

# SHIFTING GEARS

Reframing our approach  
to working with young  
Londoners displaying  
Harmful Sexual Behaviours

**saferlondon**

**US**  
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OF SUSSEX

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Fairbairn  
FOUNDATION

## 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.

Safer London is a registered charity in England and Wales No. 1109444; and a company limited by guarantee No. 5190766. [www.saferlondon.org.uk](http://www.saferlondon.org.uk)

## Contents

Introduction: Shifting Gears	03
University of Sussex Evaluation of Safer London's Harmful Sexual Behaviour Project	10
Reflections and next steps	35
Acknowledgments & References	41

# INTRODUCTION: SHIFTING GEARS

Three years ago we set out to develop an innovative approach to working with young Londoners displaying Harmful Sexual Behaviours (HSB)

Prior to this we had already been delivering an impactful HSB service, sometimes referred to as Safer London's Boys and Young Men service. Although this service had a positive impact on the boys and young men who accessed it, we knew we could do more.

Research and knowledge on HSB had moved at a rapid pace and we wanted a service that was not only rooted in, but built upon, the latest research and innovative practices. That was the motivation that started us on our journey.

What we discovered in the last three years is that developing a model of support for young Londoners displaying HSB is akin to driving a car through varied terrain. Initially, we set out on a particular route, much like choosing a gear suited for smooth roads. However, as we progressed, we encountered unexpected challenges and realised that our chosen approach wasn't optimal for the journey ahead.

Like a skilled driver, we recognised the need to shift gears.

This involved pausing, reflecting, and evaluating our direction. Just as a driver might downshift to navigate a steep incline, we adjusted our strategy to better tackle the complexities of supporting these young Londoners.

This process of shifting gears wasn't about a complete overhaul, but rather a strategic adjustment. It allowed us to maintain momentum while ensuring that our approach remained responsive and effective.

Just as a driver finds the right gear for each stretch of road, we found the best approach to meet the needs of the young Londoners accessing this service.

Ultimately, through our willingness to reassess and adapt, we have arrived at a more effective and sustainable model of support.

## SHIFTING GEARS

## A HISTORY OF SAFER LONDON'S HSB SERVICE OFFER

### 2013

We piloted a young mens healthy relationships education group programme

### 2016

We piloted a HSB programme in Hackney

### 2017

Following the pilot we started delivering a HSB programme in Brent

### 2018

We expanded our HSB programme in to Croydon

### 2021

We start developing a new HSB model, working in Barking and Dagenham. We commissioned evaluation of the programme, to run alongside the development of this new model

### 2023

We opened up our HSB service to accept referrals from all London boroughs

### 2024

We welcomed a HSB Development & Delivery Neurodiversity Caseworker, to provide expert level of support to young Londoners with neurodiverse needs

## SAFER LONDON'S HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS SERVICE, DELIVERY AND APPROACH

Safer London's Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) service works alongside young Londoners following specific Incidents, allegations or concerning trends of HSB.

But we're not just here to react. We're here to collaborate, to understand, and to guide.

Our approach to HSB is both comprehensive and sensitive. We delve deep into the underlying factors contributing to such behaviours, striving to build a strong trusting relationship with each young Londoner we work alongside. A solid foundation of trust is built by creating a safe, non-judgmental space where honest communication can flourish.

### SAFER LONDON'S HSB SERVICE, SUPPORT AND DELIVERY IS ROOTED IN GUIDING PRINCIPLES:



PERSON CENTRED



CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING



STRONG TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS



TRAUMA RESPONSIVE



NON JUDGEMENTAL



CO-PRODUCTION



## SHIFTING GEARS

Referrals into Safer London's HSB service come from a variety of sources, including social care, schools and colleges.

Once a referral is received, the Safer London Front Door referral and assessment team, alongside our expert Caseworkers, conduct a thorough review to ensure that the case aligns with our expertise and the service that we offer.

Whilst we primarily engage with young Londoners exhibiting moderate to mild behaviours, we don't shy away from more serious cases. Instead, we approach them with careful consideration, providing robust support and guidance, or directing them to more suitable resources or services when necessary.

Every intervention is tailored to address the unique needs of each young Londoner, with a firm commitment to fostering positive outcomes. Our interventions cover a wide range of topics. These range from navigating healthy relationships to understanding appropriate and inappropriate sexual interactions including consent. As well as navigating online use including pornography, exploring identity and intersectionality, and managing feelings and emotions.

In the initial stages of our interventions, we conduct a thorough risk assessment using the AIMS 3 assessment tool, which is widely recognised within the sector. This tool uses a contextual approach, encompassing multiple domains to ensure comprehensive consideration of every aspect of a young Londoner's world. Beyond assessing HSB, it also considers additional factors such as education, diversity, cultural background, individual needs, family dynamics, peer relationships, pro-social skills, environmental influences, and socioeconomic circumstances.

By adopting this holistic approach, we are able to better understand a young Londoner's life, experiences and needs, laying the foundation for trauma-informed support. This ensures that our interventions are not only effective but also sensitive to the unique circumstances and challenges faced by each individual we work with.

## SHIFTING GEARS



We know that it is necessary for our efforts to extend beyond Safer London. We firmly believe in the power of collaboration and multi-agency work.

By partnering with professionals such as Social Workers, educators, youth workers, and psychologists, we ensure that our interventions are not only holistic but also carefully coordinated. This collaborative approach allows us to develop intervention plans that address the multifaceted needs of young Londoners, whilst maintaining a strong focus on safeguarding across a broader network.

Regular attendance at professional meetings is a cornerstone of our approach. These provide a forum for in-depth discussions, ensuring that every aspect of support for a young Londoner is thoroughly examined and that their needs are prioritised.

Throughout our work, safeguarding always firmly remains the top priority. Our HSB Caseworkers are transparent with young Londoners about the importance of safeguarding measures, fostering a culture of trust and accountability.

At the same time, we recognise the importance of maintaining open and engaging relationships, striking a delicate balance between protection and empowerment.

By integrating these principles into our work, we strive to create a safe and supportive environment where young Londoners can thrive and grow.

## DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LEARNING AND COLLABORATION

At Safer London, we pride ourselves on being a learning organisation, one that pauses to reflect and review our service offer and delivery.

It's through this introspective process that we gain insights into the effectiveness of our services and support and ensure they remain in the best interests of the young Londoners we work alongside. With this ethos at our core, we're committed to taking the necessary steps to continuously adapt and evolve.

When developing our Harmful Sexual Behaviours service, we knew we didn't want to do this in isolation.

Thanks to support from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, we established an effective and indispensable partnership with the University of Sussex, with a team headed up by Professor Kristine Langhoff providing invaluable guidance and support.

