

SPENDING TIME HELPING OTHERS

FUNDED BY: Sandwell Primary Care Trust and Greets Green Partnership for three years until March 2008.

PROJECT BACKGROUND: Time 2 Trade was launched to enable local people to use their skills to help others, and in turn to benefit from help themselves when they might need it.

Residents say what skills they can offer and each time they provide a service for someone else in the community, they gain a time credit. These time credits can be banked and then 'cashed in' for services they need themselves, or given as gifts to others.

WHAT IS IT? Time 2 Trade is a simple idea which has proved to be a big success in Greets Green. Those who want to become involved are registered on the Time

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Everyone's delighted that the successful Time 2 Trade project will continue into the future now it's been mainstreamed by Sandwell Primary Care Trust.



2 Trade database, which includes their contact details, availability and skills, and also details of any assistance they might need themselves.

A key feature of the scheme is its flexibility. It doesn't matter how much time people have available, they can give as much or as little as they want, which means those who do not wish to make a large or regular commitment can still participate in community volunteering.

The skills and services offered by residents vary hugely and include:

- escorting people to appointments
- letter writing
- teaching reading
- delivering leaflets
- dog walking
- decorating and DIY
- babysitting and after school care
- housework
- bookkeeping and budgeting
- car washing and maintenance
- catering
- office work and word processing
- plant watering and gardening
- photography and photo restoration

When someone asks for a service, Time 2 Trade can search the database to find someone with the necessary skills to help. Project Manager, Dan Grainger, says: "It's basically reciprocal volunteering - people use the skills and attributes they have got and, in turn, can benefit from the skills they might need help with, or donate their time credits to help others."

Time 2 Trade was first launched in West Bromwich in March 2002 as part of the Health Action Zone initiative, when Sandwell was awarded a sum of money from the Health Action Zone Innovations fund. It launched the AHEAD project – Agency for Health Enterprises and Development - to look at innovative ways of improving health.

When this stream of funding came to an end, Sandwell Primary Care Trust mainstreamed Time 2 Trade and, at the same time, a bid was submitted to Greets Green Partnership to enable the Time 2 Trade project to launch Time Banking into the Partnership area.



Time 2 Trade Project Manager, Dan Grainger.



Greets Green Partnership agreed to fund 40 per cent of the project's costs over three years in return for two days a week focussed on Greets Green, with the PCT funding the other 60 per cent.

Since the project is based on the High Street in West Bromwich, within the area covered by Greets Green Partnership, the location has in fact made it even more accessible for local people, providing a greater than 40 per cent return on the investment. The project has proved so effective that when the funding provided by Greets Green Partnership finished at the end of March 2008, the full costs were taken on by the Primary Care Trust.

ACHIEVEMENTS: Time 2 Trade now covers the whole of West Bromwich, and within the Greets Green area alone, around 75-80 individuals are registered on its database, plus approximately 18 different public and community organisations.

The project enables those registered to both offer and benefit from local skills in the community. There are also regular 'socials' such as breakfasts and barbecues which enable everyone on the database to meet up and get to know each other and to put a face to some of the services on offer.

The benefits of Time 2 Trade are many and varied and include:

- providing services and support to those in need, including elderly and disabled people
- building and reinforcing community networks
- enabling individuals and groups to keep down their bills by sharing their skills
- encouraging volunteering and community spirit
- improving the mental health of local people, for example, helping those who may feel isolated to make friends.

Project Manager, Dan Grainger, says: "Some people join Time 2 Trade because they enjoy doing voluntary work. Rather than join a normal voluntary organisation, they appreciate the idea of the time bank where they earn time credits.

"They don't have to use them themselves, they can pass them on to someone else. For example, it's possible to earn time credits by cutting someone's grass and then pass them on so you're not just helping one person, you're potentially helping many people.

