>825 (6%)</b>

The vast majority (84%) of users accessed the helpline via phone. Just over 1 in 10 (11%) contacted it via webchat, with 5% accessing it through email or contact form.

Channel	Number	%
Phone	697	84%
Webchat	88	11%
Email/contact form	40	5%
Total	825	100%

Many issues are often discussed during a single session. To provide an example, in one instance, during a single interaction, all the following issues were discussed:

- Addiction
- Benefits
- Debt
- Feelings and Emotions
- Gambling
- Managing Money
- Mental Health and Wellbeing

This example illustrates how the issue of money may be inseparably intertwined with a wide range of other issues.

The main money issues discussed can be seen in the table below. Almost half (49%) of service users discussed benefits, with 40% discussing money management. Information relating to being out of work was provided to 8% of service users, with a similar number seeking advice on debt issues. Family, advice on legal issues, unemployment, housing rights and depression were each discussed by 4%.

Main money issues discussed	Number	%
Benefits	403	49%
Managing Money	326	40%
Advice When You're Out Of Work	69	8%
Debt	60	7%
Family	32	4%
Advice on Legal Issues	32	4%
Unemployment	30	4%
Housing Rights	29	4%
Depression	29	4%
Mental Health	27	3%
Careers and Training	24	3%
Feelings and Emotions	21	3%
<b>Total interactions</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>100%</b>

In terms of demographic information, of the people who used the helpline to get in touch about a money related problem, and told us their gender (661), just over half (55%) were female, with 44% being male.

Just over a quarter were between 15 and 20 years old. 29% were aged between 21 and 25, with the remainder being 26 years old and over.

Age	Number	%
15 - 20	141	<b>28%</b>
21 - 25	143	<b>29%</b>
26+	213	<b>43%</b>
Total	497	<b>100%</b>

The population using the helpline is ethnically diverse. Of the 198 users that answered this question, around three quarters (72%) were White British, with 4% coming from any other White background. Some 8% were of Asian/ Asian British ethnicity and a similar number of Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British ethnicity. Some, 5% came from the Mixed/ Multiple ethnic groups; while 4% identified themselves as belonging to another ethnic group.

Ethnicity	Number	%
White British	143	<b>72%</b>
Any other White background	8	<b>4%</b>
Asian/Asian British	16	<b>8%</b>
Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British	15	<b>8%</b>
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	9	<b>5%</b>
Other ethnic group	7	<b>4%</b>
Total	198	<b>100%</b>

Over half (53%) found the service via Google; this was by far the most common way of finding about the service. The Mix's website, family and other search engine were used by 5% each. Some 4% found it through other organisations, with a similar number finding it via other website. ChildLine, friend, Facebook, and social media were also mentioned by a smaller number. Overall, over 7% found the Mix through referrers.

How heard about the service	Number	%
Google	166	53%
Our Website	17	5%
Family	16	5%
Other Search Engine	16	5%
Other organisation	12	4%
Other website	11	4%
ChildLine	8	3%
Friend	8	3%
Facebook	5	2%
Other social media	5	2%
Twitter	2	1%
Other	45	14%
Total	311	100%

Of the 825 helpline service users where money was the main issue, 45% were signposted to 236 different organisations including local branches of larger organisations. The services

where people were signposted to most frequently included: Citizens Advice (144), Money Advice Service (130), Turn2Us (67) and Community Legal Advice (28).

Initial feeling of people accessing the money help was recorded for 335 people. The largest proportion felt confused (18%). This was closely followed by feeling anxious (16%) and worried (10%). Somewhat smaller numbers said that they felt depressed (8%), frustrated (7%), annoyed (6%) and upset (6%). Smaller numbers mentioned also other feelings; these can be seen in the table below.

Initial feeling	Number	%
<b>Confused</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Anxious</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Worried</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>10%</b>
Depressed	27	8%
Frustrated	22	7%
Annoyed	21	6%
Upset	21	6%
Angry	15	4%
Alone	13	4%
Other	71	21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Web content

As part of the project, The Mix developed new and existing content to support people with issues relating to financial capability. About 11% of people using the Mix's website access specifically the money pages. In total there were 430,599 page views of the money related content made between July 2017 and May 2018. Of these 399,760 were unique views.

The most frequently visited topics included jobseekers allowance (17%) and emergency support (14%). These were closely followed by employment and support allowance (12%) and surviving on statutory sick pay (11%). The top ten topics visited can be seen in the table below.

