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# Impact Report 2018/19



Supporting young Londoners  
to live free from violence  
and exploitation

**saferlondon**

# saferlondon

We are a leading London charity working across the city with children, young people, their families and local communities.

Our vision is a world where all young people can thrive, free from exposure to violence, exploitation and crime.

Our mission is to create lasting change by preventing violence, exploitation and crime from negatively impacting on young Londoners.

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# A letter from our Chair

For many children and young people their experience of social injustice, inequality and violence, coupled with an absence of critical services, makes the city a hard place in which to thrive. The core purpose of our work is to support them to build resilience, develop mechanisms to keep safe and to create a sense of self-worth and citizenship.

During the last year, we reached over 10,000 children and young people, seeing a 12% increase in the uptake of our services. All were living lives affected by crime, violence or exploitation.

Research<sup>1</sup> indicates that living amongst violence is likely to impact on brain development and sometimes normalises the behaviour. Add to this difficulties created by reduced services and widening inequality and the result is toxic and damaging.

Paradoxically, one of our challenges this year has been to counteract the negative stereotyping of children and young people, particularly with the increased media attention on youth violence.

The root cause of the issue is too often laid at the feet of young people and assumptions are often made about presenting behaviours, without any acknowledgement of the trauma, adverse experiences and environments that many children and young people have faced.

Recognising where young people are most at risk is vital. For many this is often outside their home and beyond their family relationships. This broader view of safeguarding recognises that the experiences that young people have in their neighbourhoods, schools and online is also a contributory factor to exposing them to harm.

To ensure that we respond effectively to the multifaceted issues young people experience, we have begun to reshape our services to a more holistic approach. This means individuals can benefit from our wide range of services, including access to housing specialists and mental health practitioners. Every day, we see that given the right support, children and young people have astonishing strength and drive to overcome obstacles and redirect their lives.

This year, we have also invested in our organisational infrastructure, ensuring it is robust and able to respond to the ever-growing demand for our services, and our desire to achieve even more.

We were delighted to see our work recognised through two awards this year. The annual London Homelessness Awards celebrated the work of the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal and our Boys and Young Men's team received a Highly Commended award at the 2018 Children & Young People Now Awards. This was for its innovative approach in supporting boys and young men displaying harmful sexual behaviour.

The positive impact which Safer London has on so many young people would not be possible without the dedication and professionalism of our staff and volunteers. I'd like to thank each and every one of them.

<sup>1</sup> <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023%2FB%3ACCFP.0000006292.61072.d2>

Our thanks also go to our funders and partners whose support has enabled us to achieve so much this year.

Some final words of thanks. Firstly to the young person who generously worked with us on this report. Secondly, and our greatest thanks and respect, to all the children and young people we work alongside every day. They powerfully describe the reality of their lives, as they recount their own experience. Their words are clear - it is circumstance, a lack of positive life opportunities and an absence of services which puts children and young people at greatest risk. This must change.



Bruce Melizan,  
Chair of Trustees



During 2018/2019  
we saw a...



**12% increase**  
in the uptake of  
our services



**10,000**  
children & young  
people reached

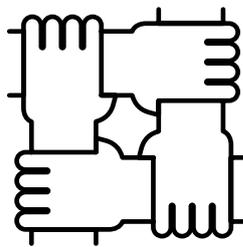
# The issues faced by many young Londoners

This year, concerns about youth violence and crime have never been greater. There has been much attention and discussion about the challenges that London and other UK cities face in tackling these issues. However, we believe that these discussions often overlook the root causes of what makes children and young people vulnerable to harmful activity.



## Poverty and Inequality

The contrast between wealth and poverty in a city like London, is stark. The widening social gap is further exaggerated by age, gender and ethnicity. By the time a child reaches adolescence, these effects will have significantly reduced their life opportunities. With poorer physical and mental health their ability to achieve in school is reduced. Many are excluded or will fall out of mainstream education altogether.

