

Headlines from final evaluation

Time to Connect (TTC) is a partnership initiative, supported by the Big Lottery Fund, between the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) and Timebanking UK (TBUK). It aims to support people living in traditional care settings to increase their participation in and contribution to the life of their community.

Who should read this?

This briefing sets out the headlines from the final evaluation of Time to Connect. It is intended for:

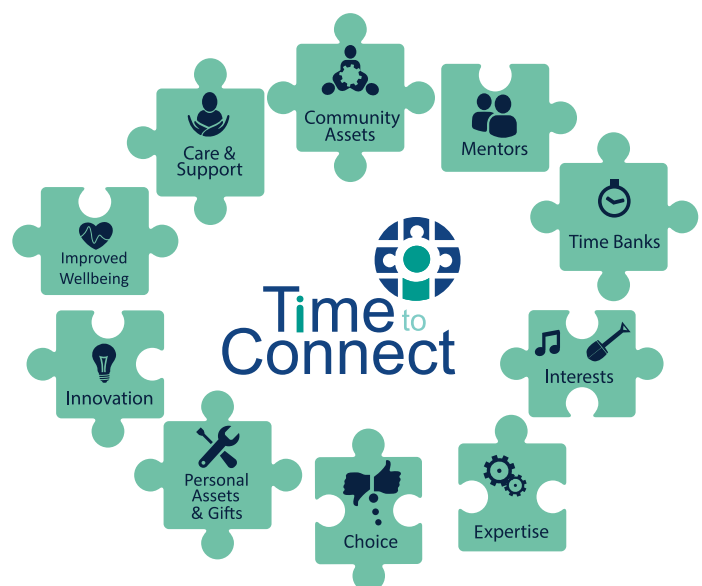
- People who live or work in care services
- Commissioners of care services
- Time banks and other community organisations

What did we do?

The project is supporting care staff and their managers to strengthen the focus on inclusion in their organisations by using a range of existing tools and approaches. At the same time, time banks are working alongside participating care settings to help connect their residents to the community and to encourage people's contribution, using time as the currency. This animation shows how timebanking works: www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYzIAHImAnk

The interim evaluation, which covered the first phase of Time to Connect, found that the extreme pressures on the care sector and rapid staff turnover meant that for many care settings and their staff it was difficult to engage fully with TTC. These pressures have not reduced. In response, phase two of the project adopted a much more flexible menu of approaches, working with care settings that were already committed to working differently, and supporting them in different ways, including:

- Supporting people in specialist roles, such as activities coordinators
- Providing short, focused training sessions on using the inclusion tools and techniques and encouraging them to set achievable goals for change
- Bringing care staff together across organisations to share experience and stories, as well as to find solutions to shared problems
- Time banks working with care settings, often by organising events and activities as a route for better connecting residents to their local communities.
- Keeping focused on the three key TTC principles, of **Connection, Mainstream and Contribution**.



What difference is TTC making for older people and people with learning disabilities?

“It was the first time, for some people, that they’d felt useful.”

“One man who has a learning disability and dementia, at first communicated through drawing. Now we have conversations.”

We found many examples where the lives of people living in care settings have been transformed through the change of thinking and approach that TTC has introduced. It was striking that many of the people who are benefiting from TTC need a great deal of support to live their lives, so the approach does not just have an impact on people who need only a little help to go out. The changes we heard about include:

- **A stronger purpose in life**
- **Better connections**
- **Reduced isolation**
- **Greater confidence/assertiveness**
- **Improved health and fitness**

The examples below illustrate some of these themes. All the examples are underpinned by the TTC principles.

J’s story:

J (a man with disabilities who lives in a nursing home on Merseyside) is a lifelong supporter of Liverpool FC and was very keen to go to a match. He is non-verbal and is not comfortable in crowds. Through TTC, a family member volunteered to go to a charity match with him, and to invite along a few of J’s old friends who he had lost contact with. When a carer arrived to pick him up after the match, he wasn’t at the place they’d agreed – he was in the pub with his friends. Since then, he’s joined the supporter’s club, he’s been on a tour of Anfield and has been to events to meet the players. The club has *‘gone out of their way to give him the best experience.’* J is getting out, connecting with others and has rediscovered a friendship group. His support worker says the experience has given him *‘pure joy – it’s given him back his independence.’*


M’s story:

