



# INTERIM EVALUATION REPORT

PHASE ONE: LAP SET-UP: MAY 2023



CLIENT: CAMDEN BOROUGH COUNCIL

EVALUATORS: MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY – CENTRE FOR ABUSE AND TRAUMA STUDIES

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**Disclaimer:** This interim report serves as a preliminary overview of the LAP (London Accommodation Pathfinder) outlining its setup and presenting initial findings from stakeholder engagement. It is important to note that the evaluation is an ongoing process, and the information presented here is subject to further analysis and exploration. Therefore, this report should be considered as a snapshot of the current progress and is not a final evaluation. A comprehensive and conclusive evaluation report will be presented at the end of the evaluation period, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the LAP and its impact.

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## GLOSSARY

EAP	Evaluation Advisory Panel
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LAP	London Accommodation Pathfinder
LARP	London Accommodation and Resettlement Partnership
SDM	LAP Strategic Development Manager
YJB	Youth Justice Board
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic

## PROJECT INFORMATION

PROJECT ACRONYM: LAP

PROJECT NAME: LONDON ACCOMODATION PATHFINDER PROJECT

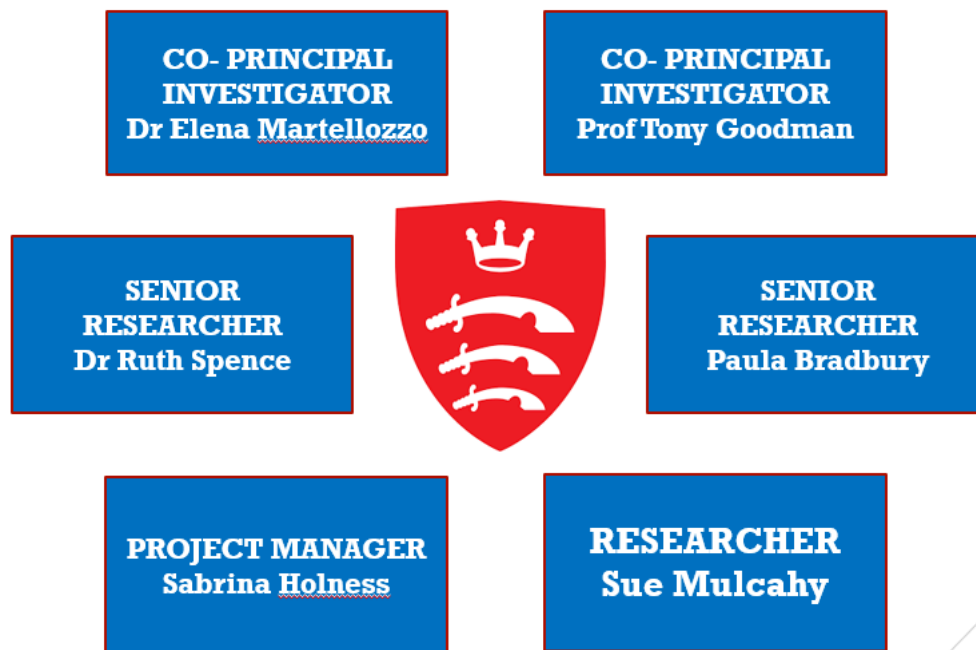
PROJECT DURATION: 1 YEAR

PROJECT COORDINATORS:

PROJECT EVALUATORS: [CENTRE FOR ABUSE AND TRAUMA STUDIES](#)

### THE EVALUATION TEAM

The evaluation team consists of three criminologists (one professor, one associate professor and one senior researcher) and two psychologists. The structure of the evaluation team is as follows:



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The London Accommodation Pathfinder (LAP) is a program designed to support and divert children away from custody. This interim report provides a progress update and evaluation of the LAP project to date, with the aim of determining its strengths and weaknesses. The report notes that the implementation of the LAP was several months behind schedule, which has limited the evaluation to the experiences of those involved in the Steering Groups and staff members from the two sub-regions In North Central London and East London.

The evaluation process involved two stages. The first stage included in-depth interviews with five members of the Board, which explored their general perspectives on the LAP in relation to four evaluation quadrants: The set-up of the LAP; Sub-Regional Framework; Outcomes for Children; and Cost Benefits and Research. The findings indicate that all participants viewed the LAP as a significantly important step towards supporting and diverting children away from custody. However, there were challenges around this success, including unforeseen costs once the children are in the supported accommodation, accessibility to suitable properties in safe locations, and the long-term requirement of individual boroughs to buy into the LAP.

The second stage of the evaluation involved a mixed methods survey distributed to all members of the Steering Group across both sub-regions, with a total of 20 responses received. Overall, respondents were optimistic about the suitability of the referral process, but they also recognised that endorsement decisions may be influenced by factors beyond a child's personal suitability, such as demand for places and child compatibility. The majority (75%) of respondents reported challenges in their Steering Group role, all of which related to the delay in the provision of accommodation.

