

Looking Back

A Review of the Community Time Credit Systems that have given birth to Spice...

Since 2003 an institute within The University of Wales, Newport has developed and tested 'community time credits' in a European Funded Programme in Wales

The credit systems have become a very successful tool for community transformation and positive engagement with community services

The institute has now been formed into a charity 'Spice' to disseminate the credit systems with public services in England and Wales



Foreword by Chris O'Malley

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The concepts of "community currencies" and "time banking" are still unfamiliar to many people. What they represent is an innovative approach to building active citizenship and social capital that the Spice team has shown time and again does work, particularly – but not only – in communities that have been marginalised from the formal economy

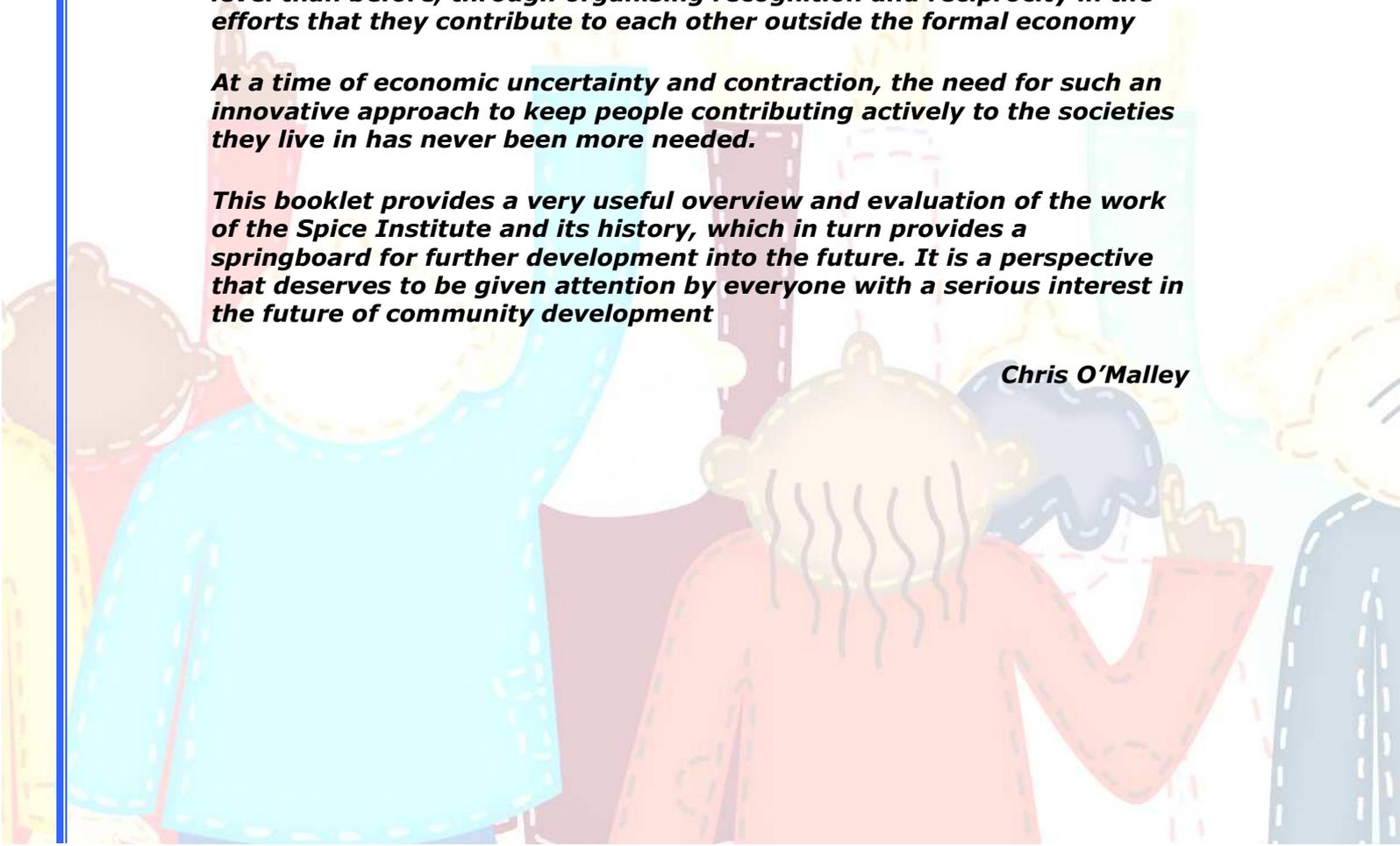
The work of the Spice team – until recently under the banner of the Wales Institute of Community Currencies – is now recognised by pioneers such as Edgar Cahn as leading the world in this field. The University of Wales, Newport is proud to have hosted this initiative, and is committed to working as a partner with the Spice Institute to continue promoting and understanding the evolution of this innovative approach to developing communities

