

Time to Talk Next Steps Scotland Pilot

Evaluation Report

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1. Introduction

This evaluation report draws together learning from the Time to Talk Next Steps Pilot in Scotland. The Pilot ran from March 2022 to March 2023 and was delivered in Partnership between the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi), Children in Scotland (CiS) and Contact.

The aim of this report is to highlight key learning about what has worked well and not so well with delivery of the Pilot. It is hoped that this learning will then be utilised to inform and strengthen the development of consistent, high quality transition support for young people with additional support needs in Scotland.

1.1 What was Time to Talk Next Steps Scotland?

Time to Talk Next Steps Scotland was a 12-month pilot programme (March 2022 - March 2023) trialling 1:1 online support for young people aged 16-25 with additional needs in Scotland: hearing their voice, building confidence, and supporting transitions.

The Pilot also provided telephone support to parents/carers/family members of the young people supported by the programme.

Direct support was delivered from July 2022 to March 2023. The Pilot was delivered by The National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) in Partnership with Children in Scotland (CiS) and Contact, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.

The Pilot was built on nationally identified needs to improve transitions and informed by learning from NDTi's [Time to Talk Next Steps project](#) in England. Coproduction with young people, parents, and carers in Scotland was also carried out to inform programme design and delivery (please see Section 1.5 for more details).

Pilot Outcomes

These Outcomes were co-produced by Pilot Partners and Stakeholders in June 2022.

1. Young people feel heard and valued
2. Young people feel connected socially
3. Young people have more confidence and emotional resilience
4. Young people have options, plans and aspirations for the future
5. Young people are accessing relevant resources, contacts, and information (national and local) to support their transition to adulthood

6. Parent/carers and family members feel heard, understood, and valued
7. Parent/carers and family members feel connected socially
8. Parents/carers and family members have confidence and knowledge of the transition planning process
9. Parents/carers and family members feel better equipped to support their young person's plans and aspirations
10. Professionals in the Children and Young People sector in Scotland have evidence to inform strengthen and develop consistent, high quality transition support for young people with additional needs in Scotland.

1.2 Evaluation approach

NDTi's Research and Evaluation team were commissioned to carry out an independent evaluation of the Time to Talk Next Steps Pilot in Scotland. The evaluation was designed to address seven evaluation questions that map the outcome areas, as follows:

Evaluation Questions

1. To what extent have young people and/or their parents/carers/families had their voices heard and felt valued as a result of the programme and what impact has this had on their aspirations and plans for the future?
2. What evidence is there that young people supported by the programme have developed emotional resilience and confidence as a result of the support received?
3. Is there evidence that young people and/or their parents/carers/families feel more socially connected as a result of the programme?
4. Is there evidence that young people and/or their parents/carers/families have more knowledge of the transitioning process and what impact has this had on their ability to access relevant resources, contacts, and information (national and local) to support their transition to adulthood?
5. What evidence is there that parents/carers/families feel better equipped to support their young person's plans and aspirations?
6. What lessons can be learned from the analysis of outcomes?
7. What should the next steps be for Time to Talk Next Steps in Scotland now the Pilot has come to an end?



1.3 Methodology

The following data sources were used to inform this report, with all primary data collection carried out between October 2022 - April 2023. All names of participating individuals have been changed throughout this report.

- Demographic data of young people requesting support from the Pilot collected by Children in Scotland.
- 11 interviews with the Supporters providing support to young people and/or their parents/carers/family members.
- 3 interviews with Delivery Partner leads
- Survey data from young people (6) and/or their parents/carers/family members (1)
- Learning session discussions (2)
- Email feedback from parents/carers/family members (12)
- Feedback from Children in Scotland Supporters, including sharing of plans made with young people and observed impacts.

1.4 Limitations

The evaluation of the Pilot has been limited by the methods employed to capture data from participants. The methods used were implemented based upon the learning from Time to Talk Next Steps in England, and discussion with Pilot stakeholders. However, due to the nature of the support provided, the communication preferences and level of need of those engaging with the pilot and their locations across Scotland, these methods were not always accessible or appropriate for everyone. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

1.5 A note on co-production.

Co-production was written into the Pilot at the start as a way to take learning garnered from the Time to Talk and Time to Talk Next Steps projects in England and apply it to the Scottish context. It was envisaged that the Pilot would meet with:

“15 young people with additional needs and 15 parents and carers, to coproduce the programme to gather views and useful information, contacts, and recommended resources to support programme delivery. Work will help identify gaps in provision and barriers faced by families which will be included in our final report.”

(Bid to the National Lottery)

Interviews undertaken with Delivery Partners reflected on the coproduction element of the Pilot as part of the evaluation.

Engaging with individuals in this way was seen by all Partners as a valuable element of the programme. It provided important Scottish context to the development of the Pilot as well as creating a strong network of friends of the project which will provide a legacy

for the work undertaken. However, all Partners reflected that having coproduction sit alone at the start of the Pilot rather than threaded through the year was a key learning point. All Partners reflected in their interviews that the Pilot should have been developed based upon the working knowledge of the transitions landscape for young people with additional needs and their parents/carers/family members that Children in Scotland and Contact had, bringing members of these groups on board once some learning had been captured and what was being asked of them was clearer.

In spite of this challenge, it is hoped that the network of friends created by the coproduction at the start of the Pilot will become a lasting legacy of the work that will take forward the learning it has generated in future iterations of this, and other projects associated to the transitions planning process in Scotland.



2. Who the Pilot reached

2.1 Young people

The Time to Talk Next Steps Pilot received a total of 38 requests for support. Of these, 31 were received on behalf of a young person (22 from parents/carers, seven from professionals, and two from foster parents) and seven from young people directly.

Of the 38, 33 were offered support. The reasons why five weren't offered support were:

- The young person having profound disabilities which meant the service was unable to provide the level of support needed to engage (2),
- The young person being under the age limit to receive support (1),
- The young person having sufficient support in place already (1),
- The young person not wanting to engage/having no motivation to engage with support that a parent had requested (1).

Of the 33 who were offered support, all 33 received at least one support session online. Four young people withdrew from the Pilot after their first session. The reasons for this were:

- Other life events taking over (1)
- Wanting face to face support only (2). Both were offered this support, one chose to withdraw anyway, and the other did not reply to the offer.
- Other support coming on board at the same time (1).

Analysis and discussion in this report is based on the data provided for all 33 individuals who began their support with the Pilot.

