



St Mary's Annual Report 2018-2019

Welcome

Thank you for picking up this report.

The following pages describe what happens when you bring people together in simple ways to form purposeful relationships and achieve goals.

They describe how more than 900 people have connected with each other to offer words and actions of welcome and encouragement.

They explain how people who were defined by their problems discover that they are capable of being a solution.

How people help each other out of isolation and into purposeful community.

Just ordinary people who have been under-rated and overlooked for most of their lives. Given the right environment they are capable of doing so much.

It is a privilege to be part of this unfolding system that is so much bigger than the sum of its parts. Every day I hear or see acts of courage, generosity and perseverance as people battle against odds not of their own making. People from all parts of the world, from all backgrounds with different stories but with a common desire to live with hope and dignity and purpose.

I hope you enjoy reading it.

Graham Duncan
Director, St Mary's Community Centre

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Toxic Ecosystem

A wicked problem with chronic and severe consequences.

The lives of too many people in our cities are dominated by loneliness, unemployment, boredom and poverty. Living like this is stressful. It goes deep. It erodes their confidence and makes it harder for them to think clearly and decide what is important. They live in a toxic ecosystem starved of hope.

"You see many people who are completely broken because of changes to benefits, so you see them coming here and asking for help."

"I wouldn't be sat here if it wasn't for TimeBuilders. I'd probably be hiding. My brain would have been tipping over with worries from the past."

For others mental illness or the randomness of life can make it hard to find a foothold into life again.

"I was diagnosed with a mental health condition. When I was in hospital my partner left me and was selling our house. I came out of hospital and had lost my home. I got sacked. Within the space of a few months I literally lost everything. For several years I went into a state of unbelievable depression."

"In the early days after I was widowed, sometimes I couldn't get to the end of the street, I'd go back home, it took a while but I'm there now... and that's because of this place."

The public health consequences are severe. People living in a toxic ecosystem are less healthy, die earlier and make repeated presentations to health services for non-medical complaints.



"Without TimeBuilders I probably wouldn't be here, it was getting that bad... I'd lined up loads of medication on the coffee table and got really, really drunk before I decided to take them... that happened to me on two occasions, I think if I hadn't been coming here, there might be a third occasion where something might have snapped, and that's how much it means to me."

These are systemic problems, wicked problems which don't have a simple fix. Everyone recognises that statutory services only deal with the symptoms of a toxic system, they cannot create healthy system - they're not set up that way.

We need a different approach - it takes a system to fix a system. What if there was a way of creating a healthy system?

What would a good ecosystem look like?

TimeBuilders helps to shape a new ecosystem with a profound and powerful impact on people's lives.

People succeed

A good ecosystem is one where people experience success instead of failure. Where they can hope again.



Jewellery craft workshops enable people to succeed in learning new skills

People build relationships

A good system is one where people find a community of people who are overcoming problems like them and who give them the courage that change is possible.



Simple things help people to create new friendships

People have purpose

A good ecosystem is one where people spend their time on things that are important to them - where they learn new skills, or take some control of their lives, or do things that benefit other people.



A raised bed made in our workshop being installed in a new home

"When I first started I was very, very nervous about coming along, Susie and the staff really put me at ease. I took it really slowly and then all of a sudden, I'm just back on top. It's made me see the future is not black. I'm having coaching sessions as well. It's given me confidence to start again."

"At the time I didn't know it would be important to meet other people in similar situations, but once I was encouraged to do it, it's like support for each other. If you have a bad day, there's someone else to carry you along, I have managed to connect with people and form long-lasting friendships."

"I am in recovery from my mental health but there will be relapses. It's not a miracle overnight it's just about managing it. Part of it is being productive, doing constructive things for my brain, something to focus on without having to think about money or whatever. That's fantastic."

How TimeBuilders helps to create a new ecosystem

TimeBuilders is a simple and effective response which addresses core issues.

It does not ask people to receive, it asks them to give by working on projects which improve the lives of others.

