Trafford Hall’s Training Evaluation

Final Report

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Executive Summary

Between April 2008 and December 2010, over 3630 people and 2000 groups from a wide range of tenants’ and residents’ organizations and voluntary community groups in England and Wales have attended 189 training courses at Trafford Hall, under four programmes: Making Communities Work, Do It Yourself, Community Crime Fighters and Playing to Learn.

For the Making Communities Work, Do It Yourself and Community Crime Fighters programmes every group that attended a training course had the chance to apply for a small grant, of maximum £3,000 (Making Communities Work and Do It Yourself) or £1,000 (Community Crime Fighters), to put their ideas into action and kick start a new community project. Projects had to focus on enabling communities to be better informed about local issues and/or to build their capacity to take part in decision making processes, especially around the management of their communities. From April 2008 to December 2010, 319 grants were awarded under the three programmes to a total of £388,680.

Participants came from all across the country (England and Wales). The majority came from the NW region, probably as a consequence of Trafford Hall’s location, but other geographical areas such as London and Wales were also well represented. The lowest participation rates were registered from East of Anglia and East Midlands. Members of the BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) community were well represented overall, with 12% under Making Communities Work, 22% under Do It Yourself and 24% under Play to Learn.

The Trafford Hall training has a number of strengths including the scale at which it is run, its target audience, its investment in micro community project dimension, its residential model, participants’ enthusiasm and praise, its innovative approach to working with disadvantaged families and the quality of training provided. These positive aspects are summarized below.

- **Scale**
  
The training provided by Trafford Hall is small scale and community oriented, which assures its ‘suitability’ and ‘responsiveness’ to training needs of local communities. It is very much ‘tailored’ training provision whose impact is based on incremental processes at community level. At the same time, the accumulated experience of Trafford Hall, running 60 courses a year, over 15 years guarantees a large throughput of participants and wide recognition.

- **Target groups**
  
  Trafford Hall training attracts both individuals and families from disadvantaged areas and reaches marginalized individuals and groups who might fall through the ‘safety’ net of the welfare state or are outside main funding streams for deprived areas.

- **Investment in micro-community projects**
  
  Its investment philosophy is based on financing micro-community projects by which small grants are awarded to communities as a follow-up to the training courses provided by Trafford Hall. The
scale of these grants target a niche within the wider approaches to investment in deprived communities, by assigning small ‘pump priming’ pots of money to sometimes everyday but important local small projects. This kind of investment is unlikely to be covered by other type of public investment.

- **Quality of training**

Trafford Hall training is of high quality and draws on a dedicated trainer network. It is highly praised by participants and in high demand – some courses were so popular that they were run a number of times. Courses under different programmes complement each other, drawing on the links and communication between Trafford Hall’s main programmes – for example, trial-and-error courses when successful feed into different programmes. At the same time, courses are relevant to current policy developments and Trafford Hall should consider offering them to Housing Associations and Local Authorities on a self-funding basis.

- **Residential training**

The residential aspect of Trafford Hall training is a significant feature of the whole ‘Trafford Hall training philosophy and experience’. It works on the principle of offering similar opportunities (by which people travel for work or training nowadays) to disadvantaged groups and individuals that are very much ‘confined’ to their own geographical deprived area. In fact, for many participants, the Trafford Hall training is not only an opportunity for knowledge transfer and enrichment, but also a ‘personal journey’ into what a mainstream training experience might look like.

- **Feedback**

A very high proportion of the participants praise both the ‘Trafford Hall training experience’ and ‘Trafford Hall environment as a whole’. They feel strengthened to take forward and improve their work at community level and often express the wish to be able to come back for such a ‘special and enriching experience’.

- **Innovation**

The Playing to Learn Programme has a very innovative approach to working with disadvantaged families. By offering ‘play-to-learn’ weekends to these families, it is offering an unique experience and valuable family bonding time to children in these families who, perhaps, have never had the opportunity of a ‘weekend away’ before their Trafford Hall experience. Other groups (Do It Yourself, Community Crime Fighters and some Making Communities Works groups) express similar reactions to the ‘unique experience’ Trafford Hall offers, and the very different kind of training two-day courses give.
1. Introduction

About this report

This report is about the operation, outcomes and impacts of the four main training programmes and linked small grant programmes, organised by Trafford Hall, home of the National Communities Resource Centre. The author, a researcher at the Bartlett School of Planning UCL, has been asked to evaluate Trafford Hall’s portfolio of training programmes from an independent position.

Trafford Hall has been running four main training programmes since 2008. These are:

1. The Making Communities Work Programme (MCW), funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) through Tenants Services Association (TSA);
2. The Do It Yourself Community Action Training Programme (DIY), funded by the Monument Trust and John Laing Charitable Trust;
3. The Community Crime Fighters Programme (CCF), funded by the Home Office; and
4. The Playing to Learn Programme (P2L), funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

A fifth programme has recently started at Trafford Hall, the Community Futures Programme which is funded by the Tudor Trust. This programme is not evaluated here. The present report focuses on the Making Communities Work Programme which is examined in great detail. The other three programmes are examined briefly in order to provide some primary descriptive information and a useful comparative background.

The aims of the report are:

- to discuss the content of the four different training programmes run by Trafford Hall by providing for each programme a summary of content and their target groups; and
- to assess the quality of learning experience and outcomes;

The findings and recommendations of this report are relevant for Government, funding bodies, practitioners, voluntary organisations, tenants and residents of social housing areas, councils, housing associations, other registered social landlords and all training centres seeking to provide training for community based small-scale organisations.

