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## NEWS

### Web scheme aims to boost part-time work

*Tom Campbell, Regeneration & Renewal - 20 January 2006*

**An internet-based scheme designed to allow under-employed people to sell chunks of their time to employers should be operating across the UK by the end of this year, according to its director.**

The Slivers-of-Time (SoT) scheme, backed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, has been created to provide a marketplace that matches employers' needs for flexible working with people without full-time jobs who need to work irregular hours. The system could be used by employers coping with unexpectedly busy periods.

Speaking to Regeneration & Renewal, SoT programme director Wingham Rowan said he was unaware of any scheme like it anywhere in the world.

An SoT pilot was launched in Newham, east London last month and 75 people in the borough are now selling an average of 400 hours of their time each week, Rowan said.

While any UK area can set up a local SoT market on its own initiative, he said, the aim is for a structured launch to ensure that the project is operational across the whole of London by September. It should be working across the UK by the end of the year, he added.

As well as the unemployed, the scheme aims to open up new opportunities for people such as lone parents, who may be restricted in the times of day or the number of hours they can work.

The scheme has been backed with £500,000 from the ODPM and £300,000 from private investors. Slivers-of-Time is run by a private firm that profits from a fee built into each transaction. Council buyers are exempted from these charges until mid-2008.

Rowan said that millions of hours that people want to work - and that firms and public sector bodies want to use - are wasted each year. He compared SoT to eBay and said he wanted the scheme to be as successful as the auction website. "If you look at eBay, that turned junk into something of value," he said. "That is what we are hoping to pull off."

In SoT, employers, or 'buyers', and potential workers, or 'sellers', sign up with a participating local recruitment agency. Sellers provide details of the hours they are able to work and buyers can request workers by using the agency's website.

Under this system, the needs of employers are matched with the availability of part-timers, Rowan said. The results also indicate the reliability and price of sellers. This price is based on factors such as the distance they must travel to the job and the length of notice they prefer, Rowan explained.

A spokesman for think-tank the Work Foundation said: "It's an interesting idea that should help people who can't work regular hours to build better relationships with potential employers."

- For further details, visit [www.sliversoftime.com](http://www.sliversoftime.com).

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