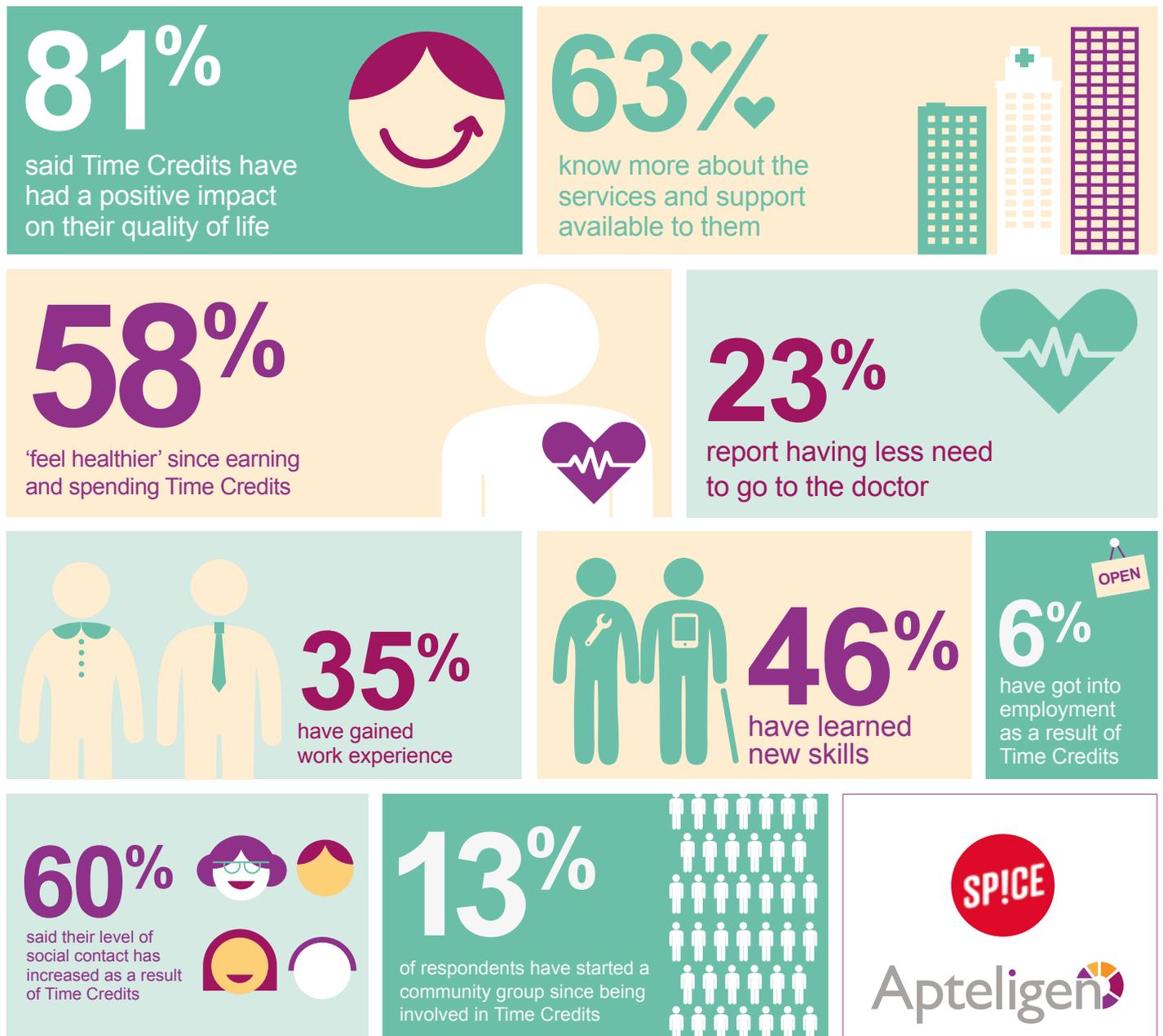


Spice Time Credits: Impact Summer 2015 Findings

June 2015



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Foreword

Much has changed in Spice since we completed our first major national evaluation last year. Membership continues to grow through exciting new partnerships across health and social care, education, housing and community development. We have welcomed many new partners to our unique network of over 500 spend venues and we have set an ambitious vision for growth over the next five years.

