



Citizen Coin

Evaluation Report 2022



BRADFORD
Stronger Communities
Partnership



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities



City of
BRADFORD
METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Introduction

Background

The Citizen Coin project sits within the Stronger Communities Partnership's Strategy and Delivery plan under Pillar Three: Getting Involved, which focuses on increasing civic participation. Activities under Pillar Three are designed to ensure that 'more people from all backgrounds will connect with others, participate in civic life and get involved in their own communities'. The project's intention was to bring local residents of different backgrounds together to engage in local activities. This is captured via the Citizen Coin scheme, which enables people to earn digital discount coins when undertaking social value activities such as volunteering. Users can then spend these coins to get discounts off goods and services. Those earning the digital discount coins can also opt to donate their coins to other people and organisations.

The technology was developed in 2020 with extensive concept and user testing with all stakeholders. The scheme then went live in December 2020 on International Volunteer Day.

Bradford is proud to be a social coin city which embraces pioneering technology to involve all its citizens in the opportunities the district offers. Through an app-based



University of Bradford – UNIFY Festival – Community Day

technology, our Citizen Coin scheme rewards people for doing social good while connecting voluntary organisations to communities and businesses. This connection and partnership is crucial especially when the economy has been struggling as a result of austerity and the pandemic. With Citizen Coin, customer footfall is boosted and the economy boosted.

The project is 'holistic', underpinned by the Council Plan to promote better skills, create opportunities for people to get into jobs/ good jobs and have better health. It aimed to contribute to ensuring safe, strong, active communities, whilst helping to grow the economy sustainably.



University of Bradford – UNIFY Festival – Community Day



Who will benefit from this scheme?

Organisations, charities and projects rely on local people giving up their time to get involved in all sorts of activities. Not only does Citizen Coin give these groups/ organisations a free platform to advertise and recruit new people to get involved in activities, it also gives them a unique way to say 'thank you'. The platform creates an innovative 'social CV' for each user by recording what they've done and what they've earned. The local authority gains evidence of the broad range of social value activity, via collecting valuable transactional data. For example, the social value generated and recorded in less than 12 months equated to £103,968.

The positives for Bradford's businesses are many. For example, the scheme is helping to keep spending local, it is connecting businesses with local citizens and it is helping retailers to meet corporate social responsibility goals whilst simultaneously rewarding customers. Only local businesses are able to join the scheme. In a time of increased uncertainty for high streets, Citizen Coin has helped get customers through the door with bespoke offers, giving retailers freedom to tailor promotions to increase consumption of their goods and services. Ultimately, Citizen Coin offers businesses the flexibility to do what they need to do to increase their customer-base and give back to the community, all at zero cost.

Citizen Coin also aims to increase volunteering. The statistics and case studies demonstrate that people are volunteering more, up-skilling and getting into paid or better jobs. There is more footfall for businesses, and we see communities that are more active and healthier.

Intended outcomes

- Increase civic participation. Civic participation is driven by people to improve their own and other people's lives. It occurs when individuals or groups get involved in formal or informal activities that can help improve life in communities and neighbourhoods. Some examples include voting; volunteering; neighbourhood watch; organising community gardens or clean ups; participating at events, focus groups or consultations to address public concerns or to improve quality of life or a place
- Increase spend with local services and retailers
- Increase opportunities for social interaction to take place between people who are different from each other
- Change perceptions around doing social good
- Increase engagement and involvement in local activities with those people who would not normally participate
- Increase participation by people from low-income households in civic and social activities

Desired impact

- More people start to volunteer or increase the amount of volunteering that they are already doing;
- More people undertake new activities, or get involved in more activities getting more active and healthier;
- More people take part in civic and social activities;
- More people from low-income households take part in civic and social activities;
- More people explore the District accessing places and services they may not normally visit;
- More philanthropy, i.e. increased sharing, giving and kindness between people;
- More equality of opportunity, i.e. increased opportunities to take part and give;
- Increased spend with participating retailers and services;
- Increased engagement between volunteers, community services, organisations and businesses;
- Increased use of new technologies via an app – a fun way of getting people to engage with each other, local business and services through new technology;
- Improved environmental impacts – more cleans up, pride in place, protecting and caring for our place and our people.

