Time to Talk Next Steps: Key Learning

March 2024

The *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 from across the three years to enable others to learn from what works when supporting young people with additional needs and their families, in similar programmes 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 codesigned and delivered training to practitioners who work with children and young people with additional needs, in England.

Partnership work with Contact provided advice, support, and information to the families of young people with additional support needs on preparation for adulthood and managing transition.

For more information about *TtTNS*, please visit the programmes website.
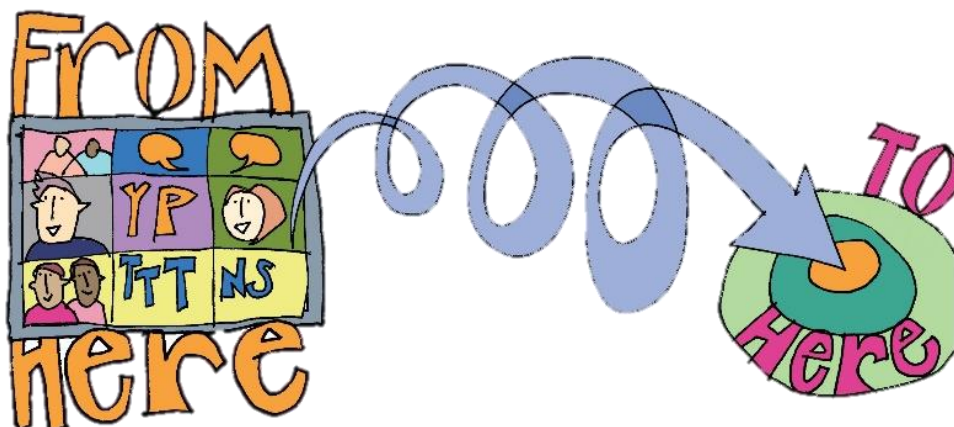
Programme Aims

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

Building confidence

Reducing anxiety

Supporting young people to recognize their own strengths

Ensuring young people and their families know their rights

Equipping practitioners with the knowledge, tools, and techniques to support young people in a person-centered way.

Empowering young people to become involved and contribute to programme design including planning, training delivery, resource development and peer support groups.

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 support to 70 young people 1:1. 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 and 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 year's one and two, year three aimed to provide support to meet the same annual target for 1:1 and 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.

In addition to the delivery activity, evaluation was co-designed and threaded across the three years of the programme. The evaluation captured evidence of what was working, in what contexts and why in a formative, rather than summative, way, to ensure learning could be shared and acted upon as the programme progressed. Evaluating the programme in this way also provided a platform for the learning to be shared more widely across the three years.

TtTNS was able to exceed its aims and provided support to 248 young people across the three 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:

the introduction of a Creativity Group for young people to come together to create art online.	the development of Human Rights training created and delivered by young people.	three young people having paid roles as co-evaluators of the programme after having received full evaluation training.
four in person residentials in different areas of England	An online exhibition by young people on rights and good support	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.

The learning shared here is therefore presented with the roll out of the programme in mind. It is hoped that the lessons learnt within *TtTNS* can provide valuable insights into what works when supporting young people with additional needs and their families, for similar programmes in the future whether part of the role out or not.

Having the right funding – Find funding that allows you to listen to and work flexibly with young people and their support networks, not 'do to' them within a fixed project outline.

Co-design - make sure your programme is co-designed as much as possible. This takes time and resources but will increase your programme's chance of success of addressing the right issues, communicating clearly, and providing the right support.

Getting the right people – Take the time to get the right workers/volunteers in place; those who are skilled in person-centred, asset-based support, will be there for the long-term, and can be a conduit for ideas, contacts, information, and funding.

Reaching people where they are – Market your programme to young people and their families/support networks in the spaces they are in already are, not in spaces they have to seek out or '*stumble upon*' by chance.

Simple, straightforward, and fast application process – Ensure young people/their families/support networks understand what your programme offers, to who, and how they can apply without lengthy forms or long wait times. Use accessible "non-service" language as much as possible.

Matching support – Build sufficient time into programme delivery for matching the needs of the young person/their support networks to the person or groups providing support based on need rather than just availability.

Building relationships and trust – Take the time to build relationships with young people, their support networks, and practitioners. Doing this will develop trust and help both the young people and programme succeed.

