

Mayor of London VRU

Bambu evaluation: impact report

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VRU |

MAYOR OF LONDON
VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT


CordisBright

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Executive summary

Summary

This report evaluates the Bambu programme, designed to support young people impacted by domestic abuse (DA) in eight London boroughs: Croydon, Enfield, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Tower Hamlets, and Wandsworth.

Funded by the Mayor of London’s Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), Bambu provides early intervention, trauma-informed support to support children and young people aged 11-24. The programme takes an innovative approach, providing tailored one-to-one support while aiming to influence systemic responses to DA.

This report presents findings on Bambu’s outcomes for children and young people and the broader system, highlights challenges, and offers recommendations for future programme delivery and commissioning.

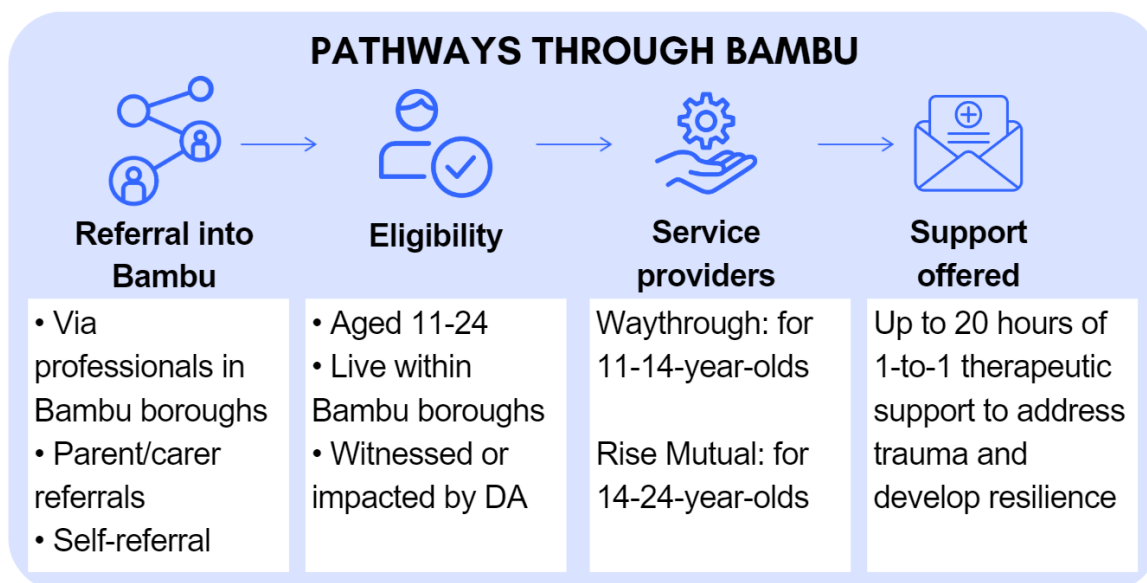
Evaluation methodology

Staff consultation 	Process Phase: Interviews with 17 wider Bambu partners ; two workshops with Bambu practitioners . Impact Phase: Interviews with 11 members of Bambu staff .
Young people consultation 	In-person or remote discussions with nine young people . Seven anonymised case studies . End of support feedback surveys from 20 young people.
Quant data 	Programme monitoring data and Outcomes data from two tools (SDQ; life satisfaction scale).
Advisory group 	An advisory group was set up during the impact phase including representatives from the VRU Young People’s Action Group (YPAG).

Bambu’s importance and effectiveness

Most DA services focus on the primary victims/survivors of abuse, which means their children – now legally recognised as victims in their own right under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – are often overlooked. This is where Bambu steps in to fill this urgent gap. The evaluation found that Bambu is **meeting a critical need** in many local areas in a way that bridges the gap for young people who would otherwise not receive support.

The support is **high quality, person-centred and trauma-informed** and makes a real difference to the young people and families it has supported. Bambu has also gone some way towards making cultural changes for those it interacts with in the wider system by **fostering greater awareness of the impacts of DA**, though system-level challenges, such as a need for more trauma-informed work throughout the system, remain.



Programme reach and engagement

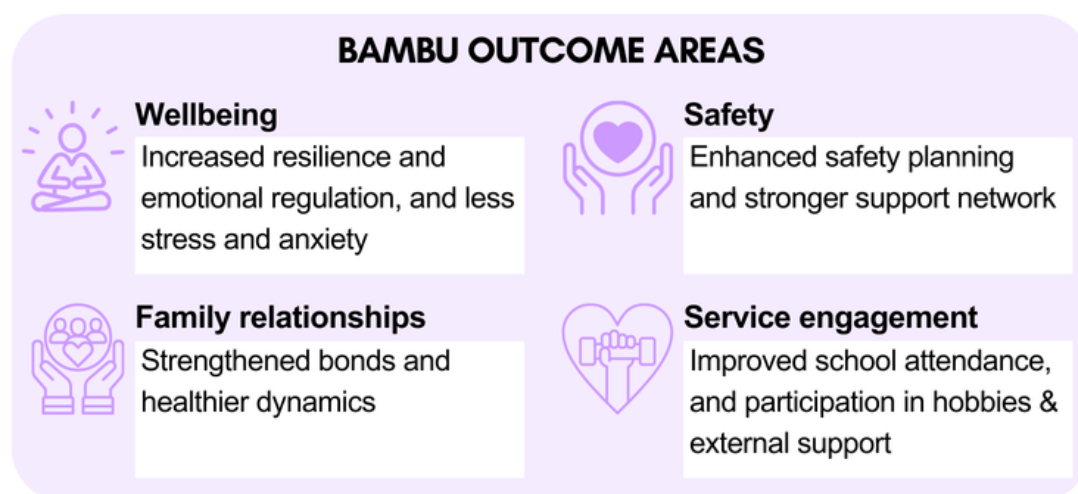
- By October 2024, 422 young people had been referred to Bambu, with 247 having attended at least a first session.
- The highest referral rates were from Croydon and Lambeth, with 31% and 26% of referrals, respectively. Most referrals were from children and family services.
- The largest age group was 12-15 years, with an even split across genders overall, and the programme reached young people from a wide range of ethnic groups.
- Despite the even gender split in referrals, practitioners noted that boys might be more likely to disengage sooner and engage less deeply in support. It was suggested this was related to the wider context of societal-level gender stereotypes and stigma around boys talking about their feelings, rather than being specific to Bambu.

Improvements to young people's lives

Bambu aims to make a difference to young people's lives in the key areas of improving wellbeing, reducing behavioural and emotional difficulties, improving family relationships, and improving engagement with services.

The evaluation found positive examples of progress in all these areas as a result of Bambu's support. Improved wellbeing was identified as a strong area of improvement through the qualitative research, particularly in terms of young people's ability to handle stress and improved confidence.

In many cases, progress in these areas led to improvements in other areas as well.



Quantitative data supported findings although the picture was more mixed

The findings from quantitative data suggested some, but less substantial, positive changes for young people.

A note on outcomes tools: It should be noted that no change in score does not necessarily mean Bambu had no impact on these domains. For example, in the absence of Bambu support, it is possible that scores could have declined, in which case, no change in score could reflect a positive impact. It is also possible that young people score themselves more highly pre-support since they may not have yet developed trust in their keyworker or the awareness to accurately identify where they are on the scales, so pre-support scores may appear higher.

Bambu collected data via two outcomes-focused surveys at the start and end of support and an exit survey. These were introduced partway through the programme, hence the smaller sample size. Both the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Brief Multidimensional Students Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS) showed some evidence of positive outcomes for young people.

Analysis of the self-reported SDQ scores for 68 young people shows that across each scale, the majority reported no change, but some showed improved scores after Bambu. Negative changes are minimal across all scales.

Notable positive changes for SDQ scores include:

- Half of young people reported **improvement in their total difficulties score**, which suggests that young people experienced an overall improvement across domains.
- 32% of young people showed positive change in **emotional symptoms**.
- 41% of young people reported improvement in **conduct problems**.

Analysis of the self-reported BMSLSS for 40 young people shows:

- **All domains showed improvement** when we look at average score.

- The largest reported improvement was in **self-perception** with a 1.3-point increase and **school/work environments** with a 0.9-point increase.

These positive changes across both tools ties into the qualitative findings that Bambu's person-centred, high-quality support impacted numerous areas of young people's lives.

Exit survey data from 20 young people who completed support was extremely positive: 100% said they would recommend Bambu support; 95% said there was nothing else they would want to see covered in their support; and the majority said they had noticed positive changes in themselves in the areas of self, family relationships, school/work, and safety.

HOW DOES BAMBU MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO WELLBEING?



Trauma-informed support. Bambu's support is designed to help young people understand and heal from their trauma and its impact on their mind, body, and behaviour. For example, practitioners described that resilience sessions help young people understand and accept themselves as they are and reduce feelings of self-blame and feeling damaged or broken.

A safe space to talk. Bambu gives young people a space to talk about what is important to them, such as their hopes for the future and how to work towards this.

A consistent relationship builds trust. Consistent engagement with one practitioner for up to 20 weeks helps build trust, which lets young people feel safe sharing their experiences and opening up. This boosts confidence and strengthens their ability to express themselves. Young people consistently highlighted the importance of the trusted keyworker relationship (see graphic p.24).

Practical techniques and strategies. Tools and techniques such as journaling, breathing exercises and session materials gave young people tangible ways to manage stress, anxiety, and anger on their own. Young people valued having tools they could use in their daily lives, including in difficult moments such as managing panic attacks and coping with anxiety.

Engaging and interactive support. The support includes interactive exercises, such as games, visual aids (e.g. charts, pyramids, and diagrams), and videos. Bambu also incorporates humour and informal engagement to make sessions enjoyable.

Empowering rather than instructing. Young people appreciated that practitioners were non-judgmental and collaborative, giving explanations and exploring options rather than simply advising. This encourages and empowers independence.

Flexibility and personalised support. Bambu responds flexibly to support young people, taking account of them as individuals in terms of how, where, and when they deliver support and who the support comes from by aiming to match young people up with practitioners they feel would best suit them.

Some system impacts

In some instances, professionals gained a **deeper understanding of the impact of DA and trauma** on young people and how this can manifest in their behaviour. However, partners felt **more work was needed to achieve broader awareness and understanding**, especially for professionals in education and children's social care.

Bambu has contributed to **schools and social services beginning to adopt more trauma-sensitive approaches**, though further training and resources are needed.

Bambu has built **strong multi-agency relationships** thanks to solid promotion efforts, making use of existing partnerships, and word of mouth; however, consistency across boroughs remains a challenge.

Limitations of the evaluation: There are some limitations to this evaluation including potential sample bias towards those who had a positive experience, and small sample sizes for the quantitative data collection, due to monitoring being introduced partway through delivery. Nonetheless this theory-led evaluation found substantial promising evidence of the difference the programme is making. Continued data collection across this programme and the early embedding of evaluation in any new commissioned programmes is recommended to continue to build understanding and evidence of what works in providing support to children and young people impacted by DA.

Key learning and recommendations for next steps

The evaluation found that Bambu represents a significant step in supporting young people affected by DA and demonstrates real potential for further integration and expansion. It also identified some challenges relating to delivery and commissioning, which hindered reach and impact. These are reflected in the below recommendations.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMME DELIVERY

1. **Strategic, consistent promotion:** Implement consistent marketing to increase referrals and ensure awareness among professionals and families.
2. **Prioritise partnership-building with schools:** Continue to focus on close collaboration with schools, including exploring options for co-location, staff training, and direct promotion to young people to maximise impact and referrals.
3. **Leverage delivery partners' networks:** Make use of delivery partners' existing relationships and programmes to raise awareness and promote Bambu.
4. **Maintain flexible programme design:** Continue prioritising the bespoke support of Bambu's model, tailored to young people's individual needs and preferences.
5. **Enhance outreach to marginalised groups:** Monitor demographics, utilise existing networks, and ensure a diverse, culturally informed team to improve engagement with underrepresented communities.

6. **Enhance gender-specific support for boys.** Conduct further research or needs assessment around how best to deliver support for boys impacted by domestic abuse, including understanding reasons for disengagement and identifying strategies and approaches that facilitate meaningful engagement.
7. **Address logistical challenges:** Reduce travel burden for practitioners, streamline consent processes with online forms, and optimise branding to make the service easier to locate online.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE COMMISSIONING

8. **Focus on broader system impacts:** Consider commissioning a) with longer-term funding and b) building in trauma-informed training for professionals working with young people in schools, children's social care, communities, and charities.
9. **Commission strategically based on need:** Undertake a needs assessment to inform future commissioning, to identify areas with gaps in the support landscape for programmes such as Bambu. This could include system mapping.
10. **Expand scope and scale of Bambu:** Extend this much-needed support for young people impacted by DA to more boroughs, younger age groups, and those impacted by abuse from other family members, such as siblings.
11. **Embed trauma-informed approaches:** Ensure trauma-informed principles are central to commissioned programmes and promoted across schools and professional networks.
12. **Adopt a whole family approach:** Embed holistic family support in commissioning to address the needs of all family members directly or indirectly affected by DA.
13. **Strengthen partnership working by embedding this within commissioning:** Embed a VAWG lead as a contracted pre-requisite in each borough for a DA programme of this nature and invest in system-wide partnership development within commissioning agreements.
14. **Improve monitoring and evaluation:** Commission an evaluation at the same time as commissioning future work, to allow improved support for delivery partners in setting up monitoring, improved data collection, and improved evaluation impact.

Conclusion

The evaluation underscores Bambu's role in bridging gaps for young people impacted by DA. The programme's high-quality, trauma-informed support has made substantial differences in the lives of its participants and begun influencing systemic practices. However, addressing the challenges identified and adopting the recommendations will be essential for maximising impact and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Glossary

Acronym	Word and Definition
BMSLSS	Brief Multidimensional Students Life Satisfaction Scale: One of the two outcomes measurement tools used in this evaluation to measure life satisfaction across different domains, such as school, family, and self-perception.
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services: NHS-provided services in the UK supporting children and young people with mental health.
CAPVA	Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse: A type of domestic abuse involving aggressive or violent behaviour by a child or young person towards their parent.
CIFA	Culturally Integrated Family Approach: A programme delivered by RISE Mutual in Enfield aimed at addressing domestic abuse in racialised and minoritised communities.
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation: A form of abuse where children are manipulated or coerced into sexual.
CYP	Children and Young People: Refers to individuals aged 0-24.
DA	Domestic Abuse: Abusive behaviours, whether physical, emotional, or psychological, occurring within domestic settings and involving intimate partners or family members.
ETE	Education, Training, and Employment: Engagement in formal learning, vocational training, or the workplace.
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advisor: A professional who provides support and advocacy for victims/survivors of domestic abuse to improve their safety and navigate systems of support.
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference: A meeting where information about high-risk domestic abuse cases is shared between agencies to improve the safety of victims/survivors.
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub: A central team of professionals from different agencies working together to identify and protect vulnerable individuals, particularly children.
MOPAC	Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime: The organisation responsible for overseeing London's police and crime strategy.
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: One of the two outcomes measurement tools used in this evaluation: used to assess emotional and behavioural difficulties in children and young people.