Through development and practical application of a increasing suite of tools and processes, the team have shown how it is possible to facilitate communities and organisations in mobilising their talents to a higher level than before, through organising recognition and reciprocity in the efforts that they contribute to each other outside the formal economy

At a time of economic uncertainty and contraction, the need for such an innovative approach to keep people contributing actively to the societies they live in has never been more needed.

This booklet provides a very useful overview and evaluation of the work of the Spice Institute and its history, which in turn provides a springboard for further development into the future. It is a perspective that deserves to be given attention by everyone with a serious interest in the future of community development

Chris O'Malley



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Introduction

1.1. Background

In 2003, the University of Wales, Newport in partnership with Valleys Kids and Timebanks UK founded a new institute with European funding: The Wales Institute for Community Currencies (WICC)

The Institute has designed, tested and evaluated new applications of time credits within socially and economically disadvantaged communities in South Wales. As these applications have been refined they have become increasingly successful; consequently this Institute has now been formed into an independent legal entity 'Spice' in order to disseminate these applications across the UK

From the start Spice's objective was to develop a sustainable and successful catalyst for engaging people in transforming communities. Spice researched timebanking and other community credit systems to identify success factors and limitations which needed to be addressed to develop a sustainable catalyst for community transformation

1.2. Reinventing Common Purpose

Spice recognised that in Wales, as with other parts of the UK, that there had existed a rich culture of community and mutual support that was no longer prevalent

In the adversity and hardship experienced during the era of coal, there had existed a strong feeling of collective identity and mutualism. These traditions of people working together gave birth to the mutual societies, educational settlement trusts, miner's welfare institutes and chapels during the 19th and 20th century. These institutes generated huge social energy, creating an active culture, empowering peoples' mutual capacity to work together for social purposes

Coal mining had brought common purpose. In the modern diverse economy of Wales, there have been winners and losers but the sense of common purpose has been eroded. However, as public policy is increasingly recognising there are still plenty of local social and economic problems that are best addressed by an engaged community. Spice sought to introduce a community credit system that would stimulate collective engagement, where people would engage with local public services (the modern equivalents of the miner's institutes) to find a new common purpose and rebuild community

1.3. The Potential for Time Credits

Spice critically examined the potential for timebanking to reinvent this culture of common purpose and community

Conventional timebanking is a system devised by Edgar Cahn whereby people within a community can exchange 'personal services' with each other. This exchange of 'personal services' revitalises good neighbourliness and systems of support, where people, for example will baby-sit and help each other with shopping or DIY. Time is exchanged with time credits, a currency which values each person's time equally. For example, every hour a person gives, is an hour which they are owed. The currency provides a simple system of exchange that acts as a stimulus for good neighbourliness

This person-to-person timebanking system was introduced to the UK in the late 1990s by Martin Simon and David Boyle from nef in Gloucester and London respectively. Over the last nine years person-to-person time banks have developed across England with support from an umbrella organisation, 'Timebanking UK'

1.4. Spice Community Time Credits

Spice adapted the principles of timebanking as a credit system for common purpose. Spice's time credits are hosted by public and community services and their main function is to credit time that people give to their community

The credits acknowledge time given by local people to support their public service and to volunteering in their local community. For every hour given (Time In), is an hour which can be 'redeemed' against a menu of local recreational services (Time Out). People may give their time to community decision making processes, to local community projects or to organising community groups and events. The credits are low cost; because redemption uses 'spare capacity' (i.e. part empty cinemas, music venues and public sports facilities)

The credits are a catalyst to move beyond engaging only the 'usual suspects' to involve a much more diverse range of people. As this report demonstrates, the results are dramatic, levels of active engagement rapidly increase and the negative cycles of dependency and inactivity begin to unravel. Furthermore, as the credits are embedded within public and community services, they are sustainable and encourage a collective approach between public service professionals and community members

