

Time to Talk Next Steps Co-production of Evaluation: Key Learning

May 2024

Time to Talk Next Steps (TtTNS) has been a three-year (2021 – 2024) rights-based support programme for young people with additional needs aged 16 – 25 in England. The programme has been delivered in partnership by [NDTi](#) and [Contact](#), and funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.

As part of the final stages of the programme, NDTi are sharing the learning and reflections on co-producing the programme's evaluation. It is hoped that sharing this learning will help other evaluators and programmes wanting to co-produce this type of work in the future.

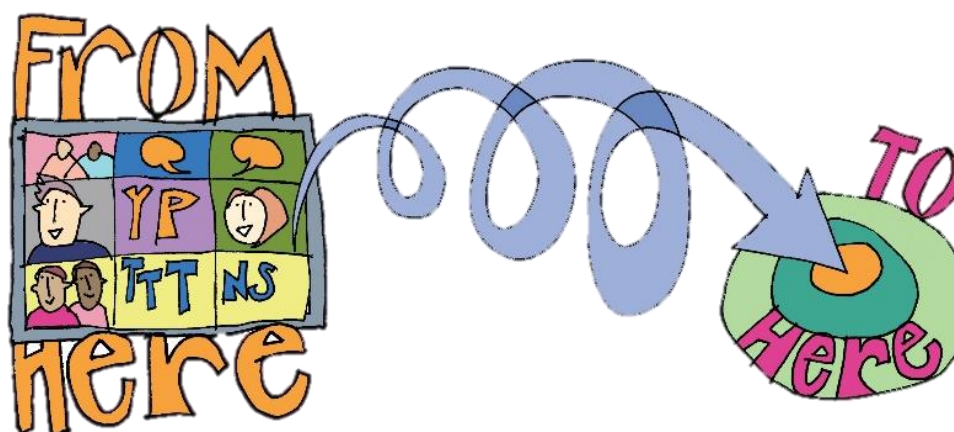
About Time to Talk Next Steps

TtTNS offered support to young people (aged 16 – 25) with additional needs who feel anxious and have limited or no plans for the future. Young people did not require a diagnosis or 'label' to receive the free support that was offered online, over the phone or in person on a 1:1 and peer basis. Young people could request support from the programme themselves or have someone request it for them.

The programme offered young people short-term, online, one-to-one sessions to build confidence and focus on goals, delivered by trained and experienced Supporters. The programme also offered young people the opportunity to become part of a 'Training Squad' which co-designed and delivered training to practitioners who work with children and young people with additional needs, in England.

NDTi worked in partnership with Contact, who provided advice, support, and information to the families of young people with additional support needs on preparation for adulthood and managing the move to adult services.

For more information about TtTNS, please visit the programme's [website](#).



Programme Aims

The aims of *TtTNS* evolved during the three years to reflect the changing nature of the programme, whilst remaining focused on:



Programme Design

TtTNS was a long-term project, co-designed to grow and develop across the three-years (2021 – 2024).



Year 1: 2021 – 2022. Aimed to provide 1:1 support to 70 young people. Ten of these young people were also to be offered support via a Peer Support Group, and a further 10 were to be offered the opportunity to become a trainer. Support, advice, and information was also to be provided to family members via Contact's [Listening Ear Service](#).



Year 2: 2022 – 2023. Building on Year One, Year Two aimed to meet the same annual target for 1:1, Peer Support provision and family member support, with a further 10 young people offered the opportunity to become a trainer and deliver at least one of the four regional training days for practitioners.



Year 3: 2023 – 2024. Building on Years One and Two, Year Three aimed to provide support to meet the same annual target for 1:1, Peer Support provision and family member support with a further 10 young people offered the opportunity to become a trainer and deliver at least one of the four regional training days for practitioners.

