

# Time to Talk

## Learning from the evaluation so far



### What is Time to Talk?

Time to Talk is a six-month project (October 2020-March 2021) offering young people aged 16-25 in England with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) free, strength-based support online to counter social isolation and provide motivation to make plans for the future. The project is delivered by [NDTi](#) and [CONTACT](#).

The project was created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is felt to have caused higher levels of anxiety and uncertainty for young people with SEND and their families, than many other populations. The project is funded by the Government's Coronavirus Community Support Fund, distributed by the National Lottery Community Fund.

The project was advertised in the autumn of 2020 and was quickly over-subscribed. Of the 50 places available, 12 were given to young people who referred themselves, 25 referred by family and 13 by professionals. A waiting list was created for the remaining referrals and additional places have been offered where possible to maximise capacity.

To date (January 2021), 45 of the young people referred to Time to Talk have fully engaged with the support offered; four one-hour (or the equivalent) online or telephone sessions providing the opportunity to:

- talk about the things they like, what's worrying them and their strengths
- discuss what matters to them and their hopes for the future
- develop self-determined goals and activities to help make plans
- identify the challenges they are facing in relation to health, social issues and/or accessing future training or employment and develop plans to overcome these.

Three young people have received double the allocation of support (eight sessions) due to their high levels of need.

The 10 who have not fully engaged with the project have done so for a variety of reasons, including; illness, other commitments, misunderstanding what support the project was offering, and not wanting the support their family had referred them for. There were also some young people who the project could not make contact with to provide support.

### Evaluation

The evaluation of Time to Talk focuses on capturing the impact the project has had upon young people, their families and/or carers and the professionals engaged in their lives.

By January 2021, 32 young people had finished receiving support from Time to Talk, 30 of whom have agreed to take part in the evaluation. In addition, 14 families/carers and 12 professionals have agreed to share their experiences with the evaluation.

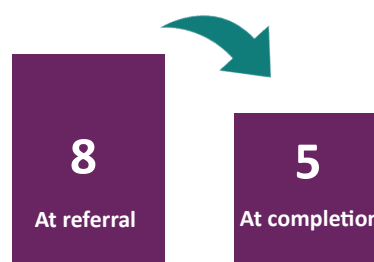
To date, 16 young people, seven family members and three professionals have contributed to the evaluation.

### Impact on Young People

The aim of Time to Talk is to help young people with SEND to counter social isolation and reduce their anxiety about the future by creating self-directed plans.

At the time of referral, young people themselves or those referring them were asked to rate their level of anxiety about the future and then again at the end of their support (there was no significant difference in the average anxiety score for those who self-referred to those referred by someone else). These scores show Time to Talk had a significant impact on reducing young people's anxiety about the future.

### Average Anxiety Score



This is likely due to the success of the project in boosting young people's confidence:



All 16 are at least  
'moderately confident'  
about the future now:

***"Made me feel a bit  
more confidence in  
myself and for the  
future ahead".***

Helping them feel  
less lonely:

**56% feel less  
lonely as a result  
of their support.**



Helping them create their  
own plans for the future:

**75% feel they have a better  
idea of what they would  
like to do in the future as a  
result of Time to Talk.**



More able to go out now  
or in the future:

***"Since Time to Talk, [they  
have] been on a train inde-  
pendently with a friend and  
been into town with a friend".***  
(Family member)



Overall, 94% of young people feel that Time to Talk was either good or very good for them. Because...

*Plenty of helpful confidence  
building and support  
documents are useful - it was  
great to have someone to  
discuss this with.*



*I felt like I was always  
listened to and was  
not judged.*



*It was good to talk to  
someone who  
listened properly to  
my opinions.*



*Was very helpful as I  
now have a idea of  
what I can do to help  
proceed into work.*



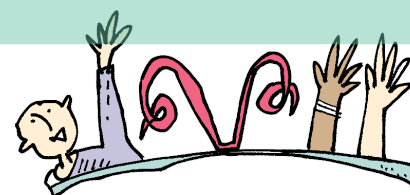
These sentiments were echoed by both families/carers and professionals, who stated they have seen the young people increase in confidence, begin to communicate their emotions, become excited about the future and engage with other services available to them, as a result of the support offered by Time to Talk.

