



RISE ABOVE

IMPACT AND ACCOUNTABILITY
REPORT 2022 | 2023



saferlondon



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Providing trusted, individual, relational support to ensure more young Londoners feel safer, are safer, and have the positive futures they deserve.

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and a company limited by guarantee No. 5190766.
www.saferlondon.org.uk

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YEAR AT A GLANCE 2022 2023


590

590 young Londoners supported one-to-one by a Safer London Specialist or Expert Caseworker

61

61 parents/carers supported one-to-one by Safer London Specialist Caseworker

41 young Londoners were supported with emotional wellbeing needs 

36 young Londoners were supported with Education, Training and Employment needs 




64 young Londoners, parents/carers were supported by CSA Navigators



16 young Londoners presenting with Harmful Sexual Behaviours were supported by an Expert Caseworker

474

referrals received and screened by the Safer London Front Door team 

1094

YOUNG LONDONERS AND FAMILIES REACHED THROUGH ALL OUR PROGRAMMES AND SUPPORT

732

YOUNG LONDONERS REACHED

362


PARENTS/CARERS REACHED



139 young Londoners were supported to access housing or housing support

114 Londoners moved to safer homes via the Pan London Housing Reciprocal, including 56 children

46 households moved to safer homes via the Pan London Housing Reciprocal

243 parents/carers attended online workshops hosted by Safer London Specialist Family Caseworkers 



My work at Safer London was so important to me. It made me feel so much more confident.

My worker helped me a lot. I was very shy before but now I am able to speak out more. I feel more confident at school, and I enjoy going to school now. I have made so many friends too.

My worker was always so positive and happy. She always had a plan about what topics we were going to cover, and I made some decisions too. I was able to choose topics I felt I needed to work harder on – like healthy relationships.

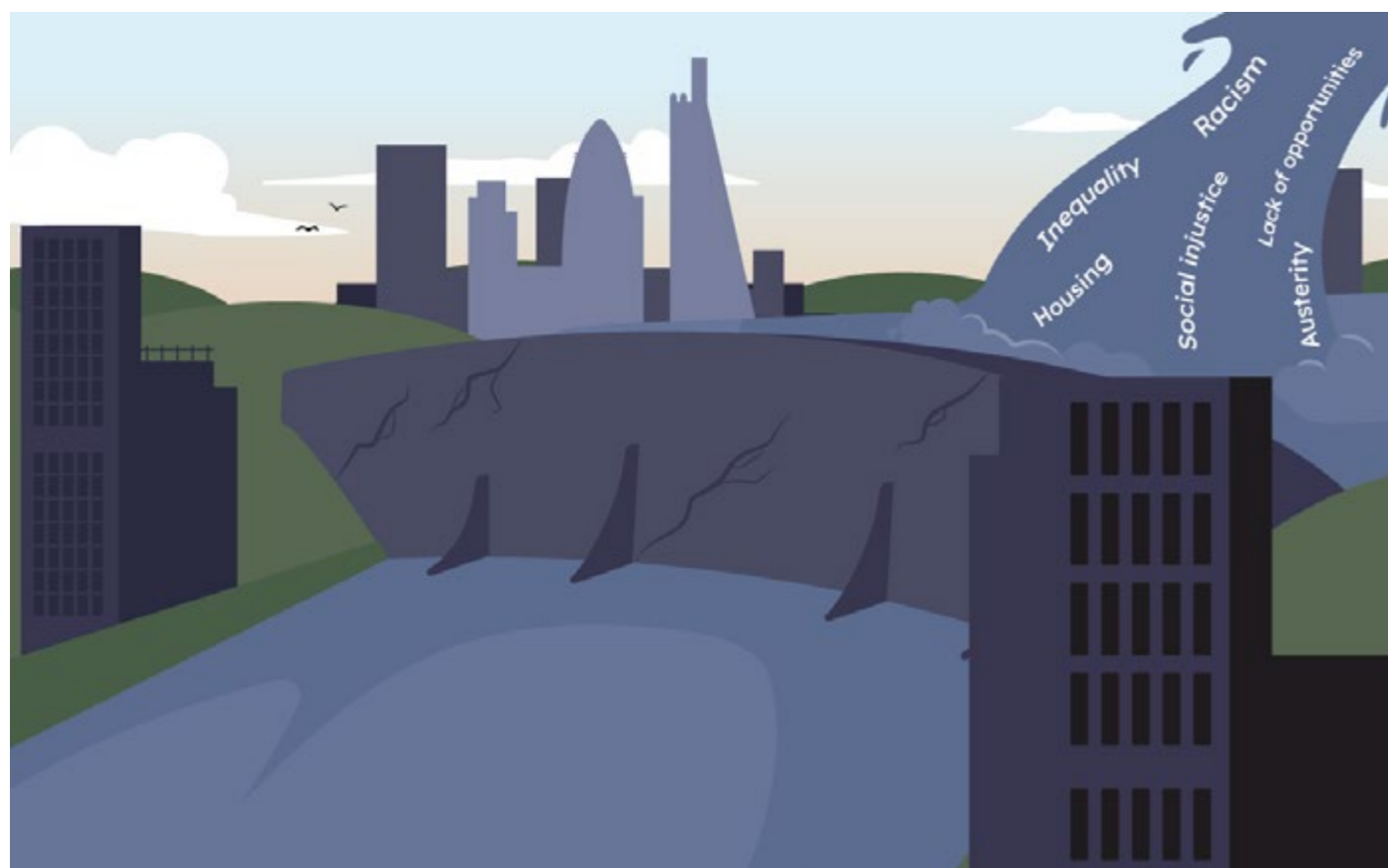
She really listened to me.

I have not had many people who have really listened to me but she did and I am so happy I could work with her. I have learnt a lot. I have learnt it is okay to take a moment to calm down before I get too angry and that my feelings matter.

**Young Londoner
who accessed Safer London's services and support**



INTRODUCTION: THE PRESSURE DAM



London is often seen as a city full of opportunities, but for many young Londoners this perception doesn't align with their reality.

Growing up in challenging and sometimes hostile environments, many young Londoners face various pressures and obstacles. Children and young people who should be full of hope and ambition find themselves constrained by limited opportunities, inequality, racism, and austerity.

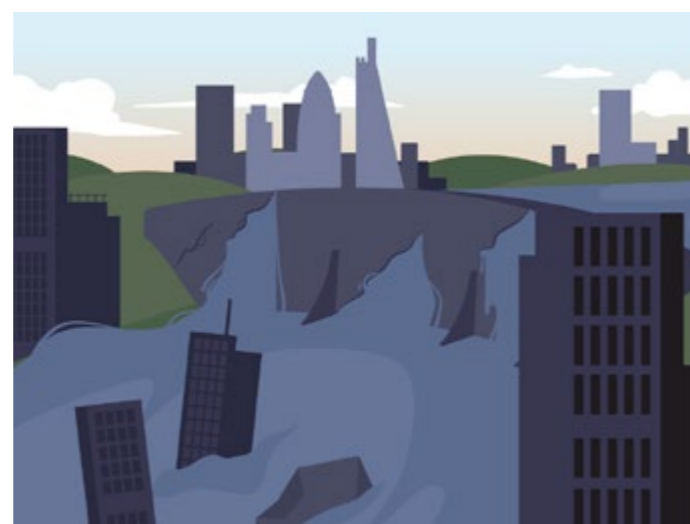
These pressures gather like water behind a dam. Over time, the weight of these challenges steadily builds against the dam's walls, placing strain on young Londoners' wellbeing and resilience. Then cracks begin to form, prompted by each injustice and unfulfilled promise.

Eventually, a breaking point emerges - a moment when the dam can no longer withstand the mounting pressure. It gives way.

Amidst the aftermath, some young Londoners are swept into a current of violence and exploitation. These individuals who find themselves at risk become caught in the grip of criminal networks and exploitative cycles, succumbing to circumstances beyond their control.

The futures that held promise are now submerged, engulfed by a society and systems that failed to nurture their potential. The absence of support and the weight of systemic inequities steer these young Londoners into difficult situations, where their struggles can go unnoticed.

In recognising this unfortunate reality, it becomes imperative to reinforce the dam. Only by addressing the root causes, redirecting resources, and fostering an environment of equity and opportunity, can the destructive current be diverted.



While Safer London may not have the power to repair the cracks in the dam itself, what we can do is scaffold a comprehensive programme of support around each young Londoner.

Our person-centred, trauma-informed approach allows us to build a unique programme of support around each young Londoner or parent/carer. This then acts as a buoy, enabling them to float or even rise above the turbulent waters they face.

By providing tailored support, we can empower young Londoners to overcome their challenges with resilience and purpose and navigate towards a brighter future.

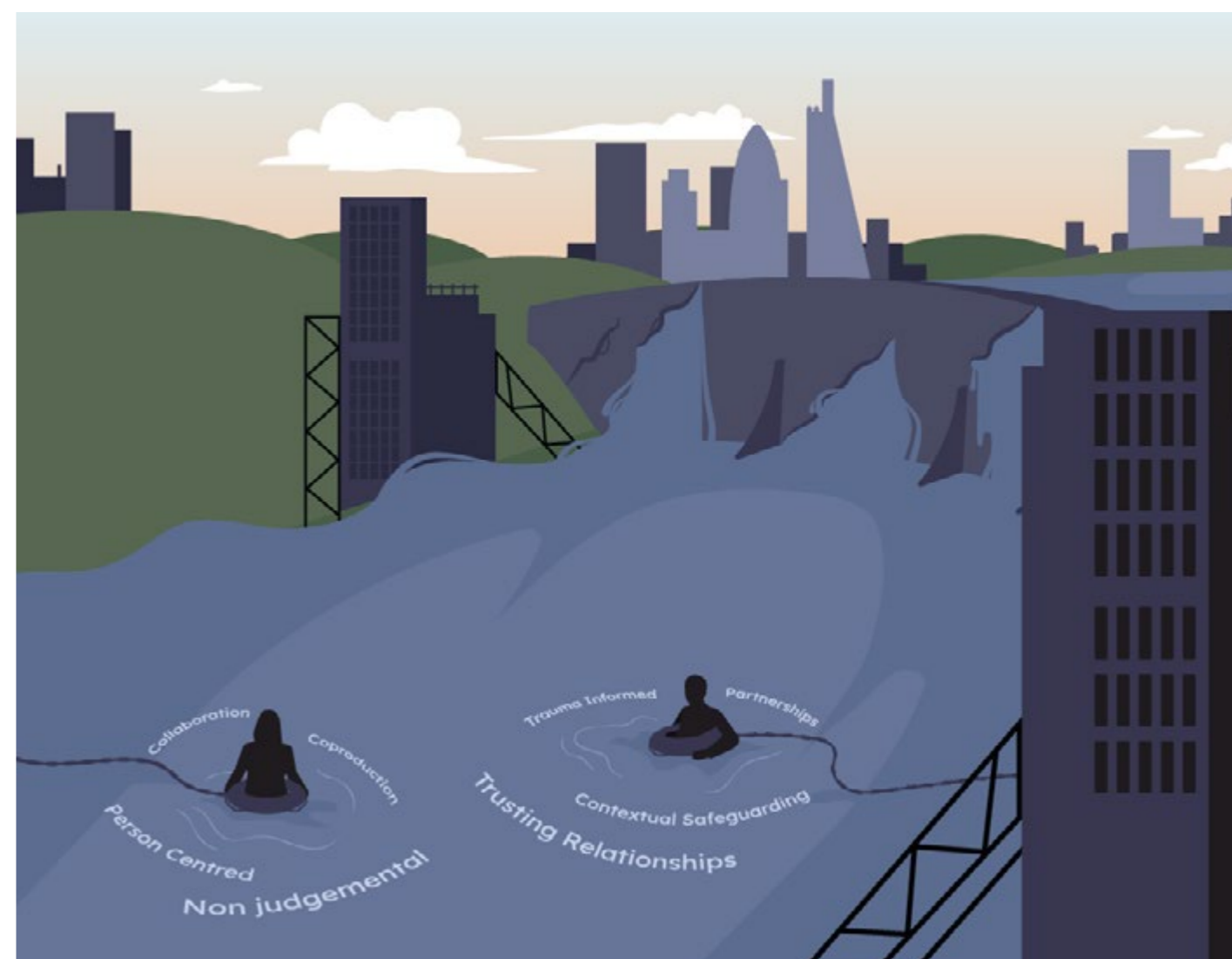
It's important to recognise and understand that positive change is something young Londoners achieve for themselves.