TtTNS was able to exceed its aims and provided support to 248 young people across the 3 years. The fluid nature of the programme’s design meant that it was also able to grow and develop organically in response to young people’s needs and desires and suggestions from family members. This led to, but was not limited to:

<p>the introduction of a Creativity Group for young people to come together to create art online</p>	<p>the development of Human Rights training created and delivered by young people</p>	<p>three young people having paid roles as co-evaluators of the programme after having received full evaluation training</p>
<p>four in-person residentials in different areas of England</p>	<p>an online exhibition by young people on rights and good support</p>	<p>young people and parent/carers working to roll out the TtTNS model and approach post 2024 through ‘Partners Make Time to Talk.’ The aim of which is to share learning and provide training to partners</p>

In addition to the delivery activity, the evaluation was co-produced from the outset and able to grow and develop in response to the programme’s needs. This included a review of the evaluation at the end of Year One and the decision to offer three young people paid roles as co-evaluators. This role included each young person receiving evaluation training from NDTi before working on re-designing the Vision for Change, Outcomes Framework, and data collection tools, in addition to supporting the completion of an ethics application for these new tools to be used.

The remainder of this document shares the learning and reflections from NDTi’s Research and Evaluation Team and Trainee Evaluators about what made this way of working a success and what could have been better. It hopes to provide an honest insight into what it takes to co-produce evaluation well and offer future programmes and evaluators hints and tips for work in the future.



What Works...



Finding the right funding – It is important to find funding that supports truly co-produced evaluation, including payment for all those who undertake the work.



Having enough time - In addition, but not unconnected to funding, making sure there is enough time to co-produce the evaluation is essential. It is important to consider all aspects of the evaluation from recruitment and training to dissemination, and factor in the time needed into any applications for funding.



Getting the right people – It is important to have those with a traditional evaluation background guiding the co-production who are confident and comfortable working in a collaborative way. They also need to have time to dedicate to the work to do it well.



Easy and accessible application process – Recruiting co-evaluators takes a lot of consideration for both those recruiting and for potential applicants. Take the time to think about who you want to recruit and adjust the marketing and application process accordingly to their possible needs. For example, can people send a talking head video, or could you hold an information day for people to attend, instead of a traditional application form.



Clear expectations – From the outset everyone involved in a co-produced evaluation needs to know what is expected of them, within what time frames. This should be communicated clearly to potential co-evaluators at the recruitment stage, discussed in any selection process such as an interview, and contained within any agreements or contracts signed at the start of the work.



Building relationships – It is important for the evaluation team to build relationships with one another. Time should be dedicated at the start of the work to simply get to know one another, discover each other's interests and passions, preferred ways of working and reasons for wanting to be involved in the project.



Provide training – Co-evaluators are normally employed in projects for experiences and skills other than evaluation. It is therefore **ESSENTIAL** that they are provided training on evaluation in order for them to develop the skills and knowledge needed to meaningfully co-produce the evaluation.



Share knowledge and skills mutually – Co-producing evaluation is about learning and sharing together; it is not about traditional evaluators imparting knowledge without learning anything themselves. Everyone in the evaluation team has valuable assets to be shared and learnt from to help the work be the best it can be.



Be flexible – It is important for everyone in the evaluation team to be able to work flexibly. For those guiding the work, this may mean changing how information is shared, how data is collected and how it is analysed to ensure each step is as accessible as possible to the co-evaluators. For the co-evaluators their flexibility will come from being able to adapt to the changing needs of the evaluation as it ebbs and flows.



Supporting co-evaluators to take their first steps – It is important for co-evaluators to be supported in a way that is comfortable for them when taking their first steps in evaluation work. For example, this might be co-facilitating focus groups or interviews, providing preparation and debriefing sessions or running shorter more frequent analysis sessions.



Offering space to reflect and grow - Being a good evaluator requires personal reflection on your work and experiences hearing from participants. This is a skill that co-evaluators will need support to develop and space to do. Providing evaluation journals, regular check-in conversations after data collection and team reflection meetings are some good ways of doing this.

More Information

The National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) hope that you find the learning from Time to Talk Next Steps shared here useful. If you would like more information about the information in this document, or about Time to Talk Next Steps more generally, please refer to the project website www.ndti.org.uk/projects/time-to-talk-next-steps or contact:

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