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NHS Salford

## Time Banking Interim Report

January 2011

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**NHS**  
**Salford**

## Table of contents

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Purpose	1
Aims of the Pilot	1
Outcomes	1
Time Banking Evaluation	2
Approach	2
Health impacts of Time Banking	3
Direct Health Impacts	3
Indirect Health Impacts	3
Salford Experience	4
Using the Salford Time Bank	6
Pleasures of taking part	8
Things to improve	9
Community engagement and social cohesion	9
Health and wellbeing impacts	10
Conclusions	12
Contact details	13

## Purpose

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The purpose of the project is to use Time Banking as a tool for behaviour change specifically related to smoking, alcohol and physical activity. Time Banking has not previously been used as a tool for directly addressing lifestyle issues which can support health improvement. The Salford service is therefore being used to pilot and test Time Banking to support lifestyle changes.

## Aims of the Pilot

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The aim is to deliver the principles of Time Banking, specifically related to three broad outcomes.

Time Banking members will:

- Be healthier people
- Enjoy greater mental well being, through increased confidence, happiness and personal fulfilment and thereby have higher aspirations
- Be more engaged in supporting their communities.

## Outcomes

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Expected outcomes, including improving prevention, are:

### Tobacco Control and Smoking Cessation:

1. Increase the number of referrals to the Smoke Free Spaces project.
2. Increase the number of referrals to stop smoking services.
3. Development of local support groups to support those wishing to stop smoking

### Alcohol

1. Increase the number of people who understand the safe and sensible drinking message
2. Support the increase in the number of people who drink within recommended limits
3. Increase the number of people who receive brief advice and intervention

### Physical Activity

1. Increase the number of people who are aware of the physical activity recommendations
2. Increase the number of people who increase their levels of physical activity

### Social:

1. Number of people with have healthier behaviours.
2. More people moving from pre contemplation to contemplation stage of changing health related behaviour.
3. Number of people with improved knowledge relating to tobacco and alcohol

4. The number of people able to articulate to friends and family the message of improved health behaviour.
5. Increase in friendships and social capital.

## Time Banking Evaluation

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Salford NHS commissioned Hall Aitken to evaluate three projects as part of its ongoing Tobacco Control Strategy. The three projects- Time Banking; Re energise; and Smoke Free Homes – have all been evaluated before and this study seeks to build upon this previous research and, through close working with project beneficiaries, explore:

- the impact of the services among target populations;
- how well the services have delivered their stated outputs and outcomes;
- the factors that have facilitated/hindered the delivery of the services;
- the potential longer-term value/limitations of the services to influence behaviour change;
- the ability (or not) of the services to deliver other well-being outcomes such as social cohesion (the tools developed would need to allow for these additional outcomes to be identified);
- the identification of these additional outcomes; and
- the 'fit' of these approaches within a wider set of behaviour change programmes delivered at community level.

## Approach

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Our evaluation has collated information based on several complementary approaches including:

- Desk-based review of programme data
- Telephone interviews; and
- Attendance at a Time banking event.

### Desk-based review

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We have looked at the programme monitoring data in the periodic monitoring report and other data provided by the client. We also reviewed the evidence base for Time banking from a range of national and international sources.

### Telephone interviews

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The telephone interviews focused on the experiences of a cross-section of participants in relation to their engagement, activities, motivation, health and social impacts. We were particularly focusing on evidence for health outcomes from Time banking and to identify areas for improvement.

We spoke to all five people from the contact list provided, as well as a woman from Re-energise who was involved with Time Banking. Of the 6 contacts 2 were older and not so mobile, one had retired, two had been off sick after stress related breakdown and one was a young mum. All but one were women.

## Health impacts of Time Banking

While time banking may not appear at first to be a health intervention, there is a growing body of evidence that time banks can and do have an impact on members' health and wellbeing – both physical and mental. These impacts are both direct and indirect.

### Direct Health Impacts

The Time Banking UK website ([www.timebanking.org](http://www.timebanking.org)) features several articles that place time banking in a strategic context with national health indicators and other evidence.

