

Learning and Evaluation Partner – Building Brighter Futures

Invitation to tender

January 2026

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Summary

Building Brighter Futures is a five-year programme which funds work to improve the mental health of children and young people aged 10-19 years old who are living in the most challenging circumstances and who face complex difficulties.

The programme encourages collaboration between the NHS, trusted community organisations and researchers to develop, deliver and evaluate ambitious solutions that will go further in preventing and treating mental health conditions in young people.

In 2023, we tested a limited version of this joined-up approach by awarding £225,000 to three projects that had established partnerships between children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and voluntary and community sector organisations (VCS).

In August 2025, we awarded £7.5 million to 11 Building Brighter Futures projects involving approximately 50 delivery partners, from South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, King's College London, voluntary and community organisations, schools and alternative provisions.

In 2026, we will be awarding a further £2.2 million to 2-4 additional projects.

Each project varies in scale, approach and strength of existing evidence base, and each project is responsible for undertaking its own evaluation (to varying degrees¹). Collectively they represent a valuable opportunity to build insight into what works, for whom, and under what conditions.

To maximise learning across the portfolio and strengthen the evidence generated, we are commissioning a Learning and Evaluation Partner (referred to in this briefing as the Partner) to synthesise findings, facilitate learning, provide a programme-level evaluation, and help raise our profile in the children and young people sector.

[Read more about the programme and funded projects on our website.](#)

¹ On the Standards of Evidence scale, which measures evaluation robustness, majority are at level 2, a couple are at level 3, and 1-2 are at level 5: https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/standards_of_evidence.pdf

The hypothesis of the programme is that cross-sector partnerships delivering innovative projects with co-production approaches will lead to improved mental health outcomes for children and young people living in challenging circumstances and surface new insights and practices that can be shared more widely to inform commissioning, funding and delivery of services beyond south London.

Role of the Partner – To work in partnership with Maudsley Charity over the remaining three years of the programme, to evaluate change relating to the hypothesis and deliver the following activities:

1. Strengthen the overall evidence emerging from the projects.
2. Generate and share cross-cutting learning about effective approaches.
3. Assess and communicate the collective impact and lessons of the funded portfolio.
4. Plan and deliver reflective practice across the programme.
5. Gather insights about the relationship between Maudsley Charity and our grant holders.
6. Identify opportunities to extend and sustain impact beyond the life of the current funding.

Contract value: £255,000 (inclusive of VAT)² Apr 2026 – Mar 2029 (with potential to extend).³

Deadline for submissions: 5pm Tuesday 24th February

Key contacts: Georgina Chatfield, Programme Lead for Children & Young People (georgina.chatfield@maudsleycharity.org) and Naomi Brill, Head of Impact & Effectiveness (naomi.brill@maudsleycharity.org)

² Final contract subject to Board of Trustees approval.

³ Some grant funded projects are due to end in 29/30 and beyond, so there may be an opportunity to extend the contract, at a reduced scale, to collect evidence and learning after March 2029.

About the Charity

Who we are

Maudsley Charity is a grant-making charity that advances and accelerates positive change in mental health care in south London.

We fund and support key clinical, academic and community partners so that everyone who experiences mental illness, without exception, can access the care that's right for them.

While our roots are embedded firmly in our local community in south London, we also aim to seed positive change in mental health care elsewhere in the UK, by sharing and amplifying the knowledge and evidence that is generated through the work that we fund.

How we work

We focus our resources on work that is underpinned by evidence, experience and equity.

Evidence

Good mental health care is based on reliable knowledge and information. We identify and financially back the most promising solutions that draw on and generate learning and evidence, working alongside South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) at King's College London, and groups and organisations from our local community and voluntary sector. We share that learning and encourage others to adopt those solutions in other parts of the country.

Experience

Mental health care is more effective when it is informed by relevant expertise and lived experience. We continually strive to understand the perspectives of people in the communities we serve and encourage our grant holders to do the same when developing and delivering their work. We bring together people with lived experience of mental illness, their families and carers, clinicians, nurses, researchers, and people working in community organisations to identify where our funding programmes can make the biggest difference.