TH training philosophy

Trafford Hall is a residential training and conference centre, near Chester. It is the home of the National Communities Resource Centre, a charity offering training and support to all those living and working in low income communities around the UK to develop their skills, confidence and capacity to tackle neighbourhood problems and reverse poor conditions. Trafford Hall opened in 1995, with support from the Government, Laing North West, many local authorities, housing associations, and charities, and tenants from across the country who helped to fundraise and advise on its development.

Training courses are residential and usually run over 2 or 3 days. Each event involves around 20 people from different community organisations from deprived areas across the country. The training is participatory and action focused. Training is developed and organised by Trafford Hall and delivered by outside training organisations. There are bursaries available for unfunded tenants and community volunteers to cover the costs of accommodation and training. However, all participants have to pay a £20 administration fee. Training and child care bursaries are also available.
Data sources
Trafford Hall has provided detailed information for the main training programmes: ‘Making Communities Work’, ‘Do It Yourself’, ‘Community Crime Fighters’ and ‘Playing to Learn’. The information was organized under four main categories:

1. **Detailed tabulated information** on courses delivered under each programme by financial year including information on course types, date, number of places available on each course, take-up rates, number of bursaries awarded, exceptional bursaries such as those covering the cost of travel expenses, childcare and carers; ethnic composition and geographical distribution.

2. **Summaries of participants’ course evaluations** including participants’ direct feedback on the quality of Trafford Hall training and venue, pluses, barriers, gains, quality and difficulties.

3. **Detailed break-down of the grants awarded, rejected and pending** under the Small Grant Programme for each programme.

4. **Examples of grant projects**, whereby community groups explained in their own words how the grant awarded by Trafford Hall helped them to set up, strengthen or continue a community project.

Additional information was provided for some programmes such as previous reports and evaluations, leaflets and ‘in-house’ documents. A significant amount of background information and explanations were provided by Trafford Hall’s Training Manager, Barbara Watson.

Data analysis
Data analysis has been carried out separately for each training programme. In order to reveal patterns, quantitative (tabulated) data, such as data about courses and grants, was tabulated in Excel; at the same time, qualitative (descriptions, quotes) data has been analyzed manually. While quantitative data was provided for each programme, in great detail for Making Communities Work and summarized for Doing It Yourself, Community Crime Fighters and Playing to Learn, qualitative information has been supplied mainly for Making Communities Work and some for the other programmes.

Outline of the report
Following this introduction, the report covers five main parts. The first four sections are dedicated one to each of the four training Programmes: Making Communities Work, Do It Yourself, Community Crime Fighters and Playing to Learn. The last section summarizes very briefly the key messages of this report.
1. Making Communities Work (MCW)

Trafford Hall’s MCW Programme is an innovative and practical ‘capacity building’ programme of residential training, linked to follow-up small grants, for people living and working in some of Britain’s most deprived neighborhoods in England and Wales. Its main goal is to provide

‘low-cost training events for tenants and residents of Local Authorities and Housing Associations in socially deprived areas in England and Wales, working as groups and individuals. The courses focus on positive local action to tackle problems, the development of groups and the management of social housing’.

The Programme is funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG), through the Tenants Services Authority (TSA), and Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). Previously to 2008, the programme was called Capacity Building and funded by the then Housing Corporation. MCW has been run continuously until June 2010 when it was suspended for two months, due to Government review. The programme was reinstated in August 2010.

MCW seeks to generate ideas, develop skills and increase people’s ability to take local action and work as partners with local authorities and other local agencies. The aim was for this to help people to:

- get involved locally to influence local decision making processes, especially around housing management;
- effect positive social change in their local areas by tackling local problems;
- develop community projects on the ground and encourage community activities;
- encourage others to participate;
- contribute to the Government’s goals of promoting community involvement and neighborhood renewal.

MCW is evaluated here from April 2008 to December 2010. However, the findings for the period between April 2010 and December 2010 do not carry the same weight as those for the previous two financial years (April 2008-March 2009 and April 2009-March 2010), as a result of the funding being suspended and subsequent high concentration of courses. Nevertheless, we present here findings from that period, which could show as an interesting contrast to a previously well established programme.

COURSES ON OFFER

Number of courses and frequency
87 courses were run at TH under the MCW Programme between April 2008 and December 2010.. These courses were distributed as follows:

- 42 courses between April 2008 and March 2009, the equivalent of a two-day course almost every week for the year;
- 31 courses between April 2009 and March 2010, the equivalent of a two-day course every week and a half for the year; and
- 12 courses between April 2010 and Dec 2010, the equivalent of a two-day course every 3 weeks for the year, taking into account the suspension of funding between June and August 2010.
Most courses were run once but there were courses which were run twice or more in one year. Courses with long waiting lists were repeated. High demand courses often reflected government interest in a policy area. The graphs below (Figure 1-3) show the pattern of course frequency during the three financial years.

Figure 1 – MCW Courses run between April 2008 and March 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 2008A</th>
<th>Group 2008B</th>
<th>TMO guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33 courses run once</td>
<td>3 courses run twice</td>
<td>1 course run three times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Between April 2008 and March 2009 (Figure 1):
   - The TMO guidance course was run three times;
   - 3 courses were run twice (Group 2008B). They were:
     - Being a Chairman
     - Housing and Regulation Act
     - Writing & Editing Community Newsletters
   - 33 courses were run once (Group 2008A). They are listed in the table below.

