

SchooLets

An evaluation of the ippr project in its final year

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Section 1

Introduction

1.1 This is a report for the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) about the achievements of the SchooLets project from 2003 to 2005, and in particular about the four schools that continued the project into the final year.

1.2 SchooLets is a practice development project that aimed to give schools the encouragement, advice and support to start their own community currencies (Local Exchange Trading schemes (Lets) and time banks). The objectives of the project were to test out how much the scheme would be a useful mechanism for driving forward development in the following areas:

- Parental involvement in school life, particularly from those who are alienated from current opportunities for engagement.
- The focus on the school as a community hub or ‘social capital bank’.
- Approaches to citizenship education, active citizenship and financial literacy.

Table contrasting LETS and time banks

	LETS	Time banks
1	Complementary currency where participants determine the fee for an exchange	Local community currency where participants are rewarded using a time-based currency for exchanges
2	Based on an economic according to what their skills or goods are worth, and primarily a tool for local economic development	Based on equality, one hour is equal for everyone, so primarily a tool for developing social capital
3	Wide variety of often complex skills available, e.g. electrical, qualified alternative therapies,	Wide variety of simple, undervalued skills available, e.g. gardening, socials, befriending
4	Regular exchange of goods for local currency (part or full payment)	Some exchange of goods for local currency, or goods given as awards for community participation through the time bank e.g. refurbished computers
5	Participation in LETS can affect entitlement to state benefits	Participation in a time bank will not affect entitlement to state benefits, if goods are not exchanged for time credits
6	Participants make contact individually using directory (web or paper based) and socials	Time broker facilitates exchanges between participants, can also have directories
7	Varied sizes, often larger scale over wider area e.g. Brixton LETS has 238 participants	Usually small in size (60-100 participants) and networked together across wider area
8	Involves people who are confident enough to facilitate their own	Attracts people who would not normally get involved in volunteering.

	exchanges, but who might not often have conventional spending power	Reaches hard to reach groups, people with low confidence
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Section 2

Background

2.1 The SchoolLets project emerged out of the publication in 2001 of the ippr report *Parents Exist, OK!? Issues and Visions for Parent-School Relationships*. This in turn grew out of an ippr research project from 1999-2000 about the relationship between parents and schools. The conclusion of both report and project was, as report author Joe Hallgarten put it: “Policies need to be constructed to make schools more family-like, rather than families more school-like.”

2.2 He went on in the report to say that the recommendations could assist but not unambiguously realise such an objective, and that what was required was that “schools undergo dynamic cultural change”.

2.3 The SchoolLets project was developed as an experiment in that kind of cultural change, using two ideas from outside education, both from radical economic thinking:

- Lets were developed in the 1980s, originally in Canada, as a complementary currency system that could provide liquidity in depressed areas, use local resources better and make communities more cohesive.
- Time banks were developed in the late 1980s, originally in the USA, as a way of measuring and rewarding – in a reciprocal way – the efforts that people put in helping out in their neighbourhood, as a way of rebuilding local trust.

2.4 The planning stage of the project began in September 2001, and from the beginning of 2002, ippr linked up with Time Banks UK, London Time Bank and Les Moore, a respected Lets expert, in Liverpool. The plan was that the schools would launch their systems during the 2002/3 school year, rolling out the idea further in 2004. Funding was received from the Lloyds TSB Foundation and CfBT Research and Development.

2.5 The critical role of the co-ordinator (or broker in time banks) was recognised at an early stage, recruiting members, linking up requests and offers, keeping credit accounts, organising events, setting up steering groups, and generally driving the projects further. The idea was that some of these tasks could be delegated, even to older pupils.

2.6 After a period of planning, development and training, the scheme was rolled out in nine primary and secondary schools in the academic year 2002/03. They were:

- **Beaufort Park County Primary School, Liverpool (primary)**
- **Callington Community College, Cornwall (secondary)**
- **Charles Dickens School, Southwark, London (primary)**
- **Hargrave Park School, Whittingdon, Islington, London (primary)**
- **Little London Community Primay School, Leeds (primary)**
- **Rydens County Secondary School, Surrey (secondary)**

- **St Anne’s Roman Catholic Primary School, Liverpool (primary)**
- **Shorefields School, Liverpool (secondary)**
- **Varndean School, Brighton, West Sussex (secondary)**

2.7 Schools achieved varying levels of success in the period up until June 2004. At this stage the schemes had a combined membership of around 154 with something in the region of 2,000 hours of time clocked up.

2.8 The phase of supported development culminated in an independent evaluation report, completed by the Citizenship Foundation in Summer 2004. But four of the five participating primary schools (two schools in London and two in Liverpool) were given funding to support brokers for one extra year. These schools were experiencing some success, particularly in the way they were engaging parents, but it was felt that another year would allow time for SchoolLets to bed down and build up individual member exchanges thereby benefiting the research.

2.9 In September 2004, brokers and senior staff in the remaining schools each wrote out an action-plan setting out the objectives they were working towards in the academic year 2004/05, during which the formal period of the project ended and the remaining four schools carried on alone with the scheme.

2.10 This evaluation report concentrates on those four schools and draws some conclusions about the SchoolLets project as a whole. It is based on detailed interviews with as many of those involved as possible.

“People they came to the English and computer skills course because they needed it. They couldn’t communicate very easily and they all come from very different cultural backgrounds. Then this beautiful thing happened: people coming in here and mixing and then you get members for the Time Exchange, and they are as active as they can be. Once they get that thing that allows them to move on, they go and get a job. The Time Exchange is just a tool to helping that happen.”

Jonies Henry, Broker, Hargrave Park

“The time bank can open things up for you. I gained employment in catering at REPA – an adventure playground – and also for a children’s charity through Charterhouse Settlement, setting up their kitchen for a year. These were as a result of being involved in the time bank.”

Parent participant, Charles Dickens School

Section 3

The SchoolLets extension

3.1 Charles Dickens and Hargrave Park in London, and Beaufort Park and St Anne's in Liverpool, were making enough progress that the project organisers felt it was worth continuing funding to support brokers for one extra year from September 2004.

3.2 Beaufort Park

3.2.1 *How it started:* The project began in January 2002 when £4,000 was deposited at the local credit union to pay for Asda vouchers, funded by the local Toxteth EAZ of which St Anne's was also a member. The involvement of the EAZ, and their determination to link parents more closely to the school, was one of the driving forces behind the project. Beaufort Park used a Lets model, so that although one hour was equivalent to one *easyLets*, that was also equivalent to one Asda voucher (or similar from Woolworths, W H Smith, Marks & Spencer, Fatty Arbuckles and others).

3.2.2 *Successes:* The project has successfully attracted parents to take more of a role in the school, helping with extra reading, maths, PE and other activities. Some have even taught road safety and a school rounders club. Like St Anne's, there has been some involvement from the local credit union, including a visit to school assembly to help pupils take part in their Young Savers scheme. The school has also become more of a community space as a result of the project. Local bingo takes place there, which continues to be popular. Also, parents have been able to be drawn into the educational objectives too. A parent replaced a classroom assistant when they were ill, which was very useful to the school.

