

Interim Evaluation

Time to Connect

Key Messages

Authors: Jane Carrier, Carol Clifford, Victoria Mason-Angelow,
Naomi Harflett, Yasmin Jennings, Helen Bown, Becky Strike

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1. What is Time to Connect?

Time to Connect 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.

Time to Connect is working for three years in two phases of approximately 15 months each, with selected residential care settings for older people or people with a learning disability. This document summarises the findings of the interim evaluation of Time to Connect, which covers the first phase of the project. Phase 1 worked with settings in Greater Manchester, Gloucestershire, and Lambeth and Southwark.

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.

Phase 1 of Time to Connect was seeking to achieve the following outcomes:

Older people and people with learning disabilities participating in Time to Connect:

- Have greater choice and control over the things they do, who they do them with, and the places they go.
- Have more social connections, new friends, increased interaction within the community and reduced isolation.
- Have improved wellbeing and happiness, and value themselves and their contribution.

In care settings participating in Time to Connect:

- Staff acquire new skills and knowledge and are enabled to be creative in their role of supporting people, leading to increased job satisfaction.
- Staff attitudes about what is possible for people are changed, leading to changes in practice across the care setting.

Time banks participating in Time to Connect:

- Have an increase in membership and diversity of members, and a better and broader bank of skills through the contribution of older people and people with learning

Time to Connect planned to achieve these outcomes by:

- Identifying staff members to be community champions, who NDTi train in using a range of tools and interventions that have been shown to promote greater community inclusion.
- Each champion directly working with people they support and, ideally, training other staff to do the same, to identify their interests, wishes, skills and assets and to plan and support relevant community connections.
- Working with senior managers to identify what working practices, systems and cultures they will change so that staff are better able to help achieve community inclusion.
- TBUK supporting local time bank brokers to develop their ability to help people with support needs to contribute their own skills and assets to the time bank and to build community connections with other people, including time bank members.

The evaluation included a series of interviews with people contributing to or affected by the project, as well as gathering change stories which capture its impact. The evaluation team also carried out three observation and case study visits to care settings taking part in Time to Connect.

The evaluation was designed to:

- Measure the impact of the project on the lives of those living in care settings participating in the project.
- Identify 'what works' in the delivery of the project (e.g. the role of the different organisations involved, staff attitude and approach, delivery and approach to support for community mentors) to facilitate or impede positive outcomes.
- Use learning to support subsequent phases and roll out of the project and inform how success can be replicated in care settings beyond the project.

This document summarises:

- The early impact that Time to Connect is having on the groups and organisations who are involved
- The factors that help Time to Connect to achieve its outcomes
- The barriers to change
- How phase 2 of the project is reflecting the findings of this interim evaluation
- Two illustrative case studies



2. What impact is Time to Connect having?

The interim evaluation found that Time to connect is having an early impact in a number of different ways, in some cases expected, but unanticipated in others.

Impact on older people and people with a learning disability

The interim evaluation captured many change stories about the impact that Time to Connect is already having on the lives of individual older people and people with a learning disability. These provide strong evidence of outcomes in three key areas:

- Reduced isolation
- Increased confidence
- Better connections

The evaluation team also identified a small number of examples where people are contributing to the community, sometimes via a time bank, but in other cases through informal relationships.

Finally, the evaluation also found examples of mutual support and genuine friendships growing out of Time to Connect, for example between time bank members and older people, that were not there before the project started. A selection of illustrative examples is below.

An older woman was already going swimming (before Time to Connect) to a disabled only swimming group. Through Time to Connect the member of staff organised for the resident to join in with a mainstream, 50+ swimming group. The swim leader didn't have any preconceived ideas about what the resident could and couldn't do and found she can do more in this new group. She was initially supported by 2 members of staff but now only needs one and has increased her confidence in swimming through this process.