Mostly our projects involve:

Eating together - collecting surplus food and making a community meal for others to share.

Making - from waste wood in our community workshop.

Growing vegetables in raised beds in the front yards of inner city houses and in our churchyard.

Learning - some members teach English to people from other countries. Others run their own skills share groups in art, sewing, Chinese, creative writing, crafts, table tennis, exercise, badminton and many others.

People earn a Time Credit for each hour that they work on a project and they can spend the Credit on rewards

donated by our community partners. For example spare capacity in sports clubs, leisure centres, theatres, or for coach trips or meals in our community café.

This makes a difference to people who are marginalised:

It increases capability - mental and emotional strength and skills.

It creates opportunity for people to do work which is valued by others and to build social networks.

It builds motivation - people experience success and are rewarded for their work with Time Credits.

Improving the lives of others.

In our woodwork shop members teach new skills and share their experiences of life with young people



Barriers

Making a new ecosystem is not rocket science, but it's also pretty difficult.



Our gardening projects create a rhythm of work and wellbeing



New life under the surface

It's difficult because many people have been living for decades in a toxic ecosystem which has eroded their confidence and motivation and denied them the opportunity to learn anything meaningful. People react to this in different ways.

Some have inward walls of depression and isolation.

"I was very reluctant to join and scared. I had been in hospital for four months and coming into the community was weird, different. I was worried how people would perceive me, what they'll think about me, whether I'd fit in. I was nervous, anxious, everything."

Others become suspicious because they feel constantly let down by those who claim to be helping them.

"A lot of people here have had a bad education, a bad environment, lost jobs, lost confidence, so you're going to start off with baby steps. I think that happened to me... I felt really down... felt completely useless."

The stress of being in an unhealthy ecosystem makes it hard for people to make good decisions and to recognise what is most important for them to do.

"I did have tendencies just to keep myself to my 4 walls, this has helped me get out of my shell, it has helped me turn around and understand that there are people there for me in the community itself."

Nothing can happen until these barriers are overcome. And so our

workers spend a long time working in new communities to build trust. They are tenacious in working initially with very small groups of people and brave in doing things which often fail. But they stick with it because they believe that once the trust is won, once there is a small seed of faith then things will start to bloom.

"I would say the most important thing is that it gives me an incentive. I would be just sat at home, hiding, watching the four walls. It's just like someone threw a lifeline at me, this place and Time Credits and all that, it's a means to be able to turn around and do something, and know you're doing a good thing."

Trial and error, tenacity and bravery are good things. But we also wanted to make things easier and so we've been doing some evaluation.

Evaluation and theory

We know that joining TimeBuilders makes a transforming difference.



...But we wanted to understand why in more detail.

So for the last 3 years we've been doing an evaluation with the help of academics from the University of Sheffield School of Health and Related Research (ScHARR).

These were our questions:

“What do we have to do to help people create a good and healthy ecosystem?”

“Of all the things we do, which are the most important and how can we do them better?”

“How can we use this knowledge to replicate TimeBuilders in other contexts?”

We've conducted over 100 interviews to discover what the experts, our members, can tell us about how TimeBuilders works.

Last year we discovered the COM-B framework (Michie 2011) which anchored our thinking in three experiences that strongly influence the way that people think and behave.

Capability - how people experience success, or failure

Opportunity - how people meet others in a place that feels welcoming and safe

Motivation - the experience of doing activities which feel important and rewarding.

But we needed to look deeper to figure out how to create these qualities on the ground. So we looked deeper.

- We looked at where things were working well in our projects and contrasted with where they weren't.
- We talked to academics and read books.
- We talked to thoughtful practitioners and made notes.
- And we got interested in the science of behaviour and the psychological drivers which ping around in any human system.
- We tried to make visible the hidden psychological processes that were already operating in our projects so that we could do them more intentionally.

After all this we had a deeper understanding that you can boil things down to 3 simple rules which you can apply everywhere and which run through TimeBuilders projects.

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You can boil things down to 3 simple rules which you can apply everywhere.