- **A sense of self-esteem and wellbeing from making a contribution** – providing a greater sense of control and reducing feelings of anxiety by being involved in their community
- **People supported to live independently** – helping people have the support networks to stay in their own homes when ill or recovering from an illness, also keeping older people mentally, emotionally and physically fit through volunteering
- **Self-reported measure of people's overall health and wellbeing** – people feeling positively connected, purposeful, confident and active, and appreciating kindness – this not only relates to older people being looked in on and supported, but also people of all ages earning credits that they can spend on services they could not otherwise afford. This provides autonomy, control, and access to services.
- **Preventing ill-health and promoting wellbeing** – involving patients and community members in health promotion results in better credibility and uptake of healthy habits and following medication than if a professional alone gave such guidance. Having nearby, informal support also helps ensure people's needs are met.
- **Dignity in Care** – several of the Department of Health's aspects of dignity are reflected in time banking: assisting people to maintain confidence and self-esteem, alleviating loneliness and isolation, treating each person as an individual and enabling people to maintain the maximum level of independence

A study at Rushey Green in London found that of Time Banking participants who had both a mental and physical health problem, 70% experienced some remission within six months of joining the scheme.

### Indirect Health Impacts

While much of the research on time banking itself appears to be anecdotal, the principles behind time banking have researched health benefits.

#### Social capital

Building social capital is the prime goal of time banking. Social capital has been found to give people a greater sense of connection through "bridging" social capital – links to people they might not otherwise meet, but who they have something in common with, for instance, neighbours.

## Salford Experience

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Many of these direct and indirect benefits are reflected in our interviews with participants from the Salford Time Banking pilot. For the participants in the Salford Time Bank telephone interviews, the physical impacts they were conscious of related to being out and about and thus physically active. Mental health and wellbeing impacts related to:

- social connections;
- a feeling of usefulness or purpose;
- having access to opportunities and/or services; and
- having their confidence or self-esteem boosted.

### Community connections with a purpose and value

Community connections are a big attraction to the people taking part, and hearing people's stories is part of valuing each other. One man commented:

*"When I go round to do a five-minute job for someone, I usually end up staying for an hour for a cup of tea and a chat. I love hearing people's stories."*

*"I enjoy just the thought of meeting people and hearing people's stories. You want to talk to them. It's really a lovely little thing"*

Volunteering is a prime way to gain this kind of social capital, and time banking is even listed among such activities within the Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health's (SDCMH) Social Capital and Wellbeing Toolkit<sup>1</sup>. While there are many papers on social capital's role in health, they tend to give the message that social capital is complex and so is the relationship. SDCMH's Toolkit may help to gather evidence to fill that gap.

In the case of the Salford Time Bank, there is also considerable "bonding" support from the development worker. This produces more peace of mind and provides a sense of being cared for, even in the absence of friends and family. Over time, people are also likely to make more substantial friends to support them.

## Social integration

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One role of social capital is to promote social integration, but more strikingly, social integration is the main benefit of which the Salford interviewees were conscious. A variety of research<sup>2</sup> connects brain and cell activity to social connections and resulting better health. Social connections are related to parts of the brain that feel pain – and thus also loneliness, or prolonged social exclusion. There is cellular research that shows that when people experience loneliness they are more prone to inflammation mediated disease and they have reduced resistance to viral infections. When severely lonely or excluded, the brain starts to lose its judgement of other people's emotions and motives and starts seeing things far more negatives. Brain research shows that the most effective way out of this trap is to make oneself available to help others and to take action. Time banking allows people to take those actions and start creating the social connections that make them healthier and more resistant to disease.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.scdc.org.uk/public/info/national-conference/File/SocialcapitalhealthandwellbeingLOW%20RES.pdf?sess\\_scdc=afd8b227](http://www.scdc.org.uk/public/info/national-conference/File/SocialcapitalhealthandwellbeingLOW%20RES.pdf?sess_scdc=afd8b227)

<sup>2</sup> <http://promega.wordpress.com/2010/04/05/the-social-brain-and-the-human-condition-2/>

Social interaction also appears to improve cognitive brain function. A study<sup>3</sup> showed that participating in a social discussion produced the same increase in brain function as cognitive tasks like crossword puzzles. This suggests all the “hearing people’s stories” that Salford Time Bank people took part in could reduce the chances of dementia developing in older Time Bank members and keep younger minds fit for activities such as learning new skills.

