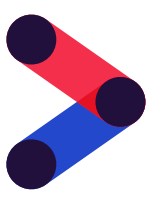# Lessons Learnt from NTP Tuition Partners: Y1

Insights for tutoring organisations

National Tutoring Programme

Introduction

This brief guide shares common challenges and solutions identified by tutoring organisations during the first year of delivery of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP), Tuition Partners programme (2020–21).

The following key challenges and practical suggestions are based on feedback shared by the 33 Tuition Partners and central NTP Tuition Partners Team. They do not constitute part of the independent evaluation and some content relates to the unique situation of extended periods of remote learning and disruption due to Covid-19.

Insights were shared via a series of collaborative capacity building workshops throughout Year 1 of the programme, led by Impetus and Nesta. They worked with Partners to identify key challenges and common solutions on a range of topics. The content and output of these workshops has been used to structure and inform this guide alongside delivery insights from the NTP Tuition Partners programme management team.

This guide includes:

- School engagement
- Pupil engagement
- Online delivery and systems
- Session delivery
- Quality assurance
- Safeguarding

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School engagement

Challenges

In year 1 of the NTP Tuition Partners programme, partial school closures meant that schools and Tuition Partners faced a unique set of circumstances. Many of the common challenges from this year therefore centred around partial school closures and the extended periods of remote learning that took place for some pupils. This was particularly evident in January 2021, when schools had to organise their own remote teaching and therefore had less capacity to continue conversations with Tuition Partners, finalise a Memorandum of Understanding and arrange for delivery to begin.

■ **Ensuring equity of access to tutoring.** 29 of 33 Tuition Partners (2020-21) were able to deliver to pupils online at-home in a set of accepted circumstances. However, tutoring to pupils online at-home is only effective when pupils have access to necessary technology and ensuring equity of access to tuition during remote learning continued to be an ongoing challenge.[1] School closures meant that schools often found it harder to arrange tutoring for their most disadvantaged pupils, with these pupils often facing technological barriers. During the period of remote learning schools often preferred to delay tutoring until these pupils could access tutoring at school, either with face-to-face tutoring, or using the school's technology for online provision.

■ **Unfamiliarity with the evidence around tutoring.** Some schools were initially unsure of the benefit of 15 hours of tuition and further explanation and input was needed to clarify which aspects of the programme could be adapted to suit the needs of the schools and which aspects were important for ensuring the impact of the programme.

■ **Retaining tutors.** This challenge related to partial school closures, where tuition needed to be postponed and work was not able to be provided for tutors at that time. This was particularly challenging for Tuition Partners who had carefully planned their tutor recruitment and workload for delivery that was delayed.

■ **Selection of pupils.** During the 20-21 academic year, schools could select those pupils who they thought would benefit the most from tutoring. Schools often initially focused on pupils in Year 6 and Year 11; however, exam cancellations and general uncertainty around which format exams would take led some schools to delay pupil selection and therefore the start of tutoring.

■ **Communication with schools.** Largely due to limited capacity during school closures, there was less clarity from schools on who were key contacts to set up the programme.

1. For more information on remote tuition see our guide for schools on supporting online tuition at home.

Top tips

- **Agree clear programme objectives.** Ensure from the start that the school is aligned with their Tuition Partner on the aim of the programme to avoid misunderstandings of the purpose of tuition.

- **Reinforce the message that the NTP is here to provide additional support for pupils in a way that alleviates teachers' workloads and supports classroom teaching.** When in discussion with schools clarify that: although tutoring as a successful intervention necessitates initial administrative time to set up and align with classroom teaching, it provides additional capacity which makes small group tutoring more feasible than school staff conducting the work in their own time.

- **Be clear about your offer as a Tuition Partner and the pupils it is most suitable for.** Not all Tuition Partners are suitable for all schools and pupils: be clear from the outset who your tuition programme is best suited to and why, to save time for yourself and for schools.

- **Give schools time to make their decision.** Headteachers and teachers are likely to need to discuss the idea with their colleagues. Give schools the option to reflect and respond on an initial offering of tuition; for example, follow up after a few days.