Acronym	Word and Definition
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls: Refers to violent acts that are primarily or exclusively committed against women and girls, often encompassing domestic abuse, sexual violence, and trafficking.
VRU	Violence Reduction Unit: A unit funded by the Mayor of London, focusing on reducing violence through prevention and intervention.
YPAG	Young People's Action Group: A group of young people (in this evaluation, organised by the VRU), that gives insights and feedback to ensure programmes and policies are youth centred.

1 Introduction

1.1 Bridging the gap for young people affected by domestic abuse

Domestic abuse (DA) casts a long shadow, affecting not just the direct victims/survivors but also their children. Most DA services focus on the primary victims/survivors of abuse, which means their children – who are now legally recognised as victims in their own right under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – are often overlooked.

This is where Bambu steps in to **fill this critical gap**, providing targeted support to children and young people who have been exposed to DA, a group that has historically been under-served despite their need. In addition, while many services focused on advocacy and crisis management, Bambu provides **longer-term therapeutic support**.

In areas where no such services previously existed, or where vital programmes have been discontinued, Bambu offers **support and empowerment** to children and young people who might otherwise fall through the cracks.

Bambu is not just responding to a need but is **working towards reshaping the narrative**. By recognising children and young people as victims and delivering support that prioritises them, Bambu bridges a gap that has been too wide for too long.

1.2 Overview of Bambu

Bambu is funded by the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) under the Women and Girls strand. It is delivered in partnership by two support organisations who operate across London, Rise Mutual and Waythrough (previously operating under the name of Richmond Fellowship), with input from the DA charity SafeLives. The overall contract value of Bambu, including contract extension, was £1,495,298.

1.3 What support does Bambu provide?

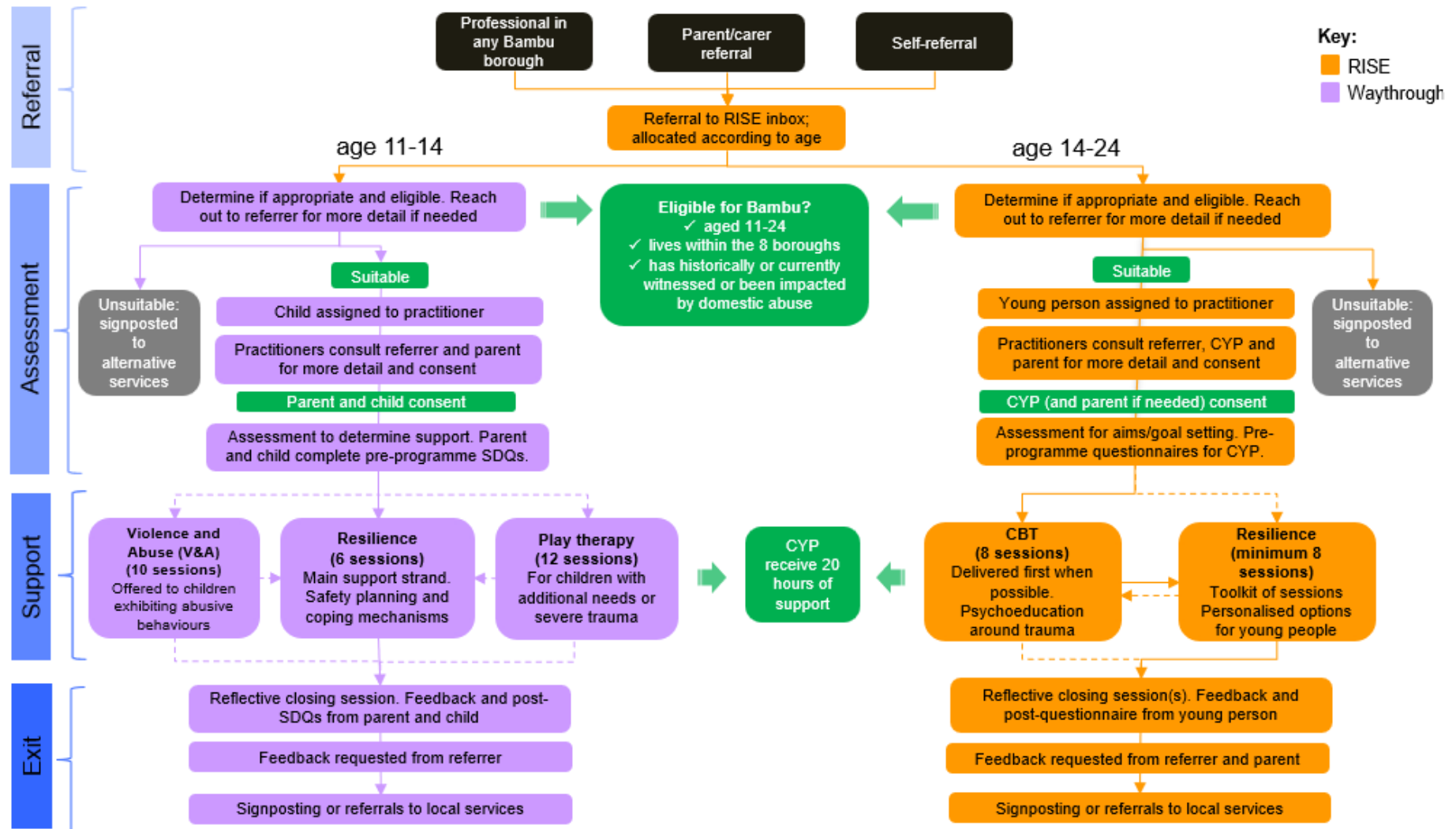
Bambu provides **one-to-one trauma-informed, early intervention support** to children and young people of all genders aged 11 to 24 impacted by DA.

Rise Mutual (lead delivery partner) works with those aged 14-24; Waythrough works with those aged 11-14. The support lasts up to 20 weeks and includes one or more of the following types of support, depending on age and need:

- Resilience sessions to support with coping mechanisms and safety planning
- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to provide psychoeducation and trauma support
- Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA) support for children exhibiting abusive behaviours
- Play therapy for children with additional needs or severe trauma

Figure 2 summarises the pathways through Bambu support.

Figure 1 Summary of journey through Bambu's pathways



In response to feedback which identified a further gap in support, a new support strand was implemented for the victim/survivor parent of the young people supported by Bambu. This programme, **New Beginnings**, began in summer 2024.

1.4 Mission and vision

Bambu's mission is to provide direct, early intervention support for children and young people affected by DA while enhancing the broader system around them through multi-agency collaboration. Its vision is twofold:

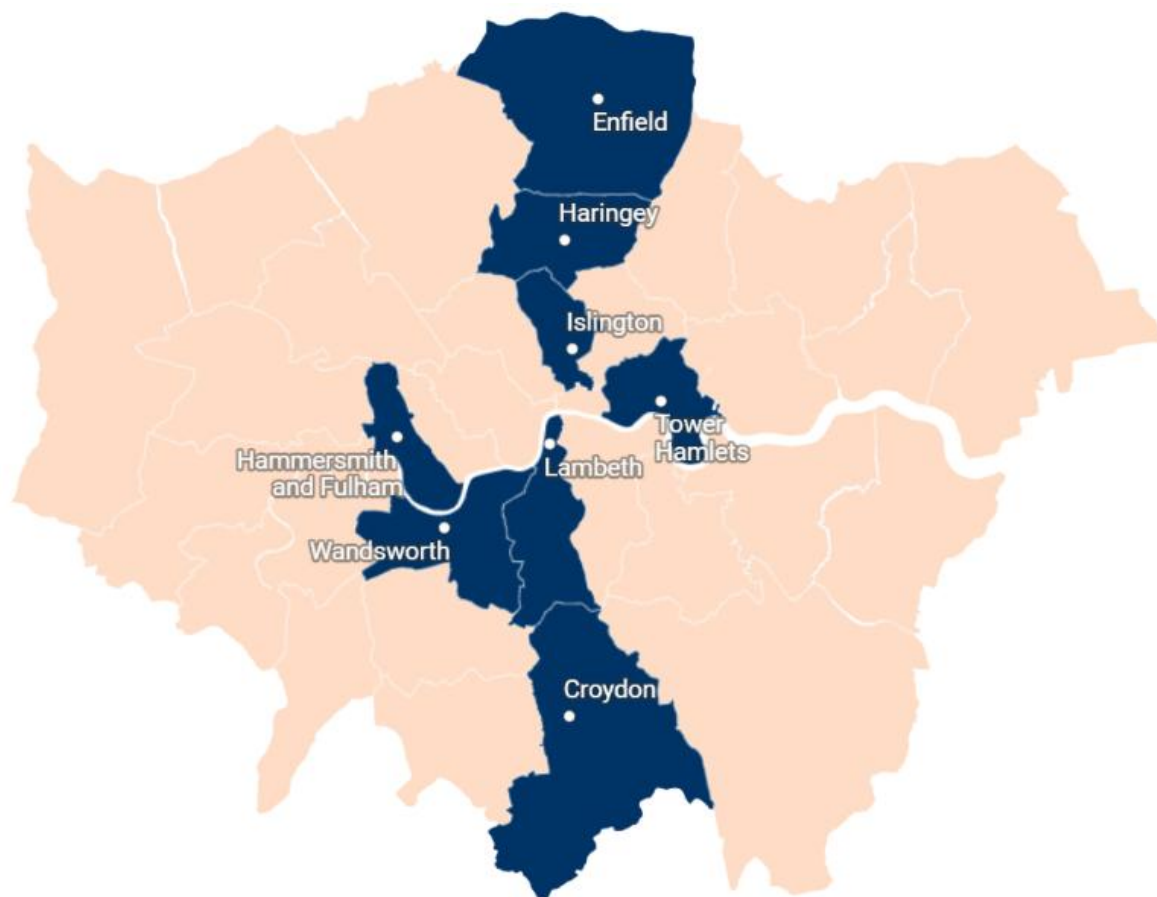
1. To address critical gaps in support for children and young people affected by DA
2. To improve system understanding of effective support for children and young people impacted by DA, and build capacity to identify and respond effectively to their needs.

Since its launch in summer 2022, Bambu has demonstrated the potential to fill a crucial gap in services for vulnerable children and young people. Originally scheduled to run until summer 2024, its success led to a contract extension for another year into 2025.

1.5 Where does Bambu operate?

Bambu operates in eight London boroughs (see below). These were chosen as Bambu areas based on evidence showing high, sustained rates of domestic abuse in these areas.

Figure 2 Map of Greater London – Bambu boroughs highlighted in dark blue (Croydon, Enfield, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Tower Hamlets, and Wandsworth)



1.6 The evaluation

Cordis Bright, an independent research organisation, was commissioned by the Mayor of London VRU to evaluate Bambu. This final evaluation report summarises learning from the previous process evaluation and findings from the final impact evaluation, across the whole of Bambu support. The report focuses on what difference Bambu has made to young people and the system, and summarises learning to take forward for future commissioning and delivery of support for young people impacted by DA.

The methods informing this report are summarised in the graphic below. Please see the

Appendix A: Limitations of the evaluation for a discussion of methodology limitations.

SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY

Qualitative consultation with staff



Process Phase: **In-depth remote interviews with 17 wider Bambu partners**, including key contacts within boroughs, referrers into Bambu, and Bambu service leads. Two **workshops with Bambu practitioners** to map pathways and refine delivery models.

Impact Phase: In-depth remote **interviews with 11 members of Bambu staff**.

Qualitative consultation with young people



In-person or remote discussions with nine young people (plus parent, according to young person preference).

Seven anonymised case studies based on those produced by Bambu staff (including young people's feedback) for Bambu quarterly returns. These are placed at the end of chapters throughout the report.

End of support **feedback surveys** from 20 young people.

Quantitative data



Programme monitoring data, including demographics, support details, etc.

Outcomes data (strengths and difficulties questionnaire; life satisfaction scales).

Advisory group including YPAG



An **advisory group** was set up during the impact phase including: evaluators, VRU programme leads, delivery partners including SafeLives, and representatives from the VRU's Young People's Action Group (YPAG). This gave oversight and informed processes, in particular to gain YPAG input on research tools to ensure their accessibility for use with young people.

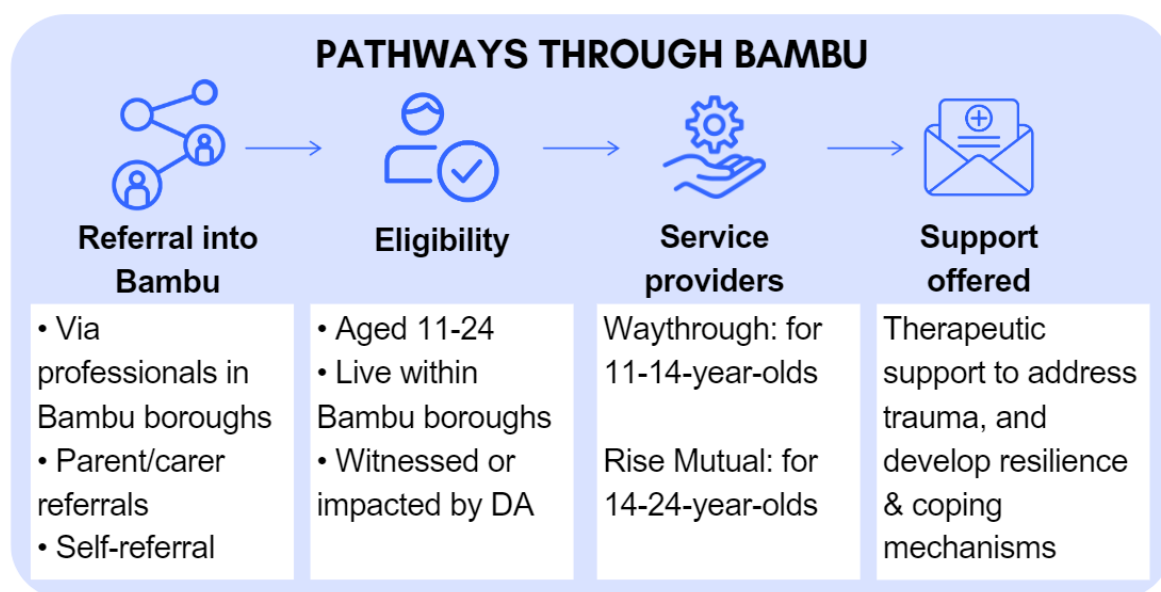
2 Bambu's reach across eight London boroughs

This section summarises the referral process to Bambu, how this translated into who Bambu reached, and further information about programme pathways.

2.1 How do pathways through Bambu work?

Bambu has universal referral, which means any professional can refer into Bambu and young people or parents can also self-refer. Eligible young people are directed to the appropriate service provider (i.e. Rise Mutual or Waythrough) and offered support.