The team's role extended beyond just evaluating the service, they actively guided and supported the development of the service using their expertise and knowledge. Over three years, they closely collaborated with the Safer London HSB team at every stage of the service design, offering consultancy and advice.

This collaborative approach allowed us to shift gears and make significant strategic changes. The University of Sussex team played a pivotal role in guiding our decision-making process, advocating for the necessity of changing directions. Working closely with them added substantial value, particularly through their partnership and support during the design and development phases.

This led to the creation of a service that wasn't solely based on research findings, but was also constructed through a robust collaboration with a highly regarded research institution.

This partnership with the University of Sussex concluded in March 2024. The subsequent evaluation sheds light on the numerous successes of the HSB service development and delivery, while also providing valuable insight into areas for further development.

For detailed findings and recommendations, we encourage you to explore the full report.

## SHIFTING GEARS

## SERVICE MANAGER REFLECTIONS

“This document marks the culmination of a three-year evaluation of Safer London’s Harmful Sexual Behaviours service. During this period the University of Sussex, funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, have observed a lot of evolution and growth in our service, including strategy and personnel changes.

I am grateful to the University of Sussex in particular Anna Hutchings and Kristine Langhoff for their professionalism, research and insights which will help us to continue to develop the service. I would also like to thank the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for their funding and support over the past three years, in addition to Safer London for commissioning the evaluation.

However, my biggest gratitude extends to the young Londoners, their families and the referrers who participated in this evaluation, as well as for their positive engagement with the service.

Finally, I am grateful to all my colleagues at Safer London who have worked on and contributed to the development of the service over the past three years.

Responding to the findings presented, I am extremely proud to read that the evaluation found evidence that the service was effective in working with adolescents displaying inappropriate and problematic Harmful Sexual Behaviours, as per Professor Simon Hackett’s (2010) continuum model.

I am pleased that the evaluation recognises the importance of positive relationships within the work. The relationship between the lead worker and young Londoners accessing the service is essential to the likelihood that our work will bring about sustained and meaningful change.

We constantly promote the importance of safe and healthy relationships within the work, focussing on issues such as consent and peer pressure.

“

The findings of the evaluation will be crucial for us going forward as we continue to grow our service and ensure each young Londoner who accesses it receives holistic, strengths-based, and person-focused support to navigate their respective challenges and become the best possible versions of themselves they can be.

”

**JOSH PAICE, SAFER LONDON**  
Service Manager (HSB)



## SHIFTING GEARS

Over the course of the evaluation, we have invested in our staff development and drawn on the latest research to ensure our response to Harmful Sexual Behaviours follows best practice and is firmly rooted in an evidence-based approach.

This is a fundamental aspect of Safer London's approach to not just our HSB service but all our offerings to young Londoners and their families affected by violence or exploitation.

Whilst there is not a wide range of research available on this topic we have been heavily influenced by the research of [Professor Hackett](#). We built our service model around the framework of [Responses, Prevention, Assessment](#) of needs, [Interventions](#) and Workforce [Development](#).

Our service is designed to be a preventive service which works with young Londoners who display inappropriate or problematic HSB, rather than behaviours which are deemed violent or abusive.

The idea is that we work with young Londoners to provide education and guidance to reduce the likelihood of repeating concerning behaviours in the future.

I am hopeful that this evaluation will encourage other organisations working in the sector. I feel that it demonstrates the practical application of Professor Hackett's research and I hope this will inspire others to follow similar practices and approaches."

Josh Paice, Safer London  
Service Manager (HSB)

**RESPONSES**

A continuum of responses to children and young people displaying HSB

**PREVENTION**

Prevention, identification and early intervention

**ASSESSMENT**

Effective assessment and referral pathways

**INTERVENTIONS**

Multi-modal approach to intervention

**DEVELOPMENT**

Workforce development



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Safer London, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, revived its Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) service delivery offer in 2021, partnering with the University of Sussex for guidance, support and evaluation.

## METHODOLOGY

This evaluation is theory-driven, focusing on understanding the underlying mechanisms of change, particularly concerning interventions for safeguarding young Londoners at risk of HSB.

At the outset of the three-year evaluation, the team sought to provide evidence of **effective intervention**, **fidelity to the service model**, and pathways for **knowledge exchange** with external partners involved in the service.

A realist evaluation approach was utilised in this evaluation, combining qualitative methods like interviews, ethnographic observations, and analysis of case records provided by Safer London.

INTERVIEWS WERE UNDERTAKEN WITH VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING THOSE WHO WERE SUPPORTED BY THE SERVICE

**6** referrers

**3** young Londoners

**4** Safer London project workers

**2** parents/carers

**2** Local authority partners

Throughout the process three themes were identified:

→ Effective relational work

→ Education and behavioral change

→ Connected practice

## SHIFTING GEARS

## FINDINGS

## Effective relational work

- Safer London's relational work approach emphasises flexibility, consistency, a child-led focus and adapting interventions to meet individual needs.
- Staff development is prioritised through targeted training, fostering specialised expertise in addressing inappropriate sexual behaviours.
- Safer London is recognised for its sensitivity and professionalism in addressing HSB, maintaining confidentiality, and fostering trust through a non-judgmental approach and open communication with young Londoners and families.
- Ethnic and cultural identities are acknowledged as significant factors, with efforts made to challenge stereotypes and promote curiosity to dismantle misconceptions.

## Education and behavioral change

- Safer London's relational approach aided in positive changes among young Londoners, with the focus on educating young Londoners promoting help-seeking behaviours.
- Interviews with school staff noted enhanced self-esteem and increased confidence in participants among young Londoners, facilitating their ability to approach adults for support.
- The HSB caseworkers facilitated learning and self-awareness through structured activities and worksheets, while also encouraging input from young Londoners.
- The child-led nature of the work was evident, with caseworkers tailoring activities to align with the interests and concerns of participants, such as mental health discussions.

## Connected practice

- Safer London collaborates with schools, parents, and professionals, engaging closely with young Londoners' networks to tailor comprehensive support to individual needs.
- Initially planning to partner with a single Local Authority for knowledge exchange, Safer London found this unfeasible due to misalignment in service delivery models and lack of internal resources within the Local Authority.
- Changes in programme delivery, necessary for innovation, require strong organisational support, which Safer London provided as the HSB service quickly adapted to deliver a sustainable service.
- Schools, pivotal in addressing HSB, often refer cases, highlighting the need to develop strategies to upskill school staff for when an intervention closes.

## CONCLUSION

The evaluation findings indicate that the work being done positively impacts the wellbeing and safety of young Londoners. Safer London's reputation and commitment to prioritise young Londoners' needs contribute to its effectiveness.