- **Make sure there is clear initial messaging around what the NTP offer is.** Be clear with schools that they can book 15-hour blocks of tuition at x% of the usual cost. For example, using an initial enquiry form that asks schools how many blocks of 15 hours they are interested in makes clear that this is the format of tutoring available.

- **Ensure all communication channels & roles on both sides of the partnership are clear.** This will help to ensure that you understand the needs of the school and why they are using tuition. Introduce your key relationship manager early in the process to ensure that schools have one point of contact. Identify the main point of contact for day-to-day delivery at the school and build a positive working relationship with them.

- **Develop a clear timeline from the outset for schools to work to.** This could include timings on when they need to provide pupil information to you, for example. Schools should understand the sequencing of set up information that they need to supply and why this information is needed.

- **Facilitate conversations with schools about which disadvantaged pupils they are putting forwards for tutoring and why.** Schools know their pupils best; however, if a school is putting forward a lower number of disadvantaged pupils it is good to try and understand why that is. For example, if there are any concerns around the suitability of the support for specific pupils and if you can do anything to make the offer more suitable.

- **Ensure that schools are aware of how much the NTP subsidy is saving on the usual cost of 1:1/1:2/1:3 tuition and how this could benefit their students.** This will help schools to understand the value of the NTP subsidy and the potential impact for their pupils. Share examples of how NTP tuition is already working for other schools.

■ **Work with the NTP central team to support school engagement.** The Tuition Partners central Team can help provide information for schools and centralised support for Tuition Partners to reach prospective schools and tutors. For example, in Y1, Tuition Partners could join the NTP's series of regional and national school webinars to present directly to schools in their area.

■ **Consider holding information sessions for schools.** For example, individual meetings with schools who are interested in the offering or webinars and podcasts to introduce larger numbers of schools to your NTP tuition package.

■ **Consider which resources can be standardised.** Videos explaining how the programme works and onboarding guides can be standardised for efficiency and to provide high-quality central resources which can be shared with all schools.

■ **Offer as much flexibility as possible within the evidence-based programme structure to support schools.** This could include accommodating school requests, where possible, on frequency of sessions, session length, and timing of the delivery to fit with a school's timetable.

■ **Consider appropriate processes to automate.** While this will depend on scale of delivery, automation can save time both for Tuition Partner and school (for example, for onboarding, session scheduling, data collection).
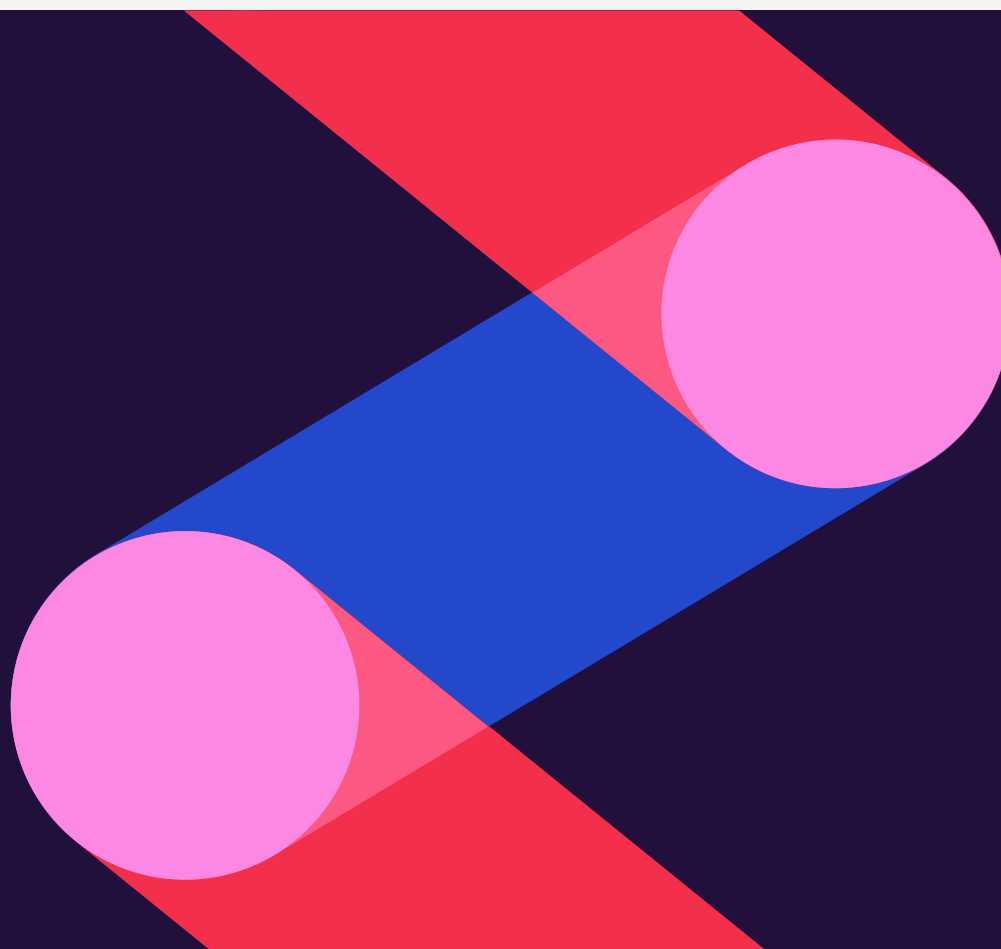
Pupil engagement

