

Public private employment initiative issues appeal to housing associations

Landlords hold key to jobs market

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A public private partnership set up to enable tenants to sell their free time has called on social landlords to help kick-start new local employment markets.

Slivers of Time, which is jointly funded by the government and private companies, said if housing associations contributed to the scheme they could reinvigorate the areas they work in by offering casual work to local residents.

The scheme is aimed at individuals who are unable to commit to full time work but could sell free hours. Interested people can register with the web based service and vend their time to companies looking for workers for tasks such as cleaning a flat or covering staff shortages.

Tony Marven, head of housing



Tony Marven: opportunity

association outreach at Slivers of Time, said social landlords had the potential to initiate markets in their areas.

'We are keen to work with housing associations because they have buying power and access to sellers,' he said.

Associations with £100,000 to use in the creation of work opportunities for local people would provide enough investment for a 'critical mass' to start a viable project in their area on their own.

'It could create four [full-time] jobs for a year,' he said. 'Or they offer work two hours a week to 285 people for about six months.'

An estimated 13.7 million people would take up work opportunities if the timeframes suited them, he claimed.

Social housing providers have been at the forefront of a pilot in Newham, east London. Participants include East Thames

Group, social housing manager Pinnacle PSG and a handful of private companies including British Waterways.

A spokesperson for East Thames said the group had used the scheme to provide cover in its call centre and post room.

'We find the system flexible and easy to administer,' he said. 'We anticipate that it will produce savings in comparison with using agency staff, particularly as there may not be a minimum time requirement.'

John Gibson, regional director at Pinnacle, said the contractor had used the scheme to find people to deliver newsletters.

People often visited their offices asking for work, he said. 'This is a good way for us to add to our credibility and also use local people.'

Slivers of Time is gearing up for a national launch in early 2007.

● www.sliversoftime.com