

# Health outcomes of place based approaches to building community cohesion: Time Credits in England

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# Structure

- Time Credits
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# Time Credits

- Time Credits are a way of recognising and celebrating the time people spend volunteering with a local organisation, community group, volunteer group or a statutory sector service provider.
- 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<sup>1</sup>.
- Evidence of benefits of time-based currencies drawn from small-scale, qualitative studies or using a self-recall method.



# The research

- National Institute for Health Research (NIHR).
- School for Public Health Research (SPHR) Public Health Practice Evaluation Scheme (PHPES).
- Evaluation collaboration with Spice, Cambridgeshire County Council and CHS Group.
- Research collaboration between the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (CCHPR) and the Cambridge Institute for Public Health (CIPH).
- Spice is a social enterprise and developed the Time Credits model in the UK.

# Time Credits in Wisbech

- Wisbech, England - area with above average levels of deprivation and a range of challenging social issues.
- Market town – agriculture and food processing – migration.



## Time Credits in Wisbech

- 17 local organisations where people can earn Time Credits.
- Include schools, homeless hostels, children's centres, adventure playground, project supporting people into employment.
- Activities include reading with children, after school clubs, gardening, office work, working in a café and kitchen, litter picking.
- Spend activities include gym, swimming, cinema, beauty treatments, social events, theatre tickets.

# **Key objectives of the evaluation**

## **Key aim**

To evaluate the outcomes of the Time Credit project in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, with a focus on health outcomes.

## **The primary objective**

To analyse the potential of Time Credits to address public health issues by:

1. Reducing loneliness and social exclusion
2. Improving wellbeing
3. Increasing community cohesion and social capital

# Methods overview

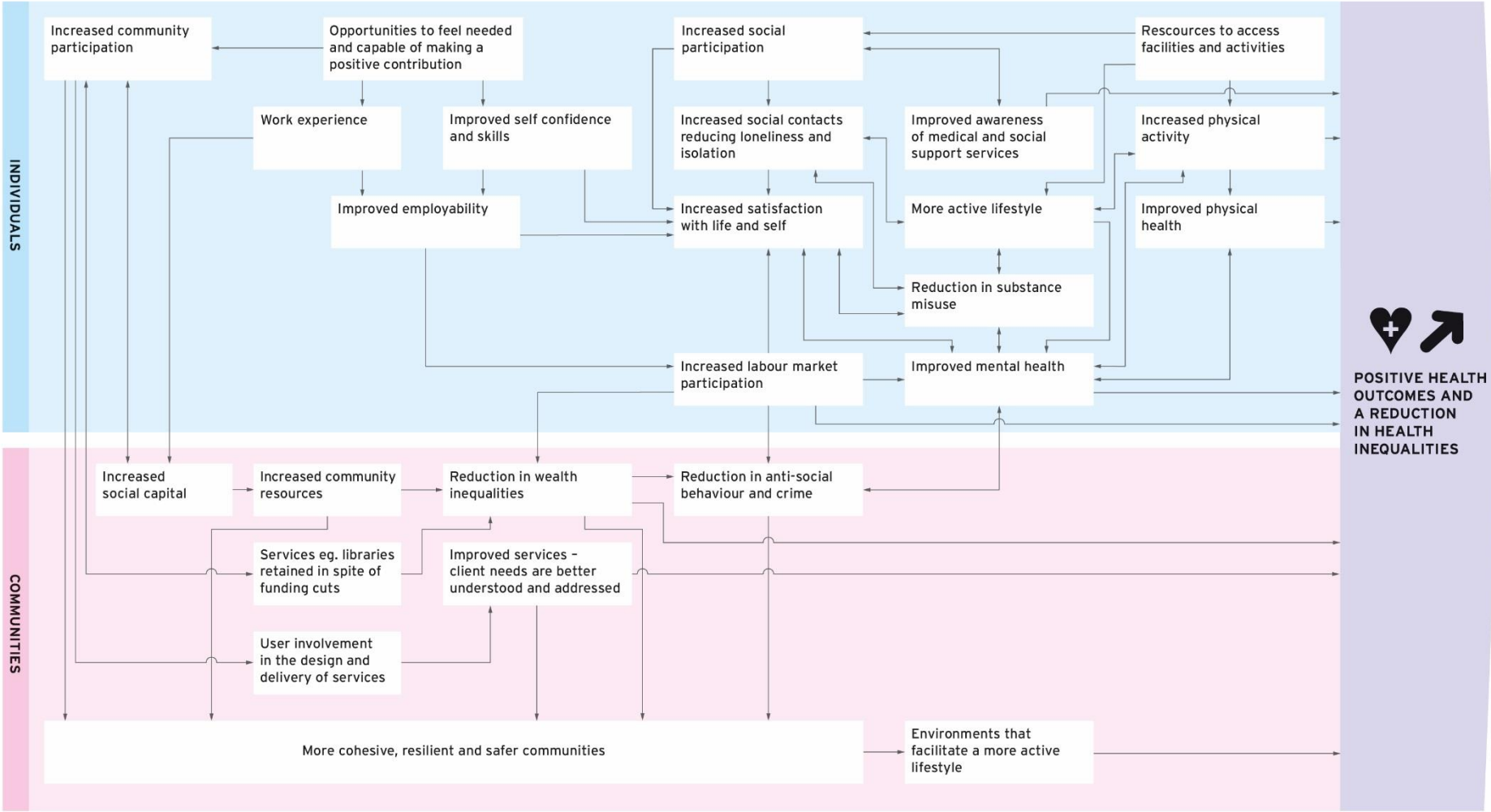
- Mixed methods research design using both quantitative and qualitative methodological tools.
- Incorporating co-production in the evaluation methodology.
  - Interviews with key stakeholders
  - Literature review, including scoping review of Time Credits and health outcomes
  - Secondary data analysis
  - Developing a theory of change
  - National survey time exchange projects
  - Longitudinal survey with individual new Time Credit members
  - Face to face interviews with individual Time Credit members
  - Survey and face to face interviews with partner organisations
  - Face to face interviews with local people not part of the project
  - Ethnographic methods including visual ethnographies and participant observation
  - Focus groups



