

# Gateshead Link Up

LinkAge Plus

## Timebank (Age Concern)

Age Concern Gateshead Timebank is a new community participation project delivered by Age Concern Gateshead and focused on older people. Through a model of mutual community support, participants use their skills and time to benefit those around them. Participants receive a one-hour Timebank credit for every hour of time they give, which they can cash in for help and support themselves. The model differs from standard volunteering in that the participants themselves control the delivery of services by electing what skills they want to offer, where, when and how often.

---

# Timebank (Age Concern)

## Objective

The objectives of the Timebank are:

- to promote independence by developing a model of support and provision for older people by older people;
- to promote lifelong learning opportunities for personal development and participation by creating access to volunteering;
- to develop a community model for the delivery of services, to promote supportive communities.

The agreed outputs of the project were to recruit 60 Timebank members by the end of the two year pilot period.

## Activity

The activities of the project have been dictated by the offers and demands of participating Gateshead residents. Activities have included basic housework and cleaning, befriending, ironing, gardening, clothing alterations, guitar tutoring, helping out in Age Concern Gateshead charity shop and day centres, and many others. The Timebank Co-ordinator has also provided information and support for, groups who wanted to organise their own social activities.

## Achievements against objectives

- **60 Timebank members by end of Year 2**

The Timebank attracted over 50 members ranging from 20 to 88 years old. In addition to these 'formal' members, a further 70+ people have benefitted either by giving/receiving practical services via the Timebank or by being involved in social activities organised through the scheme.

- **To promote independence by developing a model of support and provision for older people by older people**

The Timebank scheme promotes independence by encouraging people to focus on what they can, rather than cannot do. Despite the overall success in this area, some areas of support, such as gardening, painting, and decorating, are more difficult for older people to provide to one another. A range of abilities is needed to fully meet members' needs.

76% of members are over 50. Most of the under 50s use their skills to support the older members in their community. They also chose to donate their credits back to the Timebank for the benefit of older members.

---

- **To promote lifelong learning opportunities for personal development and participation by creating access to volunteering**

Volunteering via the Timebank helps members to become more confident, learn new skills, and get out and meet people. Members pass on their skills to one another both formally (e.g. in weekly guitar or computer lessons run by Timebank members) or less formally in the course of their practical exchanges (e.g. Timebank members learning from one another while taking part in practical exchanges such as gardening, painting and decorating, or even shopping). As well as providing information on the skills offered and needed through the Timebank, a regular newsletter also provides all members with details of social opportunities, training courses, and consultation events which they can get involved in.

*Mr M has been a Timebank member since June 2007. He gives his time teaching two other Timebank members to play the guitar, and in return receives help using computers and the internet. A keen walker, he has recently taken part in some walk leaders training and a first-aid course, and along with two other Timebank members will soon be starting a Timebank short walks group.*

- **To develop a community model for the delivery of services, to promote supportive communities**

The community development work done during the Timebank pilot phase has highlighted a number of gaps in the opportunities and services for older people in Gateshead – particularly in relation to provision of social activities for older people. Whilst the large geographical area in which the project is working makes it difficult to create a fully functioning model of mutual support, Age Concern Gateshead believes that the Timebank could become a low-cost mechanism for bringing communities together to fill these gaps.

## Wider achievements

The flexible approach we have taken to developing the Timebank has led to a number of unexpected wider achievements.

- 73 people who have benefitted from the Timebank pilot, without actually registering as official members of the scheme. A number of these are people who have been prepared to put in some time, but not wanted to 'sign-up' and commit themselves to anything longer term. Others are people who have benefitted from the outings and activities organised by Timebank members;
- External partnerships have been developed with Gateshead College and Newcastle Marriott Hotel MetroCentre;
- A small group of students from the Skills & Work course at Gateshead College have become Timebank members, and are giving time once a week doing either painting and decorating or gardening for older residents in the Borough;
- A team of staff from the Marriott Hotel MetroCentre are also giving time to the Timebank as part of their community involvement programme. This work will include regular activities plus a major event in Volunteers' Week with over 40 of their staff members taking part, and will again focus around heavier tasks such as gardening, DIY etc.

---

## Resources

As a completely new project, the Timebank was fully funded by Link Age Plus at a cost of £60,607 for 21 months, which includes the salary of a full-time Timebank Co-ordinator. This was slightly subsidised by Age Concern Gateshead to help cover things such as rent, admin costs, and publicity. The Timebank Co-ordinator has made use of the Age Concern Gateshead mini-van and mini-buses for certain activities, as well as regularly using her own car to travel around the borough. Additional equipment has also been bought to use for gardening work, and also for painting and decorating.

Via membership of Timebanks UK, the project has been able to make use of a generic timebanking database, though in recent months the Timebank Co-ordinator has created a new database to better meet the projects needs.

## Key lessons learned

The key lesson learned from this project is the importance of flexibility. We have adopted a more flexible approach to the traditional Timebank model of exchanging hours and skills, thereby helping meet some of the practical and social needs of older people living in Gateshead. This has included being able to support individuals to create new groups and shared social opportunities, and providing help and support to individuals who are not necessarily able to reciprocate with their own skills.

## Further information

Anne Marshall, Chief Officer Age Concern Gateshead  
Tel: 0191 477 3559  
E-mail: [anne.marshall@ageconcerngateshead.org.uk](mailto:anne.marshall@ageconcerngateshead.org.uk)

Clare Cook, Timebank Co-ordinator  
Tel: 0191 477 3559  
E-mail: [timebank@ageconcerngateshead.org.uk](mailto:timebank@ageconcerngateshead.org.uk)

Timebanks UK  
[www.timebanks.co.uk](http://www.timebanks.co.uk)

Ref to website: [www.ageconcerngateshead.org.uk](http://www.ageconcerngateshead.org.uk)

## Related documents

Timebank Members Handbook.