

The Impact of Time Banking in Scotland

TIME BANKING UK

TIME TO GIVE AND TAKE



In October 2007, Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) was commissioned by Time Banking UK to undertake research to investigate the impact of Time Banking in Scotland. The research, which engaged with five Scottish Time Banks, aimed to measure the impact of Time Banking on members in terms of their social, physical, economic, cultural and human capital. There was also a focus on distance travelled with regard to employment, education and training.

Background to the Research

- Time Banking UK have been funded by the Scottish Government to develop Time Banking in Scotland over a three year period and this includes a commitment to undertake a research and evaluation project about the impact of Time Banking at the end of this time.
- Time Banking UK has a joint venture agreement with VDS which aims to establish Time Banking as a key feature of volunteering in Scotland. This research and evaluation project will help to inform the future direction of Time Banking in Scotland.
- VDS has through its work with the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) the ability to apply the Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit evaluation framework which can establish a model approach for the evaluation of Time Banking.

Research or evaluation studies into Time Banking, at least in the UK is fairly limited. There are some reports however that shed light on the nature of participation in and benefits of, Time Banking. Time Banking projects sit within a sector known as the co-production sector and have underpinning principles that guide their evolution and purpose; these are the principles of co-sufficiency and co-production.

Methodology

In order to meet the aims of the project, a sample of five Time Banks was identified; a spread of organisation/locality based, rural/urban and those with and without a targeted client group. The sample also included a spread of newer and more established Time Banks.

The Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit (hereafter known as the Toolkit) was developed by the Institute for Volunteering Research with input from the London School of Economics, the University of East London and Roehampton University and is a pack of methods and instruments which measure and assess the effects of volunteering. The Toolkit was adapted for use in measuring the impact of Time Banking.

Focus groups were carried out with members of the five Time Banks. The focus groups had between five and seven participants in attendance, which meant that twenty-eight Time Bank members in total across the five study areas were consulted.

The Volunteers' Focus Group Topic Guide from the Toolkit was used to gather data on the gains and benefits Time Bank members associate with Time Banking. Additional questions were devised to capture data on distance traveled in terms of employment, training or education.

In addition to focus groups with members, all the Time Bank Brokers (n=5) in the specified sample were interviewed. Two of these brokers were regional mentors and/or coordinators. For these interviews the Core and Supplementary Staff Questionnaire pertaining to 'measuring the impact on the organisation' was adapted. This questionnaire was designed to assess the effects on Time Bank members as people who may both provide and receive Time Bank services.

Data Analysis

The focus group data was analysed using the Toolkit matrix, categorising impacts into the five capitals within the categories of; gains and benefits, training and support and effects of volunteering.

Time Broker interviews were recorded, transcribed and then analysed, again using the Toolkit matrix.

Time Banking provides a way to meet new people, learn new skills, increase knowledge of local services, and increase trust in others.



Findings

The research found that the level of impact of Time Banking across the five capitals was higher in the more established Time Banks. There was evidence to suggest that some of the indicators of economic capital, e.g. moving into training or employment, were only visible in the more established Time Banks. However, there was also evidence to suggest that the indicators of human and social capital, e.g. achieving something useful and doing more volunteering, were visible across all Time Banks. All interviewed Time Bank members were clear that culture was not considered to be relevant to Time Banking. Time Brokers felt that the local populations were represented to varying degrees, but that Time Banks were very inclusive, and did not view culture as an issue.

Varying levels of impact may also be attributed to the operational styles of each Time Bank rather than simply developmental stages. For example, some Time Banks didn't offer external training or social events which meant there was less physical capital in evidence than in those where they were provided.

Across the five Time Banks, there were an array of activities taking place via member exchanges. These seemed to take three forms; one to one activities such as gardening or transporting, one to one learning such as cooking or guitar lessons, and group learning such as Italian tuition or knitting.

Some of the Time Banks had Time Brokers who were paid staff, while others had volunteer brokers. This was suited to local circumstance, but it was agreed across all Time Banks that this role was key in supporting members and maintaining morale. Members were encouraged to drop in to Time Bank premises which encouraged discussion between members, and was often cited as a way of generating ideas for activities.