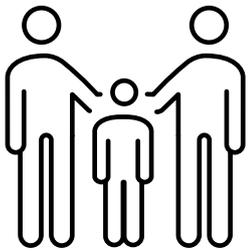


## Community and Environment

Communities should be places of nurture and safety, but this is not true for many children and young people. Poor housing, scarce employment opportunities and a lack of investment in local environments are further compounded by the dramatic reduction in services (including direct provision for family and youth support). This is where the impact of violence, exploitation and county lines networks (which actively groom vulnerable children and young people into drug trafficking) are most keenly felt.

“ We feel as if we were judged left right and centre. If you're Black or Asian you're considered a minority who will not make it to 30. We grow up accepting the block and lifestyle as normal but it wasn't. ”

“ Growing up, all the kids had on the estate was a park with one swing and a broken seesaw. The youth club was shut all the time and the police always thought we were up to something, even though we wasn't. ”



## Relationships

Some young people we work with have suffered abuse, neglect or been witness to violence in and around their home. The impact of this is profound and heightens their vulnerability to harm. Equally, many families are living under enormous stress and anxiety as they seek to protect their children from the harm of powerful outside influences. This additional strain is detrimental to all in the household, undermining relationships, escalating conflict and increasing feelings of instability.

“ My older brother was in a gang, so I was exposed to a lot young; by primary I knew about girls, sex, weed ... and now finding out that kids don't play with toys anymore but with guns, knives and people's lives. ”



## Trauma

Trauma is a physical and psychological response to distressing or life-threatening events. This can occur after a single event or as a result of repeated or prolonged exposure. It is well documented that adverse childhood experiences and trauma can significantly affect a young person's development and well-being. Experiencing violence or living with an ever-present threat of harm has a particularly damaging effect on mental health and increases a young person's vulnerability to exploitation.

“ I felt no one cared about me or helped me as much as the gang, what I was going through we all went through. I didn't feel like I could speak to anyone but my brothers, they were all I trusted and what I knew. ”

London is where I came from  
Down in the south  
Where people talk with their  
weapons, instead of their mouths.

Kids stop playing in parks  
And start playing with knives and leaving marks  
We hardly see the love, light and sunshine  
But more gloves, knives and gun crime.

It is hard to sleep  
Many find friends hard to keep  
Mainly nightmares, hardly dreams  
Waking up to sirens, tears and screams  
Mums crying  
Sons dying  
Too many funerals.  
A lot has happened, that I can't count the numerals  
Names and pictures in the news  
All for the YouTube views  
A life so many choose  
They are winning but in the end they lose.

And this is the life you will rather  
The wisest words from my father  
I shook my head and responded back with laughter  
But little did I know my life would lead to disaster.

When living on a council estate  
The two things hard to escape  
Death and prison  
I have seen too many times in my vision  
In every community it brings division  
Taking away lives, cells be the addition.

I've been sold a lot of dreams without receipts  
My life was like a track on repeat  
Too many times in the past I've been deceived  
And this gift be the present that I received.

There is a disease  
Which causes my demographics number to decrease  
It is called beef and it happened to me  
One of its side effects causes people not to see  
The damage  
Which comes in a package  
The only cure  
Is to have a heart that is pure.

Now, when you hear this verse  
Please do not disperse  
I met Safer London who made me feel safe  
They said trust in them and have faith  
So I give many thanks  
Leaving the reader to the pages blank.

Poem written by a young person  
supported by Safer London.







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# How we have an impact with young Londoners

To have the greatest impact on the lives of children and young people we:

- listen and enable them to build positive relationships
- deliver programmes which seek to intervene early
- build strong networks with partner organisations and communities capable of ensuring that children and young people are supported to stay safe
- use a holistic approach where services are tailored to the shifting challenges and circumstances children and young people face.

## Creating safety

When we start working with a young person we spend time ensuring that they gain a clear understanding of their safety, and what this means in the context of their relationships and environment.

Safety planning is a key feature of our work with children and young people affected by exploitation and violence. Through mapping activities, they are able to consider the relationships where they can seek safety and support. They also consider the relationships, spaces and contexts where they feel more vulnerable. In identifying the healthier connections, they can create practical and solution-focussed plans to improve their safety and resilience.

