

# Tenant Futures

## External evaluation of the National Communities Resource Centre Tenant Training Programme

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## SUMMARY

The Tenant Futures programme offers residential training to social housing tenants in England who want to play active roles in their housing organisations and in the community.

The objective of the Tenant Futures programme is to offer training to social housing tenants tackling housing-related problems in low-income areas. The overall aim is to strengthen the skills, confidence and capacity of social housing tenants so that they can tackle problems in their communities, improve neighbourhoods and services, and better the life chances of residents.

The training programme is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government and has offered over 100 courses to more than 2,000 tenants since its inception in 2011.

This report evaluates the programme period for April 2013 - March 2014, and follows an earlier evaluation of the programme between October 2011 and March 2013<sup>1</sup>.

### Benchmarks

The benchmarks set out for this Tenant Futures training period have been exceeded or nearly met.

- ✓ 37 courses were run by the end of March 2014, exceeding the programme target of 33 courses.
- ✓ 743 tenants were trained by the Tenant Futures programme, exceeding the programme target of 720 tenants.
- ✓ 42% of tenants attending Tenant Futures training were new to the training programme, very close to the programme target of 45%.

### Tenant feedback

Tenants are generally very positive about their experience of the Tenant Futures programme.

- ✓ 36 out of 37 Tenant Futures courses received a positive satisfaction rating of at least 70% or more.
- ✓ 93% of participating tenants were either happy or very happy with the quality of the training they received.
- ✓ 92% of participating tenants thought the course was taught at the appropriate level.
- ✓ 83% of participating tenants said training had encouraged them to take new ideas forward.
- ✓ 95% of participating tenants said that Tenant Futures training had given them new ideas.

Most tenants regard Trafford Hall as a good residential training venue.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cr/casereport79.pdf>

- ✓ 96% of participating tenants said Trafford Hall was a good or excellent venue to host the Tenant Futures programme.
- ✓ 91% of participating tenants said the food and accommodation provided by Trafford Hall were either good or excellent.

While tenants are very positive about Trafford Hall and the Tenant Futures programme, they also suggested ideas on how the programme could be improved.

1. Offer longer courses. Some tenants feel overwhelmed by the amount of information presented in a short period of time. Tenants felt longer courses would help.
2. Give tenants course materials before they arrive at Trafford Hall to allow them time to prepare. Tenants suggested emailing some of the materials before the start of the course.
3. Make sure tenants are clear on the level of the course before they attend. A rating system – for example beginner, intermediate, advanced – would help tenants judge whether the level is appropriate to them.
4. Tenants are overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of networking with other tenants, yet some feel shy about mixing with people from other organisations. Tenants suggest that trainers should more actively encourage participants to mix.
5. Give tenants more time to learn how to apply to the small grants scheme, as well as time to brainstorm how they could use a grant locally to follow through on some of the ideas presented in the training.
6. Give tenants more time to move around, conduct courses outdoors if the weather is fine or change rooms once in a while to give tenants a breather.

### **Grant programme**

The Tenant Futures programme offers small-seed funding (maximum £1,000/project) to tenant organisations that have received training at Trafford Hall and have developed an action plan on how to apply that training in their community.

Interviews with tenant groups show that grants have many positive outcomes in communities. Grants are used to purchase IT equipment to encourage digital literacy and improve communication, to organise informational events and community days, to bring training courses to tenants locally, to produce promotional material and reports and to organise visits with other tenant groups to share best practice. The grant case studies and examples at the end of the grant section outline many of these outcomes.

As of March 2014, 41 small grants had either been paid to tenant organisations or were moving through the grant application process. This number falls below the programme target of 59 grants. Tenants and Trafford Hall staff said this may be due to several reasons:

1. A short Tenant Futures administrative vacancy may have played a role in slowing down the administrative processing of the grant applications. This vacancy has now been filled.
2. The application form can be confusing for tenants unused to applying for grants. Grant writing is a skill that many tenants are developing or still need to develop.
3. Tenants participating in training at Trafford Hall are volunteers, and give their time freely. At the same time, many tenants are currently facing great pressures, which they report are having negative effects on their ability to volunteer and engage in activities like applying for community grants.
4. The grant process is a big endeavour for many tenants that stretches over several months and requires skills in grant writing, project coordinating and impact monitoring. Some tenants say they feel daunted by the process. More support in developing these skills and implementing the grant would be very useful.

Feedback suggests that some tenants need more support in order to manage the grant application process. Trafford Hall could develop dedicated short courses to:

- Train and support tenants in the grant application process.
- Help tenants understand how to monitor, showcase and market their community outcomes.
- Help tenant groups develop ways to retain volunteers during times of increased hardship and to maintain continuity on projects, such as the grant application.

It would also be helpful if tenants applying for grants nominated one housing officer to act as a direct link to the landlord. This staff member would commit to supporting the tenants group and be a point of contact for Trafford Hall in case of any problems.

## **Conclusion**

Suggestions for programme improvement are made throughout the evaluation and are brought together in the final recommendations section. Proposals have been made with resource and budgetary limitations in mind.

At a time when tenants are faced with increasing responsibilities as well as hardships, the Tenant Futures programme is equipping tenants with knowledge and skills to become productive members of their housing organisation and their community. Active tenants give a great deal of their time, energy and personal resources to improving their and their neighbours' circumstances. The Tenant Futures programme and Trafford Hall support this positive activity, and follow on funding should be sought to sustain and deepen this important service.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This is an evaluation of the Tenant Futures programme, developed and run by the National Communities Resource Centre (NCRC) at Trafford Hall and funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

The Tenant Futures programme was set up with funding from DCLG in October of 2011. Further funding was granted to extend the programme through to the end of March 2015. This report evaluates the period of activity from April 2013-March 2014 only, and follows an earlier evaluation of the programme between October 2011 and March 2013<sup>2</sup>.

The objective of the Tenant Futures programme is to offer training to social housing tenants tackling housing-related problems in low-income areas. The overall aim of the Tenant Futures programme is to strengthen the skills, confidence and capacity of social housing tenants so that they can tackle problems in their communities, improve neighbourhoods and services, and better the life chances of residents.

Tenant Futures training courses are developed around four core aims:

- 1) Development and support of the individual
- 2) Strengthening tenant groups
- 3) Encouraging tenant groups to engage in their community
- 4) Understanding policy and management issues.

All Tenant Futures courses are residential over two or three days, and aim to bring social housing tenants from across England together to share ideas and experiences, learn new skills, increase levels of confidence and share best practice between tenant organisations.

An additional element of Tenant Futures is the **small grants programme** designed to offer seed funding (£500 - £1,000 max) to tenant organisations that have received training at Trafford Hall and have developed a strategy on how to use that training in their community. Grants are given to tenant-led projects that encourage community follow-up action after the courses. Tenants typically ask for funding to cover follow on training days, community events, site visits, guest speakers and IT equipment. These grants are intended to spread the benefit of the Tenant Futures learning throughout participants' local communities, develop local knowledge and networks, win greater local support and recognition for the tenant groups aims, and kick-start community action.

This report is the result of the evaluation of feedback provided by the 743 tenants who participated in 37 Tenant Futures training courses in the period from April 2013 – March 2014. Twenty follow-up interviews were conducted with tenants to ask further questions about their training experience, and prompt them to elaborate on specific outcomes their training had initiated. A further ten interviews were conducted with grant recipients to monitor how grant money was spent and to uncover wider

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<sup>2</sup> <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cr/casereport79.pdf>

outcomes. This report outlines the responses to the Tenant Futures programme and put forward several recommendations for future development.

### **About the NCRC at Trafford Hall**

The National Communities Resource Centre (NCRC) offers training and support to those living and working in low-income communities, to develop their skills, confidence and capacity to better their conditions.

Two and three day training courses are held at Trafford Hall and residents from low-income communities from across the country travel to Chester to participate. Residential training allows for concentrated focus away from the stresses of everyday life, provides more time in training than typical local half-day events, and develops networks, relationships and the sharing of best practice among tenants from across the country. It also provides a source of ideas and long-term support.

### **Cost**

The NCRC offers low-cost training to members of low income-communities. Training courses cost the participant £15 and include room and board over the training period. The remainder of the true cost of the training, averaging between £170 and £310, is covered by a grant awarded to the NCRC by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Transport to Trafford Hall is covered by participants, but is often funded through social landlords or can be covered by applying for a travel bursary offered by Trafford Hall. There is also a small fund available for childcare costs when necessary.

Trafford Hall programmes are funded by several organisation including the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Tudor Trust, the John Laing Charitable Trust, and the Monument Trust as well as occasional sponsorship from other organisations.

## 2. TENANT FUTURES OVERVIEW

### Benchmarks

Between April 2013 and March 2014 the Tenant Futures programme trained 743 tenants on 37 courses. 42% were new to the programme, while 58% had attended training previously and subsequently applied to attend another course. As shown in Table 1 below, all targets for the programme period April 2013-March 2014 were met, almost met or exceeded.

**Table 1: Tenant Futures benchmarks met**

	<b>Target to March 2014</b>	<b>Actual by March 2014</b>
Number of courses run	33	37
Minimum number of tenants trained	720	743
Number of tenants new to Tenant Futures training	45%	42%

### Courses

The courses provided over this period are shown in Table 2, which includes the number of participants per course and a brief description of the course content. Several courses were repeated due to particularly high demand. These include the Wider World course about housing and welfare reform changes, Dealing with Anti-social behaviour, Being an Effective Chairperson and all of the Tenant Scrutiny courses.



