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**An Appreciative Inquiry into  
'What gets People Involved at  
Rushey Green Time Bank?'**

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## Executive Summary

Between May and September 2019 Rushey Green Time Bank undertook a participatory evaluation using an Appreciative Inquiry approach to understand what gets people involved and the impact of their involvement within our organisation.

Rushey Green Time Bank trained 16 members and volunteers to collect stories of people's most memorable experiences getting involved in the Time Bank. These story collectors captured 47 stories which were analysed by the group to identify emerging themes to learn what involvement looks like at its best.

A story-sharing event held in September gave the wider membership an opportunity to share and validate the inquiry's findings.

This report describes the Appreciative Inquiry approach and what happens in the inquiry process. It provides examples of the stories collected, and presents the inquiry's findings including creative reflections from our story-sharing event.

It includes the key learning and themes arising from the research and concludes by proposing some next steps in the inquiry process.

## Foreword

It is now more than twenty years since Sarah Burns and I, and a number of people from Catford, first set up the Rushey Green Time Bank.

It was and is, at heart, such a simple idea. People either grasped it immediately – unless of course they were officials – or they never did. The idea was that doctors, most days – in fact, the latest figures suggest that it can apply to 40 per cent of the patients they see – see patients who don't actually need drugs, but they do need a friendly visit once a week – or a range of other, human things.

The idea that we had back then was that doctors at the Rushey Green Group Practice would be able to write prescriptions for these friendly visits which they could take downstairs to the Time Bank. Of course, it didn't quite work like that. To start with, the Rushey Green doctors found it was a helpful option to suggest to people with long-term depression. And by joining the Time Bank, and finding – for the first time sometimes – some useful roles, found their lives also transformed.

Twenty years on, it is amazing how the Rushey Green Time Bank has grown and spread – both in its ambition and its geographical focus. Reading this appreciative inquiry is an inspiring case study of just how innovative the Time Bank remains.

Although, we should immediately qualify this by explaining that there is a sense in which some mainstream services are beginning to learn some of the lessons. NHS England is finally beginning to rollout social prescribing across their new primary care networks.

I am aware of course that Rushey Green Time Bank has begun to develop a little beyond its origins in the NHS.

The idea of appreciative inquiry, which began – if we are not too strict about it – in Chicago in the late 1980s has by coincidence, a creative common philosophy with time banks. I mean broadly that both ideas are based on people, and accentuating the positive. More precisely, both techniques value people for what they can do, not for what they can't, and for what they think goes right, not for what they think is wrong – aware that if they start complaining about things, they may never stop.

So I recommend this research for those reasons and because the stories in this document are both moving and uplifting. That is one of the great advantages of qualitative research, as opposed to the graphs and algorithms, which litter these kind of publications, is that it can give you a glimpse of what people really feel.

One final point. I was fascinated to find that Rushey Green Time Bank members were still writing poems. They were doing so right from the beginning. Fifteen years ago, noticing how much time bank members like to write poems, we applied to the Arts Council for money to expand the idea. So it was how the time banks gave birth to a London-wide time bank time poetry project, which provided poets in time banks – all too briefly. The project culminated in a reading in the Poetry Cafe, together with the poet laureate, then Andrew Motion. That was a wonderful experience, watching some of the brilliant Rushey Green Time Bank members at the microphone.

This report showed me that poetry is still at the heart of the time banks – aware that this one simply asks people to step up and support people, apparently in an ordinary way. But then what happens is more than just prosaic. It is poetry.

**David Boyle**

*Co-founder, Rushey Green Time Bank, London Time Bank and Time Banking UK  
Co-author, Give and Take: How time banking is transforming healthcare*

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## What is an Appreciative Inquiry?

“Appreciate Inquiry is a process for engaging people in building the kinds of organisations and a world they want to live in. Working from peoples’ strengths and positive experiences, AI co-creates a future based on collaboration and open dialogue.” David Cooperrider, founder of Appreciative Inquiry”.<sup>1</sup>

Appreciative Inquiry is a philosophy and an approach more than a research tool or a set of techniques. It works from an appreciative, positive and strength-based standpoint.<sup>2</sup> Rather than starting with the problem and finding solutions to that problem, an Appreciative Inquiry uses an asset-based approach focussing on what is working well in order to learn from this.<sup>3</sup> Working from strengths helps people and organisations become stronger by building on their strengths; what you focus on grows. It is ‘generative’ as it create opportunities to generate new ideas and ways of working.

Appreciative Inquiry is a collaborative and participative approach to organisation and community development.<sup>4</sup> It enables organisations and communities to look at what works in order to learn from that to a build a vision for the future. This approach can generate change and action based on the principle that a group or organisation will grow in the direction of whatever its people focus their attention on.<sup>5</sup>

## How does it work?

‘The first question is fateful’.<sup>6</sup> The questions asked in an Appreciative Inquiry influence the direction of change. It works by asking people to talk about their successes. By talking about their successes, the inquiry gives people confidence in their own ability and increases the likelihood of generating action and involvement in the future.

The participatory nature of the inquiry process fosters a shared understanding of everyone’s contribution. The collective is on the journey to create a vision for the desired future and collectively work towards making this vision a reality.



<sup>1</sup> A Taste of AI 2.0 , resource pack, Appreciating People

<sup>2</sup> A Taste of AI 2.0 , resource pack, Appreciating People, card 2

<sup>3</sup> Appreciative Inquiry Resource Pack, Scottish Social Services Council – NHS Education for Scotland 2016

<sup>4</sup> A Taste of AI 2.0 , resource pack, Appreciating People, card 2

<sup>5</sup> Appreciative Inquiry Resource Pack, Scottish Social Services Council – NHS Education for Scotland 2016

<sup>6</sup> A Taste of AI 2.0 , resource pack, Appreciating People, card 7

## The five key steps of the Appreciative Inquiry process

1. **Definition:** establishing the focus and scope of the inquiry
2. **Discovery:** eliciting stories of the system at its best to identify 'the positive core'. It involves in depth investigation into what works based on dialogue and structured conversations
3. **Dream:** collecting the wisdom and imagining the future based on 'the positive core' and the community or organisation's history
4. **Design:** bridges to the future based on the best of the past and the present. Groups work to use assets discovered in the second phase to design a plan and structures to create the desired future
5. **Destiny/delivery:** Making it happen. Building on the dream and design stages to generate action based on individuals', organisations' and communities' commitment to the process.

This report focuses on the first three stages of the inquiry process undertaken so far.

