

# AN INTRODUCTION TO TIME CREDITS



Spice has developed Time Credits as a tool for building stronger communities and co-produced services where people are active and equal participants. We believe in the power of people to create positive change.

## The values of Time Credits are:

-  **Everyone has something to give** } We work with community members and service users to identify different ways that people can give their time, catering for different skill-sets and levels of access and releasing untapped potential in a community.
-  **Everyone's time is equal** } We recognise that everyone's time is worth the same, however they contribute.
-  **Reciprocity** } Time Credits help people feel valued and thanked. Organisations provide opportunities to spend credits in order to recognise the value of people's contributions, and support people to develop new activities for each other.

## Using Time Credits as a tool for co-production

Co-production is an approach to service delivery or community activity based on the principle that we are all equal partners and all have something of value to contribute. People, including service users and their communities, are involved in identifying the need or challenge, designing the solution and delivering it - with professionals, independently, or anything in between.

Time Credits work as a tool for co-production as they build on people's experience, knowledge and abilities to build relationships between communities and services and revitalise the community itself. Through Time Credits, people are encouraged to get involved in their community, to make decisions about how services are run, to help create and actively deliver services, to run community cafes, to transfer learning, to run support groups, after-school clubs, bingo nights and comedy events and much more.

A co-production approach helps services and activities become more effective as service users and their communities are helping design and deliver outcomes. This encourages buy-in and even 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 sense of community increases, also leading to increased wellbeing for participants, professionals and communities.

## How Time Credits work: 1 hour = 1 hour



*It has given them so much encouragement to participate in day to day life and encouragement in saying, yes, I can do these things.*

Sabrina, PLUS

## Earning Time Credits

People earn Time Credits by giving time to their community. Anyone can earn Time Credits, through organisations that are part of the network, and everyone's time is equal. Time Credits are given for active contributions to the community and not to reward good behaviour or for attendance.

Examples of how people earn Time Credits include:

- Planning and running community events and activities such as fetes, carnivals, parties and coffee mornings
- Informing the planning and design of services through forums and consultations



- Supporting others in learning and development activities e.g. sharing computer skills
- Delivering and coaching community activities e.g. running drama or art classes
- Helping in day centres and cafes and lunch clubs for older people
- Supporting people with long term illnesses
- Administrating the Time Credits system within an organisation
- Befriending
- Helping school children with reading
- Taking part in gardening activities, after school clubs and environmental clean ups

*I feel that Time Credits have taken me places that I haven't seen before...It has helped me to gain confidence in myself and improve the way I now live my life. Through Time Credits I have made lots of new friends.*

Cheryl

## Spending Time Credits

People can spend Time Credits to access services and activities where they earned their credits and with other Time Credit network organisations and community groups. 1 Time Credit is always equal to 1 hour of activities and has no cash value.

Time Credits can be spent in different ways:

### Community Spending

### Corporate Spending



- Physical activities including swimming, gym, tennis, hockey, golf and exercise classes, bowling, freerunning
- Learning and skills classes such as computing, arts & crafts, drama & dance, bread making and accredited training
- Community activities such as coffee mornings, bingo and pamper evenings
- Cultural activities such as plays, comedy, music shows, museums, historical sites and films
- Trips to resorts, for shopping or to local attractions
- Room and venue hire
- Tea dances
- Physiotherapy
- CD and DVD hire
- Children's activity and soft play centre



## Community Spending

Community Spending is the spending opportunities that happen on a very local, grassroots level. These are usually within voluntary or community sector organisations where people are also earning credits. This is a vital part of the Time Credits model, and is a key way to measure how well it is working as a tool for co-production and community and user-led transformation.

### Impact of Community Spending

- Increases community action and strengthens local networks as people exchange Time Credits to learn new skills or get support beyond service provision
- Builds confidence amongst individuals as their time is being valued by other community members
- Encourages new groups and activities led by the community
- Encourages people to recognise and make use of their community's resources as they can spend Time Credits to access them, e.g. hiring rooms, equipment and outdoor space
- Encourages people to become involved in the design and delivery of their services, and gives organisations a mechanism for involving users in this. In turn, services can be more responsive to users' needs by providing activities that people want, and become user-led
- Provides very local accessible opportunities so people don't have to travel to find ways to spend their credits



## Corporate Spending

Corporate Spending is Time Credit spending that takes place in businesses or leisure services where people are not earning credits; places like swimming pools, gyms, golf courses, cinemas, theatres, museums, educational establishments and soft play centres. Corporate Spending can enable people to access services and activities that they would not usually be able to, for reasons such as cost, lack of confidence or fear of visiting a new place, and can have a range of benefits for health and wellbeing. Corporate Spending acts as a complement to Community Spending and is aimed at increasing access to opportunities, building local networks, and supporting local businesses.



## What Time Credits can do

### What using Time Credits can mean for an organisation

Time Credits are a tool that can be used by an organisation to:

- Engage more volunteers, increase participation from local people and reach a wider audience
- Encourage people who currently receive services to play a more active, participatory role in designing and delivering the service
- Enhance the way that people give time to the organisation, drawing them more meaningfully into the service and how it is delivered
- Recognise the contributions of volunteers and thank them
- Increase capacity of activities by running activities in partnership with volunteers
- Build links with other local organisations to maximise the use of assets and resources
- Improve their outcomes by developing new activities (earning and spending)
- Increase the wellbeing of users and build stronger social networks between users and the wider community

This can help them to achieve their own vision and objectives and deliver more effective services as they are shaped and driven to a greater extent by the people who use them. It can also enable users and community members themselves to be a part of service delivery, with staff roles becoming more facilitative and supportive.