Challenges

- **Some disadvantaged pupils may experience more challenges working with new adults in their life.** Further support may be needed to help with attendance, particularly at the beginning of a block of tuition or for pupils accessing remotely from home in certain circumstances.

- **Pupils may initially view tutoring negatively, as 'extra work'.** This may particularly be the case if they have not had a direct explanation about the NTP Tuition Partners programme and the potential benefits of being involved.

- **Pupils may be struggling with wider social and emotional issues.** Following the uncertainty of a period of school closures and remote learning and the wider implications of the pandemic, some pupils may struggle with issues which are out of the scope of a tutor's academic expertise.

Top tips

- **Provide consistency for pupils.** Avoid pupils changing tutor midway through a block of tuition and ensure that there is a single contact point between the pupil, the school and the Tuition Partner to maintain consistency if a specific tutor is no longer working with them. This may be particularly relevant for volunteer tutors.

- **Establish the school's key contact and preferred frequency for tuition attendance information before beginning delivery.** Have a plan in case there are any issues with attendance. For example, should this be flagged to the school office or the main contact arranging tuition; should attendance data be reported daily or weekly to ensure timely follow up.

- **Explain the benefits of attendance.** At the start of the programme, ensure that the school is clear that attendance is more likely lead to attainment outcomes.

- **Work with the school to explore reasons for any attendance issues.** Make sure that the pupil has all the information they need. Could attendance be supported with a change in tuition time, for example? Are they struggling in a small group and could be accommodated 1:1 or in a different group, or vice versa? For remote at-home delivery encourage schools, who know their pupils and families best, to identify any reasons for non-attendance that can be supported.

- **Include dedicated time, particularly within the first tutoring session, to building relationships.** Ensure that pupils understand the role of their tutor and what they can expect from the sessions. For example, rapport building can be included as part of the content plan with five minutes at the start of each session to talk about interests or activities outside of the academic content being covered.

- **Flag up any motivational issues to your school contact.** Pupils should see being involved as a positive opportunity and understand how the sessions will work in practice. The school should ensure that the pupils are aware of how frequent and how long their sessions will be and the answers to any other concerns that may be a barrier to participation; for example, whether there is an associated cost for their families. The Tuition Partner and school can work together at the beginning of the tutoring offer to ensure it is promoted to pupils as a positive opportunity.

- **Have a contact at the school to whom you can raise pastoral concerns should anything come up in tuition sessions.** In addition to formal safeguarding processes, having both academic and pastoral input from the school may help provide a balanced view of what is needed for tutoring to be successful for the pupil.

Online delivery and systems

Challenges

■ **Finding an online platform to use.** This included ensuring all associated platform costs were clear in advance and that the platform would work for the type of schools that individual Tuition Partners work with.

■ **Ensuring that tutors had the necessary training to use online platforms.** Due to partial school closures more tutors than expected were needed to deliver lessons online, including some who were initially recruited to do face-to-face tutoring only. This highlighted the need to ensure that all tutors have appropriate training and access to ongoing support to ensure online delivery can happen as necessary.