Figure 1. Age of young people receiving support from the pilot

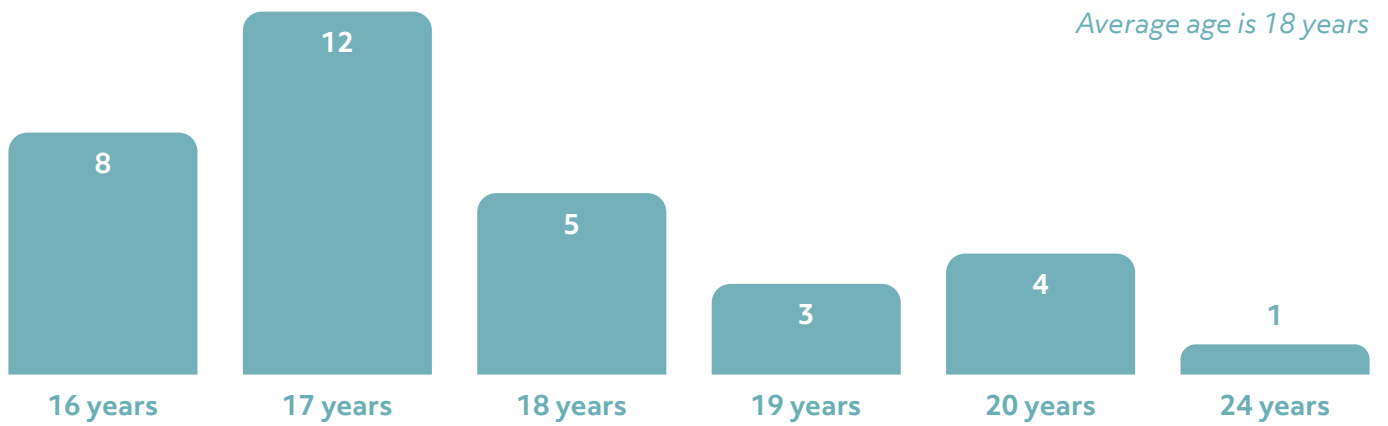


Figure 2. Gender identity of young people receiving support from the pilot

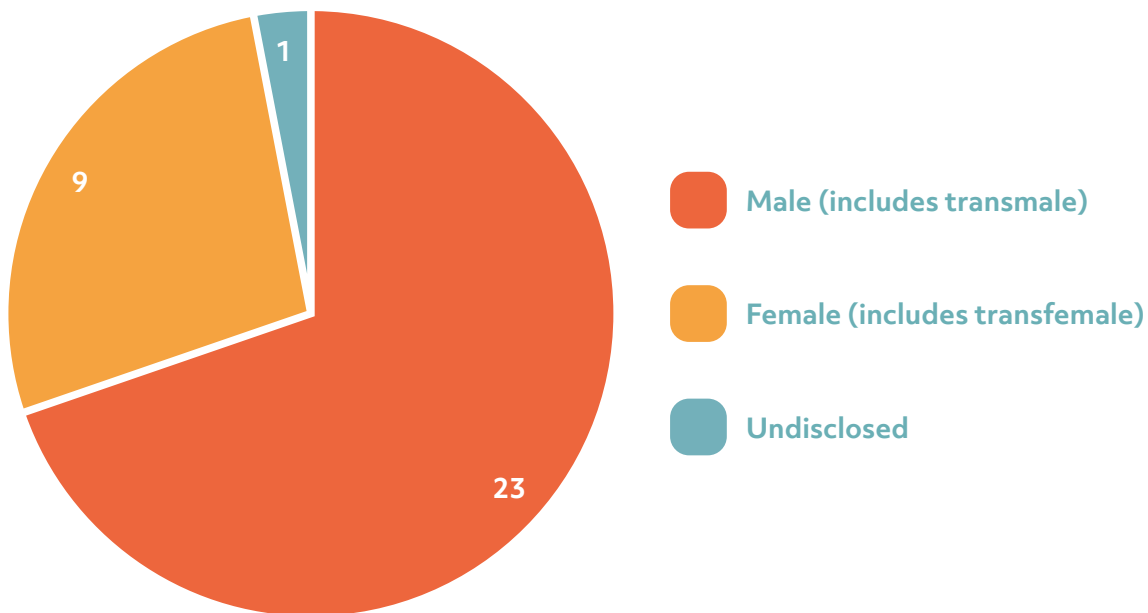


Figure 3. Ethnicity of young people receiving support from the pilot



Image 1. Location in Scotland of young people receiving support from the pilot

Below is a map of the local authority areas where the young people who requested support from the Pilot or had it requested for them, came from. The grey areas on the map are areas where no requests were received from.

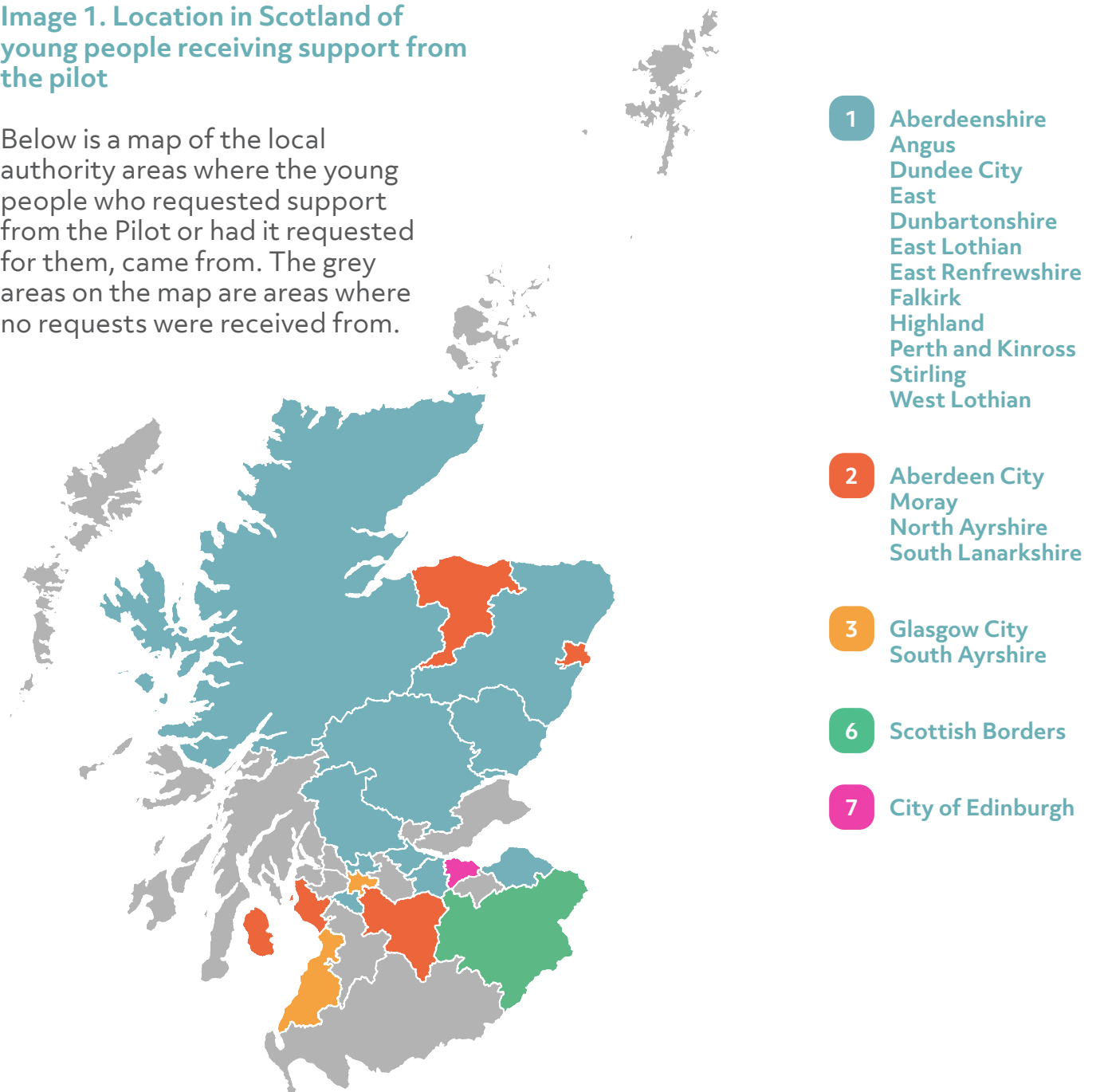


Figure 4. Reasons young people requested support from the pilot*



* From data received.