All the respondents were confident that the LAP would be able to identify the children's pro-offending narrative. With 95% being confident that whilst developing the support plan, the LAP would be able to identify the children's strengths and goals, personal pro-social identity, and route plan for developing a pro-social identity. Additionally, participants were significantly confident that the children could be encouraged to proactively engage with the educational and leisurely activities being run by the staff. Furthermore, 80% believed that the LAP would develop a pro-social identity by being in the supported accommodations and engaging in the activities.

In conclusion, this interim report provides valuable insight into the LAP project's progress to date. The evaluation process highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the project, including the challenges faced by the Steering Group in the delay of provision of accommodations. The report also underscores the optimism of the respondents about the suitability of the referral process and the LAP's ability to identify the children's pro-offending narrative and develop their pro-social identity. This report will serve as an important basis for the final stages of the evaluation, where it will be possible to engage with the children participating in the LAP. Overall, the LAP remains a significant step towards supporting and diverting children away from custody in the London region.

## ABOUT THE LAP PROJECT

The pathfinder has been developed with the shared aims of:

- Securing a journey of continuous improvement to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people
- Building on existing capability in children's services, corporately and with partners to identify
- Good practice, diagnose improvement challenges and identify risks to performance
- Systematically sharing knowledge about what works across the sector, providing a platform for innovation and ensuring that there is systematic identification and dissemination of best practice.

The London Children's Innovation and Improvement Board (LCIIB) brings together London directors of children's services with London chief executives and treasurers in order to provide shared oversight of children's improvement and innovation activity across the capital. The LCIIB has agreed an ambitious Pan-London Placements Commissioning Programme, which is an ambitious collaborative programme developed with the shared aims of:

- Enhancing placement sufficiency
- Securing more efficient use of public resources
- Improving outcomes for children in London

Within the Commissioning Programme, the Alternative to custody project has key aims to:

- Reduce numbers of children in custody both on remand and sentence to address over-representation of London children in custody
- Reduce numbers of children from BME background in custody, both on remand and sentence, to address significant disproportionality.
- Reduce overall costs to public sector
- Improve outcomes for children through a psychologically informed approach
- To improve resettlement and prevent re offending

The London Accommodation Pathfinder will directly support these aims.

This project proposes a bold and innovative pan-London approach to commissioning new pathways that will accommodate 16 and 17-year-old children that are males as an alternative to custody, either on remand or as an alternative to custodial sentence (the supported accommodations are not secure). There is a timeliness to the proposal which can build on the historically low numbers of children in custody, partly as a result of Covid-19 resulting in court closures. The approach has been designed with initial market engagement which included an experienced provider. The original ambition was to develop four supported accommodations across London with the provision to be in small units of five or fewer children to mitigate risk and the location would be carefully planned considering gang related territorial issues and other factors.

To develop the LAP the LARP board appointed the LAP Strategic Development Manager and a Project Support Officer to work pan London with the Local Authorities. Camden Council are the lead Local Authority for London and both positions are based in Camden council which provides some infrastructure to the project. A provider (St Christopher Fellowship) has been selected by competitive procurement process led by Camden Council through the established Dynamic Purchasing Vehicle (DPV) in London. Camden council also entered into a Collaboration Agreement with the participating authorities (11) which divides up the liability for the award and subsequent placements. The Collaboration Agreement sets out the placement arrangements, payment of voids costs and termination of regional agreements.

The vision is for a whole system transformation that addresses the disproportionately high number of children in custody, particularly for children from a BME background. The investment will set up, pump prime and support transition to innovative alternative pathways for children, based on the tried and tested psychologically informed approach. The transformation will deliver change across London delivered in phases with learning from the initial stage informing subsequent development. The most significant benefits are in improved outcomes for children, from self-esteem and mental health to confidence and skills for further education and employment - in short to equip these children for a life outside the world of crime. This yields wider outcomes through reduced recidivism and lower levels of crime in the community.

The LAP vision and business case originated in mid 2020 and was originally provided grant funding up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. Due to the complexity of the LAP project the grant funding was extended for an additional year, ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. Demonstrating the significant



scale of the project being commissioned to set up and mobilise across two subregions of London.

The delays in the project meant that there was a requirement of the expected timelines and number of properties initially proposed as the LAP originally set out to secure four houses, each providing supported accommodation for up to five boys aged 16-17 for durations up to six months.

### Support for Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and Youth Justice Board (YJB) aims

The LAP aims to improve outcomes for children through alternative pathways to custody at remand, post-sentence and resettlement. This includes improving mental health, self-esteem, employability skills and reducing re-offending. The psychologically informed community-based approach is proven to deliver better outcomes than custody. This directly supports the Ministry of Justice vision to deliver a world class justice system that works for everyone in society and the strategic priority that the system reforms offenders.