## The value of volunteering

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While Time Banking UK notes that the reciprocal nature of time banks helps to engage people who might not otherwise take part, volunteering is still at the core of time banking, and there are a range of well researched health benefits from that. The Corporation for National and Community Service in Washington DC has drawn together or 32 seemingly robust studies relating volunteering and health<sup>4</sup>.

This review found:

- Several studies showing that volunteers suffering from chronic pain receive benefits from helping others even beyond what could be achieved with medical care. This included declines in the intensity and frequency of physical pain and also reductions in depression.
- Heart attack victims who volunteered afterwards reduced their risk of despair and depression, two factors that lead to mortality.
- For over 65s, volunteering reduced levels of depression.
- People over 70 who volunteer 100 or more hours per year are 1/3 as likely to die as people in a similar position who do not volunteer, and they are 2/3 as likely to report bad health.
- Volunteering has protective impacts for years after volunteering, though higher levels of volunteering seem to produce more substantial results – to a point. There is conflicting evidence whether the threshold for maximised benefits is 40 hours per year or 100 hours per year (roughly 2 hours a week).

The benefits are much clearer for:

- older people, who are more likely to have lost some of their roles and connections through retirement and being widowed; and
- socially isolated people, or people with low levels of social support.

It appears having discretion over their time is a key influencing factor for volunteers. One study compared the health of older people who were working in low paid jobs, caring or volunteering. The volunteers had much higher health rates because they felt in control of their lives and could choose to be helpful. Similarly, research showed that while older people with depression found their depression eased when they started volunteering, younger and middle aged people found depression a barrier to volunteering. It appears this was because they already had plenty to be responsible for and that was causing part of their depression. In contrast, older people are more likely to be free of responsibilities and looking for some.

## Helping and giving

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Research by Allan Luks and Peggy Payne, in *The Healing Power of Doing Good: The health and Spiritual Benefits of Helping Others*, has identified positive effects of

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.sharpbrains.com/blog/2008/04/03/social-connections-for-cognitive-fitness/>

<sup>4</sup> Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research (2007)

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/role\\_impact/performance\\_research.asp#HBR](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/role_impact/performance_research.asp#HBR)

being helpful. There is a phenomenon known as “the helper’s high” resulting from endorphins that are released when we do a kindness for someone. Research shows that even the *memory* of the helpful acts can produce a small helper’s high much later. Indeed, even *watching* someone else be helpful produces the same result, as shown by experiments on people watching a film about Mother Theresa.

- One study of 2,700 men found that those who did regular volunteer work had death rates 2½ times lower than those who did not volunteer.<sup>5</sup>
- Recovering heart patients who visited current heart patients to lend moral support recovered 60% faster than those who did not volunteer.<sup>6</sup>
- Stress-related health problems improve after performing kind acts – this reduces depression and can decrease the lung pressure that leads to asthma attacks.<sup>7</sup>
- Feeling a connection with someone, such as through friendship, stimulates emotions that strengthen the immune system.<sup>8</sup>
- In a study of HIV patients who volunteered, found their white blood cells increased from 200 to 800.<sup>9</sup>

## Using the Salford Time Bank

### A more flexible and creative approach

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While the Time Bank uses common principles of earning time credits to spend on other people’s time, there is more to Salford’s approach, which means that people are more likely to engage with the project.

