



Girls & Young Women Mentoring Programme:

Maia & Lift Evaluation Findings

Executive Summary

London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) is committed to tackling violence against women and girls. The VRU invested £1 million in a new mentoring programme (Maia & Lift) for Girls & Young Women aged 9 to 25, who identified as female or non-binary (assigned female at birth). Expert charities Advance, Chance UK, Working Chance, and Woman's Trust delivered the programme. One-to-one and group activities were provided for those who were at risk of domestic abuse or being exploited, alongside other factors like poor mental health or not being able to pay for their basic needs.

Between March 2022 and December 2023, the programme supported 102 Girls & Young Women in Hackney, Camden, Islington, Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Westminster, providing them with opportunities to be safe and lead positive lives. The VRU believe Maia & Lift can help to tackle violence against women and girls, and support those who have experienced harm from family members or other people in the community.

About The Girls & Young Women Mentoring Programme

Maia

The Maia programme provided 1:1 mentoring sessions and group activities for Girls & Young Women aged 13-25 to explore concepts of identity, healthy relationships, and empowerment. Topics covered in sessions were chosen by the Girls & Young Women, ranging from healthy relationships to support with job applications. Maia also referred Girls & Young Women to employability and therapeutic activities, if that was helpful for them.



Employability activities for young women aged 18-25. Employability, coaching aimed to develop skills such as CV writing, job applications, and interviewing skills.



Therapeutic workshops for young women aged 16-25 to develop techniques for anxiety and mindfulness, building confidence, and resilience.

Lift

The Lift programme provided 1:1 mentoring and group sessions for girls aged 9-13 to support skills development, social & emotional skills, and coping mechanisms.

Participants were invited to join in with different activities, including weekly 1:1 sessions with their mentor and discussions with other young people about topics important to them. They were also offered the option to go on fun outings, including trips on the tube and to local shopping centres

Who?

- Girls & Young Women (including non-binary young people assigned female at birth) aged 9-25.
- Who lived in Hackney, Camden, Islington, Newham, Tower Hamlets or Westminster.
- Who were at risk of issues related to:
 - Domestic abuse, violence or substance use.
 - Involvement with gangs or the criminal justice system.
 - Low school attendance, school exclusion, or not in education, employment or training.
 - Poor mental health and wellbeing, such as signs of depression or anxiety.
 - Poor peer relationships, such as experiences of bullying, and social isolation.

How?

- Girls & Young Women were referred to the programme through other services.
- The three most common referral organisations were:
 - Children and Families Support Services **(35 referrals)**
 - Advance – Maia **(27 referrals)**
 - Education providers, such as schools and colleges **(25 referrals)**

What?

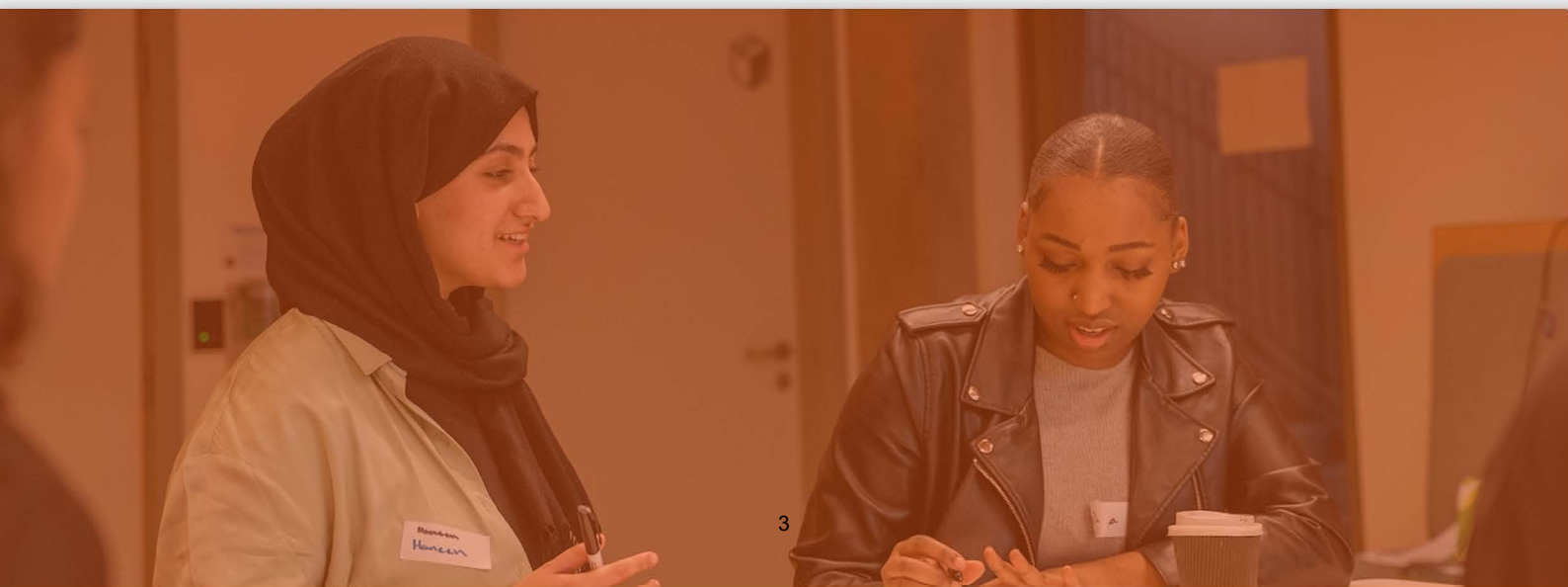
- One-to-one support, mentoring and group activities delivered by a partnership of Advance, Chance UK, Working Chance, and Woman's Trust.