Despite challenges in service delivery, Safer London demonstrated adaptability and robustness. Commendably, Safer London has adapted its approach and provided support mechanisms such as reflective practice and training for staff.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a consistent and holistic plan for supporting ongoing work within schools.
- Explore re-branding the HSB service.
- Build robust and consistent process for recording outcomes specific to the HSB service.
- Capture how young Londoners' victimisation is surfaced in the work.



# UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX EVALUATION

Prepared by Anna Hutchings and Professor Kristine Langhoff

## INTRODUCTION

Safer London, supported by funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, commissioned the University of Sussex to conduct an evaluation on their newly re-launched Harmful Sexual Behaviour project in 2021.

Safer London had previously provided this specialist service but in the absence of funding, had not maintained this specialism within their service until new funding offered the opportunity to re-start the service, building upon prior learning and intending to incorporate current research and best practice in the field.

The project aimed to intervene with young Londoners displaying sexual behaviour categorised as 'inappropriate' and 'problematic'; thus serving as an early intervention initiative to prevent escalation and additional harm.

In this report, we contextualise the evaluation by first providing an overview of Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) and how it is conceptualised in the academic literature; we then describe the evaluation methodology, key findings and recommendations for Safer London's continued work supporting young Londoners to engage in safe, healthy relationships.



## SHIFTING GEARS

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

HSB has been defined as sexual behaviour by under-18s that are: *“developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others and/or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult”* (Hackett et al., 2019, p.13.13).

The spectrum of sexual behaviours among children and young people ranges from what is considered typical and expected for their developmental stage to behaviours that are deemed inappropriate, problematic, or even abusive and violent (Hackett, 2010).

**NORMAL**

Developmentally expected

Socially acceptable

Consensual, mutual, reciprocal

Shared decision making

**INAPPROPRIATE**

Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour

Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group

Context for behaviour may be inappropriate

Generally consensual and reciprocal

**PROBLEMATIC**

Problematic and concerning behaviours

Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected

No overt elements of victimisation

Consent issues may be unclear

May lack reciprocity or equal power

May include levels of compulsivity

**ABUSIVE**

Victimising intent or outcome

Includes misuse of power

Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance

Intrusive

Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim

May include elements of expressive violence

**VIOLENT**

Physically violent sexual abuse

Highly intrusive

Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator

Sadism

Hackett’s continuum (2010) which helpfully identifies how ‘inappropriate’ sexual behaviour can encompass single instances of sexual behaviour that are developmentally inappropriate, actions that may be deemed socially acceptable within a specific peer group but are not acceptable in broader society, and situations where behaviour occurs in an inappropriate context despite being considered normal elsewhere.

On the other hand, ‘problematic’ sexual behaviour, as delineated in this continuum, refers to actions that are developmentally unusual and socially unexpected. These behaviours may exhibit characteristics of compulsion, involve unclear consent, and demonstrate non-reciprocal behaviour. They often occur within power imbalances but may lack overt victimisation.

## SHIFTING GEARS

Moreover, sexually abusive behaviours demonstrated by children and young people can occur in online settings, termed Technology-Assisted Harmful Sexual Behaviour (Hollis & Belton, 2017). However, there exists a lack of consensus in research regarding the characterisation of developmentally 'normal' versus 'problematic' online behaviours (McNeish & Scott, 2023). Expertise and understanding for addressing this specific issue are still nascent.

Recommendations for intervention in respect of 'inappropriate' and 'problematic' sexual behaviour include actively responding to such behaviour, including listening to the child or young person without judgement and responding calmly. It is essential to consider both the individual's developmental and chronological age, along with broader holistic factors and safeguarding concerns related to their sexual behaviour.

Adhering to organisational child protection protocols is vital, including reporting to the designated child protection authority and seeking support from the appropriate lead. Additionally, evaluating the need for therapeutic intervention and making referrals as necessary are critical steps in effectively addressing and supporting the individual's needs (NSPCC, 2021).

Despite promising emerging research, there is a dearth of studies on children and young people exhibiting inappropriate and problematic sexual behaviours (Campbell et al., 2018). However, school staff are often critical to identifying these behaviours, given their propensity to occur in settings where children congregate, such as schools (Shawler et al., 2020, p.8). Timely identification and referral are pivotal in effective early intervention (ibid).

While individuals who exhibit HSB can be considered a diverse group, research has identified specific discernible patterns. Most children and young people displaying Harmful Sexual Behaviours are male (Vizard et al., 2007; Finkelhor et al., 2009; Hackett et al., 2013; Fox & DeLisi, 2018).

While some pre-adolescent children may exhibit 'problematic' behaviour, it is seldom intentionally abusive (Johnson & Doonan, 2005). Those with learning disabilities are particularly vulnerable to displaying inappropriate and problematic sexual behaviours, with 38% of under-18s referred to specialist services for HSB having a learning disability (Hackett et al., 2013). However, increased adult supervision over these individuals often leads to the identification of their sexual behaviour as problematic (Allardyce & Yates, 2018).

## SHIFTING GEARS

Ofsted (2021) has identified that sexual harassment and abusive behaviours among adolescents in schools have become so common that they are considered normal.

In response, the government in England has introduced new guidelines that focus on prevention and early intervention. These guidelines recommend a whole-school approach, robust preventative education, and 'zero tolerance' for inappropriate behaviour (Department for Education, 2022a). In addition, a broader prevention strategy is suggested, including a public health perspective and gendered analysis (Scottish Government, 2020).

While research indicates that professional intervention can decrease rates of sexual recidivism among young people (Lussier et al., 2016), it is essential to acknowledge that existing evidence largely stems from studies involving boys and young men convicted of sexual offences (McNeish & Scott, 2023).

Prioritising early intervention and addressing lower-level behaviours, explicitly focusing on schools, appears crucial (Lussier et al., 2016), but more research is needed at this early intervention level.

Safer London's HSB service was intended to meet this need for early intervention services, and the evaluation of their work is timely.

## METHODOLOGY

A realist evaluation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) approach was proposed to determine 'what works, in which circumstances, for whom'.

This approach to evaluation is theory driven, beginning with understanding the overarching theory of change (i.e. what do they think they are doing and why do they think it will be effective?) including the generative mechanisms underlying the decisions made and actions taken to safeguard young Londoners deemed at risk of HSB.

In addition to identifying any positive changes for young Londoners and their families, the Sussex evaluation team also sought to capture learning related to the wider context in which this work occurs (e.g. the geographical location, socio-political context of the local authorities and schools, and the wider cultural and gendered contexts that young Londoners inhabit).

At the beginning of the three-year evaluation project, the research team sought to provide evidence of: **effective** intervention, **fidelity** to the service model, and pathways for **knowledge exchange** with external partners working with the young Londoners accessing Safer London's HSB service.