Throughout this we remain committed to understanding and evaluating the impact of our work with partners and this report marks another milestone in this process. Since being founded six years ago our work has grown and expanded from South Wales to communities and services across England and Wales; breaking new ground, placing communities at the heart of solving their own problems and harnessing the power of partnerships at all levels.

This report brings exciting new insights and for the first time sets baseline measures on key indicators that we will follow through and track in future years. This is part of a deliberate move to a deeper, broader and more specialised evaluation process to match our growth and diversification. A massive debt of thanks has to go to Apteligen who have led us through this process and supported us to set out a long term evaluation strategy which will enable us to gain deeper levels of insight and to benchmark against key national and international outcomes.

This report demonstrates that co-productive approaches, such as Time Credits, provide a unique way to design and deliver community and public services. The findings clearly show that being able to contribute and feeling more connected, has a positive impact on an individual's ability to maintain their independence, and improve their health and wellbeing. We are particularly encouraged to see that Time Credits continue to support some of the UK's most disadvantaged citizens to get involved in their communities, many for the very first time.

This evaluation, like our programmes, has only been possible because of strong partnership working. I would like to thank our talented team for supporting this evaluation and the hundreds of community groups and services who have contributed.

As a team we continue to be inspired by the commitment and creativity of the thousands of members that give their time to build communities and services across England and Wales. Thank you for continuing to partner with us to understand the impact of the work that we have done together.



Becky Booth
CEO Spice



Key findings

Spice Time Credits have a positive impact on individuals, organisations and communities. This evaluation focuses specifically on the impact of Time Credits on individuals' lives.

The findings highlighted three key areas of impact: quality of life, health and wellbeing, building stronger communities, building individual capacity and creating new opportunities.

Quality of life, health and wellbeing

The findings of this report are consistent with the results of Spice's previous evaluation which found that Time Credits improve quality of life, health and wellbeing.

There is a recognition that social contact is an important factor for wellbeing and this report finds that 60% of individuals are increasing their levels of social contact as a result of Time Credits.

This is consistent with previous findings that Time Credits support people to spend more time with others in the community and build new friendships. The adverse effects of isolation and loneliness are well documented and these findings point to Time Credits supporting key aspects of improving and maintaining independence, health and wellbeing. These are all important drivers of prevention to ensure that people live well in the community for longer.

Currently 58% of respondents report feeling healthier and commentary by participants suggests that many people are spending their Time Credits on physical activity such as gyms and swimming pools.

Building stronger communities

Time Credits continue to support the development of stronger communities with 77% of respondents agreeing that they have taken part in more community activity as a result of Time Credits.

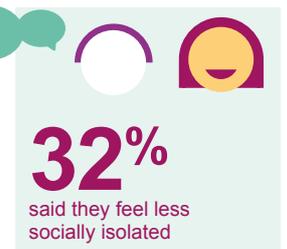
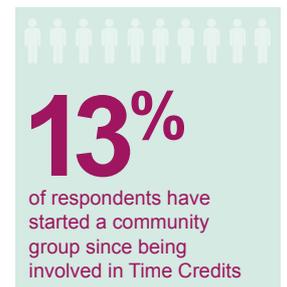
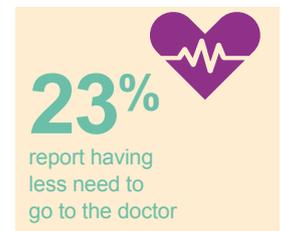
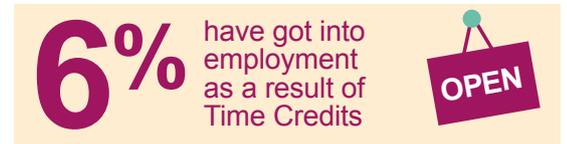
Stronger social networks are creating an environment in which people feel more supported and support others in return. 48% of respondents reported being more likely to get important needs of theirs met because they were part of a local community. 13% of respondents reported having started a new community group as a result of Time Credits. This measure demonstrates the positive journey that individuals are going through and how this results in the creation of new community solutions, a key component of co-production.