Figure 3 Pathways through Bambu

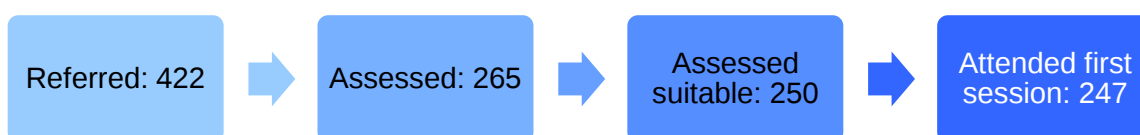


2.2 Who did Bambu reach?

At the time of reporting in October 2024, Bambu received a total of 422 referrals. Of these, 170 referrals were closed (40%), 130 were completed (31%), and 122 were active (29%).

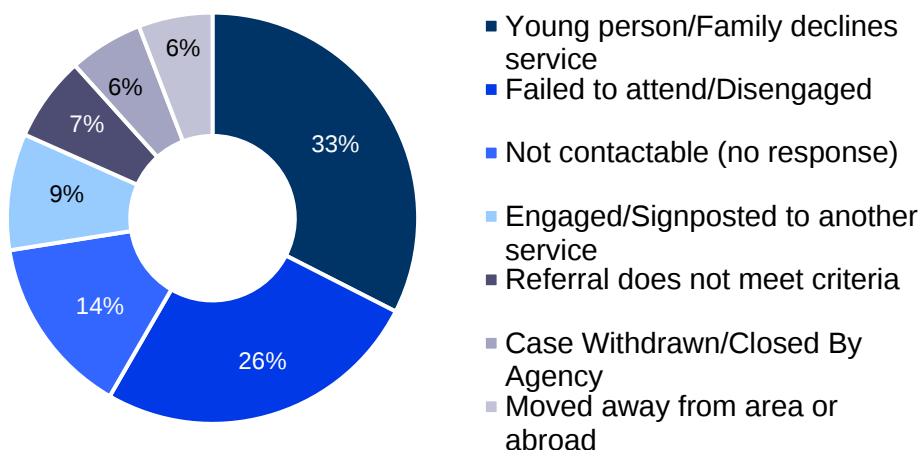
The throughput from referral to first session attended is shown below.

Figure 4 No. of young people moving through Bambu (as of October 2024)



Among those 157 young people who were recorded as referred but not assessed for Bambu, 37 had been offered or were awaiting assessment. Among the 120 young people whose cases were marked as closed, this was due to the following reasons:

Most drop-off between referral and assessment was due to young people or families declining or disengaging



Similarly, among the 20 young people who were not assessed as suitable for support, for all but one, this was due to them declining Bambu support (with the remaining young person being referred to an alternate service).

Referrals took time to be built up in some boroughs but at the time of this report, Bambu was receiving referrals in all eight boroughs. The highest referral numbers came from Croydon (31%) followed by Lambeth (26%).

Bambu's original target was to reach 600 young people over its contract period. However, this was based on a delivery model involving sessions being provided in a group setting. Service delivery then developed to the current model of providing support on a fully one-to-one, person-centred basis. This resulted in a smaller number of young people reached. Wandsworth also replaced Hounslow in summer 2023 due to a lack of referrals in Hounslow, which again contributed to lower referrals in the earlier stages.

Figure 5 The most highly referring boroughs were Croydon and Lambeth

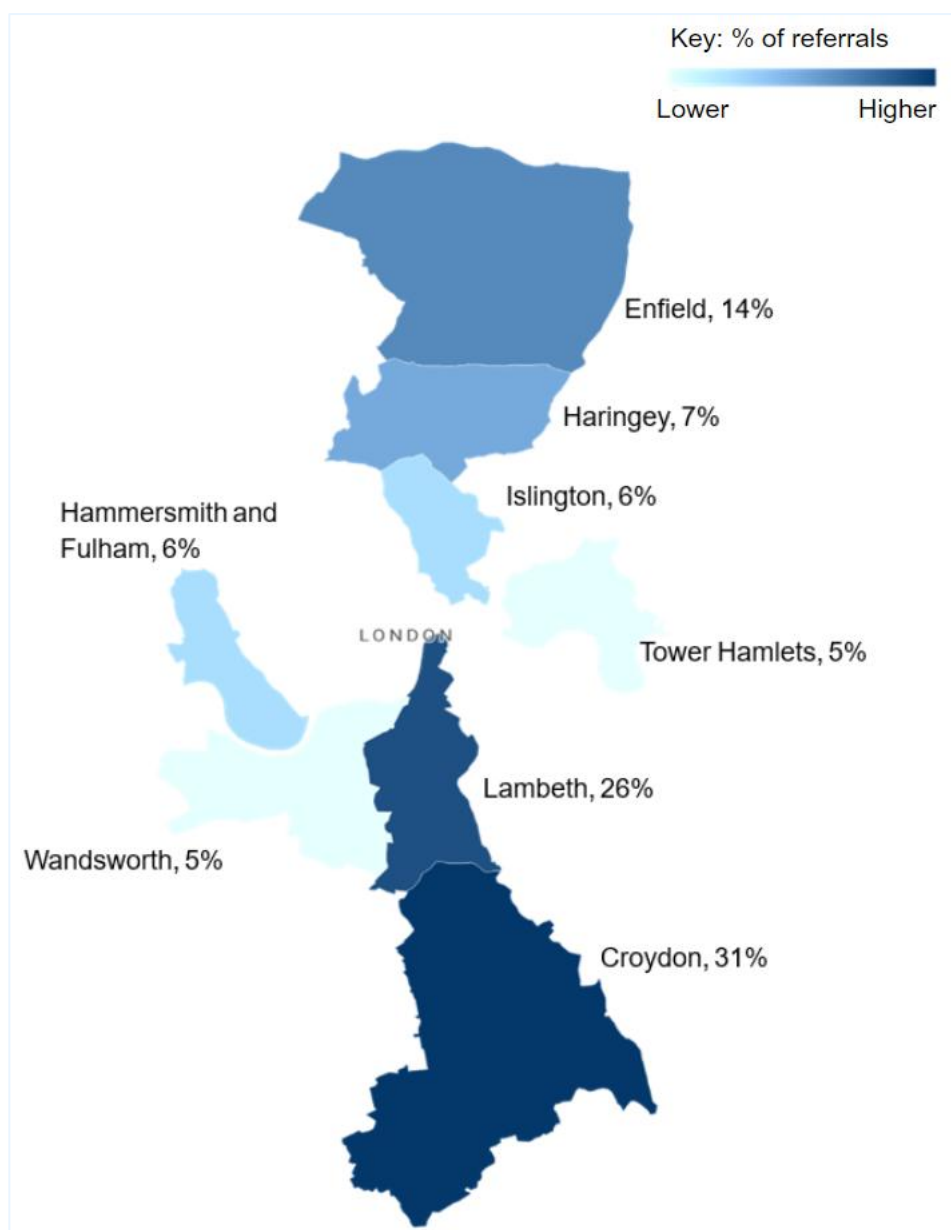


Figure 6: Referral routes

The majority of referrals came from Children and Family services

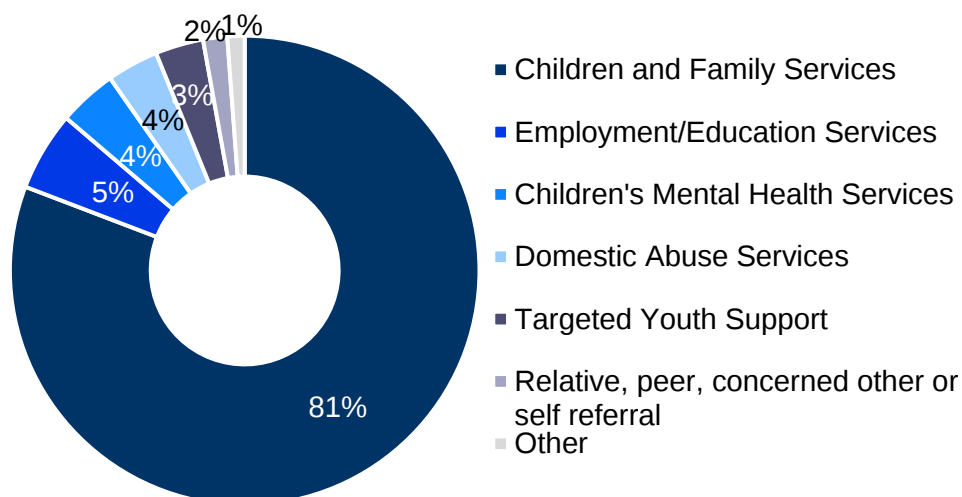


Figure 7: Age breakdown of young people referred

The largest age group was 12-15 years

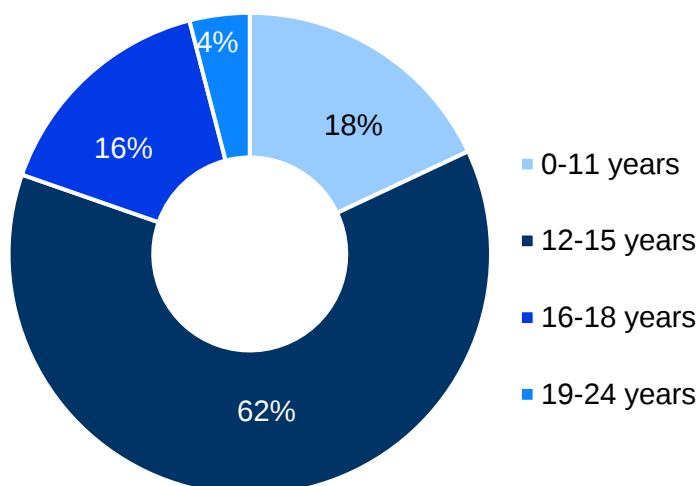


Figure 8: Ethnicity breakdown of young people referred

Bambu engaged young people from a wide range of ethnic groups

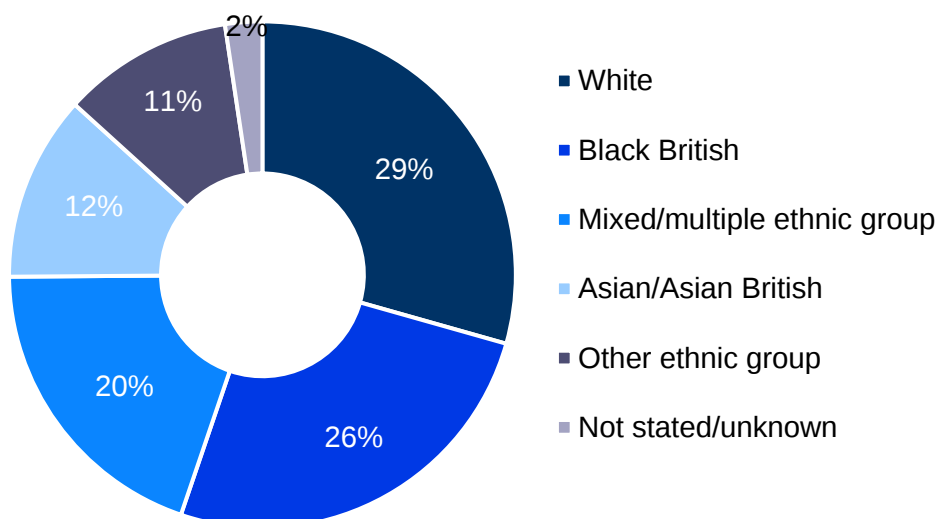
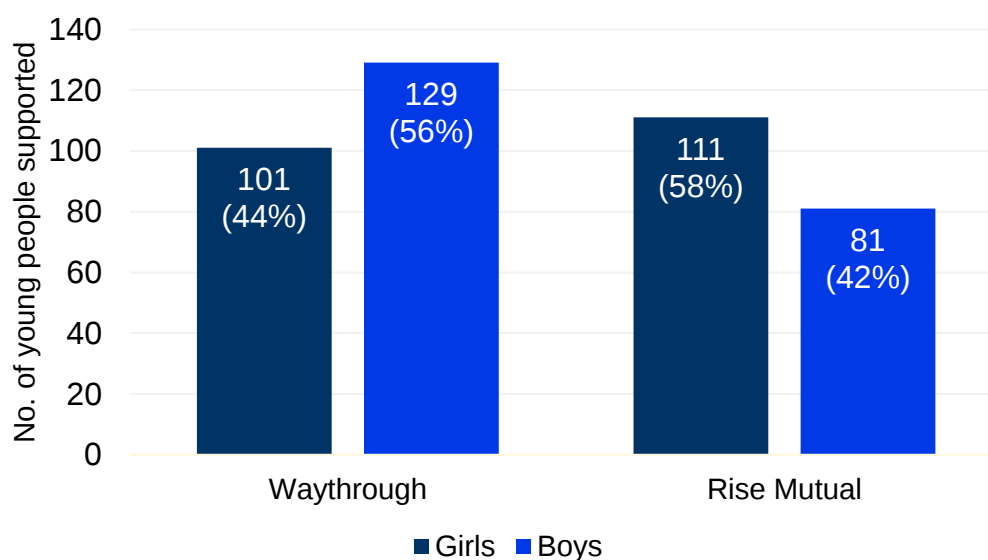


Figure 9: Gender breakdown by provider organisation

Young people were split evenly by gender* across Bambu, but Waythrough had more boys' referrals overall



*No young people of other gender identities (e.g. non-binary) were recorded.

2.3 Main reasons for exit/closure

Among the 300 young people for whom data on exit/closure was available,¹ the most common reason for exit from Bambu was programme completion, accounting for 30%. Disengagement represented 14%, and 12% involved young people or their families declining the programme.

Reason for exit/closure	Number of young people
Completed the programme	127
Disengaged (for one or more reasons)	59
Young person or family declined the programme	51
Young person was not contactable (no response when contacted)	17
Engaged but were later signposted to another service	17
Case withdrawn/closed by agency	13
Young person/family moved away from the area or abroad	8
Referral did not meet Bambu criteria	8
Total	300

¹ Data was unavailable for 122 young people (29% of the overall group).

3 Embedding Bambu into the boroughs: learning from the process evaluation

This section highlights learning from the process evaluation, completed in May 2024.

This phase involved qualitative consultation with 17 stakeholders who had some involvement with Bambu, including key contacts within the boroughs, stakeholders who refer into Bambu, and Bambu service leads. It also involved two workshops with Rise Mutual and Richmond Fellowship practitioners who deliver Bambu.

These findings have fed into the recommendations that we make in chapters 6 and 7.

3.1 Pathways through Bambu were functioning well

Referrals were broadly working well, with clear eligibility criteria, a simple and accessible referral form and good responsiveness from the Bambu team.

Consent and assessment were also working well, with positive views from referrers, who appreciated the clarity of the assessment process and the ability to work collaboratively with practitioners to introduce Bambu to young people and parents/carers. Practitioners found the assessment process useful but lengthy. However, they appreciated that assessment could take place flexibly over several sessions, allowing information to be gained that may have been missed on the referral form.