■ **Delivering online can be particularly challenging for younger children.** Adapting the content of tuition for younger children, where more physical resources and directed learning is required, was particularly challenging.

■ **A higher level of parental engagement and support is needed for online at home delivery.** This includes encouraging children to join sessions and, in the case of younger pupils, for a parent/carer to supervise the session.

Top tips

- **Run demonstrations of your online platform for schools.** This might include training for teachers to ensure that they are comfortable with how to access the tutoring and support pupils who run into issues.

- **Provide examples of how other schools are using online tutoring.** This will help to reassure and encourage schools, particularly if face-to-face is more challenging in their area due to geographical constraints.

- **Consider whether the online platform works for your requirements too.** For example, how are sessions recorded and stored – does this align with your internal systems? Are links for each session automatically generated and sent?

- **Identify an IT support contact at the school.** Establish who is involved in ensuring the online platform functions effectively when used at school and can be contacted in the event of technical issues.

- **Conduct user research with the demographic of pupils that you work with.** This can help to identify which interfaces and tools they like. For example, if you will be working with pupils with challenging behaviours is it possible to disable interactive options, if necessary, to support with fewer distractions?

  Different functions of an online platform may be more relevant for younger/older students or working 1:1 vs working in a small group. For example, consider whether there is there a need for multiple pupils to share their workings or notes with their tutor simultaneously.

- **Consider testing or quality assurance of your tutors' technical set-up.** This might include testing their internet quality in advance of delivery to ensure tutoring sessions can run as smoothly as possible.

Session delivery

Challenges

■ **Receiving high-quality information about pupils from schools in advance.** This is needed to ensure tutoring sessions are well planned. However, in some cases, Tuition Partners did not receive the information needed and there were some uncertainties for tutors on the pupils who would be involved and their specific needs.

■ **Schools wanting to swap attendees.** Although this may be a necessary last resort for pupils who repeatedly do not engage, it can cause disruption to other pupils in the group.

Top tips

■ **Ensure that schools are aware of the benefit of sustained tuition and the potential risks of swapping pupils.** Work with schools to support pupils who are not attending rather than swapping pupils immediately.

■ **Encourage schools to carefully consider which students require 1:1 tuition and which would benefit from small group tuition.** Encourage the grouping of pupils who can work well together and who are finding similar areas of learning challenging. Flag any issues with grouping that arise to your school contact as early as possible.

■ **Ensure schools are aware that Tuition Partners are keen to support them to reach pupils who may be initially difficult to engage in tutoring.** Explain to schools the expertise of your tutors and the processes that you have in place to engage pupils who may be facing more issues with motivation.

■ **Share expectations in your initial conversations with schools on the pupil information you need.** This might be a combination of baseline assessment tests to inform tutoring and feedback from classroom teachers on the specific areas that the pupils need to work on. Be clear around why this is needed and the timing for providing it.

■ **Gather all the information that you need to personalise a pupil's tuition programme upfront.** This will help to ensure that the content of tuition sessions is as relevant as possible and should avoid teachers being asked to supply information multiple times.

■ **Think about how to match tutors and pupils.** Tuition Partners should consider how to ensure a good relationship between tutors and tutees, and this could be an area that the school is asked to provide advice on.

■ **Continue to make judgements on progress and engagement in each tuition session.** Planned content should be adapted as needed, with this information flagged and shared with the classroom teacher.

Quality Assurance

Defining quality standards, improving quality and reviewing and monitoring quality are challenging to categorise centrally across Tuition Partners. However, we offer some suggestions below for initial considerations.

Top tips

■ **Use quality assurance for all core activities that will impact on and help scale quality of delivery.** This will likely include school recruitment, school relationship management, tutoring recruitment & training, pupil onboarding, session planning & facilitation.

■ **Ensure that you have clearly defined quality standards for all aspects of delivery and share these with your tutors.** Involving tutors in the design of your quality standards can help them advocate for this. For example, understanding how quantitative and qualitative information is being gathered centrally and how these insights will be helpful for them.

■ **Ensure that tutors know that they will receive high-quality training and support and define the key skills and training they need to deliver to expected standards.** This can help support recruitment and retention, for example. Quality assurance should be developmental, with staff receiving useful information and support as a result of monitoring processes.