- People who don’t feel they need any services can spend their credits on events and outings – this week’s trip to Blackpool to see the lights, for example, for two hours of credit
- Credits can be spent on courses such as confidence building or health coaching
- There is even scope for donating credits to others who can use them
- People who can’t get out so much or feel they have much to offer get credit for coming to meetings or working at events
- There are even volunteering jobs that earn credits
- Some service activities are done in groups, such as gardening days that bring people together
- Even groups can become members and use their group credits to hire a van for group activities

As one very active participant said, “It’s all about helping each other out and socialising. Even older ladies can contribute by knitting then get credit and earn services too.” The inclusiveness of exchange is particularly clever by giving isolated people credit for contacting other isolated people. One said, *“I know there’s someone there... the people I called really appreciated it and they were nice.”*

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.sciencebuzz.org/blog/bah\\_humbug\\_science\\_is\\_proving\\_there\\_is\\_a\\_helpers\\_high](http://www.sciencebuzz.org/blog/bah_humbug_science_is_proving_there_is_a_helpers_high)

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.actsofkindness.org/benefits/1>

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

<sup>9</sup> <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=2685717&page=1>



## Varying levels of engagement

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The research on health benefits of volunteering suggests that it has the most noticeable positive impacts when people can decide the amount and type of volunteering they would like to do and it fits in with their lives. This is definitely a principle at the Salford Time Bank and the people interviewed have very varying levels of participation, based on their interests and other commitments.

The two people who had recovered from breakdowns and felt their lives were transformed were the most active. Once they discovered the Time Bank, they were active in as many ways as they could find. At the other end of the scale were the oldest ladies who were less active but who had made phone calls to isolated people, and one made a commissioned drawing for a child's Christmas present. Both of these had had their gardens cleared. The young mum had started working soon after joining and had less time, and the woman who was a member through her group only volunteered through her group and used credits through the group.

## Kinds of engagement participants had experienced

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### Earning time credits

Everyone had been involved in helping others:

- Phoning isolated people for a chat
- Doing a drawing someone wanted done
- Taking people out who are more isolated
- Gardening work
- Fixing things and small jobs like changing light bulbs
- Typing up a letter for someone on the computer
- Writing Christmas cards for someone
- Knitting for hospital's premature baby unit and lactation unit and cancer care

Engagement in group activities for credits

- Coming to meetings of the Time Bank
- Working on reception at an afternoon tea
- Help with the tea at Chill Plus
- Help at the carers group, giving facials and hand massages.
- Volunteer as a link worker with Unlimited Potential
- Volunteer as a support adviser to help people finding it hard to quit smoking

Giving services to organisations

- The Knit and Natter group knits baby clothes for premature babies and fake breasts for expectant and new mothers at the lactation unit at the maternity hospital. This is an example of group to NHS services.

### Spending Time credits

credits on organised activities

- Blackpool outing
- Dinners with the group

Receiving help from fellow members

- Gardening work in the summer
- Having a washing line put up
- Having things fixed around the house

#### Group benefits

- The Knit and Natter group used some time credits to hire a van to take the group to a knitting supply shop 10 miles away

## Pleasures of taking part

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### Community connections with a purpose and value

Community connections are a big attraction to the people taking part, and hearing people's stories is part of valuing each other.

*"When I go round to do a five-minute job for someone, I usually end up staying for an hour for a cup of tea and a chat. I love hearing people's stories."* – Man who provides 'odd job' service through Time Bank a lot

*"I enjoy just the thought of meeting people and hearing people's stories. You want to talk to them. It's really a lovely little thing."* – Older woman who belongs to a few groups

Sharing value while making connections is even more appealing.

*"It's great to do useful things for the community and get to know people. Sometimes it's something really simple, but they really appreciate it."* – Man who is now much more engaged socially since the Energise Centre helped him turn his life around

*"Carolanne kept saying, 'I know you've got a lot to offer,' until I realised I did have things to give. Now I have a whole new circle of people around me – friends too."* – Woman who was overworked, underpaid and devalued at work

*"The lady whose garden we did was having cancer treatment and it was nice to feel we'd helped her. It was a lovely day too."* – Young mum who started to volunteer before getting a job

*"I helped a lady write all her Christmas cards and now she smiles whenever she sees me... a bunch of us did gardening for an older woman and we worked so wonderfully together."* – Woman whose boss had discouraged colleagues from being friendly to each other and bullied her

### Supportive staff to provide personal encouragement and moral support

As well as having a very flexible and imaginative approach to earning and spending credits, Salford's Time Bank is has a more substantial support component. For some people, the support was a critical part of the package that they valued as much as the volunteering experience and exchange. While time banks are particularly associated with "bridging" capital because of their focus on volunteering, the Salford model also includes this one-to-one connection for more isolated people. As a result it also provides "bonding" social capital for people who need it.