3.2.3 *Challenges:* There were early difficulties getting the trading model up and running, partly because of inadequate computer equipment for online accounting and partly because the idea seemed so new to those involved. The requirement for CRB checks for the parents involved also caused some difficulty. There was a danger that the school would have to pick up the bill for this, though this was eventually covered by the Kerb Craft project, which was linked into the *easyLets* scheme from the start. After an initial period, the focus of the project shifted from community involvement to much more educational objectives. This meant that parents could not earn *easyLets* for local activities unless it was directly related to education – they had, for example, that helping with Christmas festivities would earn credits, and there were some complaints when this was changed. On the other hand, by March 2005, all but three of the classes had been allocated a volunteer parent through the *easyLets* scheme, helping with tasks like reading to children

3.2.4 *Project future:* The broker came from the EAZ, which is now winding up, so a replacement was recruited last year. The *easyLets* continues as part of the school and the objective is to continue expanding parental involvement, with an emphasis on classroom activity. Parents continue to be involved as participants, though not usually

trading with each other. There is a successful research group of parents now investigating the setting up of a parent and toddler group.

3.3 Charles Dickens

3.3.1 *How it started:* Charles Dickens is based on a depressed neighbourhood where social exclusion and mental ill-health are high. Low self-esteem is endemic, and many of the population regard themselves as having no skills. The school believed it was vital to reach parents as well as children, which is why they were originally interested in the SchoolLets project and in setting up a time bank in the school. The project began early in 2003 with the appointment of a broker for one day a week – an existing staff member, funded as a home liaison worker by the Education Action Zone (EAZ). When this funding ended, she continued her work for two days a week on parental involvement, with one day funded by ippr and one day funded by the London Time Bank network.

3.3.2 *Successes:* Charles Dickens is now the third most successful primary school in Southwark and there has been a dramatic improvement in parental involvement in the school, some of which is certainly due to the project. The time bank linked up with a similar project at the Charterhouse Settlement across the road. Activities included a relaxation day, weekly cooking workshops, head massage etc. At least two mothers who took part in training have since got paid jobs as a result. Although parents were the original focus, the project has been popular since among pupils – so much so that it needed to be re-organised into smaller groups (the focus among children was overwhelmingly group activities). That required an approach to the staff and a re-launch of the project during 2004. The broker has started recently working with years 5 and 6 who were doing dancing. Another time bank from the nearby Aylesbury estate helped with chess workshops. Demand remains high enough for the time bank activities to have to be rationed.

3.3.3 *Challenges:* The project has not been able to sustain the same level of parental involvement, which has reduced since its peak, and the broker is no longer linking up once a week with Charterhouse. Partly because of its popularity, the time bank has never quite cracked the question of how to record hours, using and abandoning various different methods during the life of the project. Difficulties in recording hours for parents may also have been a contributory factor in their involvement tailing off. Gardening is also taking place, but there is little or no mutual support happening between parents through the time bank, as was originally envisaged – although there have been parents using the scheme for childcare.

3.3.4 *Project future:* Now the funded project has ended, one of the PHSE co-ordinators will be involved and will promote the time bank in the classroom, but this solution is not ideal because teachers have limited amount of time. There are plans to re-launch a Buddy Bench, along the lines of the one pioneered at Hargrave Park (see below) – or similar breaktime friendship scheme – which will launch in September. Parents are still involved, reading to younger children, helping with the dancing classes and other lunch hour activities. The intention is to continue the project and to re-launch the

computer workshop, as well as linking in with the Arts Council-funded poetry project that is being shared with other time banks in London.

3.4 Hargrave Park

3.4.1 *How it started:* The original impetus for involvement was from Beatriz Escheverri of the Whittingdon Agenda 21 group, a community group based at the school, who has been project facilitator since the start of the project in 2001 – as well as the arrival of Wendy Meredith as the new headteacher. Both are factors in the considerable success that the project has achieved here. The project was originally funded by Bridge House Estates Trust for six months and the first broker was appointed in November 2001 for a launch two months later. Volunteers kept the project running for nearly a year before the re-launch with funding from ippr and the Islington Time Bank network. The start of the project, at least a year before the formal start of SchoolLets, means that the adults were already involved and providing a context for the main project to work. From the beginning, aspects of planning for the Time Exchange were handed over to the children. They were the ones who decided what criteria to use when interviewing people to be members and 30 of the first applications came from them immediately after the meeting.

3.4.2 *Successes:* Headteacher Wendy Meredith was upbeat about the Time Exchange and said that it had “definitely added to the school”. Although Hargrave has developed partly as a children’s time bank, it is supported and facilitated by teachers, and integrated into the way the school is run. At the suggestion of the children, after the register in the morning, they do the Time Exchange register when they have to say publicly whether they did what they committed to. One early development was the Buddy Bench, members of which would sit on the bench in break on a rota basis, and anybody who felt they didn’t have anyone to play with could sit with them. This began in June 2003, and was inspired by similar schemes in York schools and planned with great thoroughness as a way of reducing bullying and integrating isolated children. It is managed by a children’s committee and has been a great success and has attracted notice from councillors and others. It is rewarded by outings organised by the broker, which are also now offered to other children taking on responsibilities through the Time Exchange: in fact, all the voluntary activities in the school have been brought under the Time Exchange umbrella.

3.4.3 *Challenges:* The project has suffered from having four successive broker, though now the project funding has ended, it is being integrated more into the school. Beatriz is stepping down and her role is now being handed over to Katie Austin, the school learning mentor who is playing the lead role on the development of Hargrave Park as an extended school. There have been differences of opinion about whether the Time Exchange should encourage children to trade with each other, though parents do so to some extent.

3.4.4 *Project future:* The Time Exchange has just started facilitating a fruit and vegetable stall together with the Islington Community Kitchens project. There was also

training in life skills coaching, whereby children coach other children in life skills. Parents and other adults from a wider community are involved, in particular from the parent-teacher association (PTA) and a local Turkish and Chinese group. The project will continue but is now being completely integrated into the school management system.

“It has meant is that instead of me asking for help from the children, or helpful children offering help, or children who can’t cope socially using helping as a way of hiding instead of being just that – so it looks OK on the surface – it’s put it into a much more professional setting. It’s put it into a citizenship setting. They are helping as their duty, as their service in making society better, in being part of a team rather than just individuals.”

Wendy Meredith, Headteacher, Hargrave Park

3.5 St Anne’s

3.5.1 *How it started:* Like Beaufort Park, St Anne’s is in the Toxteth area of Liverpool. As many as 67 per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. Although the deputy head has been in charge of the project, St Anne’s has employed the same broker throughout, working five hours a week. Also like Beaufort Park, St Anne’s organised their project on the basis of Lets, using a currency called *easypounds* – again, these were worth a £1 Asda voucher, or similar. It began at the beginning of 2002.

3.5.2 *Successes:* One of the first successes for the project was linking up with the local credit union. They in turn tried to persuade local businesses that they should be more involved with the school. The credit union also started up a savings scheme for the children in school and that is still going. Every Friday someone from the credit union comes and there is a small group of children who contribute to their savings account. The link with the credit union continues, with an official visiting the school from there every Friday to service the group of children who contribute to savings accounts. There has been an influx of parents who are prepared to be involved with the school, at least partly as a result of the project. They also helped with a play about *easypounds* that the pupils performed and later took to Manchester to perform there. Vouchers have been presented to parents in school assemblies as a mark of respect. Those parents who did not want to take part in classes were able to help in other ways too, like making costumes, or helping out in art classes.