Top 10 money topics visited on the website	Number of page views	%
<b>Jobseekers allowance</b>	<b>71,936</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Emergency support</b>	<b>61,555</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Employment and support allowance</b>	<b>51,520</b>	<b>12%</b>
I can't survive on statutory sick pay, what can I do?	47,278	11%
JSA complications	29,087	7%
Claiming health benefits	23,271	5%
Taking someone to small claims court	22,318	5%
Income support explained	18,503	4%
Education Maintenance Allowance and the 16–19 bursary fund	16,469	4%
JSA sanctions	8,345	2%
Other	80,317	19%
<b>Total all page views</b>	<b>430,599</b>	<b>100%</b>

Between June 2017 and April 2018, the under 25 UK social media reach (a number of The Mix’s followers on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) has almost tripled. It has grown from 20,879 to 54,918. This increase is likely to be partly due to the Mix’s marketing activities discussed in the Chapter 5.4: Learnings from implementation.

People were directed to the Mix’s money web content from over 25 different websites, with the largest numbers coming from [advicenow.org.uk](http://advicenow.org.uk); [govbenefits.uk](http://govbenefits.uk), and [duckduckgo.com](http://duckduckgo.com).

According to the Google data, which should be treated as indicative only, almost two thirds (64%) of visitors were female. In terms of age, almost a quarter (23%) were under 25 years old, with the remainder being 25 and over.

A mobile phone is the most popular device for viewing the money pages; this was used by about two thirds of users. Desktop was used by about a quarter of users with 9% using tablet.

## Volunteers

Overall, there are 10 volunteer positions on the helpline that need covering during the opening hours (11am -11pm). These are based across the Nottingham and London sites, with digital connectors - answering webchats only - working remotely.

The following data cover the period between July 2017 and May 2018. In total, The Mix received 462 applications for the helpline volunteer positions between July 2017 and May 2018, with the vast majority (96%) fitting the job description criteria.

Applications	No of applications	No of applications that fit job description
London	144	138
Nottingham	71	71
Digital Connector	247	235
<b>Total</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>444</b>

Overall, 174 volunteers started their training (typically involving 30 hours over a six-week period) during the same period, with 99 volunteers (57%) completing their training.

Training	Started training	Completed training
London	66	40
Nottingham	40	20
Digital Connector	68	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>99</b>

In total, 70 volunteers were inducted and started working on the helpline, with 71 volunteers completing six months of service during this period.

Volunteers	Inducted/on-boarded	Completed 6 months of service

London	30	22
Nottingham	13	19
Digital Connector	27	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>71</b>

Currently, there are 117 volunteers working on the helpline; with additional 35 volunteers leaving their roles in the past 12 months. The breakdown can be seen in the table below.

Volunteers	Current	Left in the past 12 months
London	51	15
Nottingham	18	2
Digital Connector	48	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>35</b>

Currently, work is underway to shorten the length of training, and be more selective during the recruitment process to increase the proportion of volunteers inducted to their position.

In terms of demographic information, just over a third (36%) of volunteers working on the helpline falls into the target range age (18-25); with the remainder being older.

The data on gender and ethnicity were available only for 26 volunteers. The vast majority of volunteers are females (96%); and around three quarters (77%) come from the White British background. Some 8% are of African ethnicity, with a similar number coming from any other White background. There is a small number of volunteers from other ethnic groups.

### Increasing awareness of the helpline

To increase awareness of the helpline, the following activities were undertaken:

- Pay-per-click (PPC) marketing promoting money content on The Mix to young people resulted in 19,438 clicks.
- Outreach to services/organisations where young people ask for/need support with money to promote helpline
- Creation of specific The Mix Money materials to seed out to relevant organisations
- [Press release](#) - money is the biggest cause of stress for young people
- [Nottingham event](#) (12th March 2018) promoting the service, building links in Nottingham and talking about what we achieved.
- [Promoting The Mix Money on social media](#).

Each element reached a different type of audience effectively. Social media reached our audience of young people, PPC helped us reach more young people, outreach helped us reach peers inside and outside the third sector, event enabled us to make links in Nottingham, while PR helped us reach the media.

## 5.2 New evidence

Four online focus groups were conducted, two with young people who used The Mix and two with young people who did not use it. Each focus group had between 4 and 10 participants.

Participants were between 17 and 24 years old. Overall, there was not much difference in the type of responses given between the groups, and where they did differ it is highlighted below.