For the purpose of this evaluation, we define these terms as follows:



**EFFECTIVE:** To identify what has worked, for whom, in what circumstances



**FIDELITY:** To understand how the service delivery aligns with the originally identified service goals



**KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE:** To support and inform Safer London's development of a service delivery model that can be provided within statutory settings

## SHIFTING GEARS



A realist evaluation approach lends itself to drawing upon a range of research methodologies.

In this project, we collected a range of (primarily) qualitative data through interviews, ethnographic meeting observations, and accessing data from referral and case records provided by Safer London. See Table 1 for a summary of data collected.

Interviews	6 referrers 2 parents/carers 3 young Londoners 4 Safer London project workers 2 Local authority partners
Direct work	2 x examples of direct work
Programme of work	15 Session Plans
Assessments	1 initial and 1 closing assessment
Young Londoner feedback questionnaires	3

Table 1



## SHIFTING GEARS

Project data underwent an iterative process of analysis that began at the start of the project and continued throughout, including:

## METHODS

60

Research team meetings

18

Meetings with Safer London

3

Years of data analysis

**Research team meetings** held approximately twice yearly throughout the project. The PI and project researcher met to read the data, employing the Institutional Ethnography (Smith, 2005) strategies of indexing (i.e. making connections between the work processes and practices and the people doing them) and mapping the 'ruling relations'- their features and the related social practices - involved in the daily work of the Safer London project worker(s) as it evolved over time.

**Monthly meetings with Safer London staff** (e.g. the project worker and manager) which contributed to our thinking and helped shape the evaluation in relation to data collected and through providing important organisational context for the analysis.

**An intensive period of data analysis** where the team employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) stages of thematic analysis.

Upon completing data collection, the team read the qualitative data and familiarised themselves with the secondary data (e.g. referral and demographic details) garnered from case files.

The project researcher underwent a process of initially coding the data, and then together the team generated themes, then further refined and named them before embarking on the written summary of findings below (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Throughout, we sought to take a reflexive approach, critically examining our own prior subject knowledge, research and practice experience, within the context of coming alongside Safer London to support and evaluate the work.

## SHIFTING GEARS

## FINDINGS

Throughout the evaluation, several themes emerged as central to the delivery of the service and the emerging evidence of its effectiveness.

We have framed these themes as: **effective relational work**; **education and behavioural change**; and **connected practice**.

These themes are discussed in detail later in this report, but we begin with a brief summary of the young Londoners Safer London supported through the HSB service from 2020–2023.

**Twenty-four young Londoners** were referred to the Safer London HSB project across the **three-year evaluation period**.



**24**

young  
Londoners  
referred



**83%**

referrals  
accepted



**11**

Work plans  
completed  
plans

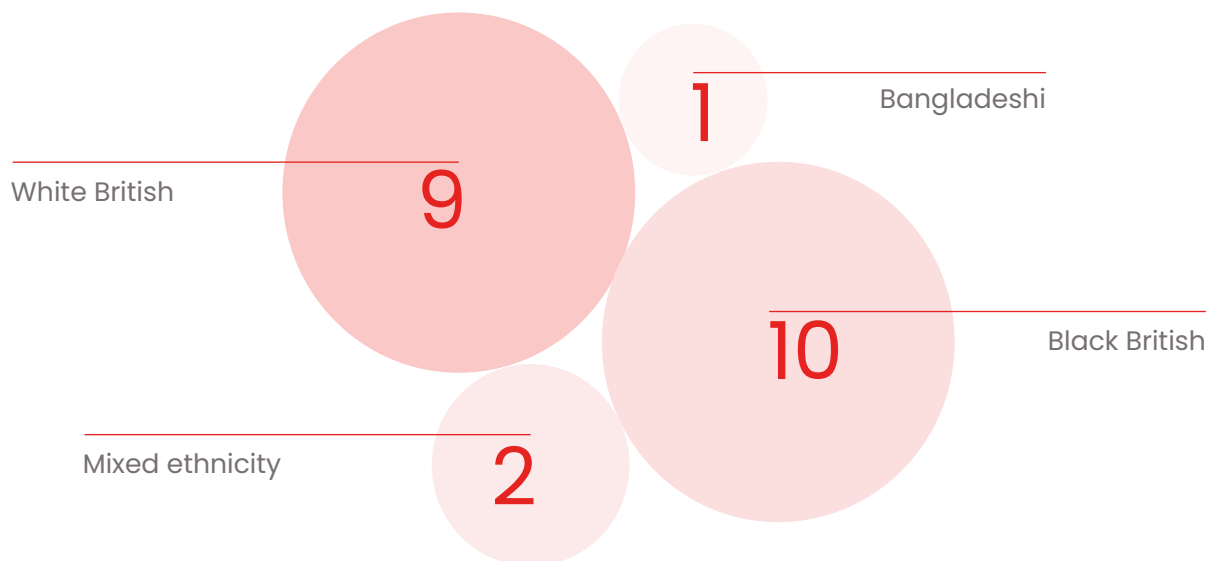
- 83% of referrals were accepted (n=20 boys/young men)
- Four were identified as too high-risk for the project for the following reasons:
  1. A young Londoner whose behaviour was determined to be 'too risky' for the lone female worker to manage. Consequently, the case was referred to a male worker in the Safer London Emotional Wellbeing team.
  2. A young Londoner who had experienced extra-familial sexual abuse.
  3. Two young Londoners exhibited sexually abusive behaviour that was determined to be more severe (i.e. in the higher end of Hackett's continuum) than Safer London would work with\*

Among the 20 young Londoners Safer London provided services to within the evaluation period, 11 are reported to have successfully completed the plan of work at the point when data collection ended. Three either did not engage or actively declined the service.

\*If Safer London determines that a referral is not suitable for their service, they will write to the referrer explaining this decision. In this communication, they will include resources that may be helpful and suggest an alternative pathway for support, such as the Lucy Faithfull Foundation.

## SHIFTING GEARS

The young Londoners are ethnically diverse, with an equal split between White British and Black British backgrounds, along with two young Londoners of mixed ethnicity and one of Bangladeshi origin.



# 13

average age of those accessing service

The young Londoners ranged in age from 11-17; the average age was 13.

They presented with a range of additional needs including Autistic Spectrum Condition, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and other mental health concerns.

# 2

young Londoners had previously been Looked After Children/subject to placement order

At least two young Londoners were reported to have previously been a Looked After Child or subject to a placement order.

The service currently has nine\* open referrals, with two being managed by the newly appointed Neurodiversity and HSB Expert Caseworker. The service estimates a capacity for eight more cases.