Why?

- To support Girls & Young Women to:
 - Develop positive coping mechanisms.
 - Understand their strengths and identify and manage emotions.
 - Understand their rights and feel empowered to assert them.
 - Develop and use their own safety strategies.
 - Have long term goals and aspirations for the future.

Key Figures

- A total of 102 Girls & Young Women were reached by the programme.
- The programme took place over 12 months beginning in summer 2022.



How The Mentors Support And Guide Girls And Young Women

- Mentors focused on building trusting relationships with Girls & Young Women.
- Mentors were patient, compassionate and understanding.
- Participants chose what their engagement looked like, for example, deciding what they wanted to discuss in sessions, or how often they would meet their mentor.
- Sessions focused on highlighting strengths and abilities, rather than challenges.
- Mentors were considerate of how gender, trauma, and culture might impact someone's experience.
- Peer support helped Girls & Young Women discuss their experiences with people like them, who may have shared experiences.

Views on the programme's impact on Girls & Young Women:

While on the programme, Girls & Young Women reported the following changes:

Emotional

- Better mental health
- Better independence
- More confidence
- More positivity
- More hope for the future
- Better emotional regulation
- Increased trust in new people
- Increased feelings of tranquillity
- Improved coping mechanisms
- Less stress and worries

Social

- Less conflict with family
- More secure network of friends
- Improved social skills
- More able to make independent choices
- More confidence to question their rights in relationships and what they should expect from their relationships
- Greater sense of self-reliance

Environmental

- More opportunities to try new things
- Recognition of their strengths
- Increased confidence in their abilities
- Improved outlook on school and education due to encouragement from their mentor
- Increased resilience to tackle challenges

Views on the programme's impact on parents/carers:

While on the programme, parents/carers of Girls & Young women reported the following changes:

Emotional

- Gave parents/carers more independence and free time
- Sense of relief at seeing their child overcome challenges

Social

- Provided a wider support network for parents/carers
- Less likely to argue with family and improved sibling relationships
- Parents/carers felt calmer at home

"Where she's not as clingy, I can actually breathe now. I'm so happy how she's improved."
Parent/ carer