Building individual capacity and creating opportunities

The previous evaluation found that 'Time Credits offer value as a complementary currency specifically for people and families with lower incomes. Among people in this group, Time Credits are seen as a means to do things they couldn't otherwise afford to do, which leads to greater financial and social inclusion'. Whilst this is particularly the case for lower income families, this survey found that even in households on higher incomes, individuals do not always have a lot of disposable income and Time Credits can still make it possible for families to undertake activities together.

Time Credits continue to support individuals to learn new skills. It was found that a third of members had gained work experience and 6% reported getting into employment as a result of Time Credits.

"Oh crikey, rebuilding my family. The people I have met, the skills I have learnt, the confidence I have gained, the learning ops. My list is endless. xx"



Introduction

About Spice

Spice grew out of the Wales Institute for Community Currencies (WICC), a partnership project funded by the European Union (EU) to develop new social currencies for communities in ex-mining areas in South Wales.

When the EU programme ended in 2009, Spice was established to develop the work of WICC into a wider geographical remit, to develop programmes that included the voluntary, public and private sector, and to create a national network of local Time Currencies.

Spice strategy

Spice's vision is to create nations of connected communities. Spice has three organisational objectives to achieve this vision:

1. Support organisations to deliver high quality, high impact Time Credits programmes
2. Support organisations to develop a more co-productive culture
3. Work with policy makers and funders to foster an environment that supports co-productive service delivery

Objectives of Time Credits

Spice has developed Time Credits as a tool for building stronger communities and co-produced services where people are active and equal participants. Spice believes in the power of people to create positive change. Time Credits act as a means to encourage more people to get more involved in their local community by giving their time. Through this, Spice's projects work towards improved outcomes for individuals, organisations and communities.

Individuals — By encouraging people to engage with local community organisations, Time Credits create opportunities for individuals to learn new skills, gain confidence and raise their aspirations. Following increased participation, individuals have better access to peer and community support networks, and feel they have something positive to contribute. By spending Time Credits, individuals can try new activities and improve their health and wellbeing. Many participants have commented that through the Time Credit network they have been able to try activities they could not previously afford.

Organisations — Time Credits can be used by organisations to engage with new groups or to encourage more active involvement from service users in the design and delivery of services. Involving service users in this way can bring new skills and insight, and shape services so that they better respond to need. Organisations and providers are connected through the Time Credit network and are able to make better use of community assets. Organisations participating in Spice programmes include local authorities, housing providers, schools, health and social care providers and a wide range of community organisations.

Communities — Time Credits connect groups and services across a community and create opportunities to share assets and skills, and to collaborate. Communities are better able to support each other, with more people giving more time in the local community, and with individuals and groups outside of their usual social network.

Using Time Credits as a tool for co-production

Community decline and civic disengagement is a worrying national trend and public services are more stretched than ever. Spice Time Credits can be used to engage people in the design and delivery of their public and community services and to support people to take a more active role in their communities. Time Credits support services and neighbourhoods to become more effective agents of change. Whether this is with pupils in schools, tenants in housing associations or local people working with their community anchor organisation, using Time Credits as a tool increases active engagement, reduces dependency and builds community and individual esteem. Through Time Credits, people are encouraged to get involved in their community, to make decisions about how services are run, and to help create and actively deliver services alongside professionals.