## Rushey Green Time Bank - Who We Are

**Rushey Green Time Bank** is a local charity in Lewisham, South East London, that enables people to share time and skills to build happier, healthier communities. Timebanking uses an asset-based approach and works by facilitating the exchange of skills and experience within a community. Like the Appreciative Inquiry approach, it looks at



what people have rather than do not have. It values people and recognises that everyone has something special to offer others in the form of knowledge, skills and time. Every human being has the capacity to be a contributor.

The charity began as a pilot project in Rushey Green Group Practice in 1998 after Dr Richard Byng heard about the benefits of timebanking for people's health and wellbeing. It was one of the

first examples of social prescribing and was the first time bank founded in a healthcare setting. Doctors at the surgery would refer patients to the Time Bank to reduce social isolation and loneliness by connecting them with other members to get active and give in their local community.

Due to this history, our organisation continues to have a particular focus on reducing social isolation through social prescribing, working with organisations such as



**Community Connections** who refer isolated and vulnerable adults to us. Since then we have developed a number of different projects that have come out of the ideas and skills of our members, to offer more local people ways to get involved and give in their local community. These include **FoodCycle Lewisham**,



a project offering a free community meal cooked using surplus food every Saturday at Lewisham Irish Community Centre, and **Wild Cat**



**Wilderness**, a community green space, developed and maintained by volunteers in Catford. We host **Lewisham Local**, an initiative that encourages local giving, and have worked with **Macmillan Cancer Support** to pilot a time banking project for people affected by cancer in Lewisham.



## Background to the Inquiry

In April 2019, Rushey Green Time Bank came to the end of a three-year grant cycle with Lewisham Council. We wanted to take this opportunity to evaluate the impact of our work with the people and communities we serve. Since October 2019, we have embarked on a new grant from Lewisham Council to scale up the work of Lewisham Local to inspire more individuals, organisations and businesses to give and get involved to make Lewisham a happier, healthier and fairer place to live. As our organisation grows and our work programme changes to take on more of a strategic role in Lewisham, we wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on what has worked well for our members and volunteers in order to use this learning for our future work. To do this we decided to undertake an Appreciative Inquiry.



## The Focus of our Inquiry

As an organisation we wanted to inquire into 'what gets people involved?' in our Time Bank and the projects we manage. We want to understand what has made the difference to inspire people to give or engage with projects and the impact of their involvement.

This inquiry aims to help us take the best of what is forward and build on our past and current successes to help us as we work towards achieving our vision for our a borough where local people, organisations and business are connected and inspired to contribute and give to make Lewisham a better place.

## Collecting Our Stories

In May 2019 we trained 16 Time Bank members and volunteers from our Wild Cat Wilderness and FoodCycle Lewisham to collect stories from our membership to listen to people's best and most memorable experiences, to understand what has made the difference and what's got people involved.

Between May-June 2019 over a six-week period, 14 of the story collectors collected stories from Time Bank members, FoodCycle Lewisham and Wild Cat Wilderness volunteers.

We asked our storytellers to tell us about one of their best, most memorable experiences getting involved in the Time Bank, FoodCycle Lewisham or Wild Cat Wilderness, a time when they have felt most inspired and engaged.

We asked the following follow up questions:

- What was important about this experience?
- What got you involved in the first place? What made this experience possible?
- What would get you engaged like this again? What would you like to do in the future?
- What impact did this experience have?

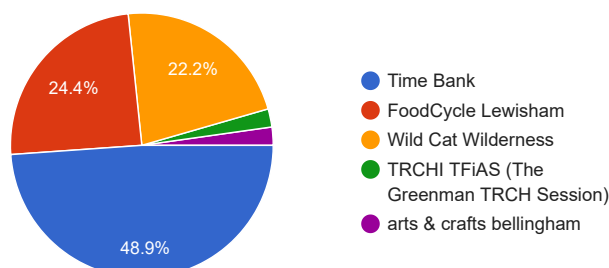
Story collectors were asked to record the main points from the story including the key words, quotes, phrases and anything that stood out from the story on a briefing sheet. These briefing sheets would then be used in the analysis stage to help identify emerging themes.

Story collectors also recorded their three reflective learning points after listening to the story and some personal data from the storyteller to help us identify demographics for the people we spoke to.

## Who We Spoke To?

Our story collectors collected a total of **47 stories** from the inquiry. **23** were from the **Time Bank**, **13** were from **FoodCycle Lewisham** whilst **11** of the stories were from **Wild Cat Wilderness**.

### Which project is this story from? 45 responses



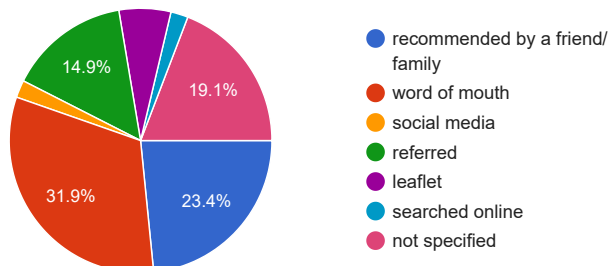


## Statistics from the Inquiry

A large majority (31.9%) were introduced via word of mouth, the second most popular way of getting involved is through being recommended by a friend or family (23.4%).

### What got people involved in the first place?

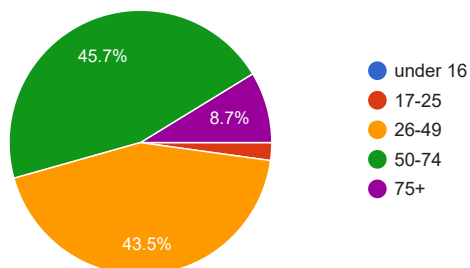
47 responses



The age group that responded the most in the Appreciative Inquiry was the 50-74 year olds (45.7%), the second most popular age group that responded was the 26-49 year olds (43.5%) and the third most popular was the 75+ year olds (8.7%). The age group that responded the least was the 17-25 year olds (2.2% of the members). These figures are reflective of the age demographic of the Time membership.

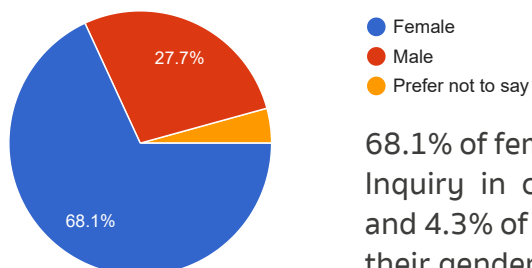
### Age group

46 responses



### Gender

47 responses



68.1% of females responded to Appreciative Inquiry in comparison to 27.7% of males and 4.3% of people preferred not to disclose their gender.