Figure 5. Reasons parents/carers/family members and professionals requested support from the pilot*

* From data received.

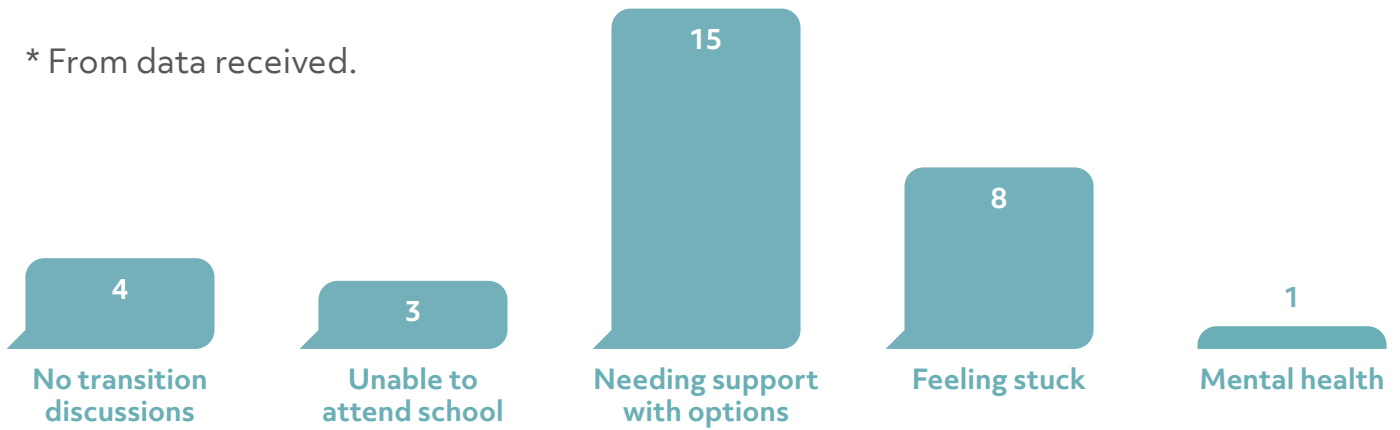
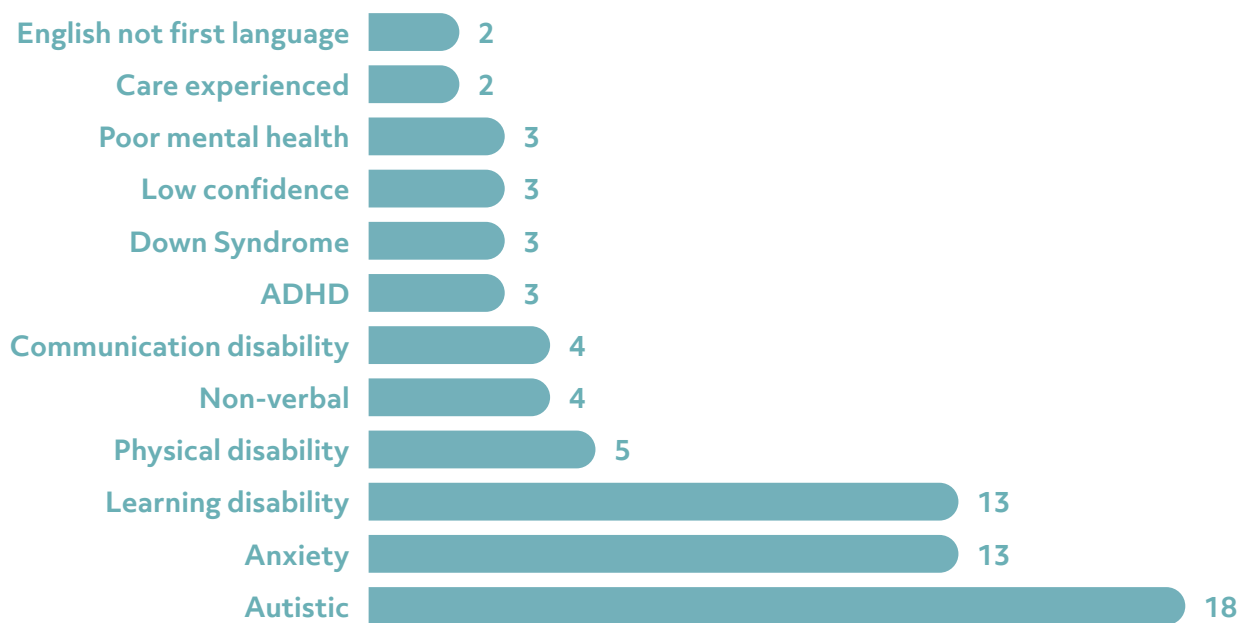


Figure 6. Additional needs listed on request for support

The graph below shows the additional support needs detailed in the requests for support from parents/carers/family members and professionals.



2.2 Parents/carers/family members

Three parent/carers/family members were referred to Contact as part of the support their young person received. Two of these went on to receive support as part of the Pilot. No further demographic information was captured about these individuals.

2.3 Discussion

The demographic makeup of the young people receiving support from the Time to Talk Next Steps Pilot, provides an insight into the population of young people with additional needs across Scotland. Whilst it is not possible to comment more broadly on the representative nature of this data, due to the small sample size, nor compare it

to the national picture, due to the limited availability of up-to-date data for this group, there are some findings of note.

Firstly, the locations where young people lived were overwhelmingly rural. This suggests that young people with additional needs who live in rural locations may experience multiple disadvantages when moving through the transitions process due to their geographical location. That is, the **widely cited** challenges associated with rural living such as reduced transport links, challenges to accessing education and medical care, and limited employment opportunities, may be compounding the often **complex process of transitioning to adulthood for this group**. In fact, the rural location some young people lived in was mentioned as part of their reason for requesting support from the Pilot and included as part of the reason why they found the Pilot so beneficial:

“We live in a very remote part... My son is unable to use public transport independently due to his disabilities... Extra support would allow [him] to interact more with his peers and do things that a person of a similar age would do.”