Participants described their age as being characterised by having more responsibility, learning about debt, difficult, confusing, stressful, busy, time of transition, lost and feeling pressured to meet expectations.

### Challenges in managing money and what can help

The following were identified as **the biggest challenges** when it comes to **managing money**:

- Having enough money to pay for everything
- Saving money for the future
- Budgeting
- Keeping up with others/ or not succumbing to impulsive buying, peer/ social pressure, overspending
- Trying to find a balance between choosing to save money or spending it on non-essentials
- Making money last whole month
- Balancing earning money with other activities

To better illustrate these points a few quotes are included below.

*“The biggest challenge when it comes to managing money is being happy with what I’ve got and not being tempted to buy something due to society’s values and peer pressure”*

*“Trying to find a balance between things I need and things I want”*

*“Perhaps trying to balance the fact of earning money and balancing other activities such as education or family”*

When asked about **what can help**, there was agreement among participants that there should be more education at school focusing on money in general and specifically on ways to manage money and topics such as how taxation works.

Other suggestions included:

- interesting information online that is easy to understand
- learning how to manage money
- teaching yourself to prioritise
- paying money for rent/ food/ bills before spending money on anything else or keeping separate accounts to pay for these essentials

- having a separate account for emergency money that cannot be touched

It was suggested that The Mix could help in the following ways:

*"I think they could have some sort of guide to making a budget or a guide to banking for young people if they don't have one already. "*

*"If The Mix had a budgeting spreadsheet that would be really helpful."*

Having chat about money was also found useful as people can share their ideas and discuss them, as well as having articles about money related issues.

### Financial capability when leaving school

Generally, the participants who did not use The Mix tended to say that they did not feel very financially capable or prepared in the transition when leaving school. The response was mixed for the participants who used The Mix in the past. Some did not feel ready to be financially independent, others stressed that they became more aware of the cost of things and unexpected expenses, while one respondent felt confident.

### Experiences with The Mix

Help provided by The Mix was generally well received and participants found it useful. Some applied what they learned in their daily life, however, one participant said that lack of time prevents him from applying the advice.

*"I actually went to The Mix to look up stuff for home management...Yes, I found it helpful. It was very accessible and easy to understand. There wasn't loads of jargon like on other sites ... Yeah, I learned how to deal with bills and food shopping a bit better."*

*"I used the information about living on a budget on The Mix especially the articles to do with going out. "*

*"I have read stuff too but ended up not applying any of them 'cause there is no time - things like doing income/expenses, etc. take time. I don't keep all my receipts and my income varies month by month so cannot project"*

*"I got some really good advice from you on budgeting and not over spending."*

*"Yeah I stumbled upon the website when I thought my gambling had gotten too far."*

### Helpful advice received

Young people were asked about helpful advice they received. Some participants did not seek any advice, while others did but were not successful. The following were identified as places where helpful advice was received:

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Money Saving Expert website (Martin Lewis) - articles on university loans and accommodation, budgeting and coupons
- The Student Room – help with budgeting student loan; regular forums about how to save money/job searches etc.

- Voucher codes - good offers
- Using Google
- Links on Government sites
- UNiDAYS
- a bank helped one participant to set up a monthly budget to reduce his overdraft
- Apps for budgeting
- family

*"I just researched different ways to manage money and when I found a solution that fit me I ran with it and it really helped"*

The importance of using the right language in which the financial advice is written was also emphasised.

*"I have never gone seeking advice for myself that much but I would say most I see are not young person friendly. All the confusing language and lots of text which is not engaging at all."*

Lack of clarity on how to go about finding advice was also stressed by one participant:

*"It's an awkward situation where you want advice but are not sure what you are actually looking for advice on "*

### Information young people would like to learn about

When respondents were asked 'What would be the most useful or interesting aspect of dealing with money someone could tell you about?' There was a lot of interest in learning about saving for the future; how to budget; how to balance spending on essentials, social life and other non-essentials. Some participants noted that they would like to learn more about credit score; bonds; pensions; NI deductions; taxes and life insurance. It was also noted that learning more about student spending in the university would be helpful, especially about what is needed and where savings can be made.

Young people would also like to learn about how to avoid impulse purchases. They would like information on what they should prepare for in financial terms. One participant was interested in information on how to get housing when they have no guarantors as agencies usually ask for 6 months' rent on top of fees which they do not have available.

