An Evaluation of Spice Time Credits

December 2014
Executive Summary

16,000 people have earned Time Credits in the last three years

45% had not regularly given their time before

62% give their time at least once a week

95 people have started a community group since being involved in Time Credits

65% say their quality of life has improved

81% are very likely to continue giving their time

9 x 9

45% feel healthier

76% feel able to contribute more

19% people who say they need to go to the doctor less since earning and spending Time Credits

62% Organisations that report they are able to make better use of skills and resources in communities
This summary report has been prepared by Apteligen Limited and our associates Kerry McCarthy and Cassie Robinson, as part of an independent evaluation of Spice Time Credits. The evaluation began in July 2012 and since then over 1,300 people have contributed to our research. Our work has been wide-ranging and possible only because of the commitment and willingness of so many to engage in the work we have been doing. The aim of this evaluation was to help a wide range of stakeholder groups to understand the impact of Time Credits.

In order to do this, we used a number of different research methods including surveys, interviews and face to face group sessions. In total we received 1,102 unique responses from Spice members, 291 unique responses from staff within Spice’s partner organisations, and we held 33 group workshops with a combination of staff and members, including service users from a range of community organisations. The workshops focused particularly on gathering in-depth information about how people feel at different stages of their involvement in Time Credits, the resources and assets that Time Credits have had an impact on, and how relationships form and develop as a result of Time Credits. A further 20 in-depth interviews were undertaken with key personnel from a selection of Spice’s host partner organisations.

**Time Credits programmes included in this evaluation**

- **Chorley**
  - Host: Lancashire County Council / Chorley District Council
  - Time Credits members: 900
  - Trading since: August 2012
  - Focus: Communities and Health & Social Care

- **West Norfolk**
  - Host: West Norfolk Partnership
  - Time Credits members: 1301
  - Trading since: February 2012
  - Focus: Schools and Health & Social Care

- **Carmarthenshire**
  - Host: Carmarthenshire County Council
  - Time Credits members: 600
  - Trading since: January 2013
  - Focus: Communities and Housing

- **Cardiff West**
  - Host: Action in Caerau and Ely (ACE)
  - Time Credits members: 1000
  - Trading since: January 2012
  - Focus: Communities

- **London: Westminster**
  - Host: Paddington Development Trust
  - Time Credits members: 350
  - Trading since: August 2012
  - Focus: Communities

- **City of London**
  - Host: City of London Corporation
  - Time Credits members: 360
  - Trading since: March 2012
  - Focus: Communities

- **London: Lewisham**
  - Host: London Borough of Lewisham
  - Time Credits members: 800
  - Trading since: April 2012
  - Focus: Communities and Health & Social Care

- **London: Look Ahead**
  - Host: Look Ahead Care and Support
  - Time Credits members: 136
  - Trading since: January 2013
  - Focus: Health & Social Care

- **Wiltshire**
  - Host: Wiltshire County Council
  - Time Credits members: 800
  - Trading since: May 2012
  - Focus: Communities and Health & Social Care
An Evaluation of Spice Time Credits

Time Credits are an effective way to engage people in giving their time to their communities in a sustainable way. In particular, people who are new to giving. Time Credits also motivate people who are already giving their time, to continue.

- The amount of time people regularly give through Time Credits programmes is notably higher than the national average. Nationally, around two thirds of volunteers (66%) give their time at least once a month, whereas 62% of Spice volunteers give their time at least once a week.
- Time Credits lead to sustainable improvements in quality of life. 65% of members reported that Time Credits have helped to improve their quality of life within the first year.
- Time Credits have opened up many opportunities for people to get involved in new activities. Over 40% of respondents reported that they now regularly do things they didn’t do before. 95 Spice members also reported that they have been incentivised through Time Credits to start a new community group.
- Time Credits appeal to a wide-ranging demographic, helping people to: build their sense of contribution, create opportunities to share skills with others, take part in more community activities, and make new friends and social connections.
- Time Credits help people to adopt healthier lifestyles and to improve physical and mental well-being. A total of 45% of respondents reported feeling healthier as a result. 19% of people already say that they now have less need to go to the doctor since earning and spending Time Credits. People with a disability were more likely to report that they were now doing new things as a result of Time Credits.
- Time Credits generate early benefits in organisations. 75% report already seeing clear benefits as a result of Time Credits. These benefits include broadening the range of service options that organisations can offer and delivering higher quality services without additional cost.
- Time Credits create opportunities for organisations to collaborate and build stronger networks with each other. They do this by creating a new shared language and framework for co-operation.
Increasing Levels of Participation

“I think it is such a brilliant idea. I loved getting the children involved and instilling good living practice into them. And it has helped us spend time together as a family at no added cost. All the volunteers I work with benefit so much from them and I know they will continue to give their time because they feel valued and important to their community.”

