

**DMPC Decision – PCD 1241****Title:** Missing People Is This OK Chatbot Service for London**Executive Summary:**

The Violence Reduction Unit is intending to make a grant award to Missing People to expand their successful chatbot pilot with one borough into a pan-London service. The service is aimed at children and young people who have concerns about exploitation & would like to speak with someone confidentially. The service pilot was evaluated and showed highly promising results.

**Recommendation:**

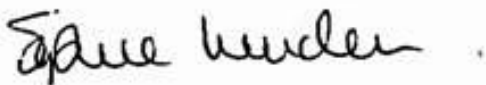
The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime is recommended to:

1. Approve the grant award of £99,627 to Missing People for the roll out of a pan-London chatbot service for children and young people. The programme will be delivered from October 2022 – September 2023.

**Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime**

I confirm I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct. Any such interests are recorded below.

The above request has my approval.

**Signature****Date****26/07/2022**

## **PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE DMPC**

### **1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1. Is This OK? is the brainchild of Esther Rantzen DBE and Anne Longfield CBE. Through their engagement work with young people, they realised 13-18 year olds needed a credible, digital, safe space to discuss and share their worries about exploitation – which didn't exist.
- 1.2. Is This OK? includes a 24/7 chatbot, online information resources and access to direct one to one chat delivered by a skilled, expert team. The service is totally anonymous and confidential, which 68% of young people using the service in 2021-22 said was essential.
- 1.3. The service principles, website and chatbot design, branding and marketing have been designed at every stage with young people with lived experience
- 1.4. The service secured funding for 2018 to 2022 from BBC Children in Need for a 2-stage pilot, delivered by Missing People and NSPCC Childline, with tech partner Reason Digital. The initial pilot was in 2 local authority areas, which grew to 7 areas in the second pilot phase (May 21 to March 22), and there are currently 8 area operating the service, including 1 in London.
- 1.5. The impact of the service has been shown through a recent evaluation by the University of Liverpool, when over half of young people (51%) who used the service chat said that they felt better after the chat and four in ten (42%) said that they were able to make safer decisions. Less than 6% of young people had spoken to another professional/ helpline before contacting Is This OK? Missing People is now seeking funding to deliver Phase 3 of Is This OK? through a wider roll out of the service from October 2022.
- 1.6. The Is This OK? team can only breach confidentiality if they believe the young person or someone else is at serious risk of significant harm and if the young person chooses to share information about who they are and where they are. The Is This OK? team are skilled in safeguarding and supporting young people.

### **2. Issues for consideration**

- 2.1. Prevention and early intervention – helping young people before exploitation becomes entrenched and gathering information about the causes of violence, linking to the VRU's public health approach.
- 2.2. Helping tackle violence against women and girls – Is This OK? is be an accessible, safe, confidential, and anonymous space for young women and girls across London to seek support for their experiences of exploitation, and coercive control, and to be signposted/ referred anonymously to other specialist support.

- 2.3. Partnership working – Is This OK? will work with schools, youth work teams, social workers, PRUs and mentors working with the VRU to promote the service. Is This OK? Will also work with specialist exploitation, mental health, and victim support services to provide young people with a personal pathway to additional support. This will further the VRU as a hub of good practice, networking, and capacity building.
- 2.4. Exist strategy – The London VRU will discuss with the provider what will be put in place in terms of sustainability for the programme after the year of funding.

### 3. Financial Comments

#### BUDGET FOR 1-YEAR PAN-LONDON ROLL-OUT

Item	Cost (per year – October to September)
7 days a week x chat delivery 4-11pm	£47,623
Project management and promotion (staff time)	£23,280
Team welfare and development: monthly clinical supervision and training	£1,580
Young advisors, youth consultation and young people's promotion of service	£4,600
Social media promotion and materials	£9,000
Tech development, licensing and support	£6,560
Monitoring and evaluation – quarterly reports inc contact trends	£1,562
Other costs (ICT equipment, software licensing, travel)	£2,746
Contribution to overheads – HR, IT, Finance, Governance	£2,676
<b>total</b>	<b>£ 99,627</b>

- 3.1. The budget requirement for this work totals £99,627. The programme will be funded from within the VRU's approved Mayoral Precept budget. Expenditure of £49,814 will be incurred in 2022/23 and £49,814 in 2023/24.

### 4. Legal Comments

Paragraph 4.8 of the MOPAC Scheme of Delegation and Consent provides that the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime (DMPC) has delegated authority to approve all bids for grant funding.