Whilst our Expert and Specialist Caseworkers play a vital role in facilitating growth and development, the true catalyst for change lies within the young Londoners themselves.

By understanding this dynamic, we create an environment that encourages young Londoners to harness their innate potential, enabling them to become the architects of their own success.

Our role is to safeguard and provide guidance and advocacy, while respecting the autonomy and agency of young Londoners as they forge their unique paths towards a positive future.

By working in collaboration and partnership with external agencies, as well as the young Londoners themselves, we are working to ensure that no young Londoner is left adrift, but rather equipped with the necessary tools and support to thrive and succeed.



LAST YEAR WHAT WE SAW: A RISE IN COMPLEX CASES

There's no denying that the issues and pressure that young Londoners and their families face aren't going away. The cracks in the dam are progressively expanding.

Over the past year, we have witnessed a substantial rise in complex cases, accompanied by an unprecedented surge in safeguarding concerns. Something that is [not isolated to Safer London](#). Young Londoners are requiring prolonged and comprehensive support, involving the collective efforts of various Safer London professionals.

Recognising the increased need, we developed and rolled out new in-house safeguarding training. Finding that existing training was too generic this new package was tailored to align with our insights into the challenges faced by those we work alongside, while also aligning with our internal safeguarding processes.

Last year, we recorded a total of 756 safeguarding concerns, marking a substantial increase of 206 from the previous year.

Of these 756 concerns 158 were "need to knows". "Need to knows" are the most serious safeguarding concerns, and include such incidents as suicide attempts, carrying a weapon or sexual and criminal violence.

756

756 safeguarding concerns in the past year, an over 260% increase from the previous year.

As a result, we've cultivated and nurtured a team of highly skilled and proficient professionals, ensuring a consistent approach throughout our organisation in tackling the safeguarding concerns affecting young Londoners and families.

This training was also extended to our Front Door referral and screening team. Consequently, they can now conduct more robust screenings and effectively identify and address more safeguarding concerns from the very outset of the referral process. This ensures we allocate the best available support to those in need.

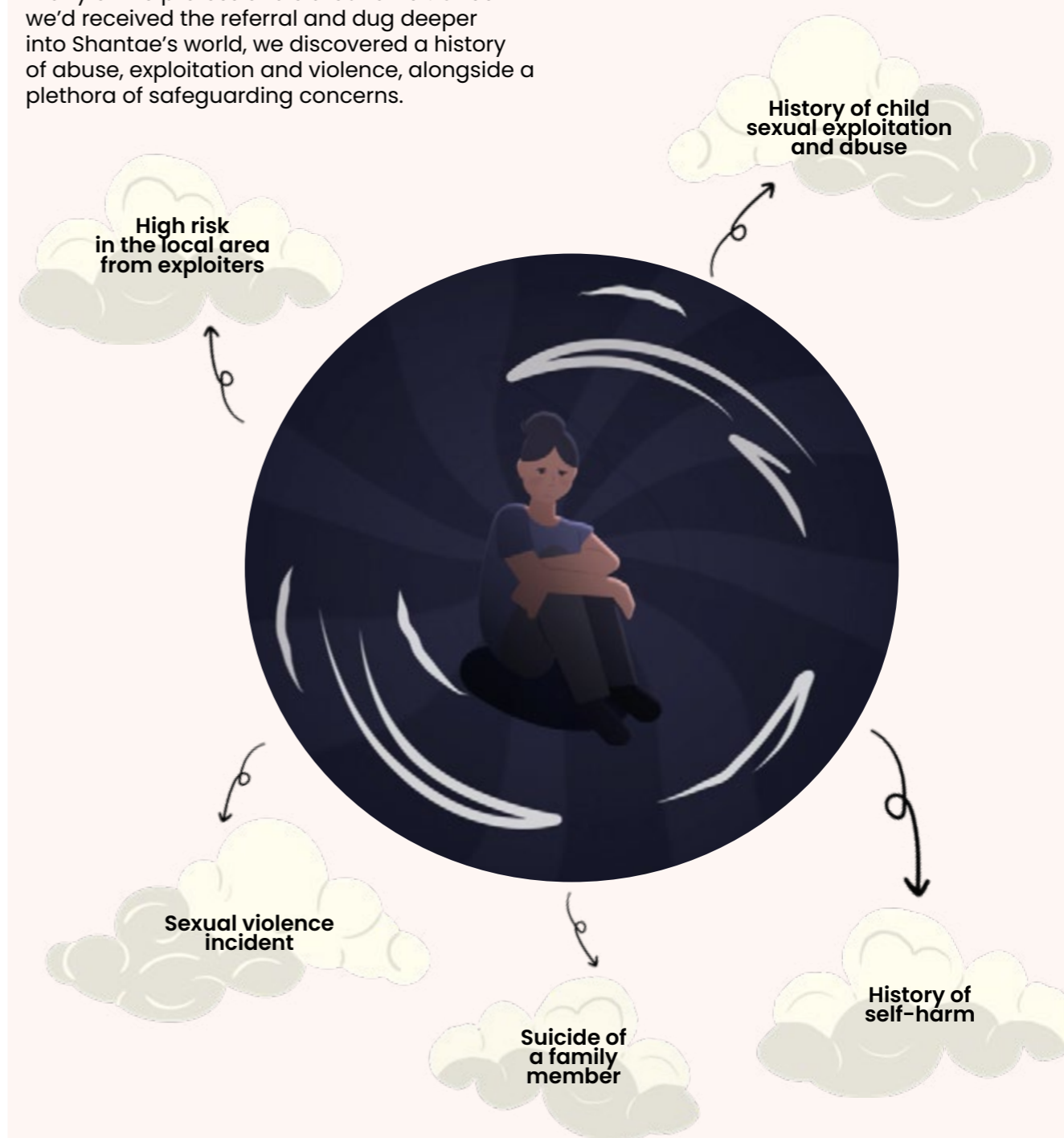
Unveiling Hidden Trauma: From Perceived Perpetrator to Victim of Abuse and Violence

Shantae was referred to Safer London due to violence and problematic sexual behaviour.

Shantae was viewed as a perpetrator by many of the professionals around her. Once we'd received the referral and dug deeper into Shantae's world, we discovered a history of abuse, exploitation and violence, alongside a plethora of safeguarding concerns.

By working on building a trusting relationship with Shantae and her family, we were able to unpick what was really going on in her life.

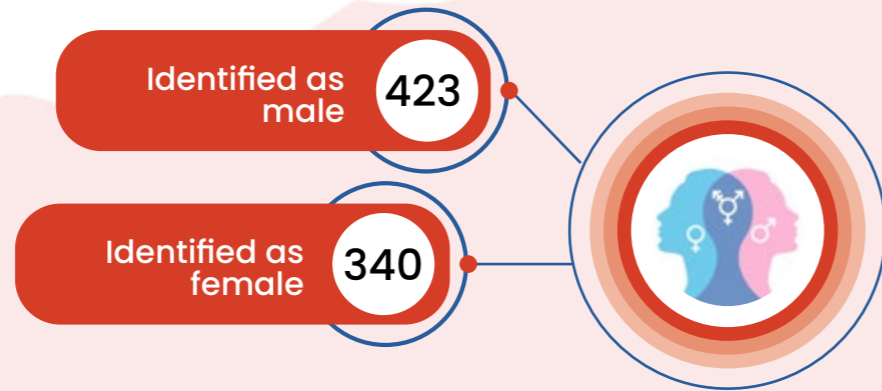
Watch how we helped Shantae [here](#)



WHO WE WORKED WITH & WHERE WE WORKED

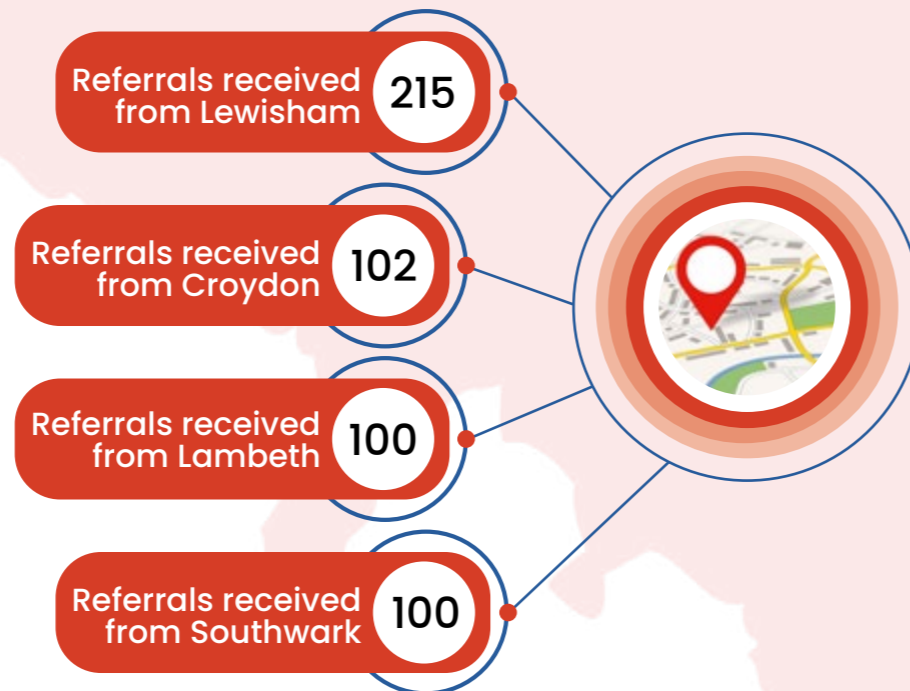
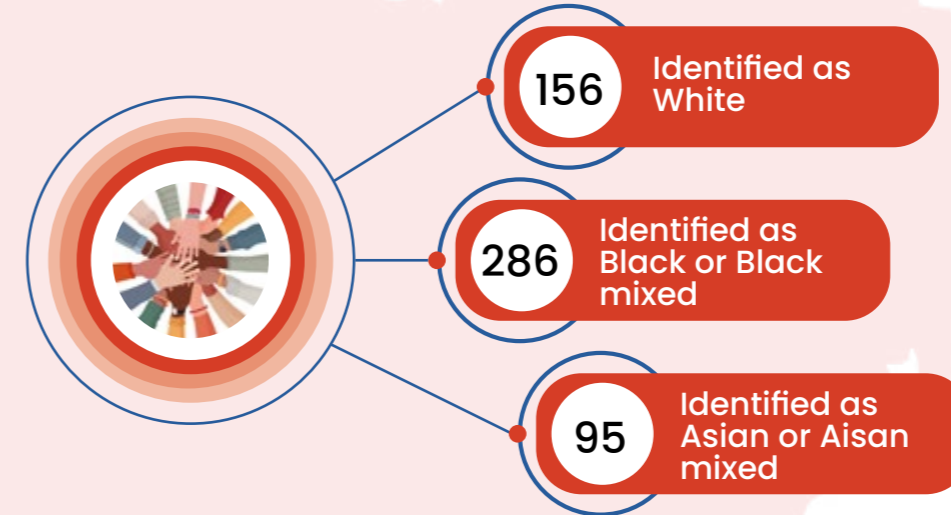
Over the last few years we focused on the reorganisation of our services, particularly in reference to gender based support. It's essential to recognise that challenges and issues commonly associated with young males, such as violence and criminal exploitation, are not exclusive to them; they equally affect many young women and girls. Likewise, many young men and boys have been deeply affected by instances of sexual exploitation and abuse.