## EFFECTIVE RELATIONAL WORK

Safer London's approach to relational work is characterised by several key elements: flexibility, consistency, and a focus on being child-led. This approach acknowledges each young Londoner's unique needs and experiences and adapts accordingly while maintaining a consistent presence and approach over time.

Throughout the evaluation period, we observed how Safer London sought to regularly refine their knowledge through targeted training initiatives, with HSB caseworkers commending their employer (Safer London) for its dedication to staff development.

Caseworkers have benefited from training covering various topics such as extremism, trauma, emotional wellbeing, autism, and HSB. This underscores Safer London's holistic approach, acknowledging HSB as a multifaceted issue requiring a diverse skill set and knowledge base.

Throughout the evaluation period, we observed Safer London's strategy for addressing problematic and inappropriate sexual behaviours change, evolving as new caseworkers were hired, relationships with external partners and referral sources evolved, and Safer London's organisational journey to becoming more trauma-informed and contextual progressed.

In particular, we observed Safer London's HSB team (despite a number of staff changes) hold on to a commitment to incorporate considerations of developmental stages and the impact of adverse experiences and early trauma on young Londoners.

By integrating these insights, Safer London appears to offer a comprehensive response to HSB.

## SHIFTING GEARS

Safer London also occupies a unique position by offering specialised expertise in addressing inappropriate and problematic HSB concerns; in doing so, they had to modify some of the tools and practice methods that were created for higher risk HSB interventions.

For example, they modified a specialist HSB assessment tool so that it was fit for purpose at the early intervention level, and more attuned to the behaviours exhibited by young Londoners.

This adapted tool prompts Safer London caseworkers to engage in a holistic assessment of young Londoners, which is attuned with the core values of Safer London, but also prompts consideration of how displays of inappropriate and problematic sexual behaviours can be a consequence of a range of developmental and ecological factors, including young Londoners' past experiences which may include abuse (i.e. domestic abuse and child sexual abuse).

This tool is typically utilised to measure outcomes at the conclusion of intervention work. We only had access to a single assessment during the evaluation period and, therefore, were unable to make definitive conclusions about the effectiveness of its use in this regard.





## SHIFTING GEARS

We also observed, via the data and through our ongoing fortnightly meetings with the Safer London team, how they drew from cognitive behavioural therapy and strengths-based approaches, and adeptly utilised creative and youth-friendly online mediums to convey messages regarding sexual behaviour, including discussions on consent, distinguishing between 'ok' and 'not ok' touch, and fostering healthy relationships.

Other topics included in the programme of work were understanding triggers and thought-to-action processes contributing to inappropriate and problematic sexual behaviours. Collectively, these practices underscore the presence of a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce.

As a result, stakeholders have expressed confidence in the caseworkers' ability to address the complex issue of HSB with sensitivity and professionalism. Interviewed school staff specifically expressed appreciation for the project's specialised input on HSB, noting that other generic youth or early intervention services may lack this level of knowledge.

They described Safer London caseworkers as capable of creating contexts where young Londoners can be "*honest*" and that their approach is "*very nurturing*". Additionally, interviewed carers and parents commended caseworkers for their dedication to maintaining young Londoners' confidentiality and exercising caution in sharing young Londoners' information with others.

This blend of flexibility and consistency, coupled with a child-led approach, ensures that interventions are personalised to individual needs and preferences, a sentiment echoed by feedback from the young Londoners themselves.

For example, young Londoners receiving services described their experience working with Safer London HSB caseworkers as "*very supportive*" and providing space to "*speak freely*".

Caseworkers also demonstrated experience and knowledge of working with denial in this context, with referrers noting how caseworkers can effectively work with parents who are "*in denial*" about the behaviour of their child because they are "*devastated*".

The caseworker's non-judgmental stance fosters trust and allows for open communication, which is essential for building solid relationships with young Londoners and enabling them to overcome the denial that they (and sometimes their families) utilise as a coping mechanism or a means of self-preservation (Hackett, 2014; Hatton & Duff, 2019).

“

...sending in a youth worker doesn't cut the mustard

”

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD 1

“

[Safer London's work is] tailored, one-to-one

”

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD 2

## SHIFTING GEARS

During the evaluation period, multiple sources of data (e.g. AIM3 adapted assessment; interviews with caseworkers) surfaced how ethnicity and cultural and religious identities were recognised as significant factors in the work.

Research into the intersection of ethnicity and HSB remains limited (Allardyce & Yates, 2018), but we observed one example where a culturally sensitive and responsive approach was taken.

## CASE STUDY

In this case, a family was hesitant to allow their son to participate in the Safer London HSB project due to religious objections, particularly regarding discussions on sex and sexuality conflicting with their beliefs.

Initially, the school played a crucial role by bridging communication between the Safer London HSB project and the family to facilitate the young Londoner's access to the service.

When interviewed, the school representative described their approach to addressing parental apprehensions regarding their child's involvement in the project, emphasising that exposure to similar content is unavoidable due to the mandatory sex and relationships education implemented in schools (DOE, 2020).

By highlighting this, they helped parents understand the broader educational context their child was already exposed to, and the parents were more open to allowing their children to participate in the Safer London HSB project.

The mandatory nature of sex and relationship education in schools serves as a contextual factor that potentially mitigated some of the stigma and shame often associated with seeking assistance from an HSB service for young Londoners and their families.

## SHIFTING GEARS

In this example, the external partner (i.e. the school) had a clear understanding of what Safer London had to offer the young Londoner, and felt it was valuable enough to put forth the effort required to facilitate participation with Safer London's HSB project. However, perceptions amongst referring agencies about Safer London's HSB work were not always accurate.

For example, one project caseworker noted a prevalent perception among referring agencies that the Safer London HSB project predominantly caters to young Black men, even though it offers support to individuals of all ethnic backgrounds.

While the demographics of specific areas where the service operates may contribute to this perception, with Black British families comprising a more significant proportion of the local population, the caseworker suggested that stereotypical and racist attitudes could also influence this view.

The caseworker expressed a desire to challenge this misconception and promote an environment of curiosity to dismantle stereotypical and discriminatory beliefs, stating: *"I would like to be curious around that myth, if you like, and sort of try and break down some of those stereotypical sort of views."*

## RECOMMEDATION

## PRIORITISE CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPLEMENT TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE EVALUATION IN THIS AREA

As the Safer London HSB project moves forward, it may be important to prioritise awareness regarding cultural considerations and remaining responsive to these aspects of their work.

This could involve exploring the implementation of mechanisms aimed at monitoring and evaluating effectiveness in this area. Such endeavours might potentially contribute to the broader field by fostering a deeper understanding of the intersections of culture, religion, and ethnicity with HSB.

