Learning from UK Nonstandard Work Projects

www.UKFlexi.org

"Slivers-of-Time Working" ran from 2005 until it was absorbed into the Universal Credit from late 2010 on. Launch in multiple regions, plus independent assessments, proved (a) huge public demand (b) support from large employers (c) reduced government overheads (d) lowered benefits costs. This history shares specifics. (Links below can be searched for "Slivers" for details from an array of public bodies.)

> Many people working through 'Slivers-of-Time' had not worked for many years, and working through Slivers-of-Time allows them to get into the workplace on their own terms.
>
> **National Audit Office:** Jul. 2007

https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20170207052351/https://www.nao.org.

PHASE 1: First Movers (2005-2008)

Following Accenture research showing **14m** Brits needing nonstandard employment, our catalytic funder was Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The platform developed with partners was then leased by four non-London councils. These were Liverpool (then Merseyside through the SLR charity), Cambridgeshire County, Hull (serviced by Probe Employment), and Leeds Council (who also sparked press coverage).

Through these launches, we were cautiously embraced by employers in retail, hospitality, service delivery, care, and tourism. Housing associations realized the value. Our platform's ability to enable volunteering was exploited. But public sector demand that we now know is vital was slow coming.

Our initiative spread to eight **London boroughs** including Newham, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Harrow (who started us in schools then worked to integrate us into tourism plans) and Hammersmith & Fulham. Westminster commissioned us, but progress dragged, Kensington & Chelsea planned to use us but had no budget, Tower Hamlets got close but we moved into DWP before they concluded.

Elsewhere, our Cambridgeshire County Council launch spread to Cambridge City Council, Fenland, and South Cambridgeshire councils. Other later customers included Hertfordshire (focused on carers), Bristol, Kent (later expanded), Windsor & Maidenhead, and Warwickshire.

PHASE 2: Private Sector Acceleration (2008-2011)

Tesco (the UK's biggest private sector employer) started booking top-up workers in our Liverpool market as a trial. That led to national adoption as they allowed their staff to pick their own hours through us. They called the initiative "Extra Overtime" and focused on enabling a worker at one store to be available for additional hours at other Tesco shops around their home.

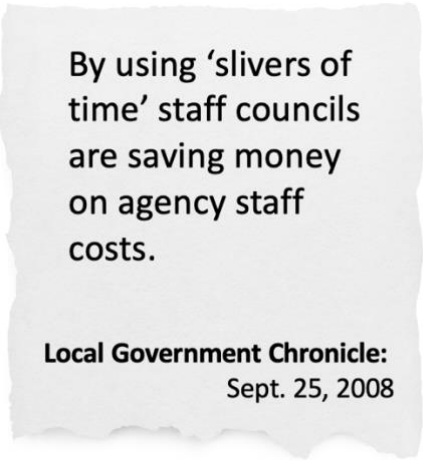
> The Tesco trade union (USDAW) believe that [Slivers-of-Time] has been particularly important in improving work-life balance as staff can plan up to six weeks ahead, rather than being asked to work overtime hours at short notice, which often does not suit the workers
>
> **European Trade Union Confederation:** Fact Sheet

https://www.etuc.org/sites/default/files/A_TT_secteur_com_EN-2_1.pdf (page 3)

PHASE 3: Coverage and Assessment (2008 - 2010)

We appeared in countless **press articles** including one by Labour's Financial Secretary. The FT wrote of us "*Microjobs have a massive potential*". We featured as a case study in one central government white paper on employment policy, then another on volunteering.

The **Local Government Association's** paper on moving to a "*Big Society*" agenda offered us as a key example of a project they would support. We appeared in a **European Commission** paper on driving social inclusion. A book from **Conservative Councils** included an entire chapter about us in their inaugural "Big Ideas'. We were also cited in another set of policy ideas for extending working lives.



https://www.lgcplus.com/archive/a-stitch-in-time-25-09-2008/

PHASE 4: DWP's U-turn and Problems (2010-2013)

Throughout the above phases, DWP (Britain's Ministry of Labour) remained opposed to our work, discouraging local authorities from launching the platform. Their rationale? Government should focus on getting everyone into a traditional job, not "*bits of work*".