By breaking down and dispelling misjudged preconceptions, we've created specific roles that enable us to extend our reach to more young Londoners.



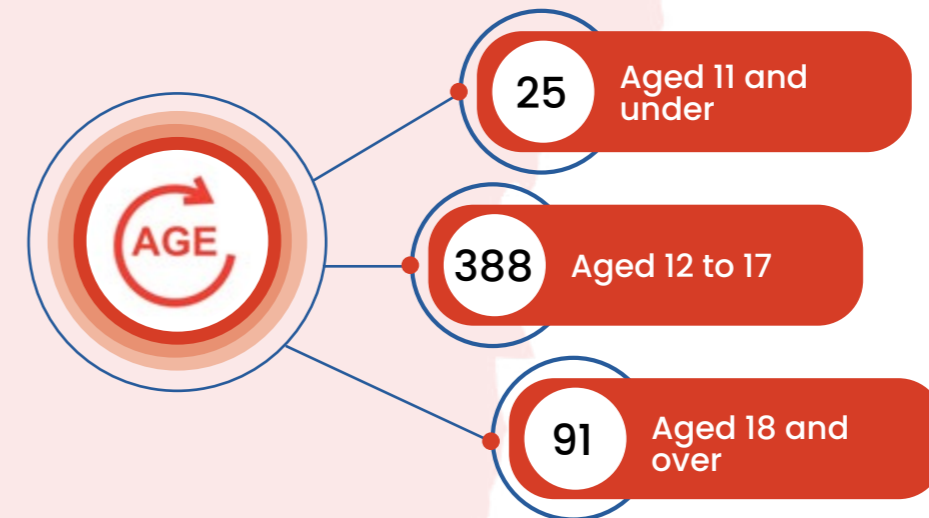
It's impossible to ignore that 65% of half of the young Londoners we worked alongside came from London's Black and Asian communities. Our commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is more crucial than ever.

Our EDI strategy sets out clear actions that will enable us to create services and support that are culturally sensitive. Our Caseworkers at Safer London are dedicated to delivering their practice in a culturally competent way, acknowledging existing inequalities and disparities. This not only strengthens our team's ability to recognise and understand their own privileges, but also empowers them to provide support in a manner that resonates authentically with the diverse backgrounds of the young Londoners they work alongside.



Safer London's case management system holds a bank of data sets that allow us to really drill down into where violence and exploitation is occurring for the young Londoners we work alongside. What it also allows us to do is look at what others are saying and see if this correlates to what we understand.

Last year, we started a comprehensive data mapping initiative, where we began cross referencing our internal data with external sources. Our aim is to not only to enhance our own practice, but also to collaboratively bridge gaps in services across various agencies working with children and young people in London.



The average age of the young Londoners who come through Safer London's Front Door is 15. However, last year we saw more young Londoners accessing our support who were 13, 12, 11 and even younger.

As part of a wider piece of work looking at our bank of resources we use when working with children and young people, we are also committed to having resources and materials that work across all these age groups. This approach guarantees all young Londoners are getting accessible and consistent support.

*To note: The data on this page doesn't comprise the data of all the young Londoners/parents/carers we worked alongside (as seen on pages 4-5). In some instances, young Londoners/parents/carers EDI data was not captured or disclosed. In other instances, we chose not to include all the EDI data on this page, for example young Londoners who identified as Non-binary or Queer.



My overall experience with Safer London was good because it made me talk more and it has kept me safe.

Seeing my worker each week helped me as she always showed up with a smile on her face. I felt supported when I wasn't being safe online and she helped me figure out how to be safe online.

She did not judge me either.

My worker taught me the five senses grounding technique and breathing to calm me down, which I will use going forward. I also learnt how to be a good friend and what a healthy and unhealthy relationship is.

**Young Londoner
who accessed Safer London's services and support**



LAST YEAR: WHAT WE DID HOW WE RESPONDED TO WHAT WE SAW

While we acknowledge we can't fix the emerging cracks in the dam, we can certainly make concerted efforts to better support young Londoners and their families whose lives have been impacted by the issues. By doing so, we can provide young Londoners with a greater opportunity for a positive future.

In order to bring about a brighter future for those we work alongside, last year we strengthened our current ways of working, building on and adapting our existing methods. As a learning organisation committed to continuous improvement, we actively listened to the feedback from young Londoners, our staff, and learning from the wider sector.

From these insights we worked on cultivating fresh and innovative approaches to our work, as well as embracing new service delivery and design, ensuring we were able to meet the evolving needs of the young Londoners and families we work alongside.

LAST YEAR WE DID THE FOLLOWING...

1. In collaboration with our partners and funders, we implemented measures to ensure that our Caseworkers work with young Londoners over extended periods. This means that young Londoners who work with our team can receive support for up to two years, with a consistent worker by their side.
2. Recognising the broader contexts that shape the lives of young Londoners, we set out to establish innovative models of service delivery and interventions. This included new intervention design centred around peer groups and the places and spaces where young Londoners spend their time.
3. The utilisation of specialist Caseworkers is not a new concept for Safer London. We have long had specialists in areas such as wellbeing and housing, and last year we expanded our team to include additional specialists in Boys and Young Men affected by Sexual Exploitation, as well as Education, Employment, and Training.
4. In response to the complexity of cases, we introduced new Expert Caseworkers roles. These individuals possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to effectively assist young Londoners presenting with the highest-level needs.
5. We know that the safeguarding of those affected by violence, exploitation and abuse necessitates the sharing of knowledge and insights with others. Embracing a spirit of inclusive and generous leadership, we crafted toolkits and comprehensive guides, aiming to disseminate our successful service models and delivery approaches. Our intention is to inspire others to replicate these practices, thereby fostering collective progress in safeguarding efforts.
6. To amplify youth voices and encourage active participation, we partnered with youth voice experts Participation People. Together, we nurtured and empowered a team of young champions known as the Safer London VIPs. The VIPs played an integral role in helping us address significant challenges and confront them head-on.
7. We worked to upskill our team so we could become an AMBIT influenced organisation, and in turn allowing us to connect and work alongside more young Londoners.

Our strategic enablers and guiding principles are what allow us to continually adapt our existing methods and embrace innovative approaches to working with young Londoners.

Throughout this report you will see where we leveraged these enablers and guiding principles to develop a strong service offer to the young Londoners and families we worked alongside.

STRATEGIC ENABLERS



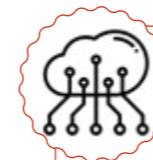
Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

We aspire to be an organisation which understands and promotes a culture of EDI for the young Londoners, families and communities we serve; as well as our staff and stakeholders.



Staff

Our team are our greatest asset. Staff training, learning opportunities, supervision, and working conditions will continue to be strengths of Safer London.



Data

Data can tell a story, as well as inform. We will analyse the data captured in our robust case management system so we can be responsive to new needs, and adapt our services.



Providing a voice

Young Londoners must influence the work we do. We're working to ensure their voices are shaping our internal processes and informing the development of our services, support and approaches.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Person Centred

Safer London puts young Londoners at the centre of their support. We listen to and work with them, focusing on them and their needs.



Co-production

Young Londoners have a say in their journey of support. This empowerment not only boosts their confidence but also facilitates meaningful engagement.



Contextual Safeguarding

We understand the impact the wider context has on young Londoners lives and safety. Whether this is in physical spaces, within their peer groups or online. We're committed to weaving Contextual Safeguarding approaches throughout our work with young Londoners.



Trauma Responsive

Young Londoners tell us how they've experienced traumatic events. This can have a devastating impact on their daily lives. Our knowledge and understanding of trauma and how it affects young Londoners, are the building blocks of our support.



Strong trusting relationships

form the foundation of all our work with young Londoners and families. We understand that establishing trust is pivotal for young Londoners to achieve a positive outcome for themselves. By building strong trusting relationships we gain insight into their world, understand what they need and learn how to keep them safe.

TRUST IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS AND BUILDING TRUST TAKES TIME

Research² shows that trusted relationships play a pivotal role when working with children and young people affected by violence and exploitation.

Establishing a foundation of trust is crucial with every young Londoner we work alongside. But trust doesn't happen overnight. These young Londoners have likely experienced significant trauma, which can result in feelings of fear, mistrust, and a loss of control.

By building trusted relationships, we can create a safe and secure environment where young Londoners feel comfortable to work alongside us.

Trust allows for effective communication, enabling us to better understand and address the unique challenges young Londoners face. It also helps foster a sense of empowerment, as young Londoners can develop confidence in their ability to share their concerns, and actively participate in their own journey.

40%

In the last two quarters* of 2022/2023 40% of Safer London's cases had exceeded a six month intervention

*extended interventions as per our contract were implemented in quarter three

WHAT WE DID

The duration for interventions provided by voluntary sector services for children and young people affected by violence and exploitation is typically six months. However, establishing effective communication alone can take months, with additional time required to gradually cultivate trust. Therefore, the current standard intervention timeframe falls short.

As the result of insightful discussions, we were able to advocate for extended interventions for young Londoners for up to two years, to meet the specific needs.

12

Up to 12 months intervention for young Londoners and parents/carers affected by violence and exploitation.

2

Up to two years intervention for young Londoners affected by criminal and sexual violence who are involved in ongoing investigations or an active court case.

HOW WE DID IT



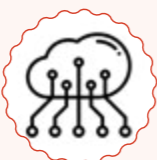
EDI



TRAUMA INFORMED



CO-PRODUCTION



DATA



TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS



CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

FUTURE FOCUS

At Safer London, we recognise that establishing trusting relationships is paramount in delivering effective support. It is a guiding principle that underlies our approach to our work.

Too often young Londoners tell us they have been let down by professionals, which only leads to a distrust in the very services meant to aid them.

To address this issue, our dedicated Caseworkers invest considerable time and effort into fostering strong connections with each young Londoner they assist, with the ultimate goal of dismantling the barriers caused by mistrust.

However, we are committed to ensuring that our efforts align with the needs and expectations of those we work alongside. Moving forward, we are enlisting the expertise of external specialists to conduct a thorough review of our internal practices.

This evaluation will focus on examining the cultivation and development of trusted relationships. Insights from this will inform our future planning, enhance the sustainability of our work, and guide its evolution.

Our aim is to refine our understanding of trust and trusted relationships, going beyond clichés to define the key factors and conditions necessary for building successful connections based on trust.

To ensure the authenticity of this process, we will actively involve the young Londoners who access our services and support. Through engaging discussions and collaborative workshops, we will gain valuable insights into their needs and desires regarding the establishment of a relationship grounded in epistemic trust.



A DIVERSE ARRAY OF NEEDS NECESSITATES THE EXPERTISE OF VARIOUS SPECIALISTS

Undoubtedly, the complexity of cases has experienced a noticeable surge in recent years. A growing number of young Londoners who come through Safer London's Front Door are now presenting with a myriad of needs that demand immediate attention.

Couple this with societal and systemic issues including the adultification and subsequent criminalisation of young Londoners, it is evident that a one-size-fits-all approach will prove inadequate in addressing the multifaceted requirements of young Londoners.

WHAT WE DID

We expanded our team by welcoming new Specialist Caseworkers. Among them were practitioners experienced in working with boys and young men impacted by sexual exploitation.

Additionally, our team now includes Caseworkers and internal advisors, whose speciality and focus is on providing support to young Londoners with educational, employment, and training needs.

239

Specialist internal support was accessed 239 times. This includes when a Specialist Caseworker is allocated as a secondary worker and when advice is sought from a Specialist Caseworker internally.

178

178 young Londoners and parents/carers received one to one support from a Safer London Specialist Caseworker.

HOW WE DID IT



EDI



DATA



STAFF



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PERSON CENTRED



CO-PRODUCTION



TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS



CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING



My specific role means I work with young males. Often this support is the first time these young men have had a safe platform to express themselves without judgement – and time and time again, just to be heard, is often the catalyst for meaningful change.