Table 1 - MCW courses run once between April 2008 and March 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting up Community Cafes</th>
<th>Tenants on the web</th>
<th>Tenant inspectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homes for the Future</td>
<td>ASB (part 2)</td>
<td>Developing comm. leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro to Board Membership</td>
<td>The future of TMO</td>
<td>Effective funding applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Communities Act</td>
<td>The role of the Treasurer</td>
<td>Rural participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Budgeting Guidance</td>
<td>Planning your Comm. Garden</td>
<td>Resolving conflict (part 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Tenants Voice</td>
<td>Housing Regulations and TSA</td>
<td>Resolving conflict (part 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASB (part 1)</td>
<td>Tools of the Trade</td>
<td>Getting your point across</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just a minute</td>
<td>Public Assets</td>
<td>Housing finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Communities</td>
<td>Cohesive</td>
<td>Real people, real power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Petitions &amp; Comm. Calls</td>
<td>The way forward</td>
<td>Welsh equality &amp; diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All on Board</td>
<td>Committee skills</td>
<td>Is your door really open?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Between April 2009 and March 2010 (Figure 2):
   - The Tenant inspectors course was run five times;
   - 5 courses were run twice (Group 2009B). They were:
     - *All on Board*
     - *Being a Chairperson*
     - *Resident Led Regulations*
     - *Presentation skills*
     - *Negotiation and Influencing Skills*
   - 16 courses were run once (Group 2009A). They are listed in the table below.

Table 2 - MCW courses run once between April 2009 and March 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenants in the lead</th>
<th>Working in partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committee skills</td>
<td>TSA consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring &amp; Evaluating the work of your group</td>
<td>Housing Revenue Account reform – the next steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro to board membership</td>
<td>TSA consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running &amp; Managing community building</td>
<td>Housing Regulations in Wales and the roles of tenants (Wales)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging communities in criminal justice: a consultation</td>
<td>Introduction to Boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Revenue Account reform consultation</td>
<td>Writing &amp; Editing for Newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocations, Fair and Flexible consultation</td>
<td>Community Mutuals (Wales)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Between April 2010 and Dec 2010 (Figure 3):
   - The Tenant inspectors course was run twice.
   - 10 courses were run once (Group 2010). They are listed in the table below.

Table 3 - MCW courses run once between April 2010 and December 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Number of places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Just a minute</td>
<td>10 places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your door really open?</td>
<td>10 places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee skills</td>
<td>10 places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory framework (Wales only)</td>
<td>10 places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenants on the web</td>
<td>10 places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to RSL Board</td>
<td>1 place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting standards with landlords</td>
<td>1 place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASB (Part 1)</td>
<td>1 place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing landlords performance (Wales only)</td>
<td>1 place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing landlords</td>
<td>1 place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of places and take-up**

The majority of courses had 19-20 places available. There were only two courses (Resolving Conflict and Wrexham Tenant Federation – The Way Forward) with 15 and 12 places respectively between April 2008 and March 2009, and four courses (Getting your Point Across – Presentation Skills; Housing Revenue Account Review; Negotiation and Influencing Skills; and Tenant Inspectors Wales) with 15-16 places between April 2009 and March 2010.

The take-up rates were very high standing at 93% for both 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 financial years:
- 788 places were available in 2008-2009 and 736 were taken-up;
- 574 places were available in 2009-2010 and 532 were taken-up.

**Carers and ‘returners’**

Each year, a very small number of people were accompanied by carers and in one instance by one child:
In 2008-2009, out of 736 participants, 7 were accompanied by one carer and 1 by one carer and 1 child;
In 2009-2010, out of 532 participants, 3 were accompanied by one carer and 2 by two carers.

More than half (58%) of participants each year were ‘returning to TH’ after undertaking previous training there – while 42% were new to TH.

**Ethnic representation**
Participants from BME groups were represented during both years:
- 13% of all participants were from BME groups in 2008-2009; and
- 10% of all participants were from BME groups in 2009-2010.

**Who is paying for the training?**
The training was mainly paid for by Tenant Empowerment Programme and Innovation and Good Practice/Housing Association bursaries, in almost equal shares. There was also a smaller number of Welsh Assembly Government bursaries each year, as well as a small number of participants who paid for themselves. The Table 4 below shows a breakdown of these bursaries by funding stream for both 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 financial years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>TEP bursaries</th>
<th>IGP/HA bursaries</th>
<th>HA bursaries</th>
<th>WAG bursaries</th>
<th>Paying participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008 – 2009</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>43% (IGP funded)</td>
<td>(IGP funded)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 – 2010</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39% (HA funded)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: TEP stands for ‘Tenant Empowerment Programme’
IGP stands for ‘Innovation and Good Practice’
HA stands for ‘Housing Associations’
WAG stands for ‘Welsh Assembly Government’*

**Geographical representation**
Trafford Hall courses were attended by participants from England and Wales. Four fifths (87% in 2008-2009 and 82% in 2009-10) of participants came from England, with 34% in 2008-2009 and 24% in 2009-2010 coming from North West, partly because of the location of Trafford Hall. Between 13% and 18% of participants came from Wales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Geographical representation</th>
<th>2008-2009</th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td></td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PARTICIPANTS FEEDBACK

This section is based on the participant’s feedback from the evaluation of 79 (91%) out of a total of 87 courses funded under the MCW programme, carried out between April 2008 and December 2010. More specifically, Trafford Hall participants’ feedback on:

- 40 of the 42 courses between April 2008 and March 2009;
- 30 of the 31 courses between April 2009 and March 2010; and
- 9 of the 12 courses between April 2010 and December 2010.

