



Report 8 TIME TO SHINE LOCAL EVALUATION

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TIME TO SHINE SERVICE DELIVERY AND PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

Produced for Leeds Older People's Forum

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Leeds
Older
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Time to
Shine





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A quick guide to the language used at Time to Shine

Ageing Better (AB)

The National Lottery Community Fund's national grant programme which funds Time to Shine until 2022. The full title of the programme is 'Fulfilling Lives: Ageing Better'. 14 'Ageing Better' programmes were funded in England, including TTS in Leeds.

Beneficiary

An overarching term for individuals who engaged with a Time to Shine project on at least one occasion.

Delivery partner

An organisation commissioned to deliver activities or services as part of TTS. Delivery partners were commissioned by Leeds Older People's Forum (LOPF).

Participant

A beneficiary aged 50+ who has engaged on three or more occasions with a TTS delivery partner project (for example joining in activities or receiving services).

Quarterly monitoring

A quarterly cycle used to collect qualitative and quantitative data from Delivery Partners to chart progress towards the Time to Shine targets and so that learning and case studies were captured regularly throughout the programme. Partner payments were only released when satisfactory monitoring returns were received.

Test and Learn questions

A set of questions created by members of the TTS team and Core Partnership to articulate what they would like to learn through the programme.

TTS outcomes

A list of 4 strategic outcomes that TTS worked towards. These are:

- 1 - Beneficiaries report that they are less isolated as a result of a programme intervention.
- 2 - Programme beneficiaries feel confident and able to participate in their communities
- 3 - Older people have been actively involved in managing, designing, delivering and evaluating the programme
- 4 - Our wider partnership will expand each year and will work better together to coordinate services and support for isolated older people.

Common Measurement Framework (CMF) evaluation questionnaire

The way in which the AB programme overall and TTS gathered information from older people involved in Delivery Partner projects.

Volunteer

A person who engaged on three or more occasions with a TTS project to give up their time to support any type of TTS activity. For monitoring purposes volunteers were categorised as either aged 50+ or younger.

The Time to Shine (TTS) programme, led by Leeds Older People's Forum (LOPF), aimed to reduce isolation and loneliness for older people (50+) living in Leeds between 2015-2021¹. TTS was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund as part of the Fulfilling Lives: Ageing Better programme (AB)², which invested £80 million across 14 local authorities in England to reduce loneliness for older people and share good practice. The TTS programme worked in partnership with local organisations to commission, design, deliver and evaluate a range of activities, including campaigns and specific interventions³. As part of the TTS programme a suite of ten evaluation reports have been published by the evaluation team at the Centre for Loneliness Studies based in the University of Sheffield⁴. An overview of the ten reports is presented in **Report 1 TTS Evaluation Executive Summary**. This report is **Report 8** in this suite of reports.

The four main objectives of the Time to Shine programme were used to design the evaluation:

1. Each year beneficiaries report that they are less isolated as a result of a project intervention
2. Project beneficiaries feel confident and able to participate in their communities by 2021
3. Older people have been actively involved in managing, designing, delivering and evaluating the project
4. The wider partnership will expand each year and will work better together to coordinate services and support for isolated older people

There is very little evidence of what works when tackling loneliness and social isolation⁵. Consequently, one of the objectives of TTS was to generate new knowledge about what works so that evidence-informed approaches can be applied by TTS and others in the future.

¹ As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the TTS programme continued to operate beyond the original funded period; however, the evaluation reports were prepared at the end of the initial funded period in 2021.

² For more details see <https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/blogs/ageing-better-big-lottery-fund-story-so-far>

³ Details of all TTS projects can be found at www.opforum.org.uk/projects-and-campaigns/time-to-shine/time-to-shine-projects

⁴ For more details see <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/socstudies/research/centres-and-networks/centre-loneliness-studies>

⁵ Courtin, E., & Knapp, M. (2017). Social isolation, loneliness and health in old age: a scoping review. *Health & social care in the community*, 25(3), 799-812.

1.1. Scope of this report

This report explores the ways in which the TTS programme responded to the pandemic whilst continuing to tackle loneliness and social isolation amongst older people.

This report is detailed further in the following journal article:

Naughton-Doe, R., Wigfield, A., Martin, C (2021) Lessons from a voluntary sector organisation working to address loneliness and isolation among older people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Voluntary Sector Review, (in press).

1.2. Evaluation methods

A comprehensive account of the research methods used across the ten evaluation reports can be found in [Report 2](#).

Prior to the pandemic, the local evaluation team was already evaluating the work of TTS and collecting research data through: interviews with TTS staff, stakeholders and delivery partners; focus groups and interviews with beneficiaries; and the Common Measurement Framework (CMF) evaluation questionnaire. As a result of the pandemic, data collection for the evaluation of TTS had to be adapted: CMF questionnaire completion was paused; research interviews were moved to telephone and video-call rather than face-to-face; and topic guides were adapted to include questions on how TTS had responded to the pandemic, and how older service users in Leeds had subsequently been affected.