Using Time Credits to support a move towards co-production helps services and activities to become more effective, as service users and their communities increasingly help to design and deliver outcomes. This encourages buy-in and ownership of services by the community, resulting in sustainable projects that offer better value for money. People grow in confidence, they build new relationships, and the sense of community increases, leading to increased wellbeing for participants, professionals and communities.

How Spice operates

Earning Time Credits — Services and local community groups identify existing and new opportunities for people to give their time. New opportunities are based on the interests, skills and availability of local people.

Spending Time Credits — Public, community and private organisations identify ways in which people can spend Time Credits with their services or at events, and at existing or new activities. This can be 'spare capacity' at theatres or swimming pools for example, or for community services as a way of recognising and thanking people for the contributions they have made. Spice spending brochures include a wide range of community organisations as well as higher profile opportunities such as The Barbican and Tower of London.



Spice Programmes

Spice is commissioned by organisations who want to integrate a Time Credit system into their work. These organisations include local authorities, housing associations, service providers, community development organisations, and schools.

Spice supports the commissioning organisation to use Time Credits as a means to involve their communities and service users more in their services, to improve service delivery and to achieve better outcomes. The host organisation will be supported to sign up local groups and organisations to create a Time Credit Network in their locality.

Spice approaches potential spend partners in the area that the host organisation works, and develops partnerships with them to help directly support active community participation and often to reach new audiences. Time Credit Networks encompass a diverse range of private, statutory and third sector organisations.

Evaluation at Spice

Over the last year Spice has grown and diversified its programmes. At the time of writing this report, 19,408 individuals have now earned a Time Credit and Spice has supported 761 organisations to become involved in Time Credits programmes.

This report builds on the impact evaluation carried out by Apteligen between July 2012 and December 2014. Using a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods, that first phase of evaluation work focused on the impact of Time Credits on people who earn and spend Time Credits, the impact on organisations that partner with Spice to deliver programmes locally, and the various communities within which Time Credits operate. A theory of change model was developed with Spice's lead partners during that evaluation which has guided all evaluation activity, during the period of that first phase and since then.

This report marks the start of a new phase of evaluation for Spice and its ongoing work to measure the local and national impact of Time Credits on individuals and communities. New survey materials, including a survey for new members, have been developed to allow Spice to capture longitudinal data annually on levels of social contact, physical activity, wellbeing and health using nationally recognised indicators. This has enabled Spice to begin collecting baseline outcome data this year which will be used to monitor and report on changes for individuals in the future. The use of nationally recognised indicators also offers the potential to explore changes for individuals against similar cohorts outside of Time Credits programmes in order to attribute change from Time Credits using additional methods.

Spice remains committed to accessibility and an easy read survey was also developed and completed by members from three of their localities. As with the full survey, it is intended that the easy read survey will be completed by members across all localities (where appropriate) and conducted on an annual basis.

Plans are also in place to refine the membership data that Spice collects with local partners on the profile of individuals taking part in its programmes across England and Wales. This will in time enable a better understanding of the representativeness of the outcome data collected in surveys such as the one in this report, against wider Spice membership.

About the survey sample

Total number of responses

The annual survey was undertaken between April and May 2015. The number of responses for the full and easy read survey are presented below.¹

Survey	Coverage	Number of unique responses	Time period undertaken
Full survey	All Time Credits members in all projects	405	April to May 2015
Easy read survey	Time Credits members in a selection of localities	34	April to May 2015
Total		439	

1. Note that some individuals completed the survey more than once. The duplicates were removed, with the most incomplete removed first and then the oldest response. It should also be noted that as is typical with surveys, some individuals did not complete the whole survey.