Rule 1 : When people achieve goals they feel capable of doing more.

Albert Bandura said something very obvious: **“to pursue any goal we need to have some confidence that we can achieve it.”**

When people set goals and achieve them it creates confidence and motivation which transfers to other areas of their lives. Success breeds success.

“I think that if I am confident at TimeBuilders, I can be confident anywhere. And also the skills, I can learn new skills and continue to do them myself, or maybe teach them to other people.”

The goal can be almost anything. But it needs to be judged carefully because many people live with an enduring

sense of failure and it takes courage to have a goal.

Other people have goals that are too big to achieve and they don't know where to start. Their goal needs to be broken down into manageable steps.

Over the last 2 years coaching has become an increasingly important part of the TimeBuilders package as we learn the importance of helping people to know what they think and to set the goals that are right for them.

“I felt I was nothing and useless and worthless. But I managed to help someone and it didn't really take a lot to do.”



Rule 2 : Relationships, relationships, relationships.

Generally people are not looking for an intervention, a project or a programme. Almost always people are looking for the relationships.

Face-to-face contact with other people is the single biggest predictor of health and happiness. Just having eye contact with someone releases oxytocin and creates feelings of wellbeing and trust. It lowers cortisol, reduces stress and helps you to deal with pain.

“Social interaction with other people for me has changed. The groups are massively important. They slowly built my confidence. I've been in social isolation for years and I've had to learn to live again. Through all this I just feel like I've changed what I want to do in life and what I thought was important.”

TimeBuilders is a system that helps people form relationships.

“I think [TimeBuilders] became a part of me, a way of life as well. You get to know people and then you realise you have a small family around you, and that makes you feel comfortable, makes you feel warm, makes you feel at home. You can ask anything, they are always ready to listen.”

Opportunities for social interaction run through everything we do. There isn't a magic way to bring people together in sustainable communities. Building relationships takes time, persistence and a commitment to listen to people and to earn trust. But we are learning to create the ecosystem which makes this more likely .

Rule 3: People are motivated when they feel rewarded.

We commonly hear that people won't volunteer because they don't want to do "owt for nowt". We wonder if this means that people are tired of being compelled to do meaningless things in demeaning environments as a requirement of continued State support.

Our experience is that in a purposeful and rewarding ecosystem where people are achieving something, learning something, having meaningful interaction, then they will give huge time and energy for "nowt".

Rewarding activity provides the incentive to overcome personal difficulties. It gives you back control. It means that you are continuing to grow and be challenged, rather than waiting for something to happen.

"If TimeBuilders wasn't there I would probably be in my house twiddling my thumbs and going to job seekers... I don't need to do that... I can see things positively and help myself..."



The distinctive contribution of TimeBuilders is that it forms an ecosystem where these things happen with regularity, where they reinforce each other and become sustainable.

Setting goals, building relationships and being rewarded

TimeBuilders brings these things into our communities.

The core projects which have formed the core of the TimeBuilders ecosystem over the last few years continue to thrive, creating leaders who make them sustainable.

Our community meals, made from surplus food, work in five sites across the city - Firth Park, Sharrow, Lowedges, Burngreave and Netherthorpe. Each week over 120 people receive a great meal and a warm welcome from our volunteers.

After working closely with our great friends at FoodCycle for 5 years we've decided it's time to forge our own way and have rebranded the meals as TimeBuilders CookHouse.



- Our gardening group is continuing to transform the grounds at St Mary's, and making raised beds to place in people's houses.



- Our Teach English project provides a place of free learning to people arriving in Sheffield from other countries. Our brilliant volunteers offer friendship and the learners earn Time Credits in our projects and develop their own social networks.



- Our workshop in its new home in Steel Inn is growing in membership and skills - producing imaginative products out of waste or reclaimed wood.



- The café continues to be at the heart of what we do - producing great food and teaching cooking skills to members. Matt, our new community chef joined us this year and is making a massive impact - providing the skills to help people cook up their own tasty meals.