Our extensive one to one support is based on our ability to create a trusting relationship with a child or young person, which provides them with a safe space to think, reflect, learn and grow or recover. This is achieved through our skilled teams displaying persistent, consistent interventions. Whilst we focus on key outcome areas, our support is flexible and led by the young person. It is delivered at a pace they feel comfortable with, ensuring that they are supported and empowered throughout their journey. Another key feature of our work is our ability to demonstrate an understanding of the lives lived by children and young people – with a clear understanding of the context in which they are expected to operate within.

This year, we have begun to expand our emotional well-being work with children and young people. In particular, our LGE service works with young people aged between 16 and 25 who are affected by criminality, exploitation and violence. This year, we have increased our mental health support, providing each person with an individual pathway to explore the issues relating to their behaviour, leading to better understanding of their feelings, improved self-esteem and increased resilience. They can then develop appropriate coping mechanisms to address the issues they face day-to-day.

### This year...

**85%**

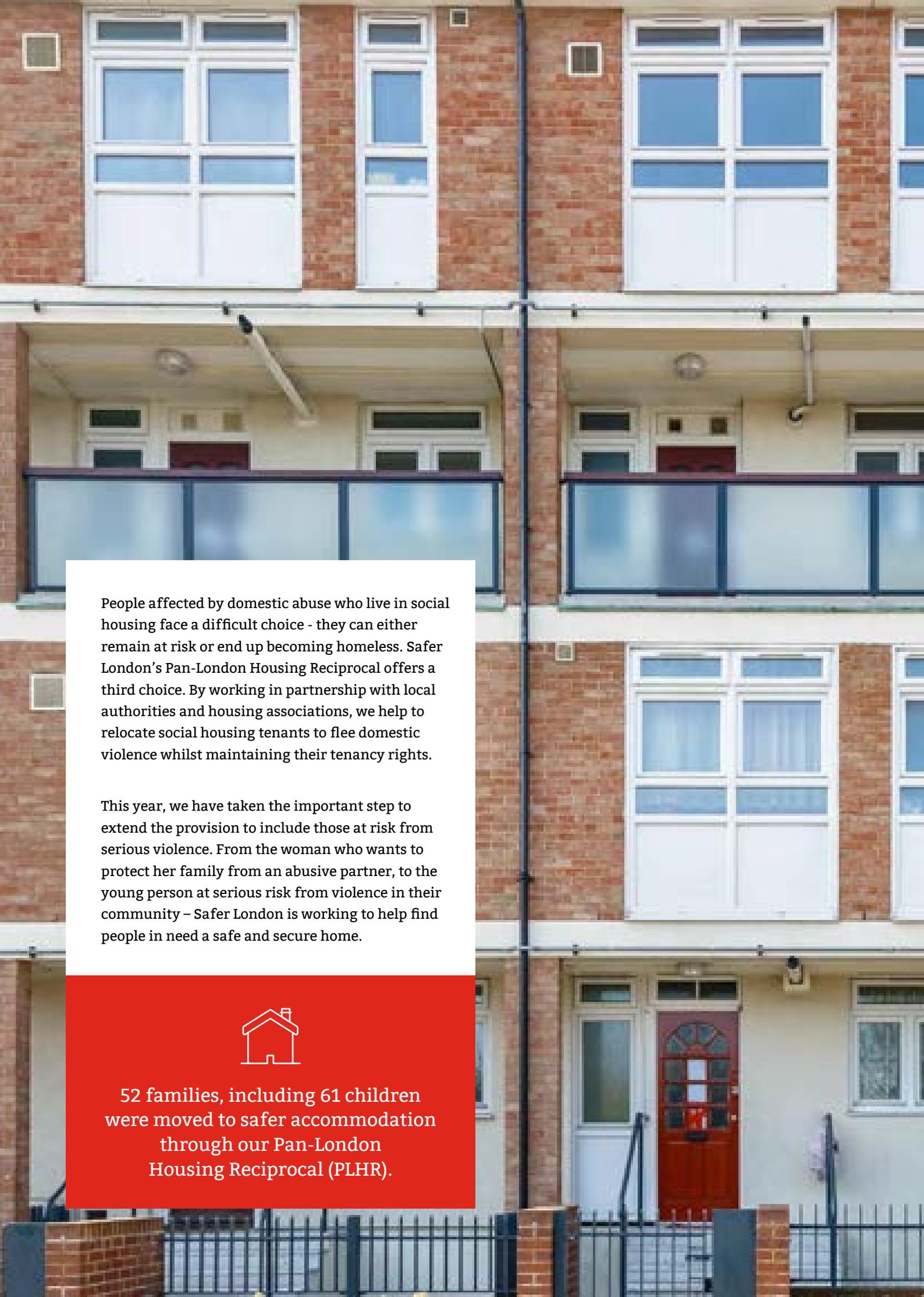
of children and young people that used our services reported they had increased safety.