3.5.3 *Challenges:* The successes in St Anne’s were despite enormous difficulties, including the building work at the school, and other parent-teacher issues arising from that. The main challenges involved getting the parents to trade, and that has been the most recent focus of their efforts, though without a great deal of success.

3.5.4 *Project future:* Since the EAZ is disappearing, the original broker is no longer in post as a result, so the project is inevitably in danger of not continuing. The funds for vouchers are also running out, and the system will probably not continue after that. But

there are plans to re-establish a PTA using the project as a means of doing so, so it continues for the time being.

Section 4

Primary school results

4.1 Despite the successes of various kinds on the different sites, all the projects have suffered from a shortage of paid time for the brokers and mixed staff involvement. All the projects have had to compromise on record keeping, so figures are difficult to extract and difficult to compare when they are available. But a series of detailed interviews have been held with the schools and with participants, and it is possible to build up a definitive view about the progress of the projects.

4.2 Purpose

4.2.1 The prime reason why the four final schools became involved originally was to improve links between the school and parents in the community. In the case of Beaufort Park, the issue of parental involvement in the school was highlighted as an issue by their Ofsted report in 2002, and for all the schools parental involvement was an issue they have struggled with. In the case of Charles Dickens, St Anne's and Beaufort Park, it was the Education Action Zone (EAZ) that suggested the original involvement in the project. In Hargrave Park it was the Local Agenda 21.

4.2.2 In the case of Charles Dickens, even higher up the agenda was finding a means whereby they could improve the self-esteem of the pupils in what was until recently one of the worst performing primary schools in the country (though it is now the third best in the London Borough of Southwark). The idea was that, if you could improve how the children felt about themselves through involvement in other activities through the project, this could be passed on to the parents.

4.2.3 St Anne's was intending to make that same process work the other way around, by getting parents trading with each other in the wider community as an example that their children could then follow. This proved very difficult to achieve. There were parents who were happy to contribute time to the school, and who were rewarded through the project, but there was very little trading with each other.

4.2.4 Hargrave Park wanted to build a greater sense of community around the school, but also to formalise the way children are involved in helping out with each other or in the school, and to build on the citizenship curriculum.

4.3 Identity, belief and values

4.3.1 For all the schools involved, a major motivation was to raise the profile of the school in the local community – and the status of what it was trying to achieve. In particular, they wanted to improve the perception in the community that the school that was actively encouraging parents to become involved in school activities, and to be a

centre of but also to raise the activity within the community. The idea was that SchoolLets could be an avenue for wider community engagement in the schools.

4.3.2 The project also dovetailed with the schools' belief in the worth of their pupils, and their search for some mechanism – not just to raise the self-esteem of their pupils – but to link it to raising the self-esteem of the parents, which was regarded as key. They believed that schools could be an active centre of a neighbourhood and the project provided a mechanism for making this apparent.

4.3.3 Only one school mentioned any conflict between the project and their own values. Beaufort Park said that when they changed the objective of the project, to put educational achievements more at the heart of it rather than community ones, the question of what would earn parents easyLets did become a difficult issue for parents who assumed that what they were doing could be rewarded in some way. Decorating the school hall at Christmas was originally rewarded, but when the focus of the project changed, this kind of activity was no longer eligible. Beaufort Park's easyLets were also linked to Asda vouchers – which gave them real buying power – so you can see why that could become an issue if rules were changed.

4.3.4 There was also some disagreement at Hargrave Park about whether encouraging the children to trade with each other would contradict the values of the project as a whole. The facilitator believed that individual trading was not compatible with the service and group ethos that the project was encouraging.

“When a little one comes up and says they want to be in the Exchange, that's a high for me.”

Wendy Meredith, Headteacher, Hargrave Park

“She was someone who came to work with our exchange – she wasn't working, she was a mum, she had been working in computer work. So she took the job and got involved, and she really grew in a very short time. You could see the confidence growing. She helped us organise a big event that we had with the school. She was reaching out to young people to see who could organise the youth branch of the Time Exchange and it was a big huge thing and she helped me organise it.”

Beatriz Escheverri, Facilitator, Hargrave Park

4.4 Staffing and resources

4.4.1 Resources to run the projects, and from which to pay the brokers or brokers, were always an issue for the schools. Despite the fact that they all came under the ipp umbrella of SchoolLets, actually there was a range of funding sources involved. For Hargrave Park, this included the Bridge House Estates Trust – before the launch of the SchoolLets project – and the Islington Time Bank Network. Other schools got funding

from their local EAZ, which in some cases provided the broker post, and which enabled them to get matched funds from elsewhere in the government.

4.4.2 The project in the two Liverpool schools has been overseen by Dingle Granby and Toxteth Education Action Zone, which provided important advantages to the schools in terms of management support, creating a mini-network for the exchange of ideas and the matched funding the EAZ where able to draw down against the money they received from ippr. This provided £4,000 toward supporting events per school and more money to buy vouchers from local business to back the Lets earnings. The director of the EAZ was also a governor at Beaufort Park. Since the only schools to reach this stage all had some kind of support mechanism – either the EAZ or the London Time Bank – that would seem to be a vital aspect of the management.

4.4.3 It was obvious, for a range of reasons, that buy-in from the staff and head was absolutely vital, and may be one reason why Hargrave Park has been a particular success. But this was also key to providing space for the project in the school, which was an issue for all of them. If the space provided was near where visitors and children happened to be, that clearly helped. If it was not, and the broker happened to be a person for whom administrative skills were easier to acquire than people skills, there was a danger that the project would be less visible.

4.4.4 St Anne's listed the fact that they had their own space from the beginning as an important resource provided by the school.

4.4.5 The partnerships that the projects managed to make with outside organisations also meant that extra resources – even if they were only in time, energy and ideas – were brought in. St Anne's link with the local credit union was among the most successful of these. Hargrave Park's more recent link with the Community Kitchen Project, and their joint fruit and vegetable stall, is another.

4.4.6 Involving parents means an outlay of resources, but it can also bring in more involvement and therefore more resources from outside. Beaufort Park put resources into the end of term activities in June/July 2004, and involved a large number of parents in organising the end of term ball, and this in turn brought in more parents.

4.4.7 But undoubtedly, the co-ordinator or broker's role was by far the most important resource. Here all the schools solved the problem in a different way, employing staff, sometimes from the EAZ, or sometimes employing parents. Both clearly had advantages and disadvantages. EAZ staff were dependent on engagement from the EAZ, but parents were in danger of being drawn into local neighbourhood divisions or of being seen by other parents as unwelcome in the gatekeeper's role.

4.4.8 Beaufort Park employed a parent for two years, until July 2004. Their current broker works mornings only on reception in the school, which does link them in more closely to the day-by-day workings there. They regarded confidence as the most important skill a broker needed, and to be available and approachable. "The parents have got to have trust in the broker as well, they've got to feel that they can approach

them with concerns, ideas or suggestions that they may have and that they will be treated confidentially and supported.”