One participant noted that the pitfalls of overdrafts when getting an account should be highlighted:

*"Especially as going in to university means that many banks will offer generous overdrafts - one that you mindlessly enjoy until you realise what it means."*

Few comments touched upon the format in which the information should be presented; videos and e-learning were recommended.

*"If there was help to understand it and a way to make it more goal orientated and fun at an early age that would be great."*

## Statements

Participants were given four statements to complete. These included:

- 'I wish I had something which allowed me to...'*
- 'The hardest thing about managing money at my life stage is...'*
- 'I wish I had something that prevented me from...'*
- 'I wish I had something which gave me information about...'*

The sentences that completed the statement *'I wish I had something which allowed me to...'* were mainly about savings, money management, ability to do instant price comparison in shops, and information on financial products and taxes.

*"...budget my spending costs so I could see exactly what I'm spending money on each month."*

*"...understand the different choices I have to make when entering full-time employment i.e. pensions, company share schemes, and taxes"*

*"...track my spending and divide it in categories, giving me nice charts & stats without having to do it myself so that I can know where I am spending too much and try and reduce that".*

Saving for the future; overspending, impulsive spending, getting into debt, managing disposable income; balancing spending money responsibly with having a good time; identifying unexpected costs; earning a decent interest; keeping up with price rises were highlighted as being the hardest thing about managing money.

*"The hardest thing about managing money at my point in life is not knowing enough about it."*

When asked to complete the sentence *'I wish I had something that prevented me from...'*, overspending, impulsive spending, going into debt, and doing irresponsible financial decisions were the main issues.

*"I wish I had something that prevented me from making irresponsible financial decisions; i.e. buying something on finance that I can't afford."*

*"I wish I had something that prevented me from constantly wanting to spend my money when I don't have any, as well as telling me all the bills I have so I don't have to keep checking myself and trying to figure out how much money needs to not be touched "*

*"I wish I had something that prevented me from pressure of society of always having the new tech"*

Finally, young people would like information about:

- how to boost their credit score
- budgeting and managing money
- paying off debts
- starting to save
- pensions, ISAs, VAT, healthcare
- complicated finance/ law jargon

- student loans while not being a university student

Participants would also like more marketing about schemes for their age group - like the lifetime ISA, and more information they **can trust**. Banks were not seen as trustworthy sources of financial information by many.

The themes of **impulsive spending**, **peer pressure** (to have the latest tech), **societal values** (consumption), **or social pressure** (to buy an expensive present) that lead to overspending were reappearing themes in the discussions. Young people would like to learn to avoid these behaviors.

Another reemerging theme was that young people feel often stressed about their financial situation and insecurity, which might have a negative effect on their wellbeing.

*“If knew more about how to save.... I would be less stressed about the future.”*

*“I am constantly worried about not having any money.”*

### 5.3 Semantic analysis

All issues discussed during an interaction on the helpline are recorded on the system. All records from the helpline where the main issue was money were analysed using topic analysis by channel to see whether young people use different channels for queries on different topics. The main topics people discuss during these interactions are listed in the table below that shows the number of contacts per topic (N) and % it accounts for within that channel.

As phone is clearly the most popular channel, it has the largest number of contacts of all three channels for every topic. Benefits and managing money are by far the most common money related topics discussed on all three channels. However, as the table below shows, there are some differences between the channels.

#### Phone

The phone is the most popular channel for discussing benefits; with over half (51%) of queries made on this channel being about benefits. Queries regarding other topics were in line with the general trend.

#### Webchat

Managing money, debt, family, unemployment, depression, feelings and emotions, homelessness, suicidal thoughts, pregnancy, relationships, bereavement and death were disproportionately overrepresented on the webchat compared to the other channels. Perhaps, this is because people tend to discuss their issues on the webchat in a greater complexity and context.

#### Email

Although the most common issues discussed via emails were benefits and managing money, people were less likely to discuss them using this channel in comparison to the phone and the webchat. Advice on legal issues is the third most common topic discussed

via emails, it accounts for a larger proportion of queries (8%) compared to the phone (4%) or the webchat (3%). There is a similar trend for discussions about gambling.

No one emailed to enquire about advice around being out of work, debt, unemployment, or housing rights; in comparison these issues were discussed commonly on the phone and the webchat.

Of the people who discussed money issues on the webchat, 7% mentioned also suicidal ideas, which is disproportionately high compared to the other channels.