The participant’s feedback was very positive overall. Across the 79 course evaluations:

- Between 90% and 95% thought that the level of the course was ‘about right’;
- 90% participants thought that the course has encouraged them to take forward an existing idea and were very happy with the course, overall;
- Between 80% and 90% rated the venue and facilities as good or excellent; and
- Between 70-80% participants thought that the catering was good or excellent and only 10% or less thought it was poor.

They praised the training and the trainers, the venue, accommodation and food, and felt that they gained in confidence. Many also said that they would like to come back for further training. The participants highlighted a number of specific positive benefits such as the opportunity to make many new friends, the networks it created and its inclusiveness.

Trafford Hall training experience (quality of training and trainers)

The trainers are a great combination. X and Y were fantastic. I enjoyed learning from them. It was not a boring class at all. Very informative! (M163).

The trainer X was very competent and has a wealth of experience and knowledge, his style of teaching was brilliant and kept me interested throughout (M130).

I really enjoyed the course, I found it really informative and helpful. The trainers knew their stuff, the venue was good and the ambience was excellent (M151).

Both tutors were extremely knowledgeable, patient and made everyone feel at ease (M122).

Trafford Hall as a venue (accommodation, catering)

Second visit to TH and it was as good as the first. Your staff are wonderful and the service is consistently good. You should have a catering page in the brochures because the food is wonderful (M158).

I came away with satisfaction and something to take back and digest. Great trainers, great venue! Extremely well run! (M144).

Lovely environment, staff very friendly – generally a very pleasant learning environment (M093).
Always more to learn that can be taken in at one go but at least staying on site means you stand a chance (M142).

**Personal development** (skills, self-confidence)

This course has given me the encouragement to go further and deepen my interest in local matters and people (M166).

I would recommend this course to anyone. It gives you a good idea of how your newsletter should be (M132).

I really enjoyed the course and feel more confident about doing a presentation and how to plan and prepare for it (M10).

Thank you for this training. I have now confidence to question our local CJS. This course links to community crime fighting which we did in January. I feel now if I report crime, it goes to court and I know some of the process (M134).

I really enjoyed the course and gained valuable skills and strategies as well as a heap of confidence in delivering presentations (M155).

**Friends and networking**

It’s been fantastic and I wouldn’t have missed it for the world. I have really enjoyed the course, gained a lot of information and met new friends which has been most encouraging (M159).

An extremely useful, worthwhile course, superb experience! Networking opportunity well worth the effort (M119).

**Inclusiveness**

Thank you. Teachers were very patient because my English is not very good and they kindly explained everything to me (M093).

I am not used to many courses like this. But I kept awake all the time because it was entertaining as well as having learning (M141).

**Willing to return**

A really useful couple of days I would not miss for the world, and will be back (M156).

The main ‘negative’ aspect, mentioned by many participants, was that the courses should be longer and that it was very ‘hard work to take in so much information in only two days’. Participants suggested that some maintenance issues at Trafford Hall could be better dealt with and some equipment could be improved such as better lighting and more comfortable chairs in conference rooms. Some thought that the courses could be improved by using less ‘jargon talk’, offering more practical examples and ‘role playing’, and that IT services were sometimes unreliable.

**Course length**

The course should be longer – a lot of information to go through and questions to ask (M131).

**Training delivery**
There is more need for a tighter control of individuals dominating or steering away from content (M075).

More exercises would help – an exercise in putting my point across would be good! (M129).

The written information should be made more straightforward and understandable (M144).

**Trafford Hall equipment (IT) and furnishings**

I found lighting to be problematic too low to read comfortably (M162).

The web connection has been a bit erratic (M160).

I need more comfortable chairs for medical reasons (M139).

The IT services should be better and the sitting areas more comfortable (M145).

**Trafford Hall maintenance**

Window needs cleaning and the showers were cold (M157).

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**GRANTS AWARDED**

**Grand value and distribution**

From the beginning small grants were built into the programme to make sure that the Trafford Hall training is ‘delivered’ in practice: every training course ends with an Action Plan which aims to tackle local problems. Participants take Action Plans back to their communities and are allowed to apply for a small grant during the following year – approximately one quarter of groups apply for grants every year.

69 grants, offering on average £2,000 each, in total of £145,000, were awarded between April 2008 and December 2010. The majority of these grants (40 grants) were between £2,000 and £3000 (Figure 4). Most grants were awarded between April 2008 and March 2009 (33 grants), followed by those between April 2009 and March 2010 (25 grants) and those between April 2010 and December 2010 (11 grants).
The bulk of grants were more that £1,000 and less than £3,000 in any year, no grants of less than £1,000 were awarded in 2009-2010 and only one grant of more than £3,000 was awarded in 2008-2009. Grants were awarded as follows:

- April 2008 – March 2009
  - 6 grants less than £1,000;
  - 10 grants between £1,001 and £2,000;
  - 16 grants between £2,001 and £3,000;
  - 1 grant more than £3,000.