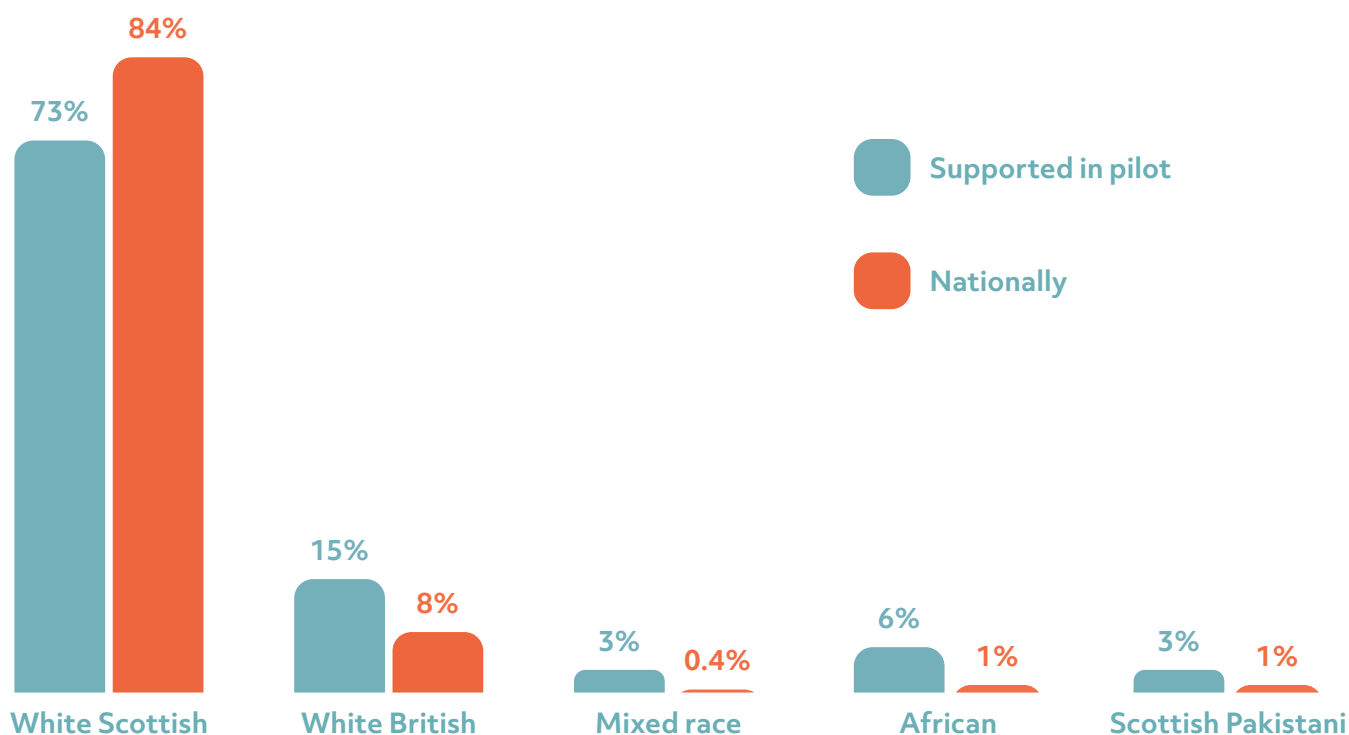
(Request for support form, Parent)

“There is nothing in my local area, no things I can access so it is great having something online that I don't need to worry about travelling to.”

(Feedback from young person)

Secondly, it is interesting to note that the ethnic mix of young people receiving support from the Pilot appears to be over the most recent national figures for these groups (2011) (Figure 7. below). Whilst this suggests the Pilot has done well in terms of reaching a broad mix of the population, it does also suggest that attention might need to be paid to the needs of young people with additional needs in Scotland who come from African, Asian, and Mixed-Race groups in the future. However, this observation should be reviewed when more up-to-date ethnicity data becomes available.

Figure 7. Ethnicity of young people in the pilot versus nationally (2011)





3. Progress towards outcomes

This Chapter draws together the learning captured for each of the Pilot Outcomes.

The Chapter begins by presenting the progress towards Outcomes achieved by the Pilot for young people, before moving on to the progress achieved for parents/carers/family members and drawing to a close with an exploration of how the combination of this learning speaks to progress towards the Outcome for professionals.

Where appropriate, Outcomes have been combined to enable the story of the Pilot to be told coherently.

3.1 Young people

Outcomes 1 and 3: Young people feel heard and valued and young people have more confidence and emotional resilience

These Outcome areas are addressed, in part, by the first two evaluation questions:

1. To what extent have young people had their voices heard and felt valued as a result of the programme and what impact has this had on their aspirations and plans for the future?
2. What evidence is there that young people supported by the programme have developed emotional resilience and confidence as a result of the support received?

Feedback from young people themselves, parents/carers/family members and Supporters highlighted that many young people felt heard and valued in the Pilot.

“I feel I have learned more about myself, and I have enjoyed talking.”

(Young person)

“We felt that the sessions truly gave an opportunity for [son] to speak openly about anything that he was comfortable with.”

(Parent)

“With another young person I’ve seen her open up a lot more to tell me things that she finds difficult and isolating, something which she did not want to share in our first few sessions. She has low self-esteem and has been worried on several occasions that I won’t want to speak to her, so I have been very clear and vocal about wanting to speak to her and valuing what she has to say.”

(Supporter)

“Time to Talk sessions allowed [daughter] to speak openly and freely to a neutral party and share her views and feelings.”

(Parent)

As this feedback suggests, being heard, and valued within the Pilot has in turn allowed many young people to develop confidence in themselves that was not there before. Many parents/carers/family members and Supporters observed this in the young people:

“The advice you offered really empowered him to make decisions about his transition from school to higher education. You helped him plan and prepare for college options... The practice interview you did with him was so beneficial and set him up nicely for the real thing.”

(Parent)

“With one young person I’ve seen her noticeably grow in confidence week-to-week; she has been particularly proud of herself when achieving goals set in weekly goal-setting sessions. In our last session we spent time discussing everything she had achieved, and she said she felt really good about herself.”

(Supporter)

“Overall, the sessions really helped to develop [daughter] confidence by providing her with a greater knowledge and awareness of what to expect at college, i.e. ‘Beauty & Makeup’ course and next steps regarding employment.”

(Parent)

Supporters were able to achieve these Outcomes with young people, due to the person centred, asset based and creative ways that they worked with them. A number of parents/carers/family members, and some young people themselves, highlighted how valuable this was.

“It was fun to see you draw! The graphic made it fun to look at and understand.”

(Young person)

“[Supporter] made all the sessions really enjoyable, actively listening to [daughter] views, feelings and opinions as well as showing a keen interest in [daughter] family, pets, hobbies and interests.”

(Parent)

“The service itself is very helpful and [supporter] was great at trying to get [Son] to engage. She was very understanding that his attention span was limited and took it very much at his pace. She tried a number of techniques to get him thinking about what he wanted to do next.”

(Parent)

“[I] Used PowerPoint and Canva to design a “reverse” Talking Mat letting A indicate his feelings about a variety of subjects.”

(Supporter)

“She then set up a Zoom meeting, incorporating various of my son’s interests, so he became quite animated and engaged. She was also careful to make it a very visual call to help A’s understanding. He gave a thumbs up or down for various activities and concepts, and we were able to establish that he was keen to leave home and start a new chapter of his life.”

(Parent)

Some examples of the visual methods used by Supporters to support young people and enable them to feel heard and valued are:

Image 2. Skills, talent, and qualities

This approach was used by Supporters to guide conversations with young people and record things they said. Many young people can find talking about themselves difficult due to low confidence, but this approach allowed them to talk about themselves more comfortably.



Image 3. The journey

Through active listening the Time to Talk Next Steps Supporters capture important moments and stories from the young person’s life and record them in a way which is accessible to the young person. This approach builds confidence in being heard.