Topic analysis: all helpline records where money was the main issue								
Channel	Phone		Webchat		Email		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Topics</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>51%</b>	38	43%	12	30%	403	49%
<b>Benefits</b>	266	38%	46	52%	14	35%	326	40%
<b>Managing Money</b>	60	9%	9	10%	0	0%	69	8%
<b>Advice When Out Of Work</b>	45	6%	15	17%	0	0%	60	7%
<b>Debt</b>	24	3%	6	7%	2	5%	32	4%
Family	26	4%	3	3%	3	8%	32	4%
Advice on Legal Issues	25	4%	5	6%	0	0%	30	4%
Unemployment	25	4%	4	5%	0	0%	29	4%
Housing Rights	23	3%	6	7%	0	0%	29	4%
Depression	20	3%	5	6%	2	5%	27	3%
Mental Health	19	3%	4	5%	1	3%	24	3%
Careers and Training	12	2%	7	8%	2	5%	21	3%
Feelings and Emotions	16	2%	2	2%	0	0%	18	2%
Children	11	2%	6	7%	0	0%	17	2%
Homelessness	10	1%	6	7%	1	3%	17	2%
Suicidal thoughts	10	1%	4	5%	0	0%	14	2%
Pregnancy	6	1%	5	6%	0	0%	11	1%
Relationships	6	1%	4	5%	0	0%	10	1%
Bereavement and Death	5	1%	2	2%	2	5%	9	1%
<b>Gambling</b>	697	100%	88	100%	40	100%	825	100%
<b>Total interactions</b>								

All records from the helpline **except for** where the main issue was money were also analysed to determine the frequency of discussing money related issues during these interactions.

In total, there were 280 instances where money issues were discussed. Benefits and advice about being out of work were the most common topics discussed on the phone. Managing money was the most widespread discussion topic on the webchat and email.

<b>Topic analysis: all helpline records except for where money was the main issue</b>			
	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Webchat</b>	<b>Email</b>
Benefits	<b>65</b>	13	11
Managing money	31	<b>31</b>	<b>17</b>
Advice when out of work	<b>43</b>	15	12
Debt	19	15	3
Gambling	3	2	0
<b>Total (money related interactions)</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>43</b>
Total interactions	5187	4156	2936

## 5.4 Learnings from implementation

As previously mentioned, design of the service set-up has changed from having a standalone service focusing on the money issues only based in Nottingham separate from the existing London based helpline to directing all the calls to one queue only and having volunteers in both locations answering any type of enquiry.

This change in the helpline design shows that The Mix is adaptable and can respond to unforeseen circumstances. Importantly, it also means that it can provide a more holistic support to young people as the money issues are often intertwined with other issues, and the volunteers are trained to deal with a range of different issues at the same time.

Other learnings included:

### Marketing

- Creation of specific The Mix Money assets and dissemination to organisations that have direct contact with young people is an effective mechanism
- Money is a tough subject to engage young people with on social media
- High volume of young people searching for benefits content on Google directed to our site presents an opportunity. However, some people expect to access the government benefits service, leaving them frustrated when they find out we aren't an official governmental benefits office.
- Marketing The Mix's service as a money service is effective in getting the right users around money to our content but risks confusing our audience into thinking we do not offer a wider range of support services
- Ensure that marketing is appropriate for the service / content so that we are encouraging appropriate calls

### Approach

- Splitting financial issues from other issues people may be calling about did not work

### Volunteers

- As originally proposed, The Mix has been able to recruit volunteers in the target group (18-25 years old) who can provide peer to peer support.

- Most of the volunteers in Nottingham are students. Students often are not able to commit to regular shifts as their timetable often changes, and they might not be available to work over exam periods or summer holidays. To overcome this, we are currently looking at recruiting a wider range of volunteers and building relationships with new community organisations that could serve as a pool for volunteers.
- It would have been better to start the project at the time of year when volunteer recruitment is feasible e.g. universities are closed during summer

## Evaluation

- We struggled to reach the projected number of completed surveys; this was far too ambitious to start with. To increase response rate, we offered the respondents to complete the questionnaire online as well as on the phone, and, an amazon voucher was introduced as an incentive for people completing the initial survey. These changes helped us secure 229 responses to the user's initial outcome evaluation. However, the response rate could be improved further by offering an incentive also for the follow-up surveys.