The findings in this report are drawn from 23 interviews that took place between July and October 2020: eight with TTS staff and stakeholders, and 15 with beneficiaries. Other project related documents that have been analysed and used to inform this report include internal monitoring spreadsheets, reports commissioned by TTS, and case studies carried out during the pandemic (which detailed how organisations had changed their activities during the pandemic).



1.3. Summary of findings

The COVID-19 pandemic created a range of challenges for the programme. Time to Shine responded by: **promoting digital inclusion** and **prioritising getting people online**; refocusing partnership projects to **create opportunities to stay connected**, such as the Shine magazine; and seizing the opportunity to **raise awareness of ageism** through the Age Proud campaign.

Beneficiaries of the programme spoke of their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact of social distancing restrictions on their lives. Beneficiaries described the ways in which their lives had since adapted and the feelings this entailed. Lockdown was associated with feelings of **restriction and loss; sadness and fear**; and involved **adapting and reflecting** on the loss of connection.

The pandemic undoubtedly changed the context for the service delivery of many TTS projects. This involved: **pausing data monitoring requirements**, such as the CMF and face-to-face research; and **adapting the delivery of activities** in line with government social distancing measures. Use of digital applications such as Zoom and WhatsApp, alongside social media, were utilised by delivery partners to **stay connected** to participants. During this time, light touch data collection was encouraged in place of the CMF.

Finally, members of the TTS programme team reflected on what was learned from the pandemic. The two key learning lessons were that **technology was useful for promoting social inclusion**, and that the **pandemic helped TTS to engage with the hard to reach**.



02

The impact of COVID-19 on the Time to Shine programme

Prior to the pandemic, nine million people of all ages in the UK reported feeling lonely, always or often⁶. Levels of loneliness in the UK have increased since the first lockdown of Spring 2020⁷. Older adults were particularly affected, as the risks of COVID-19 related complications are known to increase in line with age. People over 70, or those with an underlying health condition, were advised to 'shield' during outbreaks, meaning complete social isolation from others, whilst remaining at home.

A survey by the British Red Cross⁸ found that 41% of older people felt lonelier after the first wave of the pandemic, and one third were afraid that their loneliness would continue to worsen as the pandemic continued. Another study⁹ identified significant increases of loneliness, poor physical and mental health amongst older people during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

2.1. TTS programme response to the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic broke out toward the latter part of the TTS programme. The resulting social distancing policies created a range of challenges for the TTS programme and the voluntary sector more widely. These challenges came at a time when the TTS programme was beginning to shift focus from service delivery to legacy and learning. The programme had to adapt suddenly to respond to the immediate issue of the virus and to think about longer term recovery.

Sharing learning through Time to Learn sessions

Prior to the pandemic, TTS had been running a series of topic specific, informal workshops called **Time to Learn**. These sessions were a place for delivery partners to share good practice, knowledge and ideas. During the pandemic, these sessions continued as **Time to Learn Zooms**, providing peer support and an opportunity to share learning. Some of the sessions that were facilitated during the pandemic included: **volunteers and remote management**, and **craft and wellbeing ideas: inside and out**. A Time to Shine Learning News bulletin was also launched during this time to promote resources and online events.

⁶ Kantar Public (2016) Trapped in a Bubble: An investigation into triggers for loneliness in the UK. London: British Red Cross and Co-op.

⁷ ONS (2021) Mapping loneliness during the coronavirus pandemic. Online: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/%20articles/mappinglonelinessduringthecoronaviruspandemic/2021-04-07>.

⁸ British Red Cross (2020) Life after lockdown: Tackling loneliness among those left behind. London: British Red Cross.

⁹ Wong et al (2020) Impact of COVID-19 on loneliness, mental health and health service utilisation. British Journal of General Practice, 70(700): e817-824.

A shift towards technology to stay connected

TTS recognised quickly that digital inclusion was an essential tool for keeping people connected. Prior to COVID-19, TTS had been working with a local organisation that aimed to promote digital inclusion, **100% Digital Leeds**,¹⁰ however only **8% of TTS delivery partners were using the internet for service delivery**. The pandemic presented a challenge for TTS, but also an opportunity to promote digital inclusion. Delivery partners were instrumental in helping service users to get online and delivered training to use new technologies. This involved talking to them one-to-one over the telephone, creating user guides, and increased their digital support offer to service users:

“

The use of digital technology to connect with friends, family and support has become vital in these times. We have been able to teach carers remotely over the phone how to email, use Zoom and WhatsApp to help reduce their social isolation whilst being housebound.

TTS Delivery Partner

“

We also reached out to the group leaders to see how elderly people were doing and offered support to connect people digitally. We provided them with Zoom training so that they could lead Zoom meetings.