Measuring Impact

2.1. 3 Spice Principles

Tris Dyson the Director of Spice (formerly WICC) has identified three key principles that describe the development of the time credit systems within public and community services. These principles provide the basis for measuring the success of the time credit systems

1. Know your Assets

Many public services and community initiatives are built around people's needs. 'Clients and users' of these services are defined by their needs and after often seen primarily as a 'customer' rather than as an asset. Successful engagement of people, beyond the 'usual suspects' to engagement with the many, is reliant upon regarding people as assets who have something of value to contribute

2. Create a two-way street

Spice supports the creation of an environment where people are invited to contribute to their local community services. The credits provide the opportunity then for the public and community services to 'thank' people for contributing. This is the creation of 'fair exchange' whereby people who contribute an hour are acknowledged with an hour. This system fosters strong social capital, increases the number of people involved and redefines the way services are delivered

"The fact that social needs continue to rise is not due to a failure to consult or conduct opinion research. It is due to a failure to ask people for their help and to use the skills they have. This is the forgotten engine for change that makes the difference between systems working and failing" (nef, 2008:11)

3. Look Upstream

Community services are often straining to deal with social problems that have accumulated downstream. People can often come into contact with public and third sector services when they have developed a problem and need support. This can however, generate a negative relationship and promote a culture of dependency

By engaging with people 'upstream', positively as active and acknowledged contributors to the community, and by empowering citizens, public and third sector services can often ease pressure on 'downstream' resources focused on problem solving and dependency

Methodology

Collated from 4 Evaluations

The evidence for 'Looking Back' is taken from four evaluations that were carried out for The Wales Institute for Community Currencies

'Hidden Work, Co-production by people outside paid employment'

The New Economics Foundation, 2006
David Boyle, Sherry Clark and Sarah Burns

The research was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to look at organisations in Wales, Glasgow and London that are developing innovations in co-production. In Wales the sites were all WICC timebanking projects. The researchers used an action research approach and trained 9 local researchers in each of the 3 areas

'The Impact of Co Production on People Outside Paid Work'

Sarah B James, PONT researcher

Sarah B James conducted a detailed evaluation of the Welsh pilot sites and the work of WICC

'An Evaluation of the work of the Wales Institute for Community Currencies'

Mick Warden, 2007

This external evaluation was conducted for the European Union Regional Development Fund. It included quantitative and qualitative analysis of the first four years of WICC's work

'WICC; 5 years on'

WICC 2008

This internal evaluation was carried out by the WICC team to: 1, Gain an overview of the progress of the projects and their impact, and 2, to evaluate the support given to projects. The research was carried out by conducting a survey 120 participants in the projects, in-depth one-to-one interviews and a quantitative questionnaire

Key Findings

4.1. Overall Summary Findings:

Over the last five years the work of Spice has had a profound impact on the organisations and individuals who have engaged in the time credit projects. The work has been evaluated using the three main principles described above and their associated indicators

4.2. People are Assets

Community members and staff have reported that as a result of the time credit project there is:

- Increased self-esteem, confidence and well-being
- Improvement health
- Increased skills development
- Increased motivation and access to paid employment

4.3. Create a Two Way Street

Community members and staff have reported that as a result of the time credit project there is:

- Many more people giving time to the community
- A dramatic increase in social capital
- New improved relationships between professionals and members of the community
- Increased collaboration between voluntary and public sector organisations

4.4. Look Upstream

Community members and staff have reported that as a result of the time credit project there is:

- Improved relationships between community members and public service staff
- Indication that money is being saved as a result of the improved relationships within the community

People Are Assets

5.1. Summary Finding

The Spice time credits are built on the principle that all people are assets and that their skills, talents and experience are the key to community led change. This asset based approach to community development and public service delivery leads to individuals feeling valued, more confident and has a positive impact on individuals health, well-being and employability

“The projects we studied did seem to have an impact on the lives of those taking part, in increased health, well-being and confidence and social networks...The findings also indicate that participation has the potential to achieve significant improvements in employability for some of those who are furthest from the labour market. Indeed several of those interviewed had used the projects as a stepping stone back into work, and a few had moved into further or higher education”

(nef, Hidden Work, p27)