Every young male I have worked with has strengths. It's really important these strengths are given the spotlight they deserve, and once this happens it can be magical seeing confidence and self-worth grow.

- Rob, Specialist Caseworker Young Men and Boys affected by Sexual Exploitation



FUTURE FOCUS

Our existing offer is solid and robust, but we know there's more that can be done to support and empower young Londoners.

Our vision for the future involves bolstering our team with additional caseworkers, whose specialised expertise will cater to specific needs and areas of support.

Developing specialist knowledge and expertise around extremism and radicalisation

Grooming children and young people into radicalisation is, at its simplest, just another form of exploitation. One that we can't - and won't - ignore.

Every child and young person who has been radicalised has had an entire life journey and story that has led up to that point. Often this story includes feelings of isolation or longing to belong, as well as victimisation.

Looking ahead we are forging a partnership with [KIKIT](#) and [Exit Hate UK](#), so young Londoners who have been victim to this complex form of grooming, can go on to have positive fulfilling lives.

This includes training for the Safer London team, as well as bringing on board a Specialist Caseworker who will spearhead the development of an intervention and approach of working with children and young people voicing extreme far-right ideologies.



24

children under the age of 18 were arrested for terrorism-related activity*.

This is the highest recorded percentage, exceeding 13%, of all arrests, along with the greatest number of children ever arrested since the commencement of statistical recording by the Home Office in 2002.³

*in the year ending 31 June 2021

Arrests have decreased in all other age groups, children were the only demographic to show an increase.³

"It is thought that these increases are being driven largely by the sharp rise in young people arrested in relation to online extreme right wing terrorism (ERWT)

- Dean Haydon, Senior National Coordinator for Counter Terrorism Policing

COMPLEX CASES REQUIRE SUPPORT FROM KNOWLEDGEABLE AND EXPERIENCED EXPERTS

At Safer London we specialise in working alongside young Londoners facing exceptionally high levels of risk. Our commitment extends far beyond mentoring.

Each Safer London Caseworker provides dedicated, intensive one-on-one support tailored to the unique circumstances of each young Londoner. Nevertheless, there are occasions when even this level of support falls short. The needs are many. The risks are high.

What's required is more experienced seasoned practitioners. Caseworkers equipped with the same unwavering professionalism, and unmatched resilience as our Specialist Caseworkers, but ones that also come with enhanced expertise. These are the individuals who can effectively support the most high-risk young Londoners.

WHAT WE DID

Last year, we focused on establishing new roles for Expert Caseworkers, assembling a team of skilled professionals who possess the necessary experience and knowledge to effectively support those with the highest presenting needs.

The Expert Caseworkers specialise in the areas of:

- Violence
- Criminal exploitation
- Sexual exploitation
- Housing and resettlement
- Harmful Sexual Behaviours
- Criminal violence
- Sexual violence
- Criminal Justice

Support and advocacy through the criminal justice system

Young Londoners who find themselves either as victims or perpetrators of crime and violence often lack comprehension of the processes and procedures involved in the Criminal Justice System. It is evident that young Londoners in this position require expert support that addresses their unique needs.

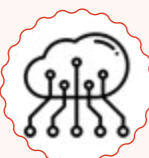
Safer London's Expert Criminal Violence, Criminal Justice and Sexual Violence Caseworkers have an understanding and knowledge of the Criminal Justice System, allowing them to provide advocacy for young Londoners with open police cases and ongoing court proceedings.

They also support young Londoners to build the resilience required to navigate through what is often a very lengthy and sometimes brutal process. Our Caseworkers will be there for them, assisting young Londoners throughout their entire journey – for however long it takes.

HOW WE DID IT



EDI



DATA



STAFF

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RELATIONSHIPSCONTEXTUAL
SAFEGUARDING

FUTURE FOCUS

We are confident in the strength of our current team of Expert Caseworkers.

However, we recognise the increasing demand for this elevated level of support among numerous young Londoners with complex and intersecting needs.

In the upcoming year, our plan is to expand our team of Experts, so we can work with more young Londoners than ever before.

Expert support for young Londoners with neurodiversity – even if they are undiagnosed

Young Londoners who are neurodiverse or have SEND may have an increased susceptibility to risks associated with exploitation and violence. Without appropriate support systems in place, they may struggle to protect themselves or seek help.

Our goal is to bring in Expert Caseworkers, who understand the nuances of working with young Londoners who are neurodivergent and have been exploited or groomed into violence and criminality, as well as those presenting with Harmful Sexual Behaviours.

By addressing their specific needs and ensuring they have the necessary resources, we can empower neurodivergent young Londoners to navigate the world safely and with confidence, reducing their risk of experiencing harm.

20%

15-20% of children and young people in the UK are neurodivergent.⁴

Neurodivergent conditions include:

- Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Autism
- Dysgraphia, dyscalculia and dyslexia
- Tourette's syndrome

3 times more likely

Children with speech and or learning difficulties are three times more likely to have been manipulated into sharing explicit photos of themselves.⁵



SUPPORTING THOSE WITH MULTIPLE NEEDS REQUIRES AN ADAPTIVE APPROACH

AMBIT* is a service model developed by [Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families](#). It's designed to encourage a system of help for excluded and overlooked children and young people, who often present with a multitude of intersecting, overlapping and complex needs.

By adopting this approach, we can effectively bridge the gap and establish connections with young Londoners who may have encountered challenges in accessing support in the past.

At its core, AMBIT revolves around the concept of mentalization, a natural process inherent in all of us, which allows us to perceive situations from the perspectives of others.

WHAT WE DID

We strongly believe that embracing the principles of AMBIT is not only crucial but also highly significant for Safer London.

Our aim is to leverage this approach to foster interconnectedness throughout the entire organisation, enabling us to have a common language for discussing our work and promoting the highest standards of practice. This will empower us to enhance our collective impact and drive forward the mission of Safer London.

Reflective Practice

Safer London Caseworkers engage in reflective practice sessions that follow the AMBIT principles framework, with the AMBIT model's thinking-together process informing the reflective practice approach.

This facilitated space offers Caseworkers a dedicated time to pause and contemplate their work.

These sessions aim to support continuous professional growth and development. The sessions are delivered in groups which are made up of Caseworkers from various services within Safer London, bringing diverse perspectives to the discussions. The intention behind this blending is to provide Caseworkers with insights from different service areas.

- We integrated AMBIT materials into our direct practice, prioritising sustainability.
- AMBIT has become a mandatory training session for all new starters at Safer London. This ensures that from the moment they join the organisation, they are equipped with the tools and mindset to apply this approach effectively.
- We established AMBIT surgeries, led by our internal AMBIT experts, as a platform for open dialogue and knowledge exchange. These drop-in sessions provide a supportive space for the team to ask questions freely and learn from one another.

HOW WE DID IT



EDI



STAFF

TRAUMA
INFORMEDTRUSTING
RELATIONSHIPSCONTEXTUAL
SAFEGUARDING

FUTURE FOCUS

Over the course of our journey, we have made significant steps towards integrating AMBIT into our operational framework.

As we move into the future, our focus will be on evaluating the effectiveness of embedded AMBIT practices. To achieve this, we are dedicated to developing case studies which will allow us to assess the impact and effectiveness of the AMBIT framework. So, we can understand the positive impact it makes for both our team and the young Londoners and families they work alongside.

Beyond this we will proactively engage in horizon scanning, ensuring that our workforce development plan is always shaped by the latest emerging approaches or incorporates the latest innovative training. Continuously fostering a culture of learning development and growth, will solidify our commitment to position Safer London at the forefront of delivering services and support to young Londoners impacted by violence and exploitation.



ADOPTING CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING APPROACHES TO STRENGTHEN SAFETY

To create long term positive change for young Londoners affected by violence and exploitation, we know we must look at the contextual factors that can impact on their safety. Only by looking at a young Londoner's whole life can we understand where they experience or are at risk of harm, and then together we can create plans to keep them safe.

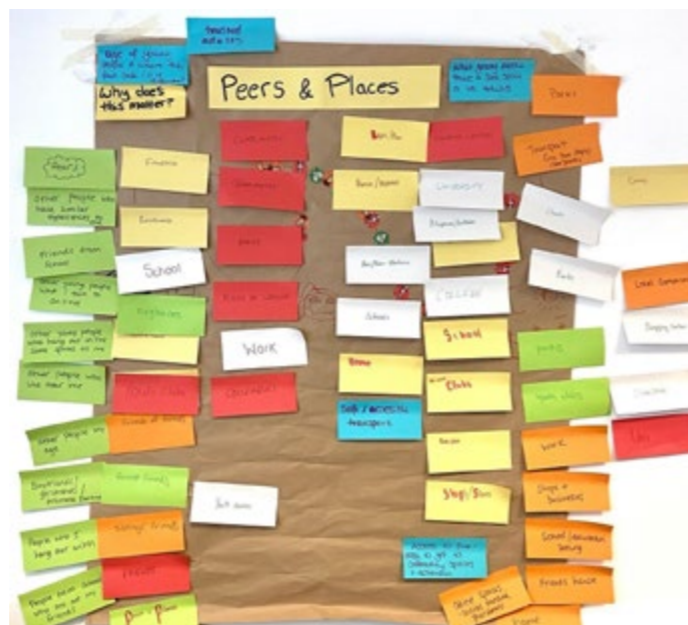
Contextual Safeguarding fills in the gaps that are often seen in statutory safeguarding, and that is to address the harms outside of the home. Young Londoners experience risk in many places. This could be on the way to school, on social media or at the local shops.

Safer London's Caseworkers understand this, and it is always built into their interventions. We know this approach can work on an individual level, but to create meaningful change that is sustainable we should be looking to apply this approach to groups of young Londoners and even whole communities.

WHAT WE DID

Last year we introduced two new Expert Development and Delivery workers whose work is dedicated to developing Contextual Safeguarding interventions. Our aim is to create a model that sits outside the conventional methods employed in prevention group work, as well as a place-based intervention which will empower communities to keep the places young Londoners live, play and work safe. The ultimate goal is to develop new models and approaches that create lasting change in communities, as well within a young Londoner's peer networks.

To make this work we've worked collaboratively with academics, sector professionals, and Safer London's youth participation group.



Cultivating innovation through youth voice

Last year we started this journey by working closely with the Safer London young Londoner VIPs. Together, we led a collaborative session that delved into the themes of peers and places, within the context of safety and harm.

Through creative safety and peer mapping exercises, we examined peer networks through the dual lens of safety and wellbeing, as well as looked at the places and spaces where young Londoners feel safe versus unsafe. Engaging discussions helped us to understand what solutions the VIPs felt could be put in place to improve community safety, as well as how peer dynamics are seen through the eyes of a child or young person.

This initial consultation phase ensures that our engagement remains rooted in the insights of the true experts - children and young people. Their perspectives are vital in understanding how to build interventions and approaches that that work for them.

HOW WE DID IT



EDI



STAFF

PROVIDING
A VOICECO-
PRODUCTIONTRUSTING
RELATIONSHIPSCONTEXTUAL
SAFEGUARDING

FUTURE FOCUS

In the coming year, we will further develop these innovative approaches and then test them. As an organisation committed to fostering a culture of proactive knowledge sharing with others, we will then share what we've learnt.

Recognising that learning is integral to growth, we are dedicated to openly communicating our experiences, both successes and setbacks. We aim to provide valuable insights that can pave the way for collaborative innovation, with the end goal of creating positive outcomes for as many children and young people affected by violence and exploitation as possible.



"Throughout the [Innovate Project](#)** we have observed Safer London's commitment to innovation. Over this period, we have witnessed Safer London making bold and, at times, radical changes to its organisational structure and approach in working with young Londoners across its services.