Approximately half the respondents identified as white British, the remaining were from black, ethnic and minority backgrounds.

Overall, approximately 70 individuals were involved with the Appreciative Inquiry to date. Within this, it includes the individuals whose stories have been collected from the trained story collectors, the 14 trained story collectors themselves, and the 25 individuals who attended the story-sharing event on the 7th September, 12 of those individuals having not had their story collected by the story collectors but were able to feed into the inquiry at the event.

## Examples of Stories Collected

### Sarah's Story

*'[TimeBanking] is good, it has helped me so much, they really give people a chance here'*



Sarah is an active member of Rushey Green Time Bank and is grateful for the help that it has granted her. She describes the Time Bank as 'a pedestal in her life'. In a society that older people often feel isolated and undervalued, the Time Bank gives people an opportunity to contribute and truly feel part of their community. As money does not matter in the Time Bank, it is inclusive to all.

Rushey Green Time Bank gave her the confidence and the platform to help others and look after them which is a passion of hers. Additionally, another important factor in Rushey Green Time Bank is that it encourages people to develop their knowledge and skills through its skills exchange and member-led workshops. This helps people like her to deepen their knowledge and experience in how to help others. In future, Sarah would love to adapt what the Time Bank has done for the community of

Lewisham to take it to her country of origin, particularly to engage and support women, as she believes that timebanking is a valuable tool that should be utilised worldwide.

***Magic Ingredients: doesn't discriminate, gives people a chance, combats loneliness***

### Lillian's Story



*'It made me smile' 'It made me very happy to attend the sessions as I was made very welcome and I felt confident in myself to do and make more stuff and believe in myself and trust myself that I am able to conquer anything if I put my mind to it'*

Lillian has been a Time Bank member since 2015. Lillian's most memorable experience with the Rushey Green Time Bank is when she attended the Arts &

Crafts group approximately three years ago. She recounts a time wherein she made a necklace and earring set from beads using a hook, a task which is taxing and requires a steady hand and mind, even more challenging for Lillian who is partially sighted. She states that it was 'intricate' and she had to be 'focused to attach the beads'. Furthermore, she said that 'it was difficult' but as a fellow member helped her patiently, she eventually managed to do it independently. When she finished creating the set it was a beautiful memory as she had given it her all and the end product looked 'so pretty she couldn't believe [she] had created them'. Lillian states further that it made her 'smile' and this experience gave her the drive and determination to come back and do more things. It was a catalyst in her growth as an individual. With the consistent encouragement from the Time Bank, she has been welcomed and her confidence has been rebuilt and renewed, which in turn has enabled her to use her new skills with her family and other areas of her life. She hopes that more people will be able to encounter Rushey Green Time Bank and experience the joy it has brought her.

**Magic Ingredients: confidence, proud, delightful**

## Kevin's Story

*[FoodCycle) lets me give back to the community and society. It's good to do something useful like this'*



Kevin is one of the most regular volunteers at FoodCycle Lewisham. One of his fondest memories was the St Patrick's Day celebration. This event particularly resonated with him, as he is also of Irish decent. There was fellowship amongst everyone as they partook in Irish dancing, sharing food, games and fun. He notes watching a mother and daughter who were very timid upon their arrival who as time went on become visibly more at ease in the new environment. Watching them

'busting their moves' and smiling, he felt that they were truly encompassing the ethos of the FoodCycle; a feeling of togetherness, being able to connect with others, happy and carefree if only for a short time.

**Magic Ingredients: community, doing something useful, give something back to society**

## Sylvia's Story

*'The Time Bank deserves a community award as it is immensely respectful, and it does so much to improve the lives of others as well as my own.'*



Sylvia has been an active member of the Time Bank for approximately four years. She first got involved with the Time Bank through Community Connections and her love of community. She began by attending an Arts & Craft session making jewellery. She found the Time Bank to be a trustworthy, 'professional and loyal' environment so she decided to stay. Her most memorable experience with the Time Bank took place at Wild Cat Wilderness, when she printed leaves onto silk to make scarves. In this workshop, they taught her that by using different natural materials, such as flowers, ground coffee and weeds for example, these products produce vivid, beautiful natural dyes once they are wet and imprinted onto fabric, such as silk. The dyes leftover ranged from bright yellows, to greens and browns and she was stunned as they were all natural, yet the finished silk piece looked lovely and professional, as though it has used artificial dyes and been made to sell on the high-street.

Sylvia appreciated that the Time Bank is encouraging and it incorporates all members. For example, when she gives suggestions, the Time Bank provides action and truly listens. She also states that she believes the Time Bank deserves a community award as it is immensely respectful, and it does so much to improve the lives of others as well as her own. It has helped her engage with others, as prior she was in a place wherein, she was lonely and physically not able to get out and about easily to socialise. She has also been able to make many new friends and always tries her best to get involved as she believes in the work the Time Bank is doing. She doesn't feel pressured to do work within the Time Bank as it is a fluid environment, and it is this fluidity which she believes has made her feel comfortable and is what makes the Time Bank special. She hopes that for the future the Time Bank, particularly the staff will be recognised for their hard work and efforts.

**Magic Ingredients: fluid, connections to others, respectful, listens**



## Searching for the 'Magic Ingredients'

After gathering the stories, our story collectors came together over two sessions to analyse the stories they had collected, to identify arising themes and the 'magic ingredients' that have made people's experiences.

Story collectors were asked to look at the recording sheets they had from the stories and extract the key words, phrases and quotes that stood out onto flipchart paper under the headings of the questions. We then looked at all the information on the post-its and tried to group them into themes. These were then posted all around the room for everyone to look and reflect on.

From these groups we collectively tried to summarise the key themes that had emerged from this collaborative reflective process. As the analysis was divided into two groups, we took the list identified in the first session and elaborated on the list based on the themes that had come out of the second analysis. It is also important in Appreciative Inquiry to not ignore the 'standalone' comments that may not be similar to the rest but can provide important insights.

## What We Discovered

Listed below are the answers provided to each of our questions from our story collector's briefings using 'word cloud' images. Word clouds help to illustrate what were the most common words given in responses relating to each key question. The larger the word, the more it was used. The complete summary of responses is available in appendix.



## What gets people involved in the first place?



What made it (the experience) possible?

COMMUNITY  
BACK HELP GET  
EASY ACCESSIBLE  
GIVE INVOLVED

FRIENDS  
FUNDRAISERS  
R&BT  
DESIRE

EVENTS

OTHERS  
FAMILY  
SOCIAL  
TELLING  
WORD

FESTIVALS  
INDIVIDUALS

MEDIA  
MOUTH

What keeps people coming?