4.4.9 Hargrave Park had the disadvantage of employing four different brokers over the period, and found it was hard to find the right mix of administrative and people skills in the same person. But they did have the continuity of one person to line manage them as facilitator all the way through. That meant that the project originator was present to encourage and cajole the headteacher most of the time. The presence throughout of the project ‘founder’ was certainly advantageous for the medium term sustainability of the time exchange, but may have also been a factor in the high turnover of brokers. Brokers need someone on the school staff to report to, who can support them keep the momentum going, but there is a balance to be struck between giving brokers too little leeway and giving them so much that they feel abandoned.

4.4.10 The input of teachers has also been important at Hargrave Park. The children’s time bank needs teachers to stand behind the project and make sure the pupils from years 5 and 6 do what they promise to do. They remind the children of their time bank responsibilities and duties, and have found that the children are quite mature about it: if they can’t cover an activity, they find someone who can.

4.4.11 The support of class teachers there has also been essential. They now call the class register, and then call the Time Exchange register when children say whether they completed the tasks they have signed up for. The children requested this because some of them were half doing their tasks. This led to a useful debate about whether half-doing a task was the same as doing it.

4.4.12 The broker at Charles Dickens was an existing staff member, a home liaison worker funded by EAZ. When this funding ended, she continued her work for two days a week on parental involvement – one day funded by ippr and one day funded by the London Time Bank network. The demand from children for the activities she is organising through the time bank is such that they have to take it in turns.

4.4.13 Attributes of a good broker include the following:

- Knowing the parents.
- Ability to connect with other people.
- Good communication skills, or capacity to learn communication skills.
- Able to draw in information and act as information source.
- Positive, someone who sees the glass as half full.
- Confident
- Approachable
- Passionate about time banking
- Hands on – time brokers frequently have to run workshops.
- Well-known in the school.

4.4.14 The consensus seems to be that this last attribute implies that a successful broker works best when they are a member of staff, based in the school. Most also agreed that the job works best as a full-time post and that the two days a week or less that the brokers were employed did not allow them to make as much of a success of the projects as they otherwise could.

“I think the broker has to be absolutely convinced that this is something that will work as they have to be very positive about it and enthusiastic and it’s difficult to actually get people to become interested in things.”

Sheila Hennigan, Deputy headteacher, St Anne’s

“There were a large number of parents involved in organising the end of term ball, and this in turn brought in more parents and so on, and the money that the easyLets was able to put into that brought in a lot more parents than would have otherwise been the case.”

Stuart Hetherington, Deputy headteacher, Beaufort Park

“There are some parents and they were really shy of coming into the school and now they really like to get involved.”

Ellie Hornby, Broker, St Anne’s

4.5 Systems and work

4.5.1 All the projects had support from experts in Lets (Les Moore) or time banks (London Time Bank network). But there is no doubt that all of them found difficulty in working the accounting systems as they were originally designed. Early IT difficulties also beset some of the projects, but it was harder to adapt the accounting systems for use by children.

4.5.2 At Charles Dickens, for example, there were added difficulties that people were not reporting what they had done. Generally, speaking, it appears that this was more of an issue for the time banks than for the Lets schemes, which explains why St Anne’s reports 2,675 hours earned, but the time banks appear to have had lower totals, without it being obvious that much less work was done. The reason for this was undoubtedly that the Lets earnings were backed by vouchers from local shops, which put a premium on reporting work done.

4.5.3 It may also be that, simply because the Lets earnings had real value, that this discouraged trading. St Anne’s reports that people were very reluctant to trade their vouchers on. On the other hand, it seems likely that the vouchers made the Lets earnings more attractive for adults, who were less likely to be motivated by earning for the sake of it in the way that children are.

4.5.4 The broker at Charles Dickens tried a number of systems, and chose one whereby a poster was put on the wall with the names of the children, and they put a mark by their name when they earned credits. That seems to have worked better with a small group than with a large one. She also tried laminated membership cards to which stars were added. These do not seem to have been particularly successful, and are clearly open to abuse.

4.5.5 Hargrave Park now sends out monthly statements (to parents) together with a list of services offered by other participants.

4.5.6 Because they did not link earnings to vouchers, the time banks have required more imagination when it came to ways for people to spend their earnings – given that private exchanges were much rarer than was intended. With the Lets systems, people could simply use them for vouchers in the shops, but with the time banks, the brokers would have to work out and usually organise something for the earnings to be spent on. Hargrave Park, for example, encouraged participants to spend their surplus on trips and outings, like rock climbing. This was a major but unintentional difference between the two systems, and the result of there being little trading between individuals.

4.5.7 The activities that were most popular varied between sites, and also at different times. Two of the schools shifted the emphasis of the project from rewarding community activities linked to the school to rewarding activities specifically related to education.

4.5.8 For Hargrave Park, the most popular activities included painting and decorating, ta'i chi, and reiki healing for adults. For Beaufort Park, they included bingo and cake-making.

4.5.9 Hargrave Park's rewarded activities for children include duty on the Buddy Bench, as well as physical games like skipping or helping younger children watch videos. For Charles Dickens, it has been reading to younger children, dancing and cooking.

Table A: Rewarded activities

	Beaufort Park	Charles Dickens	Hargrave Park	St Anne's
Adults	Helping out in the classroom Events Road safety (kerb craft project with LEA) Trips out Bingo Cake making Making numeracy and story sacks for children to take	Computer training Gardening Keep fit Coffee mornings Massage Manicure Teaching dance classes Relaxation Cooking workshops Curtain making	Reiki healing Painting and decorating Tai Chi Meal preparation Hearing children read Chinese cookery Escort Administration Sewing Translation	Swimming Football Helping with school summer fair, Culture Week, family Learning Day etc Helping with school drama Costumes Art Bingo Jumble sales

	home		Errands Hairdressing Gardening Creche work/child minding Practising English Meal site assistant Art tuition	
Children	N/A	Reading to younger children Dancing Poetry Gardening Computers Cooking	Buddy bench Quiet room/prayer room Skipping and other physical games Library Reading stories in the garden Helping younger kids to watch videos	N/A

4.6 Results against objectives

4.6.1 The SchoolLets project had three main objectives:

- Increase parental involvement in the schools.
- Make the schools more of a community hub.
- Deepen the citizenship curriculum.

To these might be added one more:

- Help teach financial literacy.

This section considers how far the project managed to achieve these in the four sites. Generally speaking, the rise in credits paid out this year – although the figures are not completely reliable as a guide – implies that all the sites have notched up their efforts.

Parental involvement

4.6.2 The consensus among the schools was that the project has managed to increase parental involvement in the school, though for some of them this was not as much as they had hoped. Most of the participating parents we spoke to said that they were more likely to visit the school now – as well as the obvious visits from dropping off and picking up children – as a result of the project. It was hard to work out how much the project was responsible for this, when they were also using other ways of involving

parents at the same time. This is not an unusual problem when it comes to evaluating projects of this kind – it is usually impossible to pinpoint exactly how much each intervention was responsible for. But there is no doubt that a contribution was made.