TTS Delivery Partner

“

We taught staff how to run online carers groups and now have over 15 groups currently running. We have also aided carers who have never used technology previously to join these groups via 1-1 telephone lessons and user guides.

TTS Delivery Partner

100% Digital Leeds, a Leeds City Council project which supports some TTS projects, continued with existing schemes where people could:

- Borrow iPads, computers and smartphones¹¹
- Receive support to get online
- Learn how to use digital devices and online technologies

¹⁰ For more information on 100% Digital, see: <https://leedsdigitalinclusion.wordpress.com>

¹¹ Time to Shine learning briefing: Helping people to get on-line before winter 20/21, July 2021: <https://www.opforum.org.uk/resources/helping-people-to-get-on-line-before-winter-20-21/>

Similarly, Digital Angels¹² supported older people to get online across South Leeds through a mixture of group work and one-to-one sessions. This also included:

- One-to-one visits in people's homes
- "Techy tea parties" in libraries and community venues
- Short courses with community-based partner organisations

The sudden necessity for older people to be online to maintain social contact resulted in many more being online than before the pandemic. A TTS programme manager explained:

There's been a lot of work going on digitally and we've got more older people online now using Zoom. There's been some really good examples of people who never thought they would use a computer, finding themselves with an iPad doing a Zoom coffee morning.

TTS Programme Team

Some examples of how TTS projects used technology during the lockdown are discussed later in **Section 2.3**, in **Table 1**.

Refocusing the storytelling project into the Shine magazine

Another way that TTS reached new people was through the magazine, Shine¹³, which provided a way of sharing stories and activities, and staying connected during the pandemic. Time to Shine partnered with Mojo Film for this project, who had originally been commissioned to create a 'storytelling' film project with older people. During the pandemic, the film project was refocused and evolved into a magazine produced by, and for, older people. During the first wave of the pandemic, six editions were co-produced with older people, who submitted stories, columns and photographs for each edition.

Shine magazine was produced and distributed fortnightly to some of the most isolated people in the city through 33 community hubs. 100 copies of the first issue were delivered to each hub and included in food parcels distributed to people who were shielding. Due to high demand 4,500 copies of the second issue were printed. An online version of the magazine was shared electronically through TTS email lists and partners across the city of Leeds.

¹² For more information on Digital Angels, see case study, "Reducing loneliness through digital connections." <https://www.opforum.org.uk/resources/reducing-loneliness-through-digital-connections-case-study-of-the-digital-angels-project/>

¹³ For more information, see Shine Magazine: Lifestyle, learning and laughter during lockdown in Leeds: A Time to Shine Report, November 2020: <https://www.opforum.org.uk/resources/shine-magazine-lifestyle-learning-and-laughter-during-lockdown-in-leeds/>

TTS discovered that using a print magazine was a **useful tool for finding the most isolated and lonely, and for starting conversations**, particularly for those without internet access. A programme manager explained that delivery partners had been able to reach older people they had not worked with before through the magazine:

I know that there is an older person that lives in this place that didn't engage with us at all, but it was giving me the opportunity to knock on the door and say, "I have got something to give you." I know they are not on the list for food parcels or medication, but it gave me a kind of tool to knock on the door with, and broke the ice really.

TTS Programme Team

Funding has since been secured to produce a further 12 issues of the magazine which will be released monthly. Past editions of the Shine magazine are available online at www.shinealight.org.uk

Continuing conversations about ageism through the Age Proud campaign

Prior to COVID-19, the way in which ageism can contribute towards feelings of isolation and loneliness was already being discussed in Leeds and elsewhere. Older people can internalise negative stereotypes about their capabilities and how they are perceived and valued in society, meaning they are more likely to become isolated. To encourage older people to see later life as a positive experience, TTS launched its campaign to reduce ageism, **Age Proud Leeds**, in October 2019. The pandemic created a challenging context for the campaign, as there had been an upsurge in ageism following the conflation of old age with 'vulnerability' and 'frailty' in the national media. Advice for older people during the pandemic was to shield for their own protection, thus forcing them to become dependent on others. This was counter to the message from TTS, which encouraged older people to be active and involved in their local communities. One TTS manager explained that many older people who were volunteers, independent and active contributors, suddenly became reframed as dependents. While this upsurge in ageism was difficult, it also presented **an opportunity to raise awareness amongst people who might never have considered the issue**. As one programme manager explained:

[The pandemic] really brought [ageism] up to the surface, and made people quite cross, and start talking about things. Whereas at the start of this campaign, if you said something about ageism, people were saying, "Is that a thing? I don't know what you mean."

TTS Programme Team

TTS staff had also noticed that more people had become aware of the impact of ageism and started challenging the narrative that equated certain ages with vulnerability. For example, a programme manager explained:

That categorisation of everybody over 70, a lot of people kicked back over that. They were saying, I may be over 70, but I don't have any underlying health conditions, and I am less vulnerable than a lot of people who are younger than me. There was lots of rebellion really to the over-70 blanket. That seemed to create a lot of anger.