Time Credits are an effective tool for increasing levels of participation and giving across a wide-ranging demographic, including individuals who have not traditionally been able to give their time.

Time Credits are also a successful means of engaging all age groups, however, they are particularly noticeable as a way of attracting younger people who are new to giving.

Time Credits help to generate a more regular and reliable volunteer base. The significant majority of Spice members surveyed (81%) report that they are very likely to continue giving their time.

We asked: How likely are you to carry on giving your time?

- 1. Not Likely: 1%
- 2. 1%
- 3. 6%
- 4. 11%
- 5. Very Likely: 81%

On average, members regularly give nearly nine hours per month.

45% had not regularly given their time before earning Time Credits.

81% said they are very likely to carry on giving their time.

62% of members are giving their time at least once a week.
Impact on Individuals and Communities

“Earning Time Credits helps to keep your mind alert, you meet new people and learn new skills. It also stops you from becoming isolated and helps the community to be a safer place to live in.”

- 65% of Spice members feel that Time Credits have improved their quality of life – this increases as people stay involved for longer
- Nearly 50% of respondents now feel able to do things they weren’t able to do before
- 46% want to do things they didn’t want to do before
- 43% are regularly doing things they didn’t do before
- 63% of people can afford to do new things
- 45% of people say they feel healthier since earning and spending Time Credits and 19% of people say they have less need to go to the doctor, demonstrating the potential for Time Credits to positively influence longer term health and well-being.

“I think that being involved in your local activities help your mental health because it gives you confidence, a sense of belonging and a voice. It has also helped my physical health by getting me doing more sports activities. It has helped me be socially active with my children, finding time to just have fun is rare when you are a busy family so it has been nice to take time out and watch a show or two.”
Change in Organisations

“The concept has created a quiet storm, we have seen customers who previously had no structure start to engage with their support workers asking about Time Credits and telling us about their individual skills. This has been a very positive beginning.”

“(It is) hard to separate Time Credits & [name of organisation]. (It is) part of everything we do – helps to get things going & build support from service users. Time Credits (is a) catalyst for engagement.”

Time Credits enable organisations to make better use of the skills and resources in the community. They also support organisations to deliver improved services. Of the 1,102 members involved in the survey, 95 reported that they have set up a new group to respond to the needs of the community.

Responding to the findings

This evaluation has identified a number of important opportunities for Spice, and how it works with members and local partners to drive change and impact. These opportunities are focused on four areas:

- Ensuring the availability of appropriate, accessible and sufficient spend opportunities
- Maximising the potential impact of Time Credits on health and social care services
- Providing greater support to partner organisations on their journey towards co-production
- Reducing lead-in times for organisations that sign-up to use Time Credits.

During the last 18 months of the evaluation Spice has been evolving its model and its processes. Learning from the evaluation has already translated into action and is continuing to inform the future plans for the organisation.
Spice grew out of the Wales Institute for Community Currencies (WICC), a partnership project funded by the European Union (EU) to develop new social currencies for communities in ex-mining areas in South Wales. When the EU programme ended in 2009, Spice was established to develop the work of WICC into a wider geographical remit, to develop programmes that included the voluntary, public and private sector, and to create a national network of local Time Currencies. Spice’s vision is to create nations of connected communities. Spice has three organisational objectives to achieve this vision:

• Support organisations to deliver high quality, high impact Time Credits programmes
• Support organisations to develop a more co-productive culture
• Work with policy makers and funders to foster an environment that supports co-productive service delivery.

Spice is now expanding its networks across England and Wales and focusing on increasing engagement within four thematic areas:

• Communities
• Health and Social Care
• Housing
• Schools

The Time Credits model

People earn Time Credits by giving their time to local service and groups. One Time Credit is earned for each hour of time given and acts as a thank you for the contribution of time to their community or service. People can then ‘spend’ Time Credits to access events, training and leisure activities provided by public, community and private organisations, or to thank others in turn.

You can spend:
• on an activity at the place where the Time Credit was earned
• on other local activities and opportunities
• as a gift or thank you to someone else
• somewhere else in our UK network

Spice Time Credit examples

About Time Credits
With thanks to the Spice funders and evaluation partners

Cabinet Office
Lankelly Chase Foundation
The Tudor Trust
Volunteering Fund Health & Social Care
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
Arriann Gân y Loteri Lottery Funded
Look Ahead Care and Support
Sir Gâr Carmarthenshire County Council
Chorley Council
Wiltshire Council
Lancashire County Council
ACE Action in Caerphilly and Ely
pdt Nesta
Lewisham
City of London
Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government
CCIA Community Currencies in Action
Investing in Opportunities

Supported by the City of London Corporation’s Charity, City Bridge Trust

Design: daughterdesign.co.uk