**Table 2: List of Tenant Futures Courses April 2013-March 2014**

<b>Course title</b>	<b>No. of participants</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
Wider World	23	Aimed at tenants who want to be involved in shaping their landlord's services and policies. The Localism Act 2011, Welfare Reform Act 2012, affordable rents, fixed term tenancies, the bedroom tax, the Right to Buy – tenants learn how these changes will affect them and their community
Wider World	20	See above
Wider World	23	See above
Wider World	25	See above
Dealing with ASB	19	Gives tenants the opportunity to look at relevant policies and how they can tackle local anti-social behaviour problems.
Dealing with ASB	24	See above
Dealing with ASB	16	See above
Local Resolution of Complaints	15	Explores how tenants can get involved and improve the complaints service. Tenants consider the principles of effective dispute resolution and examine how learning from complaints can lead to improved services.
Local Resolution of Complaints	24	See above
Local Resolution of Complaints	19	See above
Tenant Scrutiny - Getting Involved	19	Designed to help tenants understand what tenant scrutiny is and why it is being promoted. Tenants look at what scrutiny involves and examine how it fits in with existing structures for tenant involvement.
Tenant Scrutiny - Getting Involved	16	See above
An Inspector Calls	17	Examines the skills that are needed to be a tenant inspector, the support that should be provided by landlords and how tenants can take the lead in inspecting the services provided by their landlords.
An Inspector Calls	18	See above
Being an Effective Chairperson	18	Tenants learn how to chair meetings so as to bring out the best in all members and to help their committee reach the best possible decisions.
Being an Effective Chairperson	17	See above
Being an Effective Chairperson	24	See above
Robust Frameworks	16	Explores some of the practicalities of setting up and running effective Tenant Panels. The course identifies good practice in setting up and resourcing panels and considers how to measure the effectiveness of the panel.
Robust Frameworks	19	See above
Consulting Your Community	20	Gives tenants a range of tools for organising and running successful and meaningful consultation exercises.

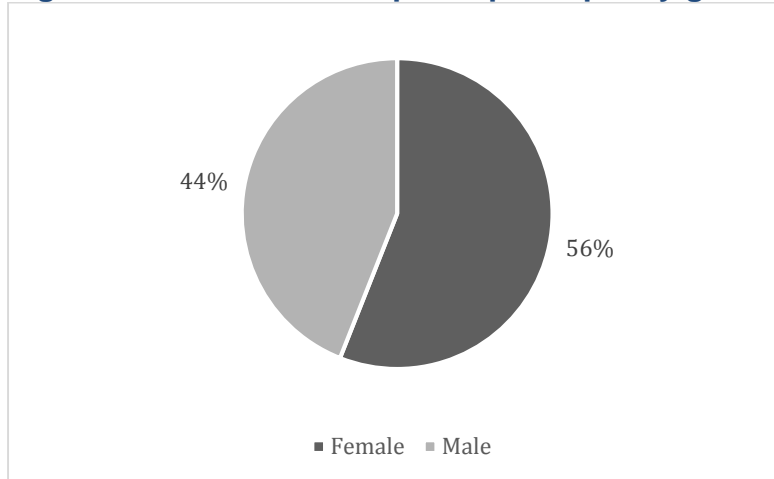
Consulting Your Community	17	See above
Partnerships for Panels	15	Provides tools for tenants facing challenges in developing genuine partnerships with their landlords using tenant panels or similar groups.
Understanding Performance Information	17	Helps tenants who want to feel more confident in using performance information and in requesting clear easily understandable information from their landlord.
Practical Skills	17	Develops skills in tenant scrutiny. A practical course that works on the key skills needed to ensure that landlords take tenants efforts seriously.
Improving Repairs	17	Tenants learn how to improve repairs through best practice and benchmarking their service against others. Also looks at the Community Cashback scheme and identifies opportunities for action.
Tenant Scrutiny - A Deeper Involvement	16	Tenants with experience in scrutiny come together to discuss and learn how to resolve complex scrutiny issues.
Tenant Scrutiny - A Deeper Involvement	23	See above.
Tenant Panels - Opportunities for Involvement	17	Aimed at tenants developing a tenant panel for the first time and provides a general overview of the use of panels and the latest information.
Recruiting for Scrutiny	16	Help tenants and landlords recruit tenants and keep them engaged and enthusiastic.
Practical Skills for Scrutiny	25	See above
Inspiring Tenant Leaders	23	Helps tenants who are involved in tenant and community groups to explore the role of leadership in bringing about positive change. Participants learn and share ideas and examples on effective community leadership.
Understanding Group Dynamics	20	Understanding group dynamics gives tenants insight into how to get the best out of their group.
Training Skills for Tenants	24	Learn how to run short, simple and effective training sessions for other tenants or groups in the area.
Effective Marketing	24	Highlights varied methods and strategies available to groups to help them engage more effectively with their communities, improving their visibility and encouraging involvement.
Effective Fundraising	16	Tenants learn how to increase their chances of making successful funding applications by: exploring the key components of a funding strategy, demonstrating the need for a community project, and increasing confidence and fundraising skills.
Making Meetings Work	21	Explores how tenants can get the most out of meetings, whatever their role. Helps tenants effectively contribute to and manage their meetings, while setting an example for others.
Committee Skills	16	Helps tenants understand the roles and responsibilities of the officers and committee members so that you can develop new committee skills and work more effectively together

### Who comes for training at Trafford Hall?

The following figures show the composition of social housing tenants attending the Tenant Futures programme in the period from April 2013-March 2014.

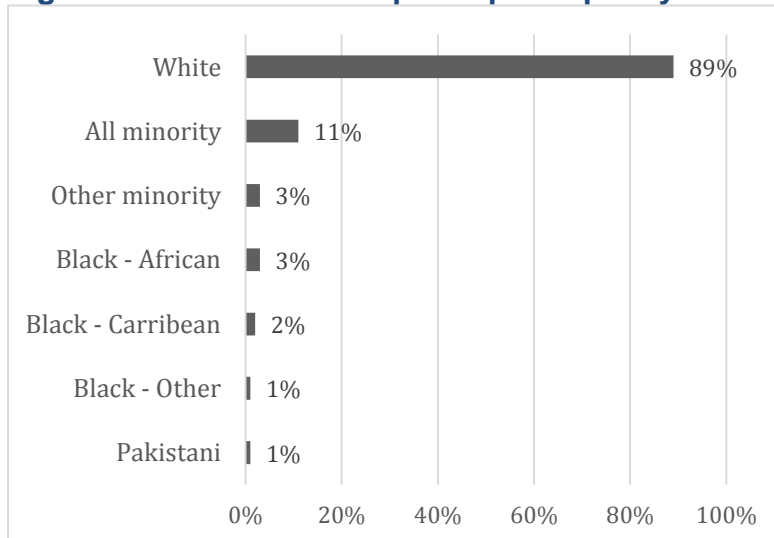
The gender split (Figure 1) continues to favour female participants at 56% and has not altered since the previous evaluation.

**Figure 1: Tenant Futures participant split by gender**



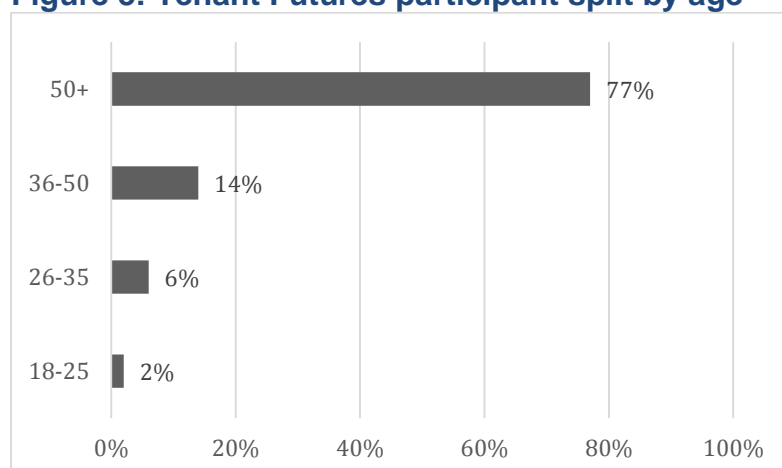
The largest ethnic group attending the Tenant Futures programme is white at 89% of all participants, while 11% are from minority background (Figure 2). This is very similar to the spread in the previous Tenant Futures evaluation and close to the national distribution of 85% white and 12% minority (2011 census).

**Figure 2: Tenant Futures participant split by ethnicity**



The share of tenants over 50 has increased from 71% in the previous evaluation to 77% (Figure 3). This age skew reflects the composition of active social housing tenants as a whole. The majority of tenants volunteering their time are generally older or retired. Most active tenants generally no longer have dependent children, and a high percentage are disabled or unable to work full-time, consequently freeing time for voluntary activity.

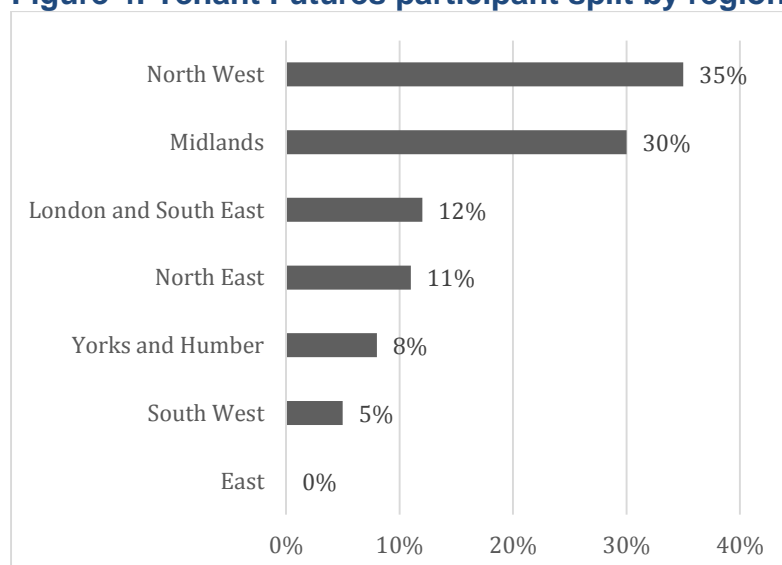
**Figure 3: Tenant Futures participant split by age**



**Proposal.** Trafford Hall could encourage younger working-age participants by placing more courses on weekends, or possibly providing a handful of courses that simultaneously offer childcare at Trafford Hall.