Structure and approach

This report begins with a process evaluation of the Citizen Coin programme, in order to understand whether the programme's activities have been implemented and have resulted in the intended outputs. This is followed by an outcomes evaluation, which looks at the programme's outcomes and assesses the extent to which these were achieved.

Process Evaluation

Who did the project engage?

As part of the baseline and follow-up surveys the project captured some demographic information from those who were willing to participate. Whilst the Citizen Coin scheme has a separate component within the app to capture demographic information, this data has not been included as some of these people would have given their information on both modes (via the survey registration and on the app).

For reporting purpose, we have focussed on the 99 individuals who provided usable demographic profiles as a result of registering following their activation of the Citizen Coin app, from which:

- **Sex:** Two-thirds of the 95 users who signed-up to the surveys and provided information regarding their sex identified as female.
- **Age:** The most populated age-bracket amongst participants was that of the 30-49 range, accounting for just under half of those registered (48%). 24 users fell within the 50-64 bracket (26%).
- **Disability:** One-fifth of those who answered stated that they considered themselves to meet the criteria for mental or physical impairment.
- **Country of Origin:** The overwhelming number (84%) of participants declared their country of origin/birth to be the UK.
- **Ethnicity:** 58% of users defined their ethnicity as being of White heritage from within the UK, with South Asian ethnicities (Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi and Kashmiri) as the next largest group at 29%.
- **Faith / Religion:** Most individuals who responded to the question stated they had 'no religion' at 40%, followed by Muslim at 31% and Christian at 24%.
- **Where people lived:** Those involved in the pilot represented a geographical cross-section of the district, with users based in 27 of Bradford's 30 council wards. City ward had the largest number of users (9), then Shipley (8), followed by Manningham, Heaton and Great Horton wards (all with 7 participants).
- **Length of residency within the UK:** The overwhelming majority of users who answered (82%) stated that they were born in the UK and had lived their whole life in the country. 16% of respondents said that they had resided in the UK for at least 10 years.
- **Length of residency in Bradford District:** Slightly more than a third of participants replied that they had lived in the area for at least 10 years (38%), with an almost equal proportion of total users (37%) answering that they had resided in Bradford since birth.
- **Household Income:** Of those respondents who answered the question concerning household income, slightly more than half stated that their income was above £24,000, with the remainder almost divided equally between the other income brackets (less than £15,000 at 24% and between £15k and £24k at 21%).
- **Dependents at home:** This includes dependents within their household whom they care for. Slightly less than half (48%) answered that they did not have dependents, whilst 40% replied that they had a child or children to care for and 11% detailed caring responsibilities for parents and/or a partner/spouse.
- **Dependents outside home:** This includes dependents outside households whom they care for. More than two-thirds of those who answered (71%) revealed they had none. The 29% of participants who answered 'yes' described a range of caring responsibilities and dependents including children, parents and wider family members and other individuals.

Were the outputs achieved? Was the anticipated number of local people/organisations/retailers recruited?

Citizen Coin Bradford pilot ran for approx. 24 months from January 2020 to December 2021.

Due to the challenges of COVID-19, the project only really started to come to life after April 2021. Despite the significant challenges presented by the pandemic, the project has been over target by 300-450% in all areas (see table below).



| Intended outputs | Measures | Actual outputs |
|--|--|---|
| 200 local people (participants earn rewards) | Number of local people who have downloaded the app | 817 registered users |
| 10-20 organisations (providers award social coins) | Number of organisations recruited | 60 rewarding organisations using the scheme to advertise activities |
| 20 retailers / local businesses / services (retailers offer discounts) | Number of retailers recruited | 112 retailers offering discounts off goods and services |

At December 2021, 3117 coins have been earned. Retailers and local businesses have been recruited from across Bradford District and include exciting sign ups like Bradford Bulls, Bradford City, and Bradford College.

The scheme has also been covered in The Telegraph and Argus in three separate pieces:

- Bradford District's Volunteers are Thanked. <https://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/19344265.bradford-districts-volunteers-thanked/>
- WATCH: Citizen Coin Scheme Launches to Reward Volunteers. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FuLc5VTw0I>
- Bradford residents urged to join ground-breaking 'citizen coin' scheme to get rewards for volunteering. <https://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/19376451.bradford-residents-urged-join-groundbreaking-citizen-coin-scheme-get-rewards-volunteering/>

The project has had a significant reach on its LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook social media channels.