TTS Programme Team

The Age Proud Leeds campaign was able to reach more people during the pandemic, through using Twitter, radio, blogs, online training and Shine magazine to raise awareness of ageism. Nevertheless, systematic ageism does remain an issue¹⁴. TTS managers reflected that it is important to explore whether increasing pandemic-related ageism contributes to further isolation and loneliness in older people.

The next section will now discuss specific examples of how the pandemic impacted on TTS beneficiaries.

2.2. The impact of COVID-19 on TTS beneficiaries

Thematic analysis of 15 beneficiary interviews undertaken during the pandemic identified three overarching themes relating to experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated social restrictions:

- Restriction and loss
- Adapting, reflecting and connection
- Sadness and fear

Restriction and loss

TTS beneficiaries spoke of the many areas of their lives in which they felt restricted as a result of the virus; this included restrictions that were physical, with limits on movement, travel and physical contact with others. Some felt these physical restrictions more profoundly as their own mobility problems or mental health were compounded by the pandemic restrictions. Many felt their lifestyle and habits had been restricted, and this extended to not being able to engage with activities that would promote wellbeing.

¹⁴ Pesiah et al. (2020) Advocacy for the human rights of older people in the COVID pandemic and beyond: a call to mental health professionals. *International Journal of Psychogeriatrics*, 32(10):1199-1204.

I go out to the shops, but at first we'd just go once a week. We would go for a walk and call in newsagents or Tesco for a newspaper. Apart from that, not really going anywhere.

Angela, Interviewee, Female, 60-69, White British, Lives with others

Beneficiaries spoke about the concept of loss in a number of ways, including: loss of contact with others; lost opportunities for celebrations and holidays; loss of financial security, bereavements, and loss of confidence. Many also spoke to a loss of connection with others in their lives; this was most often regarding family and close friends but it was also about loss of the simple connections made when out in the community.

...we have had to cancel things, like it was my 60th and I had lots of things I had arranged with friends and holidays and we've had to cancel them. My [relative] was getting married and he had to cancel his wedding, my [relative] has had her first baby and we still haven't seen her yet, she was born the end of [...] but we are seeing her next week. We haven't seen my husband's mum, she is in her 80s and she lives on her own.

Justine, Interviewee, Female, 60-69, Volunteer, Heterosexual, White British, Lives with others

On the [date] I'm off to see my [parent] who is in a home, so I'll be outside and they'll be inside. I haven't seen them in six months. I just feel it's been a real strain, not just from a social point of view... but a financial strain. It's been hard on my daughter with school, and really tough on everybody

Nina, Interviewee, Female, 50-59, White British, Lives with others

Adapting, reflecting and connection

TTS beneficiaries also identified many ways in which their lives had adapted as a result of COVID-19. These adaptations included: shaping their lives to fit within the rules; increasing their use of technology; and engaging in new activities or hobbies. Some highlighted positive outcomes, such as having time to 'get things done' at home, or having more energy as they were not commuting to work. In general, although many had adapted their lives, it was felt that it was a 'poor replacement for freedom'.

In a way, it was OK for the first few weeks, kind of, I took my time doing things which was nice, things that perhaps were waiting to be done for a while, and I thought well now, I can get on and do, take my time doing it. And that was quite refreshing in a way... but that novelty has worn off a little bit now and I want to get out and do things.

Karen, Interviewee, Female, 60-69, Heterosexual, White British, Lives with others

There were also examples of people helping friends, loved ones or those in their community, or receiving help from others.

We have set up a WhatsApp group in our street, there have been a couple of people who have been self-isolating, everyone helps each other out, one of our neighbours was isolating and she lives on her own, and we helped her out. Other people have made sure that everyone is safe and well.

Karen, Interviewee, Female, 60-69, Heterosexual, White British, Lives with others

Many beneficiaries positively reflected on their own circumstances compared to others. Although they found the restrictions on their day-to-day lives difficult, they recognised that the pandemic may have been harder for those who usually lived more active and sociable lives.

Because I have had quite long periods in my life when I have had anxiety and not gone out, I am quite practiced. It is not such a shock for me. It is for people who haven't had periods of their life where they haven't gone out. It has affected people who think they are normal, it is affecting them more than the rest of us.

Wendy, Interviewee, Female, 50-59, LGBTQ+, White British, Lives alone

Sadness and fear

The pandemic created conditions where people became increasingly anxious, as well as creating fear in those who may previously have been independent. One beneficiary who was confident socialising in groups before lockdown explained:

I am quite a chatty person, quite outgoing, but what I have found since coronavirus is I am not as comfortable at the thought of going out in groups anymore... that worries me a bit as I have never felt like that before, it is really since lockdown.