Figure 4 shows the geographic distribution of Tenant Futures participants. The North West – where Trafford Hall is located – attracts 35% of the participating tenants. This is followed by the Midlands with 30% and London and the South East with 12%.

**Figure 4: Tenant Futures participant split by region**



**Proposal.** No tenants participated from the East of England in the period from April 2013- March 2014. Trafford Hall should explore bus and train connections and identify local landlords who might help promote the programme in the region.

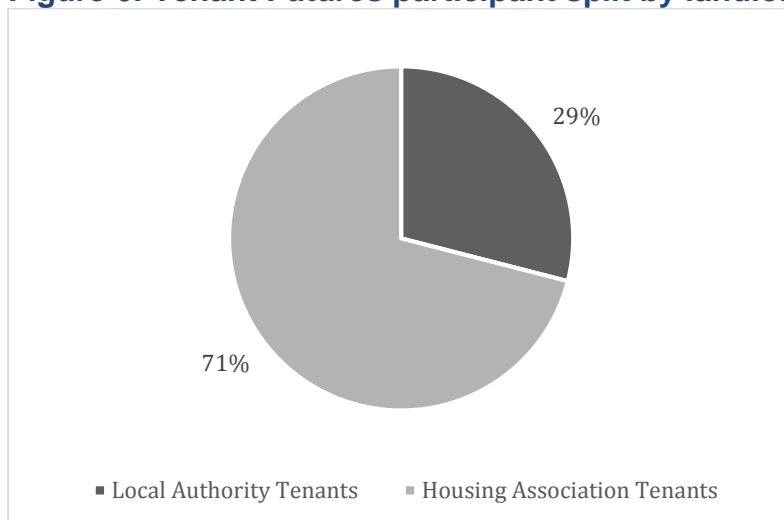
Figure 5 visually shows the geographical spread of Tenant Futures participants nationally. The map confirms the wide distribution of tenants attending the Tenant Futures programme from across the country.

**Figure 5: Tenant Futures participant geographical location**



Figure 6 shows the split between tenants from local authorities and tenants from housing associations. The majority of tenants (71%) have housing association landlords, while 29% of all Tenant Futures participants are local authority tenants.

**Figure 6: Tenant Futures participant split by landlord type**



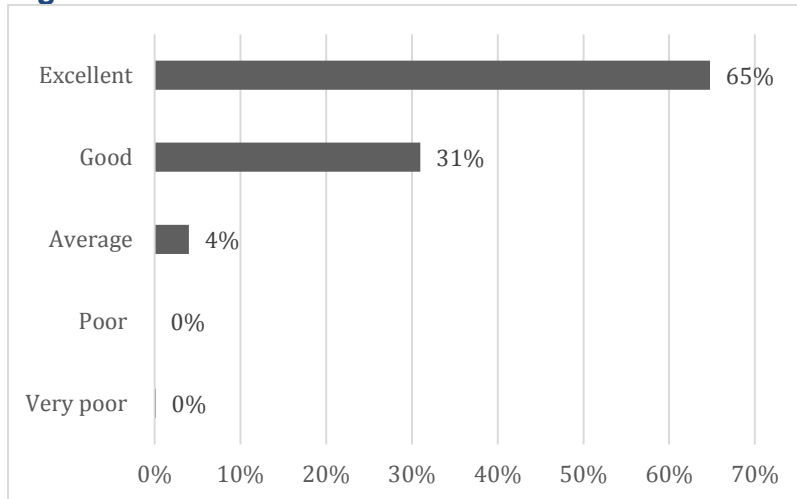
### 3. COURSE EVALUATION

Tenants were asked to complete written evaluations at the end of each training course.

#### Trafford Hall as a training venue

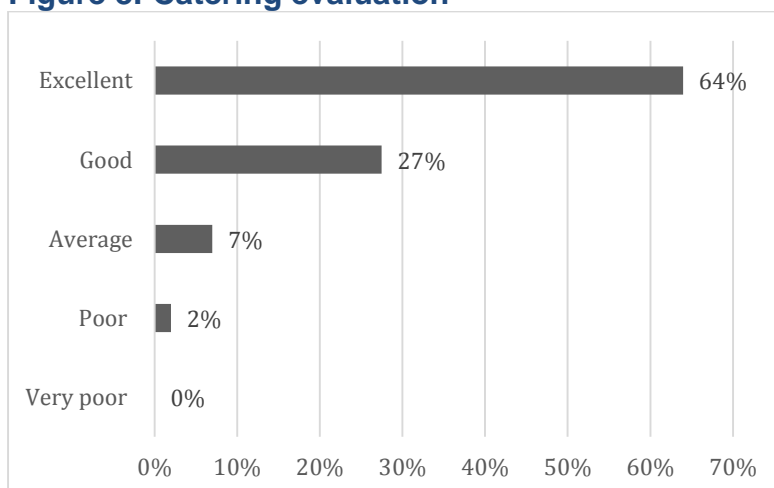
Almost all tenants regard Trafford Hall as a good residential training venue. 65% of tenants attending Tenant Futures courses say Trafford Hall is excellent, and 96% say it is either good or excellent. Only 4% say the venue is average (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Venue evaluation**



Similarly, Tenant Future’s participants were positive about the quality of Trafford Hall’s catering. 64% of tenants say the food was excellent, and 91% said the food was good or excellent (Figure 8). The catering approval ratings have gone up by 5% since the last evaluation and show that Trafford Hall staff consistently maintain and improve their residential facilities.

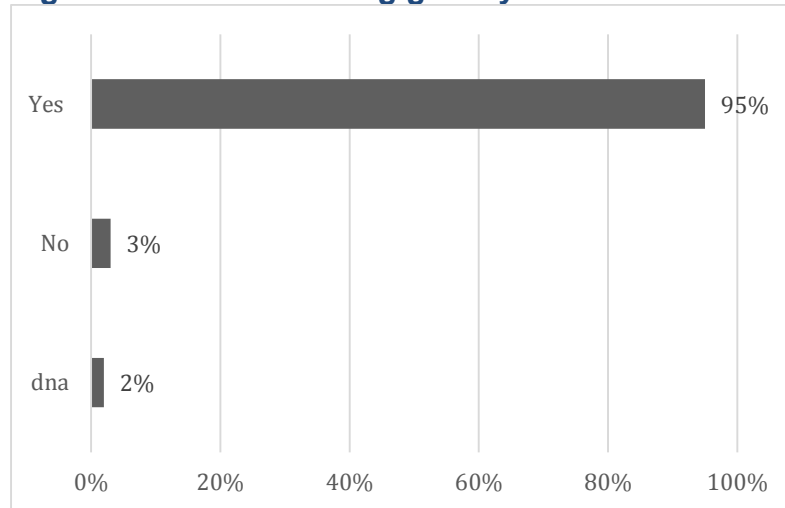
**Figure 8: Catering evaluation**



### Quality of training

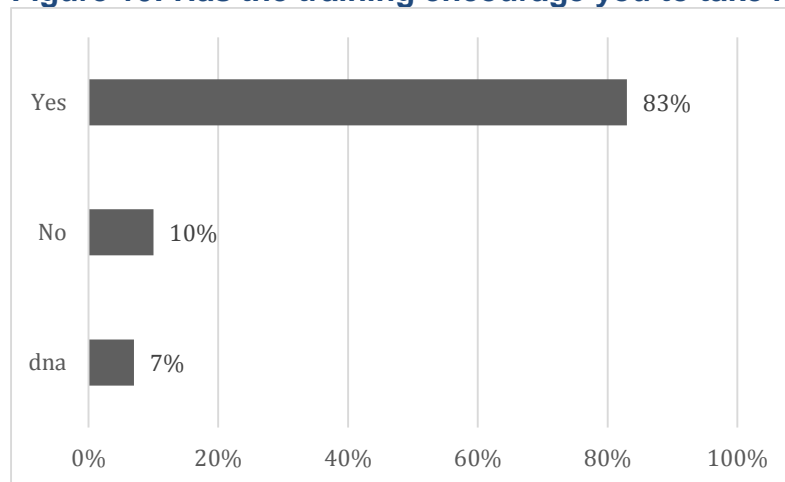
All 743 tenants also commented on the quality of the training they received. 95% of tenants say the course provided new ideas. This is a 5% increase from the last evaluation. (see Figure 9)

**Figure 9: Has the training given you new ideas?**



The evaluation also asked whether the training encouraged tenants to take new ideas forward. 83% say it had, while 10% said it had not (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Has the training encourage you to take ideas forward?**



**Proposal.** The wording of the evaluation questions: “Has the course given you new ideas?” and “Has the training encouraged you to take ideas forward” can be made more distinct and clearer. For example – “Do you feel you are going home with new knowledge?” and “Has the training inspired you to act locally? If yes, how?”