Free2b-Me (Rewarding Agency)

We are Free2b-me and we support people with their various needs such as mental health and wellbeing, physical activities, people seeking asylum, 24-hour WhatsApp support, social hubs, we support people with phone data, food, raising voices and challenging procedures especially for marginalised groups

We joined Citizen Coin because it helps with people seeking asylum, coins give them a little something where they can get food and stuff. We like Citizen Coin because it supports everyone, the people get the benefit, organisations benefit, businesses benefit. It's a win-win all round.

It's also good for our organisation because we give the CC. We've had people who want to join us because we are on CC, once they come they get to know people and its good for their mental wellbeing and getting people out there. While on Citizen Coin, they also look at other things that other organisations are offering. With the current economic crisis, Citizen Coin will help a lot of people, like my asylum group gets the coins and use them to get food. It is always beneficial for everyone. If you join CC you get people coming to your restaurant or shop, this helps you survive as well. Everywhere I go I tell people about Citizen Coin, it has gotten us new members and it gets us out there.

Outcomes evaluation

Discussion

60 people completed a baseline survey, which focussed on a variety of areas relating to volunteering and asked respondents for their perceptions of their local community. The intention was to conduct a survey at the end point of the pilot period. However, very few people responded to the request to complete a survey at this point. Therefore, in order to gain more information to inform the evaluation about changes that people had experienced as a result of participating in Citizen Coin, two focus groups were conducted and supplemented with phone calls to retailers.

The focus groups were attended by 10 participants in total (6 ambassadors, 3 providers and 1 retailer) and lasted for around 1 hour each. The interviewers adopted a semi-structured approach, with targeted questions about the scheme for each group. The conversations during these focus groups were conducted around the intended outcomes.



Citizen Coin user

I joined Citizen Coin because I am involved in community work. For example, I currently help youths at New Joy Church where I mentor them and help them learn how to play different musical instruments. New Joy Church recently joined Citizen Coin and I registered myself onto the platform because there are good deal on there, deals such as the one by Bradford City and deals from food places like from La Crepe House.

As a consumer, I can get discounts and great deals if on Citizen Coin. This has helped me save my money and find fun activities for my 3-year-old daughter who is full of energy. I particularly like the Climbing Hub place which has recently opened, I know my daughter would love that! When I visit The Climbing Hub, I will not only go with my daughter, I might invite some of my friends who also have children, we could have a play date. Citizen Coin is not just helping me and my friends and family save money, it's also helping me to be more active and connect with my loved ones. If everyone had the app, we could all connect a little more and have lots of activities to do while saving money.

30%

wanted better
information about
various volunteering
opportunities

When asked, “what factors would encourage you to volunteer or to do more volunteering?” ...



28%

wanted a
reward system

16%

wanted a system for
the remuneration of
expenses

Citizen Coin has been able to deliver on these points. Participating organisations have been able to advertise their volunteering opportunities through the app. The reward system is in the form of the Coins that can be utilised at local participating businesses. Sometimes organisations, groups, or small-scale projects can't always offer direct remuneration of expenses, for example travel expenses. The benefits of receiving coins helps people feel they are getting something back which can help towards recouping any out of pocket spend as well as receiving even more.



Some volunteers were able to use their coins to build friendships with others, through arranging to meet to share a cup of coffee together:

“ I don’t think we would have necessarily made the effort to go out for lunch if we hadn’t had the scheme to use and to try and things so and that was very effective. ”

The question focusing on voluntary activities in the 12 months preceding the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 revealed that this cohort of app users had a history of volunteering, with three-quarters already volunteering during that time. As with other projects, lockdowns impacted on the outcomes. Many of the organisations put volunteering on hold when buildings had to close. Furthermore, some of the volunteers live in outlying villages and small towns, therefore many of the offers are a long way from where they are based. Currently, the app does not sort offers by location, so it can take some time to find out what is nearby. At times, the volunteering opportunities were not active (even before and after the lockdowns), which could be off-putting to people who are new to volunteering and/or using the app. With further funding the app will be developed to streamline these features.