KEEPS  
FEELING  
RELAXED  
PROGRESS  
PRESSURE  
SHARING  
ENVIRONMENT  
SELF  
EVOLVING  
PART  
WANTING  
GROUP

BENEFITS

MUCH  
SEEING  
SENSE  
COMMON

PURPOSE





Overall, the key themes that came up across our work includes:



The key themes for Wild Cat were:



COMFORTABLY  
PUSHES NATURAL  
DEVELOPMENT TARGET  
SEEING TOWARDS  
FORCED SOCIAL SHARED  
BOUNDARIES PEACEFUL  
ENVIRONMENT  
RELAXED

The key themes for the Time Bank were:



HOPEFULNESS  
INCLUSIVE  
KNOWLEDGE  
SENSE SHARING  
CONFIDENCE  
COMMUNITY CONNECTED  
HUMAN  
INCREASED

The key themes for FoodCycle Lewisham were:



**SOCIETY**  
**CONTRIBUTION**  
**SHARING BELONGING**  
**CONNECTIONS SENSE**  
**FOOD CREATING**  
**COMMUNITY**  
**OTHERS**

What would get you involved like this again?

**SOCIAL**  
**PROJECTS**

SHARED DYNAMIC AGE GROWTH NEEDS SUPPORT IDEALS FEEL  
ADDITIONAL PEOPLE MADE CULTURAL EXHIBITION IMPACTS WILDERNESS  
WILDCAT MINDED CRAFTS YOUNGER GET IRREPLACEABLE ARTS FUND RESPONSIBILITY EVENTS HIGHLIGHT TEETH  
DISABILITY BUSINESS INTERESTS RAISING EXTRA CHOIR ACTIVITIES NEED CORPORATE  
COMING EVOLVE SEEING ENGAGING  
CREATIVE LIKE KEEP

From looking at the responses and the emerging themes and key words/phrases that emerged, the group identified a list of 'magic ingredients' to reflect what gets people involved and keeps them coming to the Time Bank and our related projects.

## Themes Emerging from our Stories

Here is the list of magic ingredients the story collectors collated based on the analysis process:

- A space to develop ideas and create something new
- Working in a team
- Opportunities to socialise and meet new people in a relaxed environment while giving
- Working together with a shared common purpose towards a target
- Seeing progress towards a goal, seeing the impact of involvement
- Feeling part of a community and a sense of belonging to something, being included and forming friendships
- Learning and sharing skills and knowledge
- Sense of satisfaction and over-coming challenges
- Sense of pride and being needed
- Positive impact on self; health, well-being, sense of self-worth, confidence, therapeutic benefits
- Giving and receiving
- Having fun!

## Sharing and Learning from our Stories Event

On September 7th 2019, we organised a story-sharing event with our wider membership to share what we have done so far within the Appreciative Inquiry. This was an opportunity for members who had not had a chance to share their experiences to feed into the inquiry, and to collectively reflect on our learning, to validate the results and identify any missing 'magic ingredients' i.e. aspects of our work that our members and volunteers value but hadn't been identified so far.

We started the event with an icebreaker asking members to share what they love about the Time Bank and put on post-it notes. These are the results in a Word Cloud Format:



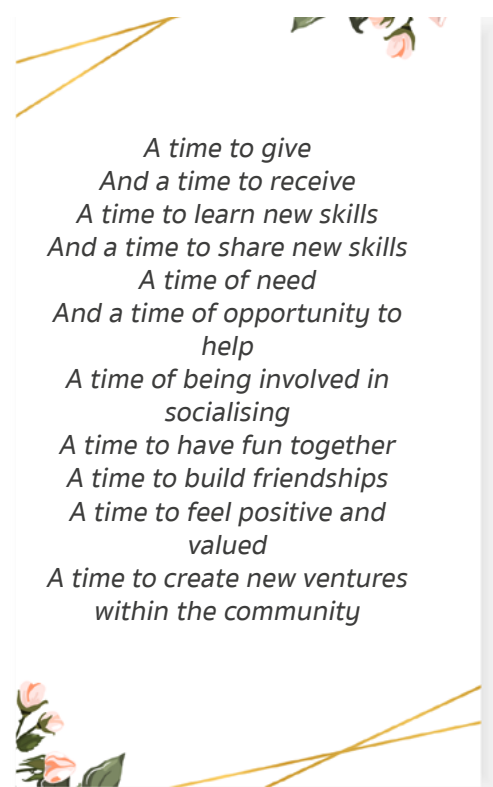


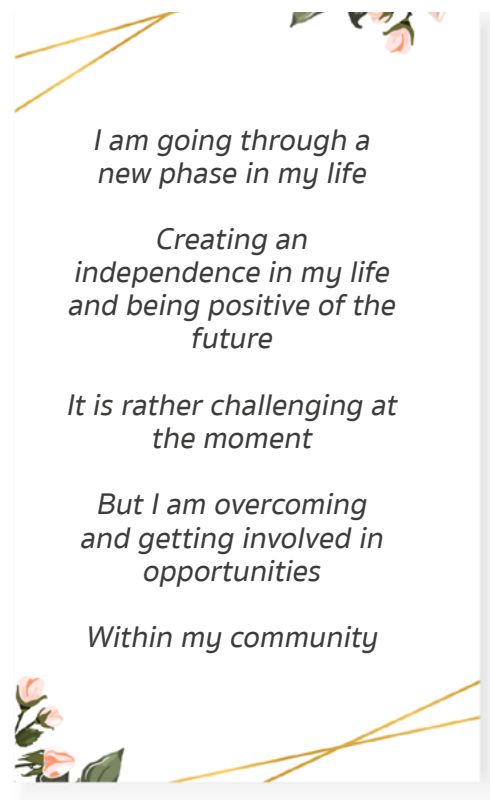
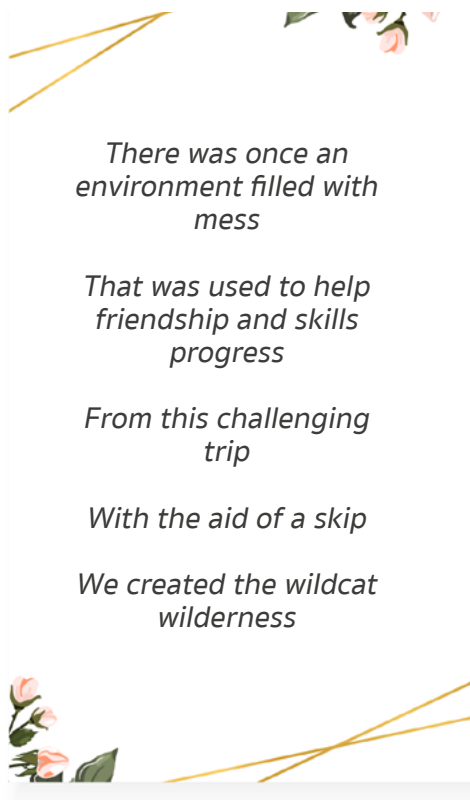
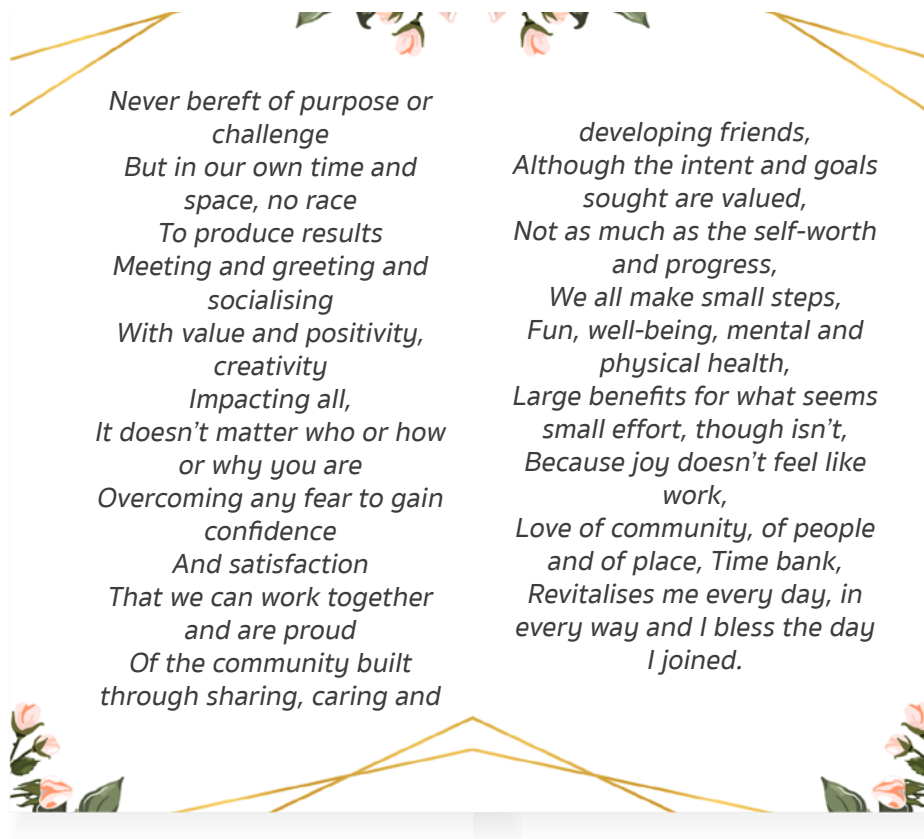
We then gave members an opportunity to share their story. Some had been invited especially to speak and others were moved to speak more organically regarding their experience in Rushey Green Time Bank.

### Creative Reflections

Appreciative Inquiry methodology encourages the use of creative techniques for the collective and reflective learning process. For this event, after presenting the magic ingredients we asked participants to use words from a list extracted from the magic ingredients, to create a poem to reflect their experience with the Time Bank. People then shared their creations in small groups, and a selection with the wider group. The activity was designed to get participants to think creatively and reflectively on what is important to them about the Time Bank and how they connected to the inquiry's findings.

Below are five of the poems created. The full list of poems can be found in the appendix.







## What was missing from the Magic Ingredients?

After the activity, members were asked to discuss in the small groups what was missing from the magic ingredients. Participants noted:

- Having time to reflect on information given
- Emphasis on creativity events
- More opportunities to spend time together and sharing experiences
- Time bank trips
- Having passion to learn new skills
- Connections - social
- Food
- 'family experience'
- Safety
- It's nice to be nice
- It doesn't cost anything
- A welcome break from negativity for your wellbeing
- Joyful experience
- How the Time Bank changes people's lives
- It's a cultural movement
- Inspiring

There was a group discussion and reflection on these and it was agreed that the key points would be incorporated into the inquiry's findings.

Groups also discussed what could get people more involved. Here is what people suggested:



- Offering more workshops to build confidence
- Having people who are less confident to take part in activities or help organise
- Advertising our events in other community organisations by putting up posters
- Asking all timebank members to tell at least 2 friends or family members to attend event
- More platforms to advertise events for those that are not online.
- Family days
- Dancing
- Retention of volunteers
- Introduce projects to stimulate interest

## The Magic Ingredients - What gets people Involved?

Based on what participants highlighted was key their involvement or missing from the original list, the magic ingredients were revised and condensed to come up with the following list:

### People Value:

#### 1. Space:

to develop ideas  
and create



#### 2. Working:

together in a team  
with a common  
purpose



#### 3. Time to Socialise:

to meet new  
people in  
a relaxed  
environment



#### 4. Building connections:

to feel part of  
a community  
and family,  
belonging,  
included, safe,  
making friends



#### 5. Learning and sharing:

knowledge  
and skills



#### 6. Pride:

making an impact,  
over-coming  
challenges



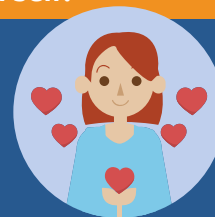
#### 7. Satisfaction:

contributing,  
feeling needed,  
progressing  
towards a goal



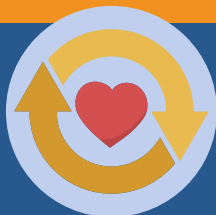
#### 8. Positive impact on self:

health, well-  
being, sense  
of self-worth,  
self-confidence,  
therapeutic



#### 9. Reciprocity:

giving and  
receiving,  
inspiring  
ourselves  
and others



#### 10. Time together:

sharing food,  
having fun, for  
free!



## Reflections on what We have Learned

Based on all the learning gleaned so far, we reflected on the following questions and how our findings fit into the journey of our members getting involved.