Rebecca, Interviewee, Female, 50-59, White British, Lives alone

Beneficiaries spoke a lot about experiencing fear or feeling unsafe during the pandemic. This was particularly in relation to the fear of leaving the house, or accidentally breaking the rules of social distancing. Many stayed indoors for fear of breaking the law:

We try our best to play by the rules, don't we? And that's what I've done by and large. I think it's particularly difficult now because they've given us a set of instructions as to what we can do and I know everything's in a bit of turmoil at the moment, so I'm feeling very conflicted about what's the best to do.

Nadia, Interviewee, Female, 60-69, Heterosexual, White British, Lives with Others

Others felt more fear at the start of the pandemic which seemed to ease with time, while others were fearing the lifting of restrictions as they did not feel safe rejoining society.

I have got very insular really, I have stayed at home so much and I have been quite frightened of going out - erm, you know, my husband is much bolder than I am about going out. But I get worried about going out without a mask... so he does a lot of the shopping.

Doreen, Interviewee, Female, 70-79, Volunteer, Heterosexual, White British, Lives with others

“Yesterday we [had a small gathering in a garden]... and normally I would have felt alright but I just felt a little out of my comfort zone, because it was quite noisy. That worried me a bit as I have never felt like that before... I don't know whether it is because I am spending quite a lot of time on my own, or I am hoping that in time the feeling will wear off. It sort of shocked me a bit yesterday, normally I would have been there chatting away. I did a little bit of chatting, but nothing like I used to, thinking, is it time to go, is it time to go, and when I did get home I shut my door and I don't know, I felt safe again.

Rose, Interviewee, 50-59, Female, White British, Lives Alone

There were also reports that older people who had been isolating were now afraid to go out, fearing the world had changed:

“One of the ladies said she didn't go out for six months and then she went out, and she was really excited about going out, but she was really frightened whilst she was out. She couldn't wait to get back, she ended up getting really anxious and quite tearful. She said, seeing everyone wearing masks and seeing the one-ways and visors, and getting on the bus and seeing the seats taped off, it all sort of built up this anxiety.

TTS Programme Team

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that many beneficiaries were experiencing sadness at what had been lost during the pandemic, and this was linked to feelings of loneliness.

“I have not found it easy. I mean I have been lucky, and the family were up a lot in the summer, and we could sit in the garden - but it's when you're used to going out nearly every day, even if I only went for a paper and you spoke to people and things like that, it is, it's amazing how lonely it is.

Erica, Interviewee, Female, 80-89, White British, Lives alone

The next section will now discuss specific examples of how the pandemic impacted on TTS delivery partners and services.

As TTS entered the sixth and final year¹⁵, the programme team had started to shift focus towards legacy and sustainability (see [Report 9](#)). During the pandemic, the core of TTS's learning plan and reports stayed the same, but focused on being flexible in terms of targets and milestones. The TTS programme team, subgroups, and Core Partnership all continued to meet but via video conferencing, instead of face-to-face, during this time. The two impacts on TTS projects will now be discussed:

- Pausing data monitoring requirements
- Adapting activities

Pausing data monitoring requirements for TTS projects

Prior to the pandemic, beneficiaries of TTS projects were completing the Common Measurement Framework (CMF) (for further details see [Report 2 TTS Methods](#)). This was previously a requirement for all Ageing Better programmes. It was decided that the data collected on the CMF in its current form could not continue, both for safeguarding reasons (government advice) and because the data collected would no longer be comparable to data collected before social distancing measures. Staff were asked to enter any CMF data collected before mid-March if they had the capacity to do so, and were informed that the requirement to return questionnaires had changed.

Monitoring and evaluation meetings with delivery partners continued during the first waves of the pandemic, although TTS had to become flexible in all of their contracts with delivery partners. This meant putting aside any previously agreed specific targets and planned activities.

In terms of the projects [...] we're being flexible and looking at what is right for each project. We don't even know what's right, it's been a brand new situation, and it depends on the older person that they're working with.

TTS Programme Team

Light touch data collection was still gathered during this time, such as Test and Learn examples, and delivery partners were asked to reflect on their learning and plans for future service provision.

¹⁵ In 2020, the National Lottery Community Fund extended TTS funding until March 2022. The project evaluation was not extended and ended in line with the original funded period.

Adapting the delivery of activities

Prior to the pandemic, most TTS projects aimed at reducing loneliness and social isolation were delivered face-to-face, with few being delivered online or by telephone. COVID-19 changed the context for many TTS projects which had to address the service delivery challenge of staying socially connected with service users whilst physically distancing; an issue which seems particularly pertinent when the objective of TTS was to reduce isolation.

