



Creating a financially
fluent population



Financial Inclusion Roundtable Report

Introduction

How can we boost national financial inclusion in the UK?

Date: February 26th, 2025

Location: Toynbee Hall, London

Time: 3pm – 5pm

The roundtable brought together a diverse range of experts from across the financial services, policymaking, social impact, and youth advocacy sectors to address the barriers preventing broader financial inclusion in the UK. With the recent establishment of the Financial Inclusion Committee by the government, this event provided a timely platform to discuss key areas including digital inclusion, savings, affordable credit and debt, and financial education. The goal was to contribute to a national financial inclusion strategy to ensure all individuals, regardless of background or financial status, can fully participate in the economy.





Attendees:

- Leon Ward, CEO – MyBnk
- Claire Quigley, Deputy CEO – MyBnk
- Richard Donovan, Global Head of Social Innovation – Experian
- Kristina Church, Global Head of Corporate Sustainability – aberdeen
- John Penberthy-Smith, Chief Commercial Officer - Saffron Building Society
- Chris Pond, Chair - Financial Inclusion Commission
- Sian Williams, CEO – Switchback
- Clare Maddison, Head of Foundation – Berkeley Foundation
- Cameron Holt, Member of Youth Parliament
- Zahir Kasmani, Investor – BGF and Trustee - BGF Foundation
- Jonathan Boyle, VP Platform Strategy Lead – BlackRock
- Rebecca Deegan, Director – Fair By Design

Key Discussion Themes

1. The Role of Financial Education

Empowering Through Financial Education

Financial education was recognised as a critical tool for informed decision-making. However, participants agreed that education alone cannot address the systemic issues that lead to exclusion. There is a clear difference between financial education and financial inclusion – while education equips individuals with knowledge, broader systemic changes are required to remove barriers to financial participation. A dual approach – individual empowerment alongside structural reform – is necessary to tackle broader economic inequalities.

Statutory Financial Education

There was broad support for making financial education a statutory part of the school curriculum. However, it was acknowledged that this alone is just the starting point. Ensuring all young people, regardless of background, receive quality financial literacy before leaving the education system is crucial.

Simplifying Financial Language

The complexity of financial terminology often creates a barrier to engagement. Many financial products assume a level of financial knowledge that is often not available to individuals, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Financial education must be practical, clear, and accessible to help people navigate the financial world confidently.



Financial Education as a Tool for Better Decision-Making

A comparison was drawn between financial literacy and driving: "We don't allow people to drive a car without passing a test, but they can go get a credit card without any knowledge of how it works." This sparked discussion on incentivising financial education, such as offering lower interest rates for individuals who complete financial literacy courses.

“Education isn’t about where you are, but where you want to get to.”



2. Affordable Credit, Problem Debt, & Savings

Responsible Lending Practices

Access to affordable credit was identified as essential, but lending must be responsible and sustainable. Many individuals turn to high-cost credit when they lack alternatives, highlighting the need for clear, accessible financial support.

Pricing of Risk

Risk-based pricing often results in individuals overpaying for credit. A collaborative approach between commercial and community lenders, who better understand their customers, was suggested as a way forward to ensure fairer, more responsible lending.

Encouraging Savings Despite Limited Resources

Saving can be challenging for low-income individuals, particularly when small savings may disqualify them from essential benefits. Practical and flexible savings tools – **such as auto round-up programmes where small transaction amounts are automatically saved** – were suggested to encourage incremental saving without penalty.



"People want to save but feel penalised for doing so."

Changing Mindsets Around Debt and Savings

Many low-income individuals already possess strong money management skills, but financial resilience requires a shift from reliance on credit to proactive saving. Support structures should help individuals transition from short-term survival to long-term security.

3. Digital Inclusion and Accessibility

Bridging the Digital Divide

Digital inclusion was identified as a significant barrier to financial inclusion. Beyond access to the internet, digital literacy – having the skills and confidence to use digital tools effectively – is crucial for participating in the digital economy. It was noted that many individuals, particularly in vulnerable communities, are excluded from online financial services due to a lack of digital skills or access to the necessary technology.

The Role of Community Support

Community-led financial education programmes delivered by trusted advisors were highlighted as an effective way to improve digital and financial literacy. Localised support can empower individuals to use digital financial services confidently.

4. Building a More Inclusive Financial Ecosystem

Collaboration Between Sectors

Achieving financial inclusion requires cooperation between financial institutions, policymakers, and social organisations. Everyone must work together to create an inclusive financial ecosystem that meets the needs of underserved communities. Public and private sector partnerships can help design more accessible, tailored financial products for underserved communities.

Regulation and Accountability

Stronger regulations of financial products and services are needed to protect vulnerable consumers, particularly those from disadvantaged groups, to ensure financial products are fair. Companies must be accountable for developing inclusive financial solutions.



“The real solution was having a trusted person to help.”

5. Challenges and Future Direction

The Role of Income in Financial Inclusion


Financial exclusion is deeply tied to income levels. Without higher wages and stable employment, many individuals will continue to face barriers to financial inclusion, regardless of financial education or product availability. Addressing income inequality is essential to achieving long-term financial inclusion.

Beyond the Curriculum: Reaching All Individuals

Traditional school-based financial education may not be enough to reach everyone. Alternative delivery methods, such as after-school programmes, in-school financial advisors, digital platforms, or peer-led initiatives, are potential ways to broaden access to financial education and ensure that it reaches individuals at all stages of life.

The Challenge of Collaboration

A lack of coordination between different sectors and organisations working on financial inclusion remains a challenge. Better collaboration between financial institutions, community lenders, policymakers and other stakeholders is crucial to scaling solutions effectively.



“Having a problem with money shouldn’t be seen as a failure.”

Recommendations

Strengthen Financial Education

- Advocate for financial education to be better embedded in the curriculum, ensuring all young people have access to basic financial literacy before leaving school.
- Utilise digital platforms and other innovative channels to enhance engagement and accessibility.

Improve Access to Credit and Savings

- Promote responsible lending with transparent terms and fairer risk pricing.
- Develop flexible savings tools, such as rounding-up savings tools.

Strengthen Digital Inclusion

- Expand community-based financial hubs with trusted advisors.

Foster Collaboration Across Sectors

- Strengthen partnerships between financial institutions, policymakers, and community organisations to create an inclusive financial ecosystem.

Address Systemic Issues

- Advocate for policies addressing low income as a root cause of financial exclusion.
- Ensure financial products cater to low-income individuals without punitive restrictions.





Closing Thoughts

The discussions at this roundtable underscored the complexity of achieving financial inclusion. It is clear financial education alone is insufficient; a more comprehensive approach is needed that includes accessible products, digital literacy, and systemic reforms to address the root causes of exclusion. By working together and focusing on collaboration, we can create a more inclusive financial system for all.

Next Steps for MyBnk:

Following the discussion, MyBnk will:

- Engage with policymakers to push for statutory financial education reforms.
- Explore partnerships to develop innovative initiatives that support low-income individuals in building saving habits.
- Continue to advocate for responsible lending practices and increased consumer protection, particularly for those who are financially vulnerable.

For further information or to collaborate on MyBnk's next steps, please contact claire.quigley@mybnk.org.