In terms of motivation, a desire to ‘help others’ (16%) and do ‘social good’ (16%) scored alongside the more generalised notion of making a difference (14%). By the end of the pilot scheme, these motivations appeared to be much the same. Some people gave away their coins as they were not motivated by rewards. Others used them to build connections. Some had added to the range of things they volunteer with and the app had proved helpful in getting people to participate in one-off events such as a community clean-up. The rewards gave people a small incentive to get involved where they otherwise might not have bothered.

“ It is a good way of channelling your efforts and the rewards feel like a thank you. ”

The following case study is an example of how Citizen Coin has contributed to changing perceptions around doing social good.

CASE STUDY

Wharfedale Wombles

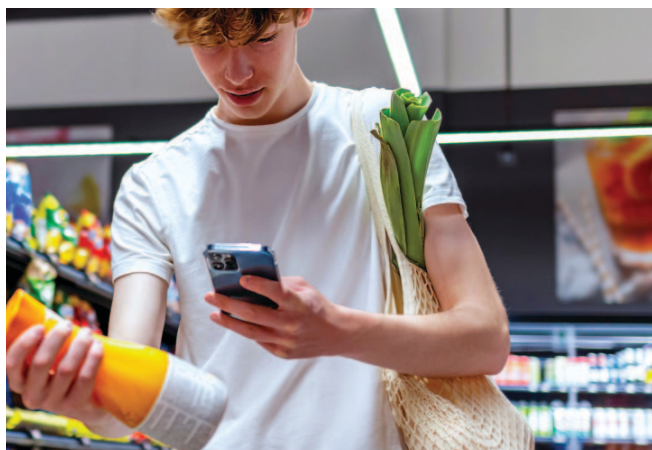
The Wharfedale Wombles are a community litter-management initiative from the Burley in Wharfedale Community Trust (BWCT). From a Wharfedale Wombles viewpoint, Citizen Coin allows us to share our activities and events across a larger community and increase awareness of what we do. We can also see other organisations that do similar work across the District so it helps with contacting, networking and working together. Ultimately, we litter-manage to prevent litter and to increase recycling through all available methods. However, we inadvertently find that we have: increased feelings of community and pride in the village; decreased isolation and increased wellness either through the Community Litter Pick or through buddy litter-picking; and, increased physical activity/exercise in nature.

By taking part in activities such as litter picking, some people who are isolated get to come out and connect with others. This week, we had someone who is socially isolated because of their disability join us in the monthly Community Litter pick event. We have member volunteers litter-picking throughout the month and this keeps the village visibly clean. We always say, “do what you can when you can”. This works well as people are afraid of signing up to unlimited commitment, and even more so if they have a busy life. It’s about making things accessible and doing what you can. If all that they can do is pick litter in front of their house, we encourage that.

With Citizen Coin, the immediate future is about making it accessible and removing current barriers. Litter picking using Citizen Coin is something that everyone can do because it gives them flexibility and pride in their place. The only challenge is ensuring local and accessible places to spend coin. If everyone in the UK put in one hour even in a year, imagine the impact and outcomes. It would change the culture and increase community.

The baseline survey data indicates that the original participants in the Citizen Coin pilot brought to the project pre-existing sentiments that included a strong sense of community, a belief in the value of difference and a willingness to engage with others. The first focus group brought together people who had participated in the scheme as volunteers. The percentage of people comfortable with talking to people from different backgrounds and considering it important to mix with others from different backgrounds was high at the point of the baseline survey (90% said they were both comfortable talking to people from different backgrounds and 92% considered that it was important). Therefore, it was no surprise that the participants in the focus groups continued to value these behaviours. Some people lived in villages where there was not a diversity of people from different ethnic minorities, but the scheme supported people to make positive inter-generational connections and connections across social class differences. However, younger people living in the villages struggled to find any offers from retailers that were both of interest to them and accessible.

“ My 14-year-old son has earned some coins. It would be nice if he had a place to spend them. And then he could sell it to others because he's been talking about it in school. Everyone's like, so where can we spend these coins if we make them? And he can't answer because of proximity. ”



There were examples of people volunteering for the first time and successfully using the skills learnt and the confidence built to obtain paid work.