“They say ‘I can do all these things’, when you then say to someone else, this person could be a match for you, they say ‘I didn’t know they could do that’ and those people know each other”

“People see you as a failure because you are unwell; they think you can’t do things. I didn’t think I had much to offer but as I had offered sewing I was asked if I could take up trousers and now I do this”

“It’s always helpful for other people to see economic value, but there is so much more to being involved with the Time Bank in terms of sense of wellbeing, and being involved with the community – you can’t measure stuff like that”

“Time Bank teaches people that they are valuable members of society with things to offer”

Physical Capital

- Time Banking increases individuals knowledge of the skills they, and other members of the community, have.
- Individuals are able to use their accrued time credits to ‘buy’ informal learning on a one-to-one or group basis, as well as more traditional exchanges.
- By being a Time Bank member, and becoming part of a network, individuals can gain more knowledge of local services that they can access.
- The Time Broker can be a key component in ensuring positive Time Bank experiences; encouraging members and celebrating achievement. The impact appears greatest where this is a full time, paid post.

Human Capital

- Networking of Time Bank members can provide a means of developing new ideas of activities.
- Time Bank members can feel that they have ‘achieved something useful’ through their activities.
- Respondents who had lost self confidence through unemployment or ill health felt that Time Banking has increased their confidence.
- Some Time Bank members felt that they had developed job related skills through Time Banking which would help them in the labour market.

Economic Capital

- Time Brokers felt that the value of Time Banking went beyond economic calculations based on equivalent wages.
- There is a requirement that Time Banking be well resourced and accessible to achieve maximum impact.

Social Capital

- Relationships between Time Brokers and Time Bank members appear important in the development of Time Banks.
- Time Bank members recruit new members through word of mouth, acting as ambassadors in the local area.
- Time Banking can increase individuals’ sense of being part of the community and raises their awareness of local activities.
- Individuals involved in Time Banking felt that they had more trust in other people as a result of Time Banking.
- Many Time Bank members have undertaken more volunteering as a result of being involved in the Time Bank.

“Everyone respects each other, where they are at. They accept them for who they are”

“One person had language lessons because she wanted to apply for a job as a speech therapy assistant, but sign language was desirable, so she wanted to put down that she was having lessons, so she got the job and it helped”



Cultural Capital

- Some Time Brokers felt that membership of the Time Bank did not represent the wider population of the local area as fewer people in full time employment become involved.
- Time Bank can provide opportunities for different cultures to work and learn together.
- Time Bank members felt strongly that ethnicity and religion were not a consideration in Time Banking.

Distance Travelled

- Time Banking can help people move into paid employment either directly or indirectly.
- Many Time Bank members have had the opportunity of further training or education as a result of being involved in the Time Bank.
- There was recognition that moving on to employment, education or training was not relevant to everyone, and so Time Brokers sought to support those who wanted to while not pushing those who didn't.

Conclusions

The research set out to measure the impact of Time Banking on members and to focus on any impact that Time Banking had had on moving on to education, employment or training. It is clear that Time Banking can impact on members beyond the practical level of having their garden done or learning a language. Time Banking provides a way to meet new people, learn new skills, increase knowledge of local services, and increase trust in others.

Increased self-confidence was a notable impact on those who had experienced ill-health or unemployment. There were Time Bank members who had made use of the skills and confidence gained to move into employment or education, supported by the Time Bank. Many had also gone on to further volunteering roles, making use of the networks and skills gained as Time Bank members.

There is evidence that the Time Broker role is a key component in ensuring positive experiences; by knowing all Time Bank members, they are able to identify the skills of individual members and to encourage skills development. In the more established Time Banks, the Time Brokers help members to access local services and assist them in finding opportunities to learn new skills outwith the Time Bank. There was evidence to suggest that the impact of this was greatest when there was a full time, paid Time Broker.

References

Institute for Volunteering Research (2004) Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit. IVR. London.



This is a summary of the research findings;
the full research document is available for download from www.vds.org.uk

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www.timebanking.org

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