5.2. Impact: Self-esteem, Confidence and Well-being

The Spice projects have had a substantial impact on people’s self-esteem, confidence and well-being. Participants have reported that the time credits had enabled them to meet new people and try new things, that has had a direct impact on their well-being

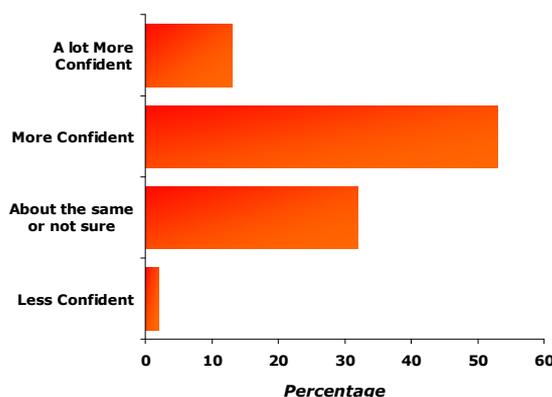
“I have always been a very quiet person through all my life, I am still very shy, But I have now gained have confidence to speak my mind at the meetings, and say what I have to say. Going back to 4 months ago, I would never have been able to do this interview” (participant, SJ research p 13)

“It’s about feeling valued for something that they are more than capable of doing, She felt useful for the first time in a long time (Daughter of participant, SJ, p16)

“I only give a few hours but it makes me feel just that little bit better about myself” (Participant, Project Questionnaire 2008)

5.3. Survey Results: Impact on Confidence

Survey Question: "How has becoming an active member of the community time credit affected your confidence?"



In a survey conducted of 120 active community members in Spice time credit projects, a striking majority 66% reported an improvement in their self confidence

5.4. Impact: Health

The Spice projects have impacted on the health of the local communities through direct engagement in healthy living activities and indirectly through general engagement

"There wasn't much (participation) last year, but now there's more of it now – like the food co-op we've got now: 167 bags requires big participation time. But that's not just physical, it's psychological as well. (nef, Hidden Work, p.19)

In some cases physical health has been positively impacted as people have become more engaged in generic activities, with participants reporting that "it get's me out the house" or are "less likely to smoke or drink" (WICC evaluation 2008)

Spice Credit projects affected health through increased attendance and involvement in local Food co-ops, salsa classes and health support groups. In the Cardiff based housing projects participants of the time banking projects have been able to access local health facilities with time credits. For example, an individual who goes two hours to helping to take care of the community garden is given two time credit's, they can use these two credits to hire the local tennis court for two hours

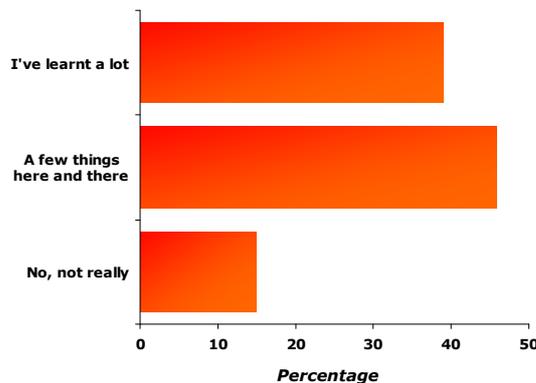
"Now I go to the gym once a week with one of friends, I use my time credits that I get from helping to run the homework club" (Participant, WICC evaluation 2008)

“I have been homeless for many years...I give my time to help look after our hostel garden, it gets me outside and I feel useful”

(Participant, WICC evaluation, 2008)

5.5. Impact: Skills & Work

Survey Question: *“Since being invited to be a member of the community time credit have you learnt any new skills?”*



For a number of the participants the time credit projects have provided new opportunities to learn new skills. For some participants it has been a key motivator to pursue training and employment opportunities

“Now I’m prepared to get up and have a go myself and I feel a lot better for it. I’m chuffed to the bone actually – that I can handle a computer and put it on. My goal is to get through the course (participant, nef, Hidden Work, p20)

“The Time Bank has helped me because I am going to do a youth work course” (Participant, S. James, 2007, p.19)

“... It’s (the time bank) is helping give me confidence. Maybe in two or three years down the road I would want to do part-time work”

(Participant, S. James, p.20)