■ **Take an early view on your particular key risks to delivery to maximise the effectiveness of your QA.** Start simple – for example, 3 indicators that you are confident in are better than 10 you are unsure about.

■ **Review your existing quality monitoring processes.** Can anything be done more efficiently? Are there existing data sources that you can make better use of (for example: lessons plans, attendance, punctuality, pupil progress assessments)?

■ **Agree internal processes to review QA information and decide resulting actions.** How is delivery monitoring linked to your overall quality standards? Is there a clear plan as to what action is being taken short term and long term? Clarify how often this takes place, who is involved and how to ensure ownership of follow up.

■ **Agree which data (and supporting IT systems) are required to monitor quality against quality standards.** Before tuition delivery starts, does further time and resource need to be allocated to ensure that high-quality information can be collected?

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is of paramount importance and should be the priority of all Tuition Partners. Below we provide an outline of initial key points to consider in regard to safeguarding. All NTP approved Tuition Partners in Y1 underwent rigorous safeguarding due diligence and ongoing monitoring.

Key considerations:

■ **Start safeguarding policies with a rationale about why safeguarding matters to the organisation and refer to the specific activities of the organisation throughout.** Provide clear links to other policies (whistleblowing, allegations management, code of conduct, safer recruitment, harassment and bullying). A Serious Incidents Policy should include the requirements for serious incident reporting, recording and management.

■ **Provide a Code of Conduct that sets out clear expectations of tutors, pupils and schools.** For tutors delivering online this should outline expectations for remote delivery including appearance and background (for example, recommendation for tuition to not take place in bedrooms), managing disturbances and group dynamics, privacy controls, password protection, use of chat function, video streaming and appropriate image sharing.

■ **Set the expectation that safeguarding is a key requirement of being a tutor.** Include a commitment to safeguarding statement on the recruitment section of your website and ask questions about attitude to safeguarding in interviews with tutors (as well as formal checks) to set the expectation that this is a key requirement.

■ **Provide regular safeguarding best practice updates for all staff including tutors.** This should be done through team meetings, newsletters or supervision sessions. Provide tutors with access to a central resource bank via an intranet system (or equivalent) which includes access to training, policies and procedures.

■ **Ensure tutors are confident in their responsibilities regarding safeguarding.** This should include being aware of both Tuition Partner and school policies and procedures. Share school safeguarding policies with tutors in advance of attending the school they are tutoring in.

- **Monitor tutors to ensure best practice.** This is particularly important when they are delivering online (in school or at home). Monitoring can take place by checking recordings or dropping into live sessions: inform tutors so that they are aware that this is standard best practice and could take place at any point.

- **Use a secure platform for online delivery.** Many platforms available have the capacity to record sessions, including the chat function. We recommend all sessions are recorded and that the recordings are retained and stored securely. Tutors should not be responsible for conducting or storing the recordings.

- **Ensure any contact between tutors and pupils/families is safe.** All contact must be via a centralised system: personal email addresses and phone numbers should not be used and there should never be contact between a tutor and a pupil out of sessions. Pupils and their families should be made aware of how to raise any concerns about a tutor.

- **Ensure there is parental supervision during at-home sessions.** Ask them to speak with the tutor at the beginning and end of each session. In certain cases where a parent/carer is not able to be physically present, you may allow a responsible adult to join the session virtually instead. This could either be a teacher/TA from the school or a family member.

- **Have specific policies and procedures in place for online delivery at home.** For example, ensure all sessions are recorded and monitored, and recordings are appropriately stored (securely and for an adequate amount of time).

- **Ensure that parents/carers have signed an agreement for online at-home sessions.** They should be given clear information on the expectations of them, their child and the tutor. This should include core features of the online safety policy that are relevant to parents; in particular, how to report a safeguarding concern.

- **Ensure Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) and other relevant staff are aware of changes to statutory guidance and that this is reflected in policies and procedures.** Policies and procedures should be reviewed and updated regularly.

- **Actively seek feedback from tutors, pupils, parents/carers and schools.** This will ensure continuous improvement to safeguarding policies and procedures. Regularly monitor safeguarding records and logs with key learning being fed into management and board reports, policy updates and training.

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