Profile of respondents

Key information about the profile of respondents is given below:



How long respondents have been earning and spending Time Credits



43%

Give 1–3 hours each time



30%

Give 3–5 hours each time



61%

of respondents earn / spend Time Credits weekly

Comments on the sample

- 53% of the responses came from three projects: Chorley, Carmarthenshire and the City of London. This means that the overall results will reflect the views of members in these areas more than elsewhere.
- Detailed active membership data is not available across Spice projects, therefore it is not possible to fully assess how representative the profile of respondents is, however a diverse cross section of the different types of organisations Spice works with are represented.
- Differences between the results presented in this report, and the previous evaluation should be treated with caution. Although the areas covered by the previous evaluation report and this report are similar, slightly different questions have been used to provide a more suitable baseline for future monitoring.

Findings

1.0 Quality of life, health and wellbeing

This section explores the survey responses in relation to quality of life, amount of social contact, health status and levels of physical activity. Some of the data gathered around physical activity and health status has been focused on establishing a baseline for future monitoring and evaluation, while data on quality of life is available from the previous evaluation, and comparisons have been made to this where possible.

1.1 Improving quality of life

In the annual survey, respondents were asked to estimate the extent to which Time Credits have improved their quality of life, with an option to say that they had not improved their quality of life at all.

81% felt that Time Credits have had a positive impact on their lives to some extent. 20% felt that Time Credits have improved their quality of their life 'A lot' and a further 36% said they had improved their quality of life 'somewhat'. Just 11% of respondents said that Time Credits hadn't improved their quality of life and 8% responded that they 'didn't know'.

It is important to note that this question has been changed since the previous survey in order to understand more about the scale of impact of Time Credits on an individual's quality of life so the responses cannot be directly compared. However, when given the option of 'yes' 'no' or 'I don't know' previously, 65% said that their quality of life had improved as a result of earning and spending Time Credits.

"It has made me feel more optimistic about things, I am more encouraged to look for other volunteering opportunities which has again improved my levels of positivity. I have also seen a positive impact in the lives of people I have been working with and this has again improved my quality of life."

These changes in the quality of life for people are also evident to others:

"I distribute time credits to the members volunteering for...and see how these help improve their life, it is a fantastic thing and hope it continues."

Easy read results

The changes are not just limited to those who completed the full survey, with an impressive 97% saying that Time Credits have made their life better from those who responded to the easy read survey.

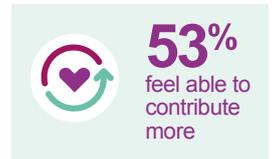
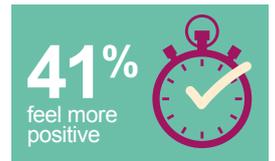
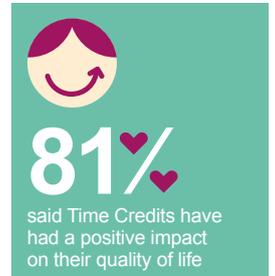
Factors that contribute to improved quality of life and wellbeing

As well as a general perception around changes to their quality of life, the survey asked people to identify whether there had been changes in factors that may impact on their overall wellbeing. Respondents were given a number of statements and asked the extent to which they agreed. Considering those who agreed 'A lot' or 'Mostly':

- 46% said they feel more confident
- 41% said they feel more positive about their future
- 53% said they feel like they can contribute more

"I have a real feeling of accomplishment with what we've done."

[The best thing about Time Credits is] "Having more confidence in myself."



1.2 Levels of social contact

60% of survey respondents said that Time Credits have increased their level of social contact. 23% of which said Time Credits had increased their level of social contact 'A lot' with a further 37% saying it has increased a little. Correspondingly, 32% of respondents said that they agreed, or mostly agreed with the statement that they are less isolated as a result of Time Credits.

“They get me out doing stuff meeting new people, socialising.”

“More (real) social network.”

“I was socially isolated, suffering with depression and low confidence...Then I got involved with ACE and everything changed for the better. I am so much happier and can see a brighter future ahead of me now. I owe everything to this project.”

“It has provided me with an opportunity to meet others and be part of a network.”

