

Introduction

Spice is a social enterprise that helps organisations to develop Time Credit systems. We began our work in 2003 as the Wales Institute for Community Currencies, and in 2009 extended our work from South East Wales into England.

We are currently running 26 programmes across the UK with local authorities, community development organisations, housing associations, health and social care providers and schools. Spice has developed Time Credits as a tool for building stronger communities and co-produced services where people are active and equal participants. For each hour a person gives to their community, they earn one Time Credit. They can spend that Time Credit on a range of activities provided by our national network of community, council, and corporate partners.



In the past three years over 17,000 people have earned or spent Time Credits through 774 organisations, including 334 places where people can spend Time Credits such as the Tower of London and the British Museum. [Our spend menus are available here.](#)



Each area or programme has unique printed Time Credit notes designed (see image) by local people. These Time Credits can be used across the area and also across our UK-wide network of partners.



The Time Credits system is developed in partnership with a host organisation, for example a local council, school, health and social care organisation who are the central bank of the system. Spice then supports for the organisation to integrate the time credits into their own services and the work of local organisations. In parallel we will sign up spend partners who accept Time Credits for their services or activities.



Time Credits and Local Authorities

Since 2011, when Spice began its work in England, it has been supporting county councils, district councils and unitary authorities to integrate Time Credits into their work to support them to achieve their aims. Time Credits have been introduced into a broad variety of individual departments and support cross-departmental working.



Spice is currently working with Chorley District Council, Lancashire County Council, Buckinghamshire County Council, West Norfolk Borough Council, Carmarthenshire County Council, London Borough of Haringey and Wiltshire Council amongst others.

Each programme is designed to address the specific aims of the host organisation. All subsequent design is focused around the agreed outcomes of the programme. Spice Time Credits programmes broadly fall into four thematic areas although the majority of programmes focus on a number of the themes.

1. Community Development
2. Health and Social Care
3. Schools and Young People
4. Housing

Impact

Spice's projects work towards improved outcomes for individuals, organisations and communities and views the interactions between these as key to improving outcomes and building stronger communities.

Individuals: By encouraging people to engage with local community organisations, Time Credits create opportunities for individuals to learn new skills, gain confidence and raise their aspirations. Following increased participation, individuals have better access to peer and community support networks, and feel they have something positive to contribute. By spending Time Credits, individuals can try new activities and improve their health and well-being. Many participants have commented that through the Time Credit network they have been able to try activities they could not previously afford.





Organisations: Time Credits can be used by organisations to engage with new groups or to encourage more active involvement from service users in the design and delivery of services. Involving service users in this way can bring new skills and insight, and shape services so that they better respond to need. Organisations and providers are connected through the Time Credit network and are able to make better use of community assets. Organisations participating in Spice programmes include local authorities, housing providers, schools, health and social care providers and a wide range of community organisations.

Communities: Time Credits connect groups and services across a community and create opportunities to share assets and skills, and to collaborate. Communities are better able to support each other, with more people giving more time in the local community, and with individuals and groups outside of their usual social network.

An independent evaluation involving 1300 individuals has shown that:

- 51% of people taking part in Time Credit schemes have never or rarely contributed their time before
- 40% report regularly doing things they didn't before
- 58% feel more confident
- 71% have more social connections
- 45% feel healthier
- 19% report needing less social care services
- 65% of members reported that Time Credits have helped to improve their quality of life within the first year. This rises to 75% for people who have been members for 18 months to 3 years.
- 57% know more about what services and support are available
- 53% have made new friends
- 43% have learned new skills
- 66% know people in their community better

Time Credits as a tool for coproduction:

Community decline and civic disengagement is a worrying national trend and public services are more stretched than ever. Spice Time Credits can be used to engage people in the design and delivery of their public and community services and to support people to take a more active role in their communities. Time Credits support services and neighbourhoods to become more effective agents of change. Whether this is with pupils in schools, tenants in housing associations or local people working with their community anchor organisation, using Time Credits as a tool increases active engagement, reduces dependency and builds community and individual esteem. Through Time Credits, people are encouraged to get involved in their community, to make decisions about how services are run, and to help create and actively deliver services alongside professionals.

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Using Time Credits to support a move towards co-production helps services and activities to become more effective, as service users and their communities increasingly help to design and deliver outcomes. This encourages buy-in and ownership of services by the community, resulting in sustainable projects that offer better value for money. People grow in confidence, they build new relationships, and the sense of community increases, leading to increased well-being for participants, professionals and communities.

Individual Stories

Alistair, Chorley Lifestyle Centre, Lancashire

Partner: Lancashire County Council & Chorley Council

Volunteering has helped Alistair on his way back to health after suffering a series of heart attacks 12 years ago. Alistair earns Time Credits at the Lifestyle Centre in Chorley which is run jointly by Age UK in Chorley and The Brothers of Charity.

Alistair serves meals at Chorley Lifestyle Centre's lunch club every Wednesday and finds this very satisfying and rewarding. The Lifestyle Centre wasn't signed up to Time Credits when Alistair first got involved, but since Time Credits have become part of the volunteer experience at the centre, Alistair has noticed a tremendous difference.