- April 2009 – March 2010
  - 8 grants £1,001 and £2,000;
  - 17 grants between £2,001 and £3,000.

- April 2010 – December 2010
  - 2 grants less than £1,000;
  - 2 grants between £1,001 and £2,000;
  - 7 grants between £2,001 and £3,000;

**Grant types and projects**

Grants were awarded to community groups for a number of activities. One third of grants (about 35%) was awarded for IT and office equipment, usually to allow groups to produce their own community website, newsletter, leaflets and other publicity materials. These were split as follows:

- 15 grants (26%) were awarded for purchasing IT equipment including software, laptops, printers, USB pens, etc.; and
- 5 grants (9%) were awarded for office equipment such as stationary, paper, cameras, etc.

Two thirds of grants were awarded for generic community activities including:
• training other tenants in the originating communities led to and ‘trickle-down’ Trafford Hall training. In this way participants ‘passed on’ information acquired during their training at Trafford Hall. 14 grants (24%) were given for these events.

• organizing local events such as consultations, exhibitions, networking events and conferences – 12 grants (21%);

• catering equipment, tables and chairs in community cafes set up as ‘community hubs’ such as meeting and advise points, centres of community activity, services for families and children, the elderly- 7 (12%) grants;

• enhancing ‘in-house’ skills in community groups to undertake additional work, carry out evaluations and take on legal challenges – 5 (9%) grants; and

• ‘green issues’ such as setting up local allotments and community gardens; growing own food and healthy eating - 4 grants.

Other community grants were awarded for:

• providing a newly formed group with their first year’s rent;

• individual developmental training;

• funding a ‘study visit’ to another community project;

• physically extending community premises;

The boxes below give summaries of the purpose and contribution that these grants have made within a number of deprived communities.

Box 1 – Wrekin Housing Tenants Panel in Telford was awarded a £1000 grant to update and purchase IT equipment.

The group received a grant that has enabled them to update their IT equipment. This has helped the group to produce their own publicity material and maintain better records of their activity. The skills gained as a result of the training and subsequently as a result of obtaining the equipment has improved the confidence of the group and given them a more positive image locally. The group as a result has seen an increase in tenant involvement with more members attending the office and participating in their work. The future of the group is now more secure thanks to the increased ability communicate and voice opinion and involve a broader spectrum of members.
The grant of £3,000, has enabled the group to employ a member of staff to provide a Saturday Club to mainly young African Europeans from the Warden Housing Estate. The sessions have provided academic support in Maths, English and Science and the group have noted an improvement in the young people’s interest in engaging in their school work. The children have also taken part in recreational football (with plans for joining the local junior league) and are planning to block book swimming lessons at the local pool.

Box 2 – **Brickwell Estate Residents Group** in Hull run local events to better understand their work and the influence they could have on local decision-making.

The group attended a training course at Trafford Hall which gave Area Housing Board members skills and knowledge to provide an effective housing service. The course covered responsibilities of Board Members, effective committee skills, budgeting and forward planning. Following the training Board Members have been able to transfer this learning into their own localities. Working in partnership with Hull United Residents and Tenant (HURAT) Federation and Governance Officers of Hull City Council, the group ran workshops to enable discussions and improve understanding of the Terms of Reference. As a result Area Housing Board Members came away with a better understanding of their role. Those involved will now have better skills and confidence to contribute effectively and make full use of the opportunity that the meetings provide to help improve their local areas.

Box 3 – **Edo State Women’s Group** in Harrow (Middlesex) developed additional ‘in-house’ capacity to carry out extra work in the local community.

The grant of £3,000 has enabled the group to employ a member of staff to provide a Saturday Club to mainly young African Europeans from the Warden Housing Estate. The sessions have provided academic support in Maths, English and Science and the group have noted an improvement in the young people’s interest in engaging in their school work. The children have also taken part in recreational football (with plans for joining the local junior league) and are planning to block book swimming lessons at the local pool.
Box 4 – **Hackethorpe Tenants & Residents Association** in Sheffield busted local services in their area and improved intra-generational communication by providing a community garden service

The group wanted to make a difference in their local area. They applied for a grant to start a community gardening service and, taking into account local generational difficulties which were being experienced at the time, hoped the services would help bring the generations together and engender respect between them.

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Box 5 – **Hyde Park Unity Day Group** in Leeds organized an alcohol-free area to accommodate a Muslim community within a mainstream local event

Unity Day is a community event run every year in Hyde Park, Leeds, to celebrate local culture predominantly through music and dance. The event, attracting around 10,000 people, in recent years has been dominated by the attendance of the student population. The grant awarded provided the group with the opportunity to develop a perma-culture area and also provide activities that would help to refocus the day on the involvement of the local community. The group designated the Unity Garden area of the park an alcohol-free zone to enable the involvement of the Muslim community and offered a range of activities from willow lantern making and cob sculpture to eco-friendly demonstrations such as bike generated energy and rocket stoves. The cultural area included African dance workshops and Bhangra music and dance. Both areas were attached to the children’s area so that families were able to easily participate in the range of activities provided.
The project included outreach, working closely with the Tic Tac Bus (the mobile teenage information, advice and support service) to encourage girls from the area to attend and participate in drug awareness sessions. The group is keen to promote information about drugs and the sessions were creative and stimulated debate whilst also being structured with learning outcomes. The project has reached vulnerable youngsters, teenage mums, parents and young offenders.