Most exciting is when members run their own groups based on their skills and talents in crafts, art, sewing, creative writing, litter picking, Chinese and many other things. Groups such as this are fantastically important because they provide a welcoming and inspiring 'landing place' where new members can find their feet and understand what TimeBuilders has to offer. In Firth Park a group of ladies are running their own activity groups.



Time Credits

At the heart of TimeBuilders is the Time Credit.

People earn Time Credits for every hour they spend contributing to a project.

They are central to motivation because they give people an instant reward for each positive step they take. Being rewarded for each step of a slow and challenging journey makes it much more likely that people will continue.

"I cannot describe the feeling of worth that Time Credits gave me... to be rewarded for an hour's work with a Time Credit which you can then go and use, when money is so tight... It meant the world. They give you worth and confidence."

Earning your way into activities builds self-esteem and slightly offsets the stigma of poverty.

"I use Time credits to take my daughter swimming once a week. That's important to me because your money can be spent on other things more important. During the summer holidays they did a movie afternoon and children were invited. It is important having my daughter involved sometimes because childcare has always stopped me before."

"Yes TimeBuilders allows me to be independent, it's great. Yes it's my favourite thing about TimeBuilders because it saves you money, instead of spending money you can spend Time Credits."

"The time credits are an incentive for me. It's nice to know you can save them up and spend them. You can also save them for theatre tickets. It's a good way of getting out and seeing new things, I've made lots of new friends."

Earning Time Credits is an important factor in the sustainability of our groups.

"Time Credits are definitely an incentive - I'm able to keep my group going because of Time Credits. Without them my volunteers would not turn up, even if they've got nothing else to do because it's not rewarding to them. When I'm doing a project where people can earn Time Credits people come because they know they can earn Time Credits."



Replication

A great idea isn't worth much unless it works in more than one place and this is what we've set out to test.

Can TimeBuilders create good ecosystems in other places?

An important part of our learning has been forming partnerships with other organisations so that we can learn what works, and what doesn't work when you start to replicate.



Rotherham Minster

When our good friend Phil Batchford moved to become vicar of Rotherham Minster he wanted to take TimeBuilders with him because it had made such a difference to his church in Sheffield. We didn't need to be asked twice and so working with him we have developed Rotherham TimeBuilders.



We now have a thriving and growing TimeBuilder project running 7 groups and attracting up to 50 people to a new

community of belonging and purpose. We've set up a walking group and a new CookHouse meal in the neighbouring ward of Masbrough.



With the financial help of Sheffield Diocese, Christine is now working full time in Rotherham so we're excited about future developments.

Most learned

How important it is to work well with a small group of people to invest time and faith in them and build activities around their strengths.

TimeBuilders in Gleadless Valley and Lowedges

A year ago we formed a partnership with Reach South Sheffield to replicate TimeBuilders in communities near the outskirts of Sheffield.

This is what we've done:

- Worked with the brilliant, volunteer-run Lowedges Community Centre to develop a weekly community café whilst our CookHouse community meal continues to thrive.
- People told us they were struggling with healthy eating and weight so we have just started a new TimeBuilders Weight Watchers group which people can access with Time Credits.
- Developed a new community workshop alongside the gardening project already running at Herdings there. Volunteers are now taking responsibility for running the project.



Also in Sheffield

Manor and Castle Development Trust are generously hosting our Men's Shed workshop in the Steel Inn where they also provide support for young people who aren't at school. We all saw the possibility of something good.

Our workshop members value their welcome at the Steel Inn and the group has grown in numbers and purpose. The members bring skills and experience of life and when they aren't busy making all manner of outdoor wood crafts they are starting to teach some basic woodwork skills to the young people at the Inn, so they can make something they can be proud of.



- Helped the landlord of the John of Gaunt pub to put in a raised bed to improve the area for local people and installed a raised bed in the local shopping parade.
- With the help of the amazing Rebecca, we are running an inspiring jewellery-making course designed to raise skills and aspiration in an area of interest to women living in the local community.