“I’ve got a part-time job now the Time Bank helped me as I could show my employer that I’ve done work in the community.” (Young Person, Bettws Boys and Girls Club, Thirsk, G, Time for Young People Feasibility Study, p.15)

Creating a 2 Way Street

6.1. Summary Finding

The Spice projects have created an environment for people to 'give and take' which has fostered strong social capital, dramatically increased the number of people involved and has redefined the way that community services are delivered

6.2. Impact: Many More Active People

The challenge for most organisations with a remit for community development or citizen-engagement is how to encourage more people to get involved and go beyond the 'usual suspects'. The Spice time credit project's, value and acknowledge the time that people give to their communities. This enables the organisation to thank those that have traditionally given their time and encourages new people to become actively involved. Consequently, in every Spice project, active engagement has dramatically increased

“Crucially for me, what do you get if you ask for volunteers? You get people who have the confidence to give time, those that would have in the past gone to chapel. Time Banks gives a mechanism to get those who you must get in to make community development work”

(Project co-ordinator, nef, Hidden Work, p.23)

...most staff and participants noted that co-production approaches seemed to be able to attract those people least likely to spontaneously participate in volunteering activities” (nef, hidden Work, p.23)

6.3. Graph: Many More Active People

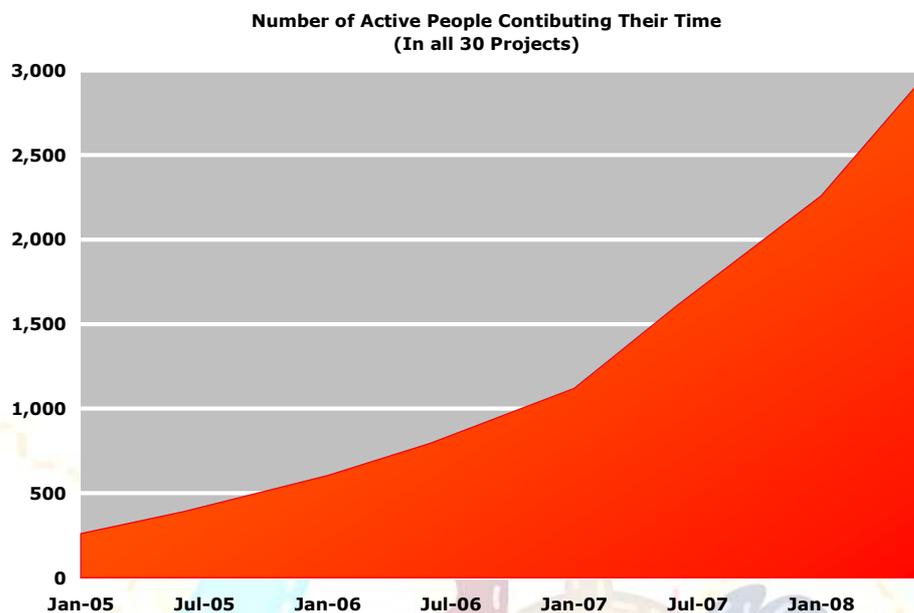
The projects in Wales have seen huge increases in both the number of people involved and the number of hours given to the community

At the start of a new project, Spice conducts a time audit. Essentially, Spice visits the 'host' agencies and counts the number of people that 'actively contribute' and the number of weekly hours that they give as volunteers to supporting and delivering community services. There is often something to start with, but is usually very low. As the programme progresses this data is recorded, as new active members join and as credits leave the bank. As a result Spice very simply measures and plots, the number of active hours contributed and the number of people who are 'active members'

The following graphs represent data collected from the 30 of the 39 total projects. The 30 projects are those with at least one year's data

