

**DMPC Decision – PCD 1539 Missing People****Title: Missing People 'Is This OK' Project Extension****Executive Summary**

The Violence Reduction Unit intends to make a grant extension award to Missing People to continue their successful and innovative online support service for young Londoners pan-London. The 'Is This OK?' (ITOK) service is aimed at children and young people in the 11-17 age group who have concerns about exploitation & would like to speak with someone using a digital safe space that is completely anonymous and confidential. The service includes a 24/7 chatbot, online information resources, and, for those wanting to disclose their concerns to someone confidentially and anonymously, access to a direct one-to-one chat delivered by a skilled and expert team at Missing People.

The service pilot was evaluated previously, and with the current 12-month VRU-funded project coming to an end, there is evidence supporting the need to continue the service from October 2023 until June 2024 to continue positively supporting young people in London.

**Recommendation:**

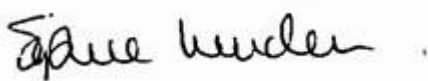
The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime is recommended to:

1. Approve an additional grant award of £59,895 to Missing People to extend the current grant agreement to deliver the ITOK project from October 2023 to June 2024. Expenditure of £34,226 will be incurred in 2023/24 and £25,669 in 2024/25.

**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****26-10-23**



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

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

- 1.1. Is This OK? was developed by Esther Rantzen (President of Childline) and Anne Longfield (while Children's Commissioner) after identifying a support gap in terms of a helpline targeted at the 11-17 age group as Childline was not being used by this age group for reasons such as fear of disclosing. Following focus groups, CYP in the 11-17 age group stated they preferred using a private online chat and accessing information online rather than via phone calls/face-to-face, resulting in ITOK's creation.
- 1.2. Missing People, were awarded £99,627 of VRU funding from November 2022 to November 2023 to deliver 'Is This Ok?' (ITOK), a pan-London, free, anonymous, and confidential digital safe-space for children and young people (CYP) ages 11-17 to discuss their concerns around exploitation and other topics identified by CYP as needing to disclose, i.e., relationships, abuse, mental health, etc.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. The service principles, website and chatbot design, branding and marketing have been designed at every stage with young people with lived experience, in London this has been done collaboratively with YPAG
- 1.5. 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. Following the pilot's success as captured by the independent evaluation, the VRU funded the pan-London rollout from October 2022 to October 2023 which has continued to show a positive impact
- 1.6. The impact of the service has been shown through an 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. The independent evaluation showed that only c.10% of CYP accessing ITOK had sought help from other professionals before contacting ITOK. Without the unique safe space that ITOK provides, these CYP are unlikely to seek help and disclose what is going on in their lives to anyone else. The pan-London project has evidenced the impact and reach of young people via quarterly returns and case studies, identifying a requirement for the project's continuation and further opportunities for evaluation and development.
- 1.7. Disclosure and consent – should a young person disclose a significant risk of serious harm or danger to life, the ITOK team member is trained to speak to the young person about their concerns. ITOK only shares safeguarding information with a statutory agency if there is actionable information to identify/locate the young person via the young person's consent. Should a young person decide to share information with the ITOK team member, staff will work with the young person to get their consent to share the information with the relevant statutory

agencies. The ITOK team would consider disclosing that information without the young person's consent if it is believed a young person is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, or their or someone else's life is in danger.

## **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. Providing an anonymous and confidential service able to reach young people who may not feel comfortable disclosing their concerns to a professional or trusted person is an innovative approach to reducing violence, effectively supporting those who may otherwise not disclose.
- 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 continue to work with Local Authorities, Met Police, 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. Exit strategy – VRU to discuss with provider what will be put in place in terms of sustainability for the programme after the additional extension of funding

## **3. Financial Comments**

- 3.1. The total budget requirement for this work totals £59,895. The programme will be funded from within the VRU's existing approved Mayoral Funding. Expenditure of £34,226 will be incurred in 2023/24 and £25,669 in 2024/25.

## **4. Legal Comments**

- 4.1 MOPAC's general powers are set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (the 2011 Act). Section 3(6) of the 2011 Act provides that MOPAC must "secure the maintenance of the metropolitan police service and secure that the metropolitan police service is efficient and effective." Under Schedule 3, paragraph 7 MOPAC has wide incidental powers to "do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the exercise of the functions of the Office." Paragraph 7(2) (a) provides that this includes entering into contracts and other agreements.

- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 Legal advice has not been sought and there should be no significant legal implications arising from this report.

## **5. Commercial Issues**

- 5.1. This is an existing evidence-based service that 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 service. To support with continuity & testing expansion across London, this will be a grant award to the existing provider

## **6. Public Health Approach**

- 6.1. This piece of work has been informed by discussions and feedback from the Violence Reduction Unit and Missing People.

## **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. This style of engagement (online/anonymous) is accessible (24/7) and required across communities, to those most likely to use this service, our young people. Additionally, there is opportunity for direct online one-to-one chat delivered by a skilled, expert team should the online chat option not be enough or be inaccessible for users.



**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

**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

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION	<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> Jamie Endrizzi has drafted this report in accordance with MOPAC procedures.	(✓)
<b>Director/Head of Service:</b> The 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**A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hannah Clifford'.**Date 25-10-23**