For F (time bank lead), the most striking success is P, a former Paralympian gold medallist. When F first met him, he was isolated and depressed, but through Time to Connect he is now a time bank member and has started working with people with a learning disability or dementia to tell them about his sporting history and show them his medals. He has also had lunch with a couple of time bank members. He has always wanted to write a book, and F has found a CNN journalist who is going to help him with this. *He has a new network of friends.*

An older woman from one service took part in a walk organised by the time bank around the local park and museum (where they have links). Through discussions it turned out that the resident was linked to the inventor of the lawnmower. Following conversations with the family and museum to verify the details, the Education Officer met with the resident, she was invited to a presentation. The Care Home hadn't been aware of this connection. It changed how care staff looked at and thought of the woman. *There was a change from "this is a woman in a care home" to "this is a woman with history."*

(The time bank organised a gardening session at a service). I asked members for pots, and we had plants (donated by) a nursery I know. At 2pm there was nobody. At 2.45 there was nobody, just the time bank people. Suddenly they all came. Some brought pictures of their former gardens. People were sharing memories, building new friendships. Some people who never took to each other before started speaking because they found common interests. People with dementia had something to look after. It was remarkable. (Time bank lead)

CQC has also recognised the impact that Time to Connect is having on people's lives, as demonstrated below. The service in which these examples took place, which is provided by Certitude in South London, has improved its CQC rating. The senior manager involved is certain that the organisation's participation in Time to Connect has contributed to the improvement.

The registered manager gave us some examples of how the Time to Connect project had brought real benefit to the person and their community which proved to be a mutually beneficial arrangement. One person with high support needs and had previously been in institutions before moving to his supported flat was labelled as a person who could not socialise. In order to facilitate a positive relationship with the neighbours, care workers supported the person to initially accept the neighbour's parcels, this developed further into both parties doing some gardening for each other and invitations to tea. This meant the person was empowered to become an active member of their community after previously being marginalised. Another person enjoyed art and after their care support worker had been trained in Time to Connect, was encouraged to put paintings on sale at local summer parties, resulting in some sales which made the person very proud and enabled them to fund their own art materials¹.

Impact on care staff

Care workers felt the (Time to Connect) training gave them more confidence in helping people to become active citizens, build better circles of relationship and connecting with the community. A care worker gave feedback that this training had boosted their confidence, and they felt empowered to try more things with people. (CQC)

The evaluation found numerous examples of increased confidence and motivation among care staff, as noted by CQC in an inspection of one of the participating care settings, above, as well as changes to attitudes and behaviour.

There is no doubt that many staff are thinking and acting differently. For example, some described their increased awareness of inclusion, their use of the tools and techniques they had learned and gave examples of actively seeking opportunities in the community for the people they support.

Some different conversations are taking place with residents that explore their history, passions and the assets they bring. These conversations were not happening regularly before, so in some cases, Time to Connect seems to have increased a person-centred focus on people's lives, past and present, their interests and hobbies.

Impact on care organisations

(The organisation) is committed to delivering outstanding services. Partnerships like this add value to the services we provide without costing the local authority anything. (Senior manager)

Time to Connect will leave a legacy of community connections... It's allowed us to have more of a presence. (Manager)

The first phase of Time to Connect did not identify the outcomes it hoped to achieve for care organisations, but in fact, it was clear that they also saw the benefits. These include:

- better links with other organisations, businesses and services in the area
- Time to Connect providing a platform for wider culture change
- demonstrating a commitment to inclusion to external stakeholders, such as CQC and commissioners.

Where time banks are closely involved, with members and staff supporting care services, Time to Connect has also increased capacity and created new opportunities for residents, as well as offering deep knowledge of the communities in which they operate.

As noted above, CQC has commented very positively on the impact of Time to Connect in a recent inspection, both for people with a learning disability and for staff. One organisation has improved its CQC rating and the senior manager involved is certain that the organisation's participation in Time to Connect has contributed to the improvement.

Impact on time banks

Time to Connect has built skills and understanding among time bank staff and members in a number of ways. Through the project, a total of 1367.5 recorded hours of social action had taken place by mid-2018. These many hours of activity, some taking place in groups, others one to one, have not only benefited the many older people and people with a learning disability who took part. They have

also enabled time banks to strengthen their links with the local care sector and to increase the skills and confidence of time banks in working with people with high support needs.

The project has provided time and resources to time banks to facilitate developments creatively and flexibly in new ways. The development of Unlimited Potential, a time bank in Manchester within a care home, is the first of its kind (see case study 2, below).

Case study 1 shows that individual community-based time bank members also benefited from the genuinely supportive relationships they built with older people.

Impact on the wider community

The interim evaluation of Time to Connect found a small number of unanticipated examples where the wider community has been touched by the project. For example, local children are building relationships with older people, as described in case study 2, below, increasing understanding across generations. Galleries and museums are starting to welcome groups of people they may previously have struggled to attract. Although these examples are small scale and fragile, together they suggest that Time to Connect has the potential to affect communities in unexpected ways, by helping to make communities more supportive and welcoming places.