## Procedures

- It was originally envisioned that a separate, more structured shape of contact for the finance queries was needed. Having explored different options, such as the Map Tool, it was decided to use The Mix's shape of contact, with the addition of new questions around money. New signpost organisations were also identified. Using The Mix's adapted shape of contact enabled us to introduce it fast, and as we were familiar with it, it was easier to adapt and roll out. See Appendix 3: Shape of Contact

## Planning

- Not enough time was allowed for the project set-up.
- There were too many changes introduced at once without having time to embed or pilot them. The premises, employees staffing the Nottingham helpline, money issue and software used for both helplines were new. It would have been beneficial to second some of the more experienced staff from London to help with delivery, training and technology; and to introduce the new elements gradually.
- When deciding on a location of a new service it might be useful to explore where there are established relationships, and utilise them.
- Any additional training that is required for existing volunteers needs at least two months to roll out

## 6 Limitations of the evaluation and future evaluation

The outcome evaluation utilised non-random convenient sampling to assess the impact for a subset of young people who accessed the service. Selection bias may therefore have influenced the findings of the evaluation. In self-selecting samples, overrepresentation of people who have the time and motivation to complete the survey is probable. Consequently, those responding to the initial survey questions and follow up are likely to not be entirely representative of the population of the young people accessing the service. Only a small proportion of young people completed the short-term follow-up surveys; this data should therefore be treated with some caution.

Additionally, the clear majority of the follow-up surveys were completed by participants who visited money content on the website. Therefore, the findings from the outcome survey can be related to this channel but we cannot be certain that outcomes for the people using the helpline would be the same.

The potential also exists for the data to be biased because young people felt compelled to provide 'socially desirable' responses. This is most likely to be the case for those completing the initial survey via telephone (48, 21% of sample) and less likely for those completing it online and for the follow-up survey. There was however, a good variance in average scores across the questions giving a degree of confidence in the reliability of the surveys.

This evaluation has captured evidence of change as originally intended however to develop a greater understanding, it is recommended that in future, additional demographic data is collected to allow analysis of factors that may affect financial capability. Amendments to the follow-up survey procedure would also be beneficial; for instance, an incentive for completing a follow up survey is likely to increase response rate. Using a comparison group would allow us to make stronger conclusions.

A larger sample would allow analysis of possible influencing factors on outcomes such as, whether having a low financial self-confidence prior to accessing the service affects whether action is taken. Insight into this would allow more comprehensive service development, perhaps providing increased support to those with low initial self-confidence if this was found to be a significant factor. Finally, additional qualitative feedback could further enhance our understanding.

To more fully understand the impact of the intervention, it is proposed in future research programmes, that we start measuring changes in people's well-being. For example, since feeling insecure about money tends to be associated with feelings of anxiety or stress, it is likely that the intervention has a positive effect on users' well-being.

## 7 Implications and Recommendations for Policy and Practice

While, at the start of this project, we envisaged running a new separate helpline in Nottingham that would focus only on dealing with queries concerning financial issues, post-launch we learned that often it is not pragmatic, nor practical to neatly separate financial issues from other issues a young person may face. We adapted our set up so that all the volunteers based in both locations are able to deal with all the issues that need addressing.

There is evidence that the type of intervention The Mix implemented contributed to an increase in knowing how to seek financial advice, and in young people feeling that they can make a difference to their financial situation. This is important because stronger feeling that you can succeed (self-efficacy) makes you more likely to achieve your goals.<sup>1</sup> This fits in well with the finding that 9 in 10 respondents actually contacted the organisations suggested to them. The Mix's intervention on the helpline is not designed to necessarily provide the solution to problems, it is designed to signpost people to the subject experts able to help. This is an important function in the time of increasingly complex world we live in. Then, there is also the potential to reach young people seeking support for other problems than money issues but who would have benefited from it, and make them aware that there is support available. Although the Mix services are targeted at young people, a large proportion of people seeking financial support or information from the Mix was over 25 years old (e.g. 43% of the helpline users). This suggests that there may be a need for a similar service targeted at adults that would explore their issues and signpost them to relevant organisations. Additionally, it is likely that accessibility of the service in terms of different channels available and a simple (jargon free) way the information is presented is attractive also to older users.