Box 6 – **Women for well women** in Leigh (Lancashire) employed a Project Worker with the grant they received, to improve their work with young women about the dangers of drugs.
2. The ‘Do It Yourself’ (DIY) Programme

The DIY Programme is funded by the John Laing Charitable Trust and Monument Trust and aims to:

...train community volunteers from the UK in subjects focusing around the themes of sustainability, health, local social enterprises, supporting families and diversity in communities.

The DIY Programme began in 1996 with a five year grant from the Gatsby Trust and run as a community self-help training programme on the philosophy ‘can do – how to’. It also had a small grant programme attached to it. Every course ended with an ‘Action Plan’ which was taken by participants back to their communities. Courses were very popular and filled very quickly. The MCW Programme was modelled on this programme when ODPM visited Trafford Hall in 1999.

The DIY programme has been evaluated between April 2008 and December 2010. 34 courses were run over this period, involving 547 participants and 349 groups. The 34 courses run during 2008-2011 covering a range of topics:

- 13 courses were run during 2008-2009 on the following topics:
  - Carbon Footprints
  - How to Drug-Proof Your Kids (and a follow-on course providing accredited training of community volunteers to allow them to become trainers themselves)
  - Music and Dance Events to Bring Your Community Together (two-part course) – run twice
  - Women as Heroes
  - Building the Bridges
  - Freebies
  - Getting the Rules Right (constitutions)
  - Community Allotments
  - Negotiating and Influencing Skills
  - Small-scale Organic Gardening
  - Walking Friends

- 12 courses were run during 2009-2010 on the following topics:
  - Save Money by Saving Energy
  - Family Cook-Outs in Your Community Cafes
  - Women as Heroes (run twice)
  - Resolving Conflict
  - Gardening for Health (run twice)
  - Role of the Treasurer
  - Developing Your Community Cafe
  - Is Your Door Really Open?
  - Drug-Proof Your Kids – training the trainer
  - Small-Scale Organic Gardening

- 9 courses were run during 2010-Dec 2010 on the following topics:
  - Generating Income for Your Community Garden
  - Developing Community Leaders
  - Gardening for Health
  - Developing Your Community Cafe
Another 4 courses were planned between December 2010 and March 2011. These were:
- Women as Heroes
- Keeping it Legal
- Employing Staff
- Getting the Rules Right – preparing or revising constitutions

On average, 1 or 2 participants per course were paying for themselves, while 99% received bursaries each year. In addition, 3% received childcare bursaries and 18% received travel bursaries each year, with the number of people receiving travel bursaries increasing steadily between 2008 and 2011, from 12% to 24%.

The programme showed BME attendance, with an average of 22% of the participants being of ethnic minority origin over the three years. The number of BME participants has increased notably between 2009 and 2011, with 18% participating in 2008-2009; 21% in 2009-2010 and 26% in 2010-2011. The increased BME participation reflects the type of courses (more community focused).

The programme had a wide geographical coverage with 34% participants coming from North West. The second most represented area was London, sending 18% participants each year. The number of participants from Wales has also seen a significant increase between 2008 and 2011 with 4% participating in 2008-2009, 11% in 2009-2010 and 18% in 2010-2011.

The programme awarded 17 grants from April 2008 to December 2010 (3 grants in 2008-2009 and 14 grants in 2009-2010), in total of £30,459. All grants but one were between £1,000 and £2,000 and covered a range of projects. The most representative grants were the following:
- 5 grants (29%) were awarded for community health projects including women’s health and drug awareness;
- 4 grants (24%) were awarded for ‘organic gardening’ and community gardens;
- 3 grants (18%) were awarded for healthy eating and cooking community projects;
- 3 grants (18%) were awarded for community events, including music and dance events and classes, and community support such as out-reach and Saturday one-stop-shop facility.

The quotes below reflect some of participants’ feedback on various DIY courses:

*I have learnt how to take forward ideas and how to use my strengths when doing things in community (L014)*

*The tutors and the rest of Trafford Hall team have encouraged me to realise that are individuals whose contributions over time will have community, territorial and eventually global influence. I am positive that there will be change, positive change. X was also brilliant. Thanks you. (L026)*

*I feel invigorated to go back home and put all the values I have learned into practice to make my well being healthier(L036)*
The group supports women and girls in the Wigan Borough in all aspects of women’s emotional and physical health. Their team of volunteers provide practical and emotional support to empower vulnerable women and help them make informed choices under difficult circumstances. With the aid of TH training and grant award in 2008, the group were able to pay for specialist equipment and a part-time co-coordinator to train volunteers to deliver Reflexology, Aromatherapy, Body & Indian Head Massage. Since the therapies were launched, the women, who would not normally have the confidence or access to receive an alternative therapy, are now learning new ways of releasing and controlling stress, whilst raising their self esteem and general well being.

I thought that the course was very interesting and I learnt a lot that I didn’t know. I thoroughly enjoy it (L035).

I cannot stress enough how useful this course has been. Before this, I felt that things in the café were messy, unstructured and I was wondering about its future. The course has given us an opportunity to gain clarity away from work distractions and focus on tools. It has given us positivism, energy and enthusiasm to take forward and I’m positive it can work. I have discovered that staff are so dedicated and that I can rely on them for support. I recommend anyone starting a project like this does this course first. I am so grateful to have this opportunity (L040).

