

PORTOBELLO TIMEBANK

Annual Report September 2017

The Constitution for Portobello Timebank was signed on 14/2/13, by the Management Committee members Kirsty Carver, Barbara Mahon and Siobhan Leslie. The Constitution requires that an AGM is held annually in September, and that the Chair's report details the Timebank's activities of the past year. This, however, is the first time an AGM has been convened, so this report will contain a very brief summary of its history up to the present.

Portobello Timebank became one of the early adopters of the hOurworld timebanking database application 'Time and Talents' in January 2014, thus providing us with a good source of data from that date. By that time, the Timebank had acquired 19 members (14 women, 5 men).

2014 Activity was of a very domestic nature, with the emphasis on sewing and gardening, plus Ursula's first chutney-making workshop. Another 10 people signed up over the year, several after our first outing at the POD Village Show, which was to prove a consistently fertile opportunity for recruitment, which we still take advantage of.

2015 added another 16 members, and saw the introduction of some new categories like Complementary Therapies and Cosmetic Treatments, and the establishment of the Mah Jong Group. This group was our first attempt to shore up the social aspects of timebanking, which facilitates people to get to know and trust each other and thereby to encourage more 1:1 transactions. However, while the few Mah Jong participants were getting very friendly and dominating the transactions for that year, the rest of the activity was visibly tailing off. It was time to take stock, and explore what we could do to re-energise the membership.

2016 Working in conjunction with Edinburgh Uni Business School, our deliberations resulted in 4 main conclusions:

1. That we had to acknowledge our demographic. With the help of some excellent demographic data for EH15, we came to a better understanding about what we could expect from the local population.
2. That we extend our transactions to Community work. The adoption of the Brunstane Burn and litter-picking/clean-up/conservation of other areas of EH15 have proven popular with many, and have increased our profile and standing in the community.
3. That we needed to improve our communications with members and the public, through promotional material, events, social media, press reports etc.
4. That we could only implement our ideas with a certain amount of funds, where previously we had operated entirely on a cash-free basis.

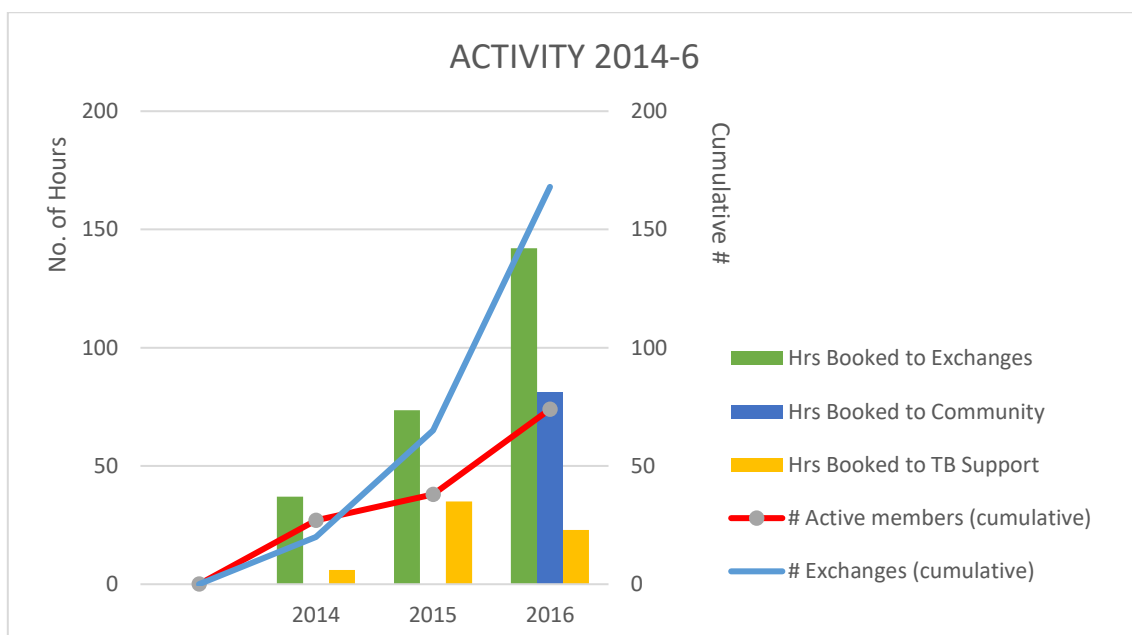


Fig 1. Portobello Timebank activity summary, 2014 – 2016

We established a committee of 8 to share the workload and put several initiatives into play – the litter-picks started in March and we held an Open Day in May. Over the year 35 new members joined, and activity shot up as the membership increased. Many of the new members heeded the advice to be proactive, and the increased diversity resulted in a greater variety of activities – life coaching, dog walking, fixing things, updating computer operating systems and so on. The year ended with a very well attended Christmas party and carol-singing for charity.