This meant that many TTS projects had to either postpone or adapt their existing activities due to the restrictions on meeting face-to-face. Examples of how TTS projects adapted their service delivery during lockdown are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Service delivery of TTS projects before and after COVID-19

TTS Project	Service delivery before pandemic	Service delivery after pandemic	Additional service delivery when COVID restrictions eased
Cara Too	Face-to-face; social media	Zoom; phone; doorstep visits; postal; social media	Local walks and outdoor socials
Carer's Connections	Face-to-face; social media	Zoom; phone; doorstep visits; postal; social media; WhatsApp	
Choices	Face-to-face; social media	Zoom; phone; doorstep visits; food parcels; WhatsApp; social media	Outdoor socials
Connections	Face-to-face; social media	Zoom; phone; doorstep visits; food parcels; WhatsApp; social media	
Don't Call Me Old	Face-to-face; social media	Zoom; phone; doorstep visits; food parcels; WhatsApp; social media	Outdoor socials

TTS Project	Service delivery before pandemic	Service delivery after pandemic	Additional service delivery when COVID restrictions eased
In Mature Company	Face-to-face;	All activities postponed	Zoom dance sessions in care homes
The Great Outdoors	Face-to-face; social media	Zoom; phone; doorstep visits; postal; social media	Regular local walks
Sunshine in Leeds	Face-to-face	Phone; doorstep visits; food/medicine deliveries; Zoom later on in lockdown	Local walks and outdoor socials
Making a Match	Face-to-face; social media; WhatsApp	Zoom; phone; doorstep visits; food parcels; postal; WhatsApp; social media.	Outdoor five-a-side football
SELF	Face-to-face	Zoom; phone; doorstep visits; postal; WhatsApp; social media.	
Community Support Project	Face-to-face	Zoom; phone; doorstep visits; postal; WhatsApp; social media.	
Sage	Face-to-face; social media	Zoom; phone; doorstep visits; postal; WhatsApp; social media.	Outdoor socials

The projects which faced some of the biggest challenges were those that could not be easily adapted to online delivery, such as the **In Mature Company** project, which delivered dance and movement sessions in care homes (see **Mini Case Study 1**).

Mini Case Study 1 In Mature Company

The typology of the In Mature Company project was:

Target Group	Living situation/Health Focus
Type of intervention	Creative/Health
Aim of intervention	Improve Physical Health/Improve Mental Health
Level of impact	Individuals Interpersonal
Method of delivery	Face-to-Face
Type of delivery	One to one/Group
Location of delivery	Participant's Home (care home)

In Mature Company delivered creative participatory dance, music and movement sessions to care home residents living with dementia. The weekly sessions were held face-to-face, either one-to-one or with groups of care home residents. The aim of each session was to promote social interaction and connectivity through touch-based work (emotional and platonic touch).

In mid-March 2020, the project was placed on hold due to the increasing risk of COVID-19 infections in residential care homes during the pandemic.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the In Mature Company project

The increased restrictions in residential care homes, and social distancing measures, limited the scope of activities and the opportunity to create space for touch and social contact. During this time, two members of the artistic team were able to hold socially distanced activities on an informal basis in the outside area of one care home, adapting some of the elements from the usual sessions.

Mini Case Study 1

In Mature Company

People in these places are very lonely.. and their level of loneliness has now increased.

(In Mature Company artist)

Navigating how the sessions would work going forward, while social distancing and working within infection control guidelines, posed a huge challenge for the future of the project.

It's quite hard when you look at projects that you've run [in the past] that have been really effective, like In Mature Company in care homes - that project is never going to run in the same way again.

(TTS Programme Team)

More details of the In Mature Company project can be found in the [full case study](#).

Beneficiary views on TTS programme and project delivery during the pandemic

Some beneficiaries commented on how TTS projects responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were examples of how some had moved from offering face-to-face support to online, or how projects had ceased running but project leaders had found ways to keep people connected.

We haven't been able to do the walks so [the project worker] produced a Facebook page for all of us to connect, and we put pictures on, like we walked here today, or I found this bug here today, so we share and keep in touch. There is a weekly newsletter that she does as well that she posts out if you haven't got email and she will email it to you electronically, and that has a creature of the week and a little quiz and news. The walks have just started up again and I have been on three of them.

Wendy, Interviewee, Female, 50-59, LGBTQ+, White British, Lives alone

Many enjoyed the project's services online, but there were some examples of how this was a barrier to beneficiaries engaging. There were also comments that as projects moved towards online platforms some members did not attend, whereas new members were joining. Other activities stopped running due to the pandemic, in some cases this was despite the activities already taking place outdoors.

The next section will explore what the TTS programme learned from the pandemic.

03

What TTS learned from the pandemic

Analysis of research data and discussions with TTS programme staff identified two key lessons emerging from their work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Using technology was successful at promoting social inclusion
- The pandemic helped TTS to engage with the 'hard to reach'

Using technology was successful at promoting social inclusion

Research shows that the use of technology and digital methods of communication can be an effective way to ameliorate loneliness. In a case study of Digital Angels¹⁶, a TTS project that supported older people to get online and network in their local communities, evaluators found that the project had led to reduced loneliness and increased well being through enabling social contact. In a more recent report, TTS found that technology had been successful at promoting social inclusion and helping older people to stay better connected with friends and family¹⁷. This experience has also been observed in other Ageing Better programmes: in a survey of 50-70 year olds, 75% said they were making more video calls as a result of the pandemic¹⁸.