### The Offer: What gets people involved initially?

- A place to get information
- A message that stimulates interest
- The space to develop ideas & create something new
- Word of mouth from friends, family & neighbours
- An opportunity to access a wide range of activities
- Opportunity to socialise and meet new people in a relaxed environment

**COMMUNITY**  
**BACKHELPGET**  
FRIENDS FUNDRAISERS LGBT DESIRE **EASY** EVENTS **ACCESSIBLE** OTHERS FAMILY SOCIAL TELLING WORD  
**GIVE INVOLVED** FESTIVALS INDIVIDUALS MEDIA MOUTH



## The Journey: Getting people activated to do more!

- Working together with a shared, common, purpose towards a target
- Seeing progress towards a goal and the positive impact of involvement
- Increased confidence in their abilities and an opportunity to engage 'on their own terms'
- Ability to create something new and make an idea happen
- Learning through sharing skills and knowledge
- Sense of satisfaction by over-coming challenges



## The Outcomes: What gets people to stay?

- Positive impact on self; health, well-being, sense of self-worth, confidence
- Sense of pride and being needed
- Feeling part of a community and sense of belonging to something
- New projects which continue to stimulate interest
- Keeping members involved in co-production of events and activities
- Having fun!



## Next steps

The next stage of this inquiry will be to develop a model to apply this learning practically across RGTB's projects to design our work to help us move towards our vision. These magic ingredients will be developed into a framework of community values to inform our approach to community development in Lewisham reflect the values we feel bring about success.

The framework will look at the practical steps involved in creating a successful journey within the RGTB projects to complement our work on social prescribing looking at:

- **Engagement**
- **Activation**
- **Retention**

Based on the success of this inquiry, we hope to scale up the inquiry to involve other community groups and organisations in Lewisham.

## Conclusion

Rushey Green Time Bank used an Appreciative Inquiry as a participatory approach to investigate what gets people involved and the impact of their involvement within our organisation. This approach enabled us to involve members, volunteers, staff and trustees to reflect on what involvement looks like at its best to create a framework of values based on the best of what we do. Through the 47 stories collected and learning from our story sharing event we were able to identify ten 'magic ingredients' which were key to getting and keeping people involved. Now at the design and delivery stage of the inquiry. These key themes will be developed into a framework for building a successful journey for getting individuals involved within our organisation's projects including those who are referred through social prescribing. This research will inform our approach to community development in Lewisham as we upscale our work through Lewisham Local, inspiring more individuals, organisations and businesses to give and get involved to make Lewisham a happier, healthier and fairer place to live.

***Thank you to all the story collectors, tellers,  
members and volunteers who contributed to this  
Appreciative Inquiry.***

***"Stories have the power to create social change and inspire community."  
Terry Tempest Williams***



## Contact us

This report was written by Simone Riddle, Community Engagement Lead Rushey Green Time Bank.

If this report has inspired you and you would like to get involved, share your story or find out more about the Appreciative Inquiry approach, contact Rushey Green Time Bank on [info@rgtb.org.uk](mailto:info@rgtb.org.uk). If you are a local community group or organisation interested in using the Appreciative Inquiry approach, contact Lewisham Local on [hello@lewishamlocal.com](mailto:hello@lewishamlocal.com)



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### Time bank

Is

**M**eeting, learning, giving and socialising

**E**njoying all Time bank has to offer

**B**eing in a positive environment

**A**mong friends creating and overcoming

**N**ew challenges and

**K**nowledge build up among friends and new acquaintances in safe environments

### Rushey Green Time Bank

Hawstead Road  
London SE6 4JH

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Company registration number 4681564



## Appendix 1

### Learning From the Stories

Data collected from the two story analysis sessions with story collectors Monday 17th June and Tuesday 2nd of July, 2019

#### Time Bank

- Sharing ideas and thoughts
- Conquers, isolation, it is social and thus develops friendship and bonds. It is also inspiring and socialist in its methods
- Community
- It combats isolation. It is independent, genuine and brings forth a sense of belonging. Furthermore, it is humane
- Increased confidence
- Learning in workshop
- "Permission" to be creative, creativity for all
- Questions based on one experience rather than continued involvement
- It is fluid, reciprocal, and is about caring, togetherness and citizenship
- Relaxed space
- Meeting new people, confidence to get involved, community feel (TB)
- Inclusion (TB)
- Hopefulness (TB)
- Release (TB)
- Feel good factor (TB)
- Interaction (TB)
- Imparting knowledge (TB)
- Confidence, proud, delightful (arts and crafts)
- Organisational skills, team player (TB)
- Artistic knowledge (TB)

#### FoodCycle Lewisham

- Volunteers (FC)
- Camaraderie amongst the volunteers (FC)
- Forming friendships (FC)
- Connections made (FC)
- To give something back (FC)
- Seeing the difference you make (FC)
- Community experience (FC)
- Contributing to society, learning new skills (FC)
- Warmth (FC)
- Fun (FC)
- Making magic (FC)
- Sharing food, no waste (FC)
- Sharing food with people (FC)
- Full stomachs (FC)

#### Wild Cat Wilderness

- 'coming here is like an encyclopaedia for me' because of the knowledge of the people here (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Meeting new people
- Bonds developed within team
- Positive experience to work alongside someone even though we didn't know each other
- Working to a definite aim (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Building my confidence, doing things that I didn't think that I could do (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Being challenged to do something out of my comfort zone (Wildcat Wilderness)
- I began to appreciate this size of the project
- Gave a sense of achievement
- Something worthwhile to do in spare time (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Knowing the world around you better "adds a richness of experience to daily life
- A good balance of how to make you feel relaxed
- If you want to talk you can talk but there is no pressure (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Relaxed environment, no pressure to finish 'easy come easy go' (Wildcat Wilderness)
- The theory of pruning could be put into practice straight away
- Informal learning environment, good atmosphere
- Individuals felt like they achieved something (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Made something to leave behind, which would then evolve with other elements

### Time Bank

- BFF inspired and sparked desire to give back to the community
- Gave her a chance to be wildly independent (Wildcat Wilderness, Timebank, Foodcycle)
- Increased confidence and sense of self worth
- Supportive environment and nice to offer skills
- Measures people by their values and not price
- Was able to feel appreciated (Timebank)
- Learning new skills
- Creativity! Working together
- Overcoming fear of children and adults
- Emotionally unloading and knowing I could turn to people from McMillan and Time Bank (TB, McMillan)
- Community feel, made me feel welcome (TB)
- Bringing awareness of this organisation, especially the free Bring & Fix event (TB)
- Learning new crafts and being able to practice these skills at home and share them with family (Arts and Crafts)

### FoodCycle Lewisham

- Teamwork with volunteers who didn't know each other well
- Everyone willing and good humoured, it was fun
- (Foodcycle) large amounts of food rescued from the landfill
- Positive aspects of projects leader
- Working as a team
- Feeling part of something big (FC)
- Understanding the impact of Food Cycle (FC)
- The most vulnerable come in (FC)
- "Amazing dishes with leftover food" (FC)
- It was magic (FC)

### What was important about this experience?

- Teamwork
- Learning new skills
- Overcoming fear and challenges
- No pressure
- Satisfaction
- Spare time
- Appreciation
- Confidence
- Positive response
- Technical
- Sustainable
- Building relationships
- Independent aspects
- Community
- Made to feel welcome
- Part of something bigger
- Understanding the impact for the vulnerable
- Creating meals = magic!