4.6.3 But there was a tension that emerged as the project progressed about precisely what this meant – whether it was enough to involve parents in the school in activities that happened to be based there, or whether those activities had to be directly related to the education of the children, like helping out in the classroom. There were practical tensions with parent participants when projects shifted the emphasis in that way. These tensions are undoubtedly what lay behind the opinion of the Beaufort Park broker that the key to success in this field was to “make sure that people understand what the rules are. Be proactive. Be approachable and supportive.”

4.6.4 The challenge was always to integrate the project into the life of the school, and given that this often meant a great deal of pushing and encouragement – without detracting from all the other activities that schools do every day.

4.6.5 There was also a feeling that the project had given some parents more confidence in dealing with authority, and since lack of confidence was regarded as a reason why parents stayed away from the school, this has to be a success.

“There has always been activity that wasn’t necessarily related to the school. We wanted to increase the activity that was related to the school. That hasn’t happened as much as we hoped but it certainly has improved it.”

Stuart Hetherington, Deputy head, Beaufort Park

4.6.6 The time banks seem to have been less exercised about direct educational involvement, and Charles Dickens certainly regards the success of their day trip to Greenwich – which attracted a very diverse group of parents – as a sign of more general success. It proved possible to involve parents in group activities like cookery and, more recently, vegetable selling. But it was much harder getting them to use credits to exchange support or help between individual parents.

4.6.7 The obvious thing to do was to ask parents what kind of activities they might want, but even this seems to have been frustrating. The Charles Dickens broker reports that about ten parents said they would come to a curtain workshop, but only two turned up. The yoga workshop, which they had similarly expressed a demand for, attracted even fewer.

4.6.8 The time bank is still operating, and the legacy of the project at Charles Dickens seems to be more involvement in the school, but they report some resistance among parents – even those who help out in the school – to report their earnings or join the time bank at all. This is a little mysterious, but one participant (who had previously been earning weekly) shed some light on it by expressing frustration with shortcomings

in the way the time bank is organised. She said this was why her involvement had reduced to every two months, and says that other parents feel the same. This may be no fault of the staff, but it may be that if people believe that earnings are not allocated efficiently – or if initiatives start and are not followed through – then it is less frustrating not to be involved in earning and trading at all.

4.6.9 St Anne’s also found it easier to involve parents in group activities, but getting them to exchange among each other was very much harder. It also proved difficult to make the shift to more education-related activities.

“You can get quite a few people to come in and help in other areas of the school, but not actually get them into the classroom. There are a lot of parents that have looked into going into the classrooms but they would do other things like go on outings and do jumble sales. We’d find that a lot more people would volunteer for that.”

Sheila Hennigan, Deputy headteacher, St Anne’s

4.6.10 St Anne’s set about solving this problem by providing much more information to parents about what actually goes on in the classroom, publishing newsletters about the curriculum – about what they were teaching and what their targets for attainment were – and asking for help from parents to achieve them. For those that have got involved in classroom work, it seems likely that earning easypounds were a small enticement that got them involved for the first time.

4.6.11 One other benefit of the project has been that teachers are much more relaxed and welcoming to parents coming to help them in the classroom.

“I think one good thing that has come out of all of this is that some teachers who might have been reluctant to allow parents into the classes before are now quite happy to let them come in and let someone work with small groups of children or spend time listening to them read.”

Sheila Hennigan, Deputy headteacher, St Anne’s

4.6.12 There is now much more parental involvement in the school, and increasingly in the classroom. At the end of 2004, the broker reported a “very good atmosphere in the school with large numbers of parents attending weekly meetings”. This is obviously a success, but it is not clear how much this is because of easypounds and how much to do with the new learning mentors.

4.6.13 This question of how much the project was the direct cause of more parental involvement was also apparent at Hargrave Park. The headteacher and staff

remain very supportive of the project, and are in the process of integrating it further into the school. They also agree that it has raised the confidence of parents involved, which must contribute to their greater involvement in the school. On the other hand, the Time Exchange is not the only initiative at Hargrave Park designed to involve parents, and it is not clear how much the Time Exchange brought them in compared to the others, though they agree that it was an important contribution to this success.

4.6.14 There is no doubt that the projects have contributed to increasing parental involvement, but it is hard to say precisely what that contribution was compared with other initiatives.

“The parents are all intelligent people, but I think maybe not working for years, their confidence is a bit low. Just coming along to meetings for Time Exchange, and the meeting to launch the fruit and vegetable project last Thursday, they all seemed very confident. They do the serving and the pricing up of the produce.”

Jonies Henry, Time Exchange broker, Hargrave Park

Community hub

4.6.15 This same ambiguity about isolating precisely the cause of greater parental involvement also applies to the development of schools as community hubs. It is hard to isolate the SchoolLets project as the single cause, although there has certainly been some success in this area.

4.6.16 At Hargrave Park, Time Exchange activities like reiki hire space at the school. The vegetable project also allows them to reach out into the local neighbourhood, but again it is hard to isolate the Time Exchange as overwhelmingly the single cause of that success. Nonetheless, the broker said she believed the Time Exchange had engendered a “sense of community ... belonging”.

4.6.17 At Charles Dickens, where the time bank is mentioned in the School Improvement Plan as part of its community work, they are clear that the time bank has made the parents feel more welcome in the school – because they were able to tailor activities through the time bank specifically for them. They had always been invited, but the garden is specifically for parents and made the invitation more concrete.

4.6.18 At Beaufort Park, the feeling was that the regular meetings that now take place in the school – and the bingo – and which are related to the easyLets project, have assisted the school to become more of a community hub. The easyLets litter pick involving children in the local neighbourhood also raised the profile of the school.

4.6.19 The difficulty for St Anne’s was that easypounds was designed as the engine for involving the neighbourhood, because adults were using the scheme to trade – and this has barely happened. The explanation by organisers was that people’s failure to use the scheme to buy what they needed was an issue of ‘pride’. Buying a decorator with

easypounds felt second rate: it gave a message that they could not afford a decorator in the normal way. Whether this was a mistake is beside the point: that appears to have been a perception, though it was specific to St Anne's.

4.6.20 So again, the project seems to have successfully enhanced the status of the schools as hubs of the local community, though it is hard to pinpoint exactly how much of this was due to SchooLets. It also seems to have been hampered, especially in the Lets schools, by shifting the focus of earnings – so that they were directly related to educational helping – and by a reluctance of adult participants to trade with each other directly.

“I think it was very useful. At the gardening workshop, there were two parents who were never involved in anything before. This is where the time bank is useful, because everyone has got a skill and so a particular parent might never have come to our literacy workshops, never come to our numeracy workshops, but they came along and learned gardening.”

Yvonne Robinson, Time Bank broker, Charles Dickens

Citizenship curriculum

4.6.21 As well as being designed to involve parents, the focus has also been on the involvement of children. SchooLets was envisaged as a way of deepening the citizenship curriculum. Here there is some divide between the time banks and the Lets sites.

4.6.22 St Anne's and Beaufort Park have not involved children in the project, so clearly that has not had an impact on pupils, except in so far as they see their parents involved as citizens in the school.

4.6.23 Both Hargrave Park and Charles Dickens felt that the project had helped with citizenship teaching. Hargrave Park, in particular, has invested heavily in using the Time Exchange as a way of teaching children to take responsibility. The Buddy Bench has been widely admired as a way of giving really quite young children a responsible role which they can carry out. Charles Dickens is re-instituting the same idea.