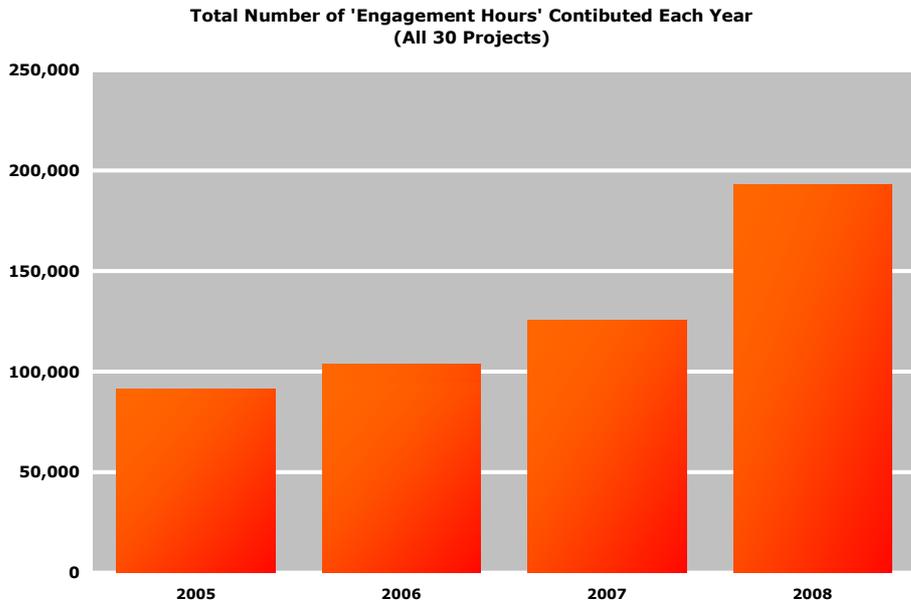
6.4. Graph: Approaching 3000 Active Participants

This graph shows the growth in the number of active participants from 2005 to 2008 approaching nearly 3,000 active participants



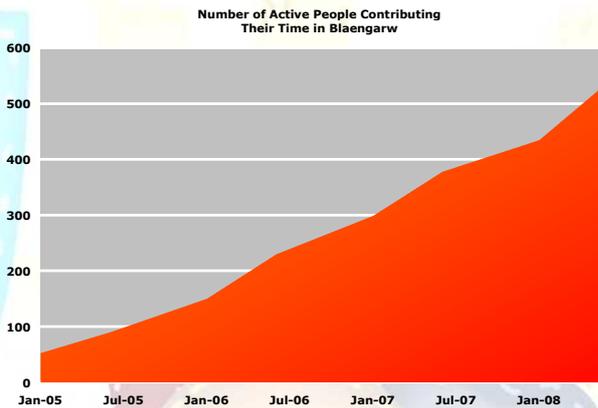
6.5. Graph: Much More Time Being Given

The Spice Credits act as a catalyst encouraging many more people to get involved. This is a direct consequence of their contribution being valued and recognised by the community



6.6. Graph: Much More Time Being Given in Blaengarw

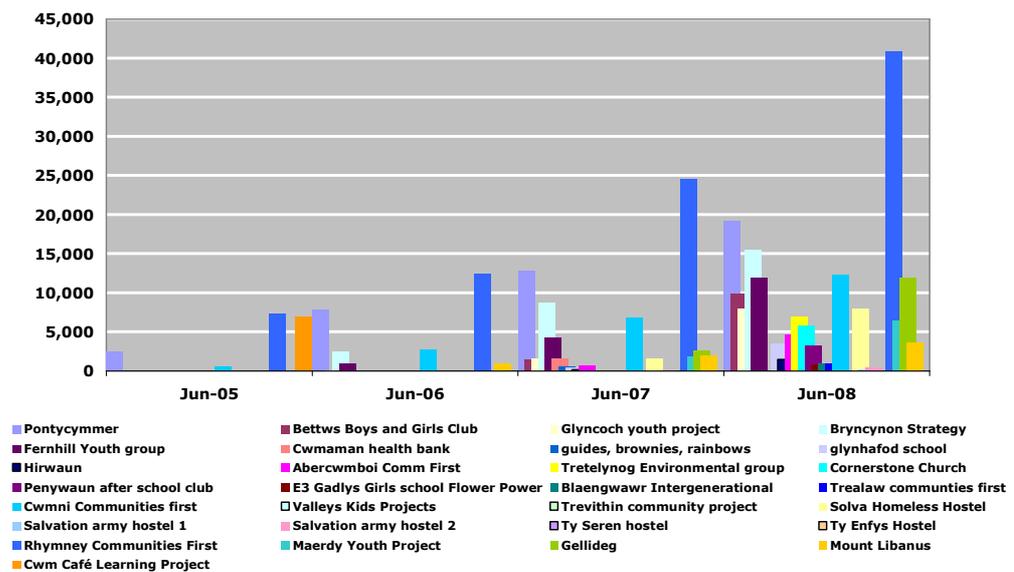
In Blaengarw the time credit system has been established across several public and community services. This has created a joined-up approach to creating common purpose