Equity

Many people in our local communities are living against a backdrop of racism, exclusion and poverty, all of which are proven to lead to more severe mental illness, reduced access to treatment and support, and worse long-term outcomes. We focus our funding on those most failed by services and society, driving improvements that benefit everyone. That's why equity is more than a principle – it is an essential tool for advancing genuine change.

About the programme

The Building Brighter Futures (BBF) programme is a £10 million fund for work to improve the mental health of children and young people aged 10-19 years old who are living in the most challenging circumstances and who face complex difficulties.

Projects are focussing on children and young people experiencing emerging and developing mental health difficulties affected by at least one of the following risk factors:

- Living in deprivation.
- Vulnerable family circumstances.
- Impacted by racism and/or discrimination.
- Neurodiversity or learning disabilities.
- Substance use.

The demand for mental health provision for young people has increased significantly in recent years with inequalities and deprivation playing a significant role in generating higher incidences of mental illness among young people in south London. This programme extends the commitment we've made to young people's mental health through our role in the creation of the Pears Maudsley Centre for Children and Young People.

We encourage collaboration between clinicians, researchers and trusted community organisations to develop and deliver the most effective solutions.

[Read about how we embedded collaboration and co-production in the programme design.](#)

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

At Maudsley Charity, we believe that diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are essential to achieving positive change in mental health care.

We understand that although health and care inequalities are most acute in relation to race and ethnicity, people's experiences of mental illness and mental health care are also impacted by other factors, including gender and sexuality, culture and religion, and neurodiversity/disability. We also know that by addressing the challenges faced by the people who are most frequently and profoundly failed by systems and services, we elevate experiences of care for everyone.

We therefore prioritise – and actively practice – the values of DEI in everything we do. We use a robust DEI framework, developed by the Association of Charitable Foundations (ACF), to inform our approach to the projects we fund, the partnerships we build, and the people we work with.

Our approach as a grant-maker

At Maudsley Charity, we know that making a real difference for people living with mental illness means identifying and focusing on the areas where our funding will make the biggest impact. It also means designing and delivering all our programmes in the most effective way possible.

We actively seek out and respond to the insights, perspectives and needs of a wide range of people when selecting our funding priorities, designing our programmes, and assessing funding applications. This includes people with lived experience of mental illness and recovery, as well as people with professional experience of mental health care, treatment and research.

We believe that relationships matter as much as funding. That's why we aim to be an ethical, flexible and approachable funder; open to discussion and adapting our processes to give applicants and grant holders the best chance of success at every stage. We understand that traditional funding models often privilege those organisations who are most able to apply. We have worked hard to make our application process more accessible, so that we are better able to reach and engage the widest possible range of potential grant holders – including people who may never have applied for funding before.

When we begin a relationship with a grant holder, we work to identify and reduce unnecessary administrative burdens. From the very start, we support them to build their skills and capacity and encourage them to explore ways to sustain the impact of their work after our funding ends.

Our approach as a partner

As a small charity team that covers four of the most diverse boroughs in London, we recognise the value of collaborating with specialist partners whose knowledge and expertise can enhance the impact of our own work. When working with external partners, we seek out those who truly understand our local communities and whose values and approaches to DEI align with ours.

We prioritise the voices and perspectives of the communities we serve throughout each stage of our tendering and commissioning process, for example by inviting people with lived experience of the programme's focus to contribute to reviewing briefs and assessing submissions.

We also strive to create an inclusive approach to tendering and commissioning by:

- Maintaining a simple and straightforward tendering/commissioning process.
- Prioritising 'thought partners' who can contribute ideas and suggestions.
- Hosting informal pre-application Q&A sessions for potential partners.
- Providing feedback to applicants whose tenders are not successful.
- Establishing a default principle of joint ownership for any output materials.
- Fostering a culture of mutual feedback between us and our partners.