The tutor was very knowledgeable and had a great deal of patience and delivered the course in a interactive and very interesting way. I would be interested in attending further courses that the tutor has to offer (L042).

The examples below illustrate how the grants awarded by Trafford Hall were used.

Box 8 – **Women for well women** in Leigh, Lancashire

The group supports women and girls in the Wigan Borough in all aspects of women’s emotional and physical health. Their team of volunteers provide practical and emotional support to empower vulnerable women and help them make informed choices under difficult circumstances. With the aid of TH training and grant award in 2008, the group were able to pay for specialist equipment and a part-time co-coordinator to train volunteers to deliver Reflexology, Aromatherapy, Body & Indian Head Massage. Since the therapies were launched, the women, who would not normally have the confidence or access to receive an alternative therapy, are now learning new ways of releasing and controlling stress, whilst raising their self esteem and general well being.
The group grows their own organic products in their allotment garden. These have been used to feed around 50 people per month at a Luncheon Club they run for local residents. The group were awarded a grant to purchase an additional greenhouse, shelving and equipment so they can plant enough crops to expand their Grow, Cook and Taste sessions to engage 8 to 11 year old children as part of an intergenerational project the group have created.

Box 9 – **NEPHRA Residents Association** in New Moston, Manchester

Box 10 – **Manchester Women of Diversity** in the Manchester suburb of Wythenshawe

The group was able to establish a much-needed Ethnic Food Co-Operative in their community with the help of training and subsequent grant opportunity at Trafford Hall. The Co-Operative enables and encourages members of the BME community to taste and buy healthy whole foods which are unavailable locally, at competitive prices on a bi-monthly basis. Operating from their recently acquired office space and community kitchen area, the group were able to kick-start their activities by purchasing their initial food stocks, Weighing Scales and Vacuum Packing machine from their £2,000 grant award. The Women of Diversity were also able to promote their Food Co-operative with the aid of funding for publicity and a designated mobile telephone, where customers can reserve & order food items by text message and have them delivered to their home.
3. The ‘Community Crime Fighters’ (CCF) Programme

The CCF Programme, funded by Home Office, was agreed in the late autumn of 2008, following a pilot in early 2009, with the main programme starting in April 2009 and ending in September 2010. The main purpose of the programme was to enable local people to understand how to engage with their local crime fighting services and how to report crime. The overall aim was to give people the confidence to use the tools and powers of the system to make things better in their own communities, and to spread that information and confidence to their wider communities by working with local crime fighting services and by applying for small grants to help that happen.

Between Jan 2009 and September 2010, under the CCF programme, Trafford Hall ran 45 courses for 878 people. Course numbers varied between 15 and 26 people per course. At the end of the programme there was a waiting list of 132 people who had either applied too late for the last few courses or who were unable to attend on any of the course dates at the point at which they applied. The participants came from all areas of the country – from as far afield as Middleborough, Swansea, St Ives, Southend and Clacton.

Every group on the courses was offered the opportunity to apply for a small grant (up to £1000) to take local initiative to ‘involve’ or ‘inform’ other members of their community about issues raised by the CCF course. Approximately 300 grant applications were made and 233 were awarded, dispersing a total of £211,780 for community based crime prevention projects. The grants were used in community for things such as:

- Notice boards used by the police and community to keep people informed of local crime issues;
- Newsletters and leaflets to spread the information to the wider community;
- Matching funding for community events, usually run in partnership with the local authority, local police or firefighters;
- Clear-up days where areas of land or streets were cleared of rubbish, needles and litter, often working with young people;
- Setting up joint working with other crime-fighting services (police/ fire brigade/ local authorities) by way of strong strategic local partnerships meant to take things forward locally.

The quotes below reflect some of participants’ feedback on various CCF courses:

*I really enjoyed the course and I came along to assist in communications and training of others. I feel I have tools to support residents and groups in the future (CCF2)*

*The presentations by the young advisors were excellent – what an inspiration. Personally I feel that this service could be incorporated into work being undertaken by agencies in Newport and would be seeking to explore this with the necessary agencies in the future (CCF3).*

*It was a very informative and useful course which enhanced my understanding of the criminal justice system and the role of a community crime fighter (CCF18).*

*I know of others on this course before me, and their excellent reports have been fully justified (CCF36).*
4. The ‘Playing to Learn’ (P2L) Programme

The P2L Programme is funded by the Big Lottery Fund up to March 2011. The programme has been evaluated here for the period between March 2008 and December 2010. P2L’s main aims are to assist families:

- to support their children’s learning and development through focusing on the benefits of playing to learn;

This is done by encouraging the participants (families with children):

- to take part in simple, practical activities that provide opportunities for play, learn and work together as a family and gain practical skills, which can be used at home;
- to develop ideas for family play activities, which will focus on, enhancing children’s capacity to learn and increasing participation in their community or environment;
- to action plan ways of spending more time together in fun family-centered play activities in order to increase confidence, self-esteem and build family cohesion; and
- to take away activity packs with ideas tried during the weekend so families can progress when they get at home.

The programme is developed by running residential courses for low-income families during a weekend. Families are usually around 3-6 people including both adults and children, and can include siblings up to 16. The family’s composition is as perceived and experienced by the child, that is to say single mother or father and siblings, OR mother, estranged father and siblings, OR mother, grandmother/ ‘Mrs-next-door’ who helped with childcare and siblings. In order to qualify for the course, families have to come via a support organisation such Sure Start, Social Services, the School, Church or other local organisations.