6.7. Graph: Tipping Point

In each project the time credits begin by crediting people who are already giving their time and by drawing a few more active members in. The credit system becomes more popular as it becomes more embedded into the community and as the community service becomes more imaginative with how it can be deployed

Number of Hours Contributed in Each Project
(29 Projects, Excluding Blaengarw)



6.8. Impact: Social Capital

The Time Credit projects have strengthened the networks in the community and fostered better relationships between the generations. This has been achieved through both the collective participation and through the celebration of the time given. Through the events, trips and activities new social networks have merged, for example in Blaengarw a new 'knit and natter group' group was formed after people discovered at a bingo event that they shared the love to knit

"I've been coming to events in this hall for 20 years – I've grown up with it...now it has become a bustling community centre again" (Participant, nef, Hidden Work, p.29)

"Its much like it use to be, people working together...the festival, for example, brought so many groups and people together. It was a real community event. There were so many new members of the time bank who got involved for the first time" (Participant, WICC questionnaire, 2008)

"I think everyone knows me now...I am helping them as well, they help me – I help them, I've got loads of people I can turn to now (participant, Hidden Work. P.29)

"There is a domino effect of increased activity – participants getting involved in more projects and other groups through getting involved in the first place". (Hidden Work, p.30)

"The elderly people are really supportive of the time bank.They are happy to see how much we are giving back to Glyncoch". (Young Person, Glyncoch - Time Bank, Thirsk, G 2008, Time for Young People Feasibility Study p. 16)

6.9. Impact: Relationship between staff and the community

In the host public and community services, staff and participants have reported a change in the dynamic between staff and members of the community. Staff members reported that as they began to value the time that people gave through the time banking projects people were looking to take on more responsibility and this led to more trusting relationships

"people realise that there is a lot they can offer each other and people realise that they have some power as well because they are so used to being dictated to. They can actually realise that they can actually take responsibility" (worker, Hidden Work, p.30)

"Staff in the Wales projects said that relationship between project users and professional staff have loosened and improved considerably and pinpointed increased trust as the reason" (Hidden Work, p.33)

"People in the Valleys and other places have been so used to professionals being up there and being put down. I think that it is about people believing that they have something important that they can offer themselves and it is about valuing what they have to give and understanding that they don't have to receive all the time. It's also about the expectation that people can fix it – it's about helping them to believe they can effect change" (Staff, Hidden Work, p. 44)

"They feel more involved in their community and in the running of their youth group, since the T4YP project has been in place" (Youth Worker, Statutory Sector, Thirsk, G. 2008, Time For Young People Feasibility Study, p. 19)

"Youth Workers have stated that they have witnessed a cultural and attitude change in the young time bank members. This is manifested by young people asking youth workers "What can we do to help?" rather than asking what the youth workers are going to do for them". (Youth Prevention Team – Maerdy, Thirsk, G. 2008, Time for Young People Feasibility Study, p. 21)

"The Police use to just move us on and now they run discos for us and we can use our credits to get in" (Young Person, Bettws - Time Bank, Thirsk, G. 2008, Time for Young People Feasibility Study, p. 21)

6.10. Impact: Greater Collaboration

In many of the projects the time credits have developed new relationships between community organisations. Greater collaboration is evident place between groups who had previously worked in isolation

For example in the Glyncoch project the local church began to host the youth group on a Tuesday night after they saw the young people being actively involved in projects in the community. In the Fernhill project the tenants and residents groups asked the youth to assist them in things that they struggled to do themselves. The older youth members began moving heavy items, repainting the house and supporting the group to run events

"all projects fostered stronger links both with other community groups and with some professional agencies working in the area" (hidden Work, p.31)

"Many reported that they were becoming more active in more than one community group, while several gave examples of a new found confidence to take more control of their own lives, and where necessary even to challenge those in authority" (Hidden Work, p.31)

"Relations have improved between us and the community, through this seems to be as much about having a focus for meeting people as any joint enough...I think of more in terms of rehumanising us....now people are prepared to engage with us" (police service, hidden work, p33)

"We have noticed a change in attitude; young people are now taking more responsibility in the youth club and in their community... criminal damage and racism has gone down" (Jo Dunster, Youth Worker / Time Broker – Bettws, Thirsk, G, 2008, Time for Young People Feasibility Study p. 37)