Given the limited research in this area, the Safer London HSB project has an opportunity to be a pioneer in exploring practice in this area.

## SHIFTING GEARS

Curiosity and openness are required for effective relational work to develop, along with a careful attunement to any feelings of stigma and shame (Hackett, 2014) experienced by young Londoners and/or their families.

One parent expressed the daunting nature of engaging in services regarding the issue of HSB, saying: *"You're frightened to talk to someone in case you get judged"*.

The caseworkers at the Safer London HSB project addressed these concerns by offering support to both young Londoners and their families\*. A referrer commented how a caseworker went *"above and beyond to get involved with the parent as well, which I think is really refreshing"*.



The caseworkers carefully considered how the service was described to the young Londoners referred to their service. In the final year of the evaluation, we engaged in ongoing reflective discussions with the Safer London HSB team regarding how the service might be re-branded, shifting away from using HSB explicitly in the programme's name to something more general, such as 'healthy relationships'.

This shift represents an alignment with the work they do (i.e. educating young Londoners on how to have healthy relationships) and might ensure young Londoners and their parents/carers feel more comfortable seeking support and engaging with the service.

\*Safer London caseworkers provide one to one support to young Londoners referred into their services and support. If it is determined that a parent/carer needs support, the caseworker can submit an internal referral to Safer London's families team for one to one support.

Alternatively they can signpost to an appropriate external organisation, which allows the practitioner to focus predominantly on their work with the young Londoner, whilst maintaining professional boundaries with the family and confidentiality as per Safer London's Agreement to Access services form signed by young Londoners.

## SHIFTING GEARS

## EDUCATION AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

Safer London's relational approach provided a foundation for supporting young Londoners to make changes in their behaviour that enabled them to feel more confident in social environments and better able to seek help from adults.

“

[work with Safer London caseworker] gets you on the right path

”

YOUNG LONDONER

For example, a young Londoner described how engaging with the project *“gets you on the right path”*. Whilst he didn't elaborate on what 'right path' might mean for him, interviews with school staff described how a young Londoner's work with the Safer London HSB caseworker had contributed to improved self-esteem, remarking that following the intervention, he came into school *“with his head held up”*.

Safer London's approach to educating young Londoners also supported their ability to engage in help-seeking behaviours. Considering the project's initial focus on boys and young men (the project is now open to all genders), this is a particularly promising finding as it represents a challenge to traditional notions of masculinity that often discourage help-seeking behaviour.

“

Thinking about behaviour before you do it

”

YOUNG LONDONER

The safeguarding lead at one school specifically highlighted a notable increase in the confidence of a young Londoner, noting his newfound ability to approach adults and ask for assistance.

Safer London HSB caseworkers supported young Londoners' learning and insight into their own behaviours via planned worksheets and activities but balanced this structured approach by encouraging young Londoners to offer their own ideas for topics to discuss.

A young Londoner explained how his caseworker asked him *“if there's anything I want to talk about like the week after”* and would then bring an *“activity the week after”* which aligns with the young Londoner's interests, for example around issues such as 'mental health', evidencing the child-led nature of the work.

## SHIFTING GEARS

Providing the support and education needed for young Londoners to develop the skills and confidence that result in safer, healthier behaviours, caseworkers engaged consistently on a weekly basis.

However, whilst some referrers described this consistency as a strength, generally indicating this was an adequate amount of contact time, others indicated that they thought more than one session per week might be helpful for young Londoners who are struggling.

Finally, the recent appointment of a neurodiversity specialist caseworker demonstrates Safer London's responsiveness to the landscape of HSB concerns, in which the overrepresentation of young people with learning disabilities has been evidenced (Hackett et al., 2013). We see this as evidence of the project's careful attunement to children and young people's needs and the capacity for adaptation as new issues arise among young Londoners.

As this appointment was made at the time the evaluation ended, we were not able to observe or evaluate any changes made to the programme following this appointment.



## CONNECTED PRACTICE

As facilitators in multi-agency collaboration, the Safer London HSB project works in tandem with schools, parents/carers, and other professionals to offer comprehensive support to young Londoners. Interviewed referrers noted caseworkers' close engagement with the networks surrounding young Londoners, including their parents and carers, to ensure that support is tailored to individual needs.

This is an important finding, as it represents how Safer London was able to maintain fidelity to one of the original programme's aims: to facilitate knowledge exchange with external partners.



Safer London's original plan for this knowledge exchange work involved partnering with a single Local Authority to work alongside, co-delivering HSB services in a manner that would incrementally support and upskill the Local Authority partner to sustainably deliver the HSB work after Safer London's funding had ended.

Within the first year of the evaluation (and the new HSB service's relaunch), Safer London recognised that this approach was not feasible for either Safer London or the Local Authority partner whose service delivery model did not sufficiently align with the evidence-informed approach Safer London intended to take.

It was also clear that the Local Authority did not have the internal resources to provide staff who would eventually take the lead on the work once the Safer London funding for this work had ended. We observed Safer London make a careful and informed decision to end this partnership whilst maintaining what appeared to be a positive working relationship with them.

## SHIFTING GEARS

Making a significant change to programme delivery is often necessary as part of an innovation journey (Lefevre, et al., 2024), but requires a strong and supportive organisational context to do so.

Safer London appears to provide that support; the HSB service adapted and evolved quickly, reconsidering how they might still work to meet the primary aim of sharing knowledge and delivering a sustainable service.

For example, although embedding a sustainable model of HSB work with a local authority partner proved unfeasible, caseworkers from Safer London did upskill professionals from the proposed partner service via sharing resources and tools. For example, a worker from that service reflected on how it had been helpful for Safer London to provide content for a consent workshop.

As evidenced by the literature review, schools play a crucial role in addressing HSB, as these behaviours are frequently observed in school settings, and referrals to services often come from school staff (McKibben & Humphreys, 2023).

A referring school staff member who was interviewed for the evaluation highlighted the importance of developing a better understanding of how to continue working with young Londoners once a Safer London HSB intervention had concluded.

## RECOMMEDATION

**UPSKILL SCHOOL STAFF TO ENSURE LONG TERM SUSTAINED OUTCOMES**

Moving forward, it may be beneficial for Safer London to consider intentional strategies for upskilling school staff, particularly in terms of identifying and implementing ongoing low-level interventions that can be continued in the school setting once the work with the Safer London HSB project has ended.

Finally, it is worth noting that in the early stages of the project, some referrers described experiencing difficulties with the online referral forms, but this concern did not feature in the accounts of later interviewees.

Other referrers expressed appreciation for the timely manner in which the Safer London HSB project responded to referrals and could commence work. All referrers commented on the sound levels of communication between themselves and the Safer London HSB project.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, evidence from this evaluation is promising, indicating that the work being done contributes positively to young Londoners' wellbeing and safety.

