

# London Vanguard independent evaluation

## Headline findings

11 February 2026

The London Vanguard improved access to support and outcomes for children and young people who may be affected by violence.

- 1509 children and young people who were referred to the London Vanguard across 12 London boroughs were supported over three years of the pilot (2022-2025).

### Addressing inequalities for marginalised groups

- Staff described uncovering new needs which had gone unnoticed by other services; in particular, neurodevelopmental, speech and language, mental health, and learning needs. Data showed many more suspected disabilities, mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions, compared to diagnoses.
- It was widely recognised in interviews that a holistic approach to supporting the children and young people supported by the London Vanguard was taken, in response to the multiple adversities and social challenges they face, including health, race and social inequalities.

### Mental health and wellbeing outcomes

- Overall, 47% (37% missing) of children and young people were reported as having improved mental health.
- Children, young people, parents and carers, staff and key stakeholders all reported improvements in mental health, confidence, self-esteem, and agency among children and young people. Many children and young people described becoming the “best version” of themselves, with parents and carers describing positive changes in their own wellbeing and parenting approaches in addition.

### Improved relationships and wider circumstances

- Overall, 33% (44% missing) of children and young people were reported as having an improved education status, and overall, 34% (43% missing) of children and young people were reported as having an improved accommodation status.
- Improved family dynamics, peer relationships, and communication were common positive themes in the interviews and focus groups. Additional benefits seen due to the support of the London Vanguard included better housing, community engagement, and educational or employment opportunities.
- The positive changes described above were generally maintained for a year, attributed to the long-term, holistic nature of the London Vanguard, and strong practitioner relationships with the children and young people.

## Improved offending behaviour and violence

- Staff described examples of children and young people engaging in less violent behaviour after receiving support. This was supported by the data that showed 27% (58% missing) of children and young people who were reported as showing reduced offending behaviour, 35% (47% missing) showing reduced high-risk behaviour frequency and 34% (47% missing) showing reduced high-risk behaviour severity.

### Change was enabled by:

- **Partnership working:** Initial challenges in establishing partnerships were described, but by the end of the evaluation, effective co-ordinated support was evident. Cross-organisation collaboration was described as fostering knowledge sharing, enhances skills, and improves outcomes for children and young people.
- **Co-production:** Engaging in co-production activities enabled staff to better understand and respond to community needs, strengthening the relevance and impact of the London Vanguard. Children and young people also reported the benefits of being involved in co-production activities.
- **Flexible, community-embedded support (crossing intervention and prevention):** Effective support that is adaptable, rooted in local communities, and responsive to individual needs was described as being delivered, and essential for providing increased access and positive outcomes.
- **Bridging Support:** Staff described building sustainable relationships between children and young people and wider services, acting as ‘a bridge’. Doing this in areas that support prevention (e.g., education, housing), and where there may be access challenges (e.g., specialist mental health services) were described as ensuring continuity of support outside of the London Vanguard workers, as well as positive outcomes.

## Sustainability

- There was widespread concern about sustainability and short term funding.
- While national collaboration is valuable, maintaining London-specific forums to share best practice was described as crucial, due to the specific context.
- Staff emphasised that sustaining the work of the London Vanguard depends on strong partnership buy-in, therapeutic training for staff, committed leadership investment, and a skilled, complementary team.

## Links to policy

- Approaches like London Vanguard are strategically valuable because they break down silos between health, social care, community, and justice settings, aligning with the mission-led push for cross-department co-operation.
- The London Vanguard directly align with the NHS England 10 year plan<sup>1</sup>, and the UK Labour Government mission<sup>2</sup>. By offering psychological support, family or carer support, and building links between health, social care, community and justice services, the London Vanguard aim to prevent violence and its escalation, which

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<sup>1</sup> NHS England. (2025). Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England

<sup>2</sup> Prime Minister’s Office 10 Downing Street. (2025). Plan for Change: Milestones for Mission-led Government. <https://www.gov.uk/missions>

aligns with the 10 year plan aims of focusing on prevention and reducing serious harm and knife crime over time.

- Through this evaluation, the London Vikings have demonstrated that integrated, community-based care can succeed in a complex city context, offering lessons for workforce redesign and service integration to meet the 10 Year Plan's ambitions. Scaling this across the NHS will require sustained investment in training, IT systems, governance, and local ownership.
- The aim of the London Vanguard model corresponds closely to the ambition of Young Futures Hubs<sup>3</sup>, and as such the learning from this evaluation should be considered, including how to ensure children and young people who may not otherwise receive support can be provided with accessible support in the community, through the VCSE's expertise, and the emphasis on co-production, partnership and collaboration.

## Conclusion

The evaluation highlights the unique and flexible approach of the London Vikings, in supporting children, young people, parents, and carers via a bespoke, community-based offer. The London Vikings address societal adversities and promote holistic wellbeing, bridging critical gaps left by traditional mental health services such as CAMHS. Their ability to engage marginalised communities through trust, cultural humility, and co-production is a particular strength. Evidence from this evaluation suggests that children and young people experience better access to support, and improved outcomes in a range of areas, with the strongest impact when whole-family support is provided.

The London Vikings' collaborative model with statutory and VCSE partners has matured into effective delivery, and its emphasis on genuine co-production ensures relevance and sustainability. Please note that our understanding of practitioner-rated outcomes is limited, and it is not expected that all outcome areas are relevant for all children and young people, so these findings should be interpreted with caution. Additionally, the self-selecting nature of the participants means that the findings may be biased towards those who had more positive experiences.

Each of the London Vikings is operating differently. In this evaluation, we analysed the London Vikings model as a whole, and found that all teams are collectively working towards the principles of both The Community Multi-Systems Violence Reduction Programme<sup>4</sup> (CMSVRP; Vanguard), model and the Framework for Integrated Care<sup>5</sup>. The evidence in this evaluation suggests that these principles are being met, although more evidence would be required to explore Framework principle six in relation to sustaining trauma informed organisations. While the commitment is evident, challenges with wider system working were identified, and sustained changes to organisations will be seen outside the lifetime of this evaluation. Overall, the evaluation demonstrates the London Vikings' vital role in early intervention, prevention, and systemic change for children and young people who may be affected by violence.

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<sup>3</sup> Prime Minister's Office 10 Downing Street. (2025). Young Futures Hubs to launch offering vulnerable young people lifeline. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/young-futures-hubs-to-launch-offering-vulnerable-young-people-lifeline>

<sup>4</sup> <https://londonviolencereduction.nhs.uk/the-london-vanguard-mental-health-community-projects/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.annafreud.org/services/services-for-professionals/the-framework-for-integrated-care-a-catalyst-for-change/>