What we've learned

The value of place. It's much harder to engage without a building that is open and recognisable. The value of 'open door' community hubs in local communities is incalculable - they give people a place where they can meet, belong and encounter others. Areas without them are impoverished and the social glue is noticeably weaker.

Arbourthorne Community School

Arbourthorne Community School has an inspiring ethos. They love their local area, they see the best in it and want it to be a hub of opportunities for parents. They immediately saw the potential of TimeBuilders to help them deliver their vision.

The opportunity to embed TimeBuilders into a local school is really exciting - good times ahead.

Pye Bank School

You wait for a primary school for 3 years and then two come along! Pye Bank School is near our Firth Park and Furnival projects and has an unused caretakers house in the gardens with so much potential. They are keen to get involved with TimeBuilders and so we started with a litter pick - which was brilliant!



Rugby Central Methodist Church

An introduction from a mutual friend (Community Catalysts) resulted in a brand new partnership in the town of Rugby. The team from RCMC have formed a new Community Interest Company to run TimeBuilder projects and after a couple of days discussion and training they are ready to go with a whole bunch of exciting projects. Really looking forward to seeing how they grow.

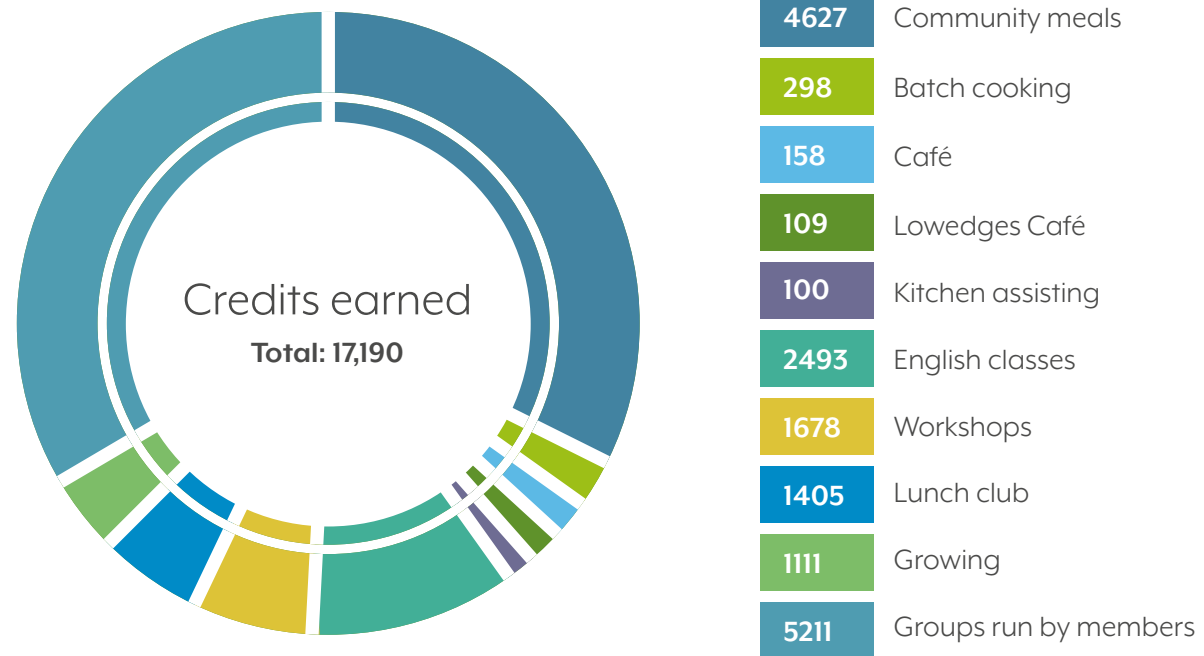


This has been a busy year and we've grown in every way. We've worked with over 900 people.

484 active members (370 last year) who earned an incredible 17,190 Time Credits (12,912 last year).