4.6.24 The children's time bank that has developed at Hargrave Park is also an excellent example of innovative training in citizenship, from the children's committees right through to the Time Exchange badges they wear on duty. They also regard the reading and dancing activities, where pupils work together to create new dances themselves, have also been a factor in developing their responsibility. On the other hand, although the time bank had contributed, they say that the school had been strong on the citizenship agenda already. There is no doubt also, that although Hargrave Park is relentless in its determination that children do their agreed time bank tasks, the pupils hours are dealt with more informally than in the Lets projects.

Financial literacy

4.6.25 Although this was not the most important objective of the project, there was awareness that – if the SchooLets project developed as it was hoped – then it had the potential to teach children and their parents some of the skills involved in financial literacy. There is no doubt that the involvement of credit unions in both the Lets schools meant that there was more potential for this. But the failure to persuade many individuals to trade with each other must have limited the effects of this among the adults.

4.6.26 Another aspect of spreading financial literacy was the way that raised self-esteem among the parents seems to have contributed to their economic life in other ways. At least two adult participants at Charles Dickens managed to get paid employment as a result of their activities through the time bank – one of them in computer training and the other in cookery, both having done classes at the school organised through the time bank.

4.6.27 Hargrave Park, on the other hand, has had internal disputes about whether the children should be encouraged to trade individually using credits. The facilitator of the project has always felt that this contradicts the community aspects of the project, and quite specifically rejected the idea that SchooLets could be a medium for teaching financial literacy.

4.6.28 So in the narrow sense, the involvement of credit unions in the two Lets schools undoubtedly has helped achieve this, though perhaps they could have been involved without this particular project. In a wider sense, adult participants have been helped to be more involved in the world of work, which confirms findings of other research into time banks.

“One of the boys was helping with the reading, one who ended up getting excluded. Seeing him sitting there with a younger child helping him to read – that was nice to see. On Thursday they had a vegetable barbecue here, and the parents are getting more and more involved in the gardening here and getting plants to take home. More and more parents are coming each time.”

Yvonne Robinson, Broker, Charles Dickens

4.7 Time banks and Lets

4.7.1 The advantages of using a time bank system include:

- The earnings are more obviously related to service – rather than market exchange – and it may be easier to involve children in this kind of project.
- It is probably easier to integrate parental earnings with pupil earnings.

- It is more informal, though debits and credits still need to be recorded accurately. Debits and credits do not therefore have to match in quite the same way, which makes it more flexible.

4.7.2 The advantages of a Lets system include:

- The link to vouchers (although this is not common in Lets systems) means that earnings have real buying power and are therefore taken more seriously by adults, though this does cost money – and may in practice inhibit individual trades (though to be fair, this did not happen in the time banks either).
- Because Lets earnings are closer to money, they have more educational potential for financial literacy.
- If participants do exchange among themselves, this can have a real impact on their livelihoods.

Section 5

Secondary school results

5.1 A number of secondary schools were interested in trialling SchoolLets. They were:

- Callington Community College in Cornwall wanted to use a time bank to work with the Junior College Support Team (year 8) who help out teachers and students. They also aimed to link with older people in the area offering help and chats.
- Varndean School in Brighton aimed to reward year 10 students in their activities with local schools as part of the citizenship curriculum. Varndean school is on a campus of schools and colleges, interconnected by playing fields. Students go on study sessions to the different establishments. They were also interested in using time credits to reward a new year 7 independent learning programme.
- Rydens County Secondary School in Surrey wanted to use complementary currencies as a means to involve parents and to link the school with local organisations as a practical part of the citizenship curriculum.

Callington Community College

5.2 In a rural location and with a strong community focus, Callington Community College was very committed to setting up a time bank. A senior teacher acted as broker, initially targeting year 8s, and linking with local organisations, such as a neighbouring old people's home. Fliers were distributed in the local area and to parents. The time bank was even promoted on local radio. But the response was too small to develop the project.

5.3 There may have been some mistrust of the idea among the local voluntary sector, but the main problem seems to have been that the broker was working directly to the headteacher and no other staff were involved. There were discussions about including SchoolLets activity in the individual achievement records of pupils, and of making presentations to the staff and governors, but after a long incubation period without any activity by participants, ippr decided to stop supporting the site in 2004.

Varndean School, Brighton

5.4 Despite a presentation at a school assembly, and fliers being sent out to parents, there was little support for having a time bank in the school. The broker was also the school receptionist and she said that the people who were interested were very interested, but that overall the response was not great. The difficulty was also that,

although the deputy head was committed to the project, the broker did not have direct access to the pupils and had to go through teachers who were not necessarily committed. In fact she was the third broker appointed, and both the others left in quick succession. One of the lessons of the project is that a quick succession of staff can be fatal for the project and it may be that there was already a certain amount of exhaustion about the idea even before she began work.

5.5 Although pupils did sign up to join the project, many of them withdrew the next day after parents expressed some concerns about safety.

Rydens school

5.6 The broker role at this school was split between two people: a finance assistant working in the school reception, who did the administration for the time bank, and the head of citizenship. After some false starts, they planned to concentrate on year 8 pupils.

5.7 Although the pupils returned a third of the forms with activities suggested, the parents did not reply to their letters. Since the school was committed to the project involving both, this was not pursued. Rydens then promoted the time bank to its sixth formers, but the response from them was poor, so the idea was not taken any further.

5.8 The problem was that parents in secondary schools often live much further from the school than they do for primary schools. Many of the pupils commute by public transport and there is little interaction between parents dropping off as there is at primary schools.

5.9 The school offers Citizenship GCSE, which involves pupils in one-off charitable work as part of their studies, and this may have seemed more attractive than more regular commitments. It also proved difficult to get consent forms back from parents, agreeing for their children too participate in the scheme. This in turn raised questions about liability off school grounds in case of accidents. But insurance costs for a time bank with a large number of students would have been prohibitively expensive.

5.10 There were benefits in splitting the broker role, but it may be that this did not provide one enthusiastic face to drive the project in the way that is required.

Section 6

Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 There is no doubt that aspects of the SchooLets project, as planned, have been more difficult to put into effect than was anticipated. This was especially so in the secondary schools that took part, and it is true that there are features of primary school life – even if it is just the geographical proximity of the parents – which explain why this is. But as the 2004 Evaluation Report says, there may be other advantages that secondary schools could have used if the project was pursued consistently and with commitment across the school.

6.2 On the other hand, all four primary schools in the extension period have benefited in different ways from the project, mainly in the involvement of parents in the school and in enhancing their status as a community hub. It is hard to pin down precisely what contribution was made by the project in relation to other initiatives designed to achieve the same thing, but it clearly has been significant. The project has successfully helped to build relationships between the schools and parents, though not necessarily between the parents themselves.

6.3 It is also clear that the project has developed in very different ways, according to the needs of the schools and the imaginations of the brokers. That has generated genuinely innovative schemes, including the involvement of credit unions in two of the schools and the Buddy Bench – the playground support system run by primary school pupils themselves – in the other two.