The evaluation identified some process challenges around needing more support and information from referrers, including to gain consent from young people before making the referral. Practitioners noted that this would enable a smoother consent and assessment process post-referral. The evaluation also identified differing referral rates by borough, thought to be due to differing levels of promotion and embeddedness in the boroughs, or different levels of need.

Referrals were originally intended to be via schools through Operation Encompass. However, the programme moved away from this early in the implementation phase due to challenges with this route.

3.2 Bambu is perceived to be an effective support model

Feedback on Bambu support was highly positive. The flexible, person-centred, trauma-informed approach was widely recognised and valued, and the exit process was felt to be supportive for young people. Factors enabling these areas of success included: highly engaged, skilled practitioners; and a responsive, reflective approach.

The most significant challenges for Bambu included difficulties finding venues; the logistics of operating across eight boroughs, support needs being outside Bambu's remit; and the need for whole family support including support for the victim/survivor parent.

3.3 Consistent implementation across all eight boroughs was a challenge

All eight boroughs had high levels of DA, hence the rationale that they would also have a need for support for young people impacted by DA. However, referrals to Bambu differed by borough and implementation efforts saw varied success.

We heard highly positive examples of awareness and embeddedness of the programme. The need for Bambu is high in areas without any existing support for children and young people affected by DA. Throughout the evaluation, partners working with Bambu praised it as a timely and important response to the critical gap in support for children and young people. Proactive promotion, effective communication, collaborative working, and word-of-mouth all facilitated integration in some boroughs and raised Bambu's profile. Pre-existing relationships between delivery partners and other services also helped embed Bambu in some boroughs.

Where Bambu was less embedded and awareness was lower, partners suggested that this was linked to **local need** and **existing service landscapes**. Areas with overlapping existing support found that levels of referral to Bambu were lower, since partners were more likely to be directing eligible referrals towards providers they were already familiar with rather than Bambu.

Learning from the early implementation phase also reflects this, where overlapping work was identified in Hounslow, leading to a lack of referrals, and its subsequent replacement with Wandsworth. This underscores the **importance of the existing local system** when considering need and using this to inform commissioning.

3.4 Conclusion from process evaluation

The process evaluation found that Bambu represents a significant step in supporting young people affected by DA, with its flexible and trauma-informed approach receiving widespread praise. While there were opportunities for increasing reach and raising awareness, Bambu's potential for further integration and expansion were evident.

HARRISON'S JOURNEY



Story so far

Harrison had a difficult few years after moving to the UK. Although the family moved away from his dad, Harrison was still fearful of his dad who had threatened the family. He wasn't attending school and was struggling to sleep or leave the house.

Progress with Bambu

Bambu helped Harrison in the key areas of safety, both physical and emotional, and overall wellbeing, including healthy relationships, returning to school and feeling better in his cultural identity.



Seeing the difference

Support with safer housing

Harrison's Bambu keyworker encouraged the IDVA working with Harrison's mum to ask for a MARAC to rehouse the family for their own safety. This resulted in the family being rehoused.

Finding calm

Bambu focused on helping Harrison calm his nervous system. They did mindfulness and grounding exercises and worked on his sleep using visualisation. This helped soothe him when he feels overwhelmed. Since the support, Harrison described feeling much calmer.

Overall wellbeing and sense of self

Harrison was still afraid of seeing his dad but was now attending school. He learnt how to soothe himself and was sleeping better too. Bambu also helped Harrison explore seeing his cultural identity as a strength and learn about healthy relationships.

NAWAL'S JOURNEY



Story so far

Nawal had experienced domestic abuse in the home through abusive behaviour by her dad. She had also witnessed it in her wider family towards her mum.

Progress with Bambu

Bambu gave Nawal a safe space to talk and share what she was feeling. This meant Bambu was able to identify and refer Nawal to the specialist support she needed.



Seeing the difference

A safe space

Nawal and her keyworker explored Nawal's experiences of DA and family dynamics. At first, Nawal said she was nervous and couldn't speak about things she wanted to, but by the end she felt more comfortable opening up. She said she found sessions to be a safe space.

Signposting to specialist services

Nawal and her keyworker worked on her disordered eating and self-image, after they had built enough trust that Nawal was open to this. Her keyworker worked with her school to get information from a specialist eating disorder service and refer her to the school nurse for support.

Flexible, needs-based support

Nawal wanted to continue sessions over the summer but didn't want these online, as she didn't feel comfortable talking at home with her family around. Her keyworker worked with her school to find a solution. They were able to have sessions at the school over the summer, which meant Nawal could still access the support.

4 Making a difference to young people's lives

This section summarises the outcomes Bambu achieved for young people, focusing on improving wellbeing, reducing behavioural and emotional difficulties, improving family relationships, and improving engagement with services.

4.1 Overview: Bambu's impact on children and young people

We heard **highly positive examples of progress for young people** thanks to Bambu. Bambu aimed to make a difference in the key areas of improving wellbeing, reducing behavioural and emotional difficulties, improving family relationships, and improving engagement with services.

This chapter discusses how Bambu was able to **support young people to make positive changes** in these areas. This was particularly the case in the areas of **ability to handle stress and improved confidence**. In many stories, achieving progress in these areas led to improvements in other areas as well.

Although the young people we spoke to for the evaluation were likely influenced by a selection bias, with those who had a good experience more likely to engage than those who did not, evidence from speaking with wider partners throughout this evaluation echoed these positive sentiments about Bambu's impact for individuals and families.

It should be noted that Bambu is just one element in a much wider system, and some aspects of these outcomes will be outside Bambu's control to influence. For example, living with the person perpetrating abuse or with a parent who does not recognise the abuse will necessarily impact improvements in wellbeing and safety, no matter how positive the support from Bambu is.

Later chapters therefore consider how these positive changes for individuals can be sized up to achieve impact within the context of the wider system.

4.2 Improving wellbeing

Our evaluation found clear evidence from speaking with young people, parents and staff that Bambu contributed to improving young people's wellbeing.

Wellbeing was the most highlighted area where people had seen progress: all those we spoke to highlighted substantial improvement in young people's overall wellbeing since working with Bambu.

I do feel like I am changing, in a good way. But I don't really know how I'm changing. Just when I wake up every single day, I feel like I'm just doing better and better and better.

Young person, Waythrough

Improved wellbeing manifested in different ways. For some young people, this meant feeling happier and more balanced in comparison to persistent low moods. Others described becoming more open to learning new things and feeling better equipped to manage daily stresses. Bambu helped young people navigate everyday challenges such as school stress, difficult relationships, building their confidence and setting boundaries.

In Year 8 I was not doing well, I was always in my room and tired and that has changed now. I'm capable of dealing with things that I wasn't able to when we started.

Young person, Waythrough

Three key areas where Bambu achieved positive changes for young people are the ability to handle stress, feelings of safety, and improving self-esteem.

4.2.1 Improved ability to handle stress and trauma

Bambu supported young people to work on their ability to handle stress and trauma.

- **Increased resilience in daily life.** Young people felt more capable of handling challenges that had previously felt overwhelming, thanks to Bambu's practical support and encouragement. For instance, one young person saw her severe anxiety and physical symptoms of nausea, headaches, and frequent crying before school reduce. Her mornings became less stressful, and she felt happier about attending school.

Before we started [the sessions], I had a lot of anxiety and depression. I still suffer a bit, but not as bad as I used to. It's made me feel a lot more confident, calmer and less stressed about going to school. And just in life in general.

Young person, Waythrough

Her parent also highlighted these changes, saying, "We get more smiles, more laughter and less tears."

- **Increasing understanding of stress helps manage emotions.** Sessions enabled young people to better understand the relationship between thoughts, emotions, and physical responses to stress. Some young people referenced specific sessions, such as "our tricky brains," which helped them identify stress triggers, especially during conflicts. One young person shared that she could now manage her emotions more effectively by stepping away and taking a walk to calm down during disagreements with her mum or sibling.

I started journalling. I write down my feeling and it lifts a really heavy weight off my chest a lot quicker and I can actually feel better about myself rather than letting those emotions and feelings eat me alive.

Young person, RISE

Practitioners saw some evidence that young people were able to sustain the techniques to improve their wellbeing after support ended. For example, we heard that a young person messaged his former practitioner after ending support to say he had used breathing techniques and assertive communication to cope with his friend's rude messages. He first

took ten deep breaths, then replied asking the friend if they could speak on the phone instead of engaging in online discussion.

It's nice to speak to someone and get some weight off your shoulders. Just to be able to say your thoughts and speak to someone else.

Young person, Waythrough

Young people highlighted the positive and supportive relationships they built with their keyworkers, emphasising the importance of trust, consistency, and a non-judgmental approach.

A TRUSTED KEYWORKER RELATIONSHIP

Keyworkers were **relatable and easy to connect with**, so the relationship felt more relaxed and less authoritative.

I really liked that I knew she was always there for me. If I did ever have an issue, she was there and she was able to help me.

- Young person, Waythrough

They were **adaptable** to young people's needs and interests, and would **listen without criticism or judgment**, which made young people feel respected and understood.

[Keyworker] is a real person. She's like my friend. Even though this is her professional job, the way we talk and banter, I feel very comfortable with that.

- Young person, RISE

Keyworkers were seen as **consistent, dependable and available**, and a stable and trustworthy presence.

We would decide what to do based on what I'd tell him. If I'm having a bad week, we'd play games. If I'm having a good week, we'd talk.

- Young person, RISE

4.2.2 Increased feelings of safety

Bambu contributes to increased feelings of safety amongst young people.

- **Better safety in school.** Practitioners support young people to open up about experiencing bullying in school. They discuss how to speak to other professionals and adults to decide how to help, e.g. helping the young people decide to report the issue.

- **Building a supportive network of people around the young people.** Bambu works with young people to identify people in their 'network' who are safe or not safe and understand who they can go to for help. Bambu also provides young people with safety plans. Involving young people in the process of making a safety plan for them has helped them feel empowered and they know what to do if they are feeling unsafe.

[Keyworker] made me more aware of my surroundings – who to stay away from and who to come for help. He made me see who to be friends with and who not to be friends with. To see things properly. And that's what I like about it, is that he's not just telling me advice, he's giving me a reason.

Young person, Waythrough

- **Safer friendships and relationships.** The support helps young people distinguish between healthy and unhealthy relationships and make more informed decisions about who to trust and engage with. Several young people said how before Bambu they had trouble with friends, but Bambu helped them choose their friendships more carefully and handle conflict with friends.

Before the sessions, I was pretty easily influenced. I would often do bad things at school that would get me in trouble but since then, I've kind of grown and left my old friend group for a new one and they're a lot better. I feel like leaving my old friends actually helped me in my education.

Young person, RISE

- **A trusted adult.** Practitioners work hard to build safe and trusted relationships with the young people they support. Young people build trust in their practitioners and gradually feel safe opening up to them.

It is important to note that feelings of safety are also dependent on wider circumstances which are outside of Bambu's control. Some families supported by Bambu may be at risk of homelessness or living in temporary accommodation; some may continue to be living with the perpetrating parent. These factors can mean that the young person is not in fact very safe and therefore they may continue to feel unsafe irrespective of Bambu's support. With this in mind, Bambu must be seen as one aspect of support rather than a catch-all.

4.2.3 Increased self-awareness and self-esteem

Practitioner support to problem-solve and understand their own emotions helps young people become more confident advocating for themselves and establishing boundaries.

- **More ability to handle daily life.** Parents we spoke to said their children felt more confident due to Bambu's support and were more able to do things on their own, for example getting themselves to school.

He was attending more school lessons, was able to identify trusted adults that he can communicate with and has had a reduction in his sanctions because of his ability to regulate his emotions. His self-esteem and confidence have improved. Both mum and school have identified this change [in him].

Bambu staff member, Waythrough

- **Greater self-esteem led to more ability to advocate for themselves at home and school.** Young people were more able to voice their opinions, advocate for themselves, and maintain boundaries in their relationship with family members, as well as at school.

One young person hasn't been to school since April. To help him actively voice his feelings more to parents and professionals, we worked on his confidence during the sessions. It has helped him to a point where he's been able to put a plan together, have a meeting with the school and advocate for himself.

Bambu staff member, Waythrough

- **Increased self-assurance and more open to speaking up.** Some young people reflected on how they had become more outgoing, sure of themselves, and less influenced by external opinions. They described being better at managing the negative emotions that used to bring them down, and more able to talk about their feelings.

I'm not as closed and reserved as I was. I'm more open than I used to be and can talk about how I feel.

Young person, RISE

HOW DOES BAMBU MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO WELLBEING?



Qualitative consultation with partners, young people and parents found Bambu makes a difference through:

Trauma-informed support. Bambu's support is designed to help young people understand and heal from their trauma and its impact on their mind, body, and behaviours. For example, practitioners described that resilience sessions help young people understand and accept themselves as they are and reduce feelings of self-blame and feeling damaged or broken.

A safe space to talk. Bambu gives young people a space to talk about what is important to them, such as their hopes for the future and how to work towards this.

A consistent relationship builds trust. Consistent engagement with one practitioner for up to 20 weeks helps build trust, which lets young people feel safe sharing their experiences and opening up. This boosts confidence and strengthens their ability to express themselves. Young people consistently highlighted the importance of the trusted keyworker relationship (see graphic p.24).

Practical techniques and strategies. Tools and techniques such as journaling, breathing exercises, and session materials, gave young people tangible ways to manage stress, anxiety, and anger on their own. Young people valued having tools

they could use in their daily lives, including in difficult moments such as managing panic attacks and coping with anxiety.

Engaging and interactive support. The support includes interactive exercises, such as games, visual aids (e.g., charts, pyramids, and diagrams), and videos. Bambu also incorporates humour and informal methods of engagement to make sessions enjoyable.

Empowering rather than instructing. Young people appreciated that practitioners adopted a non-judgmental, collaborative approach, giving explanations and exploring options rather than simply advising or counselling. This encourages and empowers independence.

Flexibility and personalised support. Bambu responds flexibly to support young people, taking account of them as individuals in terms of how, where, and when they deliver support and who the support comes from by aiming to match young people up with practitioners they feel would best suit them.

4.3 Reducing behavioural and emotional difficulties

The support from Bambu to identify and manage their emotions allows young people to improve their emotional state and behaviour.

- **Improved ability to manage and respond to challenging emotions, especially anger and stress.** Young people shared that they felt more capable of handling intense emotions like anger and stress by using the practical strategies introduced during Bambu sessions. They spend less time fixating on worries, prevent anger from taking over, and use calming techniques to regain control in stressful moments. These positive changes in young people's ability to manage emotions were also observed by both practitioners and parents.

I try to count from and rate myself from 1-5 on how angry I'm feeling and try not to let my anger get to me and reach 5. Before when I used to be off, I would literally let it take over my life but now, I get outside for a little bit and then I'm finally doing okay.

Young person, RISE

- **Reduced conflict.** Bambu's support to identify, differentiate and regulate their emotions helped young people engage in conflicts less frequently, including at school. For young people who were previously regularly getting into trouble at school, this began to happen less as a result.