### What would get people involved in the first place? What made it possible?

- Organisational skills and team-work (TB)
- Wanting to do something different from what my friends do going through a hard time-wanted to do some good (FC)
- Curious to see what it was after retirement
- Cutting away from meaningless babble, conversations have meaning, learnt so much
- I had got to know Maria and being newly retired, I wanted a volunteering opportunity (Wildcat Wilderness)
- I had a few hours spare on Thursdays - Wildcat Wilderness
- Was interested generally in the Timebank experience
- Not currently employed so wanted to volunteer
- I work from home "needed punctuation marks in my life"
- Out of work and was new to the area
- Bored, isolated, pass on experience
- weed bashing volunteering fitted in with my work hours
- Good that it was no interview/no CV needed (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Accessible and easy to get involved (no DBS check) - Wildcat Wilderness
- People gave them the opportunity
- Maria's vision for the site is inspirational
- The concept was enthralling
- You get something back (reciprocal)

- Wanting to be involved with a food waste project (FC)
- Accessible to get involved with (FC)
- Revamping a presentation to make it more attractive for members or intending members (TB)
- To help others and to find a place called home
- Wanting to do more in the local community, they wasn't fulfilled
- Desire to be involved in grass roots community organisation
- To help the community and give back (FC)
- Give back to the local community (FC)
- The red cross lady brought an individual to Wild Cat Wilderness
- Community, connections and Simone Booth
- Heard about the vandalism, which was then mobilised (Wild Cat Wilderness)
- Heard on social media, attended an event and opening after (Wild Cat Wilderness)
- After hearing about it from a flyer they fell in love with the concept
- Word of mouth from members
- I'd bumped into Alex at Rushey Green Festival and was looking for events and projects for families
- A friend told me about it
- Attending the event (festival) and making contacts with the community (TB)
- Complimented other work with outdoor based gardens
- Heard about WCW through a friend and thus wanted to find out more
- I like being outdoors and Wild Cat Wilderness is a haven in Catford
- Found Wild Cat Wilderness through google looking into doing gardening for other people and volunteering
- Social media events, friends, word of mouth from members, Google (the internet), vandalism of bees
- 'needed punctuation points in my life' not currently employed, curious, wanting to get out of the house
- Desire to be involved in the local community, reciprocity, easy to get involved (no checks)
- Newsletter
- Fellow friend from educational disability foundation
- Simone booth told them about it
- A course by the lewisham job centre where they were advertising mcmillan

#### **What would get them involved like this again?**

- More support for those who have additional needs (disability)
- Growth of projects
- Younger age dynamic
- Putting more activities for children that take place so they could bring the children with them
- More multicultural events so the communities could be integrated
- More I.T sessions
- More media related productions
- More arts&crafts projects for people with disabilities
- How to grow and maintain a plant
- More similar requests to help promote the events and I'd be willing to help
- An international cultural day/evening event to share our different cultures within the community
- Do they need extra? Interests are being met to keep them coming
- Engaging with business corporate and social responsibility
- Working with like-minded people/shared ideals, arts and crafts or cultural exhibition or choir i.e. creative activities, made to feel irreplaceable, social or fund-raising events which highlight impacts, projects to get their teeth into
- Seeing Wildcat Wilderness evolve

#### **Impact of the experience/difference on individuals:**

- Living in the moment and having conversations that are so heart-warming that mean so much
- Improved social skills
- Employment opportunities
- I made new friends
- Enabled me to offload a load of anxiety and stress
- Gave me hope for the future
- A feeling of inclusion
- Eradicated feelings of loneliness and hopelessness
- Learnt new skills
- Also able to share my own skills with those willing to learn
- Made me very happy as I was very welcomed
- I felt confident and trusted myself to be able to conquer anything I put my mind to
- Being able to promote TimeBank and share how it has helped me by providing a platform whereby the public can exchange their skills without having the pressure of having to pay
- Continuity and progress
- Gave me a sense of accomplishment
- Increased confidence

- Met Philippe at festival, learnt of the timebank and it reinforced and restored the idea of community (increased self-esteem, improved mental health). Story embodies the positive aspects of the Timebank
- Working with adults reminded him of working with children, people experience fear when faced with new things (when you get older you have to pass on this experience to be inspired to create a business which helps the local community (TB)
- To appreciate how much time and preparation goes into events (TB)
- "Picks you up", "gives recognition", something I didn't know I could do (TB)
- To share with others (TB & FC)
- Formed new relationships (TB)
- Sparked friendships (TB)
- Fully community-based, well-run (TB)
- Confidence
- Believing in myself again
- Warm, positive feelings (TB)
- To improve my health (TB and FC)
- Good sense of purpose, very therapeutic (TB)
- Learned something new (TB)
- Shared artistic skills with others and inspired (TB)
- Confidence
- Believing in myself again
- Warm, positive feelings (TB)
- To improve my health (TB and FC)
- Good sense of purpose, very therapeutic (TB)
- Realising the difference I had made (FC)
- To be inspired to create a business which helps the local community (TB)
- To appreciate how much time and preparation goes into events (TB)
- "Picks you up", "gives recognition", something I didn't know I could do (TB)
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#### **Time Bank**

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- Formed new relationships (TB)
- Sparked friendships (TB)
- Fully community-based, well-run (TB)
- Learned something new (TB)

#### **FoodCycle Lewisham**

- Gained something back (FC)
- Volunteering is important for corporate and social responsibilities (FC)
- Want to be involved increasingly more each week (FC)
- Being with people (works alone in day-to-day life) (FC)