“ I am living with a hearing loss, and braved volunteering via Citizen Coin. I wanted to improve my skills, build my confidence, meet new people and step out of my comfort zone. Not only have I done all this, I have now secured my first EVER paid, DREAM job at the University of Bradford. ”

Some of the people volunteering had also become Ambassadors for the scheme. They joined the Citizen Coin Officer from the Council on visits to retailers to encourage them to get involved in the scheme. Although there were some open doors and retailers who were very pleased to become involved, for others it did not feel possible at the time that they were approached.

Some of the people volunteering had also become Ambassadors for the scheme. They joined the Citizen Coin Officer from the Council on visits to retailers to encourage them to get involved in the scheme. Although there were some open doors and retailers who were very pleased to become involved, for others it did not feel possible at the time that they were approached.

“ They [businesses] will tell you that they're in a dire situation, and that they can't afford really to lose any of their profit, etc. ”

A volunteer signed up to an activity via the app to promote Citizen Coin to local businesses something she felt not skilled at doing, the activity was to encourage businesses to partake in the scheme.

“ I've never been a saleswoman. I find that uncomfortable to an extent, but I've also pushed against some really open doors as well. ”

Despite the reservations, some had persisted in approaching local businesses over a long period of time, demonstrating their commitment to the scheme as well as getting involved in activities they have never done before.



Level Up: Womxn In Music at the Underground, Bradford

One volunteer had been involved in a timebank scheme in another part of the country where people could, for instance, get free cinema tickets for times when the cinema was not full. The offers were limited to things that did not cost the retailers anything. The Bradford scheme was more ambitious on this front by asking retailers to offer something that incurred a cost to themselves, but would also hopefully lead to more custom.

“ So I think what’s really lovely is in Bradford it has that element that you can use it in retail, you can use it much further...it’s just how we can work out how we can let people use those kinds of offer without taking away any profit. ”

For the retailers, there were some who had definitely felt the benefits of being part of the scheme.

“ This is a revolutionary scheme for Bradford District, not only does it help local small businesses with a free publicity platform, it also gives us the opportunity to really thank all those kind people in our communities who give up their time to make positive differences for others. We are proud to be a legacy business that supports such a gratifying initiative. ”

A social enterprise that included both volunteering opportunities, such as in a bakery, could instantly reward people with coins for them to enjoy something in their café. However, other retailers had received little interest from people in their offer. For instance, a hairdresser had

only had one client using the coins. Another had changed their offer after discussion with the Council worker from a free milkshake to a 2-for-1 offer, which had generated more interest. Some spent more than their coins were worth, bringing in additional business. Some employers specifically targeted participating businesses to hold meetings on their premises and support their businesses.



Yam Spice Foods, one of the retailers participating in the scheme

The decision to only include local businesses was off-putting to some younger volunteers. One of the colleges had promoted Citizen Coin to all the students but some constructive feedback was that there was no current offer that they wanted to use. This reflects a much wider issue about the marketing budgets of larger franchises and chains that become very popular with younger people. However, local businesses were responding in creative ways and new businesses had been joining the scheme throughout the pilot period; this is growing as time is passing and as more and more people are finding out about the scheme. Those involved in promoting the scheme were confident about its potential:

The scheme aimed to increase participation and

“ A few months ago, we had like 13 offers on here, we’ve got 77 offers now. Soon this will be 700 offers. ”



Bradford African Community (Rewarding Agency)

We are a community group and our aim is to engage African communities and encourage them to engage with activities in the local area, including explore pathways to employment, learn more about local authorities, support new people by getting them out and getting them familiar to new facilities and places. We want to build confidence.

Citizen Coin is a fantastic project which encourages local people to support their local area, at the same time, they are promoting the economy and our local area, if someone gets a coin they can be encouraged to spend their coin. For the African Group, we use Citizen Coin to get different adverts and it brings all information together where the members get to know what is happening. It's a platform bringing people together, its new and when people get used to it, it will help the community even more. People can get news easily and can know where to go and have fun. Citizen Coin is helping us to encourage people to get involved and to stay motivated. There is a bright future in Citizen Coin, this would connect people, businesses, locals to connect ever stronger. We currently use the platform to advertise activities and advertise our work. When we do this, it goes wider, people then know where and when it's all happening.

engagement in local activities with those people who would not ordinarily participate. There were certainly examples where this had happened. One organisation had a request to recruit a cohort of volunteer drivers to support a schools' cluster in Bradford District with a view to delivering food to those pupils who were isolated and qualified for free school meals.