Safer London drew inspiration from the Contextual Safeguarding framework to shape its 5-year strategy, which focused on working with People, Peers, and Places. This strategy marked a shift in conceptualising the harm faced by young Londoners in a more holistic manner. Safer London transitioned from siloed working organised around types of harm to a more integrated approach. This resulted in a variety of changes both in its practices and within the organisation.

The Innovate Project learnt a great deal from Safer London's careful and ethical approach to making these changes. Particularly, when something didn't work out the first time, or when more resources were needed in order to create meaningful change, Safer London wasn't afraid to 'pause' some aspects of its innovation journey in order to ensure that the right conditions were in place. They showed they were an agile and learning organisation, open to sharing their learning with others.

As a test site for the Innovate Project for Contextual Safeguarding, we have committed to support the development of resources, to be used by others wanting to adopt Contextual Safeguarding in their work with children and young people.

Through these actions, Safer London has played an important role in evidencing what Contextual Safeguarding might look like in a voluntary organisation. There is still a lot to learn about how the approach can be implemented in the third sector. Until now, Contextual Safeguarding has predominantly been conceptualised and put into practice within statutory Children's Social Care services.

We have observed how Contextual Safeguarding aligns with many of Safer London's organisational values. These include collaborative and strengths-based approaches to working with young Londoners, which seek to understand, and change, the contexts in which young people experience harm. Furthermore, we have seen how Safer London employs the Contextual Safeguarding framework to support and influence multi-disciplinary partners to respond to contexts of harm.

The Innovate Project is coming to an end in December 2023. We are concluding the project with a conference in November 2023, where Safer London will contribute and share the insights gained from their innovation journey."

- Delphine Peace,
Research Fellow, Innovate Project

EMBEDDING YOUTH VOICE THROUGH YOUTH ACTION

Youth voice is incredibly important to us at Safer London.

We want to make sure that the perspectives, experiences, and needs of young Londoners are heard and considered throughout all areas of Safer London – from our service delivery and development to our recruitment and polices.

At Safer London we recognise that young Londoners are not just passive recipients of services, but active agents in shaping their own lives and communities.

By engaging with young Londoners and giving them a platform to express their opinions, ideas, and concerns, we know we can create more relevant and effective programmes and interventions.

WHAT WE DID

Last year, we forged a partnership with Participation People, established experts in amplifying youth voices, to foster a culture of youth voice and participation within Safer London.

Our primary objective is to inspire every single person who works at Safer London, urging them to explore innovative ways of harnessing youth voice. By doing so, we aim to reshape their approach towards their work and, more importantly, to guarantee that the voices of young Londoners are valued in matters that deeply concern them.



Thanks to the VIPs I have become a lot more confident in myself and sharing opinions and thoughts with fun and likeminded people my age!

We're not just making a difference to Safer London, we're also doing it to ourselves!

- young Londoner VIP

- 14** 14 young Londoners engaged with the VIP programme and were active youth voice champions.
- 22** 22 youth voice sessions out of which 17 were consultations with Safer London senior leaders.
- 2** 2 collaborative sessions were facilitated with external partners and funders. This provided a platform for the VIPs to actively engage in the broader discourse surrounding violence and exploitation in London.
- 51** 51 volunteer hours reflecting the significant amount of time invested in actively engaging and connecting with the VIPs, as well as the dedication from the VIPs themselves.

HOW WE DID IT



EDI



STAFF



PROVIDING A VOICE



CO-PRODUCTION



TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS



CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

Safer London BIG takeover week

Last year we hosted our first VIP BIG takeover week. The event provided an opportunity for these VIPs to lead discussions on important business challenges through sessions, brainstorming, and creative activities.

This included looking at our recruitment and induction processes, ensuring our practice resources are youth friendly, and the creation of a digital youth hub.

In order to uphold accountability, we monitored actions, and have planned future activities where we will continuously review these actions, making sure we are staying true to our word.



10

10 young Londoners aged 12 to 18 participated.

5

5 big business challenges tackled head on.

ACTION	WHO	WITH WHO	W
All the notes being written up. create Website Proposal create summary doc create Youth hub and launch	Who is who Kate Helen Helen	Charlie Kate V.I.P MM	2 weeks Febru Febru
write up the notes reviewing take back of resources and youth responses and review before publishing V.I.P Review	Charlie Allyson Allyson Allyson V.I.P	Team Team Team Charlie	1 week Febru Febru April April
write up the notes → Team meeting	Charly Team	Team	2 weeks
V.I.P Review initial changes	Team V.I.P's Karley	Charly Team	DECEMBER EASIER
write up notes → build information resource review + design process (peers)	Charly Carly Carly	Carly Aiden Aiden	2 weeks Dec Feb
write up notes Review & finalise	Charly Sam	Sam Radini	2 weeks

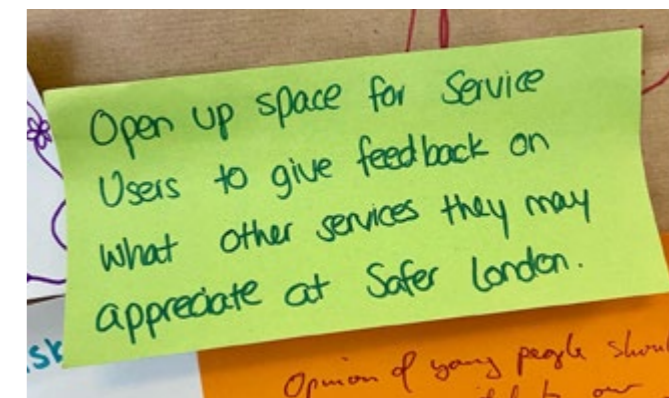
FUTURE FOCUS

The future of youth voice and participation at Safer London holds immense promise as we continue to embrace the power of young Londoners' voices.

We recognise the significance of amplifying youth perspectives and creating platforms for their active involvement in decision-making processes. Going forward we are creating mechanisms whereby anyone who has accessed or been offered our services and support can feedback to us.

We will provide opportunities to feedback at multiple stages of a young Londoner's journey, including those who opt not to work with us or those who initially choose to work with us but later withdraw from our support.

By encompassing all perspectives, we will gain a comprehensive understanding of what is effective and, more significantly, what is not.



SHARING OUR KNOWLEDGE THROUGH GENEROUS LEADERSHIP

Generous leadership is important. We know we can't work in silo. We also know we can't reach everyone.

By adopting a generous leadership approach, we are demonstrating our commitment to making a positive impact on communities beyond the reach of Safer London. By sharing our knowledge and learning with other organisations, groups and communities, we are allowing for a wider dissemination of best practices, innovative strategies, and evidence-based interventions.

By sharing what we've learnt, we hope to empower others to enhance their own capacity to safeguard children, young people and families impacted by violence and exploitation. We want to inspire a culture of collaboration, learning, and continuous improvement across the sector, resulting in a more effective and coordinated response to violence and exploitation.

WHAT WE DID

Last year we produced two guides, based on models and approaches of service delivery. These two guides shared our learning experiences, building on where we got it right – as well as where we can improve.

With resources and templates, these resources can guide professionals to safeguard and support those affected by violence, exploitation and abuse.

Beyond the Banter: A Professionals' Guide

Building on the success of the award-winning 'Beyond the Banter' Safer London created a comprehensive guide for professionals.

This resource aims to explore how the peer-led approach can be tailored and implemented to benefit various groups of children and young people, extending its impact beyond its initial target audience.



Unlocking Doors: A Professional's toolkit for establishing managed housing reciprocals

After operating the Pan London Housing Reciprocal for five years, we set out to develop a comprehensive toolkit designed to guide and assist professionals. So, they could set up and establish a managed housing reciprocal, to support social housing tenants fleeing violence, abuse and exploitation based on local need. Thus, extending the reach of this important scheme.



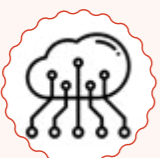
HOW WE DID IT



EDI



TRAUMA INFORMED



DATA



CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING



TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

FUTURE FOCUS

At Safer London, we firmly believe in the importance of sharing our experiences and knowledge, regardless of whether they are positive or negative.

It is our commitment to prioritise this sharing, as we recognise its significant value.

Looking ahead, we will be building upon the success of the Beyond the Banter model and tailoring its approach to support young women and girls who've been impacted by criminal and sexual exploitation. This adaptation reflects our dedication to addressing their unique needs and offering them the assistance they deserve, by using an innovative peer-led approach.



LAST YEAR: THE DIFFERENCE WE MADE THE NUMBERS

It's important to understand that numbers don't tell the full story.

Measuring impact only with numbers doesn't show the full picture. To really understand impact, we need to look beyond the numbers and consider the personal and societal effects of our work.



FEELING SAFE

78%

78% of young Londoners who were impacted by violence said they felt secure or less at risk from harm.

93%

An impressive 93% of those impacted by sexual exploitation expressed feeling safer compared to when they began working with us.

83%

When it comes to young Londoners who were affected by violence, 83% shared that their lives were now less affected by it.

EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND EMPLOYMENT

77%

For 77% of young Londoners affected by violence had better access to education, training, and job opportunities.

93%

As for those impacted by sexual exploitation, a significant 93% found that their involvement in education, training, and employment had improved.

FAMILY AND PEER RELATIONSHIPS

84%

84% of young Londoners affected by violence noted that their relationships had gotten better.

94%

An impressive 94% of those impacted by sexual exploitation found that they were better equipped to nurture healthy relationships.

77%

Among young Londoners affected by violence, a solid 77% mentioned an improvement in family dynamics.



This is particularly fundamental when it comes to young Londoners, as their lives and stories are just beginning. The experiences and transformations they undergo shape their futures in ways that extend far beyond numerical data.

To gauge the true impact, we must listen to their voices, understand their journeys, and appreciate the qualitative aspects that numbers alone can't represent.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

82%

82% of young Londoners affected by violence shared that they had a better understanding of or easier access to suitable health support.

94%

In the case of young Londoners impacted by sexual exploitation, 94% mentioned experiencing an enhancement in their overall health and wellbeing.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND COPING STRATEGIES

76%

A significant 76% of young Londoners affected by violence expressed that there was a decrease in their involvement in criminal or violent activities.

92%

For young Londoners impacted by sexual exploitation, an impressive 92% indicated that they had developed better strategies for coping with their challenges.

ACCESSING HOUSING AND SUPPORT

82%

82% of young Londoners impacted by violence said they found it easier to secure housing or receive housing support.

REDUCING RISK OF EXPLOITATION AND VIOLENCE, THROUGH IMPROVED FAMILY DYNAMICS AND MANAGING EMOTIONS.

Aaron is a 12-year-old boy that I worked with over a period of six months. From what I experienced, Aaron is joyful and very funny. He's got a great sense of humour. You can tell Aaron is the one who brings the joy and energy in the room. Especially when it's down he can lift it up again.

The best way to describe Aaron is as someone who is determined. If he's interested in something, he will do whatever he can to be the best and succeed.

Aaron appeared to have a happy life on the surface. However, he was experiencing troubles at home. The police visited the family home after a report of domestic violence. It was clear that the family situation was affecting Aaron and his siblings. For over ten years they had regularly been witnessing domestic violence and abuse in the home.

Due to this Children's Social Care placed Aaron on a Child Protection Plan. They referred Aaron into Safer London, due to further concerns that he was at risk of exploitation and grooming in the local community.

When he first started working with me Aaron was apprehensive, but you know, that's natural. I approached the first session as more of a conversation, rather than getting into the work itself. As time went on, he got to know me a bit more and I got to know him. I started to see his character more and he started to open up.

Aaron did have a problem concentrating and would often drift off. But if he's interested, he will engage. You just have to find a way that works for him. I had to adapt my sessions to make sure he stayed engaged. So, I thought of creative ways to work with him and it was important to structure sessions, so they were interactive.

I knew he loved drama and acting, and that he was involved in the end of school play. In one of our sessions, I helped him to practice his lines. I think he really enjoyed this because he didn't want to stop! This set us up for a great session and really helped me to build that all important relationship with Aaron.