# How Time Credits can lead to positive health outcomes

- Assume positive health outcomes emerge through a causal process - range of 'lower level' outcomes (or 'waypoints') affect health and wellbeing, potentially across the life-course<sup>2</sup>.
- Outcomes may be direct or indirect and benefits may accrue to individuals, to the wider community, or to both.
- Pathways to health outcomes can be complex.
- Some activities impact health directly - spend Time Credits to go swimming or to the gym - health benefit immediate and directly linked to the activity.
- Also indirectly - using Time Credits to access health and leisure facilities - expand social networks and reduce loneliness, leading to better mental health.

HOW EARNING AND SPENDING TIME CREDITS CAN LEAD TO POSITIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES



## HOW EARNING AND SPENDING TIME CREDITS CAN LEAD TO POSITIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES



## Case study – ‘Alice’

- Career working with children, poor health kept Alice from working for nearly a decade.
- Time Credits made it possible to return to working with children at the Orchards School - something she loves doing.
- School gave her a formal paid job.
- Volunteering has given her an opportunity to share her skills and to make use of her previous experience and training. Most importantly, she become a valued member of a community:
  - *“When I went to the first Time Credit meeting, at that point, I never ever had anybody come visit me... the only people I spoke to were my neighbours. I always worried, because I am diabetic, if I’m ill that nobody would find me. Now, I go to that school every day, I may go in sad but I come out with a smile on my face... I finally got somebody, who, if I don’t turn up at school they will come looking to see if I’m alright<sup>3</sup>”.*

## Case study – ‘Peter’

- Lives in a Ferry hostel halfway house and volunteers in the Ferry project kitchen – came from prison.
- Now volunteers most days and treats it like a job.
- Learnt new skills, found a new passion.
- Feels like he’s giving something back, enjoys it, sense of achievement – hopefully route into employment.
- Spending Time Credits – rebuild relationship with wife and daughter:
  - *“We are on benefits and the money only stretches so far ... using the Time Credits, it gives me enjoyment to take my little girl to the movies with what I have earned. If it wasn’t for the Time Credits, we wouldn’t be doing that many things with her. And because we go out more, we are closer as a family.”*

# Evidence of positive impact

- Increase confidence, sense of achievement, self-belief.
- Skills, routine, employability.
- Active lifestyle, access to activities by spending Time Credits.
  - *“It gets them up and moving. It is a bonus for some people just to get up. It is good to be on their feet all day. Sarah said that she is too busy when she is here to go out for a fag except on her break and so she has really cut down a lot on smoking. She is more confident. People at the beginning say “I won’t be able to take order, I can’t talk to customers, I’m too shy”. Then after a while they start saying “I’ll do that”. But they decide to take these next steps. Sarah now answers the phone and has no problem talking to the public. You see a lot of change when people volunteer<sup>4</sup>”.*
  - *“She is always in a happy mood when she is here, she always has a smile on her face. It doesn’t faze her when we are busy. She enjoys what she is doing”.*
  - *“Some people wouldn’t have been given a chance somewhere else. It puts barriers up. They have nothing to worry about here. It gives people the chance they need. That’s what people appreciate”.*

# Research challenges

- Moving beyond qualitative evidence – impact – but not necessarily in the world of public health.
- Evidencing outcomes – longitudinal research using validated health scales in online survey.
- Co-productive research.

# Conclusions

- Ongoing research.
- Simple concept – but a complex intervention.
- Challenges and opportunities of evidencing public health outcomes.
- Beneficial outcomes - improved health, wellbeing, skills and confidence.
- Time Credits provide the opportunity to be active citizens, to share experiences and skills and make positive contributions that foster a sense of inclusiveness and help shape own community.
- Efficient tool for engaging people to develop more inclusive, cohesive and resilient communities.



# References

- <sup>1</sup>Markkanen, S. and Burgess, G. (2015) Introduction to time banking and Time Credits. Cambridge: Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research.
- <sup>2</sup>Markkanen, S. and Burgess, G. (2016) The potential for Time Credits to generate public health outcomes – a conceptual model. Cambridge: Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research.
- <sup>3</sup>Burgess, G. and Markkanen, S. (forthcoming) Wisbech Time Credits – individual member case studies. Cambridge: Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research.
- <sup>4</sup>Burgess, G. (forthcoming) Wisbech Time Credits – partner organisation case studies. Cambridge: Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research.

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