3. What are the factors that helped?

The care settings and organisations where Time to Connect is making most difference share a number of critical success factors, which relate primarily to the qualities and approach of leaders and staff. These include:

- **An organisational culture and strategy that genuinely sees inclusion as an important goal**
- **Strong leadership from senior managers that models and follows through on this, for example by resourcing the work adequately**
- **Care staff who are energetic, enthusiastic and rooted in their local community**
- **Some level of continuity and stability of managers and care staff**
- **Resourceful, creative and patient approaches from time bank staff**

In addition, good staff are more likely to achieve change if certain types of support are available, for example:

- **Simple, tried and tested tools and techniques for working differently with the people they support**
- **Flexible support and training that is targeted to the circumstances and experience of each care setting**
- **Opportunities to meet with peers from other organisations and settings to solve problems and celebrate successes together**



4. What are the challenges?

The interim evaluation highlighted some early examples of the difference Time to Connect is starting to make, but these changes are not yet embedded or systematic, and rely on the efforts of a few exceptional people.

It is clear that a number of issues influenced the set-up of the project, such as patchy communication about Time to Connect within and across organisations and the extent to which training was targeted to individual care settings. However, two overarching contextual issues are affecting the progress that Time to Connect has been able to achieve to date:

A lack of capacity and turbulence in the care system

It's a struggle for Champions to find time to have in depth conversations and to investigate community options. (NDTi lead)

People have care duties, they're overworked, understaffed. This isn't going to be the priority. This is a secondary thing. (Manager)

The interim evaluation of Time to Connect has highlighted the lack of capacity in the care system to deliver change in culture and practice in a sustainable and

systematic way. There is no doubt that the situation has worsened significantly, even since Time to Connect was initially designed.

The over-riding priority for care staff is to carry out tasks to keep people safe, with a perception that they have little opportunity to do much more than this, so any other activity is seen as additional and discretionary. For example, in most services, staffing levels are not sufficiently flexible to accommodate unhurried conversations about people's passions or aspirations, or to support people

to go out. For the care staff involved in Time to Connect, no additional time was allocated to cover this at the outset, so some staff were working on the project in their own time.

Staff turnover was also very high in many of the services involved, with some depending on agency staff, who could find it difficult to develop the trusting relationships on which Time to Connect relies.

These relentless pressures on the sector meant that sustained engagement with Time to Connect was difficult to achieve. Many of the organisations which had initially been committed and prepared to take part subsequently went on to experience a very high level of organisational change, at most levels. Senior managers who had been very supportive left, so Time to Connect no longer had a champion who understood the rationale for the project and was committed to making change happen. Care staff who had received training also left, or changed role, which left the project with fewer skilled-up and enthusiastic front-line staff to act as community champions. In one participating service, all the staff who had been trained as community champions left within a few months.

The pace and complexity of transformational change

Some people are very able here (in the extra care service), but outside it is not at all the same. (TB lead)

It's a slow burner. It's just gathering pace. (Senior Manager)

Many interviewees commented that transformational change such as Time to Connect is inevitably a slow process. This was compounded by the financial pressures and lack of stability in the care sector and capacity issues as outlined above.

But also, for the people who Time to Connect aims to benefit, change can be difficult and needs to be managed sensitively. Interviewees reported that some people can be anxious about leaving a familiar environment, while others find noise and being among unknown people a stressful experience. People's health can fluctuate from day to day, or decline over time, which means that plans need to be fluid, or that people cannot continue to take part.

This means that change will be slow to achieve, and patience is required, as described below.

My thoughts on community connections, having spent time with M, is it can take time. To think about yourself, how you see yourself and how you fit into the community can be difficult. I think M was able to, given time to reflect, admit to herself she was not the person she used to be but importantly she could still see the value in herself as she is now and to be able to see how much people still value her. (Community Champion)



5. What next?

The design of Phase 2 of Time to Connect is reflecting the findings of the interim evaluation. For example, there is now a stronger emphasis on working at an organisational level, including with managers, rather than assuming that individual care workers have the time and organisational support to act as change agents. While Time to Connect is continuing to support care workers to develop their skills in inclusion, training is now delivered to their managers, too.

