Executive Summary

It is thought that in the UK there are 13.7 million people looking for volunteering or work with flexible hours every year. How do you find them and match them with the opportunities available?

Slivers of Time was set up in 2006 with support from the Department for Communities and Local Government, to do just this.

With additional funding support from Nominet Trust, Slivers of Time is now a sophisticated online booking tool where people looking for any type of work can indicate when they're available, the type of work they're looking for and key information such as willingness to travel.

Businesses, local authorities, charities and individuals can then access the flexible pool. Local authorities are using Slivers of Time to find workers to fill positions on a temporary basis, becoming their own recruitment agency and thus saving public money. Informal charity work and support for individuals with personal budgets is also available.

The site is helping those who are either un- or under-employed both to earn income and increase their skills and experience in a difficult job market. It also supports community based volunteering through a time-banking model.

Shaped.By.Us is now becoming a place-based open innovation platform that brings about collaboration between local people and the public, voluntary and community and private sectors; a place where people don't moan, but where solutions are creatively co-developed. People can share an issue e.g. this area has a high level of child obesity, or create a challenge e.g. how can we ensure that people in this area are getting the right food and nutrition? Others can get involved through research, generating and networking to sponsor solutions.

The Building Change Trust was established by the Big Lottery Fund with a National Lottery grant of £10 million as an investment for community capacity building and the promotion of the voluntary and community sectors in Northern Ireland. The Building Change Trust is registered as a company limited by guarantee in Northern Ireland (NI071181) and is registered as a charity for tax purposes with the Inland Revenue (XT113984).
Social Innovation is one of the Building Change Trust’s core themes for the period 2014-2018. The Trust has adopted the following definition of social innovation:

“Social innovation is new solutions simultaneously meeting a need and seeking to improve people’s lives, communities and the environment. It encompasses innovation and change (social and related) and better use of assets and resources.”

Digital technology has transformed how people communicate, interact and transact, for social good. And new social innovations emerge today without an element of technology being involved.

Our research on Digital Social Innovation in Northern Ireland, carried out by the Young Foundation, found a significant number of opportunities for digital social innovation:

- People need the opportunity to see what is on the horizon and what people are doing that is interesting and that they could pull people in on a voluntary basis [to help] if they are interested.
- Access to data helps [with digital social innovation]. It would allow people to work on something and you could pull people in if you never actually had a final product… just a conversation.
- It’s very difficult to find the sweet spot. The only way is to keep following what people are doing and develop and diversify.
- Increasing open data will help people in digital social innovation.

Once a groundswell around digital social innovation emerges, it helps people to take things into their own hands and encourage and develop digital social innovation through its stages of development.

A Social Innovation Voucher scheme to partner digital social innovations at various stages. This could include mentoring, funding, advice and support to develop and scale social innovations.

The Building Change Trust will engage with other stakeholders in the social innovation space in Northern Ireland, Great Britain and Ireland to develop opportunities and initiatives to develop social innovations with experts in Northern Ireland, Great Britain and Ireland.

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“What Opportunities are there? Interview with stakeholders from across Northern Ireland’s public, voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors (VCSE), as well as the digital technology sector, uncovered a number of opportunities for digital social innovation:

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What practical steps can be taken? Proposals

1. Convene a social digital innovation group of people from the public, private, VCSE and tech sectors, as well as academics, interested in supporting and growing digital social innovation.

Support for digital social innovation needs to be firmly embedded within the wider Social Innovation movement in Northern Ireland.

A ‘Geeks in Residence’ programme, placing high quality, social-minded tech experts in forward thinking VCSE and tech sectors, and also as part of wider Social Innovation initiatives.

2. Inspire and spark understanding and awareness of digital social innovation specifically across the VCSE, tech, and also as part of wider Social Innovation initiatives.

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CASE STUDY: SPACEHIVE

Spacehive was created by founder Chris Gourlay to support innovation in the social impact space.

Spacehive was inspired by founder Chris Gourlay to support innovation in the social impact space. The council to make things happen locally, Spacehive was developed to help communities, institutions, governments and countries live as they connect, for social good. And few social innovations emerger today without an element of technology being involved.

To read the full report, visit the Building Change Trust website at: http://www.buildingchangetrust.org/