In response to officials who clearly believed they should shoehorn Brits with complex lives into a 9-to-5, we persuaded a small group of workers in three of our North of England markets to allow us to write up their life circumstances and achievements through us. These were laminated, to be spread across officials' desks as we asked "*How will you get each of these **actual people** into a job, and why when they are thriving with us?*"



Our case studies included the parent of a disabled child who found no job would tolerate her need to rush to pick him up from school during a fit. We had former soldiers with PTSD, enterprising lower-skilled people painstakingly building a home business and needing **extra work** as it grew, retirees unwilling to exit the labour market completely, and the partially employed.

This approach, and agitation by local government leaders, led to the incoming Cameron government making us a key component of their plan to transform the UK welfare regime, the Universal Credit. Existing operations were wound down.

While planning for the Universal Credit, DWP's Labour Market Interventions team worked with us in East London. A body of work developed around **tapered payments**, to avoid the so called "*benefits cliff*" where a person can suddenly lose all their income from the state for accidentally doing 30 minutes too much work, and other features supporting personalized steps into full time.

Final Analysis

Slivers-of-Time Working demonstrated huge **public demand** for infrastructure supporting nonstandard work-seekers. We have seen the same phenomenon in the US; every region where we launch is massively oversubscribed on the supply side. So many people seek an alternative to exploitative apps or unprotected work in the shadow economy for personalized employment.



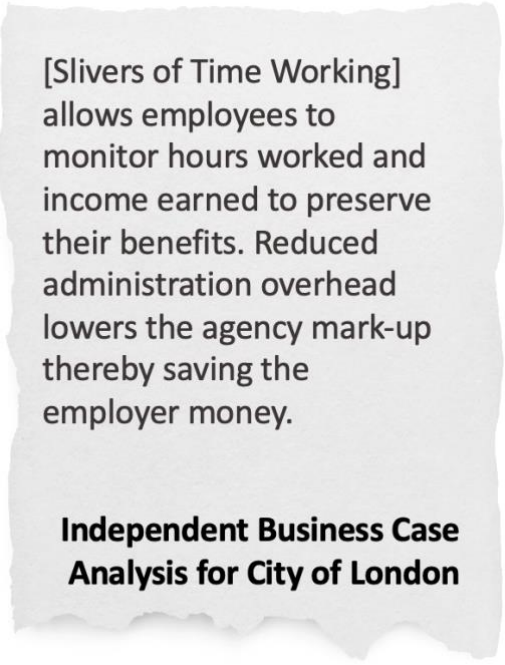
https://assets.eurofound.europa.eu/f/279033/cf9fb6f6bc/wpef15046.pdf

It took time for us to understand the path to successful launch in any area. There has to be a "market making" project that identifies **catalytic demand** for nonstandard labour. That is most easily found in public sector, or public sector adjacent, bodies: councils, housing associations, parts of the NHS, conference centers, airports, schools, and so on. Once that demand for vetted, qualified, workers gets a regional market to critical mass, purely private sector firms will come in.

But our first iteration in Britian generated around £8m of wages and protected employment for breadwinners who couldn't fit traditional labour market pigeonholes. At our peak we had around 70,000 workers registered, far, far, more than we could quickly access demand for. It all just scratched the surface of a desperate **societal need**; labour market infrastructure that systemically, sustainably, scalably empowers individuals not blessed with regular availability for employment.

Scale of need, and our impact for those served, was captured in a range of independent assessments:

- **2005**: Accenture (for the Prime Minister's Policy Unit): Scoping Slivers-of-Time Working
- **2006**: Oxford Economic Forecasting: Slivers of Time, Making the Labour Market Work Better
- **2006**: Middlesex University, School of Health and Social Sciences: Research into the Potential Take Up of Slivers of Time Working
- **2007:** National Audit Office: Helping people from workless households into work (p33)
- **2010**: Strategic Transformation Ltd. for City of London & LB Hounslow: Strategic Outline Business Case, Slivers of Time Working
- **2011**: European Trade Union Confederation: Working Time in the Commerce Sector (p 3)
- **2014:** Eurofound, the **European Union's** operation focused on improving living conditions: Slivers of Time Case Study.



http://modernmarketsforall.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/ESD03336k-esd-DI-Business-case-Slivers-of-time_op.pdf