"Time Credits are a brilliant idea! They make you feel like you're worth something. I feel appreciated and this has given me so much confidence."

Alistair has also had the opportunity to earn Time Credits by putting his skills as a photographer and film maker to good use, creating a short promotional film for the Time Credits scheme in Chorley. Alistair's favourite way to spend Time Credits is by taking coach trips run by Age UK or Spice.

"I've visited places like Carlisle and the Lake District courtesy of Time Credits, I have also had the pleasure of gifting Time Credits to a friend who has been able to come along and enjoy the trips with me. Time Credits encourage me to get out of the house, I meet lots of new people and it's good for the soul!"

Celia and Beth, West Norfolk

Partner: King Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

Celia and Beth have been best friends for over 19 years and Time Credits are helping them to spend time together doing social activities that they wouldn't normally get to do. Celia has been earning Time Credits by helping to run a community coffee bar and with the Norfolk Credit Union, and has been using them to take friends and family on trips to the theatre and days out. Having Time Credits has meant that Celia can do things like surprise her friend with tickets to see 'Joseph' at the Corn Exchange. **"It's given us more freedom, as we would not have the money to do half the things we get to."**



Celia had given over 30 hours of her time to supporting her community which meant she could take Beth and her husband Bob with her on the trip. Beth said,

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“My highlight was seeing the Crown Jewels [in London], I’m familiar with the Scottish Honours and so it was wonderful to see the English jewels, I have since learnt that the two drop pearls in the centre of her crown were supposed to be Elizabeth I’s earrings”.

Beth loved learning all about the Tower of London and the history of the City of London and has learned so many facts that the pair joke that she could be a guide on a future tour. Their friendship means a lot to both, who have helped each other through difficult times in recent years, and Time Credits are helping them to find new activities to try out together – as Celia says,

“Half the places, I wouldn’t be able to go to because I wouldn’t feel like I would want to go on my own, so sharing them means that I get to go. I don’t know what I’d do without her, at a time of need she is always there. She’s a friend in a million.”

Working with Local Authorities

Buckinghamshire County Council – Prevention Matters

Buckinghamshire Time Credits are supporting Prevention Matters, a programme to help people to live healthily and independently for longer in Buckinghamshire. Spice are working with Prevention Matters partners, which include Buckinghamshire County Council, District Councils, the NHS and the local voluntary sector to ensure Time Credits support the programme across Buckinghamshire, encouraging active community participation and volunteering both by older and vulnerable adults, and in activities that support them.



Prevention Matters includes direct support to local organisations to encourage the development of services and activities that will help older and vulnerable adults live healthily and independently. Time Credits are enabling local organisations to make better use of community resources, including attracting more volunteers, and to offer more opportunities for participation and activities for local people that support health, wellbeing and independence, including opportunities to meet new people and gain confidence and new skills.

Prevention Matters also includes a service offered directly to individuals who are at risk of requiring health and social care services to help identify service and activities that will enable them to maintain their independence and quality of life. In this aspect of Prevention Matters, Time Credits will be used to encourage and enable people to be more active, independent and socially connected, increasing their skills and confidence and improving their health and wellbeing.

Buckinghamshire County Council Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, Patricia Birchley, said: **“We are very pleased that Time Credits will be encouraging more people to give time to support older people in Buckinghamshire as part of the Prevention Matters programme, and enabling these volunteers to access a wide range of activities in return.”**

Chorley Council

Chorley Council is a District Council in Lancashire, delivering public services for Chorley borough. Time Credits were introduced to the borough through a partnership between the District and County Councils and Spice as part of a national programme with three other sites in England, supported by the Department of Health.

Chorley was seen as a pioneering district, interested in taking on new approaches and innovations. The project was shaped between Lancashire County Council, Chorley Council and Spice, deciding to take a focus on older people and community provision of services that would support independence and social connectedness.



After an initial co-design phase with local people and organisations, Time Credits started trading in Chorley in August 2012. By October 2014 over 16,000 hours had been given by just over 1000 people through a network of 48 local providers and community groups. 42% of members surveyed were either new to or had previously only occasionally given time. A broad network of spending partners was developed, ranging from community offerings such as drama activities, band performances and older people's social activities to local theatre shows, leisure services and libraries and museums. While the focus of the initial programme was health and social care, with a focus on older and socially isolated people, Chorley Council decided by December 2012 that Time Credits had broader potential in Chorley. The council worked with Spice to develop a 3 year programme plan that expanded Lancashire Time Credits into a wider community development programme aligned to the council's corporate development plan.

The local facilitator started work on the broader programme in August 2013. Specific areas of innovative development have included:

- setting up social prescribing of Time Credits with a local GP surgery
- developing a neighbourhood cohesion approach with Time Credits that will now run through all Chorley Council community work
- Integration of Time Spend opportunities into local parking arrangements and key council run events
- The inclusion of Time Credits in corporate future planning
- Training of all key council teams in using Time Credits to increase civic engagement

This will involve the Council reviewing how it delivers, creating a shared vision with local organisations and businesses, and supporting communities and neighbourhoods to realise and utilise their potential to be leaders. Time Credits now run through all of these objectives.

If you have any questions or need more information please contact:

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