

## Who should read this?

This guide draws out some of the lessons from the final evaluation of Time to Connect (TTC). It is intended for people who live and work in care settings such as residential and nursing homes, or supported living services.

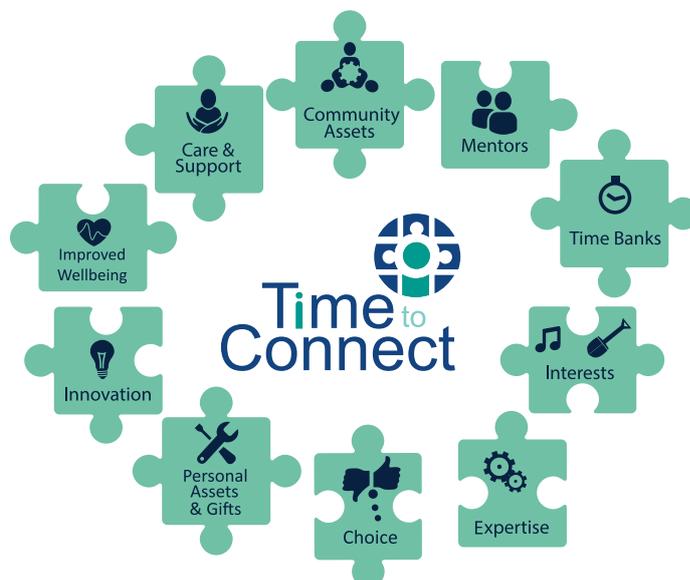
## What is Time to Connect?

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

Time to Connect aims to help people living in care settings to play a greater part in the life of their community. It is a partnership initiative, supported by the Big Lottery Fund, between the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) and Timebanking UK (TBUK).

The project is supporting care staff and their managers to think and act differently about inclusion in their organisations by using a range of tried and tested 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. This animation explains how timebanking works:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYzIAHmAnk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYzIAHmAnk)



## Why is it important to do this?

Inclusion means that people with disabilities and older people have the same opportunities and choices as everyone else, for example to learn, to have friendships, hobbies and the chance to do the things that bring meaning, enjoyment and fun to life. But when people move into a care setting such as a residential home, connections to the community can be broken, leading to feelings of isolation and a poor quality of life. Time to Connect aims to break this cycle by helping people find or rediscover their passions and reconnect with the community once again. J's story, below, shows how this can work.

### 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.'**

## What difference can Time to Connect make to older people and people with disabilities?

*"The main impact has been friendships (for the people we support). (If the sessions led by the time bank didn't exist) I'd be less motivated to get going and mix with people."*

*"One of the men we support had been doing the same activity every Wednesday for years. Now he's doing a range of things, for example sports. There's been a reduction in his challenging behaviour as a result."*

J's story shows the difference that this way of working can make. 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. We found that peoples' lives were improved in the following ways:

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

## What difference can it make to people working in care settings?

*“Carers going out saw the impact it had on residents. For example, someone who doesn’t sleep slept really well after going out.”*

*“Support workers are thinking more creatively about activities, making connections between what we like doing and what the people we support like doing.”*

*“I was a support worker. The coaching and tools (from Time to Connect) helped me be more assertive and more managerial.”*

Working in this way can massively improve the working lives of people who work in care settings as well as the people they support. For example, care staff told us about:

- Seeing the difference that TTC makes to the people they support, from better health and fitness to much greater happiness with their lives, as described above
- Learning new skills and testing out new tools and frameworks to guide thinking and practice
- Being able to work more creatively and to have fun
- Feeling more confident, motivated and satisfied.

# What can I do?

## If you are a care worker...

- Find out about the passions of the people you support. Sometimes this can help if you have these conversations with them out in the community, when they can already see that it's possible to be out and about.
- Find out what's available in the local neighbourhood that might benefit the people you support – from clubs, classes and social groups, to galleries and museums, pubs and cafes.
  - Find out if there is a local time bank that might want to work with you to help connect the people you support into the community.
  - Look at the tools included in the TTC web page, below, and test them out with someone you support.
  - Make small changes, for example if you have a spare half hour, try something different that you and the people you support enjoy – make a cake, sing a song or go for a walk. Build people's confidence by going out in stages, for example simply go for a drive first, then a walk, then build to going out to a café or community venue.
  - Tell others, including your managers and your colleagues, about the difference you're making to residents' lives.
  - Use Facebook or other social media platforms and local media to celebrate what you're doing and connect with community groups, activities and events.
  - Create a buzz with other care homes in your organisation. Share what you are learning and doing, encourage and support them to try it too.

## If you are a manager...

The evaluation of TTC found that there's a much greater chance of success if managers behave in certain ways, below. As one manager told us it was about having a positive, 'can-do' mindset: ***“if you want the absolute best for your residents (you think about) what will that take and what would that look like”***. A great manager will:

- 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 TTC, and nurture and encourage them
- Model the approach that is expected from staff.

## If you are a resident, or a family member...

- Make sure that the care setting knows about your history and your interests.
- Ask for help from care staff to find interesting and useful things for you to do in the community.
- Be aware that you can go out and do the things you enjoy.
- Remember that people living in care settings can and do contribute to their communities, as G's story, on the next page, shows.

## G's story:

At a time when World War 2 was receiving a great deal of media attention, G, an older Belgian woman in the early stages of dementia, commented to one of the care staff ***'I have so much to tell about the war. I could speak to young people.'***

The carer mentioned this to a teacher at the school gate when she was picking up her grand daughter from primary school, and they agreed to arrange a session at morning assembly for G to come in and speak to a group of 9-10 year olds. The carer asked her manager if this would be all right – the manager's response was ***'Why not? You know the teacher, you know G – you go ahead and organise it.'***

On the day, the carer helped G attend. G told her story so well that the children were captivated, and afterwards each of them wrote a note thanking her and telling her how much it had meant to them to hear about her wartime experiences. As soon as she returned to the service, G told the manager all about her morning, saying ***'I did it, I did it!'***



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