I feel better and calmer generally, like when someone tries to get to me, I don't react. She told me that if this happens with students at school, I should just let them talk and leave them. Not reacting. I just let it go.

Young person, Waythrough

One practitioner noted that Bambu is teaching young people emotional regulation skills that even many adults lack.

A lot of young men who struggle with anger issues, feel less comfortable saying 'I feel sad a lot' and instead say 'I'm angry a lot'. They don't know how to ask themselves, how does anger physically feel in the body? How does sadness feel when I get angry? How should I calm myself down? It's all skills that a lot of grown-ups don't have and they're all using at least some of them by the end [of the sessions].

Bambu staff member, RISE

4.4 Better family relationships

Support from Bambu has led to improved relationships between the young people and their parents and siblings. Many young people on the Bambu programme experience challenging family situations, with their parents traumatised or distant. Young people therefore often do not feel they have space and safety to share their feelings. The support from practitioners was felt to play a key role in enabling the young people to improve their relationship with their non-abusive parent.

- **Stronger bonds/connections with family.** Young people reported improved relationships with family, most commonly with their mothers and siblings. For example, some said that they had learned to express their feelings more openly with family members, instead of keeping emotions bottled up.

We're getting better with my family. I never used to tell my mum about how I was feeling. I'll just say I'm fine, which is a typical teenager! But now I'm able to like open up to her. I'm having this issue today and just being able to speak to anyone, like my brothers, my sister, my mum and my family.

Young person, Waythrough

- **Spending more time with family.** For some young people, the support contributed to more harmony within the family, thanks to their work to understand themselves and gain confidence. We heard examples of things like eating meals together, cooking together or spending more time as a family after having had Bambu support.

I'm still not as close to my dad, but it is nice in the house now. I don't just stay in my room. I feel like going down and mum and dad will be cooking, and my sibling would be playing so, I like being in the house now.

Young person, Waythrough

- **Understanding healthy boundaries.** Bambu sessions helped young people recognise the importance of both understanding and establishing healthy boundaries and identifying people who are 'safe' for them.

One YP didn't have a good relationship with her dad because he was quite absent. So, when they were together, she struggled to say no to him and ended up always saying yes when he suggested they do things that she was

sometimes scared of doing. By working on this in [Bambu], she is now able to say no to her dad which is a positive thing for her and their relationship.

Young person, RISE

- **Conflict management and empathy.** We heard that Bambu support helped some young people develop increased empathy and skills to manage conflict in healthy ways within their family. One young person shared that the sessions, particularly breathing exercises and conflict management, helped him spend more time with his family and gave ideas for how they could support one another and work together.

I'm realising that everyone is going through stuff and needs space sometimes. My keyworker is helping me understand about people, not just myself.

Young person, RISE

Some practitioners suggested a need for widening the eligibility criteria to include instances where young people have been impacted by abuse not from parents but still within the family, e.g., violence and aggression from siblings.

HOW DOES BAMBU MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO FAMILIES?



A neutral, confidential space to explore family dynamics. Young people have a space to talk about what is most important to them, explore their family dynamics and open up about their trauma. This helps to improve their relationship with their family.

Tools and discussions around setting healthy boundaries and managing conflict. Practical tools, techniques and resources give young people strategies to use when challenges arise in their family relationships.

Joint sessions with parents and young people. Bambu sometimes works with parents and young people in joint sessions to understand how to communicate with each other and these sessions have improved their relationship.

4.5 Parental response to Bambu support

Practitioners highlighted that many parents have had a strongly positive response to Bambu. The three parents interviewed alongside their children shared overwhelmingly positive views about the support and its impact on their children.

I have definitely seen a difference in [my child] since he started the sessions — he's a lot more confident now, he opens up more. He is very lucky to have [his keyworker] working with him. We're just really grateful for all the help she's giving him.

Young person's mum, RISE

In many instances, practitioners described close, trusted relationships with parents. Some parents engaged closely, supporting their children and giving feedback. Others were distant but still encouraging. Practitioners observed that those who previously received support from a similar service were sometimes more likely to engage as they may have greater trust in services and potentially more awareness of the abuse affecting their children.

A parent not being in a position to access their own support likely does have an impact on how much they can acknowledge the abuse and how much awareness they have around it which then does impact on the young person not being aware that that's abuse.

Bambu staff member, Waythrough

However, some parents/carers were less engaged, potentially due to a lack of trust in services. When young people are externally referred, parents may feel less keen to engage if they feel more 'forced into' Bambu support. If so, practitioners aim to give reassurance:

They want to understand if there is an ulterior motive, they fear their compliance is attached to something else. We have to help them understand and feel safe – once that happens, then the response is good but it's not a 100% success rate in getting there.

Bambu staff member, Waythrough

Other parents are unable to actively engage in the support for their child/ren due to dealing with their own trauma, mental health, or practical safety issues for their family.

4.5.1 Supporting parents alongside young people

Bambu's initial work with parent victim/survivors of domestic abuse was limited since the service was specifically designed to support children and young people. However, a gap in support for parent victim/survivors was quickly identified and practitioners found themselves providing support as follows:

- Practitioners would sometimes help parents by guiding them through housing issues, visitation rights, helping them in their relationship with a social worker etc., to better support the young people.
- Practitioners would signpost parents to specific services or support groups that may be helpful for them. Initially, parents whose children were referred into the CAPVA strand of Bambu were offered an opportunity to attend parent support groups within another RISE programme, but this is no longer running.

These examples and feedback allowed the VRU and providers to identify a gap in support for the victim/survivor parents (i.e. generally mothers) of children supported by Bambu and consider options for addressing this need.

A NEW SERVICE TO SUPPORT PARENTS

In response to the identified gap in support, Bambu proposed an additional service: the **New Beginnings** programme. This started in autumn 2024 to support mothers who are victims/survivors of domestic abuse and have children on the Bambu programme. The programme is designed to support parents to help enable positive outcomes for their children.

The programme has been successfully delivered to a small number of victim/survivor parents so far, with excellent feedback from group participants. This includes up to eight group sessions of emotional and skills support for parents, focused on improving self-confidence in their parenting and reducing feelings of hopelessness. Where there is a language barrier, sessions can be delivered one-to-one with an interpreter. Bambu delivers four groups a year, with each group accommodating 8-10 women.

This new strand was not included in the evaluation, but its inclusion in Bambu is a positive indication of how the delivery partners and London's VRU have worked together to identify, understand and work to address the gap in support for mothers who are victims/survivors of DA.

4.6 Improving engagement with services

Bambu contributes to improving young people's engagement with services and activities in multiple ways, including school, hobbies, and other support services.

4.6.1 School

- **Increased school attendance and attainment.** Practitioners reported a substantial increase in school attendance for young people they supported. We heard examples of young people who had previously had low attendance regularly attending school by the end of their Bambu support and experiencing more school engagement and success than they would have done without Bambu support.

There was a YP who did not engage in any activities in school, but towards the end of his sessions, he engaged in lunch time activities and hobbies outside of school and his attendance improved. He felt like doing all of this because his self-esteem improved. He had the perception that nobody thought good of him and that he was incapable, but he pushed himself out of his comfort zone and his GCSE grades were two grades higher than what he had predicted in the first place.

Bambu staff member, RISE

- **Positive shifts in school experiences.** Some of the young people we spoke to noted overall improvements in their school life following Bambu support, enabling smoother and more positive experiences during the school year. For some, this came through learning to set goals and focus on their future, while others felt more confident in moving away from negative influences and forming healthier friendships. Some also

shared that they got into less trouble at school and felt more motivated to attend classes regularly.

I didn't like school much in year 7 and 8 and didn't really attend my classes. But since Year 9, I've been attending my classes more and I also have some friends. I feel a bit more confident and have started to actually enjoy school.

Young person, Waythrough

- **Improved support at school.** In a small number of cases, keyworker advocacy for young people improved their support system at school. For example, one keyworker spoke with school staff about a young person's mental health struggles. This led to the school making changes such as providing a safe room for the young person to retreat to during stressful moments. This change in the school's approach was crucial, as it gave the young person an additional layer of support, contributing to their overall safety and wellbeing.

There was no real support there until [keyworker] got involved. [...] Before that, they didn't really see it as a problem. But since [keyworker] started coming to the school and having meetings, I think the school now has really sort of stepped up and realised that, OK, we have got a problem and we're going to help now.

Young person's mum, Waythrough

4.6.2 Hobbies/activities

Bambu contributes to young people taking part in more hobbies and activities, with examples of young people who were previously isolated finding **renewed engagement and interest in hobbies and social activities**.

Young people who were previously held back by poor mental health or personal challenges described feeling more able to participate in hobbies and activities. Examples ranged from sports like football, rugby, softball, basketball and the gym, to quieter pursuits such as chess, journaling, or tutoring outside of school.

TAKING PART IN MORE HOBBIES AND ACTIVITIES

Some young people shared that their improved wellbeing let them pursue interests consistently and stay committed over time, e.g., regularly going to the gym or for runs in the park

I might also start going to a club with my friends to do some hobbies. Initially I wasn't interested, but now I see that it's good for me to be doing something.

- Young person, Waythrough

I got into chess. He bought a mini chess board for me, and he helped me so much in chess. We could do anything [we wanted] and that meant the world to me.

- Young person, Waythrough

I've started tutoring outside of school. I'm also starting to get into football again.

- Young person, RISE

One young person explained how anxiety and depression had made her withdraw from activities she once loved. With her keyworker's support, she was able to reconnect with old interests and socialising. This brought back a sense of normality and enjoyment to her life, and made her more confident and optimistic

4.6.3 Other support services

Bambu also positively contributes to young people's improved engagement with other services, both in terms of **current access to support** and **confidence and willingness to engage with other services in the future** and build trust in their own support system.

- **Broadening their support network and building confidence to access it.** While some young people relied on their keyworkers for support, others shared that Bambu helped them feel more comfortable asking for support from other people in their network, including confiding in friends, siblings, or other trusted adults. For example, one young person reflected how their keyworker's guidance helped them not only trust others but develop greater independence in advocating for themselves, such as directly communicating with teachers rather than relying on their mother to intervene. Another young person said they now feel more comfortable asking for help, whether from a teacher or someone in the safeguarding team.

She's helped me know there's always someone I can talk to in the future. If I don't speak to [keyworker] again, then I know that I've got my mum, I've got teachers in my school. It will take time for me to open up, but someone's always going to be there for me.

Young person, Waythrough

- **More open to seeking future support.** Some young people shared that their experience with Bambu helped them feel more confident about seeking support in future. Practitioners gave examples of young people being more open to seeking support from their school and asking to be signposted to other services such as mentoring, counselling, community groups or sports activities.

I'll definitely do it again. If I was struggling again in the future, I would definitely do something about it instead of letting it bother me. I would definitely sign up, especially for Bambu.

Young person, RISE

Related to young people's engagement with services, practitioners highlighted the need to ensure smooth transition out of Bambu support. One aspect could be ensuring, where relevant, that they refer young people to other mentoring or counselling services earlier to support a safe transition out of Bambu, especially for those at risk. However, it is challenging to do this in the **wider landscape of lack of capacity in the system**: referrals to other services are often delayed which can negatively impact progress.

With one young person, [...] there were still substance misuse risks going on. So, we made a referral for him into targeted support around substance use and education, but we're still waiting for them to get back and he is currently on a wait list. But hopefully there's a way to improve this by discussing future support at an earlier stage so there can be more crossover between services.

Practitioner, Waythrough

4.7 Outcomes data supported findings from our qualitative research but presented a more mixed picture

Bambu collected outcomes data via two surveys at the start and end of support and an exit survey to gather feedback. The sample sizes for these were relatively small as they were introduced partway through the programme. However, both the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Brief Multidimensional Students Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS) showed some evidence that Bambu had made a positive difference to young people's outcomes. This data should continue to be collected and analysed to generate further insights.

4.7.1 A note on outcomes measurement tools

The evaluation began partway through Bambu's delivery when partners were already collecting outcomes data. Our goal around data collection was therefore to minimise the burden on delivery partners in terms of changes to their existing data collection

processes, while also ensuring the tools were capturing data related to Bambu’s intended outcomes.

Several validated outcomes measurement tools could be appropriate for Bambu, but the evaluation team agreed on **two key scales** in collaboration with the VRU and delivery partners: the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which was already in use by Bambu, and the Brief Multidimensional Students Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS).



Using well-used, validated outcomes measurement tools such as these in evaluation ensures reliability, credibility, and consistency. The tools are evidence-based and widely recognised, which provides opportunities for benchmarking, comparisons, and longitudinal assessments. They save time and resource by eliminating the need to develop new measures while also aligning with ethical standards and partner expectations.

The table below shows which scales from both tools map directly onto Bambu’s intended outcomes for children and young people. Other outcomes were evaluated via the feedback questionnaire or the qualitative consultation.

Figure 10 Mapping the outcomes measurement tools onto Bambu’s intended outcomes

Bambu outcome area	Relevant SDQ scale	Relevant BMSLSS scale
Improved mental wellbeing	Total difficulties score; Emotional symptoms	Overall life; Myself
Reduced behavioural & emotional difficulties	Conduct problems	-
Improved relationships with family	-	Family life
Improved engagement with services (ETE, activities, support services)	-	School or workplace (i.e. educational experience)

4.7.2 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

The SDQ measures outcomes across six domains: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, pro-social behaviours, hyperactivity, peer problems, and a total difficulties score. Each scale is scored from 0 to 10. As noted above, the scales that are relevant to Bambu’s intended outcomes are: total difficulties score, emotional symptoms, and conduct problems.

To calculate the total difficulties score, the scores from the four problem-focused scales (emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, and peer problems) are summed, excluding the pro-social behaviours scale. The score can range from 0 to 40, reporting an

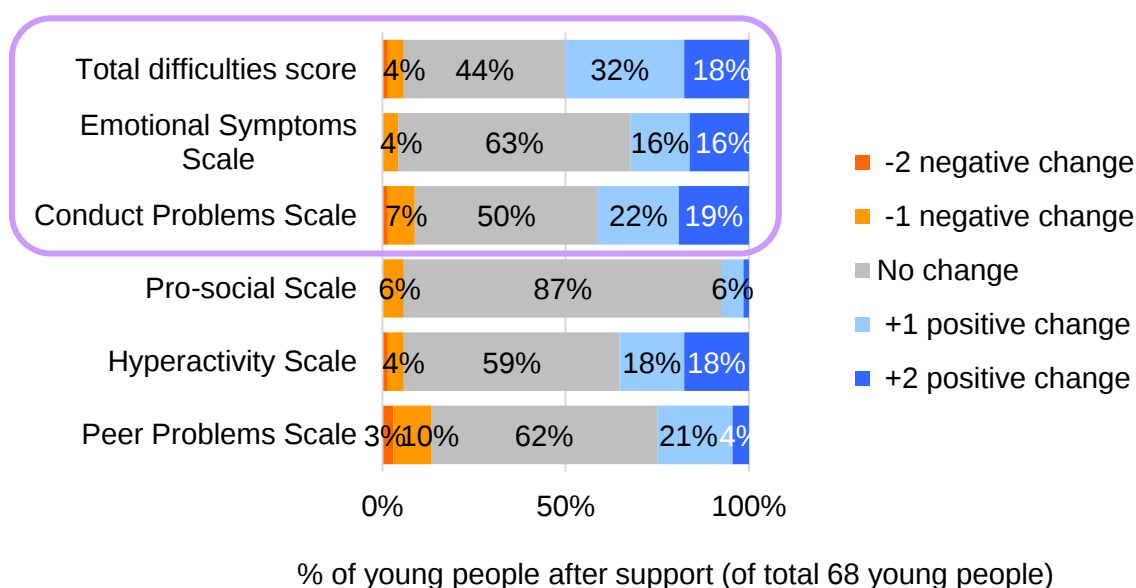
overall measure of emotional and behavioural challenges. If at least 12 of the 20 relevant items are completed, the total score can also be prorated if necessary.