Key learning questions

Using these learning questions as a starting point, we expect the Partner to work with Maudsley Charity, grant holders and young people to design the final study.

Project design and delivery

- What interventions (e.g. peer mentoring, creative health, sport and play activities, embedding mental health knowledge and capabilities within youth community settings, family/carer involvement) are proving most effective in improving children and young people's mental health, and why?
- What conditions enable effective partnership working across the children and young people's mental health sector, i.e. CAMHS, local authorities, education settings and the VCS, and partnerships between different VCS organisations, and what doesn't work and why.
- How have project teams adapted their models and plans over time in response to local context, emerging needs, or learning?
- What have been the main challenges during project delivery and how have they been addressed?

Participation, access and inclusion

- Who is being reached by the projects, and who might be missing out?
- What approaches have been most effective in reaching and engaging children and young people from target groups (see [About the programme](#) section), particularly Black children and young people, and why?
- How have co-production methods developed over the project life cycle, and how have projects incorporated youth and family voice into delivery and evaluation; and what difference has this made?

Outcomes and impact

- What changes are being observed in children and young people's mental health and related outcomes as a result of the funded activities?
- What changes are being observed in cross-sector relationships and partnerships in the children and young people mental health sector as a result of the funded activities?
- Which contextual factors and active ingredients, e.g. community setting or partnership structure etc., seem to influence outcomes most strongly?
- What is the collective contribution of the portfolio to improving children and young people's mental health support across south London?

Learning and evidence building

- How are funded organisations developing their evaluation capacity and evidence base over time?
- What data and evidence are most useful for understanding effectiveness and impact in this context?
- How can learning from individual projects be synthesised to strengthen the overall evidence base for youth mental health interventions?

Funder's role and added value

- Has Maudsley Charity's approach to grant-making, management and support influenced project success and learning? How, and if not, why not?
- Has the programme's focus on collaboration between CAMHS and VCS organisations influenced the landscape and led to sustained ways of collaborative working? And if so, how and where?
- What lessons can be drawn for how future funding programmes are designed and managed?

Extending and sustaining impact

- What are the opportunities to amplify and sustain the benefits of the portfolio beyond the current funding?
- What challenges are project teams facing which may prevent sustainability or scalability etc.?
- How can evidence and learning be mobilised to influence wider systems, policy and practice?

Methodology and approach

Using the activities below as a starting point, we expect the Partner to work with Maudsley Charity, grant holders and young people to select the methods that are most appropriate within the scope and budget of the commissioned work.

Synthesis and evidence strengthening

- Undertake a structured document review of the individual grant applications and evaluation materials, progress reports, and related outputs and outcomes to assess the quality and evidence across the 11 currently funded projects. NB: We anticipate making further grant commitments to another 2-4 projects in 2026 and, if appropriate, would like to include a brief analysis of learnings from the 3 original pilot projects.

- Review the ‘standards of evidence’ assessment, which has looked at the robustness of individual project evaluations and provide constructive feedback to strengthen their approaches.
- Build a visualisation to map the range of interventions being delivered to improve outcomes for children and young people with emerging and developing mental health difficulties through Building Brighter Futures against severity of mental health need.

Cross-cutting thematic learning and analysis

- Conduct desk-based research to identify and analyse cross-cutting themes emerging across projects (e.g. collaboration and engagement strategies, partnership working, involvement of children and young people, barriers to access, equity and outcomes). Identify patterns and differences across project types, demographics and geographies.
- Draw on wider evidence and literature in children and young people’s mental health to contextualise project findings within the broader field and policy landscape.
- Taking a systems thinking approach, surface insights on what works, for whom, and under what conditions, identifying transferable learning across different delivery models and settings, and for different mental health needs.

Field engagement and lived experience insight

- Meet each of the grant holders and, if possible, visit each funded project, at least once a year to engage with delivery teams to capture qualitative insights and the active ingredients behind what’s working well.
- Ensure young people’s voices and lived experience are meaningfully integrated into the design and delivery of learning and evaluation outputs.