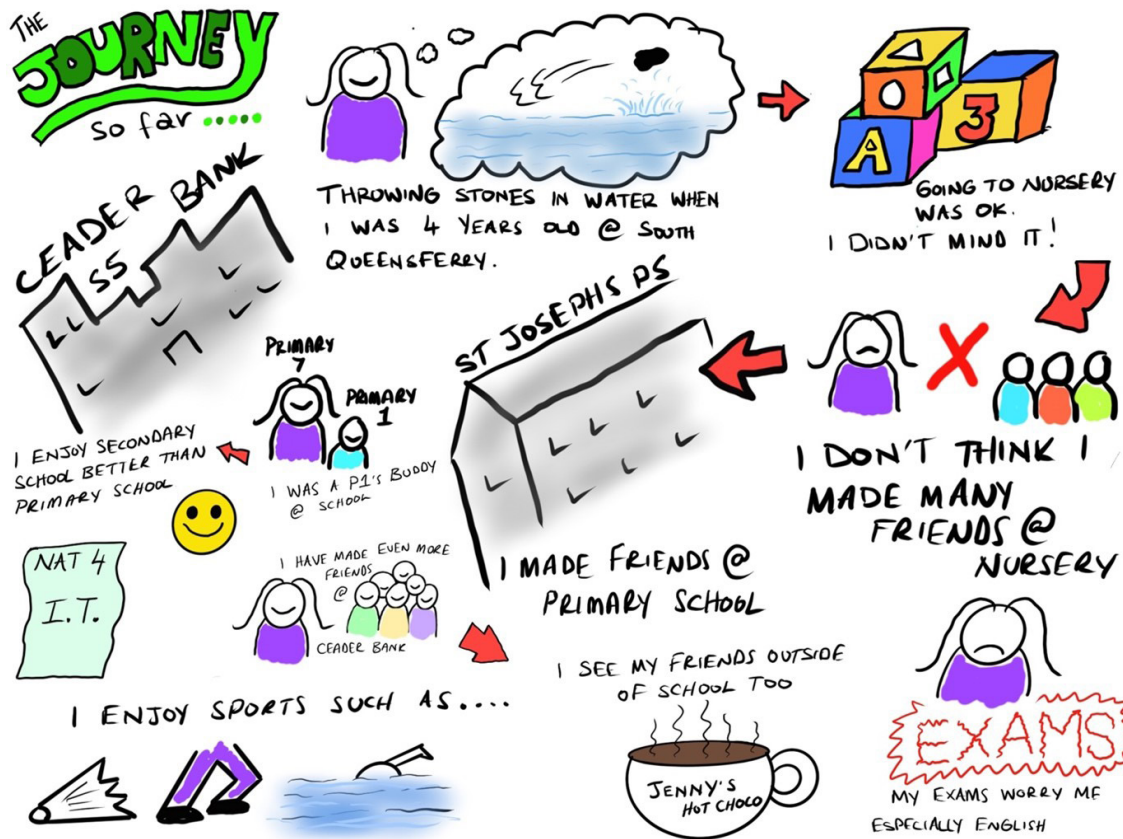
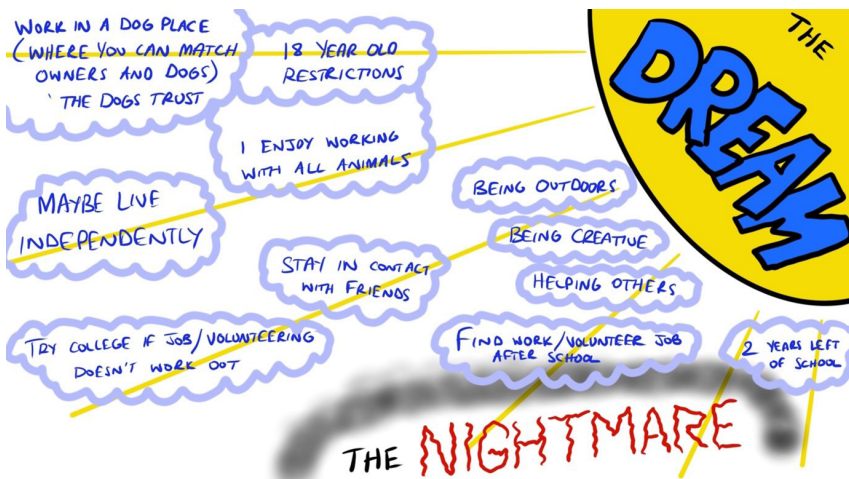


Image 4. The dream and the nightmare

The supporter discusses with the young person what their dream future life would look like. This gives the support a direction of travel, a “North Star”. From coproduction sessions we learned that it was important to also explore the nightmare future life. This allowed us to identify the direction to avoid and to remain focused on the dream.



- EXPERIENCING THE SAME FEELING AS PRIMARY SCHOOL.
 - BEING PUT ON A TIMETABLE
 - SEEING OTHERS STRUGGLE OR BE ISOLATED.

Working in a person-centred and creative way, also allowed young people with additional needs who are not usually comfortable or confident online to engage with the Pilot and achieve progress towards their own goals:

“When we first heard of the “time to talk “ opportunity we were not sure this would work with [son] as we believed he was better understood in a Face-to-Face environment, however, the way that [supporter] ran the session was fun and inviting and really managed to let him open up and communicate in a positive manner.”

(Parent)

This is invaluable learning to have been captured in the Pilot as it highlights that when Supporters get to know a young person and deliver sessions in a person centred, asset-based way, support can be offered in creative and fun ways which are successful. Successful, not only in achieving direct outcomes with a young person, but successful in providing a positive experience that builds confidence to be taken forward into the rest of the young person and their families' lives.

To emphasise this in more detail, there are some case studies at the end of this section of the report of the journeys some young people have been on as a result of the support provided by the pilot.

Outcome 2: Young people feel connected socially

This Outcome area is addressed by evaluation question 3.

3. Is there evidence that young people and/or their parents/carers/families feel more socially connected as a result of the programme?

There is some evidence to suggest that young people supported by the pilot began to feel more socially connected as a result. It was noted by some parents/carers/family members that engaging the with the 1:1 support helped young people to begin developing their social skills or to develop more confidence in this area.

“[Daughter] has developed her social skills and is more comfortable when interacting with others and able to be at her best.”

(Parent)

Some young people also began to be connected to and join new social environments as a result of the support offered by the Pilot. This engagement came in the form of joining new activities with peers both online and in person, as well as entering into new educational and/or employment activities.

“[I] Signposted the YP and their parents to local and online social groups to join and arranged for attendance at their favourite football team’s community day to foster some social connections.”

(Supporter)

“[Daughter] recently started work experience in a local charity shop one day per week. I believe the Time to Talk sessions have really helped with her communication

and the relevant skills to complete all duties and responsibilities within a retail customer service role.”

(Parent)

In addition to joining new social environments, the support offered by the Pilot allowed young people to practice their social skills before joining these new spaces and, for some, to share their worries and concerns with a friendly non-judgemental person. This had a beneficial effect on the young people.

“We felt this was a safe environment and non-judgmental...the sessions gave [him] an opportunity to practice communication with no bias and a “friendly ear.”

(Parent)

“It just helps talking things through with someone.”

(Young person)

Outcomes 4 and 5: Young people have options, plans and aspirations for the future and young people are accessing relevant resources, contacts, and information (national and local) to support their transition to adulthood.

These Outcome areas are addressed by evaluation questions 1 and 4.

1. To what extent have young people had their voices heard and felt valued as a result of the programme and what impact has this had on their aspirations and plans for the future?
4. Is there evidence that young people have more knowledge of the transitioning process and what impact has this had on their ability to access relevant resources, contacts, and information (national and local) to support their transition to adulthood?

There is strong evidence to suggest that young people supported by the Pilot are more aware of their options and have begun to develop or action plans for the future through access to resources, contacts, and information provided by the Pilot.

“[Supporter] helped me talk about what I wanted to do after school. She was interested in getting to know me and supported me to make decisions about college.”

(Young person)

The young people who requested and subsequently received support from the Pilot, came forward in a variety of positions within the transitions process. Some had developed plans that they needed support bringing to fruition, others had some ideas but needed an impartial, non-familial or statutory service sounding board to discuss and develop them with, whilst some came with no plans having fallen through the gaps and been left with no educational or transitions support due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a result, the support offered to each young person was bespoke with the young person at the centre and focussed on their assets to ensure plans could be explored, made, developed, or executed as needed.