M, a young woman with learning and physical disabilities from South London, has recently become involved in a local group that runs clean up events in local parks, working with the community, and friends of the park. She went along to an event with her support worker and loved it. Since then, she has become friends with people she met there, and is doing physiotherapy exercises on her hands so that she can operate the litter picking equipment. As a result she is getting stronger. She is now involved in running the group - contacting members, producing flyers, and is really pleased and proud about the contribution she’s making. The service manager says the experience has changed her life: *‘She smiles constantly, she’s just so happy. Her communication has improved, she’s making eye contact.’*

P's story:

For F (a time bank coordinator), the most striking success is P, a former Paralympian gold medalist. When F first met him, he was isolated and depressed, but through TTC he is now a time bank member and has started working with people with learning disabilities or dementia to tell them about his sporting history and show them his medals. He has always wanted to write the story of his life, from a child living in foster homes to his sporting successes. F connected P with a time bank member who works as a journalist. He spent many hours listening to Paul and captured his life story, which is due to appear as a self-published book. The Guardian published an article on the work of the time bank and TTC that featured P's story and a film was also released on Youtube. Just as importantly, F says that P now has *'a new network of friends.'*

What difference is it making for care staff and organisations?



"We're looking through the eyes of the people we support, now."



"In the recruitment process we're very explicit what we're looking for."

Time to Connect has improved the practice and the working lives of many of the care staff who took part, for example by:

- Challenging preconceptions and mindsets
- Enabling staff to work more creatively and seeing the difference this makes to the people they support
- Gaining new skills, through working alongside time bank brokers, and by having practical tools and frameworks to use in their work
- Feeling more motivated and having greater job satisfaction.
- Inspiring care staff to join their local time bank

Many of the care settings who have been involved have also seen an impact for the organisation, such as:

- Using TTC as a practical way of helping staff to think differently across the organisation
- Raising the profile of the care setting in the community, and as a result being able to tap into local resources, which benefit the people they support
- Drawing on the local knowledge and connections of time banks and their members
- Realising, as a result of TTC, that they need to look for different qualities in their staff, so changing recruitment processes to focus more on values and approach.

What difference is it making for time banks and wider communities?

“The people at the station are now much better at working with people with disabilities. Before, people looked through our guys, but the station staff now know how to chat.”

“I’ve made friends with these people ... It’s a pleasure to come here.”

“The social fun at (a care home) is getting quite popular with the time bank members: four new members joined us this month.”

Time banks, too are seeing the impact of TTC:

- Time banks are making a huge number of new contacts and connections, and generating a great deal of activity through TTC. For example, they have connected with 20 care homes and their residents, and spent over 6000 hours on the project.
- Time bank members, many of whom are facing challenges in their own lives, are making new friends and feeling more supported.
- Local time banks are building stronger links with care settings and strengthening their skills in working with older people and people with disabilities.
- More members are becoming involved, as word spreads about the fun activities that are taking place through TTC.
- Time bank coordinators and members are benefiting from having a real opportunity to influence the care settings they are working with and the staff who work there, and to improve the lives of their residents.
- Timebanking UK is sharing the learning from the project with all time banks across the country to encourage more connections with care homes.

Communities are becoming more inclusive as a result of TTC:

The interim evaluation of TTC found that the project had a number of unexpected benefits, and phase two looked at these in more detail. We found that TTC had helped local communities become more welcoming and inclusive as a result of the increased visibility of people with learning disabilities and older people. For example:

- People in communities and neighbourhoods getting to know the people involved in Time to Connect, and saying hello or stopping for a chat
- Staff in a very wide range of businesses and organisations, from stations, cafes and pubs, to an art gallery, providing a better service to people with disabilities or older people.

What are the factors that help people in care settings connect with the community?

“It fitted with all my aspirations for care services. Time to Connect fell in our lap at the right time.”

“The whole project is down to the human part, who we are. The heart, the trust, the give and take.”

Organisational factors are key to the success, or otherwise, of TTC. We found that care settings are most likely to be able to make a difference to the lives of the people they support where a combination of important preconditions are in place:

- Having a genuine commitment to improve, and TTC arriving at the right time to provide a vehicle for change
- Ensuring that resources are available to help support change – both staff time and a small amount of funding
- Making small changes and learning from and celebrating their impact
- Using success stories as inspiring images of possibility and a way of reinforcing what matters
- Welcoming time banks and their members to spend time with their residents and explore new opportunities
- Applying rules flexibly around allowing activities to happen in and outside of the care setting
- Learning how timebanking can benefit residents and a wider reach of beneficiaries
- Senior managers who:
 - Have vision and commitment to see things through
 - Build the confidence of their staff in venturing outside the care setting
 - Recruit the right people, with values and an approach that are in line with Time to Connect, and nurture and encourage them
 - Model the approach that is expected from staff.

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