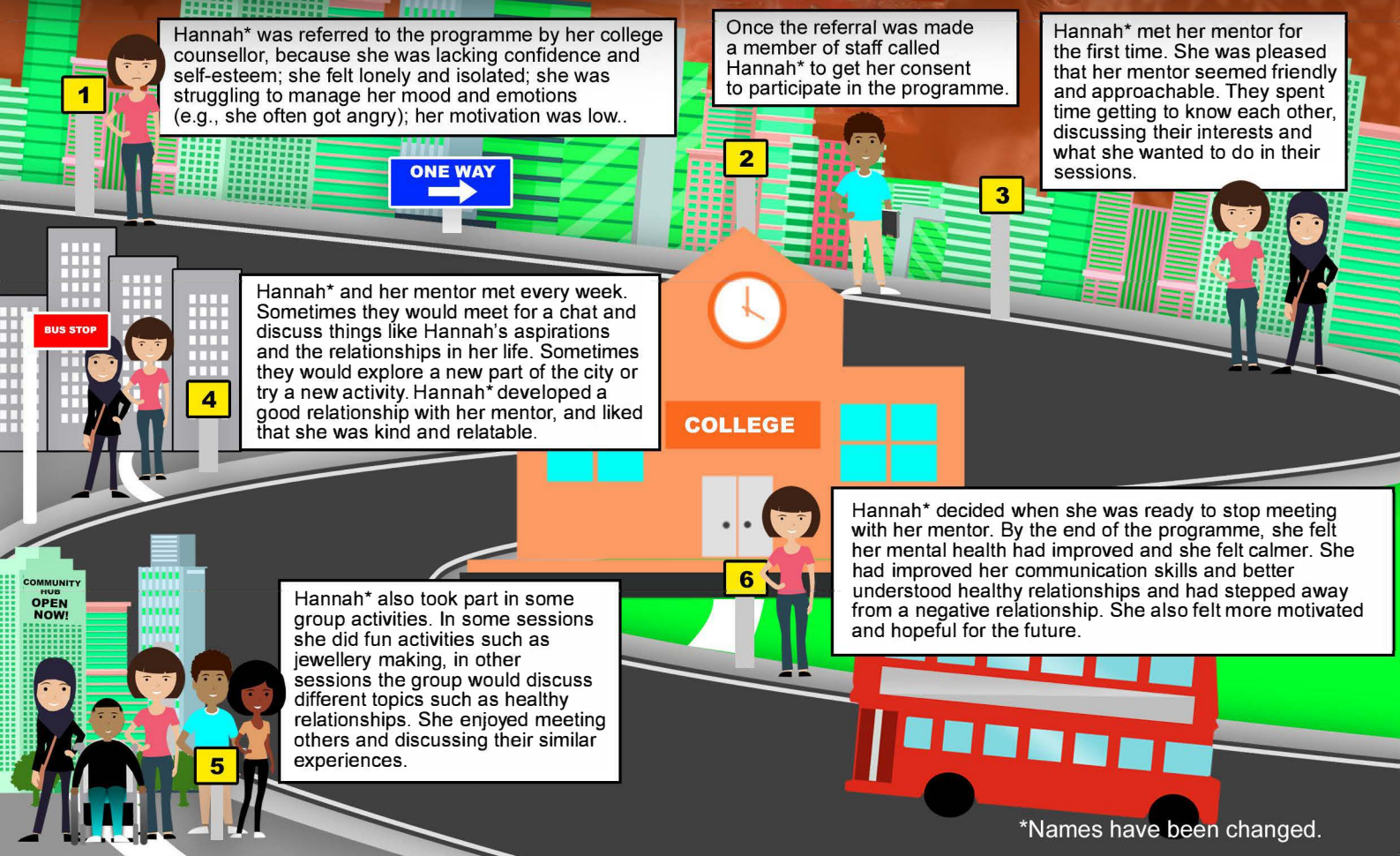
"I think it's been great. Because obviously, [daughter] has improved, and that's what makes me happy."
Parent/ carer

"[Before the mentoring I felt] lonely ... I barely went outside and explored other places."
Programme participant

"She [mentor] gave me good advice, and I felt safer."
Programme participant

"They advise you ... but it's up to me."
Programme participant

Hannah's* story



Key Learning

- There were challenges in the short timeframe for set-up and delivery, which made it hard to recruit and train staff. It also took longer than expected to work with other organisations who could refer Girls & Young Women to the programme.
- Group activities on sensitive topics were found to be the most challenging for some Girls & Young Women to attend.
- Fewer Girls & Young Women accessed therapeutic and employability support because of the time needed to build a relationship with their mentor, before being open to a referral to these activities.
- The learning from these experiences and challenges will inform key updates as the programme continues.

More detail can be found in the final evaluation report.

What Next?

Advance, Chance UK, Working Chance and Woman's Trust are delivering a new phase of the Programme. They want to make group activities more engaging and work with more young women who are at-risk of being in contact with the Criminal Justice System or being exploited.

Further information about the programme can be found here. Ecorys and Renaisi will continue to evaluate the new phase of the programme.

Credits to:

Kai Bibi and Zara Hossain

of the Young People's Action Group who drafted and reviewed key sections of the youth-facing report.