Data analysis and integration

- Collate quantitative and qualitative data submitted by projects via progress reports and other outputs to produce a coherent, portfolio-level understanding of outputs, outcomes and progress.
- Carry out appropriate health economics assessments of the projects, taking into consideration cost vs value in the context of complexity of need.
- Develop data visualisations and evidence summaries that make insights accessible for various audiences, including Maudsley Charity Trustees, NHS commissioners, schools, local authorities, mental health practitioners, policy makers, and children and young people, and their families.

Learning facilitation and knowledge sharing

- Help design and deliver reflective learning sessions with grant holders, key stakeholders and Maudsley Charity to share insights, build evaluation capabilities, and encourage peer learning. (NB: Maudsley Charity will hold budget separately for venue hire and catering).
- Identify opportunities to design and develop accessible and creative learning products that draw in a wide range of expertise and experience and that communicate emerging lessons and best practice for different audiences (see [Audiences](#) section).

Evaluation reporting and strategic recommendations

- Produce a comprehensive final evaluation report that synthesises findings, assesses the collective impact of the funding programme, and captures key lessons for future investment.
- Provide strategic recommendations for future funding design, evaluation support and evidence-building in young people's mental health.
- Support dissemination and communication of findings through presentations, summaries and contributions to events and publications.

General expectations

- The scale and scope of the work could be provided by an individual or consortium bid with a submission from the lead organisation/consultant.
- Methods should be participatory and inclusive, e.g. Appreciative Inquiry or community of learning/practice.
- The approach should be proportionate to reduce burden on grant holders, avoid duplication of data collection, and manage expectations around the breadth and depth of data that is possible for you and grant holders to collect.
- Collaborate with the Maudsley Charity team to ensure that the learning and evaluation provides relevant and pragmatic recommendations that are informed by and will complement previous work, as well as ongoing efforts.
- Written deliverables should be clear, free of jargon and written in plain English.

Skills and experience required

We are looking to work with a Partner who has relevant sector knowledge, expertise and connections, and the ability to demonstrate the following key requirements:

- Proven experience in evaluation and learning partnerships within youth, health and/or community sectors.
- Understanding of young people's mental health policy and practice and the inequalities that exist.
- Experience of working with projects addressing health inequalities and social justice.
- Understanding of young people in London and the particular context that living in a major city brings.
- Strong mixed-methods evaluation, synthesis and analytical skills.
- Ability to facilitate participatory and reflective learning approaches.
- Access to a steering group, which includes children and young people, who can inform and advise.
- Experience engaging with young people and ensuring their voices inform learning outputs.
- Strong communication skills, including the ability to design and produce accessible and engaging learning materials.

Management and governance

The Learning and Evaluation Partner will report to Maudsley Charity's Head of Impact & Effectiveness and will hold a strong relationship with the Evaluation & Learning Manager, Programme Lead and Grants Programmes Officer.

A small steering or advisory group (including youth representation) will guide the evaluation approach and review outputs.

Regular meetings will be held to review progress and agree next steps – frequency to be confirmed at contracting stage.

Audiences

- Commissioners, including Integrated Care Boards and Integrated Care Partnerships in south London.
- Other funders.
- CAMHS Service Directors at South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and other UK NHS Trusts.
- Researchers at King's College London.
- Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations who work in children and young people's mental health.
- Local government, including Directors of Children's Social Care, Directors of Public Health and local councillors.
- Education leaders.
- Policy makers and campaigning organisations.
- Children and young people and their family members/carers.

Cost

£255,000 (inclusive of VAT) Apr 2026 – Mar 2029.⁴

Safeguarding

At interview stage, we will share our safeguarding policy, safeguarding code of conduct and supplier minimum standards⁵. If successfully through to this stage, tender applicants will be expected to read these and confirm their compliance.