“ The functionality of Citizen Coin enabled us to efficiently recruit these drivers; record and track their volunteering hours; communicate our requirements in terms of the volunteer role; manage allocation of tasks; and of course recognise their contribution by issuing them with Citizen Coins. The Citizen Coin App and software have proved invaluable in successfully delivering this vital piece of work. ”

Downsides to using the app for rewarding agencies were that it took time to administer and support people to use it. There was an inter-generational difference in this, with young people finding it easy to navigate. Many older people and those who were not so technically confident struggled to use it. Reminding people to use it and to access their coins could be time-consuming. When

community organisations were so busy and overloaded with demands, it was easy to overlook the scheme. For those that were regularly using it, it was helpful for keeping track of volunteering hours. This data could help them in their bids for further funding. It could also help with volunteers building a CV.

The businesses and rewarding agencies who attended the focus group felt that, with some tweaks and as it grew, the scheme was brilliant for Bradford and needed to grow organically. One rewarding agency felt that it had barely tapped into its potential:

“ For instance, sometimes 30 people will take part in an activity but only 1 or 2 will sign up for CC as a result. ”

While the app is now ready to develop further (to include maps and alerts), the evidence points to Citizen Coin being a valuable addition to a wider programme of work to increase involvement and engagement in local activities and to increase participation by people from low-income households. It just requires a smart phone, something within the grasp of most families, even those struggling financially. As a development, it was considered key to make some offers of food basics available as rewards. At the time of this evaluation, more people were struggling to afford meals to eat while paying for fuel to heat their homes.

Participants in the focus groups praised the support given by the core Council team. Other ideas for how to improve the scheme in the future included more marketing expertise, more offers that would be attractive to young people and being able to locate volunteering opportunities and where to spend coins by postcode rather than having to scroll through all the offers.

Outcomes evaluation

As the discussion above shows, though early days, the Citizen Coin programme has already seen progress across its main outcomes with an increase in the rates of civic participation across the District, increased spending with local services and retailers, and increased opportunities for social mixing to take place between people who are different from each other. The scheme has also started to change perceptions around doing social good and increased participation in local activities and volunteering by those from low-income households, or who may not normally participate.

Key learnings



1 This innovative pilot scheme has been welcomed in Bradford, providing an opportunity for participating organisations to advertise volunteering opportunities and recruit new volunteers, and for retailers to publicise their business. This has been achieved against the backdrop of a challenging social and economic context as the country recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. The volunteers, participating organisations and retailers involved in the scheme all felt that it provided brilliant opportunities for Bradford and would develop from strength to strength.

2 The app does seem to have encouraged people to volunteer for the first time and to successfully use the skills developed to obtain paid employment. It also encouraged some first-time volunteers to volunteer more frequently and even sign up as Ambassadors.

3 The pilot scheme has pointed towards areas that could easily be improved to widen the accessibility and inclusivity of the app, including bringing on board retailers in smaller villages, and by diversifying offers to include food basics, especially as the cost of living crisis worsens.

4 The qualitative evidence shows the beginning of positive change; however, the scheme needs to be delivered over a much longer, more sustained period of time to report back on more possible tangible impacts that could be achieved. A re-evaluation at years 3, 4 and 5 would give an indication of whether the intended impacts are bringing benefits for people, communities and a place.

5 The Citizen Coin pilot has been considered a success and has served its initial brief in setting up an ecosystem model that builds on encouraging volunteering and civic and social participation. However, it has also been realised that this reward and demographic behaviour platform can have a much wider appeal to a vast range of communities and agendas within a place. With further investment, and as the scheme evolves, it can also be rolled out under the one umbrella 'Citizen Coin' in other areas of:

- Education - Student CV and rewards for parental participation; discount off school meals;
- Public Health - Social prescribing, through other organisations and programmes - where people are rewarded for positive health behaviours and then linked to health retail in food and recreation;
- Environmental - Rewards for car sharing, cycling, clean ups and recycling.

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