**89%**

of children and young people that used our 1:1 services reported they had an increased understanding of healthy relationships.

**86%**

of children and young people that used our 1:1 services reported they had an increased ability to cope.



People affected by domestic abuse who live in social housing face a difficult choice - they can either remain at risk or end up becoming homeless. Safer London's Pan-London Housing Reciprocal offers a third choice. By working in partnership with local authorities and housing associations, we help to relocate social housing tenants to flee domestic violence whilst maintaining their tenancy rights.

This year, we have taken the important step to extend the provision to include those at risk from serious violence. From the woman who wants to protect her family from an abusive partner, to the young person at serious risk from violence in their community - Safer London is working to help find people in need a safe and secure home.



52 families, including 61 children were moved to safer accommodation through our Pan-London Housing Reciprocal (PLHR).

## Intervening early

Shaping our range of services to be visible and easily accessible to children and young people is vital. This is especially important as we know that the earlier we can reach a young person, the greater impact we can have. By also working in schools and with communities, we help young people gain the skills they need to negotiate their lives.

For example, our work with boys and young men displaying harmful sexual behaviours has continued to evolve; with demand for the service currently outstripping our capacity to respond. We are supporting children and young people who are often stigmatised, whilst their own needs go unmet. We offer them an opportunity to learn and reflect in a safe space; we also challenge their perceptions and responses whilst ensuring they are afforded appropriate support and protection themselves.

Another one of our approaches is to provide young people with a safe space to relax. Our mentoring work creates important opportunities for dedicated 1:1 time.

A trained mentor offers a young person time to talk, reflect and enjoy activities, but all at a pace of their choosing.

We facilitated 24 ten-week group programmes involving over 300 children

We hosted 51 Drop Down Days; one-off events reaching over 9,000 children & young people

**97%**

of children & young people who accessed our early prevention group work said they had increased understanding of healthy relationships.

**96%**

of children & young people who accessed our early prevention group work reported they had increased safety.



This year, we worked with 64 boys and young men who were displaying harmful sexual behaviour, through intensive one-to-one intervention.

## Influencing change

At Safer London, we know that we can have a positive impact on individual lives. However, it will take something much larger to create long term change to safeguard children and young people and give them the secure and stable future they deserve.

To achieve this, we work with partner organisations, funders and policy makers to influence local, regional and national policy development. We push for the investment of time and resources to enable young people to lead lives where they can live free from the threat of violence and exploitation.

We lend our expertise to partner organisations' policy campaigns, parliamentary discussions and proactively respond to consultation towards new legislation. We do this by drawing on our understanding of the needs

of young people, their families and communities; combined with our knowledge of the causal issues behind why young people are drawn into violence and exploitation.

We contributed to the 'Seriously Awkward' campaign on the issue of vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds missing out on vital support. We drew specific attention to how the safeguarding needs of this group are being overlooked due to their age.



Sherry Peck, CEO addressed a Parliamentary seminar examining the growing county lines drugs problem and contributed to discussion around possible solutions.



We co-chaired the London Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) group and Housing Operational and Strategic group with Solace Women's Aid. These forums promote access to safe and settled housing for those who need to move as a result of violence. Resulting publications included policy and practice briefings on preventing homelessness, crisis responses and long-term housing.