Analysis of the self-reported pre- and post-programme SDQ scores for 68 young people supported by Bambu shows that across each scale, most young people reported no change. Some showed improved scores after Bambu support, while negative changes are minimal across all scales. Notable positive changes include:

- 32% of young people showed positive change in **emotional symptoms**.
- 41% of young people experienced improvement in **conduct problems**.
- **Half of young people experienced improvement in their total difficulties score**, which suggests that young people experienced an overall improvement across domains. This ties into the qualitative findings that Bambu's person-centred, high-quality support impacted numerous areas of young people's lives.

Figure 11 Change in SDQ scores post-Bambu – relevant scales highlighted in purple

The majority of young people's scores showed no change, but some showed positive change



It should be noted that the relatively large proportion of young people who showed no change in SDQ scores does not necessarily mean that Bambu had no impact on those domains. For example, in the absence of Bambu support it is possible that scores could have declined and, in that case, no change in SDQ scores could reflect a positive impact of Bambu. It is also possible that young people score themselves more highly pre-support since they may not have yet developed trust in their keyworker or the self-awareness to identify where they are on the scales.

4.7.3 Brief Multidimensional Students Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS)

The BMSLSS assesses satisfaction levels with six areas on a 7-point scale from 0 – very dissatisfied, to 6 – very satisfied. These areas are: Overall life, Myself, Family life, School or workplace, Friendships, Where I live. When the scores for each scale are added, a score of over 18, i.e. >50% of the highest score, indicates high life satisfaction, while a score of less than 18 indicates low satisfaction.

As noted above, the scales that are relevant to Bambu’s intended outcomes are: Overall life, Myself, Family life, and School or workplace.

40 young people had BMSLSS data before and after support. The large majority reported high satisfaction both before and after support (see [Figure 12](#)). This may reflect a relatively low level of need of the cohort. Or, as above, it may reflect that young people may be less open to rating themselves negatively early in support before building self-awareness and trust with the keyworker.

Figure 12 Life satisfaction survey (BMSLSS) scores pre- and post-Bambu for 40 young people

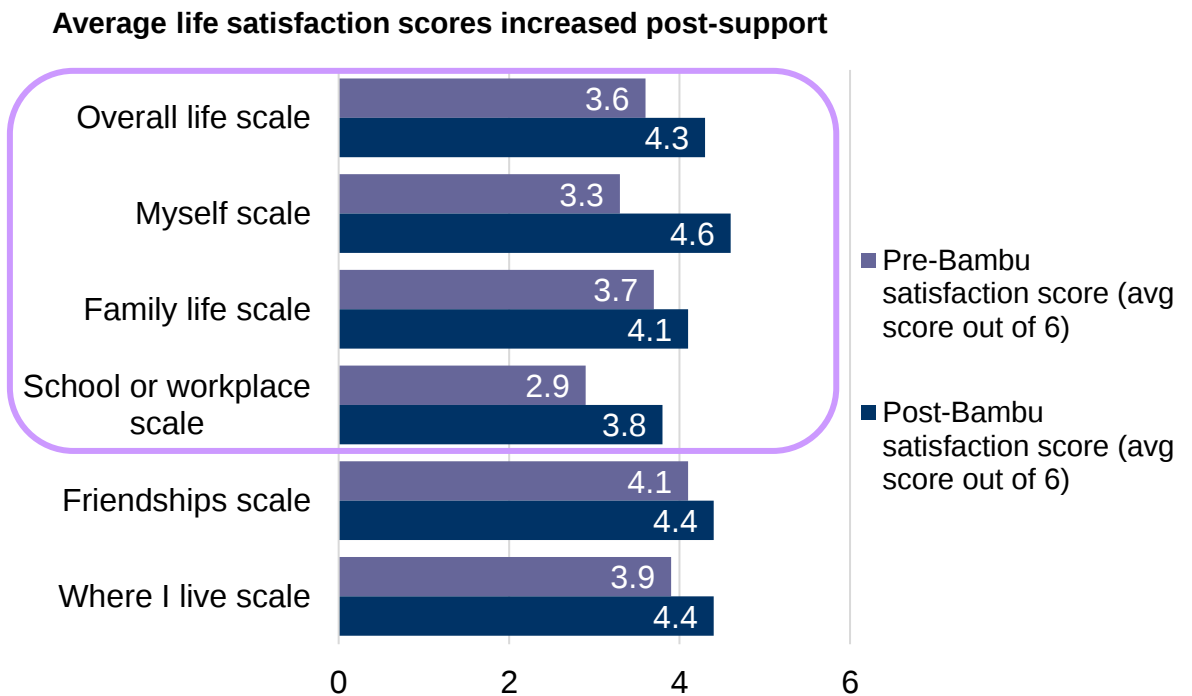
Life satisfaction level before → after Bambu support	Number of young people	% of young people ²
High → high (no change)	33	83%
High → low (-1 negative change)	1	3%
Low → high (+1 positive change)	4	10%
Low → low (no change)	2	5%
Total young people	40	100%

More in-depth analysis of the BMSLSS (see [Figure 13](#)) shows:

- All domains showed improvement when we look at average score.
- The largest improvement was in self-perception (Myself) with a 1.3-point increase and school/work environments with a 0.9-point increase.

² Does not sum to 100% due to rounding to the nearest whole number.

Figure 13 Change in BMSLSS scores post-Bambu for 40 young people – relevant scales highlighted in purple



4.7.4 Exit survey feedback was highly positive

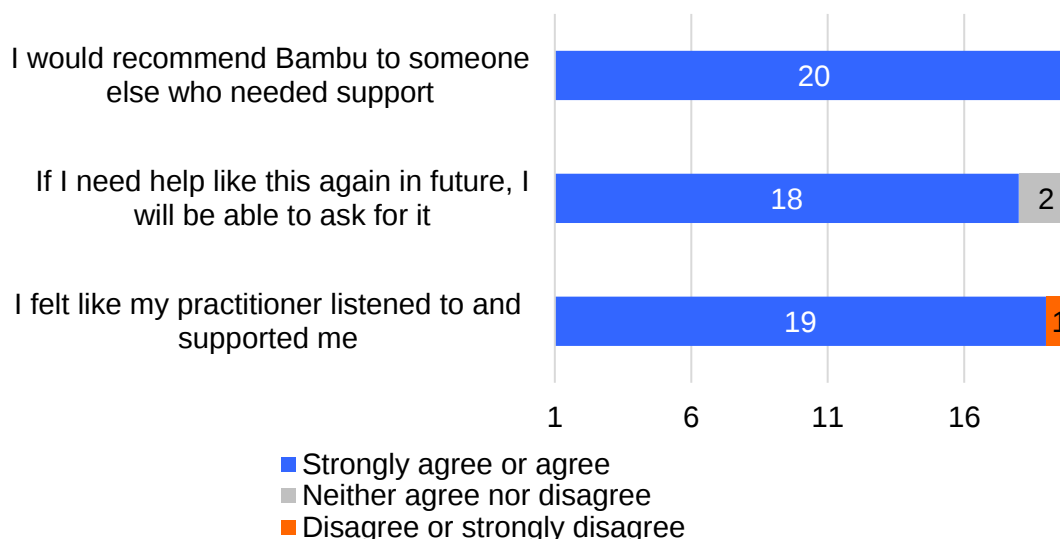
Exit survey data was available for 20 young people who had completed support. This feedback was extremely positive.

Overall feedback

In response to a series of three statements, all or most young people responded positively in relation to their overall experience of the programme, as outlined in the figure below:

Figure 14: Exit survey data from 20 young people

Young people rated their agreement with the following statements positively:



Most / least helpful

When asked what they found **most helpful** about the support they received, responses from young people fell into the following themes:

Most helpful:	No. who gave this answer (some said more than one)
Space to talk about feelings with someone who cares	6
Better understanding of own feelings, mind, and body	6
Techniques to help with anxiety, stress, and anger management (e.g. breathing and grounding exercises)	3
Less anxiety and stress	3
More confidence	3
Setting boundaries	1
Help with future problem solving	1

Most young people did not have an answer to what they found **least helpful**. Those who did said the followed areas: breathing exercises (3), finding it hard to travel on the bus to meet (1), sometimes having not much to talk about (1).

19 out of 20 said there was nothing else they would want to see covered in their support. The one remaining young person said they wanted more sessions to help with leaving school and starting work.

Outcomes

Questions around noticing changes in their lives were also answered positively by the majority of the 20 young people, especially in relation to changes in themselves and in how safe they feel:

Since having Bambu sessions, have you noticed any changes in...	Summary of young people's responses
Yourself?	18 said yes. Areas included feeling happier, calmer, and less angry; feeling more confident; and having better boundaries.
Your relationships with your family?	15 said yes. Areas included arguing less, opening up more to family, and having better communication.
Your school or work?	17 said yes. Areas included feeling more confident and less stressed at school.
How safe you feel?	18 said yes. Areas included feeling safer at home.

SOPHIA'S JOURNEY



Story so far

Sophia had experienced domestic abuse in the home through abusive behaviour by her dad and uncle when using alcohol.

Progress with Bambu

At first, Sophia was withdrawn, lacking in confidence, and struggled to speak about her experiences, but Bambu supported her to open up and she chose to continue with the sessions. Bambu contributed to Sophia getting the specialist support she needed.



Seeing the difference

Space to explore and process

Bambu helped Sophia explore her experience around the relationship dynamics in her family and the difference between healthy and abusive behaviours. She fed back that she gained confidence throughout her Bambu support and challenged her negative thinking.

Disclosing safeguarding concerns

Sophia became comfortable sharing the challenges around her mental health and disclosing a safeguarding concern within her family. This meant Bambu could respond by raising this with her school SENCO to ensure their safety.

Able to access further support

Based on Sophia sharing her concerns with Bambu, a referral was made to CAMHS to give additional support. Bambu also signposted Sophia to further options to access in future. Sophia's mum gave feedback that Sophia seemed happier since support from Bambu.

DAISY'S JOURNEY



Story so far

Daisy had witnessed domestic abuse in the home from her dad and from her brother's behaviour to her mum. Daisy accessed resilience sessions and completed all 20 sessions offered by Bambu

Progress with Bambu

Bambu worked flexibly with Daisy to focus on her own needs, and to set up a stronger support system for her and her mum.



Seeing the difference

Flexible approach helped engagement

Daisy initially didn't want to attend sessions in school or online, so her practitioner worked to agree they would meet at a local library after school. This let her keep her privacy and not miss school or social time with her friends.

A safe space to focus on her

Daisy struggled to speak about herself at first, but her keyworker built rapport to let Daisy explore her feelings, understand her wants and needs, and explore healthy relationships. This let her feel comfortable to share her feelings with safe people and develop her confidence to focus on her own needs.

Accessing help for her and her mum

Daisy asked her keyworker to advocate and share her feelings in multiagency meetings. At the end of sessions, she was signposted to future options. Bambu also referred her mum to a local service for advocacy and therapy in her own language, which her mum later fed back that she had accessed and was finding helpful.

LEYLAN'S JOURNEY



Story so far

Leylan and his sister experienced verbally aggressive behaviour by their dad who had acute mental health problems, and had witnessed him abuse their mum. Leylan had anxiety around leaving his mum at home alone with his dad, so had been homeschooled for two years.

Progress with Bambu

Bambu helped Leylan address his goal of returning to school, gave him the space to open up, and supported him to gain confidence through trying new activities.



Seeing the difference

Opening up for the first time

At first Leylan was anxious about opening up, worrying his dad would find out, but over time, he felt it was okay to talk and that he had people to support him through difficult times. His mum said he returns from the sessions with a newfound confidence and 'a spring in his step'.

Supporting a return to school

His keyworker supported his enrolment at a new school, which he attended for 4 weeks before the summer break, a huge achievement after being absent for over 2 years. His keyworker then put him in touch with a specialised school, which Leylan was open to attending for his GCSEs. He said he has more confidence now and is looking forward to a future career.

Renewed interest in hobbies and activities

Leylan showed more excitement about his interests. His keyworker took him to the gym to help him be around people of his age. Leylan then joined a gym with his dad and plans to attend weekly. He said in the past, he would give up easily, but now he feels stronger and more able to deal with what life throws at him.

5 Changes for the system

This section summarises Bambu's progress on system outcomes for professionals and the sector.

5.1 Overview: Bambu's indirect impact on the broader system

This chapter focuses on the bigger-picture outcomes Bambu intended to influence in relation to professionals and the sector. Although not directly targeted by specific activities within Bambu, these were identified as potential outcomes thanks to Bambu's work to engage with the system and reach the young people it supports.

By engaging with key partners, fostering collaboration, and influencing systemic change, Bambu created ripple effects that went beyond its primary objectives of supporting individual young people. These changes indicate progress towards the programme's aim of ultimately shifting the dynamics of the existing system to enable a more sustainable, supportive environment for young people impacted by DA.

Bambu has contributed to improved professional practice in supporting young people affected by DA. It has helped professionals recognise young people as victims/survivors in their own right and adopt a more trauma-informed approach. Bambu has influenced greater awareness of the impact of DA, improved professionals' confidence in identifying and addressing young people's needs, and modelled good practice, particularly in multi-agency and school settings. However, there is also a need for further systemic training and resources to embed this good practice more widely across the system surrounding children and young people.

5.2 Outcomes for professionals

5.2.1 Increased ability to identify young people impacted by domestic abuse

Bambu contributed to a shift in how professionals identify and support young people who have witnessed or experienced domestic abuse.

- **Recognition of young people as victims/survivors in their own right.** Most DA programmes are for adult victims or the perpetrator and are often focused on keeping family units together. Historically, services have primarily focused on supporting parents, which can overlook their children who are also affected. Bambu encourages a more holistic approach which brings young people's needs to the forefront. Practitioners felt there was growing recognition of this importance and that Bambu was well-placed to highlight and support this.

I think it's had that knock on effect where practitioners or referrers are just getting much more aware of children and young people's needs. And the type of service that they can access and that meets their needs more effectively. That's really shone with Bambu.