Pilot Supporters worked creatively to support young people in whatever stage of their transition plans they were at. However, in most cases, staff acted as a conduit between the young person and services/organisations/charities/businesses and, in some cases, with their families, to support their plans for the future.

The work in this Pilot has highlighted that for many young people with additional needs in Scotland the greatest challenge they and their families face when transitioning to adulthood, is coordinating all the elements of the transitions process and its associated administration, alongside living their everyday life. Having the support of a non-statutory, named, and consistent individual to listen and 'connect the dots' was found to be lifechanging for some young people in the Pilot and incredibly valuable to most others. The Supporter's freedom to utilise their skills and connections enabled them to work with the young person and/or their parent/carer/family to take steps to support progress. At times, this was where there had been barriers or obstacles for the young person and/or their family. In most cases, the steps required to be taken weren't complex or large, but small and simple when there was freedom to act using existing knowledge and skills.

"Been two years out of education and all transitions plans had fallen through, she had a plan to go to a Day Centre but due to Covid they had stopped dealing with applications. So, I had a long chat with her and that was what she wanted to do, and this was her dream she said 'there is nothing else' She was completely focused on what she wanted to do but just couldn't access it. So as a result of that I reached out to the Day Centre, explained exactly what she was telling me, and they have offered her a place. And it was like goodness me we are actually achieving what she wants straight away."

(Supporter)

"[Supporter] has offered to contact Social Work for me to see if she can get a response from them, as they are not responding to my emails and phone calls."

(Parent)

"[I] Ascertained that A is very keen to move away from home next year and wants to meet other young people. Identified several activities he would like to explore next year, including football, dancing and working with wood. [I] Have collated all A's views and will share with social work to support planning and ensure A's views are considered going forward."

(Supporter)

To further highlight the progress towards these Outcomes, there are three case studies below.

Alex



Alex was 18 years old when he received support from Time to Talk Next Steps. He has highly complex needs and does not use the spoken word to communicate. He was still in education at the time of the support but had no transition Social Worker in place and no plans for the coming year.

As a result of Alex's communication needs, he had found engaging online quite difficult in the past. However, the Time to Talk Next Steps Supporter used PowerPoint and Canva to design a 'reverse' Talking Mat for Alex. This allowed the supporter to ask simple questions and provide Alex with a way to indicate his feelings about the things being discussed in the sessions.

Through using this process and with support from Alex's mum, the Supporter was able to ascertain Alex's feelings about his plans for the future. These included moving away from home and meeting new young people. Alex was even able to share that he wants to undertake some new social activities in the next year including football, dancing and working with wood.

The Time to Talk Next Steps Support was able to draw all this information together and share it with the local Social Work team to ensure Alex's views were considered going forward.

Sean



Sean was 25 when he started receiving support from Time to Talk Next Steps. He began receiving support from the Pilot alongside his mum on the phone and via text message, before moving online.

Sean was working part time as a cleaner when he first came to Time to Talk Next Steps. He wanted to find better employment and also become more socially involved. He also wanted to get his own place to live and know his own Rights in relation to his Benefits.

Sean's Time to Talk Next Steps Supporter worked with him and his mum to understand what he wanted. She then contacted the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and helped Sean with an initial online appointment form about Personal Independent Payments (PIP). As part of these conversations, Sean and his Supporter found out that the hourly rate he should be getting was higher than he was receiving. CAB helped sort this out with his employer who have put him in touch with a disability specialist who is helping him with his claim for PIP. This experience has increased Sean's confidence and his income!

Cassy



Cassy is a young Autistic woman who has additional mental health needs. She began receiving support from Time to Talk Next Steps due to a recent move from one City in Scotland to another.

Cassy has only recently begun to talk, and her parents shared with the Pilot that they felt she had a deficit in confidence due to her communication skills. Her Time to Talk Next Steps supporter adapted a 'What Matters Island' to work with Cassy and in doing so found out that she wanted to go to college to do makeup and beauty potentially, was interested in volunteering, wanted to join a gym and make some friends.

With this information, the Supporter was able to set up a meeting for Cassy with the college and whilst she is not yet able to apply for the course she wants, the college are working with her to develop the skills needed to make this possible.

The supporter was also able to get a letter from the GP so she can access ILF (Independent Living Fund) funding to join a local gym and connected her to a local befriending group that she is now part of with her mum.

This support has seen Cassy grow in confidence, develop communication skills and start to become less socially isolated in her new city.

3.2 Parents/carers and families

Outcome 6: Parent/carers and family members feel heard, understood, and valued

This Outcome area is addressed by evaluation question 1.

1. To what extent have parents/carers/families had their voices heard and felt valued as a result of the programme and what impact has this had on their aspirations and plans for the future?

Feedback from parents/carers/family members suggests that they felt heard and valued by the Pilot.

Many parents/carers/family members were involved in the support provided to the young person in their family as part of the Pilot from the outset. The reasons for this were varied including to arrange the logistics of the sessions, supporting communication, and helping reduce anxiety for the young person. Being involved at the beginning allowed many parents/carers/family members to get to know the Supporter and share their own thoughts, feelings and, in some cases, their own support needs. This not only allowed the Supporter to have a greater understanding of the context in which they were providing support to the young person, but also allowed them to offer support to the parents/carers/family members and refer them to Contact and other services/organisations that might be able to help. This allowed many parents/carers/family members to feel heard and valued, and the support offered invaluable:

“In summary, [supporter] and TTT have been immensely helpful to both me and my son. She has helped identify what A would like to do once he leaves school, and she is supporting me in my request to have A funded in accommodation where he would be happiest and fulfil his potential. Without this support, I would be at my wits end, and feel quite driftless. As a parent of a child with ASNs, life is often challenging and difficult, and having professional support is very reassuring. It feels like everything I would like for my son requires a battle, and to have TTT on your side, makes me feel very encouraged that we’ll reach our goals.”

(Parent)

Outcome 7: Parent/carers and family members feel connected socially

This Outcome area is addressed by evaluation question 3.

3. Is there evidence that parents/carers/families feel more socially connected as a result of the programme?

Evidence towards this outcome is limited as there were not many opportunities for parents/carers/families to connect socially as part of the Pilot. However, those parents/carers/families who attended the Learning Events held in November 2022 and February 2023 suggested that connecting with other parents/carers/families in these forums was beneficial.

“Doing things like this helps, to know we’re not the only ones.”

(Parent)

Interviews with the Supporters providing support to parents/carers/families suggest that parents/carers/family members often put themselves last. Their role as parent/carer/family member to a young person with additional needs, work commitments and other family member’s needs, often means they don’t have much time to look after their own wellbeing, including taking time to undertake social activities and hobbies they enjoy. Just one example of the time pressures facing many parents/carers/family members is highlighted by the experience of Supporter trying to arrange an introductory call with one parent.

“Trying to arrange the call took a few attempts. Parents often put themselves and their wellbeing last. We managed to speak for the first time whilst they were in the car between appointments as it was the only time they had on their own. As I explained what the support was and what could be involved they [the parent] was like ‘Right, I need more time for this when I can concentrate’ so we arranged a more convenient time.”