At this point, we will also ask applicants to provide their organisation's policies and approaches on safeguarding, data protection, governance and research ethics.

All contractors delivering projects for Maudsley Charity where they come into contact with vulnerable adults or children must agree to comply with our policies as part of the terms of their contract.

⁴ Final contract subject to Board of Trustees approval.

⁵ We are able to provide a copy of these documents earlier upon request.

Timeline and expected deliverables

The timeline is an indication; actual dates will be agreed during contracting.

Deliverable	Description	Timeline
Invitation to tender opens. Q&A session with the Maudsley Charity team. Invitation to tender closes. Interview dates. Contract begins.		26 th Jan 26 10 th Feb 26 24 th Feb 26 16-18 th Mar 26 13 th Apr 26
Onboarding, baseline review and evidence mapping	Review existing project documentation, planned evaluations, and evidence standards. Establish baseline data across the portfolio and an understanding of the audience base.	Months 1-4
Inception report and evaluation framework	Co-design an evaluation and learning framework with Maudsley Charity, the grant holders, and a steering group which includes children and young people (managed by the Partner), setting out data collection plans, learning questions and reporting cycles.	Months 3-6
Learning and evidence reviews	Synthesis of project-level findings (from progress reports) and evidence quality. Identify emerging themes, gaps and opportunities for cross-project learning.	End of years 1, 2 and 3
Learning/ community of practice sessions	Help design and deliver portfolio-wide learning sessions to share insights, reflect on findings, and strengthen evaluation practice. (NB: Maudsley Charity will hold budget separately for venue hire and catering).	End of years 1, 2 and 3
Project support and feedback reports	Provide tailored feedback and light-touch support to grant holders to strengthen their evaluations and evidence generation.	Ongoing

Deliverable	Description	Timeline
Learning products	Produce a variety of accessible and engaging learning outputs (e.g. case studies, data visualisations, insights about the relationship between Maudsley Charity and our grant holders, short reports, and other creative products) summarising emerging evidence and insights in line with our audience base and media channels.	End of years 2 and 3
Final evaluation report	Comprehensive synthesis of findings across the full programme, assessing the collective impact, value and lessons from the portfolio, including identification of projects that have potential to extend and sustain impact beyond the life of the current funding.	End of year 3
Presentation/ dissemination session(s)	Presentation of key findings to Maudsley Charity, grant holders and other key stakeholders.	End of year 3
Learning beyond scope of existing tender (additional contract to be agreed)	Short addendum report/other appropriate outputs to capture learning beyond the existing grant periods.	Years 4/5

Appendix 1 – Maudsley Charity values and behaviours

We are ambitious for change

- We are brave and intentional, taking calculated risks to tackle the complex challenge of delivering better mental health care for everyone.
- We support the creation of new evidence, invest in fresh ideas, and help expand proven solutions to make a lasting difference.

We are compassionate

- We engage everyone with care and respect, mindful of the contexts facing people who experience mental illness and people who deliver mental health care.
- We lighten our grant holders' workload by creating a balanced and efficient grant-making process from application to evaluation.

We are inclusive

- We value knowledge, expertise and personal experience, championing diverse perspectives and empowering everyone to contribute to our decision-making.
- We prioritise projects that actively involve people with lived experience in shaping care and treatment.

We act with integrity

- We carefully consider our social and environmental impacts and uphold high ethical standards, especially in our fundraising, procurement, and investment practices.
- We are fair and transparent in our grant-making and hold ourselves and our grant holders accountable for effective delivery.

We value relationships

- We nurture relationships based on mutual respect, and acknowledge the roles played by all stakeholders in achieving our shared mission.
- We provide the support, trust and open dialogue our colleagues and grant holders need to succeed.

We learn and share knowledge

- We actively seek feedback, and use it to evaluate and improve our working practices.
- We provide a platform to share what works in our local communities and model change in other parts of the country.

Appendix 2 – Building Brighter Futures theory of change