Invest Upstream

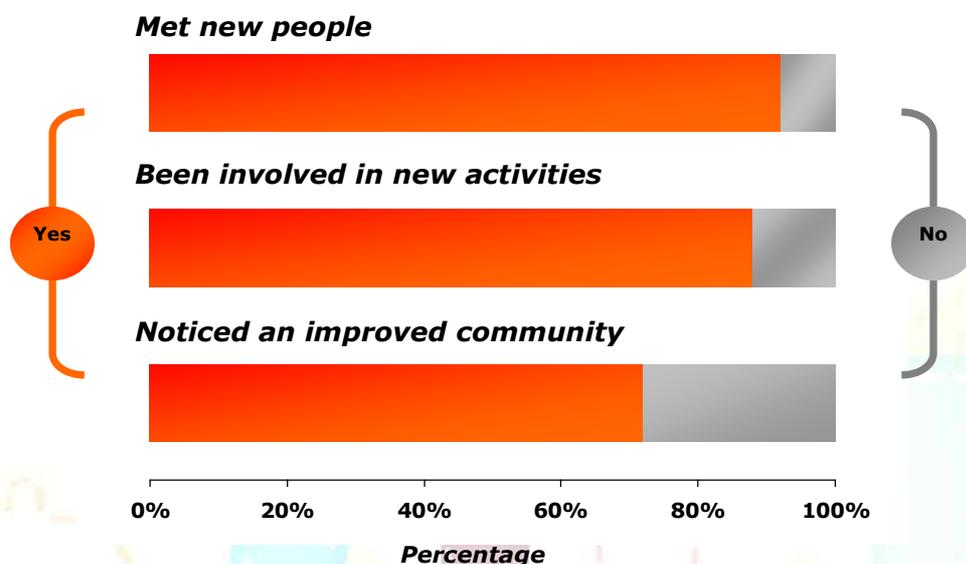
7.1. Summary Finding

Increased community engagement as a result of the community time credit systems have resulted in improved community cohesion and an increased sense of ownership by community members. This has resulted in multiple social outcomes, and improved relationships between community services and their service users

7.2. Survey: Community Cohesion

Surveyed participants of the time credit schemes reported an improvement in the community and in their own involvement in the community. The overwhelming majority had met new people and had been involved in new activities and a striking 72% reported that they had 'noticed an improved community'

Survey Question: "Since the community time credit started have you..."



7.3. Survey: Community Cohesion

There is strong evidence to indicate that the increased engagement of people in communities and in particular young people has resulted in a reduction in petty crime and anti-social behaviour

"Project staff also talked about the local train station that participants had adopted and the new community garden, both of which have escaped vandalism, possibly as a result" (nef, Hidden Work, p.34)

"They enable people to work together to achieve common goals" (nef, Hidden Work, p. x)

"The Police have recorded a 17% reduction in Crime (mainly anti-social behaviour) over the past year, in particular anti-social behaviour within Bettws, since the introduction of the youth time bank into the Boys & Girls Club". Safer Bridgend 20/11/2007

"Results arising from the scheme in Blaengarw have been reflected in Bettws, such as increased community reassurance, lower crime, community empowerment, community trust, improved social networks and increased community intelligence."

Sergeant A. Bennett, Community Safety Officer – Bridgend, Thirsk,
G. 2008, Time for Young People Feasibility Study p. 24

"It's easy to see that when children are involved in a worthwhile scheme that they can gain something from, the levels of anti-social behaviour in the community drop." Police Community Support Officer, Thirsk, G. 2008, "Time for Young People Feasibility Study, p. 24)

"We are now including Time Banking into our training programme for new police recruits" (Dr. Ena Hctor, Police Sciences Department - University of Glamorgan, Thirsk,G. 2008, Time for Young People Feasibility Study, p24)

"I've never seen any other programme as effective as T4YP in reducing anti-social behaviour", (Alison Pesticcio, Youth Prevention Team - Maerdy Youth Time Bank, Thirsk,G. 2008, Time for Young People Feasibility Study, p24)

"The staff cars nor the building have been trashed, since the Time Bank has been in place", (Matthew Ford, Time Bank Co-ordinator Trevethin, Thirsk,G. 2008, Time for Young People Feas. Study, p24)