*"It's helped my confidence and helped me get back into a social life. It's been my medicine to make me better. They've all helped and I've found myself as a person. I've found wonderful people who treat me with such compassion... Carolanne is just the most wonderful person. She's built me back up and built*

*me back up. My whole stamina in life has changed.” – Woman whose life has transformed after a breakdown*

*“It’s an ideal thing. They’re there if you need to talk.” – Older woman who belongs to a few groups*

*“I know there’s someone there. I can have a quick chat with Carolanne if I’m feeling down. I know I can always talk to someone if I need to, even in the evening. That’s most important.” – Older woman in a wheelchair*

*“I used my credits for life coaching, health coaching and confidence building courses. They even come with you [to courses] if you have anxiety problems like I did.” – Young mum*

## Things to improve

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All of the participants recommended by Time Bank said there was nothing they would improve on. The man, however, said that he was waiting for a mechanic to join the scheme. In the meantime he was only able to use his credits at events or donate them.

The woman who was only a member through ‘Knit and Natter’ said she was not entirely clear what the benefits would be or she could offer or receive through the project. Given that there are many extra options for earning and spending credits, it would make sense to promote these options further until a wide range of people and services are available.

## Community engagement and social cohesion

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Social integration and having more roles is related to positive effects on mental health, in research such as James House (1988), and it is a factor that all the interviewees experienced. Time banks are associated with “bridging” social capital. This is all about feeling connected to the world around you and it overcomes boundaries, such as age or religion, which might otherwise produce isolation.

## Knowing the neighbours

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One of the oldest women explained that she had known her neighbours years ago, but as those people moved away and new people moved in, the neighbours made less effort to get to know each other. Now just having neighbours to say hello to is a difference she appreciates. *“Now I know quite a few neighbours around the corner, through Carolanne, like the lads who did my garden.”*

Saying hello to neighbours and fellow Timebankers was a common experience. Two of the other interviewees said they see people in the street and have a chat. In addition, the young mum who was working has made many friends and now volunteering has built up a wealth of contacts in the community, and the man is so socially confident that he’s starting his own club.

Having Carolanne within the community is important too. The woman in a wheelchair is especially appreciative. *“Carolanne just lives around the corner, so when I can’t sleep, if it’s not too late, she’ll chat or pop round. We’re always exchanging magazines since my son buys me quite a few every week.”*

## Clubs for social connections

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Clubs can be an important way for people to connect to each other, but there are different ways to connect. The two people who turned their lives around after breakdowns have joined several clubs and one has even set up a bingo night that has become popular. They had gaps in their lives, were on incapacity benefit (or ESA) and rediscovered the pleasures of giving and being involved. The other four had different experiences.

Two go to the Time Bank meetings and were looking forward to the trip to Blackpool, but did not consider Timebanking as a club when asked if they had joined any. One of these was already a member of two clubs and church group; the other began working soon after joining the Time Bank, so had not been free for clubs. However, but started volunteering at Unlimited Potential when she was made redundant recently. Of the remaining two, one was often ill and has been unable to take up Carolanne's offer of a lift to the clubs. The other is only a member of Time Bank through her own club and spends most of her free time with her husband.

## Feeling engaged with the community

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Everyone said they felt more engaged with the community thank to Timebanking. Even the woman who was only a member through her group said, "Probably yes, because there must be people benefiting as result of our work for the local cancer hospital and it's satisfying to help and encourage breastfeeding."