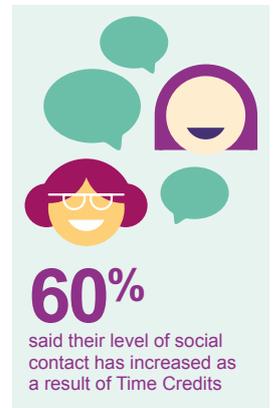
New friends and social networks

Easy read results

53% of those completing the full survey and 75% of those completing the easy read survey said that they had made new friends as a result of their involvement with Time Credits.

In addition 45% of people who completed the full survey felt they had built up their social network and 27% reported getting to know their neighbours better. This compares to 6% and 30% respectively in the previous evaluation.

“Expanded my social network and enabled me to do more activities with my friends and family.”



1.3 Health status

In the previous evaluation 45% reported that they 'felt healthier' as a result of Time Credits, and 41% neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. In the more recent survey 58% reported feeling healthier with 29% of respondents agreeing with the statement that they felt 'a lot' or 'mostly' healthier and a further 29% agreeing they felt 'somewhat healthier'.

Over a quarter of respondents (28%) agreed 'A lot' or 'Mostly' when asked if they are better able to manage in their own home as a result of Time Credits. This compares to 26% in the previous survey who agreed that they are better able to manage in their own home. Although the slight variation in question should again be noted, there was a similar improvement in the perceptions around need to use social care, with 23% mostly agreeing that their need had decreased now, compared to 19% in the previous research.

1.4 Levels of physical activity

Respondents were asked what activity they had done in the previous week.

- 52% had done some vigorous activity on at least one day. These individuals reported spending an average of approximately 73 minutes a week doing vigorous activity.
- Three quarters of members had done some moderate activity in the previous week. These members reported spending over two hours (139 minutes) a week doing moderate activity.

Commentary by members suggests that many are spending their Time Credits on physical activities, with swimming and gym membership being mentioned regularly. A number of people appreciated that Time Credits allow them and their children to take part in physical activities that they might otherwise not be able to afford to do.

"I can't always get to the free swimming sessions with my son and wouldn't have been able to afford to pay but now we can use time credits to have some quality time together."

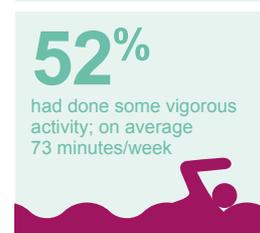
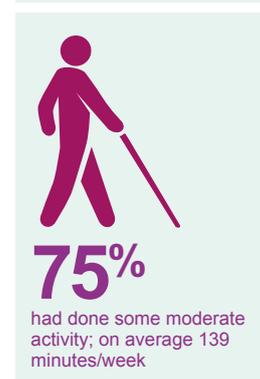
"My daughter is learning to swim as I'm using time credits to take her."

"I'm able to go to the gym, and this benefits me greatly when I do not have money for gym membership. Thanks."

For others, it may not be about physical activity but simply about not being at home:

"Getting out of the house and doing things that I have not done for years."

"Earning time credits has helped my family spend more time together and given my children more opportunities to do things and go places as before I could not afford to do this, we enjoy going to the cinema together, before we would only go maybe once a year now we go almost two or three times a month. We also use time credits at Lynnsport which helps us all keep active. We have also been to the corn exchange to watch various shows which we could have never done before."



2.0 Building stronger communities

The research explored the impact of Time Credits on the interactions individuals have with their community and their overall perceptions of community.

“The arts and crafts workshops were incredibly sociable and great fun! I made some lasting friendships and really felt that, not only did they help me become a happier person, but that I helped make other people’s lives better. I have been spending more time credits recently than ever before. I had a literal mountain of them from about 1 year ago. I have taken friends and family to The National Botanic Gardens twice and Pembrey Country Park twice. Great fun!”

2.1 Doing more in the community

73% of respondents in the previous evaluation said that they had taken part in more community activities. 77% of respondents from this survey also agreed with this statement (52% agreed ‘mostly/ a lot’ and 25% agreed ‘somewhat’).

49% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they were more able to influence what their local community was like, 65% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more hopeful about the future of their community and 70% stated that a sense of community was important to them.

In addition to the closed response questions, there were a number of comments from members.

“Feel part of a supportive community with active and motivated people that I enjoy being with and who make a huge difference to the community. They are excellent mentors and role models to me and my children. If the world had more people like these it would be a better place.”

“It has completely transformed my life ... Now I’m driven to help others feel as great as I do through my new family community group!”

2.2 Strengthening networks and mutual support

The table below shows the proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements since earning and spending Time Credits:

62%

I know the people in my local community better

64%

I spend more time with others in my local community

38%

When I have a problem, I am more able to talk about it with members of my community

63%

I know more about what services and support are available to me

48%

I have more trust in the people in my local community

48%

I am more likely to get important needs of mine met because I am part of my local community

These findings are consistent with the previous evaluation which found that Time Credits help people to build their sense of contribution, share skills with others, take part in more community activities, and make new friends and social connections.

There is also anecdotal evidence of communities supporting each other more, with some members distributing their Time Credits to others and between community groups.

“I am able to give to others and treat my neighbours and family with the time credits. I can give time credits to others who have little money and it makes them have a better quality of life.”

“I have not spent my credits yet but I have given them out to people who have helped with my community clean up. The Scouts were really pleased with their credits and I feel they will benefit from them.”

46% of those surveyed said that the fact they are giving back to their community is one of the main things they like about earning Time Credits. 22% also said that they are helping others and making a difference for others.

The survey also showed a positive shift in the numbers who said they have helped others with the same condition. In the annual survey 26% said they had helped others with the same condition or who face similar challenges to them compared to 15% previously.

The adverse impact of isolation and loneliness is well documented and these findings point to Time Credits supporting key aspects of improving and maintaining independence, health and wellbeing. These are important drivers to ensure that people live well in the community for longer.

3.0 Building individual capacity and creating opportunities

Respondents to both the easy read and full survey were asked about the opportunities that earning and spending Time Credits have created for them.

The previous evaluation found that 45% of respondents were new to giving time. Commentary from respondents to this survey suggests that there remains a high proportion of participants that are new to giving their time as a result of Time Credits, and that those who already gave their time are now giving more. For example, participants who had previously found it difficult to volunteer said that Time Credits have opened up valuable opportunities by allowing them to give their time more flexibly and in a manner which fits more with their family. At the same time, some respondents reported that Time Credits have encouraged them to remain incentivised, to give more time, or give their time in a more consistent manner.

This section explores the opportunities that respondents reported as a result of this new form of engagement.

3.1 Opportunities to do more

In the full survey, when asked whether they could do more as a result of Time Credits, 64% agreed with 41% responding that they largely agreed and 23% saying they somewhat agreed.

Easy read results

For those completing the easy read survey, 84% of respondents said that Time Credits have helped them do more activities.

Over a quarter of the members reported that they can afford to do a lot of new activities that they would not have done if they had not been earning Time Credits. Not surprisingly, this is particularly the case for those on lower household incomes rather than those earning more, and is consistent with findings from our previous research.

“It’s a massive weight load off a family of 6 as we can’t afford activities usually.”

However, it should also be noted that even in households on higher incomes, individuals do not always have a lot of disposable income and Time Credits can still be an important factor in making it possible for families to undertake activities together.

“I can take my daughter to the cinema and swimming pool more often. Our household income is pretty good, but as we have to pay mortgage, high childcare costs and support family members abroad we struggle sometimes, so to be able to earn and use Time Credits has been very helpful.”

“A great positive experience that has been enjoyable and directly led to me getting a job that really suits me.”



3.2 Developing new interests

43% of respondents said they have developed new interests as a result of Time Credits and members are reporting that they are enjoying undertaking new activities, even when it challenges them. Many told us that it gets them involved in activities they would not even have considered previously:

“I enjoy the activities I do which involves meeting people, it gets me out of my comfort zone and I have made new friends. Plus you get time credits to enjoy different things around the country.”