"It's also good for social networking and for people's self esteem. There's the saying 'charity hurts'. If you're the recipient of help all the time it's very disabling because you come to rely on it and it lowers your sense of self



worth, and your ability to cope by yourself. Whereas with the time bank, if you're a recipient, you can offer help in return."

PROJECT IN ACTION:

Joys of volunteering for Jessica

Great grandmother Jessica Ferguson has been a member of Time 2 Trade for nearly four years and helps people with jobs around the home such as putting up curtains or babysitting.

She mostly donates her time credits to the elderly and those in need, so they can go on trips or have some jobs done such as decorating. She also sometimes uses them to enjoy a Time 2 Trade social event or a trip to the seaside with her grandchildren.

Jessica is one of the Neighbourhood Reps on the Board of Greets Green Partnership, and is a director of SCIPS – Sandwell Community Information and Participation Service in Oldbury - another voluntary role. She is also a tenant inspector for Sandwell Homes. She has two children, eight grandchildren and a great grandson, and was a foster mum in the 1980s, so is used to being busy.

She says: "The house has always been full and I couldn't be sitting at home with my knitting, rocking chair and slippers. I donate my time credits to others or I use them to attend functions, or take my grandchildren to the seaside.

"It gives me great pride and satisfaction to work voluntarily in the community, helping other people. There's an old saying: 'what goes around, comes around', and it's true. I've got the time to put into the community and help other people and I enjoy doing that.

"I make a lot of friends and get a lot of pleasure out of it. I would definitely recommend Time 2 Trade to other people."

Community centre gets decorated!

Wood Lane Community Centre in Greets Green is among the many local organisations now registered on the Time 2 Trade database. Its entrance hall and a meeting room were decorated recently thanks to a team from Probation Services made available through the Time 2 Trade database. The Centre has



Time 2 Trade volunteer, Jessica Ferguson (pictured bottom right), helped a grandmother look after her grandchildren whilst their mother was in hospital.



since earned time credits to 'pay' for the work by providing a venue for events such as the Time 2 Trade breakfast meetings.

Andrew Rainsford, Chief Executive of Greets Green Community Enterprises, which runs the Centre, says: "This was a useful scheme. We hadn't got the money for a contractor at the time and the Probation Service team were a good bunch - all serving community service orders. They did a good job." Other local organisations registered on the Time 2 Trade database include the Methodist Day Centre, Hamblett's Community Association, St Andrews Church, the Credit Union and Become.

Babyta uses new job skills to help out

Local mum Babyta Kaura became involved with the Time 2 Trade project after looking for work and training through the Become project in Greets Green.

She was put in touch with Time 2 Trade to gain work experience, which enabled her to complete an NVQ Level 2 qualification in administration. This in turn helped her to get a part-time office job with the Primary Care Trust's Mental Health Team, which fitted around her two young children.

Babyta is still a member of Time 2 Trade, earning time credits by offering her administrative skills at meetings. In turn, she uses them to attend Time 2 Trade social events or to take the children on day trips. Last year the family had a great trip to the seaside at Rhyll.

She says: "I was looking for a job and finding it hard because of having two children. Gaining work experience with Time 2 Trade boosted my confidence and enabled me to meet new people and to get my NVQ.

"I think Time 2 Trade works really well and I would recommend it to other people."

If you would like to know more about Time 2 Trade in Greets Green and West Bromwich, call Project Manager, Dan Grainger on 0121 553 3110 or email d.grainger@nhs.net



Greets Green Partnership was awarded £56 million in 2000 to deliver a 10 year regeneration programme under the Government's New Deal for Communities (NDC) initiative. It has funded over 340 projects throughout the area, covering community services, crime & community safety, health, housing & urban form and jobs & skills. The Partnership area, which is adjacent to West Bromwich Town Centre, is home to just over 12,400 residents living in 4,900 households.

To find out more, call Brian McKinstrie, Greets Green Partnership's Communications & PR Manager on freephone 0800 953 0215.

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