The others were more emphatic:

*"Yes, very much so. I feel there's something to go out there for now."* – Woman who turned her life around after a breakdown

*"Yes, [Timebanking] is part of the community and part of my life."* – Older woman who is a member of clubs

*"Yes, my role is desk-based, but people come to see me and I use contacts from my previous community-based job I got through Timebanking."* – Young mum

*"Yes, after years with no connections with neighbours, it's nice now when someone does make the effort... it's invaluable to the neighbourhood to be connected and it's growing now."* – Older woman in a wheelchair

## Health and wellbeing impacts

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Health impacts for Time Bank are very closely interwoven with the Re-energise project and Energise Centre. However, wellbeing impacts were distinct to Time Bank for its social integration value and giving people a sense of purpose.

### Overall wellbeing

The most common health impacts related to mental health – reduced anxiety, reduced depression, improved state of mind, increased confidence and getting out of the house.

*"I've overcome anxieties a lot faster using their strategy."* – Young mum

*"This is the first autumn I haven't suffered from SAD."* – Woman who was bullied at work for many years

*"I have a healthier lifestyle in their way – they're always so cheerful"* – Older woman in a wheelchair unable to take part in much physical activity

### Physical activity

As mentioned earlier, most people had been to the Re-energise project to become fitter. The young mum who did not mention Re-energise said that she was perhaps less active while working at a desk-based job than when she was playing with her children all day, but that the confidence-building courses she did have got her out and about more and she always walks. Physical activity also struck the two oldest women as less relevant to them. One was limited by her wheelchair and the other just considered getting out to meetings to be activity.

Overall, most people were active in their everyday lives by being out and about and walking. Those who had used the Re-energise project were consciously active, with walks if not going to the gym or swimming.

*"I walk my friend's dog a lot now and I wouldn't have done that before because I didn't have the confidence to go out."*

### Healthy eating

There was a clear pattern that those who had taken part in Re-energise had much healthier diets and those who did not felt their diet was generally all right, though they took on board some advice.

*"They don't tell you should or shouldn't do. They just give you advice and look after you."* – Older woman

Lifestyle approaches to eating were common:

*"I tell myself, 'If you don't eat, you'll feel poorly, so eat'."* – Older woman

*"I used to rush around all the time and never stopped properly to eat meals or enjoy my food."* – Woman who had been overworked and underpaid before her breakdown

*"The health trainer suggested that I could cook my own meals instead of buying ready-made food and it would take my mind off my anxiety. It saves money and I've got more confidence now to find recipes on the internet and try them out."* – Young mum

*"I'm eating right now that I'm not depressed anymore."* – Man who had had post-traumatic stress

### Alcohol reduction

Among the interviewees, there was little scope for changing alcohol consumption. Two people never drank anyway; one had stopped before coming to Re-energise, and the other three only drank occasionally and in moderation.

### Smoking

Time Bank didn't seem to have much impact on smoking with this group. Four of the respondents had never smoked. One had started smoking cessation through Re-energise.

### Awareness of local activities that support healthy lifestyles

There was a high level of awareness of the Energise Centre, though the woman who had not used it and was in a wheelchair said she could find out through her GP, social worker or social services. Another person who had been to Re-energise recommended her GP and going for walks.

In addition to recommendations of Re-energise and GPs, one person recommended the Willow Tree and another the Catholic Church, for Catholics and non-Catholics.

## Conclusions

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While the evidence of the health benefits of timebanking specifically is more anecdotal, there is considerable evidence of the health benefits of volunteering, helping and social interaction. Social capital is more complex, but SDCMH's Toolkit may produce more substantial evidence of the clear benefits of positive social capital. It is important to note that timebanking's mutual approach is said to engage more people, as well as giving them access to services that reduce health inequalities. The evidence from telephone interviews reflects the well-documented evidence of the "helper's high": it is a pleasure to help, and can make people feel better about life, especially those with more room for improvement.

## Contact details

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### Client

Client contact	Chris Dabbs
Title	Interim Report, Timebanking Evaluation
Date	13 January 2011
Version	First draft
File location	F:\Projects\Current projects\4086 NHS Salford\Reporting\Drafts\Timebanking interim draft one.docx

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