When looking through the lens of the original realist evaluation methodology, the changing service delivery landscape remains a noteworthy and influential context. Services for 'lower level' HSB remain limited, and Safer London occupies a unique space within this specialist area of work. The mechanisms originally planned and relied upon to deliver this work- namely, via a singular local authority partner - did not materialise as they had planned.

However, we observed that the robust and supportive structures with Safer London as an organisation (another aspect of the programme context) enabled the still-new service to adapt and change direction remarkably well.

Safer London's reputation amongst referring organisations that Safer London 'knows' London and understands what it means to be a young Londoner (including a firm commitment to see the child first, before focussing on their behaviour), is another important element of the context in which this service delivery takes place.

Safer London should be commended for their agility in taking a new approach, alongside a range of other mechanisms within the organisation including offering the HSB caseworker routine clinical supervision and supporting the newest HSB Service Manager to become trained in this specialist area of work (as prior caseworker(s) described feeling somewhat isolated in the work, as the only member of their team with expertise in this area).

Additional supportive mechanisms include 1) the flexibility of the caseworker role to adapt the work with young Londoners - including the timing, location, and focus of the work to ensure young Londoners' own interests and needs are addressed, and 2) in reinvigorating the drop-in surgery forum where wider Safer London staff can seek the support and expertise of the HSB team.

The surgery is an example of how the programme's original aim of becoming sustainable and embedded in services is being realised (albeit within Safer London's own organisation rather than an external partner).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the data available to the evaluation team and our experience observing the work of the HSB service across the last three years, we offer four recommendations for Safer London.

### → DEVELOP A CONSISTENT AND HOLISTIC PLAN FOR SUPPORTING ONGOING WORK WITHIN SCHOOLS

We recommend Safer London considers a consistent and holistic plan for supporting ongoing work within schools upon ending an intervention with a young Londoner.

This might include a closing letter to a school with clear and accessible advice tailored to the young Londoner's needs and /or a more comprehensive package of support (depending on the school's interest and Safer London's capacity to deliver).

Whilst resources within the HSB service may be limited, it could be worth exploring how the team can offer training, advice and support to the school to continue upskilling education staff as a means of addressing HSB using a whole school (preventative) approach.

### → EXPLORE RE-BRANDING THE HSB SERVICE

Continue to explore re-branding the HSB service using asset/strengths-focused language rather than deficit/problem-focused language.

The team described an interest in re-naming the service the 'Healthy Relationships Project' and we would encourage this as it both reflects the level of risk and harm they are addressing (i.e. below the level of 'problematic' on Hackett's continuum) and might also enable Safer London's aspirations to continue embedding a Contextual Safeguarding approach throughout all services.

Right now, the HSB service offers a very individualised approach, in addition to some support/advice for parents/carers and the schools young Londoners attend. However, a wider framing around healthy relationships might enable them to explore the use of group work and the benefits of peer learning, which would be easier to do under the banner

## SHIFTING GEARS

**→ CAPTURE HOW YOUNG LONDONERS' VICTIMISATION IS SURFACED IN THE WORK**

Although evident in conversations with HSB service staff, perhaps more work could be done on recording data which captures how young Londoners' victimisation is surfaced in the work.

Whilst staff were able to articulate how an understanding and awareness of prior abuse and victimisation are common amongst young Londoners exhibiting inappropriate or problematic sexual behaviours, data we collected did not help us to understand how or where this is considered in the work (e.g. at the stage of assessment or later in the direct work)

**→ BUILD ROBUST AND CONSISTENT PROCESS FOR RECORDING OUTCOMES**

Finally, we recommend Safer London continues to develop a robust and consistent process for recording outcomes for young Londoners.

We were only able to gain access to one initial and one closing AIM assessment. Whilst we are aware that a significant amount of work was done when the service re-started to modify the standard AIM assessment for the work Safer London planned to undertake, we did not gain access to a sufficient number of assessments to comment on the modified assessment or how it is being used within the service to identify and measure outcomes.

The issue of measuring outcomes remains challenging within this area of work and particularly for a new service that underwent significant structural and staffing changes throughout its first few years.

Moving forward, it will be important for Safer London to focus on clarifying key outcomes for the service and working to ensure the means of capturing outcome data are available and understood by staff responsible for collecting them.



## REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

As Safer London we are incredibly encouraged by the conclusion drawn from the evaluation of our work. It affirms that our efforts are making a positive difference in the wellbeing and safety of young Londoners.

One of the key strengths highlighted in the evaluation is our robust and supportive internal structures, which enabled us to pivot and adjust our approach effectively.

This adaptability was crucial, especially when faced with making decisions that resulted in us shifting gears and changing direction.

We are proud of our resilience and adaptability in navigating these challenges and obstacles as they arose.

We're particularly grateful for Professor Langhoff's team for their support, advocacy, guidance and encouragement in these times.

The University helped us to set a solid foundation of focus for us as we continue to deliver this important service to young Londoners.

Building on the insights from this evaluation, we believe there are several recommendations that other organisations working with young Londoners experiencing HSB could consider implementing.



## **SAFER LONDON'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS AND SECTOR PROFESSIONALS**

### **→ DEVELOP ROBUST SUPPORT STRUCTURES**

Establishing robust and supportive structures within the organisation is crucial. This includes providing regular clinical supervision or reflective practice for practitioners involved in HSB casework, ensuring they have the necessary support and guidance to address complex issues effectively.

### **→ INVEST IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Prioritise training and development opportunities for practitioners, particularly those in managerial positions. Equipping them with specialised training in HSB intervention techniques will enhance their ability to support frontline workers and ensure the delivery of high-quality services.

### **→ FOSTER FLEXIBILITY IN SERVICE DELIVERY**

Recognise the importance of flexibility in service delivery to meet the individual needs of young people. This may involve adapting the timing, location, and focus of interventions to ensure they are tailored to each young person's specific circumstances and preferences.

### **→ PROMOTE COLLABORATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING**

Create opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing. Initiatives such as drop-in surgery forums, where staff can seek support and expertise from specialised teams, can enhance interdisciplinary collaboration and improve outcomes for young people.

### **→ BUILD TRUST AND UNDERSTANDING**

Invest in building trust and understanding among referring organisations and stakeholders. This involves cultivating a reputation for expertise and commitment to prioritising the wellbeing of young people, which can foster strong partnerships and facilitate effective collaboration.

### **→ EMBRACE ADAPTABILITY AND RESILIENCE**

Emphasise the importance of adaptability and resilience in navigating challenges and setbacks. Organisations should be prepared to pivot and adjust their approaches as needed, drawing on internal strengths and resources to overcome obstacles and achieve positive outcomes.