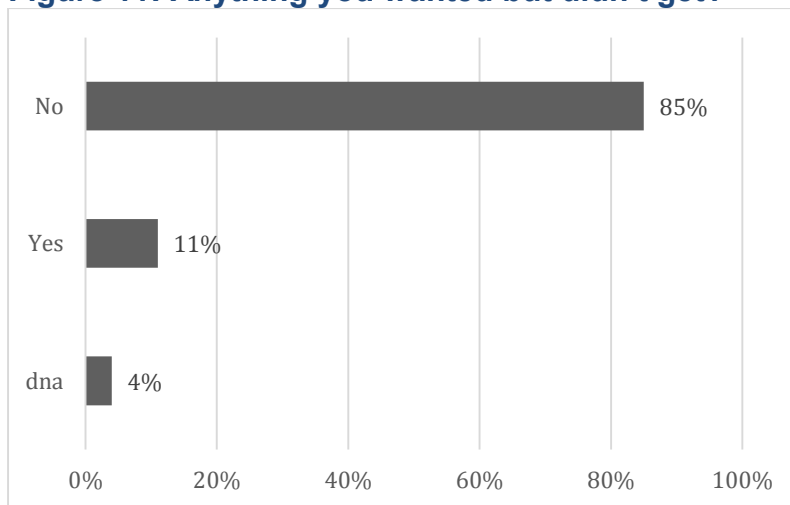
On all courses tenants are also asked to outline the three action points they had identified for themselves locally. The ten most common action points are outlined in Box 1 below. The three most popular action points are to share new information locally, to engage more people in the community and to attend more training courses.

### Box 1: Top ten tenant action points

1. Share information from courses with other tenants locally
2. Recruit and engage more people in the community
3. Go to more training locally and at Trafford Hall
4. Seek funding for projects and community activity
5. Use IT for social networking, community blogs, and scrutiny work
6. Improve communication between panel members and with landlord and wider community
7. Better planning of panel and community activity
8. Create new tenant panel
9. Work more with landlord
10. Organise a community/ information event

Tenants were asked whether they had unmet expectations from the course they attended. 85% of tenants said that there were no unmet expectations. Of the 11% who wanted more, the majority stated that they wished the content of the course had been clearer in the marketing material, or that the level of the course should be clearer to help them decide (Figure 11).

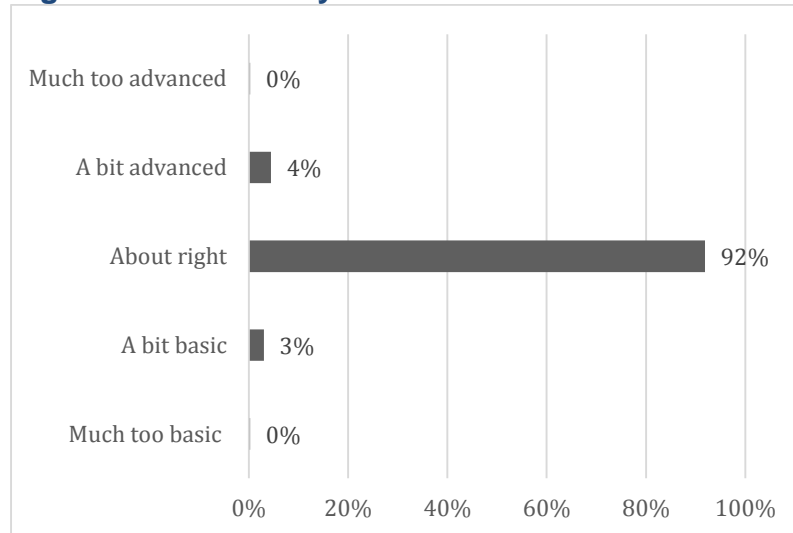
**Figure 11: Anything you wanted but didn't get?**



When asked about the level of the course, however, the vast majority of tenants said it was appropriate. 92% of tenants said the level of the course was about right, while only 8% said the training was either too basic or too difficult. (See Figure 12)



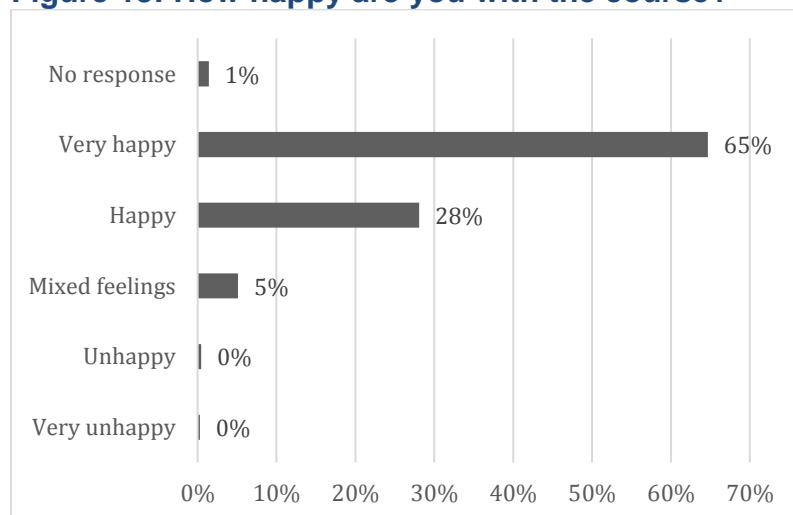
**Figure 12: What did you think about the level of the course?**



**Proposal.** Share more details about the content and the structure of the course with tenants before they attend the course at Trafford Hall to help them understand the level of the course and the types of materials that will be covered.

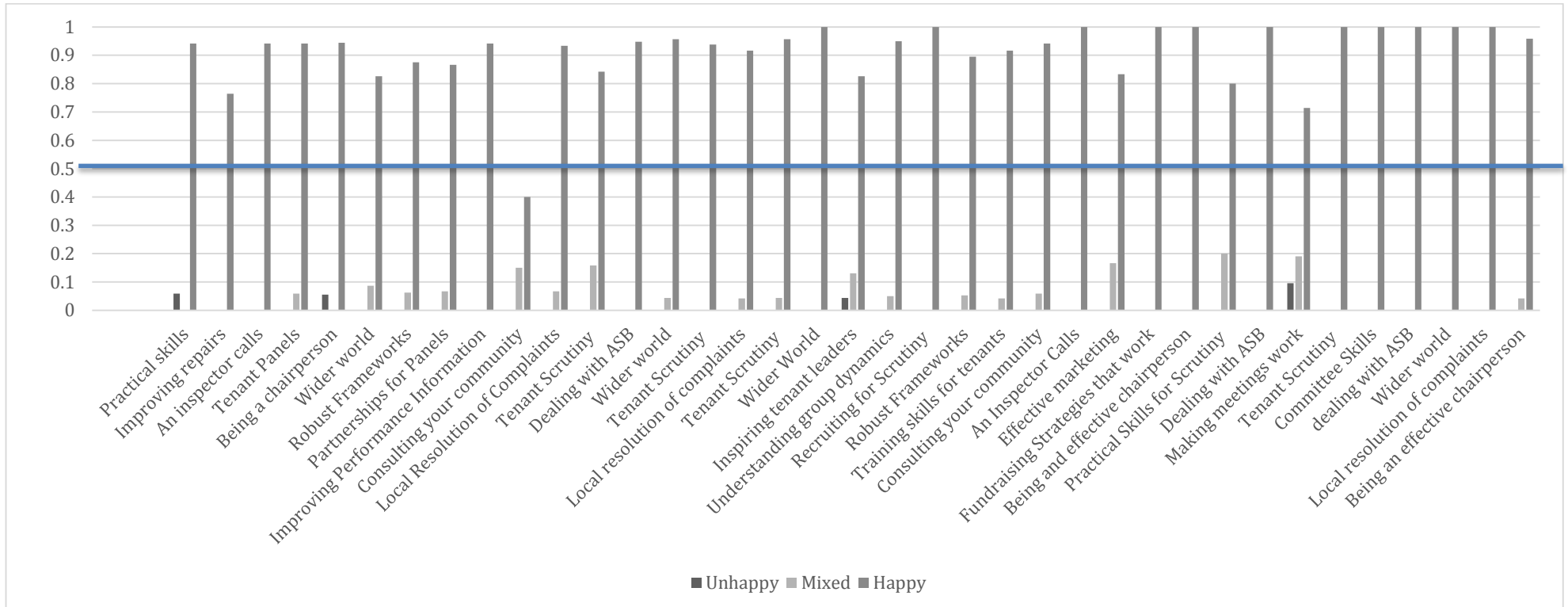
Tenants were asked how happy they were with the course overall. 93% of tenants were either happy or very happy with the course, 5% had mixed feelings, and none of the tenants said they were either unhappy or very unhappy with the training they had received. (See Figure 13)

**Figure 13: How happy are you with the course?**



Overall, course satisfaction for the Tenant Futures programme is very high (Figure 14). All but one of the 37 courses held between April 2013 and March 2014 received positive satisfaction ratings of 70% or more. One course – Consulting your community – received the lowest satisfaction rating of 40%. Satisfaction of this course improved to over 90% later in the year, showing that positive changes were made by the trainer in response to earlier feedback.

**Figure 14: Overall course satisfaction**



## Improvements and tenant suggestions

Tenants were asked to comment on how the Tenant Futures programme could be improved. Several suggestions were frequently repeated and are listed in Box 2.

### Box 2: Top tenant suggestions on how to improve Tenant Futures training

1. Offer longer courses. Some tenants feel overwhelmed by the amount of information presented in a short period of time. Tenants felt longer courses would help.
2. Give tenants more information before they arrive at Trafford Hall to allow them time to prepare. Tenants suggested emailing some of the material before the start of the course.
3. Make sure tenants are clear on the level of the course before they attend. A rating system – for example beginner, intermediate, advanced – would help tenants judge whether the level is appropriate to them.
4. Trainers should more actively encourage tenants to mix with tenants from other organisations.
5. Tenants would like more time to learn how to apply to the small grants scheme, as well as time to brainstorm how they could use a grant locally to follow through on some of the ideas presented in the training.
6. Give tenants more time to move around, conduct courses outdoors if the weather is fine or change rooms once in a while to give tenants a breather.