Contacts to the helpline made via telephone are often emergencies. This means that during such contacts urgent issues such as having somewhere to sleep need to be sorted out. Often, it is not appropriate to deal with underlying issues during this call. The Mix is aware about shortcomings of this situation. Dealing with an immediate crisis will not help the person to address the underlying causes of their situation. That is why we are thinking about introducing a follow-up service for such calls. Once the emergency has been addressed, this service could start addressing those underlying issues that are often of a financial nature.

Accessing the service increased young people's feeling of being organised with day-to-day money and being in control of finances. Since feeling insecure about money tends to be associated with feelings of anxiety or stress, it is likely that successful financial capability interventions have a positive effect on users' well-being, and therefore measuring this aspect more widely could be beneficial. Learning that can be drawn from our experience for MAS and the financial capability community is that separating the issue of financial capability from other issues a person faces may be counterproductive. It may be helpful to apply a more holistic approach, where a range of issues can be addressed simultaneously. Addressing the emergency issues first may allow more space for developing people's financial capability.

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<sup>1</sup> Stajkovic, A. D. & Luthans, F. (1998). "Self-efficacy and work-related performance: A meta-analysis". *Psychological Bulletin*. 2: 240–261.

A lot of young people participating in our focus groups suggested that schools should teach pupils more about money management. Perhaps introducing some basic money skills and knowledge in compulsory curriculum could go some way to help people manage their money better.

The vast majority of queries where money was the main issue (84%) were made via phone; it is clearly the preferred method of contact for financial issues. This is in contrast with the trend on the helpline in general where the use of chats is growing (32%); here phone accounts for only 45% of all contacts.

There should be more information specifically targeted to young people about saving for the future, how to budget, and how to balance spending on essentials, social life and other non-essentials, along with information explaining taxes or financial products such as pensions. It is important to use user-friendly, easy to understand language to keep young people engaged with financial information, using attractive formats such as videos and e-learning.

It is also important that this information is available from sources that are clearly trustworthy; banks were not seen as trustworthy sources by many.

Impulsive spending, societal values (consumption), peer pressure (to have the latest tech), or social pressure (to buy an expensive present) were all identified as contributing to young people's financial problems. To help people with their financial problems, the roots of their problems need to be addressed. Young people would like to learn how to avoid giving in to those social phenomena. There should be more emphasis on such interventions. Strategies and narratives need to be developed, and widely circulated to help people deal with these feelings and perceptions, and to show that it is ok not to give in, while stressing other more positive values. This is an extensive task but if we are to help people to manage their money better, we should not ignore the societal pressures young people are very susceptible to.

## 8 Sharing and Learning Activity

Sharing and learning activity included:

- Director of Development attended WWF Engagement webinar September 2017
- Regular representation from The Mix at MAS Young Adult Steering Group meetings
- Project Manager attended the WWF Learning & Sharing event on 10 November 2017
- Project Manager attended WWV webinar in March 2018 on Communicating Evidence Effectively
- The Project Manager and the Director of Development had a call with Paul Sternberg at Ravensbourne College to discuss and share challenges and learnings experienced from running WWF-funded projects
- We held a Mix Money event hosted by Capital One in Nottingham in March 2018. This event gave an overview of the service and presented some of our learnings and findings to date. It was attended by various partners and local organisations, and also had representation from MAS