Bambu staff member, Waythrough

- **More awareness of DA in wider system.** Bambu staff felt that in general, there was more awareness of DA in the system among those professionals Bambu had worked with directly. Bambu enabled professionals to broaden their understanding of the impact of DA.

It's definitely improved their ability to identify potential victims of domestic abuse [...] Before Bambu, many of the young people we see will have either not got a service at all or sent off for a service that doesn't quite fit their needs, like CAMHS. Often young people go there if they're exhibiting some anxiety, depression, the suicidal ideation that we get etc. But it's helped [professionals] understand the need a bit better and feel more confident to make a referral and know it's the right one for that young person.

Bambu staff member, Rise

However, Bambu had less ability to effect change more broadly so there is still a significant way to go in improving awareness and practice in the system. In particular, Bambu staff identified **a need for more training about DA** in statutory services, and how DA can affect children and young people. This need is especially apparent within social care and education whose staff play key roles in young people's lives.

Training and upskilling professionals in social care and education should go beyond raising awareness and provide specialist knowledge on identifying and supporting children and young people impacted by DA.

Social workers and other social services staff are expected to know more than they do about domestic abuse. They might have had a 2-hour seminar on domestic abuse and yet they are coming in as the 'expert' in the room. This is not a Bambu-specific problem, but it is a system problem. A significant proportion of a social worker's case load will include domestic abuse, but the training they receive is at the awareness-raising level not the practitioner level.

Bambu staff member, Waythrough

Partners highlighted that specialist training could help achieve:

1. **Greater understanding of trauma and how it manifests**, including the different ways DA can impact on all areas of young people's lives, e.g. how they behave in school and with peers, and how they engage with services.
2. **Greater ability to adopt a trauma-informed approach.** Bambu staff identified a need for social services and other agencies that are not focused on DA but work with families who may have experienced DA to adopt a more trauma-informed approach.

5.2.2 Improved trauma-informed practice

The evaluation heard strong evidence from practitioners and those who had worked with Bambu that a trauma-informed approach was at the heart of Bambu's work. Prioritising this for future commissioning may be fundamental to achieving impact.

Bambu's approach, which prioritises understanding and addressing the impacts of trauma on young people, may have influenced the professionals and systems it interacts with by improving the culture and understanding of good practice around working with young people affected by domestic abuse.

Key outcomes include:

- **Leading by example to embed trauma-informed practice.** Bambu practitioners model a trauma-informed lens in their work when they discuss young people's cases with referrers such as social workers. This helps to shift their perceptions towards the young people, which may in turn help to influence their approach more broadly when working with families.

Practitioners felt that some of the professionals Bambu was in contact with now have a better understanding of the application of trauma-informed approaches. They better understand the complex impacts of DA on various aspects of young people's lives, such as mental health, school attendance and emotional regulation, and they may feel more equipped to support them effectively.

[We] think about how we talk with wider professional networks or individual professionals about the benefits of this trauma-informed work.

Bambu staff member, RISE

- **Bringing focus to the need for trauma-informed practice in schools.** Bambu staff felt they had made some progress in improving the ability and awareness of school staff around supporting young people affected by DA, although challenges remain. Practitioners identified a lack of training and resource around trauma-informed practice and how the context of young people's lives might affect them in school. Young people are often sanctioned when behaviour is difficult to manage, rather than worked with holistically. While Bambu staff shared their expertise informally with schools, they stressed that a more systemic approach was needed.

That's where we've really found things like school attendance, mental health, self-harm, anxiety and depression – all these other things that aren't necessarily ignored. They're being picked up, maybe by the schools, like: there's an issue with their attendance, there's an issue with behaviour – but they're not linking it to the domestic abuse. They're not able to see the bigger picture that actually, this is what this young person is going home to, or this is what they have been going home to for the last five years. You know, thinking about a broader perspective: actually, this could be why we're seeing these behaviours.

Bambu staff member, RISE

- **Offering specialist advocacy at multiagency conferences.** A member of Bambu staff may often be the sole DA specialist at multi-agency child protection conferences. They can provide appropriate advocacy for children and their victim/survivor parent (usually mothers), informed by their expertise around DA that otherwise would not be represented.
- **Awareness was raised of good practice even in non-Bambu boroughs.** Partners noted that some boroughs asked Bambu to come and speak to them about their work despite not being in a Bambu area, so they could advise on what local authorities may want to look at commissioning in the future.

5.3 Outcomes for the sector

5.3.1 Improved accessibility and reach of services

Bambu has been approached by other boroughs to explore setting up the service in their borough, which demonstrates a broad demand across London. Staff were keen to expand Bambu given this clear need, but noted operational challenges that would follow.

Bambu has done well to reach young people. It was clear that Bambu fills a gap in support for young people who have been affected by domestic abuse. This means Bambu has improved access and reach of services, given that **without it, many young people would otherwise not have had any support at all.**

In areas where Bambu does not operate, there is often little support for young people affected by DA, especially boys. In response, Bambu flexed its eligibility criteria in some cases to support YP who had no other service available.

In Enfield, a YP had experienced some DA when he was younger, but his main issue was bereavement. There was no service this YP could access, and she was becoming vulnerable to CSE [child sexual exploitation] and bullying. We were able to allocate a therapist to focus on the grief and bereavement but then also uncover previous trauma with the DA.

Bambu staff member, RISE

Bambu aimed to improve accessibility and reach, particularly for minoritised or marginalised groups. There were some differences by demographic factors in terms of the extent to which this outcome was achieved:



- **Deeper engagement from girls than from boys.** While there was a broadly even gender split in referrals into Bambu, practitioners noted that boys might be more likely to end participation sooner as they were finding it difficult to dig deeper into the support. It was suggested this was due partly to the wider context of societal-level gender stereotypes and stigma around boys talking about their feelings, rather than being specific to Bambu. Some practitioners also suggested that young people may find it easier to express their emotions to adults of the same gender as them. This could highlight a potential need for more male practitioners in Bambu to better support boys. Practitioners noted **more work was needed to reach non-binary youth.** Despite a relatively high presence of trans and non-binary young people in London, practitioners noted that more work was needed for Bambu to reach them.



- **Less reach for young people with additional needs.** Practitioners noted an under-representation of disability other than neurodiversity, although they were unsure why this was. Additional needs such as autism and ADHD emerged as a challenge for delivering support, as practitioners had to find ways to work around the young people's capacity. Here, practitioners aimed to be flexible and go beyond the Bambu toolkit.

One young person [is autistic], and he struggles to express verbally what he's feeling. We do an activity called threat-drive-soothe (TDS) in session two or three, but for this young person, TDS aren't words he's learned to say yet. So we've come up with different words and tailored the session to his needs, stripping away 90% of what's in the Bambu toolkit. The session for him looks completely different but it helps this way.

Bambu staff member, RISE



- **Positive reach for global majority groups.** Bambu was successful in reaching and working with young people from global majority groups, with more than half of young people belonging to these groups (although the evaluation was not able to comment on Bambu's ability to reach hidden communities such as travellers). Practitioners having the same demographic background as the young people was helpful where possible, as young people may more easily relate to practitioners who have similar backgrounds to them. However, matching child/practitioner characteristics can be a challenge with a small team.

We have a diverse team, and this is a strength but we're a small team so we can never match the characteristics in full. There will always be differences. We keep an eye on [team diversity compared to the local population]. But each borough is very diverse, and we don't even have one practitioner per borough.

Bambu staff member, Waythrough

We also heard evidence that Bambu has potentially improved reach for other services. It has **signposted, made referrals, and advocated for young people** to improve their practical access to services, as well as increasing young people's openness to accessing services other than Bambu. The Bambu programme also **supports young people while they wait for referrals to other services** such as CAMHS. In this way, young people are less likely to be left without any support at all.

[Other services] are more confident knowing if there are other issues outside our remit, we won't just leave it; we'll go back to the referrer and suggest referrals, or we'll make them ourselves, or go back to the young person if it's a self-referral and explore what else they could access.

Bambu staff member, RISE

5.3.2 Improved partnership/multi-agency working to support families

The Bambu team has taken part in a great deal of partnership working. Staff felt this has improved over the lifetime of the programme, but that there was always room for further improvement.

Key reflections on multiagency work included:

- **Good multiagency partnership working on risk management and safeguarding, but challenges remain.** Bambu practitioners and referrers were actively involved in multi-agency working with MASH teams and others. They were particularly involved in risk management, providing support after safeguarding incidents in a variety of areas such as helping with police statements and court process, and liaising with police, social services, school, and health services. However, we also heard there were some operational challenges with multiagency working; for example, Bambu tried creating awareness about its work at MARACs (multi-agency risk assessment conferences) where information is shared about high-risk DA cases but was denied access due to information sharing and confidentiality concerns.
- **Positive work with other DA services.** We heard examples of effective signposting to relevant services (such as IDVAs) and charities working with young girls, especially where young people had experienced unhealthy relationships or abusive circumstances themselves.
- **Strong relations with VAWG leads but would have been improved by being built into commissioning arrangements.** Overall, there were positive relationships with VAWG forums and teams, including making use of the wider partnerships VAWG forums offer to spread the word about Bambu and raise awareness of the importance of broadening focus to young people in the DA space. However, building this in to commissioning arrangements would have supported progress and problem solving in embedding Bambu in the system.

When you go to a VAWG forum and talk about Bambu, you have up to 100 partners on that call. It's great because you have other DA services, but also health, substance misuse, helpful agencies we can link in with. Even them hearing about the project is helpful.

Bambu staff member, RISE

- **Strong potential and some examples of positive partnership working with schools, especially in latter stages, but challenges remain.** Bambu relies heavily on partnership working with schools and we heard some good examples of relationships building with schools as a focus area for the programme. For example, practitioners gave examples of working closely with schools after young people ended support to maintain communication with those young people. However, it was felt that more work is needed here to raise awareness of the impacts of DA and how to work in partnership to support children and young people affected.
- **Reach across health has improved, in particular with GPs and CAMHS.** In cases where a fast response was needed to discuss a child's welfare, this happened quickly; staff noted that health professionals are aware of Bambu and tend to be responsive.
- **Internal partnership working between Bambu delivery partners contributes to better support for families.** RISE and Waythrough come together through practice forums to problem solve, share best practice, provide clinical supervision, and give time for practitioners to work through challenges. This also helps support practitioners through the emotional challenges of the work.

CASSIA'S JOURNEY



Story so far

Cassia witnessed her dad's domestic abuse towards her mum throughout her childhood. She had high levels of anxiety and was subject to a child protection plan.

Progress with Bambu

Cassia and her Bambu keyworker discussed her hopes and set clear, positive goals together. Cassia made huge progress thanks to Bambu, particularly in her mental wellbeing and safety.



Seeing the difference

Managing emotions and finding calm

Bambu gave Cassia tools to manage her anxiety and feel calmer. She practised grounding and mindfulness and addressed negative thought patterns. Cassia said Bambu helped her learn to prioritise her wellbeing and let go of trying to control external situations.

Building a foundation of safety

Cassia made strides in her emotional and physical safety. She opened up about her experiences and fears and with her keyworker, explored red flags for future relationships, and developed a safety plan together with her mum. Cassia knows where to go for more support if needed.

A new chapter for education

Cassia's improved wellbeing had a ripple effect on her education. Her reduced anxiety meant she could focus better; she successfully finished her GCSEs with good results and went on to college, something she felt wouldn't have been possible before Bambu.

RYAN'S JOURNEY

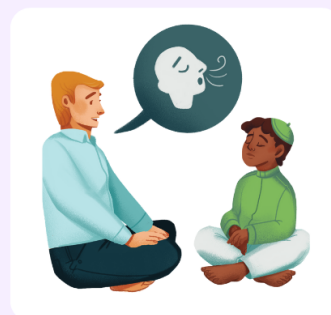


Story so far

Ryan had witnessed abuse by his dad to his mum and brother and was placed on a Child in Need plan. Social care were concerned he had begun to normalise these experiences and that he didn't have a clear understanding of healthy relationships

Progress with Bambu

Ryan and his keyworker came up with a plan focusing on understanding DA and healthy relationships. His keyworker also got involved with Ryan's professional support network, attending multi-agency meetings, working with the school, and collaborating with their social worker.



Seeing the difference

A safe space to work through challenges

Ryan was receptive to support from the start; he said he liked his sessions, and they made him feel good, as they gave him the space to talk about issues with his dad and brother without being judged.

Managing feelings and behaviours

Ryan was forthcoming in talking about his experiences. He had an awareness of how his own behaviour could stem from what he had witnessed. By the end of support, Ryan's mum said they felt he listened to the keyworker's advice and that they had seen his behaviour at school improve.

A new chapter for the family

Ryan felt things were more peaceful at home and that it was a safer place as his dad had left. The family's risk had reduced significantly and there were no current concerns. His keyworker remained in contact with Ryan's mum to give relevant updates and check-ins where needed.

6 Recommendations for future programme delivery for young people impacted by domestic abuse

This chapter lays out key learning and recommendations from the evaluation to support future programme delivery.

6.1 Strategic, consistent approach to promotion is needed to improve awareness and increase quantity and quality of referrals

The process evaluation found Bambu's proactive work to promote the service and their collaborative partnership working with local partners both worked well. But creating and maintaining consistent awareness of the service across all eight London boroughs and across different parts of the system within each borough was a continued challenge for Bambu. Considerations for delivery organisations could include:

- **Consistent marketing and promotion** to maintain awareness among professionals and mitigate against the impact of staff turnover within social work and children's services teams.
- **Targeted work to increase self-referral rates** through awareness-raising activities in places families are found e.g. local libraries and community spaces.
- **Work in partnership with other local organisations to support a sense of shared responsibility to raising awareness of the programme** through clear, localised strategic promotion.
- **Review and adapt communications to improve understanding among referrers**, for example including explanation of what role referrers can play in making the process smoother and more effective for children and young people, including gaining their consent per-referral.

6.2 Prioritise partnership-building with schools to maximise impact

The reliance on schools for reaching and working with young people is both a challenge and an opportunity. The Bambu teams have worked in partnership with schools to identify and engage young people, but further work could be done on this partnership-building to achieve maximum impact.

- **Promote Bambu directly to young people through training or classes** to improve knowledge around trauma and increase awareness of Bambu to encourage self-referrals. Bambu could deliver sessions on healthy relationships, give assemblies or school talks, or distribute leaflets. This would improve knowledge and give the option for young people to approach practitioners to speak privately afterwards.
- **Consider co-location in schools.** Co-locating practitioners in schools, for example for a day per week, would allow them to deliver sessions with young people already

enrolled, consult on other cases with teachers to share good practice, and be present for young people to self-refer.

- **Build schools' awareness and understanding of the service and its importance.** Practical help from schools is needed to find a physical place to hold sessions and allow young people to arrive for these on time. However, schools often deprioritised these sessions over regular schoolwork, so building awareness of the importance and potential impact of the service for young people is key.
- **Deliver training for school staff on trauma and DA more broadly.** There is a need to improve the mindset in schools around trauma and how the impacts of DA can manifest in young people, including in relation to challenging behaviour and school exclusion. Delivering training in schools could help to support buy-in as well as improve trauma-informed practice among education professionals.

