

Valuable **SPARE TIME**

A new approach to flexible working is being piloted in Newham to help people turn their spare hours into cash. Slivers of Time is not a dubious get-rich-quick scheme, but a legitimate, government-funded project which enables those who cannot take regular employment to work whenever time permits. It also gives employers a highly cost-effective way of topping up their staff at peak times.

Programme Director Wingham Rowan said: "eBay is where you go to buy and sell spare items; Slivers of Time is where you go to buy and sell spare hours."

There are thousands of people in Newham with commitments like caring for small children and other dependents, or studying, that make it impossible for them to take a regular job, even a part-time one. But they can become 'sellers of time' whenever they have spare hours. Other eligible sellers are people who are claiming incapacity benefit or Jobseekers Allowance. They may legally work for a few hours a week and the experience may help them to take up more regular employment.

In the past, it has not been profitable for employment agencies to place people in work for short, irregular hours. But now the technology exists

to link available workers with employers who need extra hands at short notice. These 'buyers of time' include caterers, retailers, manufacturers, distribution companies, healthcare companies and the leisure industry. Local housing association East Thames Group takes on temporary workers through Slivers of Time when they are short-staffed, recruiting their own tenants when possible.

To comply with the law, time sellers must register with a participating employment agency, which is responsible for checking that they are legally allowed to work in Britain, and if necessary, carrying out a police check.

The Slivers of Time website directs sellers to their nearest suitable agency. Once employees have been checked and cleared, they go online to Slivers of Time and indicate what hours they

are available, what kind of work they will do, and what hourly rate they will accept.

They are notified of work bookings by text message, with details of time, place and what the rate will be after National Insurance has been deducted. And just as with eBay, sellers can build up positive feedback if they show they are reliable workers.

For more information, visit www.sliversoftime.com

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Case study

Arunkumar Soundaramourty, 24, from Stratford has been selling his spare hours to East Thames Group via Slivers of Time while he looks for regular full-time employment.

He may legally work in Britain but he is not claiming any benefits. "I have done manual work and data inputting while searching for a permanent job," said Arunkumar.

"The Slivers of Time system is really easy to use and very flexible."