**Proposal.** This evaluation recommends that Trafford Hall staff and trainers consider the six tenant suggestions listed above, and develop an action plan to integrate this feedback in future funding periods.

Tenants were sent Trafford Hall Achievement Forms following a Tenant Future's training course and asked to complete and return them to track achievements and gather success stories. This did not produce the most useful findings. The majority of forms were poorly filled out by tenants and yielded little new or useful information as the forms do not focus on outcomes. Some tenants clearly find it difficult to write down their experiences in detail.

**Proposal.** Following up with randomly selected tenants by telephone and recording their answers to questions on what specific outcomes their training has initiated in communities would produce useful feedback. Tenants can more freely describe outcomes, and Trafford Hall staff can actively encourage feedback on specific outcomes. These tenant stories can then be used as promotional material for the Tenant Futures programme, and in future impact evaluations.

The Trafford Hall Achievement Forms yielded useful information on what courses Tenants would like to see in the future. These suggestions are listed in Box 3: below. The five most popular course suggestions are courses on report writing, food poverty

and affordable eating, public speaking and presenting information to tenants and landlords, how to organise community centres led by volunteers, and how to best manage group finances.

### **Box 3: Courses tenants would like to see in the future**

- Scrutiny course on report writing
- Food, food poverty and healthy eating
- Public speaking and communication skills
- How to run a community centre with volunteers
- Managing group finances, accounts, online banking
- Financial inclusion
- Community gardening
- Tenant rights
- Lobbying and negotiating
- How to deal with homelessness
- IT courses, website building and social networking
- Domestic violence and housing
- More opportunities for young people
- How to involve younger tenants
- Recycling
- Staying healthy in the community
- Update on any changes the government makes to housing policy
- Health and safety

### **Overview of the Tenant Futures training experience**

There was far more positive than negative feedback from tenants about their training experience. They feel better informed and as a result more confident to take up an active role in their local community. Tenants with less positive experiences referred to having unmet expectations of the course, because the course content was not clearly represented in the marketing materials (Box 4).

### **Box 4: Tenant feedback**

#### **Positive feedback**

*I feel that I've gone from total ignorance about scrutiny, to having knowledge enough to be able to perform as a competent scrutiny panel member.*

Beworth Borough Council

*It's given me the tools to ask my landlord to set up a scrutiny panel and to get tenants involved, especially as I now know that having a scrutiny panel is a regulatory requirement.*

Walsall Housing Group

*Attending this course has demystified all the jargon. I'm going home now feeling like I know what people are talking about and confident to participate.*

Colbolt Housing

*We will be able to really raise our profile as a tenants group as a result of this training.*

Housing Hartlepool

*The course was a real confidence booster!*

Northampton Borough Council

*I now feel like I have the confidence to speak in a group.*

Willow Park Housing Association

*Going on a training course for three days was tough because I missed my family, but what I gained in terms of networking, learning and socialising made it all worthwhile.*

Metropolitan Housing London

*I now have a much better understanding of the role of a tenant inspector and how to best improve services and work with the council.*

HBBC Leicester

**Negative feedback**

*I'm sorry to say this but the course doesn't really help me as I have already covered most of the subjects. This course is more suited to tenants new to panels. I wish this had been made clear in the course information.*

Wythenshawe Community Housing Group

*The course did not give me any new ideas – it was too basic. I wish the course content had been clear from the beginning.*

Housing Hartlepool

## 4. GRANT EVALUATION

A review of all grant monitoring forms and general Trafford Hall grant statistics was conducted. In addition 10 grant recipients were interviewed. These interviews focussed specifically on the process of applying for the grant, implementing the grant locally and monitoring the outcomes and wider impacts of the grants in the community.

### Introduction

The Tenant Futures programme offers small-seed funding (maximum £1,000/project) to tenant organisations that have received training at Trafford Hall and have developed an action plan on how to apply that training in their community. Tenants bring their Tenant Futures training back to their communities by organising a variety of training days, events, site visits, guest speakers and equipment funded by the small grants programme. Grants are intended to extend the benefit of the Tenant Futures learning throughout the recipients local community, develop local knowledge and networks, win greater local support and recognition and kick-start community action.

Tenants are introduced to the grant programme during a 15 minute session during the Tenant Futures training course. Tenants receive a grant pack which contains a guide on how to apply for the grant, the grant form and a checklist to ensure that applicants are providing all of the required evidence.

### Grant statistics

Trafford Hall keeps records of the grant application process. Figure 15 shows that the number of grants paid or currently in progress stands at 41 compared to the target of 59 for the period. Close to 70% of the grants have been paid out to tenants, while the rest are currently going through the administrative process.

Out of 28 paid grants, 19 monitoring forms, which provide feedback on how the grant was used, have been received and processed by Trafford Hall.

**Figure 15: Grant statistics April 2013-March 2014**

Target number of grants April 2013-March 2014	59
Actual number of grants paid or in progress by March 2014	41
Number of grants in progress by March 2014	13
Number of grants paid out to tenant groups by March 2014	28
Number of paid grants for which monitoring forms have been collected	19

The grant data also gives insight into what training courses promote the most grant applications (Figure 16). Burkitt Vernelle Training is clearly successful at encouraging tenants to take up grants. 19 grant applications were made as a result of 11 Burkitt Vernelle training courses at Trafford Hall.

**Figure 16: Trainers promoting the grant programme**

Trainer	Number of courses conducted	Number grants submitted by tenants attending their courses
Burkitt Vernelle	11 courses	19 grant applications
Engage	15 courses	14 grant applications
Choosing change	5 courses	3 grant applications
Make it work	2 courses	3 grant application

**Proposal.** Bringing together Trafford Hall trainers in a workshop to share best practice and develop new ideas on how to encourage the grant programme.

Figure 17 shows the regional distribution of the grants, which is roughly in line with the regional distribution of tenants attending the Tenant Futures programme, with the exception of the East Midlands and the North East which are both underrepresented.

**Figure 17: Regional distribution of grants**

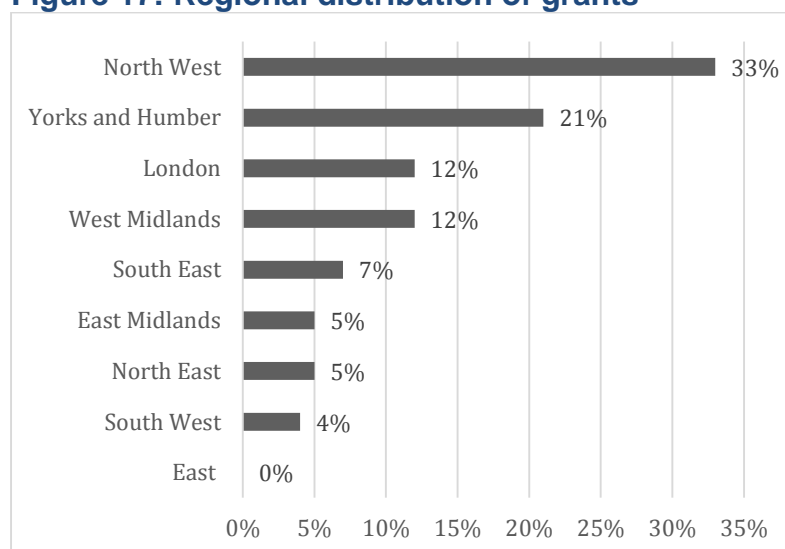


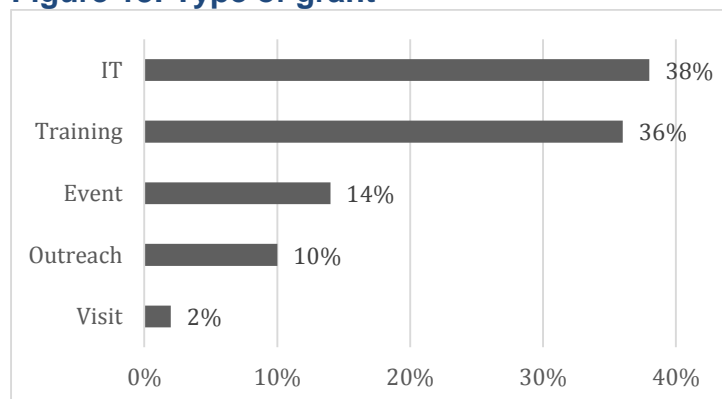
Figure 18 shows what type of grants were awarded over the period from April 2013-March 2014. The most popular use of the grant is to finance the purchase of laptops, tablets, printers or projects for use in community centres, to help the production of scrutiny reports, to improve communication, to provide tenants access to the internet and computer training and to give presentations.

Follow on training is also a popular use of the grant. Tenants invite Trafford Hall trainers to visit them locally to give more tenants access to information and training.

Events are also financed through the grant programme. These are designed to bring the community together, to share information and to recruit new volunteers. Grants will also sometimes cover outreach materials – this can include printing costs for posters, the production of large banners, the installation of notice boards and so forth.

Visits are also sometimes organised with the grant money, such as visits to tenants groups from other organisations to identify best practice or tenant visits during housing association mergers. These visits have a strong reinforcement effect.

**Figure 18: Type of grant**



### **Changes to grant administration**

In response to last year's evaluations, several changes have been made to the grant scheme to improve its take-up with tenants.

In an effort to promote the grant programme, the grant introduction session was moved from the end of the course to the beginning of the training course. The aim was to introduce the possibility of a grant earlier in the training to allow tenants to consider their application throughout their time at Trafford Hall.

Trainers have also been asked to incorporate brainstorming sessions into their training to prompt tenants to consider how they could best make use of the funding opportunity.