## Appendix 1: Outcome evaluation - initial and follow-up surveys

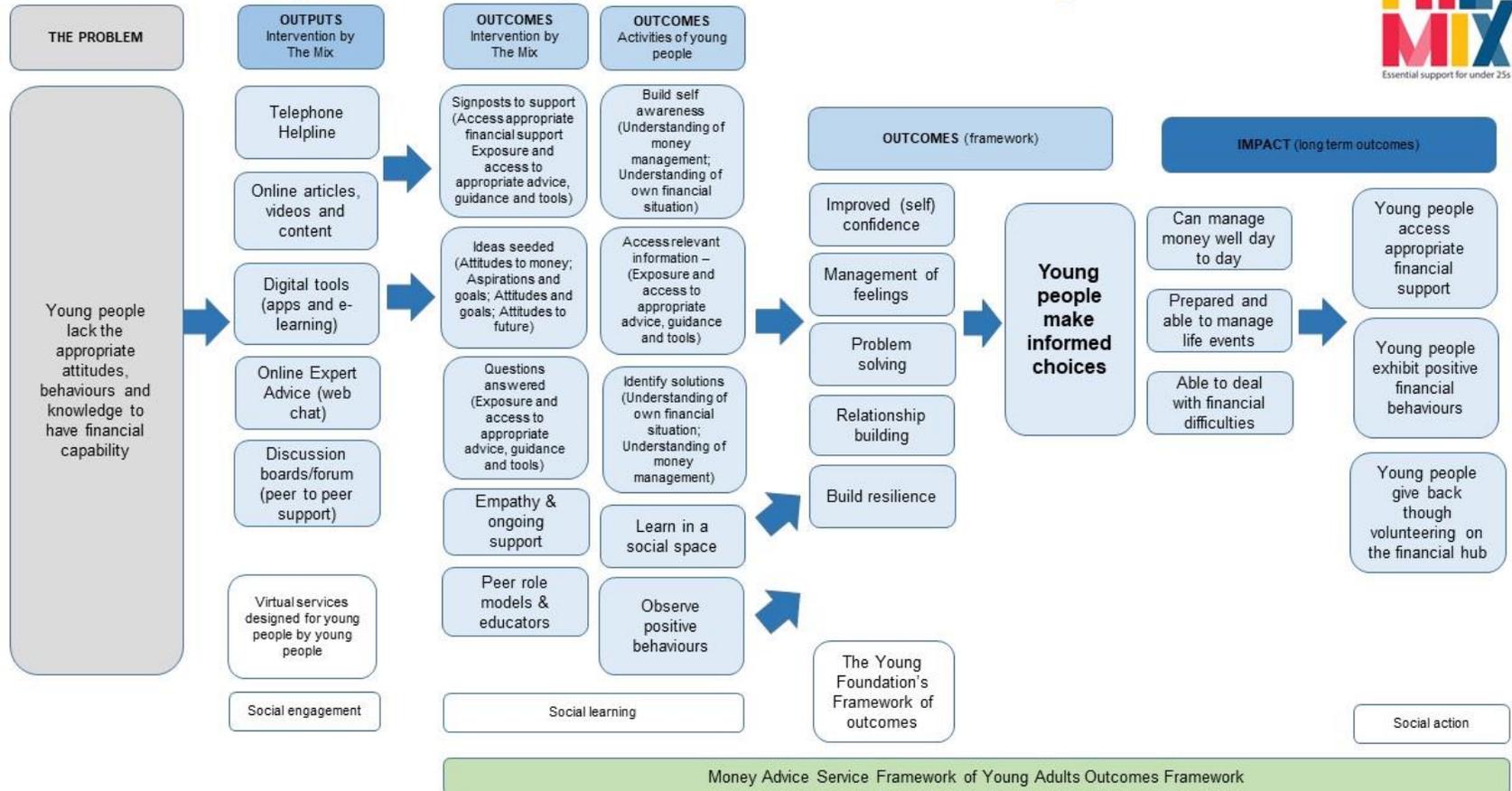
### Initial Survey Questions

1. Can you give us a sense of how confident you feel managing your money?"  
Please answer on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is 'not at all confident' and 10 is 'very confident'
2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement (strongly agree, slightly agree, neither agree nor disagree, slightly disagree, strongly disagree, don't know):
  - "I feel in control of my finances"
  - "I am very organised when it comes to managing my money day to day"
  - "When it comes to financial advice I don't know where to start"
  - "Nothing I do will make much difference to my financial situation"

### Follow up Survey Additional Questions

3. It's helpful for us to understand whether you spoke to anyone else about your financial issues before you contacted The Mix. Could you tell us which of the statements below describe your situation? Please select all that apply.
  - The first time I talked about my financial concerns/questions with anyone was when I contacted The Mix
  - I have spoken to friends or family
  - I have spoken to the company/companies/people I am in debt to
  - I have spoken to other support organisations/professionals
4. If you were given some information about other organisations that might be able to help you, can you tell us which of the following statements are true?
  - I HAVE NOT followed up any of the organisations that The Mix told me about
  - I HAVE contacted SOME of the organisations that The Mix told me about
  - I HAVE contacted ALL the organisations that The Mix told me about
  - I was not given information about other organisations.
5. If you HAVE NOT contacted any organisations, can you tell us why that might be?
  - I have not had time
  - I forgot
  - I was confused or unclear
  - I lost the information given to me
  - My problem/question/concern is no longer important
  - I found help from somewhere else
  - Other....
6. Would you recommend The Mix to a friend who might have money management concerns or challenges
  - Yes definitely
  - Yes maybe
  - No

# Theory of change for financial capabilities



### Appendix 3: Shape of Contact