Exploitation and grooming

Aaron's mum was concerned he was at risk of being exploited or groomed after he lied about his whereabouts. To address these concerns, a big focus of my work was around spotting the signs of exploitation and how Aaron could keep himself safe in certain situations.

We explored Aaron's understanding of exploitation by asking questions about what he thought exploitation was, what the signs of grooming are, and how to identify potential exploiters.

We then moved on to community safety. Together, we identified areas of risk and safety, so areas or places Aaron felt he might be exploited or groomed. From this we could identify places that felt safe and places that felt unsafe. Together we mapped this out and from there we're able to make a safety plan.

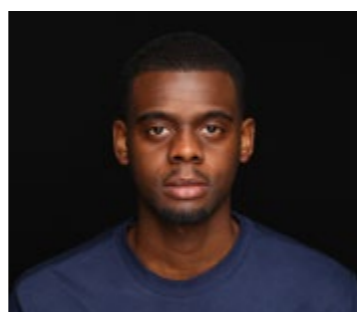
We focused a lot on what he would do if he found himself in a situation where he was getting groomed or exploited. It was simple strategies, such as keeping his distance from those who posed a risk by going to the next local shop and reaching out to his mother or other trusted adults.

Who Aaron could contact formed a key part of his safety plan. I put to him the question of who else he would call if he couldn't get through to his mum and he wasn't aware. I said, *you know you can call the police and they'll be able to help you, especially if the situation is very severe* and he understood that.

Aaron is now equipped to handle unsafe situations and protect himself effectively using his safety plan.

Meet Aaron's Caseworker!

Luke,
Specialist
Criminal Violence
Caseworker



Family dynamics

Despite Aaron having a good relationship with his mum, it was clear that we needed to improve their dynamic, particularly around trust and communication.

We had lots of conversations on how Aaron needs to be honest about his locations with his mum. I wanted him to understand that he didn't have to hide or lie about what he was doing. All he has to do is be honest. His mum wasn't going to stop him from going out and being with his friends. She wants him to have fun, but he had to be open about what he was up to and where he was going.

He was able to grasp that, and it changed the dynamics of the relationship. He began openly sharing his whereabouts and kept her in the loop, letting her know where he was going and who he was with. There was now a line of communication which brought that trust between them.

Over time I saw significant improvements in the relationship. Both Aaron and his mum expressed how it had improved. Aaron's mum told me he's speaking to her more and engaging in conversations. These were short and general, but conversations none the less. It let me know he was trying. He'd even started reading to his siblings and spending time playing with them. I could see that he actually wanted to build that relationship and have that trust with his mum, as well as be that big brother to his younger siblings.

Managing emotions

One of the things I wanted to work on with Aaron was conflict resolution. Sometimes Aaron struggled in managing his emotions effectively. In the first few months of starting secondary school, he got into a number of fights over a short period time. This raised concerns with the school, as they were worried about the possibility of this becoming a regular occurrence.

It was clear that if Aaron felt disrespected by someone, his immediate response was to retaliate. So, we worked together on ways to manage his emotions, but more importantly managing his reactions to those emotions.

It was about getting him to understand that he's going to feel angry, because everyone does, right? It's about how the response can cause that situation to get worse or better.

I focused on showing Aaron different ways of how to deal with situations and we did a lot of this through scenario-based work. I'd get him to think back to previous situations where he reacted in a way that caused more problems, and together, we explored alternative ways of dealing with those situations. Additionally, we worked through possible future scenarios. So, I'd put together a hypothetical situation and together we worked through ways he could handle that situation positively.

When it came to that conflict resolution, I could see a real growth in Aaron. I had conversations with Aaron's teachers where they told me he was getting into less fights and they could see that he was handling situations better. It was clear to me he'd improved his ability to manage difficult situations. With time he was able to deal with situations in a positive way. So instead of reacting, he was able to take a moment to breathe and step away, and then address it accordingly.

He was able to just think about the situations and not let his emotions take control of him. He was now the one in control.

My approach with Aaron was always about creating a space where he could be open. We talked about what he wanted to work on, what he felt comfortable talking about. I let him know if he needed support or help with anything, he could come to me, and if it wasn't something I could help with, I could draw on the professional network for assistance.

Sometimes I feel like young Londoners may have just missed out on certain lessons. Sometimes you just need to put it in front of them and they'll be like, *ohh, OK, I'm aware now*. I feel like this was the case for Aaron. He just needed to be guided.

I believe Aaron will continue to grow. His mind is focused and he knows what he needs to do. He has the fundamentals and he's been able to implement them. He has the ability to self-reflect and can communicate how he's feeling. I know from what I've seen that he can make major improvements and go far in life. I really feel like the future is bright for him.

Name changed to protect identity

HOW WE MEASURE OUR IMPACT

Measuring the long-term impact of our work has always posed a challenge. It becomes particularly difficult when we consider the complexities of the lives of the young Londoners we work with and the challenges they must overcome.

To address this issue and ensure consistency across all our work, we developed our first **Theory of Change**. This framework aims to measure outcomes across key areas of the young Londoner's journey.

To assess against these outcome areas, young Londoners engage in discussions with their Caseworker, providing a rating of 0 to 4 against questions that explore each area in more detail.

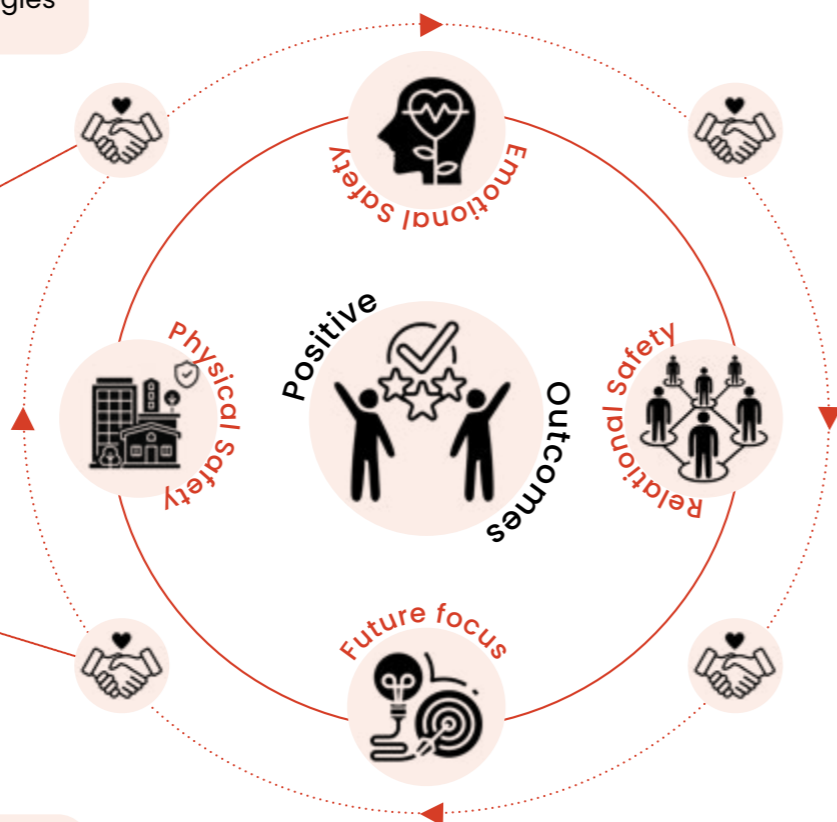
This evaluation takes place at various points throughout their support, showcasing the progress achieved during their journey with Safer London.

SAFER LONDON OUTCOME MEASUREMENTS

Ensuring **physical safety** and wellbeing is paramount in each young Londoner's support journey. We concentrate on equipping them with knowledge on safe navigation through their environments, including online spaces, and empowering them to develop strategies for self-protection.

Emotional safety focuses on young Londoners' self-compassion, encompassing self-love, self-worth, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and self-care.

All of these outcomes are underpinned by a **strong relationship** between the young Londoner and their dedicated Caseworker. This relationship is built on a solid foundation of trust and serves as the catalyst for change, enabling young Londoners to achieve progress in each outcome area.



Centred around a young Londoner's **future aspirations**, we strive to establish attainable goals, ensuring sustainability beyond the end of our support. Success in this area can be seen through improved understanding of financial skills and exploring education, employment, and training opportunities.

Focusing on a young Londoner's interactions within their peer networks, both positive and negative, this measurement involves fostering an understanding of **healthy relationships** and building supportive networks.

OUTCOME MEASUREMENTS: THE NUMBERS



Average score at the start of the intervention

Average score at the end of the intervention

To assess emotional safety, Caseworkers engage in discussions with young Londoners asking questions around how they manage and navigate their emotions, feelings and responses during challenging and difficult times. These conversations also serve as a collaborative exploration of the young Londoner's self-perception and self-worth.



Average score at the start of the intervention

Average score at the end of the intervention

To measure relational safety, Caseworkers talk to young Londoners about their peer relationships. Specifically they focus their questions around healthy versus unhealthy relationships, as well as whether young Londoners can identify risks within their peer networks, as well as where they can go to for sources of safety and support.



Average score at the start of the intervention

Average score at the end of the intervention

To gain an understanding of a young Londoner's physical safety, Caseworkers ask questions that explore the spaces and places where young Londoners spend their time. Together, they discuss where young Londoners could experience harm and whether the young Londoner feels they are able to safely navigate that environment – whether that be in the physical or online world.



At the end of the intervention, 73% of young Londoners felt they had a clear idea of what they wanted for themselves in the future and had a clear idea of how to achieve it.



Once their support with safer London came to an end, 85% of young Londoners felt they were on a path to being able to pursue and work towards their future goals.

UTILISING THE OUTCOME MEASUREMENT TOOLS TO NURTURE POSITIVE CHANGE

Jess was referred to Safer London after a disclosure of sexual assault and concerns of exploitation within her peer group. Despite a stable home life and good academic performance, Jess needed additional support to help manage the trauma she'd experienced. As Jess began working with her dedicated Caseworker, she was initially hesitant, but she soon revealed her vibrant personality. Shyness gave way to reveal an outgoing and very funny young woman who lit up the room.

We understand the value of a person-centred and trauma-responsive approach. From the start, Jess and her Caseworker engaged in open conversations, allowing Jess to choose what she felt comfortable discussing. Collaboratively, they identified the main priorities and tailored an action plan which was relevant and relatable. Clear timelines were set, and progress was consistently revisited to keep things on track.

The support provided was entirely centred around Jess, it was all about making sure she felt comfortable and that the sessions were relatable so she could engage. The focus was on tailoring accessible sessions, addressing challenging topics in an engaging manner. During one session, they made gingerbread houses to inject some fun into an otherwise heavy topic. The goal was to create an environment where Jess felt at ease, making her journey towards progress as smooth and enjoyable as possible.

It was important to create a safe space for Jess, a space where she knew that she didn't have to discuss her painful experiences, but if she chose to, her Caseworker would be there to listen. To create this safe space her Caseworker took the time to get to know Jess and what her interests were. As it turned out, Jess was deeply passionate about sports and actively involved with her local team. Leveraging this knowledge, her Caseworker used this as a foundation to establish and build trust.



Physical Safety: ability to navigate safe path through own environment

It was important to empower Jess so she could safeguard herself from potential harm, while also focusing on identifying the places where she felt the safest and happiest.

During their discussions, Jess and her Caseworker explored potential sources of harm, both in the online and offline worlds, ensuring she gained a clear understanding of what harm might look like and how she could effectively protect herself.

To address community safety, they explored various scenarios together which allowed Jess to visualise how she could keep herself safe in the community. They explored what unsafe and safe situations look like, especially in relation to potential harm from others. Jess was encouraged to understand that those who truly cared about her would never subject her to discomfort or danger. Additionally, she actively identified her trusted networks, forming a vital part of her safety plan. This plan involved sharing her whereabouts with those she trusted, which she was already doing, and keeping them updated about her plans.