*“ I cannot praise  
Safer London  
enough for the help  
and support. ”*

## In 2018-19 Safer London contributed to the advisory boards and forums listed below:

Agenda: Alliance for Women and Girls at Risk Scrutiny Panel

Contextual Safeguarding Network: Community and Voluntary Sector Core Collective

Crown Prosecution Service London - Violence Against Women and Girls Local Scrutiny Panel Meeting

Hackney's Contextual Safeguarding Advisory Board

Home Office Ending Gang Youth Violence Forum

Home Office Round Tables on Serious Violence Strategy

Home Office Serious Youth Violence Unit Social Media Action Group

London Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Housing Operational and Strategic Groups (group ceased March 2019)

London Women's Outreach Network

Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime (MOPAC) Knife Crime Strategy Workshops

Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime (MOPAC) Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Forum and Female Offender Strategy Group

Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime (MOPAC) Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Housing Task and Finish Group

Metropolitan Police CSE Strategic Governance Board National Working Group Community and Voluntary Sector Policy Forum

Tackling Youth Violence Network

Tri-Borough Domestic Abuse and Housing Operational Group

Violence and Vulnerability Delivery Group Meeting (Brent)

Youth Justice Board Reducing Reoffending Board

*“ I like how they invested their time in me and encouraged me to do anything I wanted to do. ”*



# The future

In 2019-20, we are working to ensure that our work embraces both a contextual safeguarding approach and continues on the path towards becoming a truly trauma-responsive organisation.

With this in mind, we are proposing to develop our services to cover a broader range of harm experienced outside of the family context, adopting a public health perspective. This offers a wider range of opportunities to intervene in order to prevent escalation of concerns and offer help to children and young people who need it at different stages.

Initially we will focus on harm or abuse that we identify as child sexual exploitation or linked to criminal exploitation. This includes children and young people who go missing from home or care and those who are trafficked or subject to other forms of modern slavery or harm associated with exposure to serious youth violence. We will also include children and young people who exhibit harmful sexual behaviours.

In order to prevent and address this, we believe that it is important to offer support and protection not only to children and young people who are victim of such abuse, but also to those children and young people who victimise others. Many of these forms of harm or abuse co-exist and are interlinked.

However different perceptions, processes and practices, mean that children, families and communities affected by these issues do not always receive the safeguarding focus and support that they should. This often results in unmet need, unresolved trauma and unaddressed risk which leaves children and families more marginalised and disengaged.