## CASEWORKER REFLECTIONS

“

What makes this work so satisfying and rewarding is the way that the young Londoners we work with are genuinely open and engaging in terms of the support we offer.

”

**ROB JAMES, SAFER LONDON**  
EXPERT HSB DEVELOPMENT  
& DELIVERY CASEWORKER

“The past year has been very busy for our Harmful Sexual Behaviours service, with increasing levels of referrals coming through. What has become apparent – and very rewarding – is that referrers are noting the benefits of the service, and now make regular referrals for additional young Londoners they support.

When I start work with any given individual, I remain very aware of how scary linking in with a support worker might be for them, especially when addressing sexual behaviours. I often reflect on how my “teenage self” would feel if that were me, and these reflections immediately heighten the respect and empathy have for any young Londoner.

The work and interventions we do need to be meaningful and might include topics such as consent, relationships, sexual behaviours, identity, and online safety. Time and time again, what becomes apparent is that this work can only happen when a trusting relationship is cemented.

The key to building these relationships is to maintain consistency, honesty, and recognise the individual needs every Londoner has, shaping the interventions around that. Active listening is paramount, and when you “hear” the young Londoner, that generally gives them permission to be their authentic self.

## SHIFTING GEARS

Looking back over the last year, I hold fond reflections of all the young Londoners I have supported and without exception, I am able to recognise the strengths that they all had. These strengths underpinned all our work and enabled them to become even stronger.

Resilience has played a massive part, and one of the most rewarding aspects is seeing young Londoners coming back week after week to learn and explore more, even when the need for difficult conversation arises.

Of course, it is important to stay within our remit of HSB work, but inevitably, other issues arise, and excellent work and progress has been made around issues such as improved mental health and self-worth and inner strengths when stressful situations might occur, like moving home and school changes.

It is really exciting to see our service grow, and the recent inclusion of an expert neurodiversity worker only adds to our ability to provide the wider support that is needed. The hope would be that we are able to reach out to more young Londoners and to complete more one to one work across London.

It would be great to develop a proactive service with an outreach approach, enabling better support prior to events and incidents happening. It would also be good to work more with other professionals to highlight the reality that HSB happens across all genders and create better inclusion into our service."

**Rob James, Safer London**  
Expert HSB Development & Delivery Caseworker



## ASPIRATIONS AND FOCUS FOR THE FUTURE

### INCLUSIVE SERVICE

We recognise that there is a gender imbalance of the young Londoners who access this service, with eight out of the nine young Londoners open to the service\* identifying as male.

Research, albeit limited, does suggest that those who present as females are underrepresented in terms of support around HSB, despite a growing awareness that young people who don't identify as male also require support.

Going forward we will be working closely alongside our partners in Social Care and educational settings, to ensure they are aware that we can accept young Londoners of any gender identity into this service. We also committed to promoting the service in a way that is clear that it can offer support to girls and young women.

We recognise that a different approach may be necessary for all genders; male, female and non-binary, and meet regularly as a team to discuss the best individualised support for each young Londoner accessing the service.

Now that we have both male and female workers on the team, we can provide young Londoners who prefer to work with someone of the same gender with that choice.

### ACCESSIBLE SERVICE

Similar to making sure that the service is inclusive of all genders, we strive to provide a service and support that is accessible to young Londoners with additional needs.

We recognised that a large percentage of referrals coming into the service were for young Londoners with neurodiversity. In response at the start of 2024, we appointed an Expert HSB Development & Delivery Worker with knowledge and expertise of neurodiverse conditions and needs.

We believe this appointment will enable us to better recognise and address the challenges faced by young Londoners with neurodiversity. Our goal is to offer support in understanding how their behaviours may affect others, as well as in navigating challenges such as interpreting social cues and managing sensory issues.

In addition to delivering one to one work, the Expert HSB Development & Delivery Worker will also be providing a monthly drop-in surgery for practitioners across the organisation to seek guidance for their own cases when required.

## SHIFTING GEARS

**REACTIVE INTERVENTION,  
PROACTIVE PREVENTION**

While we acknowledge the positive impact of our work, there's a growing recognition for the importance of preventive measures rather than solely reacting to events.

Through this evaluation and our own observations, we've identified that beneath instances of HSB in young Londoners, there often lies unaddressed issues or lack of support. Utilising the AIMS 3 model, we address not only the immediate HSB but also non-sexual behaviors, developmental factors, environmental influences, and self-regulation.

By comprehensively understanding the five domains and emphasising strengths and self-esteem, we aim to effectively support young Londoners, facilitating meaningful change and reducing the likelihood of recurring behaviours.

One method we employ is encouraging participation in social activities that resonate with the young Londoner, as research suggests this can serve as a significant protective factor against HSB.

If, upon completion of our intervention, we determine that further support is needed, we collaborate with the network and referrer to facilitate onward referrals to resources such as learning mentors, counselors, or CAMHS.

**REFRAMING OUR  
LANGUAGE**

While our work aligns with the nationally recognised HSB framework, it's crucial to be mindful of language and adjust as needed.

Using the term "harmful sexual behaviors" could result in unfair judgments or stigma, especially of young Londoners facing complex needs or lacking prior support.

Focusing solely on addressing HSB might send the wrong message to young Londoners. They are more than just their behaviors. They have a range of other issues and deserve support that acknowledges their complexity.

Safer London aims to rename the service, prioritising the relational aspect of our work based on feedback from evaluations. However, we also recognise the importance of clarity in communicating our services to both referrers and young Londoners seeking support.





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND REFERENCES

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We are grateful for the guidance and dedication of Dr. Anna Hutchings and Professor Kristine Langhoff over the past three years. Their advocacy has been instrumental. We'd also like to thank Professor Simon Hackett for his ongoing support and contributions to the broader discourse surrounding HSB.

The HSB programme is currently managed by Service Manager Josh Paice\*, who effectively manages the service and the team. We would like to thank Josh for his ongoing commitment to the service and for his unwavering passion for supporting positive outcomes for the young Londoners accessing Safer London's services and support.

We want to extend our gratitude to all past and present caseworkers who've worked on this service, with particular recognition for Rob James, whose contributions have significantly shaped the service as it is known today.

The HSB programme is now funded by HFC (Help for Children) and we are looking forward to developing the service even further with their support.

Our deepest appreciation goes to the young Londoners who have participated in the HSB programme over the past three years and beyond. Their resilience and determination inspire us every day.



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Information on our services, including criteria and how to make a referral, can be found on our website [www.saferlondon.org.uk](http://www.saferlondon.org.uk)

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## SHIFTING GEARS

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Reframing our approach to working with young  
Londoners displaying Harmful Sexual Behaviours

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