Sessions exploring online safety opened Jess's eyes to the potential risks posed on the internet. Through these sessions, she gained valuable insights into navigating virtual spaces safely, particularly learning how to protect herself while using social media platforms.



Future focus: Finding purpose and making steps towards it.

Jess conveyed anxiety about her upcoming exams, so her Caseworker engaged in discussions with Jess' Mum, encouraging her to communicate directly with the school and GP. The goal was to ensure Jess had the support she needed during this critical period, allowing her to excel in her exams.

With her dedication to her sporting activities, there's a high likelihood of Jess achieving great success, even reaching a professional level. A goal and aspiration her Caseworker actively encouraged and supported.



Emotional Safety: Self compassion

Self-compassion and self-love were something Jess requested as part of her programme of support. They were the primary focus for her and the aspects that resonated most strongly with her. During their sessions, Jess and her Caseworker delved into the significance of self-love and self-care and exploring effective ways to manage emotions and stress. They utilised affirmations as a powerful tool, creatively incorporating positive statements that Jess could embrace and integrate into her life moving forward.

The empowering message Jess received from her Caseworker was: "Never allow others to define you. Your life is yours to live, free from the constraints of societal pressures. Don't let anybody tell you any different". This message not only reaffirmed and validated Jess' own thoughts and feelings but also provided the necessary encouragement and readiness to navigate the more challenging conversations ahead.



Relational Safety: Interactions with peer networks

Sex and consent were topics Jess was hesitant to discuss in detail, but were important to explore as part of her journey of support. While she was willing to approach the topic, she preferred not to delve into how it related to her past experiences.

Through creative and interactive sessions, the topic was explored in a sensitive way, ensuring that it didn't overwhelm her. Sessions were designed to not retraumatise Jess, respecting her boundaries and allowing her to vocalise her concerns at her own pace. Her Caseworker avoided discussing the traumatic aspects, creating a safe space for her to express herself freely.

The sessions emphasised the importance of consent, reaffirming that what Jess had experienced was not her choice or her fault and that she was a victim. Together, they explored the dynamics of relationships, focusing on the benefits of healthy relationships versus unhealthy ones, and also discussed the qualities of a good friend.

Jess' vast peer network was explored through mapping exercises. Jess had a lot of people around her and this deep dive into who these people were and what role they played in her life allowed Jess to see who she could rely on during times of need or crisis. This comprehensive analysis played a pivotal role in shaping her overall safety plan, empowering her to make informed decisions about whom to trust and lean on in critical situations.

Jess' engaging work plan played a pivotal role in the successful completion of the intervention. A personalised workbook became a cornerstone of Jess' support. This was tailored to her preferences and was something she could revisit. This invaluable resource contained all the information covered in the sessions, along with Jess' own reflections. Taking the lead in its design, she recorded the outcomes of each session, including activities like the pyramid exercise used to explore her relationships.

The workbook's flexibility allowed Jess to determine its contents and use it as a tool for retrospection. Moreover, it provided space for her Caseworker to contribute additional information, such as relevant resources on sensitive topics like sex and consent. This creative approach not only brought variety to the conversations but also allowed Jess to reflect on different aspects of her life.

By using the outcomes as outlined in the Theory of Change, Jess' Caseworker was able to scaffold support around Jess which focused on achieving positive outcomes in the areas of emotional, relational and physical safety, as well Jess' future focus. By including Jess in the coproduction of her action plan and by regularly revisiting this and measuring against the indicated outcomes, together they were able to help Jess achieve her goals and create sustainability that will allow for long lasting impact.

By the end of Jess' time with Safer London her self-confidence had soared. She was positive and enthusiastic throughout her support, bringing joy and laughter to every session. It can often be sad when support comes to an end, but it's the sign that the young Londoner no longer needs us – which is only a positive. In the case of Jess, it was clear she was on a path to a positive future.

Name changed to protect identity



My worker helped me realise things that I could do to help myself and make changes which would positively impact my life. They made sure I had a choice of when and how our sessions would work, which made me feel more at ease. They made sure I was comfortable and if I wasn't ready to talk about something they would wait until I was.

They were very kind, nonjudgmental and supportive.

I have learnt that I need to work on setting boundaries and keeping them. After my support I know I can trust in myself and know what I am worth.

Looking to the future, I can't wait to see what happens with my future education at sixth form and law school.

**Young Londoner
who accessed Safer London's services and support**



REFLECTIONS AND LEARNING: LOOKING BACK

Self-reflection holds great significance.

It allows us to gain valuable insights from our past experiences, which in turn shapes our path for the future. It encompasses not only acknowledging and celebrating our accomplishments, but also critically examining areas that require further growth and development.

Each year we set ourselves three big aims. Here's how we fared against what we set out to achieve last year.

1.

Further our journey to becoming a fully trauma-responsive organisation and making steps towards it.

Trauma can have a profound and lasting impact on young Londoners, families and communities. Trauma overwhelms a person's ability to cope and can significantly affect their mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. By ensuring we are a fully trauma-responsive organisation we will be able to create safe and supportive environments that will enable young Londoners to overcome their trauma and move onto positive futures.

Last year, we took a significant step forward in our journey to become a fully trauma-informed organisation by engaging the expertise of Betsy De Thierry, a renowned trauma recovery trainer and consultant. By delivering a comprehensive programme of trauma training for the entire Safer London team, from those providing direct support to our central resources team, we are ensuring that a comprehensive understanding and knowledge of the effects of trauma and its manifestations in young Londoners is permeated throughout every aspect of Safer London.

By doing so, we have woven a powerful golden thread that unifies us all.

2.

We want to work in partnership with community organisations to grow real local responses to violence and exploitation.

At Safer London we are confident in our abilities of working one-to-one with young Londoners and families who need specialist and intensive support. Our primary challenge lies in direct community engagement.

As a London wide organisation operating on a substantial scale, we currently lack those community connections. To bridge this gap, we recognised the need to collaborate and partner with established organisations and groups already embedded in local communities.

Last year we partnered with [Code 7](#) to facilitate peer group initiatives in Lambeth's communities. With strong roots in the community and locally respected teams, Code 7 is well positioned to deliver this form of outreach on our behalf. Building on this partnership we are now in the early stages of exploring and establishing a parents' network in Lambeth. This peer support network will allow parents affected by violence and exploitation to support one another.

Furthermore, we widened our own networks of grassroots and community organisations, building relationships with culturally sensitive organisations. This allows us to refer those we work alongside to services and support that are tailored and equipped to address their specific needs.







3.

Our services and delivery will be shaped by young Londoners, and we will build pathways for them to influence delivery, development and decision making.

In 2020, in the midst of the global pandemic, we welcomed the first cohort of the Safer London VIPs. Since then we've made leaps and strides. Last year we set out to ensure the VIPs were central to how we worked and that they gained exposure to a range of Safer London colleagues, from practitioners right up to the CEO. We have witnessed youth voice grow and develop over the past few years, showing real benefits not just for us as an organisation, but for the young Londoners who are part of the VIP group.

We wanted to find a visually engaging way to showcase what participation looks like at Safer London, and more importantly the difference it makes. So, we brought together the VIPs to create the [Safer London Youth Voice & Participation tree](#).

Through collaborative discussion and creative activities we focused on six main areas:

-  The Seed: The purpose and motivation behind participation.
-  The Roots: Shared values for us and the VIPs.
-  The Trunk: What supports effective participation.
-  The Branches: How we facilitate successful.
-  The Leaves: The difference it makes – impact and outcomes.
-  The Sun and Rain: What allows participation to develop and grow.

As this work evolves and progresses more and more leaves will be added to the tree. The more our participation work develops, the more difference we can make for all the young Londoners we work with.





SAFER LONDON YOUTH VOICE AND PARTICIPATION TREE



The sun and rain foster growth by promoting effective communication, leveraging social media, and encouraging new participants to join the VIP group. These elements enable the Youth Voice and Participation Tree to flourish and grow.



The leaves represent the impact, tangible outcomes and transformative effects of youth participation, such as improved confidence, practical skills, and a safer environment. Through participation young Londoners feel validated, and their ideas lead to positive change and innovation.



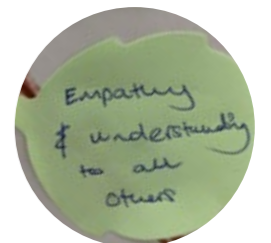
The branches symbolise the diverse and dynamic methods through which Safer London and the VIP group nurtures and amplifies youth voice. These activities and initiatives create a space for young Londoners to grow, learn, and actively contribute.



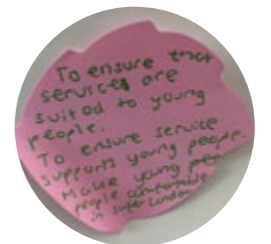
The trunk of the Youth Voice and Participation Tree serves as a solid foundation, nurturing and sustaining youth voice and participation. It empowers young Londoners by providing opportunities, work experience, and a supportive team that values their opinions and ideas.



The roots of the Youth Voice and Participation Tree form the foundation of this vibrant community at Safer London. Anchored in core values like kindness, empathy, and respect. These values create a positive and supportive environment where everyone feels heard and valued.



The seed of the Youth Voice and Participation Tree is like the fuel that keeps the young Londoner Safer London VIP group going. The VIPs shared their individual reasons, like wanting to make new friends, learn from different perspectives and making sure services are tailored to young people's needs.



REFLECTIONS AND LEARNING: LOOKING AHEAD

In 2020 Safer London launched its first Strategy [A Safer London for Everyone: People, Peers and Places](#).

Setting strategic goals is vital for any charity. It sets direction and focus by defining purpose, vision, and mission, which in turn guides decision making, actions and next steps, and how we allocate resource and funds.

Our big three areas of focus as we enter the penultimate year of our strategy:

1.

Taking a closer look at the Safer London Front Door

In the first year of our five-year strategy, we implemented the Safer London Front Door. A single point of entry for all young Londoners and families who access Safer London's support and services. This enabled us to allocate the right workers and ensure no referrals were missed. It has also meant that safeguarding and EDI are considerations prioritised the moment a young Londoner or family member is known to Safer London.

Now we want to make sure it's the best it can be.

Going forward we will look at carrying out an internal review of the Front Door, making sure it is efficient, effective and adequate for both professionals and those who use our services. We will also look to share our learnings with others.

Additionally, we've introduced new outcome measurement tools to more effectively measure the difference we make. Substantial investments have also been in enhancing our workforce development offer. This includes a new training system, as well as a programme of activities overseen and managed by a workforce development coordinator.

We always strive to ensure our team is delivering the best possible support to the young Londoners they work alongside. Support that is in line with values and behaviour expected at Safer London.

This year we are developing our first behaviours framework. This framework will empower the entire Safer London team with a comprehensive understanding of what effective behaviours are required at different levels in the organisation. This framework will be developed in collaboration with all those within the organisation and will be used as part of the performance management process to discuss and evaluate performance.

This will run alongside the important work we have already done to improve our people management process, which includes discussions around case management, as well as EDI and intersectionality.

2.

Formalising a set of behaviours to enhance service delivery and support

Since launching our first organisational strategy in 2020, we have achieved numerous significant milestones. This includes a Theory of Change that underpins our delivery work across our three strategic areas of People, Peers and Places.

3.

Continuously reviewing the landscape in which young Londoners operate and swiftly adapting to emerging themes with agility.

Being agile and responsive to emerging themes is crucial in the development of services for children and young people affected by violence and exploitation.

Young Londoners whose lives are impacted by violence and exploitation often contend with complex challenges. It is only by taking a dynamic and adaptable approach to service development and provision, that we can hope to align with the evolving needs of the young Londoners we work alongside.

Over the past year we have noticed a significant gap in our service delivery and support. Often, we see young Londoners accessing Safer London's services who are neurodivergent or have SEND, whether this has been formally diagnosed or remains undiagnosed.

We know we need to create impactful, responsive, and tailored interventions that genuinely address the challenges faced by this demographic.