Trafford Hall is currently working on an online magazine which will showcase successful grant applications and their outcomes. This will be promoted to tenants while they are at Trafford Hall and will catalyse new ideas and present best practice.

The general grant strategy at Trafford Hall is now:

1. Scheduling an early grant talk to give tenants an opportunity to consider how they might make use of a grant in their community
2. Increasing the amount of time during training sessions dedicated to brainstorming how grants could be implemented locally
3. Taking time to work one on one with tenants while they're at Trafford Hall to increase their confidence in filling out the application.
4. Introducing tenants to grant success stories in order for them to generate ideas and learn from best practice.

### **Issues with the grant programme**

The main issue with the grant programme is lower than expected grant applications received in the period from April 2013 to March 2014. This is probably due to several factors

1. A short Tenant Futures administrative vacancy may have played a role in slowing down the administrative processing of the grant applications. The process of administering a grant can take eight to ten weeks of working with the tenant on



the application to the approval and eventual payment of the grant and finally the monitoring of the grant outcomes. This vacancy has now been filled.

2. The application form can be confusing for tenants unused to applying for grants. Tenants often need dedicated support from either Trafford Hall or their housing provider in order to submit all of the appropriate details. Grant writing is a skill that many tenants are developing or still need to develop.
3. Tenants participating in training at Trafford Hall are volunteers, and give their time freely to better their communities. At the same time, many tenants are currently under great pressure due to changes to their benefits, a drive towards greater work incentives, possible increases in the need to support struggling family members, disability and ill health, old age and so on. Increased pressure on social housing tenants may be having negative effects on their ability to volunteer their time and do things like applying for community grants.
4. Tenants feel anxious about staying up-to-date with monitoring forms and meeting all the grant conditions. The grant process is a big endeavour for many tenants that stretches over several months and requires considered understanding of the grant's purpose and its impact on the wider community. The social return on investment is a notoriously complicated to assess and asking tenants to do so without prior training is challenging.

**Proposal.** Providing continued funding to support a dedicated administrator is crucial in supporting tenants and keeping the process moving.

**Proposal.** A dedicated training course in grant writing may be a requisite for some tenant groups.

**Proposal.** A training course on how to keep tenants involved and volunteering during times of pressure or hardship may be useful for tenants groups struggling to retain members and stay active.

**Proposal.** Developing a course on how to monitor, showcase and market your community outcomes. This would not only benefit Trafford Hall, but also more widely promote the good work of tenants groups and create materials with which they may receive further funding

### **Grant case studies**

Ten grants were followed up for this evaluation. Tenants were asked to comment on the process of applying for the grant, implementing the grant locally and monitoring the outcomes the grants had in the community.

Three case studies have been outlined below to give an idea of what kind of impact grants have on communities. The last case study highlights some of the difficulties tenants face in applying for the grant scheme and shows that some tenant volunteers need consistent support from Trafford Hall, alongside their landlords to follow through on ideas.

### **Grant case study 1: Progress**

Mrs Brown is the chair of a community centre in the North West of England run entirely by local volunteers. The community centre runs courses in first aid, cookery, welfare reform and benefit advice and organises support groups and dinners for vulnerable people.

The community centre was burgled recently and several laptops among other things were stolen from the premises. After attending a tenant scrutiny course at Trafford Hall, Mrs Brown applied for a grant to buy a laptop to replace the stolen property. The funding was granted and the laptop is now being used every day to give residents access to the internet.

Residents search for jobs, resolve housing related issues, apply for benefits and get general IT training on the laptop. Mrs Brown says internet access in the community centre is very important because everything is online now a days and many community member are unable to afford internet in their home. She estimates that about 40 people use the laptop every week.

Following on the success of the laptop grant, Mrs Brown also applied for a grant to buy a projector for the community centre. The projector is being used to run a number of courses in the community. Local community stakeholders, e.g.the council, fire service and the police, have made use of the projector while giving presentations to the community. Mrs Brown estimates that about 20-30 people attend the courses offered by the community centre and that 12 courses have been held since the projector was purchased. Using the projector, the community centre has also started hosting a film night for young people in the community, which has become popular.

### **Commentary**

In this case both grants awarded by Trafford Hall have contributed to the facilities available to tenants using this community centre. Tenants now have access to the internet and can improve their digital literacy, while taking advantage of online resources. The projector has been used creatively – not just for presentations and training courses, but also for entertainment in the form of a film evening for young adults. This brings young people who are often a hard to reach group into the community centre.

## **Grant case study 2: Progress**

Mr Scalia is the chair of his scrutiny panel. After attending a tenant scrutiny course at Trafford Hall he applied for a grant to buy two tablets for the scrutiny group which previously had very limited access to IT and did all of their scrutiny activity on paper and by post. The housing association agreed to match the grant funding if the tenants received it from Trafford Hall. Mr Scalia found the grant application a little difficult but manageable with the help they received from Trafford Hall and his landlord.

Mr Scalia says the tablets have proved to be a big success and made the group more efficient. They are able to communicate easily with each other, share information and collaboratively write their scrutiny reports.

*The tablets have been excellent. We're all on the same page now in the scrutiny group. We all receive emails, there's no more postage everything just goes right to the laptops. It's a better communication system definitely. And the housing association has caught on – because of the success of the tablets in the scrutiny group they are now providing IT training to other residents to improve their skills. And this is a process that really started with the Trafford Hall grant.*

Mr Scalia estimated that all 6,000 tenants benefited from an improved scrutiny panel and up-to-date information which is now sent quarterly to all tenants via email.

### **Commentary**

This grant has initiated several different outcomes. The application process involved the landlord and began a conversation between the housing provider and its tenants about access to IT facilities. As a result the landlord agreed to match Trafford Hall's grant funding. Furthermore, after noting the success of the tablets within the scrutiny group, the landlord offered to provide IT training to tenants in order to improve their skills.

The grant also led to a more efficient system of working within the tenants group. The tenants are now able to communicate more effectively with each other and write reports in a collaborative way on the internet.

The new focus on IT also initiated the idea to send quarterly scrutiny email updates to all 6,000 tenants in the organisation. As a result all tenants in the organisation are better informed about the quality of their housing.

### Grant case study 3: Problems

Mrs Wilson has volunteered on her scrutiny panel for the last 4 years. She has attended three Trafford Hall courses and says the training has helped her and her panel members produce reports of improving quality.

The scrutiny panel has recently been struggling to retaining volunteers and as a consequence Mrs Wilson applied for a grant to hold a scrutiny recruitment event for which she received funding May 2013. One year later this event has still not take place and Mrs Wilson feeling very anxious about not having followed through.

*We got the money from Trafford Hall about this time last year, but since then lots of our panel members have left and our panel has shrunk from 12 to 5 people. We're so desperately trying finish our scrutiny report at the moment that organising the recruitment event has just not been possible. I'm just volunteering but sometimes it really feels like a job, but I'm not getting paid and I'm having to go without the support from my panel members. I'm worried that Trafford Hall is fed up with us, so I'm thinking of just giving Trafford Hall the money back. It's really just very stressful at the moment and sometimes I feel a bit panicky about it. But I'm just a volunteer - there is only so much I can do!*

Mrs Wilson also acknowledged that her landlord has not been very supportive. The housing officer who supports the panel has gone on maternity leave and the housing association has failed to provide appropriate cover for this role. Mrs Wilson feels that receiving support from a consistent member of staff would help her better organize the scrutiny panel, communicate with Trafford Hall and develop a strategy for holding the recruitment event. Mrs Wilson was clearly worried about not having followed through with the Trafford Hall's grant money and mentioned several times that she needs more support from the housing association.

### Commentary

This case study highlights the pressures tenant volunteers are facing in terms of time and available resources. Recruiting and retaining tenants can be challenging, and fewer volunteers often means increased pressure on those who remain.

Poor or inconsistent support from landlords can also mean that tenant groups struggle to hold together, or to produce results.

**Proposal.** Landlords are generally very supportive of Trafford Hall and the grant programme. It would consequently be helpful if tenants applying for grants nominated one housing officer to act as a direct link to the landlord. This staff member would commit to supporting the tenants group and be a point of contact for Trafford Hall in case of any problems.

**Proposal.** Tenants need clear and frequent reassurance that they can call Trafford Hall and let them know if they're having problems with grant implementation. Tenants should know that Trafford Hall is available to provide grant advice and support in all situations.

## Further grant examples

### Islington Community Project, London: Welfare reform training



The Islington Community Project was offered a grant of £500 to train local community leaders on welfare reform. These leaders have subsequently gone out to hard-to-reach and often non-English speaking communities to share this information and offer people help if they are struggling with benefit changes. Twenty-five community leaders attended the course.

### Complaints panel for Cobalt tenants, Liverpool: A new scrutiny panel



Cobalt housing tenants applied for £500 funding from Trafford Hall to assist in the start-up of their new scrutiny panel and to support a marketing campaign to increase panel participation. The grant money funded the production of leaflets to spread the word about the panel to other tenants and helped fund initial costs such as a telephone, stationary and a banner. The remainder of the grant was spent on tenant training to help the new group understand their role and responsibilities.

### **Kirklees Tenant Federation, Huddersfield: Open day for young people**



The Kirklees Tenant Federation applied for £600 funding to hold a one-day event to encourage more young people to get involved in tenant related activities. The grant funding was used to publicise the event, hire marquees and provide limited refreshments. The event was held in conjunction with partner organisations who organised activities such as Bushcraft, climbing, African Drumming workshops, arts and crafts stalls. Over one hundred young people attended the event and filled out questionnaires about what concerns them in the community and how they might want to be involved in the future.