6.4 There is no doubt that the qualities of the individual running the project in each school, and how they are managed and supported, is absolutely central to the success of these projects. It is almost a truism to say this, but their personality, confidence, drive and juggling abilities really is the most important deciding factor between success and failure.

6.5 There is a potential criticism that these, and the other innovations, would have been possible without the time banks or Lets. This is true in a narrow sense, but it also misunderstands the purpose of complementary currencies in a public service context – which is that their main contribution is to make possible and integrate a whole range of activities that would otherwise be competing for energy and attention.

6.6 All the projects received support and advice and welcomed it. There was only one negative comment about the support received, and that related to paying invoices on time. The advice from networks of support seems to have made a critical difference.

6.7 The most important measure of success is that at least one of the four, and probably three of them, will be continuing with their schemes after the formal funding from the project. Despite the rhetoric of funders, we should not underestimate how rare this is.

Conclusions about objectives

6.6 *Parental involvement:* The projects were successful methods of involving parents, though perhaps not quite as successful as the schools had hoped, and other activities also contributed to this.

6.7 *Community hub:* The project has enhanced the status of schools as community hubs, though again it is not clear how much it was this project and how much other interventions that has made this shift. The sites did not generally speaking succeed in getting the community to exchange much with each other.

6.8 *Citizenship curriculum:* Two schools did not involve children, so success here was limited. Other schools have been able to use the schemes to help teach aspects of responsibility.

6.9 *Financial literacy:* The involvement by credit unions in two schools has provided a basis for this, but because most participants are not exchanging with each other, progress here has been limited.

Practical conclusions:

6.10 Brokers who were actually on the staff of the school found the job easier than those who were not: they could access existing communication systems, and had better access to pupils. But they do need sufficient time to do the job – three days a week is a bare minimum – and they do need to be able to relate to parents effectively. There is a tension here between having a dedicated outsider or an existing member of staff, who can then get subsumed within a rash of other school roles, without the dedicated time the project needs. But even if they are a fresh face, they need to be on the school staff once they are appointed.

6.11 The enthusiastic involvement of headteachers and staff is absolutely critical, and the more that the project can be integrated into the school, the more activity is likely to happen.

6.12 There was some evidence of confusion among parents and children about the project, how it worked and what it was for. This was especially true where the objectives of the project were refined half-way through.

6.13 The variation in arrangements and innovations is a positive strength. It may be that separate systems for pupils and parents does add to the confusion, but this is not quite clear.

6.14 Rapid turnover of responsible staff is not conducive to success. This is obvious, but Hargrave Park was successful despite having four brokers in the period because there was an identifiable and enthusiastic leader of the project throughout.

6.15 Administration is more important than it might seem. If parent participants are unsure that the project is being managed well, or that their earnings are not being properly recorded, then they may carry on helping out in the school – but the project itself will tend towards an ordinary volunteer scheme, with all the known disadvantages of that.

6.16 Although some of the innovations could theoretically have happened without the involvement of complementary currencies, credit systems seem to have the ability to link together a wide variety of other initiatives. That may mean that more activity takes place, but this is necessarily hard to prove.

6.17 The support structures are very important. The 2004 Evaluation says that the schools that stayed in the projects were embedded either in a time bank network or an EAZ. There is no doubt that the proximity to other time banks for Hargrave Park and Charles Dickens has helped them.

6.18 Paper communication with parents is not very effective. This is in line with other research about time banks, which report the vital importance of face-to-face communication.

Recommendations

6.19 The formal SchoolLets project is now at an end, but activity is still taking place and should continue to do so in at least some of the schools. All four extension schools said they would advise other schools to try similar ideas. If they do, the following ought to be given consideration:

6.20 Be clear about the concept: Schools need to be very clear about explaining the ideas behind the complementary currency, otherwise parents can get confused about what gets rewarded and what does not.

6.21 Reassure and involve local organisations: Local organisations can also find the idea that ‘volunteering that gets rewarded’ is a little threatening. They need reassuring and bringing on board, demonstrating how the idea can bring extra support – and from a wider social mix – to their own efforts. Links with other time banks for the two London schools have also been enormously valuable, as have the links with credit unions in Liverpool.

6.22 Integrate the project into every aspect of school life: the USP of complementary currencies is their ability to link disparate people and projects, but this is only possible if they are in turn linked into other aspects of school life. Those which were unusual standalone projects seem to have been unable to drum up the necessary momentum. The Hargrave Park system, where teachers call a Time Exchange register – actually requested by the children, to make sure that activities were done properly – is a good example of what is possible.

6.23 **Involve the whole staff from the start:** there is no doubt that, when the headteacher and whole staff are working as part of the project, it is very much more likely to be successful. This is clearly difficult sometimes in schools, where teachers often regard themselves as the unappreciated deliverers of a multiplicity of initiatives, and the thought that this might be another one – rather than a way of linking the others – is not helpful. On the other hand, there are potential benefits to them, such as having assistance in classes.

6.24 **Appoint a leader with time to develop the project:** the broker needs to be outgoing, enthusiastic, committed and senior. They also need sufficient time: although the brokers managed on the time they were allocated, they clearly would have made a step-change difference if they had been full-time.

6.25 **Put the broker on the staff:** this does in some ways contradict Recommendation 5, because existing staff members will have other jobs to do, but appointing them to the school staff would help provide the access they need to do the job.

6.26 **Experiment with other ways of getting the administration done efficiently:** administering these systems is crucial to their long-term trust, but often those who are best in the leadership role are not so good at the administration, and this may be best done by somebody else.

6.27 **Train the broker to connect with parents:** the evidence is that the brokers were on a learning curve and had to find out what parents wanted from the projects. They also had to be interested and approachable for parents, and confident enough to deal with an uneasy status of administrator among equals. At least one enthusiastic parent also seems to be a pre-requisite for success.

6.28 **Give the project a dedicated space:** Successful projects of this kind need some shared office space, preferably accessible for parents. There also needs to be space to interact with teachers.

6.29 **Provide the broker with management support:** reporting direct to the headteacher is probably not enough support for a broker. They probably need to have a couple of key staff connections rather than relying on one busy person, or being left to sink or swim.

“I started off advertising to all year 5 and 6s and I only had about six that wanted to be part of it. When it was six, it was a really nice group of girls and it was manageable, but then it grew and grew and then we put it out again and now everyone wants to be part of it and it’s not so easy to just manage on my own.”

Yvonne Robinson, time broker, Time Bank, Charles Dickens

Appendix 1

Quantitative details

Very little quantitative information has been kept by the brokers. This is partly because of undoubted time pressures, and partly it may be to do with a reluctance among teaching staff to collect any more numbers than they absolutely have to because of the weight of similar administrative requirements they are now under as part of their work.

What figures we have collected are difficult to compare. They refer to different time periods, but they do allow a snapshot glimpse at some aspects of the project.

Table B: Number of credits earned and members recruited

	Beaufort Park	Charles Dickens	Hargrave Park	St Anne's
Credits earned	2750	844	896 (c)	2675
Participants (a)	53 (b)	71	97	20

- (a) This is the number of members involved by the end of the project, not the number in the lifetime of the project.
- (b) 11 male and 42 female, all white British except for one Chinese origin and two Asian British.
- (c) Up to July 2004 only.