The whole programme is about improving these families’ children learning ability, by play. Play will improve, for example children’s hand-eye co-ordination, social interaction, concentration, maths or reading skills. It aims to help parents and carers to understand how play can affect their children’s learning. They spend the whole weekend as a family with the parents learning to play with their children. The families then go back home and they and their support organisations are asked to undertake a follow-up ‘survey’. The programme is not able to measure improvement in children’s learning outcomes, but measures improvements in family relationships and in the way parents interact with their children.

Between March 2008 and December 2010, 188 families, comprising 734 family members benefited from the 25 residential weekend courses run under the P2L Programme. This included 469 children (64%) and 265 adults (27% women and 9% men). They were all on their first visit at Trafford Hall. Among the 188 families, 45 families (24%) were BME families; and out of the 734 people 188 (26%) were from a BME background.

The families came from all geographical areas but:

- the majority of families came from NW (46%) and YH (20%);
- about one in five families was from WM (10%) and London (10%);
- some families came from the wider SE (6%), E (4%) and EM (3%); and
- a handful of families came from NE and SW.
The family status was predominantly ‘single mother’ (53%) or ‘two parents’ (29%), followed by ‘single father’ (6%) and ‘two grandparents’ or ‘single grandmother’ (2% each); 8% of the participant families came with other people who were considered ‘part of the family’ such as grandparents, relatives and close friends and neighbours. The majority of children were of primary school age (94%), with half of them being between 4 and 9 year old. However, children’s age varied as follows:

- 30% were 0-3 years;
- 52% were 4-9 years;
- 11% were 10-12 years; and
- 6% were 13-16 years.

The quotes and pictures below offer a flavour of families’ thoughts following a P2L weekend.

‘I do play with the kids at home but real life gets in the way you haven’t got a big space to just go and make something ...you have to do everything else that you have to do...coz normally at home it’s just me ...and the kids...and that’s it!’ (lone mother, 2 children)

‘It really boosted nice my confidence ...if my kid wants me to paint my face...I let him...if he is enjoying it...it’s good for him...and me!’ (lone mother, 1 child)

‘The accommodation really suited us...we have a disabled daughter...totally met her needs...we didn’t have to struggle with anything ...it’s been really good spending quality time with the children...and with my wife...it’s been fantastic’ (father, 4 children)
'We really enjoyed it...we had really good fun...and the book trail...that was our favorite part.' (lone mother, 2 children)

'The weekend has been really good because we've had time to spend with the children which we don't usually have at home...we are usually so busy...we have five children...it's so nice to have all this time to spend with the children together ...for me and for other people in the same kind of situation that we are....if you know that you are coming there is no need to be nervous...it is so relaxed ...the staff will help you with any problem you've got...no matter day or night there is always somebody here...you don't need to worry about anything...you don't have to worry about your children ...I mean... it's the best thing I've ever did!' (mother, 5 children)
5. Conclusions

In conclusion, Trafford Hall’s general training model conveys the following key messages:

- **Targeting disadvantage**
  Its main aim is to target people in disadvantaged communities—it is mainly aimed at social housing tenants and community organizations in deprived areas, thus reaching a wide range of tenants’ and residents’ organizations and voluntary community groups in England and Wales.

- **Attracting all ages and ethnic groups**
  The Trafford Hall training welcomes the more established members or representatives of local community organizations as well as the young, families with children and the disabled. At the same time, the Black and Minority Ethnic community is well represented, with an average of one in five (20%) participants across all courses being from an ethnic minority background.

- **Spreading out from NW and attracting from London**
  One in three participants comes from the NW region where Trafford Hall is located (near Chester). However, two thirds of participants come from outside the NW with 20% coming from London, the South West and East Anglia.

- **Encouraging common learning and action**
  The Trafford Hall training model encourages participants to attend in groups of between two and four people so it is more likely that learning takes root and more certainly leads to action. Between 90% and 95% thought that the level of the course was ‘about right’;

- **Drawing up Action Plans**
  Action Plans are draw up at the end of each training course, outlining plans to implement further action, which participants take back to their communities. As a follow up of these action plans many participants return to Trafford Hall with other members from their communities. 90% participants thought that the course has encouraged them to take forward an existing idea and were very happy with the course, overall;

More specifically, the Making Communities Work (MCW) Programme stands out because of:

- **High quality training**
  On average, up to 95% of participants are satisfied with the quality of training on offer at Trafford Hall under the MCW Programme and praise the professionalism and quality of training staff.

- **Nature of training and high take-up**
  The majority of participants appreciate the residential training offered by Trafford Hall. Between 80% and 90% of participants rated the venue and facilities as very good or excellent. All courses offered over the two and a half year period had a very high take-up rate (93%).

- **Allowing ‘returners’ but encouraging new participants**
  All training courses under the MCW Programme have a target of 49% new participants on each course. By allowing ‘returners’, it is more likely that ‘knowledge and new skills’ take root in communities while, by targeting new participants, the Programme ‘spreads out’.
• **Small grants as follow-through ‘pump priming’**
  On average 26 grants per year are offered under the MCW Programme. Grants of up to £3,000 which are awarded to community groups for a number of activities such as IT and office equipment, local training and events, community cafes and local allotments.

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