In addition 440 people regularly attended meals and activities run by TimeBuilder members, but did not want to become members themselves.

The impact of this on people's wellbeing is incalculable.



Social Enterprise

St Mary's is a charity and social enterprise.

We run a conference and catering business which provides vital income as well as giving us the skills to develop and manage food-based projects.

Our conference and catering team - chefs, cleaners, receptionists, caretakers and managers have a fabulous reputation for the quality of our service and their friendly helpful welcome.

Without them none of this would happen!

"As with the previous two conferences we've held at St. Mary's, I cannot fault the service and support provided by all your staff before and on the day of the conference. Sue and the team were very accommodating of last minute changes and going above and beyond offering to collect a keynote speaker from the train station. The food was delicious as always - we'll certainly be back again next year!"

- Karen Jones, Barnsley Council

Thanks to our funders:

Lankelly Chase



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The Henry Smith Charity



And to our corporate partners who generously support us with spending opportunities.



Places for People

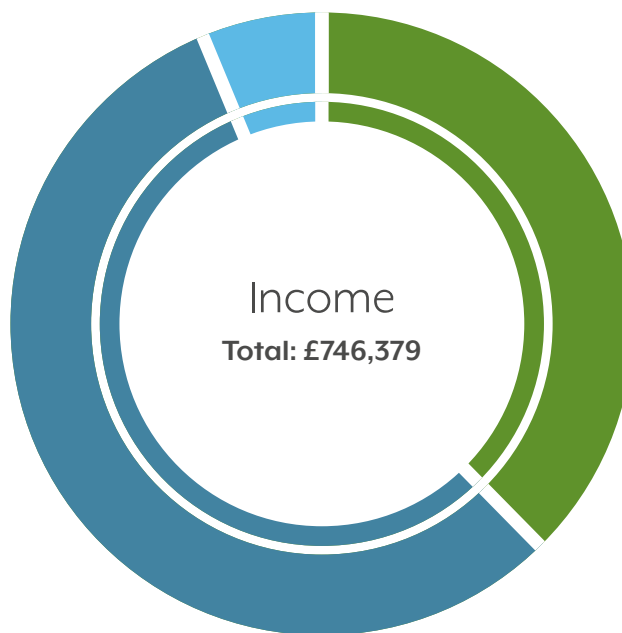


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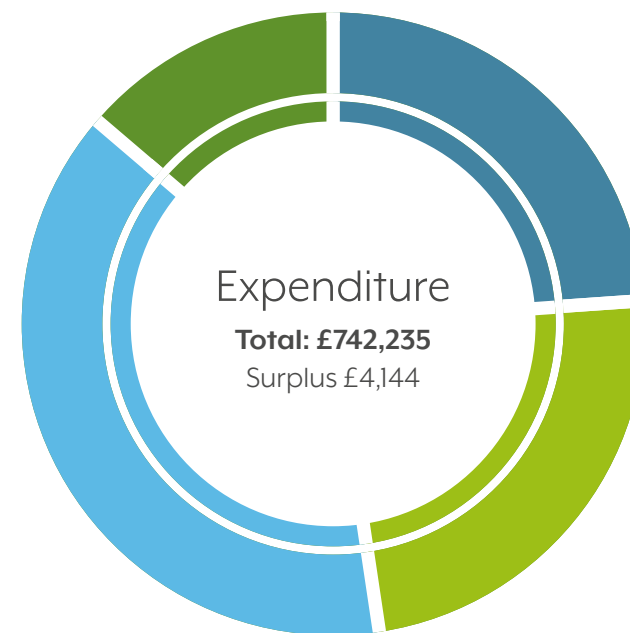


Finances

If you would like to support our work please visit www.virginmoneygiving.com and search for TimeBuilders.



£274,376	Grants and donations
£64,477	Earned income
£407,526	Conference and catering income



£107,953	Community costs and overheads
£228,894	Community salaries
£191,165	Conference and catering costs
£214,223	Conference and catering salaries



St Mary's Annual Report 2018-2019

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