Listen and engage – Listen first to young people/their support network's ideas, concerns, wants, and needs before offering ideas, information, contacts, and resources.

Supporting people to take their first steps – Work at young people/their support networks pace, support them to explore new ways of doing and being, speak up if you have an idea, but encourage them to take the lead and own what is happening in their lives.

Enable progression - develop ways in which young people can move from initial support to contributing to groups, training, activities, residentials.

Encouraging connection – This is important both for the young people/their support networks and the programme overall. The more broadly people connect to their peers, community, the local area and national networks, the more allies, opportunities, and partnerships they and your programme will have.

Developing strengths and skills – Ensure workers/volunteers can take the time to develop and grow their skills to help meet the needs of the young people/their support networks, they are supporting.

Utilising knowledge and skills – utilise workers/volunteers and young peoples and families knowledge and areas of strength to build connections, grow ideas and develop your project.

Offering space to reflect and grow - Provide space for workers/volunteers to regularly reflect on what has been happening in the programme. This can be through regular meetings, online sharing platforms, phone calls or emails.

What Works… leaving a legacy.

Support young people to develop confidence and skills – The support offered should help young people and/or their support networks to grow in confidence and develop skills that they will take with them into the rest of their lives. If possible, providing opportunities to put these new skills into practice within the programme will greatly increase success in this area.

Knowing their rights – The support offered should help young people and/or their support networks to understand and know how to exercise their rights in all areas of their lives now and in the future.

Encourage connections (YP) – Support young people/their support networks to connect to other people, groups, communities, and networks that will continue past the end of the support offered by your programme.

Encourage connections (programme)- Encourage workers/volunteers to develop and maintain the relationships, networks and partnerships that have grown locally, regionally and/or nationally throughout the programme.

Look for funding to support future projects – Embed time in your programme to find funding that helps maintain and, where needed, grow activities the programme has helped setup.

Sharing what's happening – Tell other programmes, practitioners, and policy makers about the different things you are doing, share ideas, challenges, successes, and learning.

Engage policy and decision makers – Share learning, knowledge and recommendations with policy and decision makers to help embed the programme on a local and national scale.

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:

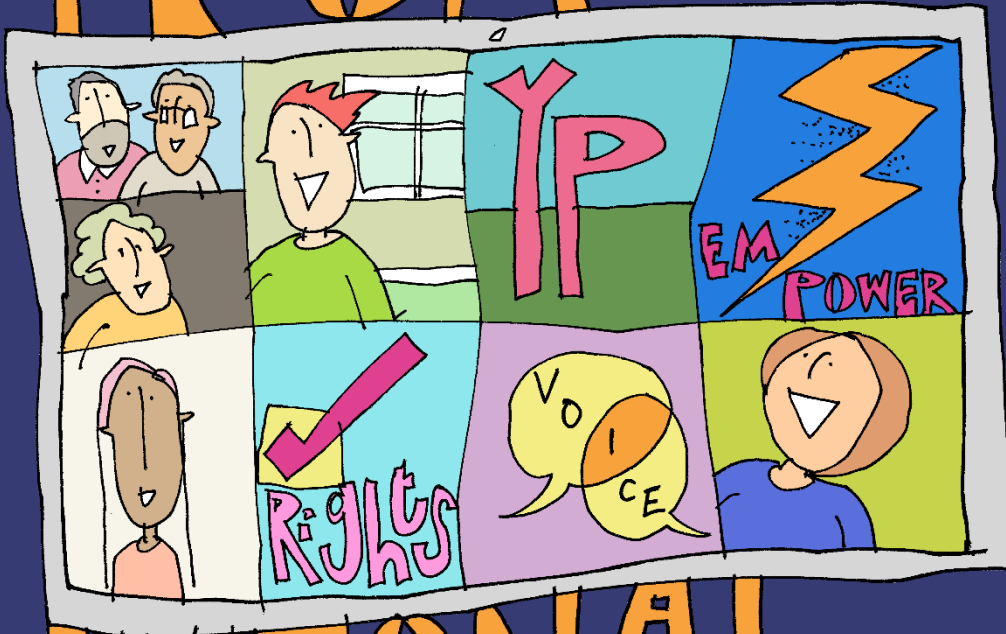❖ For the details in this document:

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