There were also examples of how older people had stayed connected with others during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this included the increased use of technology. Although beneficiaries had found technology extremely helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were also some limitations. For example, some found technology difficult to use or intrusive, and it was viewed as a poor substitute for real life contact. Others did not have access to 'smart devices' that were needed in order to participate in online activities, or did not have enough devices for all members of the household to use.

¹⁶ Digital Angels case study can be accessed on the LOPF website: <https://www.opforum.org.uk/resources/reducing-loneliness-through-digital-connections-case-study-of-the-digital-angels-project/>

¹⁷ Time to Shine (2020) Helping people to get online before winter 20/21, Leeds: Time to Shine.

¹⁸ Ageing Better (2020) Covid-19 has exposed our digital divides. London: Ageing Better

We've used Zoom quite a bit, and that has been good with family in London, and we've just kept in touch by text message a lot really. You don't want to be phoning people all the time, but it is nice to have a text message from someone just to see how they are and catch up, and emails as well obviously. So that has helped.

Karen, Interviewee, Female, 60-69, Heterosexual, White British, Lives with others

...a lot of my generation haven't even got a modern mobile phone....I do know a lot of my friends who have not even got an - well don't say iPad, a tablet or a laptop, they just have a normal mobile phone that you top up. So, half the skills that people are using, they've no idea what they're talking about.

Erica, Interviewee, Female, 80-89, White British, Lives alone

It's difficult on Zoom to have a conversation. You miss the cues, don't you, the social cues. So, the sort of pauses and the body language and such. And when your eyesight's going, you've got to wear your glasses to see the screen. So, I'd be on my iPad and it's not that big, so you don't get all the detail and then sometimes you get the stopping and starting of it, but as a replacement just to mix with people, not mix, just to interact with people, it was an absolute godsend.

Laura, Interviewee, Female, 60-69, Heterosexual, White British, Lives with others

Delivery partners were positive about their experiences of online delivery and as a result, were planning to continue offering a blend of face-to-face and online activities, even when physical distancing eventually ceased. Furthermore, many older people have said that they will use their newly gained technological skills to stay connected, and the response to the pandemic has seemingly therefore created more ways for older people to connect.

There were many connection issues as people with phones struggled. Some couldn't get their camera to work, some couldn't turn on the mic, some constantly spoke even though they were on mute and all the instruction giving was bedlam - BUT WE DID IT and we all got to see each other, which was all that mattered.

TTS Delivery Partner

A positive consequence is that in the future, improving access to technology may help to overcome long-standing barriers to inclusion, such as being housebound, having limited access to transport, having few financial resources, or being isolated during winter dark nights and adverse winter conditions.

While the increased uptake of digital technology has provided a unique opportunity for some, it has also left those who are not using technology feeling more isolated¹⁹, and increased the digital divide²⁰. For example, people with access to technology during the lockdown could still access libraries, search for jobs, and engage in online support groups, whereas those who could not, were left behind. People with learning disabilities also found it particularly challenging to go online and it is important that this inequality of access is acknowledged. This was explored in the Bee Together case study, carried out during the pandemic (see **Mini Case Study 2**).

¹⁹ British Red Cross (2020) Life after lockdown: Tackling loneliness among those left behind. London: British Red Cross

²⁰Watts (2020) COVID-19 and the digital divide. The Lancet, 2(8): e395-e396.

Mini Case Study 2

Bee Together

The typology of the Bee Together project was:

Target Group	Demographic Focus
Type of intervention	Social/Culture Change
Aim of intervention	Improve mental health/empower to become more involved
Level of impact	Individual/Interpersonal/Community/Organisational/ Public Policy
Method of delivery	Face-to-Face
Type of delivery	Group
Location of delivery	Community, Provider or Business venue/ Participant's Home

Mini Case Study 2

Bee Together

The Bee Together project was targeted towards older people with learning disabilities. Prior to COVID-19, the project worker would meet face-to-face with service users to explore their interests and discuss the activities or groups they would like to take part in. The project worker would offer support by attending the activities together, until the older person was comfortably embedded in the project and felt able to attend independently. Some of these activities have included: arts and crafts; seat-based exercise classes; café socials; and knitting groups.

The project was paused in mid-March 2020 due to the pandemic and social distancing measures. During this time, the Bee Together project worker continued to offer one-to-one support on an informal basis to participants.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the Bee Together project

The shift towards moving social activities and groups online created a barrier for some, and segregated people with learning disabilities again from their local communities. The project worker highlighted the lack of information provided by the government and local authorities in respect to COVID-19, suggesting that people with differing abilities were forgotten about during the pandemic:

One guy was still going out and about, wondering why nobody was there and was really confused. It has had a big impact on his mental health.

