School for Public Health Research

Evaluating the Public Health Outcomes of the Cambridgeshire Time Credits Project

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Background & Rationale

- Spice is a social enterprise that developed the Time Credits model and runs programmes across the UK with local councils, community development organisations, housing associations, health and social care providers and schools.
- Established in 2014, Cambridgeshire Time Credits is funded by Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridge Housing Society.
- Spice Time Credit systems support people in giving their time to strengthen communities and to design and deliver better services.
- Time Credits recognise that everybody has something to give that can make a difference in the place they live and are an effective tool for encouraging people who may be new to volunteering.
- In exchange for their contribution, they 'earn' printed Time Credit notes, one for every hour they give, which they can then 'spend' on a range of leisure and other opportunities in a network of Spice partners across the UK.

Benefits of time-based currencies - Existing research has associated participation with numerous beneficial outcomes, including:

- Improved health, wellbeing, skills and confidence
- An efficient tool for engaging people often excluded from mainstream economy
- Help to develop more inclusive, cohesive and resilient communities

Much of this evidence, however, is drawn from small-scale, qualitative studies or surveys using a self-recall method.

Aims & Objectives

- To address this knowledge gap by rigorous, independent evaluation to enable more accurate estimates of the extent of benefits arising from time-based currencies.
- To analyse the potential of time credits to address public health issues by:
- Reducing loneliness and social exclusion
- Improving wellbeing for participants
- Increasing community cohesion and social capital











EARNING (VOLUNTEERING) Improved awareness of medical SPENDING Increased social participation Opportunities to feel needed / capable group activities of making a positive contribution More active lifestyle Increased physical activity Improved self Work Increased social confidence and skills experience contacts / reduced Reduction in Improved physical health substance misuse with life and self mproved mental health Increased labour market **POSITIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES / REDUCTION** IN HEALTH INEQUALITIES Reduction in Services such as libraries retained in spite of funding Improved services client needs better Environments that facilitate more active lifestyles delivery of services More cohesive More resilient communities Safer communities

Conceptual Underpinning

- Health benefits accrue in various ways through several different pathways, largely through opportunities to engage in meaningful activities. Typically cited positive outcomes associated with participation in time-based currencies include:
 - enhanced self-esteem, confidence and skills
 - expansion of social networks and friendships, and increased community involvement
 - social integration and community self-efficacy; social inclusion
 - improved health, wellbeing and quality of life (2-7).
- Many of the benefits are believed to arise from the reciprocal nature of time-based currencies and its guiding principle of co-production.
- Time Credits are inclusive and provide everybody in society the opportunity to be active citizens and share their experience and skills to make positive contributions that foster a sense of inclusiveness and help shape their own community.

Methodology

- Mixed methods research design using both quantitative and qualitative tools
- Incorporating co-production in the evaluation methodology
- Interviews with key stakeholders
- Literature review, including scoping review of time credits and health outcomes
- Secondary data analysis
- Developing a programme theory of change
- National survey of time exchange projects
- Longitudinal survey with individual new time credit members using EQ-5D
- Face to face interviews with individual time credit members (20-25)
- Survey and face to face interviews with partner organisations (15-20)
- Face to face interviews with local people not part of the project
- Ethnographic methods including visual ethnographies and participant observation
- Focus groups (2-3)

Public Involvement

- Collaboration with the Cambridgeshire County Council Community Engagement Team, Spice, and the Cambridge Institute of Public Health
- Steering group with Time Credits partner organisations and members who volunteer and earn Time Credits

Outputs / Dissemination & Knowledge Transfer

- Five Working Papers, each of which focuses on a separate aspect of the research
- Findings report 1: national level survey of time currency schemes
- Findings report 2: ethnographic research
- Findings disseminated in a range of accessible formats, e.g. a film, photography
- User guide aimed at local authorities, those commissioning and delivering health and social care services and those involved in establishing time credit projects
- Peer reviewed journal articles
- Evaluation Facebook page

References

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