### What using Time Credits can mean for individuals

Time Credits recognise the value of the time that people give to others. This might be in more formal volunteering roles or informal, day-to-day support at a service or group, depending on what people feel able and want to give. However people give their time, credits recognise the value of that time and thank people.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Q1 Do participants need to sign up for a set period of time?

A No. A person might only ever earn one credit, or they may earn them infrequently, or as often as they are able.

*They will need to fill out a membership form the first time they earn a credit so that we can start to build a picture of the different people earning Time Credits in the community.*

## Q2 How long do people have to spend their credits?

A There is currently no time limit on credits, although we do encourage people to spend them as this means that they are availing themselves of useful and interesting opportunities, and enables the circulation of credits as an effective community currency.

## Q3 How do we get the Time Credit notes?

A The Locality Facilitator will sign out the Time Credit notes to you when you have decided how you would like individuals to earn and spend credits with your organisation.

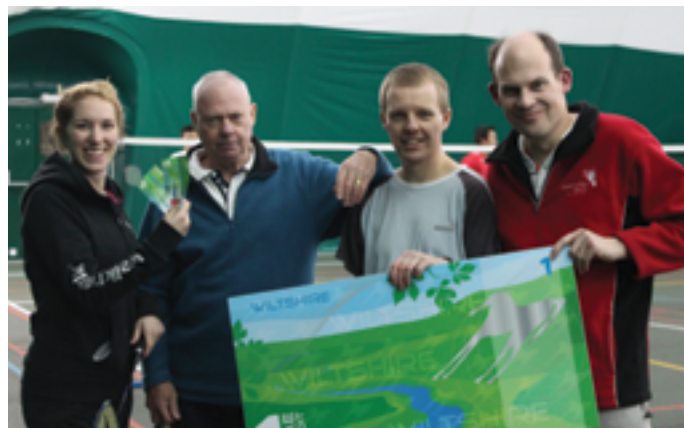
Someone in your organisation then needs to record when you sign out credits for an activity. We provide an easy-to-use form for this purpose. We need to keep track of credits because they are a form of currency. When you request more Time Credits from the Locality Facilitator, we will ask to see this form to check that the number of credits we have signed out to your organisation matches the number you have given out. We also collect data about what activities credits have been earned and spent on.



## Q4 What happens to the information you collect?

A We collect data on earning and spending so we can monitor the growth and progress of the Network.

*We also ask individuals to fill in a membership form when they earn their first Time Credit. This is so we can start to build a picture of the different people earning Time Credits in the community and see if we are reaching a wide range of people. We do not share any personal data with anyone else.*



## Q5 We don't have any budget for providing spending activities. Can we still take part?

A This is a common and valid concern and the simple answer is 'yes'. However, we do ask you to make a commitment to thinking about how you might accept Time Credits.

*We'll help you to link the development of spending to your organisational objectives, and build it into current projects or future plans. You could accept credits for events or activities you currently charge for, such as tickets to a school concert, or entry to an existing fundraising event, or something new led by volunteers earning credits. You can control the number of people who can use their Time Credits at an activity or event by limiting the Time Credit places available. You can also work in partnership with other Time Credit partners to develop spending.*

## Q6 How do we support people to volunteer if they have complex needs?

A Time Credits are a tool for broadening inclusion so anyone can take part in anything that is appropriate for them. We believe everyone has something to give, regardless of age or disability.

*We are working with a wide range of organisations including day-centres and social-care providers to develop ways that people can participate, and we can provide you with support to ensure that opportunities for earning and spending credits are available to everyone.*

**Q7** **Do Time Credits affect people's benefits?**

**A** Time Credits are valued as time (each credit equals 1 hour) and have no cash value or impact on benefits. They cannot be used to purchase actual goods and are not taxable.

*The same rules that apply to the impact of volunteering on benefits will apply to involvement in the Time Credits scheme. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) states very clearly that people 'can volunteer as many hours as you like while you're getting benefits as long as you keep to the rules for getting them'. You can find the DWP information about volunteering and benefits using this link <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/dwp1023.pdf> and you might also like to check out Volunteering England's information on the subject, <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/policy-blog/245-volunteering-and-state-benefits-some-more-myths-busted>*

**Q8** **Can Time Credits be transferred between people?**

**A** Yes, Time Credits are transferable so a person can give them to a family member or friend to spend, or use them to take a friend to an activity. They can also give them to an individual in exchange for an hour of their time (with gardening or help with the computer for example).

*Safety is essential and we encourage community members who wish to exchange Time Credits on a person-to-person basis to take sensible precautions before making any agreements. As these exchanges are not brokered by the Time Credits Network we cannot take responsibility for safeguarding.*

**Q9** **Who is responsible for safeguarding?**

**A** Individuals earning or spending Time Credits will work within your existing volunteer management and broader organisational / risk-management structures.

*You still need to make sure that your volunteers and community members are safe and may need to provide induction, training and CRB checks as appropriate. If you have any concerns about this, we can advise you on where to get support.*



**Q10** **Who is responsible for health and safety?**

**A** Any Time Credit earning and spending activity must be covered by the health & safety management, policies and procedures of the partner organisation.

*We cannot take responsibility for health & safety procedures or accept liability for any damages that occur at Time Credit activities organised by your organisation or external partners.*

**Q11** **What support can we expect to receive?**

**A** We will provide you with support to design your Time Credits programme, including developing earning and spending opportunities, training in both paper and online administration systems, and support to develop simple ways to evaluate the impact of Time Credits.

We will provide you with Time Credit currency notes in exchange for monitoring information about how the credits have been earned and spent. We will also continue to develop a broad range of time spend partners in line with size of the project and in balance with the local spending opportunities.