6.3 Make use of delivery partners' pre-existing relationships and wider work

Low support or referrals for Bambu may be a result of lack of awareness among practitioners in other services. Existing relationships and programmes could be further leveraged to support this.

- **Make use of delivery organisation's pre-existing relationships within boroughs.** For Bambu, where delivery partners were already running other programmes in the same boroughs, they were able to leverage existing relationships to support programme awareness and reach.
- **Make programme promotion a team effort within delivery organisations.** Where delivery organisation staff work on other programmes in the same borough, they could be asked to promote all services to help reach potential referrals.

6.4 Continue to prioritise a responsive, flexible programme design

Bambu's flexible programme design is key to its success in engaging and supporting children and young people. Practitioners can draw on materials, resources and modules while working with the young person to identify their personal priorities and levels of comfort with different content and types of support, and build the programme around their needs. Services designed to support children and young people impacted by DA should continue to prioritise this approach.

- **Continue to prioritise flexibility within programme design** to provide bespoke support that addresses young people's diverse needs and preferences. This should include specifically tailoring programme to those with neurodiverse needs.

6.5 Continue to build on work to reach young people from marginalised communities

Bambu has had some success in reaching young people from marginalised communities and this was an area of focus for the programme. Reaching marginalised groups requires continued efforts and the Bambu programme can build on their work in this area so far.

- **Continue to monitor the demographics** of the young people supported by Bambu to identify and respond to patterns and gaps in who is being reached and engaged.
- **Develop strategies to build trust among marginalised groups** by collaborating with community leaders and offering inclusive services, including developing support for neurodiverse needs and trans and non-binary young people.
- **Continue to make use of existing networks to expand reach.** For example, RISE Mutual's Culturally Integrated Family Approach (CIFA) programme in Enfield for people in racialised and minoritised communities who perpetrate DA has helped to identify families and young people who might work with Bambu.
- **Continue to recruit and train a diverse delivery team**, including training on using a culturally informed approach.

6.6 Enhance gender-specific support for boys

Practitioners noted that despite the even gender split among young people who received support, in some cases boys showed a tendency to disengage earlier and/or to engage less deeply with support.

- **Conduct further research or needs assessment around how best to deliver support for boys impacted by domestic abuse**, including understanding reasons for disengagement and identifying strategies and approaches that facilitate meaningful engagement.

6.7 Work to address practical and logistical challenges

Practitioners experience practical and logistical challenges in their delivery of the programme, including sometimes lengthy travel between boroughs and venues; difficulty finding community venues to conduct sessions with young people who prefer not to have their sessions in schools; managing multiple formats for consent forms and other administrative information; and potential confusion about branding.

- **Explore options to reduce logistical challenges working across eight boroughs.** Options could include revising the support model to have, e.g. one fixed location for Bambu sessions (while balancing the need to meet young people in a convenient location for them); or practitioners restricting work to certain boroughs or days.
- **Implement an online consent form.** Practitioners offer multiple formats for consent forms (PDF, Word Doc). An online form as an additional option may reduce administrative burden as it could be shared via text or email, with responses coming to a central online location.
- **Ensure branding helps people to easily find the service** or work on search engine optimisation for the programme websites. The name Bambu was co-created with young people, however, some practitioners noted that the programme's spelling can be a potential barrier. For example, parents often search 'Bamboo' online, but search engines are unable to guide them to the service on that basis. This could have a negative impact on programme promotion and self-referrals.

7 Recommendations for future commissioning: What works to support young people impacted by domestic abuse?

This chapter lays out key learning and recommendations from the evaluation to support and inform future commissioning.

7.1 Build a focus on broader system impacts into commissioning decisions

Many challenges faced by Bambu, such as the need to improve both the awareness and practice of trauma-informed approaches, are due to challenges in the wider system. Key recommendations for commissioning are around sizing up the effects of programmes doing excellent work by **building this focus on broader impact into commissioning decisions**.

- **Longer-term, consistent commissioning.** Consistent funding for a longer period, for example 3-4 years rather than 1-2 years, would enable broader system impact for programmes like Bambu. Shorter funding periods cause challenges and inefficiencies because it takes time for a new service to get off the ground and start having an impact, and when funding is due to end delivery partners have to implement a winding down period where they stop accepting new referrals and begin letting staff go. This means the timeframe for programme delivery at its optimum level is often very short which in turn limits its impact.
- **Commission training on trauma-informed practice as part of programme delivery.** Training on trauma-informed practice for professionals working in the system around young people could take place alongside promotion work to improve the quality and quantity of referrals and improve practice in schools, children's social care, communities, and charities.

7.2 Strategic commissioning and delivery based on need

Need and local landscapes are different between boroughs. Some boroughs readily embraced Bambu; it was clear many professionals feel grateful to have this service they feel is desperately needed. However, in other boroughs Bambu is less well embedded, which may reflect **differing need**; some boroughs have pre-existing services serving the same group of young people as Bambu.

- **Undertake a needs assessment to identify areas with gaps in the support landscape for programmes such as Bambu.** This could include system mapping. The findings should inform commissioning to ensure it is strategic and based on need.
- **Allow programmes to respond quickly to identified low need/low referrals and move the service to other areas with greater need.** Partners felt the programme should prioritise boroughs that have requested Bambu over boroughs with a lack of demand or low referrals.

7.3 Consider options for expanding scope and scale of Bambu

The success of Bambu and its impact on young people and families has led to a strong desire among practitioners and partners for the programme to do more. The following options could be considered:

- **Expand support to more boroughs in London that need it.** When expanding a programme or delivering new programmes, consider phasing the rollout to allow learning from previous areas to be applied in new areas.
- **Deliver support for a wider age range** including those younger than 11 years old.
- **Deliver support for those who have been impacted by abuse from other family members** (not just parents), including siblings, given this is still abuse within the family and young people would still benefit from support here.

7.4 Continue to commission trauma-informed support

Bambu's trauma-informed approach is viewed to be fundamental to its ability to deliver effective support and achieve positive outcomes. This approach broadens the focus beyond the perpetrator and the direct victim/survivor towards understanding how DA has affected the children in the family too and providing support tailored to them.

- **A trauma-informed approach** should be considered both as a touchstone of future programmes that support children impacted by DA, and in terms of how trauma-informed approaches can be promoted with other professionals in the system.

7.5 Consider commissioning a whole family approach that maintains a focus on the young people impacted by DA

Partners highlighted that a whole family approach to support could be another way to improve access, engagement, and the impact of Bambu. In response to an identified gap and need, the funder and delivery partners worked together to include a new strand of support for mothers of the children participating in the programme, as part of the contract extension.

- **Future commissioning could consider embedding whole family support** from the start to support those in the family experiencing abuse directly, and those being indirectly affected, whether this is a partner, parent, or sibling.
- **Future commissioning could consider supporting delivery organisations to play a pivotal role in supporting families within the wider system.** Partners were keen to expand Bambu's remit to offer more systemised whole family support, which could support families through multi-agency networking that does not stop at referral or signposting but has continuous involvement from one delivery organisation.

7.6 Embed partnership working in commissioning

The evaluation heard that relationships with VAWG leads in each borough worked well overall, with Bambu able to access teams and referrers and positive experiences of marketing and raising awareness in VAWG forums. However, there were also opportunities for improvement in partnership working.

- **Consider embedding a VAWG lead as a contracted pre-requisite in each borough** as from the start. Bambu delivery partners have had a positive experience of working within this type of model on other programmes. This approach could support buy-in for the programme, increase referrals, and help problem-solving by forming a collaborative forum to address challenges together.
- **Consider including investment in system-wide partnership development within commissioning agreements.** With allocated resourcing, delivery organisations could invest in partnership building across the system including with agencies adjacent to the domestic abuse space, e.g., substance abuse services or other support services that parents might be attending, in order to maximise reach.

7.7 Improve monitoring and evaluation:

The evaluation was limited to an extent as it was introduced after the programme has been running for a year. Introducing this earlier would lead to improved evaluation of impact.

- **Commission an evaluation at the same time as commissioning future work**, to allow improved support for delivery partners in setting up monitoring, improved data collection, and improved evaluation of impact.

8 Appendix A: Limitations of the evaluation

8.1 Overview

The evaluation approach was developed in partnership with the Mayor of London VRU, Bambu delivery partners (Rise Mutual and Waythrough), and advisory group members including the VRU's Young People's Action Group and SafeLives.

8.2 Challenges and limitations

Key challenges and limitations to the evaluation include:

- **Attribution of impact.** A challenge for evaluations like this is attribution of impact to the interventions over and above other interventions or factors that may influence participant outcomes. Randomised Control Trials and Quasi-Experimental Designs are recognised as strong methods to support the attribution of impact. It was not possible in this evaluation to design and implement these approaches. In line with partners' priorities, we focused on covering Bambu as comprehensively as possible within evaluation resource, using theory-led mixed methods and triangulation to make judgements around implementation and areas of impact.
- **Capturing a range of young people's views:** Reflecting a range of young people's views in evaluations like this is a challenge. Our methodology was designed to mitigate this, and we were pleased we were able to include children and young people's voices. However, the approach relied on caseworkers approaching young people. Based on our experience, this pragmatic approach is the most likely to ensure we are able to engage young people. However, it is more likely that those who had a positive experience of Bambu would choose to take part in the evaluation than those who had not. We accounted for this in our approach to analysis and reporting and triangulated our findings against other sources to develop our findings.
- **Case studies completed by practitioners.** We complemented our primary research with children and young people by documenting individual experiences through anonymised case studies. We developed case studies based on those produced by Bambu staff for their quarterly returns to the VRU. These were completed by practitioners, which may lead to bias. However, they also included direct feedback from young people and in some cases from parents. We also made sure to use these to illustrate our findings from other sources of evidence.
- **Capturing a range of partner experiences.** Similarly to the above point, it was challenging engaging partners who were less engaged with Bambu and therefore we may have missed the perspectives of some professionals and partners within the system. We mitigated this in our analysis by taking this into account and triangulating with other evidence. We were able to speak to both wider partners who had more insight into Bambu's embeddedness into the boroughs and Bambu staff who had more insight into children and young people's outcomes.
- **Introducing the advisory group part way through the evaluation.** It was suggested to set up an evaluation advisory group at the start of the impact evaluation, including

evaluators, VRU programme leads, delivery partners (including SafeLives), and representatives from the VRU's Young People's Action Group (YPAG). Although it was helpful to make use of partners' insights in this forum at this stage, especially on research tools for engaging young people, it would have been more effective to build this in from the beginning. Future programmes should aim to introduce an advisory group at the start, so the group can more effectively influence and inform decision-making processes throughout the evaluation.

- **Data limitations.** The following limitations should be considered in relation to the quantitative data included in the evaluation:
 - **Small samples sizes for some data sets.** Small sub-sample sizes when data was broken down by activity precluded more detailed analysis in relation to specific characteristics (e.g., ethnicity).
 - **Risk of sample bias in outcomes data.** Those who had a more positive experience of support are more likely to be represented, as those who declined support did not have outcomes data available. However, this related to a relatively small number of children and young people, and in general, outcomes data was high quality and complete.
 - **Challenges with outcomes data tools.** The evaluation's desire to balance burden on partners with introducing relevant tools meant that some aspects of the outcomes data tools were not relevant to Bambu and its theory of change. We have mitigated this by presenting all the available outcomes data but highlighting those scales which were relevant for this evaluation.

9 Appendix B: Outcomes survey questions

9.1 Strengths and difficulties (SDQ) questionnaire

Please read the questionnaire carefully. For each of the statements put a tick in the box that **you** think is most like you. It would help us if you put a tick for all the statements – even if it seems a bit daft!

Please give answers on the basis of how you have been feeling over the last six months.

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I try to be nice to people. I care about their feelings			
I get restless, I cannot sit still for long			
I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness			
I usually share with others (food, games, pens etc.)			
I get very angry and often lose my temper			
I am usually on my own. I generally play alone or keep to myself			
I usually do as I am told			
I worry a lot			
I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill			
I am constantly fidgeting or squirming			
I have one good friend or more			
I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want			
I am often unhappy, downhearted or tearful			
Other people my age generally like me			
I am easily distracted, I find it difficult to concentrate			
I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence			

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I am kind to younger children			
I am often accused of cheating or lying			
Other children or young people pick on or bully me			
I often volunteer to help others (parents, teachers, children)			
I think before I do things			
I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere			
I get on better with adults than with people my own age			
I have many fears, I am easily scared			
I finish the things I'm doing. My attention is good			

Overall, do you think that you have difficulties in one or more of the following areas: **Emotions, concentration, behaviour** or being able to **get on with other people**?

☐ No	☐ Yes, minor difficulties
☐ Yes, more serious difficulties	☐ Yes, severe difficulties

If you have answered '**Yes**', please answer the following questions about these difficulties:

How long have these difficulties been present?

☐ Less than a month	☐ 1–5 months
☐ 5–12 months	☐ Over a year

Do the difficulties upset or distress you?

☐ Not at all	☐ Only a little	☐ Quite a lot	☐ A great deal
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Do the difficulties interfere with your everyday life in the following areas?

	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
Homelife				
Friendships				

	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
Education/Learning				
Leisure activities				
Employment (if applicable)				

Do the difficulties make it harder for those around you (family, friends, teachers etc.)?

☐ Not at all	☐ Only a little	☐ Quite a lot	☐ A great deal
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9.2 SDQ items grouped into outcome areas

Area	SDQ item
Emotional	3. I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness
	8. I worry a lot
	13. I am often unhappy, downhearted or tearful
	16. I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence
	24. I have many fears. I am easily scared
Conduct problems	5. I get very angry and often lose my temper
	7. I usually do as I am told
	12. I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want
	18. I am often accused of cheating or lying
	22. I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere
Hyperactivity	2. I get restless. I cannot sit still for long
	10. I am constantly fidgeting or squirming
	15. I am easily distracted, I find it difficult to concentrate
	21. I think before I do things
	25. I finish the things I'm doing. My attention is good
Peer problems	6. I am usually on my own. I generally play alone or keep to
	11. I have one good friend or more
	14. Other people my age generally like me
	19. Other children or young people pick on or bully me

Area	SDQ item
	23. I get on better with adults than with people my own age
Prosocial	1. I try to be nice to people. I care about their feelings
	4. I usually share with others (food, games, pens etc.)
	9. I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill
	17. I am kind to younger children
	20. I often volunteer to help others (parents, teachers,

9.3 Brief Multi-dimensional Students Life Satisfaction Scale

We would like to know what thoughts about life you have had during the past several weeks. Think about how you spend each day and night and then think about how your life has been during most of this time.

Here are some questions that ask you to indicate your satisfaction with life.

I would describe my satisfaction ...	Terrible	Unhappy	Mostly dissatisfied	Mixed	Mostly satisfied	Pleased	Delighted
with my family life as							
with my friendships as							
with my educational experience as							
with myself as							
with where I live as							
with my overall life as							



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