- Gave back to the community (FC)
- Felt elated participating in projects to help those in the community (FC)
- Developed skills in how to value all perspectives (FC)
- Valuing others (FC)
- “Tickle in your stomach” feeling (FC)
- Gave back to the community (FC)
- Gained something back (FC)
- Volunteering is important for corporate and social responsibilities (FC)
- Want to be involved increasingly more each week (FC)
- Felt elated participating in projects to help those in the community (FC)
- Developed skills in how to value all perspectives (FC)
- Realising the difference I had made (FC)
- Valuing others (FC)
- “Tickle in your stomach” feeling (FC)
- Being with people (works alone in day-to-day life) (FC)
- Scott involved in Foodcycle and thus they stopped 24 kilos of food going to waste. It is about sustainability, it is an adrenaline rush, gives confidence, renewal of food for others (Foodbank, Timebank)

#### Wild Cat Wilderness

- The environment
- The environment that we had the mindfulness session in was key
- I enjoyed helping to make the tree sculpture because it was rewarding to work with others
- There was a surprise element to it
- It has unleashed creativity which is inspiring my future projects such as the dye gardens (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Completing tasks itself was satisfying (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Has got more work interested in finding out about everyday plants “it’s set of a domino effect”
- Has given me a “holistic engagement with the world”
- Made me interested in everyday work (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Seeing development and growth of projects and garden (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Feeling free and liberated (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Mental health benefits
- I gained confidence in my own ability to learn new skills and carry out a task
- We made a structure which was practical and useful (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Has given me work knowledge in managing a wild environment/ my garden
- Gave me the confidence to prune trees, pruned and thus pruned a friends tree
- Intend to prune at Wildcat Wilderness next winter
- I keep coming back to see what’s still hidden
- Realised we are freeing up valuable fruit trees (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Increased mental health and wellbeing (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Its taught me to live in the moment
- It’s like having a holiday from the rest of the world
- Increased knowledge (of plants specifically) - Wildcat Wilderness
- The shed is a useful addition to Wildcat Wilderness which is used all the time
- Found irises that were hidden, had an aim to uncover them and a shared goal and appreciated the process. It was valued by the community and she was a help going towards a goal (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Learning and seeing nature and plants helped her to see the world in a different way, made her relaxed ‘social in a non-intrusive way’ tranquil space had a knock on effect and helped her to see things differently
- Something hidden is revealed
- Seeing the site develop and evolve
- Being part of a group is good for mental health “the social side enhances the benefits of the natural environment”
- Having it within an informal environment (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Meeting new people
- New skills (such as the selling of jam made from our fruit)
- Having a deadline focused relaxes minds (Wildcat Wilderness)
- People in the team (Wildcat Wilderness)
- A peaceful environment
- Mindfulness (Wildcat Wilderness)
- Keeping the world around for better and adds a richness of perspective to everyday life
- Working on a shared target
- Teamwork skills are enhance, despite not knowing each other well
- Its outside of the comfort zone in an efficient and positive way
- Sense of freedom
- Importance of being able to socialise in a non-intrusive way

## Appendix 2

### Poems

from the Sharing Our Stories Event, Saturday 7th September, 2019

A time to give  
And a time to receive  
A time to learn new skills  
And a time to share new skills  
A time of need  
And a time of opportunity to help  
A time of being involved in socialising  
A time to have fun together  
A time to build friendships  
A time to feel positive and valued  
A time to create new ventures within the community

Being part of the Time bank is developing more skills, making friends,  
It's helping someone when they are not feeling well to make them feel better,  
It's built my confidence to go forward,  
It helps me relax when I relax,  
Being happy sharing and being positive and helping others  
Having some fun at the seaside,A

Positive people valuing each other together in teams with a purpose creating opportunities and a space to experience wellbeing when they show what they have

Confidence – slow build have time to develop  
No pressure on members – very important  
No judgement, accepted as who we are  
Meet people not like ourselves  
Inspiring

Having an impact on people's lives  
Sharing, giving and receiving  
To have a positive purpose, a goal  
Is so fulfilling and good for the soul.

Challenging!  
That's what it is for me meeting new people.  
Overcoming!  
My shyness enough to open up and engage with others.  
Confidence!  
Is what I gain when I connect with the right people.  
Sharing!  
Which is something that gives me joy.  
Creating!  
Something that is appreciated  
Self-growth!  
When I can bring a smile or a laugh to someone who needed it.

A team of people within a community giving and receiving support. Developing friendships, self-worth confidence. Gaining satisfaction working towards goals.

Feeling proud in a crowd,  
is about sharing our purpose,  
fun together and inviting  
people to  
invite and give and overcome  
to receive

Time bank is a place making  
Giving as receiving  
Sharing as creating  
Learning as relaxing



Together, we make Time bank a community with  
Friendship, fun and love

Feeling the good vibes from happy sun shining smiling Time Bank faces

Rushey Green friends working together  
growing in the wilderness together  
getting a healthy community together  
growing together, eating together, being together

The goals of the people are many not few  
With the impact that friendship has on you  
The knowledge and ideas we learn on the run  
Involves purpose, wellbeing opportunity and fun  
Feeling valued and having a sense of self-worth  
Can overcome the challenges failed by the earth

(T)ime bank  
(l)s  
(M)eeting, learning, giving and socialising  
(E)njoying all Time bank has to offer  
(B)eing in a positive environment  
(A)mong friends creating and overcoming  
(N)ew challenges and  
(K)nowledge build up among friends and new acquaintances in safe environments

I am going through a new phase in my life  
Creating an independence in my life and being positive of the future  
It is rather challenging at the moment  
But i am overcoming and getting involved in opportunities  
Within my community

There was once an environment filled with mess  
That was used to help friendship and  
Skills progress  
From this challenging trip  
With the aid of a skip  
We created the wildcat wilderness

Never bereft of purpose or challenge  
But in our own time and space, no race  
To produce results  
Meeting and greeting and socialising  
With value and positivity, creativity  
Impacting all,  
It doesn't matter who or how or why you are  
Overcoming any fear to gain confidence  
And satisfaction  
That we can work together and are proud  
Of the community built through sharing, caring and developing friends,  
Although the intent and goals sought are valued,  
Not as much as the self-worth and progress,  
We all make small steps,  
Fun, well-being, mental and physical health,  
Large benefits for what seems small effort, though isn't,  
Because joy doesn't feel like work,  
Love of community, of people and of place, Time bank,  
Revitalises me every day, in every way and I bless the day I joined

I like to talk about Catford. Because I meet new friends and I communicate to people. I have been enjoying doing craft lessons with time bank. So I can put my creativity into it. That makes me really happy and cheerful. I have been doing gardening with Wildcat. Because it helps me relax and helps me stop worrying. I have been with Timebank for six years. I have been really enjoying the art classes and making friends. It gives me pleasure to my life. And I would like to thank you all. For what you have done for me. Thanks