### **East Devon Tenant Scrutiny Group, Devon: Training on report writing**



The East Devon Scrutiny group applied for a grant of £500 towards the cost of a one-day training session on report writing. The group had recently finished a scrutiny project on voids and wanted to make recommendations to their housing association through a written report. The group feel the training was very successful and have since produced the report on voids which will go to the Housing Review Board in September. The training enabled them to compose an independent report that represents their findings. They feel they can now produce reports which are simple to understand, but effective.

## 5. TENANT FEEDBACK

This section provides quotes from 20 tenant interviews about the experience of the Tenant Futures programme.

The quotes give a sense of tenants' reactions to their training experience and their feedback on Trafford Hall as a venue, and gives insight into the range of outcomes initiated through the Tenant Futures training programme.

### Why do tenants go to Trafford Hall?

Tenants enrol in the Tenant Futures training programme to learn about housing policy, to understand how they can contribute within their organisation and to gain confidence in public speaking and participating in a group. Many new tenants are encouraged by positive feedback from tenants who have attended Trafford Hall courses in the past (Box 5).

#### Box 5: Tenant quotes – Why do tenants go to Trafford Hall?

*Even though I had quite a bit of experience in tenant involvement, I went to Trafford Hall because I thought I could brush up on my knowledge and take a higher level course. It was an excellent experience. I couldn't believe how much I didn't know!*

*I went to Trafford Hall because I wanted to find out more about my rights as a tenants. I had just joined a new community and I wanted to play a part in bringing people together. It's a community of retirees and as the youngest, and the most energetic I felt it was up to me to make some kind of difference.*

*I went on a Trafford Hall course because I wanted to participate in my housing association but I wasn't sure how. I didn't have a clue before I went to Trafford Hall, so I went on a course about committee roles and I couldn't rate it highly enough. It's made me want to stand for a position on our panel and I'm more inclined to participate and to encourage others to participate.*

*The reason I went to Trafford hall was because I heard lots of positive feedback from other panel members and their contributions to the panel where quite impressive after they attend a course. I thought that I could do with some training as well.*

### Are tenants being supported by their landlords?

All 20 tenants interviewed said that they had their course and transportation costs fully covered by their landlords. 18 out of 20 tenants said that they had first heard about Trafford Hall through their landlords (Box 6).

#### Box 6: Tenant quotes – Are tenants being supported by their landlords?

*Our landlord is always very supportive of us going to Trafford Hall. Everything is paid for by them and it doesn't cost the tenants a thing.*

*My housing association covers everything. I wouldn't be able to go to Trafford Hall if it wasn't for them.*

**Proposal.** Landlords play an important role in the Tenant Futures programme in spreading the word to tenants and covering to the cost of the training. Housing providers should be seen as significant partners and Trafford Hall should consider ways to cement and further relationships with landlords.

### **What do tenants think about residential training?**

Residential training is regarded by tenants as an important aspect of the Tenant Futures programme, primarily because it gives tenants the opportunity to network with other tenants from around the country, share ideas and learn from others. Tenants feel they are part of a larger community that they can draw on in the future. Several tenants also mentioned that residential training removes tenants from their demanding environments at home and gives them time to learn in a neutral context (Box 7)

#### **Box 7: What do tenants think about residential training?**

*You wouldn't interact with the other housing associations if the training wasn't at Trafford Hall, and that's the most insightful bit. If you think all scrutiny panels are the same – you're wrong. And at Trafford Hall you can cherry pick the best ideas, which ultimately really improves the whole system.*

*I love Trafford Hall because you learn from the trainers, but you also learn from the other tenants from around the country. You often leave and your head is really buzzing with ideas.*

*I think networking is what's so good about Trafford Hall. You spend all day with tenants from all over the country and learn from them.*

*I think the residential aspect of Trafford Hall is very useful. You network and it's a great atmosphere. It's very useful to stay in touch with the tenants and the trainers afterwards. We do it over Facebook and Twitter mostly. But then you can share your successes and ask people for advice. We're networking a lot more now.*

*We have in house training but I really prefer Trafford Hall because the trainers are very good and know their stuff. But also the other tenants have a wealth of knowledge and experience that is really very useful.*

### **How could the Tenant Futures programme be improved?**

While tenants are generally happy with the training they received, two aspects were mentioned repeatedly on how the programme could be improved (Box 8). The first regards making the content and level of the course clear in the marketing materials, and giving tenants a clearer idea of what to expect from the course before they arrive at Trafford Hall.

The second suggestion relates to difficulties younger tenants have in attending courses due to work or family commitments. Five out of 20 tenants interviewed suggested holding more courses over the weekend, or offering childcare options with a handful of courses to allow working tenants and tenants with dependents to attend.



### **Box 8: Tenant quotes – How could the Tenant Futures programme be improved?**

*I was a little disappointed in the level of the course. I thought it would be more challenging, but it really ended up being just a refresher. Of course it was good to talk to the other tenants and share ideas, but I did hope the course would be more advanced. It would be good for Trafford Hall to be clear about the level of the course.*

*I think many of our tenant's would like to go to Trafford Hall but it's very difficult for people to manage with work. A lot of the training is held over the week, which pretty much disqualifies all working people. It would be good if Trafford Hall offered more courses of the weekend.*

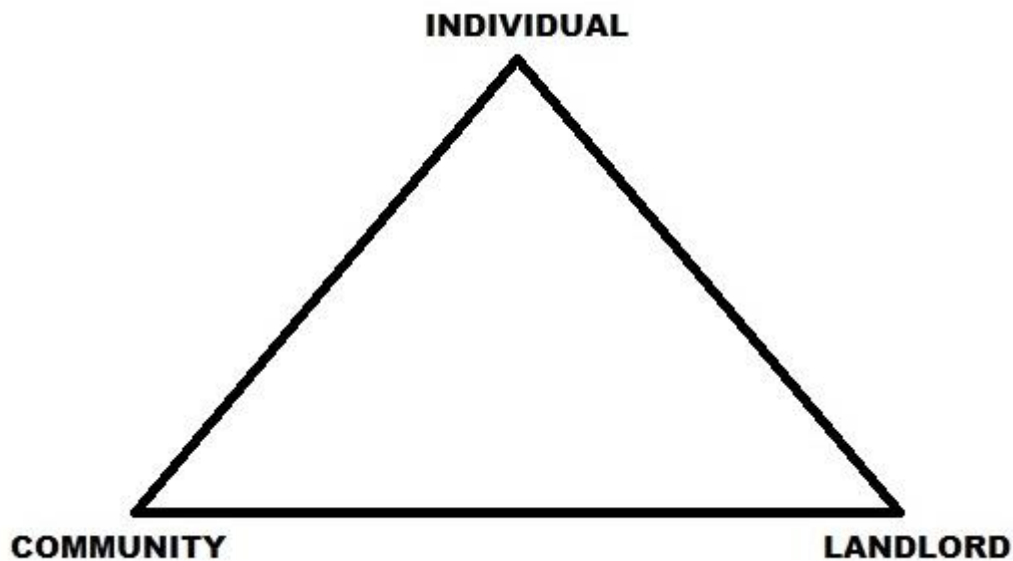
### **What outcomes has the Tenant Futures training produced?**

In talking to tenants who have attended Tenant Futures training three general types of outcomes emerge that interact with and reinforce one another. These are:

- 1) **Individual outcomes:** individual tenants learn skills and gain knowledge and confidence to participate effectively within a group or a community. Individuals learn how to speak in public, to interact with panel members, to write reports and understand technical language, and glean new information on a variety of topics from housing policy through to welfare reform that encourage them to take up leadership positions in their community.
- 2) **Community outcomes:** tenants come together to develop positive initiatives in their local communities. These can include events, community centres, community gardens, community information days and other forms of community engagement.
- 3) **Landlord outcomes:** groups of tenants work with their landlords to improve and develop services. Scrutiny panels and tenant groups study performance indicators, carry out tenant surveys and provide tenant feedback on a variety of housing related topics.

These three stands of training outcomes reinforce each other and are presented in Figure 19 as components of an outcomes triangle.

Figure 19: Outcomes triangle



**Error! Reference source not found.** holds quotes from tenants describing individual, community and landlord outcomes. The quotes demonstrate that these outcomes are mutually reinforcing and that training can provide multiple outcomes.

**Box 9: Tenant quotes - What outcomes has the Tenant Futures training produced?**

**Individual outcomes**

*Trafford Hall training has really given me confidence. I don't hold back now, if you know what I mean.*

*Training at Trafford Hall and volunteering in my community got me out of the house. After my divorce I had some anxiety problems, but Trafford Hall got me out and motivated again. I think it's a unique place because it provides training, but at the same time it's such a friendly atmosphere that you feel very relaxed. I think it takes people out of their situation which can often be difficult, and gives tenants a chance to reflect. I can't rate Trafford Hall highly enough.*

**Community outcomes**

*Out of Trafford Hall training we have set up a swap shop in our community centre, with sewing machines to alter clothes and that kind of thing, we've set up a community garden and we're currently organising a new tenants group that will align with our housing associations restructure. There's lots of activity!*

*The Tenant Futures programme has given us the confidence as a community to move forward with some ideas. At the moment we're writing grants to build a community kitchen in our community centre. We'll put on*

*courses to teach people how to cook healthily. That was inspired in part at Trafford Hall.*

### **Landlord outcomes**

*A clear outcome of Trafford Hall training is that tenant scrutiny has improved and is an important part of the Housing association now. At Trafford Hall we found out what we can expect from our landlord and we know actively tell them what we want on the estate.*

*I went on the Trafford Hall course to learn and get more experience about housing. I wanted to know how to work with my landlord. Now I am the chair of my scrutiny panel, I know how to interview tenants, analyse statistics and write reports. So it's been very useful training for me.*

## 6. PROPOSALS AND CONCLUSIONS

### Follow up on recommendations from previous evaluation

The previous evaluation outlined six major recommendations to ensure that the Tenant Futures programme continues to provide a high quality service to tenants. These recommendations are listed in Figure 20 along with the follow up actions initiated by Trafford Hall in period from April 2013- March 2014.

