

FAIR SHARES

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What is Fair Shares/Time Banking ?

If you want to share your skills and exchange some of your spare time with like minded people, then Fair Shares could be just for you.

Fair Shares is built on the principle of being a good neighbour, someone gets a helping hand and then returns the favour. Stroud resident Rose Tanner joined and had this to say: 'It was a real help to have something done that's been troubling me for months. It's a great service and a great scheme.' Rose had some heavy breeze blocks moved from her house and in exchange she offers simple clothes repairs and alterations. Elsewhere gardens have been dug and odd jobs done, but the list of skills available stretches far and wide from developing more computer skills to learning a language or musical instrument.



The mutual exchange of time between people helps to build a more cohesive community. No matter what is done or what skills used, an hour of voluntary work earns one time credit; this can then be banked and used at any time to receive an hour of someone else's time or it could be donated to a friend or relative or to a 'community pot', which can be drawn on, to support those who have more needs. Organisations and groups can also join and help each other by sharing resources and equipment.

Offering time credits for voluntary work acts as an incentive for people to volunteer their time and can be enormously beneficial to the local community. Anybody can get involved in time banking and all skills and contributions are valued equally. All we ask is that participants consider what skills they can offer others and agree to the idea of sharing skills.

All time bank participants are interviewed and provide references and we take seriously the safety of vulnerable participants. The Fair Shares Coordinator matches up the skills on offer with what is needed and records transactions between participants. The involvement of participants is far more important than the amount of time credits/deficits she/he accumulates.

Time banking was started in the USA in the 1980's and is now practiced around the world. The Five Valleys has a long history with Fair Shares because Britain's first scheme was set up in Stonehouse in 1988. Now Stroud, Stonehouse, Dursley and Beyond have linked up to join the 5 other Gloucestershire networks and the 95 around the country.

So if you have a bit of spare time or want to get a little something back for voluntary work you already do, then why not get involved with Fair Shares. Life's better with a little help.

Chris Moore (Stroud, Stonehouse, Dursley & Beyond Fair Shares Co-ordinator)