

Who should read this?

This briefing sets out the headlines from the final evaluation of Time to Connect. It is intended for:

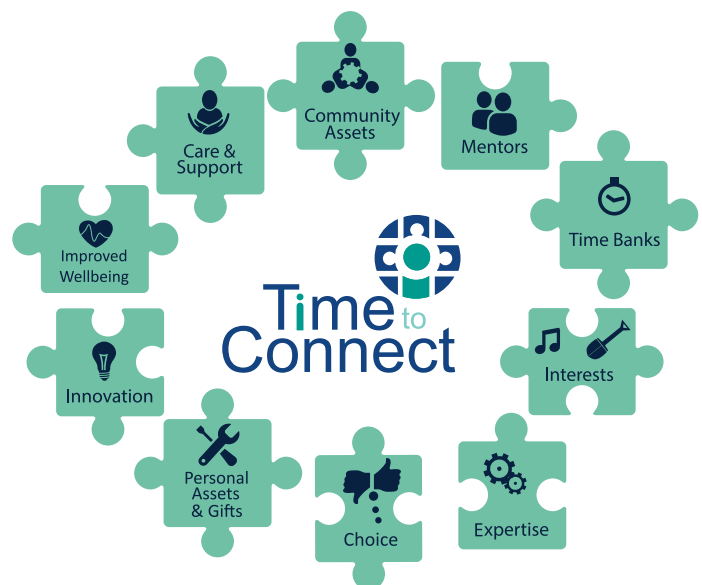
- People who live or work in care services
- Commissioners of care services
- Time banks and other community organisations

What did we do?

The project is supporting care staff and their managers to strengthen the focus on inclusion in their organisations by using a range of existing tools and approaches. At the same time, time banks are working alongside participating care settings to help connect their residents to the community and to encourage people's contribution.

The interim evaluation, which covered the first phase of Time to Connect, found that the extreme pressures on the care sector and rapid staff turnover meant that for many care settings and their staff it was difficult to engage fully with Time to Connect. These pressures have not reduced. In response, phase two of the project adopted a much more flexible menu of approaches, working with care settings that were already committed to working differently, and using a range of different ways of supporting them, including:

- Providing intensive support to people in specialist roles, such as activities coordinators
- Working with teams by providing short, focused training sessions on using the inclusion tools and techniques and encouraging them to set achievable goals for change
- Bringing care staff together across organisations to share experience and stories, as well as to find solutions to shared problems
- Time banks working with care settings, often by organising events and activities as a route for better connecting care settings to the communities they serve.



What difference is TTC making for older people and people with learning disability?

"It was the first time, for some people, that they'd felt useful."

"One man who has a learning disability and dementia, at first communicated through drawing. Now we have conversations."

We found many examples where the lives of people living in care settings have been transformed through the change of thinking and approach that Time to Connect has introduced. The changes we heard about include:

- A stronger purpose in life
- Better connections
- Reduced isolation
- Greater confidence/assertiveness
- Improved health and fitness

The examples below illustrate some of these themes.

P's story:

P (a man with disabilities who lives in a nursing home on Merseyside) is a lifelong supporter of Liverpool FC and was very keen to go to a match. He is non-verbal and is not comfortable in crowds. Through TTC, a family member volunteered to go to a charity match with him, and to invite along a few of P's old friends who he had lost contact with. When a carer arrived to pick him up after the match, he wasn't at the place they'd agreed – he was in the pub with his friends. Since then, he's joined the supporter's club, he's been on a tour of Anfield and has been to events to meet the players. The club has **'gone out of their way to give him the best experience.'** P is getting out, connecting with others and has rediscovered a friendship group. His support worker says the experience has given him **'pure joy – it's given him back his independence.'**

M's story:

M, a young woman with learning and physical disabilities from South London, has recently become involved in a local group that runs clean up events in local parks, working with the community, and friends of the park. She went along to an event with her support worker and loved it. Since then, she has become friends with people she met there, and is doing physiotherapy exercises on her hands so that she can operate the litter picking equipment. As a result she is getting stronger. She is now involved in running the group - contacting members, producing flyers, and is really pleased and proud about the contribution she's making. The service manager says the experience has changed her life: **'She smiles constantly, she's just so happy. Her communication has improved, she's making eye contact.'**

What difference is it making for care staff and organisations?

“We’re looking through the eyes of the people we support, now.”

“In the recruitment process we’re very explicit what we’re looking for.”

Time to Connect has improved the practice and the working lives of many of the care staff who took part, for example by:

- Challenging preconceptions and mindsets
- Enabling staff to work more creatively and seeing the difference this makes to the people they support
- Sharing new skills, including by working alongside time bank brokers, and having practical tools and frameworks to use in their work
- Feeling more motivated and having greater job satisfaction.

Many of the care settings who have been involved have also seen an impact for the organisation, such as:

- Using Time to Connect as a way of helping staff to think differently across the organisation
- Raising the profile of the care setting in the community, and as a result being able to tap into local resources, which benefit the people they support
- Since Time to Connect, realising that they need to look for different qualities in their staff, so changing recruitment processes to focus more on values and approach.

What difference is it making for time banks and wider communities?

“The people at the station are now much better at working with people with disabilities. Before, people looked through our guys, but the station staff now know how to chat.”

“I’ve made friends with these people ... It’s a pleasure to come here.”

Time bank members who are based in the community, many of whom are facing challenges in their own lives, made new friends and felt more supported. Local time banks also built stronger links with care settings and strengthened their skills in working with older people and people with disabilities.

The interim evaluation of Time to Connect found that the project had a number of unexpected benefits, and phase two looked at these in more detail. We found that Time to Connect had helped local communities become more welcoming and inclusive as a result of the increased visibility of people with learning disabilities and older people. For example:

- People in communities and neighbourhoods getting to know the people involved in Time to Connect, and saying hello or stopping for a chat
- Staff in a very wide range of businesses and organisations, from stations, cafes and pubs, to an art gallery, providing a better service to people with disabilities or older people.

What are the factors that help people in care settings connect with the community?

“It fitted with all my aspirations for care services. Time to Connect fell in our lap at the right time.”

“The whole project is down to the human part, who we are. The heart, the trust, the give and take.”

Organisational factors are key to the success, or otherwise, of Time to Connect. We found that care settings are most likely to be able to make a difference to the lives of the people they support where a combination of important preconditions are in place:

- Having a genuine commitment to improve, and Time to Connect arriving at the right time to provide a vehicle for change
- Ensuring that resources are available to help support change – both staff time and a small amount of funding
- Making small changes and learning from and celebrating their impact
- Using success stories as inspiring images of possibility and a way of reinforcing what matters
- Senior managers who:
 - Have vision and commitment to see things through
 - Build the confidence of their staff in venturing outside the care setting
 - Recruit the right people, with values and an approach that are in line with Time to Connect, and nurture and encourage them
 - Model the approach that is expected from staff.

Further Reading

<https://www.ndti.org.uk/tags/Time-to-Connect>

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