(Supporter)

Supporter interviews also highlighted that parents/carers/family members of young people with additional needs have two types of social needs. They have those which relate to being the parent/carer/family member of a young person with additional needs and those which do not. The Pilot was able to offer support towards their role as a parent/carer/family member through signposting to other services and providing space to meet other parents/carers/family members at Pilot Learning Events (as highlighted above). But the Pilot was not able to offer support for other social activities. Supporters do not believe this was a fault of the Pilot, but rather a symptom of the situation the parents/carers/family members found themselves in with the young person in their family.

That is, the parents/carers/family members who received support from the Pilot were uncertain about what was in store for their family in the transition planning process. This was consuming their time and energy, meaning they were not in a space to consider their own social needs. Supporters felt that once parents/carers/family members feel confident and comfortable with the transition pathway the young person in their family

is on, they would be in a position to start looking after their own wellbeing including engaging in social activities and hobbies that interested them.

Outcomes 8 and 9: Parents/carers and family members have confidence and knowledge of the transition planning process and parents/carers, and family members feel better equipped to support their young person's plans and aspirations

These Outcome areas are addressed by evaluation questions 4 and 5.

4. Is there evidence that parents/carers/families have more knowledge of the transitioning process and what impact has this had on their ability to access relevant resources, contacts, and information (national and local) to support their transition to adulthood?
5. What evidence is there that parents/carers/families feel better equipped to support their young person's plans and aspirations?

Evidence from parents/carers/family members and Supporters suggests that taking part in the Pilot has increased parents/carers/family members knowledge of the transitions planning process which has in turn allowed them to feel more able to support the young person in their family's plans and aspirations for the future.

Interviews with Partners and Supporters as well as information shared at the Pilot Learning Events suggest that for many parents/carer/family members the transitions planning process is unclear and shrouded with myths and misinformation.

For many involved in this Pilot, the word 'transition' had been used by professionals in such a way that it '*loomed over young people and their families*' as something that was going to happen to them at a certain time, for a certain period and guided by services. Yet there was often no clear communication from the 'services' about the process and, in some instances, no knowledge of the process or young people's entitlement. This was particularly noted within education settings. This situation had left many of the young people and their parents/carers/families engaged in this Pilot feeling disempowered and confused.

In many instances, the role of the support offered by this Pilot was therefore to provide parents/carers/family members with clear, concise, and accurate information about the transitions process and busting the myths they had heard.

"We find that is what most parents want; information about what is going to happen to their family....The conversation usually involved quite a bit around talking through the kinds of things that they might need to think about this stage and quite often they were thinking that the school would lead on everything and in fact that is not the case quite often, and that they didn't realise that they could start the transition planning. That they can come up with ideas on how to support their young person and ideas to link them to the community...there is an expectation that they just wait for an email or call from the school to say 'OK...' and away they go, but that wasn't happening, so they weren't really sure what to do."

(Supporter)

With the information about the process shared, support was then offered in the form of acting as a conduit between families and services/organisations (as discussed in section 3.1 of this report) or signposting parents/carers/family members to them directly. The provision of the clear and accurate information about the transitions planning process, allowed many parents/carer/family members to have the confidence to take up these connections themselves.

“She also provided invaluable support to me by signposting me to further opportunities and options I had previously been unaware of.”

(Parent)

“Meeting an [Supporter] associate of ‘Time to Talk Young Children in Scotland’ was the best thing that happened to me. I was at the point where I did not know how to help [daughter] to chart a course in terms of what she can do to build a career... when we met [Supporter], she was able to pick up interest in college again...the referral to Befriend a Child which has been helpful and support in trying gain a place at the college which is still ongoing.”

(Parent)

“YP’s parents connected with possible routes of support for future planning (via school) but commented on how there is nothing exactly like T2T and how they wish they could have more T2T sessions.”

(Supporter)

“She has also assisted me in asking the questions around support and actively signposting to charities as well as thinking outside the box for options for [son]. I would welcome her continued assistance over the next 6 months of his transition so that both she and I can (hopefully) see it through to a positive outcome.”

(Parent)

In addition to highlighting the work done to support parents/carers/family members to connect with other support and services in the Pilot, the last two quotes above, also demonstrate how impactful the work of the Pilot has been at providing the right support to parents/carers/family members. They also suggest that, at present, the support offered around the transitions planning process for many families is not hitting the mark. This evidence, alongside that presented in Section 3.1, suggests there is much work to be done within the transitions planning landscape in Scotland to improve it for young people and their parents/carers/family members. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, but hints towards the need for a **Whole Family Approach** to transitioning to adulthood and the support provided around this.



3.3 Professionals

Outcome 10: Professionals in the Children and Young People sector in Scotland have evidence to inform strengthen and develop consistent, high quality transition support for young people with additional needs in Scotland

This Outcome area is addressed by evaluation questions 6 and 7.

6. What lessons can be learned from the analysis of outcomes?
7. What should the next steps be for Time to Talk Next Steps in Scotland now the Pilot has come to an end?

The learning garnered in this Pilot has provided substantial evidence and learning for professionals in the Children and Young People's sector in Scotland to take forward into the transitions planning landscape of the future.

In addition to the progress towards Outcomes detailed in Sections 3.1 and 3.2, a number of parents/carers/family members also reflected on how valuable it was to have support tailored to the needs of the young person in their family in terms of timing, within the Pilot. Many shared how refreshing it was for the support offered to fit the young person's needs, rather than the young person having to fit into a service.

"The service itself is very helpful and [supporter] was great at trying to get [son] to engage on his terms. She was very understanding that his attention span was limited and took it very much at his pace. She tried a number of techniques to get him thinking about what he wanted to do next."

(Parent)

Supporters also reflected that this was something they valued in the Pilot and were grateful to the Funders (the National Lottery Community Fund) for allowing them ability to test and learn what worked for young people in this way.

"...Being able to work with young people in a way that worked for them was a privilege. We were able to shorten the sessions and have more of them. An hour is a long time to talk. We started off at just 10 minutes, but that got longer as they got used to me."

(Supporter)

Whilst this way of working was felt to be key to the successful delivery of the Pilot, it was highlighted by parents/carers/family members and Supporters alike, that future work in this area should become even more person centred in its suite of options for delivery. Feedback suggests that six hours of support should be the minimum available to all with scope to increase this for those who need it. In addition, many felt there should be the ability to work face-to-face with those individuals who would benefit/be able to engage with support more actively in this way.

"I would state that six meetings was a minimum and I felt we were just building a relationship and mutual understanding and would have much preferred a yearlong service so we could both see results of [supporters] hard work."

(Parent)

“We did manage to meet face-to-face at the end....It would have been nice to have done more face-to-face. The world isn’t as online now and lots of young people have got screen fatigue...in person is better for lots of reasons, but the resources to do it are much higher and the logistics would need thinking about more.”

(Supporter)

It is important to highlight that within the Pilot being supported face-to-face was possible on a case-by-case basis (as the pilot was designed with a budget that covered predominantly online sessions), but this was not clear to those delivering the Pilot initially so took some time to arrange. As a result, two individuals who requested face-to-face support ended up leaving the Pilot before receiving more than one support session. Feedback from Supporters, like that above, and Partners suggests that future projects of this nature should offer face-to-face support from the outset with the appropriate funding in place to cover the time and resources needed to provide it.

In addition to the practical elements of the support provided within the Pilot that made it a success and what is needed in the future, parents/carers/family members and Delivery Partners shared that it is equally important for the staff employed to provide support to be the right people with the right values, approach, and skills to support people well.