“We access places we wouldn’t usually think of going. We spend time earning with others in the community which is social and also improving community at the same time”

3.3 Skills and employment

46% of those completing the full survey said they have learned new skills as a result of Time Credits. This compares to 43% previously.

Easy read results

Of those completing the easy read survey, 84% said that they believed Time Credits have helped them learn new skills.

Members also reported that they have enjoyed sharing their skills with others with 58% largely agreeing that Time Credits had created the opportunities for this.

35% reported that they have gained work experience as a result of earning and spending Time Credits. 6% said it has helped them get into employment, which compares to 4% seen previously. Meanwhile 9% (3 people) completing the easy read survey also said that Time Credits had helped them into work.



Conclusions

Over the last year, Spice has grown and diversified its programmes. This survey sought to understand the continued impact of Spice's work with communities in this evolving context, and to set up a baseline against which Spice could further evaluate its work in the future.

The findings presented in this report and the commentary that many respondents provided, point to Time Credits making positive, tangible differences to many people's lives, and in diverse ways. The profile of respondents to this survey demonstrates Spice's ongoing commitment to support some of the most disadvantaged individuals and families in society, and to build better lives for themselves, their families and their communities.

Participants continue to report that Time Credits are having a positive impact on their quality of life and wellbeing. Increased involvement in the community is helping to tackle isolation, loneliness and support the maintenance of good health. The findings also show positive effects on levels of social capital and reduced isolation. The adverse impact of isolation and loneliness on health is well documented, and these findings point to Time Credits supporting key aspects of improving and maintaining independence, health and wellbeing. These are all factors that can prevent ill-health and ensure that people live well in the community for longer.

Through their involvement in Time Credits, many individuals are living more connected lives in their communities, making new friends, getting to know neighbours and increasing their overall levels of social contact. As well as changing the perceptions individuals hold of their communities themselves, this is also facilitating new models of community-led services with 13% of respondents saying that they have started a new community group since being involved with Time Credits. This shows the journey that individuals are going through, and how Time Credits can support the creation of new community solutions, a key component of co-production.

The findings show that Time Credits programmes are enabling people to learn new skills, and to put them into practice through giving time in their community. A third of respondents report gaining work experience through their involvement and 6% report that Time Credits have supported them into employment. Spice does not currently run programmes specifically aimed at supporting individuals into employment. As such, Spice will seek to understand how it might further build on these positive outcomes in the future design of programmes.

As Spice continues to grow, it is essential that they understand the ongoing impact of their work. The findings from this survey will help to further shape the design and delivery of Spice's programmes, and lead to the best possible outcomes for individuals, organisations and communities. Looking forward, Spice will seek to build further on all of its evaluation activities undertaken to date, to better understand the impact their programmes have for individuals over time.

About the survey methods

Since the initial evaluation was undertaken additional projects have been started by Spice in a number of localities.

In order to develop a baseline for new members a 'New member Survey' and an 'Annual Survey' were developed. Both of these drew where possible from the questions in the initial evaluation in order to facilitate some comparison with the existing data and explore any change. However, some changes were made to the survey questions to refine and adapt the survey to make it more appropriate for building a longer term dataset. This included asking questions about perceptions of the impact of Time Credits, and some questions which asked factual activity and perception information so that the views can be compared to see how these change over time.

The new member survey is identical to the annual survey, but without the questions which ask about change resulting from Time Credits. The new member's survey was distributed among members in the new project areas of Haringey and Cambridgeshire in December 2014. These individuals and all other members were then asked to complete the full survey in April and May 2015.

For the annual survey we developed an easy read version in addition to the full survey. The easy read version contained pictures for each question and was designed to be accessible for those who would not be able to complete the full survey. Members were invited to complete the survey using an online link, but paper versions were also made available to give everyone a chance to participate.

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