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Slivers-of-Time Working: A New Route into the Workforce

By **Richard Manby, Business Development Manager, Neighbourhood E-Markets**
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Newham Council's e-Innovations Project will set up an online marketplace connecting people with hours to sell with those needing to hire staff for short periods of time. Richard Manby, who is managing the project's launch, explains the concept.

There is a section within the labour market that is barely working at the moment. Employers, government and potential workers need it badly. It could provide a smooth transition into work for millions.

Welcome to Slivers-of-Time working.

The project has just received £0.5 million of funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on top of private sector support. Slivers-of-Time will launch in London at the end of 2005 as part of the Mayor and Borough's portal for London.

Who needs it? Countless individuals find it hard to access legitimate work because they can only be available around other commitments in their life: childcare, studying, medical commitments, caring for a dependant adult, job-seeking or existing part time work are all examples.

Our system enables individuals to reliably, easily and safely micro-sell hours when they are available for work. Instead of committing to regular shifts, our users can be available for odd hours at any time. The Slivers-of-Time website can show them when and where demand for their services is currently greatest in their locality and which agencies will help them into the market.

For employers Slivers-of-Time opens up a new way of hiring. For instance: "I need three extra people to clean at closing time this afternoon or two extra people to carry out maintenance tomorrow morning. I need to know they will be totally reliable and that I will be paying a fair market rate without overheads". There is immediate need for this kind of hiring from call centres, retailers, logistics providers, the leisure sector, healthcare and homecare industries.

The drivers for Slivers-of-Time working are in place. Free internet access is a maximum 15 minutes walk away for almost anyone in a deprived urban area. The number of mobile devices exceeds the number of adults. Incapacity Benefit claimants can now have 16 hours of permitted earnings a week to ease their path into sustainable work. Services like eBay with its 12 million users in the UK, show tangible demand for micro-selling of items. We now need a way for individuals to micro-sell their hours.

The need for Slivers-of-Time as a channel within the labour market is pressing. On the day you read this, millions of hours will go unsold in the British economy because there is no marketplace that is safe, cheap and informed enough in which they can be sold.

In the short term we are looking for regeneration expenditure that is targeted at local people. When these projects are made Slivers-of-Time they penetrate deeper into the local economy, reaching people who can't commit to shift patterns.

Slivers-of-Time working will eventually offer a service where any Londoner can sell their spare hours (after agency vetting) and any London employer can pick up legitimate, motivated, informed workers at short notice for short periods. Once it has been rolled out it will also be available in any other part of the country.

For more on Slivers-of-Time visit its website at www.neighbourhoodmarkets.org or email Richard Manby at richard.manby@neighbourhoodmarkets.com.

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