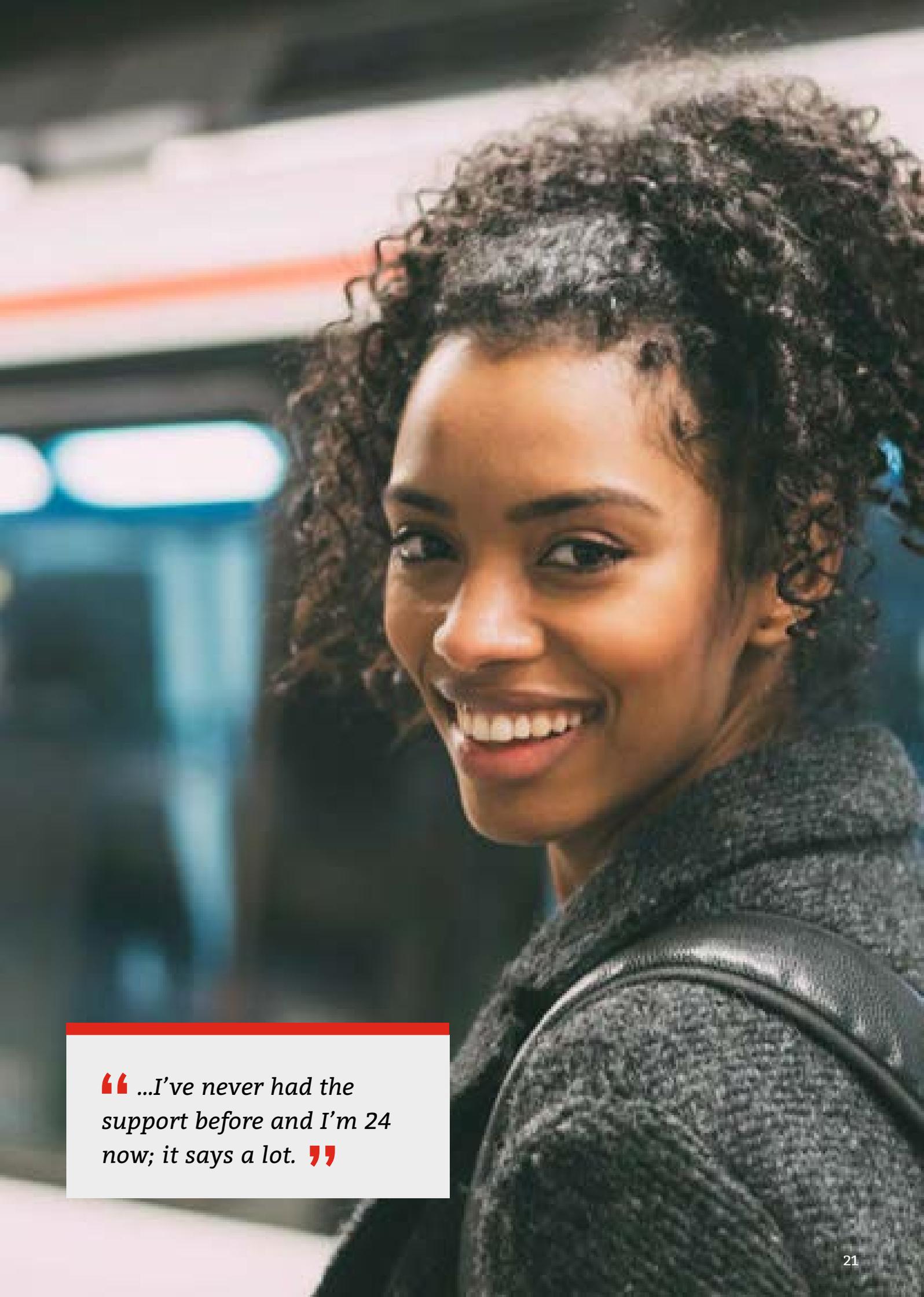
Safer London has grown year on year since its inception, essentially due to the outstanding impact of our work. However, we know there are still too many young people living in places where they feel unsafe. Fear is destructive and creates situations and behaviours which cause lasting damage to children and young people's well-being, their families and communities.

The complexity of the difficulties faced by many young people in London is daunting. We ourselves, have more work to do in the way we listen to and harness what young people tell us about their lives. This coming year, we will look to establish new models of early intervention work, develop our links to communities and build and strengthen partnerships across London.



Sherry Peck  
CEO





**“** ...I've never had the support before and I'm 24 now; it says a lot. **”**

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# Thank you

Our work would not be possible without the generosity of our funders, donors and those who have fundraised to support our work. Our thanks to you all:

Buzzacott Stuart Defries Memorial Fund  
CBRE (Southbank Central team)  
BBC Children in Need  
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
Goldsmiths' Company Charity  
Help for Children  
Home Office  
John Laing Charitable Trust  
John Lyon's Charity  
Lambeth CCG  
Leathersellers' Company Charitable Foundation  
Lewisham CCG  
London Borough of Camden  
London Borough of Croydon  
London Borough of Enfield  
London Borough of Hackney

London Borough of Haringey  
London Borough of Islington  
London Borough of Redbridge  
London Boroughs of Waltham Forest  
London Housing Association (LHA)  
London Housing Foundation (LHF)  
Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)  
Metropolitan Masonic Charity  
North Highland Worldwide Consulting (London Office)  
Paul Hamlyn Foundation  
Southwark CCG  
Spitfire Audio  
The Pilgrim Trust  
The Rayne Foundation  
Trust for London  
The many schools and individuals who fundraised to support our work.

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