2017 This year we have been consolidating our 2016 successes, and pressing on with new initiatives, particularly exploring synergies with other community organisations in EH15. We became a Registered Charity in January, citing ‘the advancement of citizenship or community development’ as our charitable purpose. Our Gardeners’ Question Time fundraiser in March was a great success, and our Community activities have been acknowledged by Edinburgh Council (who have provided us with Edinburgh Leisure passes) and Asda (with catering provisions). Membership has risen by another 25 (by early Sept) and activity is increasing exponentially – from Jan 2014 to Mar 2017 we had exchanged 500 hours; from Mar 2017 to Sept 2017 we have added a further 250 hours! We expect to welcome our 100th active member¹ very soon.

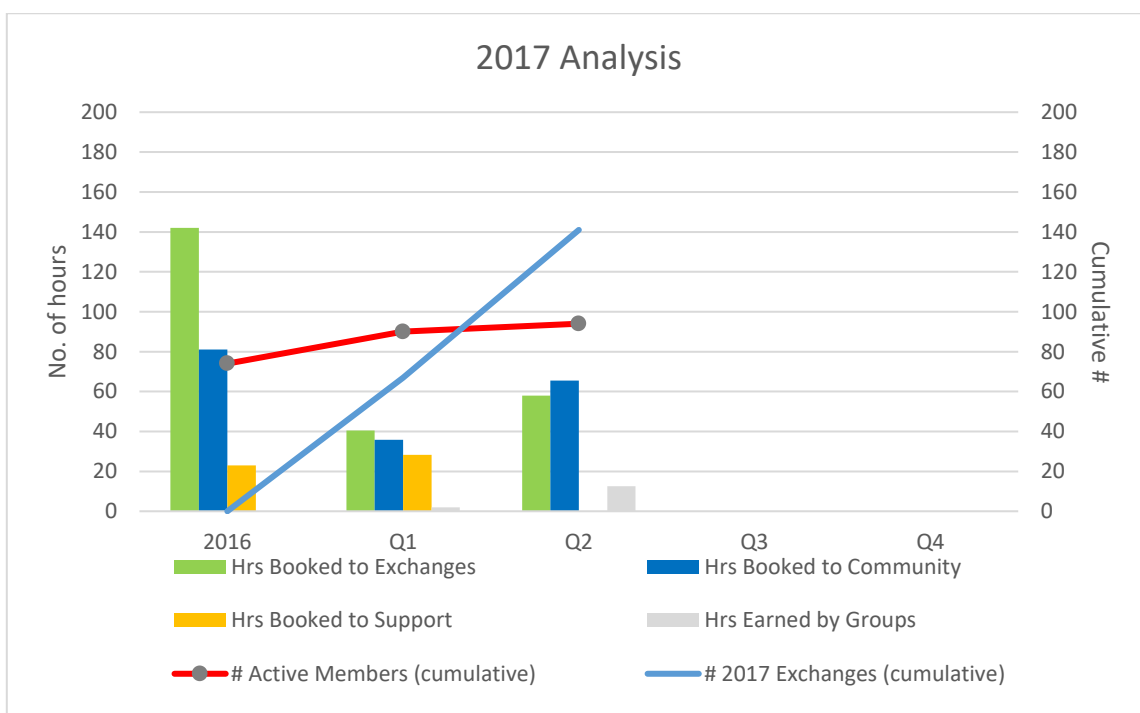


Fig 2. Portobello Timebank activity analysis, 2017 (Q1 + Q2 only)

Looking Forward: We plan to continue trying to increase the diversity of our membership and the overall level of engagement of our members. We are conscious that circumstances in society are changing by the day, and that the third sector is increasingly being expected to substitute for public sector services. While continuing to keep an eye out for opportunities to contribute to the community at large, we will think very carefully about committing the Timebank to any enterprise that compromises the timebanking principles of reciprocity and freedom of choice to participate.

Irene Thomson
 Chair, Portobello Timebank
 13 September 2017

¹ A small number of members have decided to inactivate their membership since joining