**Figure 20: Recommendation follow up 2013**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Follow up action</b>
Continue providing high quality training and accommodation	This has been accomplished by the staff and trainers at Trafford Hall in the past year. As the course evaluation statistics show, overall satisfaction is either as high, or higher, than in the last evaluation period. Tenants continue to rate the quality of the training and the accommodation very highly.
Strive to meet benchmarks	This has, for the most part, been achieved. The Tenant Futures programme has exceeded the target numbers for courses provided and participating tenants in the period from April 2013- March 2014. The grant scheme is the only area where the programme has failed to meet its target. 41 grants have been awarded or are in progress, against a target of 59 grants awarded by March 2014.
Increase administrative capacity to support tenants in the grant application process	Trafford Hall have restructured their staff to provide for an additional administrative post. The post initially covered one day a week but has recently been made full-time. The new role focuses on the administrative development of the programme and the overseeing of the small grants scheme.
Collect more consistent and robust data to aid programme evaluation	The data received for this evaluation was of a much higher quality than in previous evaluations. Additional administrative support has clearly improved the quality and consistency of Tenant Futures programme data. What is currently missing is data on training outcomes. The new "Trafford Hall Achievement Forms" could be re-designed to more specifically engage with training outcomes. Trafford Hall could also consider following up with a random sample of tenants by phone to gather detailed outcome stories.
Develop systems to include landlord and tenant consultations through the programme	Trafford Hall is currently in the process of organising a tenant and landlord consultation event which will be held later in 2014. In addition to this, several tenant and landlord events have been held at Trafford Hall over the past year, and have engaged with a number of topics including energy and fuel poverty, welfare reform, affordable housing, youth engagement and employment opportunities. Organised by the London School of Economics through their Housing Plus programme, this series of events have brought together tenants, landlords and trainers to brainstorm the issues that are of greatest concern to all stakeholders.
Secure the appropriate amount of funding to sustain the high standard of training	This was made possible by follow on funding provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government until March 2015. In order for Trafford Hall to continue to provide and further improve the Tenant Futures programme past March 2015, a new round of funding needs to be secured as soon as possible.

## Follow on proposals

Box 10 brings together the 20 proposals made throughout this evaluation. These recommendations were generated through analysis of tenant feedback, other programme data and wider thinking around evaluating the social return on the Tenant Futures investment.

### Box 10: 20 proposals

**Proposal 1.** Trafford Hall could encourage younger working-age tenants by placing more courses on weekends, or providing a handful of courses that simultaneously offer childcare at Trafford Hall.

**Proposal 2.** Trafford Hall should consider ways of extending the Tenant Futures service to tenants in the East of England. This could be done by working more directly with a landlord in the area.

**Proposal 3.** It is important to acknowledge the high level of support the Tenant Futures programme receives from landlords nationally. All tenants interviewed for this evaluation said their landlords covered the course costs and travel expenses to Trafford Hall. Housing providers should be seen as significant partners and Trafford Hall should consider ways to cement and further relationships with landlords.

**Proposal 4.** Questions in the tenant course evaluation should be simplified. Instead of asking very similar questions such as “Has the course given you new ideas?” and “Has the training encouraged you to take ideas forward”, it is recommended these questions are more obviously distinguished from one another. For example – “Do you feel you are going home with new knowledge and ideas?” and “Has the training inspired you to act locally? If yes, how?”

**Proposal 5.** Share more details about the content and the structure of the course with tenants before they attend the course at Trafford Hall. Make sure tenants are clear on the level of the course before they attend. Introducing a rating system – for example beginner, intermediate, advanced – would help tenants judge whether the level is appropriate to them.

**Proposal 6.** Consider offering longer courses. Some tenants feel overwhelmed by the amount of information presented in a short period of time. Tenants felt longer courses might solve this problem.

**Proposal 7.** Give tenants more course content information before they arrive at Trafford Hall to allow them time to prepare and be on the same page. Tenants suggested emailing some of the material before the start of the course.

**Proposal 8.** Tenants are overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of networking with other tenants, yet some feel shy about mixing with people from other organisations. Tenants suggest that trainers could more actively encourage participants to mix.

**Proposal 9.** Tenants feel there could be more time devoted to how to apply to the small grants scheme, as well as time to brainstorm how they could use a grant

locally to follow through on some of the ideas presented in the training.

**Proposal 10.** Give tenants more time to move around, conduct courses outdoors if the weather is appropriate or change rooms once in a while to give tenants some relief.

**Proposal 11.** The majority of the “Trafford Hall Achievement Forms” were poorly filled out by tenants and yielded little new or useful information. The three questions asked on the form are not focused on outcomes, which should be the main focus of this follow up activity. It is also evident that some tenants find it difficult to write down their experiences in detail. It is recommended that these forms either be redesigned to focus on outcomes, or that the achievement forms be replaced by follow up telephone interviews with a random sample of tenants to generate outcome stories.

**Proposal 12.** Maintain a dedicated administrator to support tenants and keep the process moving.

**Proposal 13.** Run a short training course in grant writing. This may be a requisite for some tenant groups wanting to apply to the grant scheme.

**Proposal 14.** A training course on how to keep tenants involved and volunteering during times of pressure or hardship may be useful for tenants groups struggling to retain members and stay active.

**Proposal 15.** Develop a course on how to monitor, showcase and market tenant community outcomes. This would not only benefit Trafford Hall, but also more widely promote the good work of tenants groups and create materials with which they may receive further funding.

**Proposal 16.** Bring together Trafford Hall trainers in a workshop to share best practice and develop new ideas on how to encourage the grant programme.

**Proposal 17.** Landlords are generally very supportive of Trafford Hall and the grant programme. It would be helpful if tenants applying for grants nominated one housing officer to act as a direct link to the landlord. This staff member would commit to supporting the tenants group and be a point of contact for Trafford Hall in case of any problems.

**Proposal 18.** Tenants need clear and frequent reassurance that they can call Trafford Hall and let them know if they’re having problems with grant implementation. Tenants should know that Trafford Hall is available to provide grant advice and support in all situations.

**Proposal 19.** Recognise the big voluntary contributions tenants make in their communities. Tenants volunteer their time, energy and sometimes even their own money to support community projects and improved local services. During a time in which tenants in social housing are under enormous pressures, it is particularly impressive to see the level of commitment and activity in communities. The Tenant Futures programme could build a short session into its courses to acknowledge this.

**Proposal 20.** Secure follow on funding past March 2015 to sustain and deepen the quality of this important programme. This should be done as soon as possible to allow time for programme organisation and development.

### **Resource limitations, support and evaluation**

Many of the proposals made in this evaluation require time and resources, which are not available within the current Tenant Futures structure. This is a major constraint within which Trafford Hall staff and trainers operate.

The need for training, advice and support from Trafford Hall is strong, as social housing tenants are faced with greater responsibilities and often increasing hardship. This demand needs to be reconciled with a limited budget and while the Tenant Futures programme is providing a service, which is highly regarded by tenants and landlords nationally, many of the support and follow-on services the programme could provide are currently not funded.

Limited resources restrict the extent to which the Tenant Futures programme can be evaluated. Generating measurable impacts of the training over the long term would require dedicated research effort to collect consistent information on individuals, community and landlord outcomes. This would require a detailed analysis of the social impact of the programme, including a cost-benefit analysis and in-depth interviews with tenants, grant recipients, landlords and community members and site visits to monitor training outcomes and grant implementation.

Within the funding constraints, it may be possible for Trafford Hall to refocus its evaluation questions more clearly around outcomes generated by the training. Asking specific questions will encourage tenants to think in terms of outcomes and training follow through, e.g.

- How has the training helped you personally?
- How will the training help your work in the community?
- How will the training help your work with your landlord?
- Has the training motivated you to act locally? If yes, how?
- What projects will the training help you develop?
- What ideas do you have for a Trafford Hall grant application?

Trafford Hall could consider replacing its “Achievement Forms” following the course with a more direct follow-up method, possibly contacting tenants by telephone. While this would be labour intensive, it would allow tenants who have difficulty with written communication the chance to feedback verbally. It would also allow Trafford Hall staff to gather detailed outcome information on the training and grant programmes.

### **Conclusion**

The Tenant Futures programme has been successful in delivering its training targets and has received very positive feedback from tenants with regard to the quality of the training and accommodation provided by Trafford Hall and its trainers.

Landlords continue to value the Tenant Futures programme. Landlords volunteer to cover tenants’ course costs and transportation to and from Trafford Hall. Most

tenants say that Trafford Hall training was recommended to them by their landlords. It would be very positive to further develop the relationship between landlords and Trafford Hall.

Tenants continue to value the Trafford Hall residential training model. They feel that residential training allows them to network with tenants from around the country, share best practice and feel that they are part of a larger community. Residential training also takes some tenants out of difficult environments and allows them to learn and participate in a neutral setting.

While the number of grant applications received between April 2013 and March 2014 was below the target set for the programme over this period, the generally positive outcomes generated by the grants awarded are clear. The grant programme has allowed tenant groups purchase IT equipment that support digital inclusion, organise community events and local training courses and visit other tenant groups to share and learn from best practice.

Proposals for improvement have been made throughout the evaluation, but this evaluation acknowledges that limited resources and administrative capacity may make their implementation challenging. Trafford Hall and their funding partner – the Department for Communities and Local Government – should consider this evaluation holistically and deliberate how the success of this programme can be sustained and deepened.



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