Going forward our focus will be on developing new roles designed to cater to the specific requirements of young Londoners with neurodivergent needs.

While our team of Caseworkers are well adept and have had training to support those who are neurodivergent, we acknowledge the importance of bringing in specialised expertise around this area.

This will not only better serve young Londoners, but also enhance the capabilities of the wider Safer London team.

CEO REFLECTIONS

“The needs of young Londoners are unique to each child or young person, but one common thread among them all is the profound impact austerity has on their lives and the services available to them. This is compounded by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, and it is painfully evident how this affects the daily lives of countless young Londoners.

The lingering impact of the pandemic continues to affect the emotional wellbeing of many young Londoners. The harm that extends beyond the confines of young Londoners’ homes, makes the experience of living in the city difficult for many young Londoners who struggle to find hope and opportunities. All these factors mentioned simply compound year on year.

To put it simply, we are asking young Londoners to thrive in a city with huge inequalities, where opportunities for many are non-existent. Employment opportunities are limited for some, housing is scarce for all, and there are places that remain unsafe for many young Londoners.

Additionally [research](#)⁶ published this year concludes that “Britain is not close to being a racially just society”. Consequently, we cannot turn a blind eye to the impacts of social injustice, a known driver of violence.

In a system that appears increasingly strained due to limited resources, we made it a priority last year to forge partnerships within the professional network. We recognise that safeguarding children and young people cannot be accomplished in isolation. Last year, we enhanced our decision-making processes at Safer London’s Front Door, ensuring thorough reviews of requests when multiple agencies are involved. This reduces duplicating work and ensures that all decisions prioritise the best interests of the child.

As part of our five-year strategy our commitment includes providing a single, consistent point of contact for young Londoners. We adopt a team-around-the-worker model, allowing individual Caseworkers to tap into a wealth of information we hold as an organisation, while continuing to serve as the primary point of contact for the child or young person.

Our work remains adaptable, offering flexibility for the Safer London team and we offer the young Londoners a blend of in-person support alongside online check-ins and conversations.

Guided by fundamental principles, we place the safeguarding of young Londoners at the heart of everything we do. This is deeply rooted within our core one-to-one intervention work, an offer that is strong and robust.

Yet, we acknowledge that there is still more that needs to be done.

Looking to the future, we aim to strengthen our community intervention offer. Place-based interventions are relatively new terrain across the sector, and it takes time to develop initiatives that foster genuine sustainability within the community itself. However, we have assigned a dedicated worker to spearhead this work, and we are confident that we will make significant progress in the coming year.

Another priority in the coming year is an increased commitment to amplifying the voices of young Londoners. This includes putting the processes and support in place to make sure the issues that are important to them are heard by those who can influence and create change.

I am immensely proud of the entire Safer London team. Every single person who works here is dedicated and passionate about promoting the safety and welfare of young Londoners. However, when I look back and reflect on our accomplishments as an organisation my thoughts are always taken to the achievements made by the young Londoners we work alongside.

These are young individuals who are having to navigate through incredibly tough environments. It is through their own resilience that they are able to find a positive focus for their future.”

Sherry Peck, CEO



HOPE FOR THE FUTURE: REINFORCING THE DAM

Although the risks of harm to young Londoners, and indeed all children and young people across the UK, can't be eliminated, there is hope for the future. Work can be done to close those cracks and reinforce the dam.

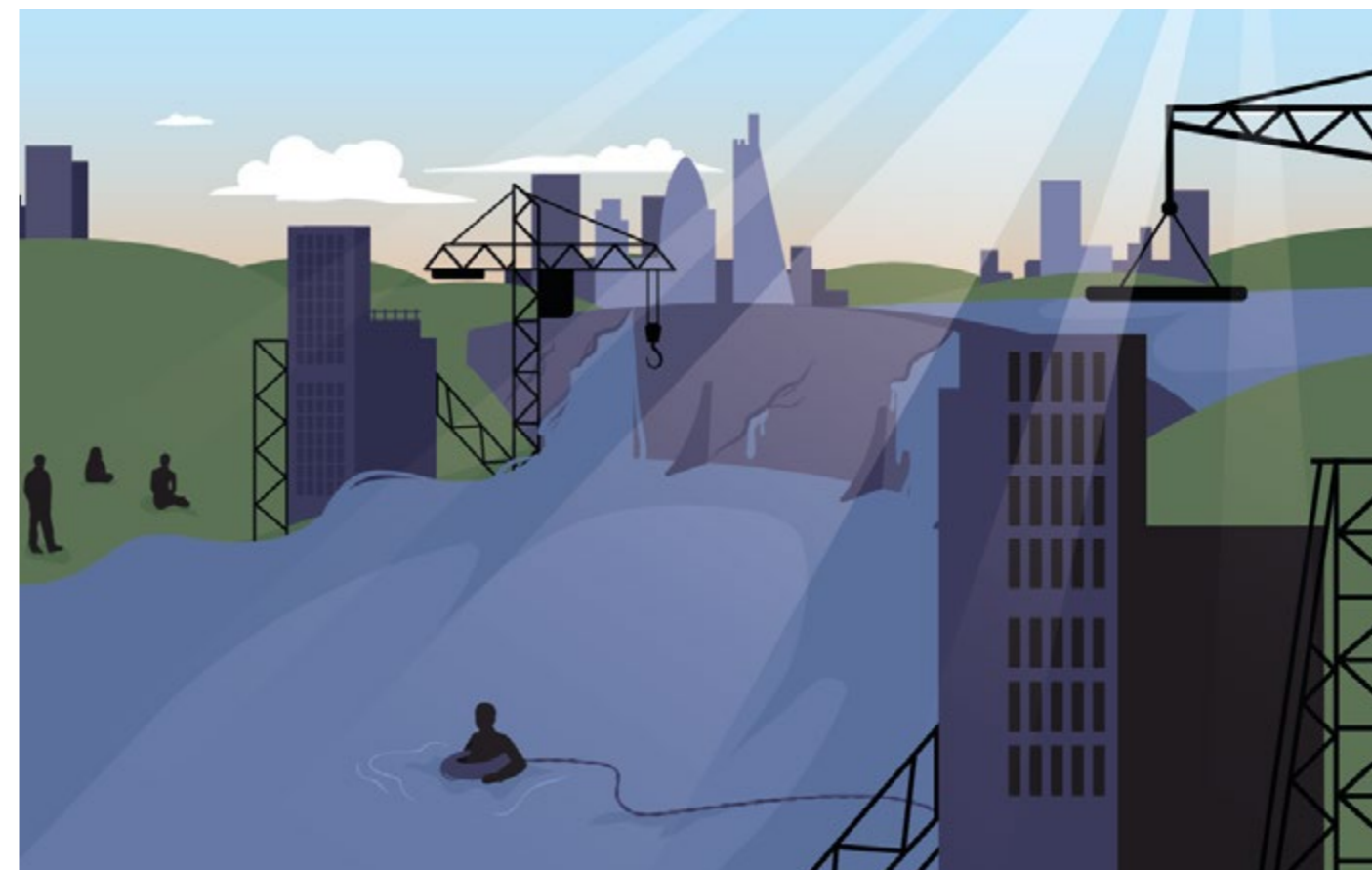
This can only be done by working in collaboration. Together, we can strengthen the dam and divert future fractures.

Government, both local and national, statutory services, third-sector organisations, and communities, as well as children and young people themselves, hold the key to change.

Until that time, we will continue our work with young Londoners and families. We will continue to invest in the Safer London team, work in harmony with others, and support and nurture community groups.

We're calling for:

- Everyone to prioritise a safeguarding approach when working with children and young people. We must work to break down the preconceived notion of young people by labelling them as either victims or perpetrators. This will ensure that safeguarding never falls short and will avoid the criminalisation of children.
- Everyone to treat children and young people as such – children and young people. The adultification of children and young people is detrimental to their wellbeing and hinders their personal development. We must stop viewing them through the lens of adults.
- Policy and legislation that puts children’s rights front and centre. This must be informed by the voices and experiences of children and young people.



At Safer London, we firmly believe there can be a positive future for every child and young person affected by violence and exploitation.

We will continue to work closely with all our partners and funders to ensure that young Londoners are getting the support they need.

A theme we consistently observe throughout our work is resilience. The young Londoners we work alongside display incredible resilience every day. The strength and determination to forge their paths toward a positive outcome are unparalleled.

This resilience is truly what allows young Londoners to **rise above**.

THANK YOU & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Safer London Senior Leadership Team and Board of Trustees want to extend their thanks to all of our partners, funders and supporters who allow us to continue our work, ensuring young Londoners have the future they deserve.

What we achieved last year wouldn't have been possible without the support and dedication of the incredible Safer London team and of course the young Londoners and families we worked alongside.

To them we say our biggest thank you - without you there is no Safer London.

Our sincere gratitude and thanks to our supporters, funders and partners:

- Catch 22
- Charles S French Charitable Trust
- City Bridge Trust
- Code 7
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- Exit Hate UK
- Help for Children UK
- KIKIT
- Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)
- Ministry of Justice (MoJ)
- NHS South East London Integrated Care System
- Participation People
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation
- Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
- Spitfire Audio
- The London Community Foundation
- The Master Poulter's Pelican Trust
- Vanguard Group Foundation
- WAGN
- The many schools and individuals who fundraised to support our work.

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- The Safer London VIPs
- Asani, Youth Voice and Participation Tree Illustrator
- Participation People
- Neck of the Woods Films
- The entire Safer London team



ABOUT SAFER LONDON

Safer London works with young Londoners and families affected by violence and exploitation.

Through specialist one-to-one intervention, we are supporting young Londoners to move onto the positive futures they deserve. We put young Londoners at the centre of their support, focusing on them and their needs. By building strong, trusting relationships we gain an insight into their world, begin to understand what they need and together we find the best ways to keep them safe.

Understanding young Londoners' lives are shaped by the world in which they live, we work not only with them and their families, but also their peer networks and directly within the community and the places where they live and spend their time.

We are committed to learning, innovating, and delivering high quality, evidence-based support. With a footprint in every borough in London, we build trusting, professional partnerships to embed our approaches and work towards achieving our vision of a city that is safer for all young Londoners who live here.

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GET IN TOUCH

To discuss potential partnerships, including in relation to any of the projects you have read about in this report please email bd@saferlondon.org.uk To commission our services email bd@saferlondon.org.uk

For general enquiries please email info@saferlondon.org.uk

Information on our services, including criteria and how to make a referral, can be found on our website www.saferlondon.org.uk

FURTHER READING

Read our Trustees' Annual Report and accounts <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/4014786/accounts-and-annual-returns>

Read past Impact Reports on our website www.saferlondon.org.uk/our-impact/

Read our five-year Strategy A Safer London: People, Peers, Places www.saferlondon.org.uk/our-strategy/

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* AMBIT is an approach to support teams develop systems of help around particularly vulnerable, excluded, and underserved clients who may have little confidence or trust in the possibility of 'help' being helpful in their lives, and whose many difficulties often attract large numbers of different teams and professionals around them, that can make it complicated to coordinate who does what, and when, and may sometimes be rather overwhelming to the very people we are trying to help. (<https://www.annafreud.org/clinical-support-and-services/adaptive-mentalization-based-integrative-treatment-ambit/what-is-ambit/>)

** The Innovate project is a four-year pan-UK project exploring how social care and interagency systems are innovating to respond to extra-familial risks and harms that young people encounter and experience beyond the home, e.g. sexual and criminal exploitation, peer-on-peer abuse, gang affiliation, serious youth violence, and violent extremism. Research fieldwork is being conducted in six case study sites through 2021 and 2022, seeking to uncover the processes of innovation at different stages of its trajectory. Each site comprises a social care organisation, local authority or other network which is innovating using Trauma-informed Practice (TiP), Contextual Safeguarding (CS), or Transitional Safeguarding (TS) as a primary underpinning framework to respond to EFRH. (www.theinnovateproject.co.uk)



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