(Project worker, Bee Together)

Prior to lockdown, approximately 20-25 people regularly attended the Bee Friends social group weekly. During lockdown, the project worker did attempt to establish the social group online using Zoom, although many older people with learning disabilities struggled to access the online group and lacked the support they needed to get online. Some Bee Together participants were loaned iPads during the pandemic but struggled initially to use them without one-to-one support.

I think we've cracked Zoom now, but the early days were difficult.

(Project worker, Bee Together)

More details of the Bee Together project can be found in the [full case study](#)

The pandemic helped TTS to engage with the 'hard to reach'

A challenge for all services hoping to reduce isolation and loneliness amongst older people during the pandemic was reaching out to those most isolated. Often the reasons why people do not want to engage in services are also the reasons they are lonely and isolated. For example, they may have limited confidence, experience discrimination, have a disability, physical or mental illness, or experience financial exclusion. While TTS had reached isolated and lonely older people, staff reflected that there was a group of people, the most isolated, that they may have been missing. This group is often referred to as the 'hard to reach.'

The pandemic offered an opportunity for TTS to find some of these 'hard-to-reach' people. TTS and delivery partners were given contacts of local people who were self-isolating or shielding and in need of support during lockdown. Additionally, many older people who had never engaged with services before, were starting to phone in to request support. As one TTS programme manager explained:

COVID-19 has taught us that the group we've always talked about being 'hard to reach', because we didn't really know where they were, well COVID-19 has sort of brought them to the surface because they have probably been some of the most vulnerable. The shielding process has put organisations in contact with them because they've needed food parcels or their prescriptions collecting or their shopping doing. A lot of the ones we knew we were failing to reach have come out of the woodwork.

TTS Programme Team



04

Conclusion

This report has drawn on findings from a thematic analysis of interviews, case studies and focus groups with beneficiaries, delivery partners and stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of the research carried out as part of this report was to explore the **impact of COVID-19 on the TTS programme**. Additional evidence from reports commissioned by TTS, and monitoring data captured by the programme team during the pandemic, has also been used in this report.

The pandemic occurred at a time when the TTS programme was starting to shift focus to legacy and sustainability. This meant that the programme had to adapt suddenly to the immediate issue of COVID-19. This involved **promoting digital inclusion, refocusing partnership projects, and raising the awareness of ageism** through the Age Proud campaign. The monitoring and evaluation requirements expected from TTS delivery partners were also adapted; the CMF was paused and light touch data collection was gathered from delivery partners.

Beneficiaries spoke of the impact that the pandemic had had on their lives and the ways in which the TTS projects they were involved in had adapted. Many responded positively to projects moving online, but recognised that there was a barrier where some did not have access to technology to continue participating in activities that were being run online.

The impact of the pandemic on the lives of beneficiaries were grouped into three themes. The first was **restriction and loss**, which highlighted the huge impact that government restrictions had on their lifestyles, social activities, and connections with others. Beneficiaries described the ways in which they had **adapted their lives** as a result of COVID-19, such as embracing new technology and engaging in new hobbies. Beneficiaries also highlighted the emotional impact of the pandemic: the **fear of being unsafe** due to the lifting of social distancing measures, and increased feelings of **sadness** as a result of loneliness and social isolation from others.

Our findings demonstrate some of the ways in which TTS delivery partners were able to adapt and learn from the pandemic, such as **innovation in the methods used by delivery partners to tackle loneliness**. Some examples of this include **blended online and face-to-face delivery models, which may create new opportunities to connect with the most isolated in the future**. It is important to consider that not all TTS projects were able to make the transition to online delivery, and so it should be acknowledged that online delivery may not be possible for all voluntary sector services that provide community activities.

Discussions with TTS programme staff identified two key lessons learnt from the pandemic. The first was that **technology was successful at promoting social inclusion**. The acceleration of digital uptake was seen across almost all TTS projects, and many were positive about using their newly gained technological skills in the future. Secondly, **the pandemic was an opportunity for engaging with hard-to-reach groups**. What is also revealing, is that only in extreme circumstances did the most isolated older people reach out for support. This was achieved through having access to shielding lists and linking in with community hubs that distributed food parcels during the pandemic. This also presented the programme with an opportunity to distribute the Shine magazine, and engage older people with services for support.

05

Related Reports

The final evaluation for the Time to Shine programme has been presented as a series of final reports.

Report 1: Executive Summary of Time to Shine

Report 2: Time to Shine Evaluation Methods

Report 3: Process Evaluation

Report 4: Intervention typologies

Report 5: Motivations and Barriers for beneficiary engagement

Report 6: Participation, engagement and outcomes for older people

Report 7: The impact of Time to Shine on project beneficiaries

Report 8: COVID-19 impact on the TTS programme

Report 9: Legacy, systems change and sustainability

Report 10: Test and Learn: Understanding the experiences and challenges of frontline organisations



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Time to
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