“The skill, experience and manner of the person running the “time to talk” session is of huge importance and kudos to [Supporter] for making this a fun activity.”

(Parent)

Finally, parents/carers/family members shared with the evaluation that they were particularly grateful for the support provided to them within the Pilot. Not only was this support beneficial because it listened to them, answered their questions, let them know their family had options, referred them to other support and services and provided space for them to meet with other parents/carers/family members, it was also the beginning of the shift towards parents/carers/families being connected to the support the young person in their family was receiving. This was viewed as being particularly important, as many statutory support services are delivered in isolation to the rest of a young person’s family, but when the support stops it is the family who are expected to pick up where it ends and provide the ongoing support. This was likened to ‘falling off a cliff’ for many families.

Additional learning from the Pilot is presented in Chapter 4, which adds to this evidence that professionals can take forward in the transitions planning process of the future.



4. Additional learning

In addition to the progress towards Outcomes captured in this evaluation, Partners, Supporters, and parents/carer/family members contributed valuable additional learning from their experiences of the Pilot as well as their suggestions for the future.

This chapter presents this additional learning in three sections: Making the Pilot work, The transitions landscape in Scotland, Learning about the evaluation.

4.1 Making the pilot work

As noted in Section 3.3, it was felt by those who engaged with evaluation, that the right mix of individuals were employed to deliver the Pilot. This was in part due to the ability of the Pilot to employ staff via non-traditional methods. That is, there was no traditional recruitment process of job advert, applications, and interviews, rather Children in Scotland were able to draw in individuals known to them with the right value base, skills, and abilities.

However, despite the right staff being employed it was reflected by Supporters and Partners alike that there was not enough time or resources within the Pilot for line management systems to be put in place or delivered nor for team meetings to be scheduled. Supporters felt they had adequate support to undertake their role in the form of email/telephone contact with one another and management, however they noted that programmes of this nature in the future need to have sufficient funding for supervision and team meetings to take place.

“There was no time for supervision as such, we were in contact via email and had phone calls, but with it being associate based (self-employed) there was no supervision. There was no budget for that...the same for team meetings....this would need to be included if we did more of it.”

(Delivery Partner)

“I have emailed other associates and we have shared information that might be useful, but we haven’t had a team meeting as such...We see things in the project group email as well, so I know what’s going on...I have contact with [Partner] regularly, but no supervision. [Partner] has always been there to talk things through, check things out with.”

(Supporter)

4.2 The transitions landscape in Scotland

As was highlighted throughout Chapter 3, the transitions planning process in Scotland has been experienced by many of those involved in the Pilot as complex and difficult to navigate. For some, the transition planning process *‘loomed over young people and their*

families' as something that was going to happen to them at a certain time, for a certain period and guided by services. Yet there was often no clear communication from the 'services' about the process and, in some instances, no knowledge of the process or young people's entitlement. This was experienced as a particular issue within education settings and often resulted in confusion about the process (as highlighted in Section 3.2) and left many young people about to leave school without any plans in place. This is a situation which causes too much anxiety for everyone involved.

"I mean some this young man's about to leave school in June, July and I'm going to a school meeting on the 31st of March."

(Supporter)

Several Supporters suggested that this situation could be improved by those working in education settings, particularly Teachers and Teaching Assistants, undertaking training about the transition planning process at a similar level to that undertaken by Social Workers.

For other young people in the Pilot, the experience of the transition planning process and the number of agencies and professionals involved was overwhelming. In fact, for one young person, the reason they asked to end their support from the Pilot after the first session was due to the number of other professionals they had in their life and not feeling able to accommodate another support session.

More generally, discussion within some Partner and Supporter interviews reflected on how the word 'transition' has taken on a *'life of its own'*. Within these interviews it was suggested the word was widely used by professionals in such a way as to imply an omnipresent force that sat outside the rest of the support a young person receives. It was also observed to regularly be used by professionals to refer to a *'linear process'* that all young people must conform to for a set period of time, rather than an individual and often *'messy'* process that takes place with young people and their families throughout their teenage years.

Based on these observations it is easy to see how the transitions planning process looms over many young people and their parents/carers/family members. The language surrounding 'transitions' infers it is an entity that sits over and above them and sets expectations about what is involved, for whom and within what timescales. When this is then not clearly communicated confusion and, in some instances, *'psychological insecurity'* is experienced by young people and their parents/carers/family members alike.

This additional learning adds to that presented in Chapter 3 by providing valuable context about the landscape in which the Pilot been delivered and clear indicators to the steps that could be taken in the future. These are discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.



5. Conclusions and recommendations

As the learning presented in this report suggests, the Time to Talk Next Steps Pilot in Scotland has been overwhelmingly successful. Significant progress was made towards the programme Outcomes and a wealth of additional learning was gathered which speaks to the broader transitions landscape in Scotland.

5.1 Key learning from the Pilot

- **Person-centred, asset-based, and creative support** helped young people feel heard and valued. This approach placed the young person at the centre of their future plans, allowed them to explore their options in a safe environment and develop their social skills.
- Ensuring young people felt heard and valued in their support helped **increase their confidence** and allowed them to **develop plans for the future**. It also allowed them the opportunity to explore new social activities if this was something they wanted.
- Parents/carers/family members supported by the Pilot **felt heard and valued** as Supporter actively listened to their needs and took collaborative steps to address them.
- Supporter regularly acted as a **conduit between family and support services/organisations** to help connect the dots of a young person's transitions planning process.
- Parents/carers/family members **valued the connection to others in the same position as them** within the Pilot, as it made them feel less alone.

This and the additional learning captured (Chapter 4) speaks to a number of recommendations now the Pilot has come to an end. These have been grouped into two sections; those relating specifically to the Pilot and the next steps that could be taken and those relating to the broader transitions planning process in Scotland.

5.2 Recommendations

Next steps for the Pilot

- A pause should be taken by all Pilot Partners to reflect on the learning captured. This pause should be used to explore what was good about the Pilot, what could have been better and how this relates to the support that could be offered in the future, who is best placed to deliver this support and to whom should also be considered.
- Any future support that is offered should sit alongside statutory services, rather than within them, to ensure they maintain their person-centred, asset based, and impartial approach to support.

- Any future support that is offered should be underpinned by a Whole Family Approach. In particular, it is felt that the suggestion of hosting a whole family information session at the start of a new support programme that forms part of a triaging service for additional support is considered.
- Any future support that is offered should be available to young people from age 13.
- Any future support that is offered should be fully resourced to offer support both online and in-person from the outset.
- All communication about future support programmes should be clear with regards to who it is intended for and what support is available.

The transitions planning process

- A Whole Family Approach to the transition planning process should be implemented.
- Work is needed to clarify the transitions planning process for young people, their parents/carers/family members, and professionals. Clear, concise, and accessible information should be easily and readily available.
- Work is needed to streamline and better co-ordinate the services involved in the transitions planning process. Lines of communication between services and multidisciplinary working processes should receive particular attention in order to ensure person-centred and holistic working with young people and their families.
- Whilst the current transition planning process landscape is reviewed and adapted, third sector support similar to that provided in the Pilot should be considered for all young people with additional needs in Scotland from the age of 13. This support should consist of a named, consistent supporter who works in a person-centred, asset-based, and creative way to support young people and their families to navigate the transitions planning process and act as a conduit between services.
- Training should be developed, piloted, and subsequently delivered to all teachers and teaching assistants working in Secondary Education settings in Scotland.