### 5. Commercial Issues

- 5.1. This is an existing evidence-based service which is currently being delivered & can easily be expanded by the provider. It would not make commercial sense to undergo a competitive process as young people already have access to the chatbot service. To support with continuity & testing expansion across London, this will be a direct award.

### 6. Public Health Approach

As above, this piece of work is in line with the Violence Reduction Unit's public health approach to reducing violence which is rooted in early intervention.

### 7. GDPR and Data Privacy

- 7.1. MOPAC will adhere to the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and ensure that any organisations who are commissioned to do work with or on behalf of MOPAC are fully compliant with the policy and understand their GDPR responsibilities.

## **8. Equality Comments**

- 8.1. MOPAC is required to comply with the public sector equality duty set out in section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010. This requires MOPAC to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations by reference to people with protected characteristics. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 8.2. The VRU will ensure Missing People provide an EQIA for this work before awarding.

## **9. Background/supporting papers**

### **9.1. INDEPENDENT EVALUATION: KEY FINDINGS – BETWEEN MAY 2021 AND MARCH 2022**

- 9.1.1. 3,795 people engaged with the chatbot and 274 young people used the one to one chat service (across a total of 485 chats as some people contacted the service 2+ times).
- 9.1.2. Of the young people who accessed one to one chat, 13% are experiencing sexual or physical violence, carrying a weapon or showing other possible signs of exploitation. A further 9% reported currently being exploited or experiencing coercive control.
- 9.1.3. 68% said confidentiality and anonymity was extremely important to their use of the service, rating it as 4 or 5 out of 5 in terms of importance.
- 9.1.4. Fewer than 6% of those at risk of/ experiencing exploitation had spoken to a professional or helpline before contacting Is This OK?

### **9.2. LONDON VRU FUNDING FROM OCTOBER 2022 FOR ONE YEAR WOULD INCLUDE:**

- 9.2.1. Chatbot service and online information available 24/7
- 9.2.2. One to one chat service with skilled, experienced chat handlers 4pm to 11pm, 7 days a week – able to respond to demand of up to 1,800 chats a year in London
- 9.2.3. A targeted social media marketing strategy developed and delivered with our youth advisory board
- 9.2.4. On the ground marketing through awareness raising sessions for teachers/ youth workers and other professionals – plus a peer to peer approach to champion the service to young people (subject to national funding bid recently submitted to Children in Need Social Action Fund)
- 9.2.5. Young People's Advisory Board to advise on, and get involved in local marketing and promotion approaches – including a £3k marketing fund for them to make their promotional ideas happen.

- 9.2.6. Signposting and anonymous referrals into local specialist support providers through a regularly updated list of services and set up of referral pathways with pan-London exploitation support services.
- 9.2.7. Quarterly reporting on service usage and trends. Note that in our pre-chat survey we ask young people what local authority area they are from, and an average of 33% respond to this question, meaning we can provide (limited) local data in monitoring reports, e.g. about exploitation trends, numbers of young people from different areas, and the impact of local marketing.

**Public access to information**

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and will be made available on the MOPAC website following approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

**Part 1 Deferral:**

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If yes, for what reason:

Until what date:

**Part 2 Confidentiality:** Only the facts or advice considered as likely to be exempt from disclosure under the FOIA should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a **Part 2** form NO

<b>ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION</b>	<i>Tick to confirm statement (✓)</i>
<b>Financial Advice:</b> The Strategic Finance and Resource Management Team has been consulted on this proposal.	(✓)
<b>Legal Advice:</b> Legal advice is not required.	(✓)
<b>Equalities Advice:</b> Equality and diversity issues are covered in the body of the report.	(✓)
<b>Public Health Approach</b> Due diligence has been given to determine whether the programme sits within the Violence Reduction Unit's public approach to reducing violence. This has been reviewed and supported by a senior manager within the VRU.	(✓)
<b>Commercial Issues</b> The Contract Management Team has been consulted on the commercial issues within this report. The proposal is in keeping with the GLA Group Responsible Procurement Policy.	(✓)
<b>GDPR/Data Privacy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GDPR compliance issues are covered in the body of the report</li> <li>A DPIA is not required.</li> </ul>	(✓)
<b>Drafting Officer</b> RHIANNON SAWYER has drafted this report in accordance with MOPAC procedures.	(✓)
<b>Director/Head of Service:</b> The VRU ASSISTANT DIRECTOR has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the MOPAC's plans and priorities.	(✓)

**Chief Executive Officer**

I have been consulted about the proposal and confirm that financial, legal and equalities advice has been taken into account in the preparation of this report. I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime.

**Signature****Date 02/08/2022**A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Hannah Chiford", is written over a light grey rectangular background.