Tables C, D and E: Breakdown of membership of one project (Hargrave Park)

	Number	% of total
Aged 10-17	37	35.9
Aged 18-24	1	1
Aged over 25	54	52.4
Aged over 50	5	4.9

Male	30	29.1
Female	67	65

White	42	40.7
Asian/Asian British	26	25.2
Black/Black British	20	19.4
Chinese	9	8.7

Appendix 2

Other schools

Two other schools were involved in the project at the beginning and subsequently dropped out. They are:

Little London

This primary school in Leeds began their involvement with great enthusiasm, and considerable local support from churches and other organisations. But after the headteacher became ill and thanks to staff vacancies and other pressures – including the threat of closure – ippr stopped supporting the project here in June 2004. The 2004 Evaluation says that, had the action plan drawn up before that been carried out, there was every reason to suppose a potential for success and for building local community involvement.

Shorefields

This project barely got off the ground. The local broker said he did not feel supported by the senior management at the school.

Projects were originally planned also in the following schools:

- All Saints Roman Catholic School and Technology College, Barking and Dagenham (secondary)
- Citischool, Milton Keynes (secondary)
- St Silas Church of England Primary School, Liverpool (primary)

Appendix 3

Interviewees

ippr

Jodie Reed

Beaufort Park

Stuart Hetherington, Deputy headteacher

Jeanette Wignall, Broker

4 parents (Linda, Diana, Sue and Vicky)

Charles Dickens

Diane Kaley, parent

Elizabeth Owens, Headteacher

Yvonne Robinson, Broker

Hargrave Park

Beatriz Escheverri, Whittingdon Local Agenda 21

Jonies Henry, Broker

Wendy Meredith, Headteacher

1 participant

St Anne's

Sheila Hennigan, Deputy Headteacher

Ellie Hornby, Broker

Appendix 4

Interview structure for schools

a) What motivated the school to get involved?

1. Why did the school get involved in the SchooLets project? What was the vision that you wanted to achieve through community currencies?
2. How successful do you think the project has been in helping you to achieve your vision?
3. Was there anything that stopped you from achieving your vision through this project?
4. What most helped you to achieve your vision through this project? (*skills, activities, people, resources...*)

b) School identify and profile

1. What did you hope that this project would add to the school, in terms of school identity? (*This could include partnerships, improved standing in the community, higher profile with schools or education professionals.....*)
2. And what (if anything) has the SchooLets project added to the school's identity? (*i.e. What does having the project here say about the school?*)

c) The school's beliefs and values

1. How does the SchooLets project support the beliefs and values of the school?
2. Has the project conflicted with the values and beliefs of the school in any way?

d) What skills and capabilities are needed to run a successful schools community currency project?

I) School resources and support:

1. What support did the school give to the community currency project? (*This could include broker support and line management, additional finances, space, promotion, equipment...*)
2. Were there any existing partnerships, networks or school activities that SchooLets fitted into or supported?

3. Did the school or school staff have any previous knowledge or experience of community currencies?
4. Were there existing staff members when the project started, that were able to act as broker for the community currency project?

II) The broker

1. Did you appoint a broker (or brokers) for the project?
2. Please give their name(s) and how long they worked on the project for.
3. If a broker left, what was the reason for them leaving?
4. Did their role as broker dovetail with other roles in the school, or other employment/voluntary activities?
5. What is it essential that a good school broker needs to know? What do they need to be able to do? What sort of person are they? To know? To be able to do?
6. In hindsight, do you think you selected a good candidate to be your SchoolLets broker?
7. How did the broker work with teachers and other school staff?
8. How did the broker 'fit into' the school e.g. influencing/ feeding into school decision making?

e) What did you do to set up and run a schools community currency project?

1. When did the project start?
2. When does/did the project end?
3. How soon after the start of the project was the LETS scheme/time bank up and running?
4. And what actually happened? What did you do and how did you do it? What were the key stages and activities in setting up and running the community currency?
5. What were 'the highs' for you?
6. And what were 'the lows'?

7. What factors added to the success of the project?
8. Were there any major setbacks or obstacles? How did you overcome them? Are there any resources (time, advice, £, other) that would have been useful?
9. Did you receive the support that you needed from ippr? Any comments? What would have worked better for you in terms of support and management of the project?
10. And were you given the assistance you required on your community currency - by Les Moore (LETS adviser) or the London Time Bank Network/Time Banks UK (time bank advisers)? What might have been more useful for the school?
11. How do you plan to use your SchoolLets/time bank in the future?

f) The nitty gritty stuff about the community currency

1. How does the LETS scheme/time bank actually work?
2. Where does it take place?
3. Who participates in the community currencies project?
(This could include parents, teachers, governors, pupils, organisations...)
4. How are they recruited?
5. How do you keep them involved?
6. How do you communicate with them?
7. How many participants do you have:
8. Were the majority of exchanges done on a regular basis, or did they tend to be one offs?
9. What was the range of activities that were brokered?
10. Were there any activities that were (are) particularly popular?
11. How many time credits or LETS were exchanged? *(for the dates of the project given in Questions e1 and e2)*

g) What has the community currency project achieved for the school?

1. What (if anything) has the SchoolLets project added to the school?
2. How has the community currency been as a mechanism for getting more parents involved in school life, particularly those who were alienated from the opportunities for engagement that were open to them? Do you have any examples or stories you can share?
3. Has the school become more of a community space (for all ages) as a result of this project?
4. Has the local community's recognition of the school increased as a result of this project?
5. Has the SchoolLets project been able to add practically towards the citizenship curriculum? Helping people to be active citizens? Helping people to talk more, or with more confidence about financial matters?
6. If a neighbouring school was thinking about using a community currency to support its work, would you advise them to do so?
7. What top tips on 'WHAT TO DO' would you give to a school that had decided that it was going to use a community currency to support its work?
8. And if the school asked you 'What things is it better not to do?' what would you reply?
9. And ideally, what resources would you tell them that they needed? (*time, people and partners, space, equipment, finances, other*)
10. Has the SchoolLets project had any negative effects on the school?
11. Have you got any other comments? Is there anything else we've forgotten to ask that is important and people need to know about?

Appendix 5

Interview structure for parents

1. Why did you join the LETS/time bank?
2. How did you find out about it?
3. How long have you been a participant?
4. What sort of activities have you been involved in?
5. How frequently do you participate?
6. What have you most enjoyed?
7. What have you least enjoyed?
8. If you were running the LETS/time bank, what would you do differently? What would you do to improve it?
9. What has been the biggest benefit for you in taking part in the LETS scheme/time bank?
10. Do you know how many LETS/time credits you have in your account?
11. Did you participate in the school before joining the project?
12. Has participating in these school activities changed how much you are interested in your child's (or children's) schooling?
13. Has participating in these activities changed how much you are involved in your child's (or children's) schooling?
14. Has participating in the LETS/time bank changed how you get involved with your child (or children) through other community activities outside of school? (*like sports, linking up with other parents and their children, religious activities, other cultural activities...*)
15. Are you more likely to visit the school, or make use of its resources, because of the LETS scheme/time bank? (*in addition to dropping children off to school*)
16. Does the school feel like a friendlier place to you since you've been participating in school activities through the LETS scheme/time bank?