

Time to Talk Next Steps Scotland

Executive Summary

Dr Victoria Mason-Angelow, November 2025

Time to Talk Next Steps Scotland (TtTNS Scotland) is a one-year (2025–26) national programme funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by the National Development Team for Inclusion ([NDTi](#)). It supports young people aged 14+ with additional needs as they prepare for adulthood, ensuring they feel confident, connected, and in control of their futures. The programme builds on [a 2022–23 Scottish pilot](#) and [NDTi's three-year programme in England \(2021–24\)](#), combining direct support for young people and families with systems learning to strengthen transitions practice across Scotland.

Programme overview

TtTNS Scotland delivers three core strands of support:



For young people: one-to-one online sessions and *Planning Live* workshops in schools/youth settings to enable person-centred planning.



For families: online information sessions, practical guidance, and signposting to relevant support.



For practitioners and systems: shared learning and evidence to improve coordination and practice in local transitions pathways.



Policy and purpose

Transitions for young people with additional needs in Scotland remain fragmented and inconsistent. TtTNS Scotland addresses this challenge by operationalising national ambitions set out in [Getting It Right for Every Child \(GIRFEC\)](#), [‘The Promise’](#), the incorporation of the [UNCRC](#), and the forthcoming [Transitions to Adulthood Strategy \(2025\)](#). It demonstrates how rights-based, relational approaches can translate policy aspirations into practice, helping to close persistent gaps between education, health, and social care.

Evaluation approach

The evaluation aims to understand *what* difference the programme makes and *how* it achieves change. It uses a mixed-method, embedded learning design that integrates session-based reflection tools and standardised outcome measures; Monitoring of referral, engagement, and demographic data; Regular reflective learning sessions with delivery staff.

This mid-point “Learning So Far” report draws on early data from 31 young people’s Request for Support forms, nine youth surveys, five delivery staff reflections, and small numbers of parent/carer and practitioner surveys. While the dataset is limited, findings provide credible early insights into reach, engagement, and impact.

Key Findings



Engagement and reach

By October 2025, 82 young people had engaged in one-to-one support, mainly aged 14–18. Requests predominantly came from parents/carers, confirming families’ central role in seeking help. Online delivery has enabled access for rural participants, though digital exclusion remains a barrier for some. Many young people joined the programme with low confidence, limited life satisfaction, and uncertainty about next steps—often following disrupted education or complex support experiences. Parents described exhaustion and isolation from navigating fragmented systems alone.



Progress towards Outcomes

Young people: Report feeling listened to leading to growing confidence, optimism, and ability to plan.

Parent/carers: Report feeling better informed and more capable of supporting their child after participating. They particularly value being listened to, clear next steps, and practical guidance.

Practitioners: Delivery staff are increasingly skilled at adapting to neurodivergent communication styles and using reflective tools. *Planning Live* sessions are fostering collaborative planning and shared ownership between schools, families, and young people.

The most significant finding across all groups is that trust and relational continuity drive progress. Small, predictable, and human interactions, rather than large interventions, enable young people and families to rebuild confidence and connection.

Challenges and Learning

Staff highlighted the importance of balancing flexibility with structure, as while they value creative freedom, they also want greater consistency in recording and reflection. Some evaluation tools were seen as too lengthy or intrusive, suggesting a need for lighter-touch, integrated approaches. The emotional load of the work remains significant, reinforcing the importance of ongoing reflective supervision and wellbeing support. Time and resource pressures were also evident; shorter sessions improved focus but limited depth in more complex cases, pointing to the value of a central resource bank to enhance efficiency. As the programme grows, maintaining regular reflective spaces and shared learning opportunities will be essential for effective team communication and sustainability.

“We’re often the first space where everything is brought together — school, family, hopes and fears — in one conversation.”

(Delivery staff)

Recommendations

Key recommendations include protecting relational continuity and consistent support relationships while retaining flexible 40-minute sessions that can adapt to individual complexity. Structured wellbeing and reflection opportunities should be embedded for delivery staff, and evaluation tools streamlined to reduce burden and sustain engagement. At a system level, insights from Planning Live should inform local transition planning, with evidence digests shared across schools and agencies to highlight effective relational practice. Strengthening partnerships with education, employability, and skills services will help link transition plans to real opportunities.