*"It was completely tailored to my daughter's needs/what was important for her (rather than it being to someone else's agenda) [they] offered a supportive approach which helped to build my daughter's confidence during the sessions"* (family member)

*"...generally more open and has given confidence to try new things which [he] wouldn't have tried before"* (professional)

*"He is now in College and is doing an IT course. Prior to this, he had no idea what he wanted to do"* (professional)

*"[Supporter] was able to see things from a different perspective and was able to support YP to build on their skills. I have seen my YP grow in confidence"* (family member)



## Impact on Families

Families have told us that Time to Talk has had a profound impact on the young person in their life as well as on them. For many families, the impact of Time to Talk has been immeasurable and, sometimes, unexpected. For example:

*"...[they] would not go out of the house without me, but after a couple of sessions, [they] went for a walk to the corner shop and back, on [their] own! [They] carried on doing this every day and then it became twice a day and even more. [They have] got into a routine now and will go for at least 1 walk around the block, then myself and usually my daughter will join [them] for a second walk. This is HUGE! For someone who essentially has been self-isolating for a few years, [they are] now happy to leave the house on [their] own."*

Developments like this are viewed by families as 'life changing' as they breathe life into a situation where, for many, hope and drive had been lost.

*For the first time in a long time, it gave us hope that things can get better and that we can get help.*

*It was like taking off a cement overcoat the first time I talked. I hadn't realised how heavy the load even though I see a therapist. Knowing that there was someone with knowledge and experience who had reached out to us, was a huge comfort. Also someone who is willing to talk to me as a parent, to hear me and not judge.*

In addition to the whole family impact of Time to Talk, individual family members have also benefited from the support offered. Several reported how Time to Talk delivery staff made them feel seen and heard in a way that had been missing from their lives previously.

Families told us that Time to Talk delivery staff also really listened and understood family situations and dynamics, acting as a point of reference and advice where needed/possible, but in many instances just a listening, non-judgmental ear. However, in some instances, the support offered to families by Time to Talk, equipped them with tools to help support their young person going forward. And for those who did not know what support was available to them until engaging with the project, it provided hope and encouragement as well as being a rallying force behind the family when engaging with statutory services.

*I think that - indirectly - it has helped me think about how I can approach my daughter's transition/support her developing independence. It has given me tools and approaches that will help her with her own planning.*

*As a parent you do need someone to rally for you. To give you some credence. Knowing so much has helped me feel less overwhelmed and more empowered.*

## Impact on Professionals

Professionals told us that Time to Talk is a great project to have referred young people to. The referral process was smooth, with good lines of communication that ensured professionals were informed of and involved in the support offered as appropriate.

Professionals surveyed feel that Time to Talk is an invaluable service for the young people they work with; as the quotes in the 'impact on young people' section highlight. But for professionals themselves, finding Time to Talk has given them a boost.

And as it is separate to the support they offer it has allowed professionals to work in other areas of the young person's life.

*Such a positive step! was finding it challenging to move forward with young person, gave both of us a boost.*

*Such an invaluable service, our team work just with young people and it's so difficult getting appropriate support without having to wait months for it.*

*Liked that it was separate so that I could coordinate support for family members.*



## Summary and Recommendations

Based on the learning captured in the evaluation to date, it is evident that Time to Talk offers invaluable support to young people with SEND, their families and carers. It fills a gap in statutory provision, by providing responsive values-based support to young people that starts from what matters to them rather than critical need. As a result, Time to Talk offers young people flexible person-centered support where they have the time and space to talk about their situations, collaboratively find solutions and make plans in a way that matters to them, rather than a set of criteria.

Working in this way, has led to positive outcomes for young people, their families/carers and professionals. Young people's anxiety about the future has reduced, many feel less isolated than they did previously, the majority now feel more confident about the future and have plans for things they would like to do and achieve. Families and professionals have witnessed the effects of these changes in the young people firsthand, with some family members also benefiting from the supported offered to them by Time to Talk and professionals who have been able to focus on them because of Time to Talk's support for young people.

As a result of this learning, it is recommended that Time to Talk continues to support young people with SEND, especially given the ongoing impact COVID-19 is having upon society.

*We think it would be great if this could be offered much wider to other young people.*

*100% of professionals believe the project is needed in the future and all would refer to it again if it were available.*

Going forward, it is recommended that the standard length of time support is offered for (currently four one hour sessions per young person) is increased to at least six one hour sessions per young person, as feedback from young people and parents suggests that four sessions or the equivalent is not quite long enough.

*It was good but don't think it was long enough.*  
(young person)

*More sessions to work through and pick apart things would have been very beneficial.*  
(family member)

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