Participating time banks are continuing to develop and share their experience and learning, supported by TBUK to develop the skills and knowledge of the time bank movement as a whole.

At the same time, the project is continuing to explore flexible and creative ways that the contribution of people living in care settings can be recognised and encouraged.



6. Two illustrative case studies

Cheviot Gardens, Lambeth, South London

Cheviot Gardens is an extra care housing scheme for people over 55 and people with dementia. It is made up of 84 flats of mixed tenure provided by Notting Hill Housing Trust. The service is working with a well-established South London time bank, Paxton Green time bank, who facilitate fortnightly sessions bringing together community-based time bank members and older people.

The attractive shared space at Cheviot Gardens is the collective asset contributed by the residents. To date, all the sessions have taken place there, although since the interim evaluation was carried out, older people are now starting to go out into the community together.

The older people who attend decide how they want to spend the sessions, which have included gardening and taking part in games and other fun activities that stimulate coordination and cognition. The design encourages participation by people with different support needs and the atmosphere is warm and positive.

There are many individual examples of change among participants, including both residents of Cheviot Gardens and the time bank volunteers who attend, with new, mutually supportive friendships developing as a result.

For example, one time bank member has befriended a resident, P, and they spend time exchanging news and sharing photos before each session. At the same time, P always speaks to another time bank member, who experiences anxiety and depression, boosting his confidence before the session - *She is acting as a supportive granny.*

Time to Connect is helping to build a sense of community within Cheviot Gardens. Some people who have made new friends through the group had previously seldom left their flat. Over time, the group of older people who are involved in the sessions has become stronger, with some older people initially dropping in for five minutes, but after several months, staying for the entire afternoon. In some cases, older people who had observed several sessions, over time started participating actively in activities, and interacting with others when they had previously remained silent.

Although so far, the time bank has focused on facilitating sessions within Cheviot Gardens, older people are making plans to go out together, for example to a local art gallery. This has proved to be difficult to organise, primarily because of sickness or other reasons why the older people were reluctant to leave the service on the appointed day.

The time bank lead is confident that over time, older people's confidence will increase, and going out will become more common.

The positive outcomes that older people are experiencing have relied on the creativity, resourcefulness and patience of the time bank lead.

Alongside the time bank sessions, the activities coordinator is working with residents to discover their passion and broker connections between residents. For example, he found two opera enthusiasts who lived in adjacent flats but who had never spoken to each other.

The key challenge for Cheviot Gardens has been engaging managers and care staff in Time to Connect as they have so little capacity to do so at present.

EachStep Blackley, Greater Manchester

EachStep, Blackley is a residential and nursing home for 60 people with dementia, managed by Community Integrated Care (CiC)

Time to Connect had a difficult start, as the service's involvement was delayed by the closure of the local time bank, which had planned to support EachStep Blackley. Replacing this support proved to be difficult and time-consuming, but project partners managed to negotiate a solution by setting up an in-house time bank, which is the first of its kind. The time bank is being developed in partnership with Unlimited Potential, a Salford-based social enterprise that has a track record in developing and supporting timebanking. Unlimited Potential has seconded a part-time member of staff to EachStep

Blackley, who is working closely with the service's activities coordinator to develop the service's community connections.

To date, the focus has been on community mapping to build a comprehensive picture of the assets that exist in the local community. As a result, the time bank is starting to develop organisation to organisation exchange, for example with the local primary school.

A group of children has already visited EachStep, Blackley to read poetry to a group of older people with dementia. One resident commented ***'It's been lovely and I've enjoyed every moment of it.'***

The school also anticipates benefits for the children, firstly in building their confidence in reading aloud, and also in developing friendships with the older people:

My hope is (the children) will build relationships. It's about getting the children used to being around older people, building their skills. (Teacher)

Other unanticipated benefits of Time to Connect have included a higher profile and stronger links between the service and the community through carrying out the mapping exercise. For example, EachStep Blackley are in discussion with Salford City FC (the club part- owned by former Manchester United players, which has strong community links), which is located close by. They are offering family tickets to residents, to enable them to attend matches with family or friends, but it is not yet clear what EachStep Blackley's reciprocal offer might be.

In addition to the project's difficult start, the key challenge has been the high support needs of residents, which can present barriers to getting out into the community. Staff have struggled to make the Time to Connect model work for their residents, and after much discussion with their local NDTi lead, have decided to focus on organisation-to-organisation exchange at this stage.