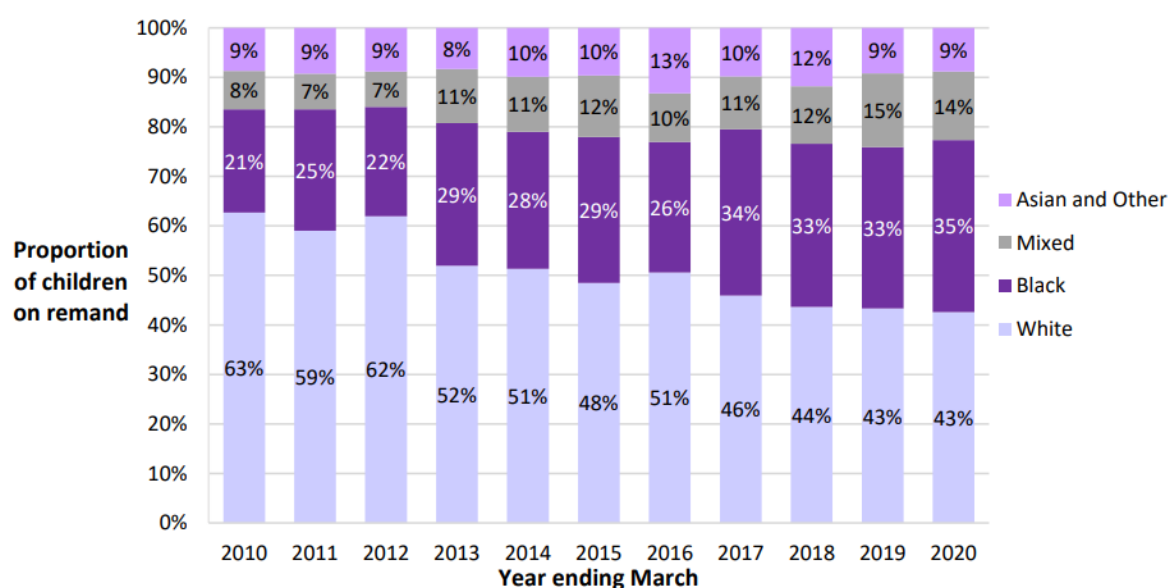
The YJB Business Plan for 20/21 commits The YJB to seeking to improve outcomes for children leaving custody. This proposed pathfinder will provide appropriate accommodation and interventions as an alternative to custodial remand, a custodial sentence and resettlement. The plan also commits to reducing disproportionality, the pathfinder will focus on reducing the disproportionate amount of BME children from the London area that are sentenced to custody or held in remand.

### Evidence of need

There is currently a dearth of suitable alternative provision to custody in London and little incentive for any one of the organisations involved to invest in new provision. As was highlighted in the pivotal [‘Case for Change’](#) report which highlighted the drastic need for alternatives to custodial sentences and the need to provide the catalyst for transformation. Once the new provision is established and the confidence of courts and other parties builds, the transition will be managed over three years. The options for courts for alternatives to custody both for remand and sentence will be opened up through a new life-building pathway for children. There will be a transition period and the two-phase evaluation is planned to build confidence and improve the model where necessary by learning from the initial stages.

Two hundred and forty-seven children from London under 18 were in custody on average through 2018-19 (most recent period for which regional comparisons are available). This number has declined from 541 in 2009-10, in line with national trends. In 2018-19, London had 247 children, up to and including age 18, in custody, out of a total of 858 in England and Wales. This represents 28% of the national total in comparison to 15% which is the proportion of the population of children in London. This proportion has not changed significantly and is 28% in the latest data for April 2020 which reports the number of children in custody from London as 211, which compares to 749 nationally.

The ethnic breakdown of children in custody shows a disproportionately high representation of children from a BME background in relation to the general population figures. *Figure One* shows that in the latest year, the number of children remanded to youth custody has decreased for each ethnic group, except for children from a Black background. *Figure One* shows that the proportion that Black children comprise increased from 33% to 35% between 2019 and 2020. This is the highest proportion in the last ten years and compares to 21% ten years ago.



*Figure One:* Proportion of children in youth custody on remand by ethnicity, youth secure estate in England and Wales, years ending March 2010 to 2020 (Youth Justice Statistics, 2021)

In reflection of this, savings would be achieved for the system overall as the costs of the model are less than placements at YOIs. There would also be indirect savings from reduced recidivism and improved outcomes for the children which would lead to reduced levels of support in future. Placements could also be extended into resettlement as the model can continue to support children through this critical period and costs are less than those incurred for many children post-sentence and substantially less in some cases.

The transformation achieves a reduction in the disproportionately high level of London children in custody through an investment of £1.18m over 3 years, with life-changing results through 20 places at one time for children established in a sustainable model for the future. The evaluation and dissemination of the results will enable replication and wider learning to inform further reductions in custody for children in London and across the country.

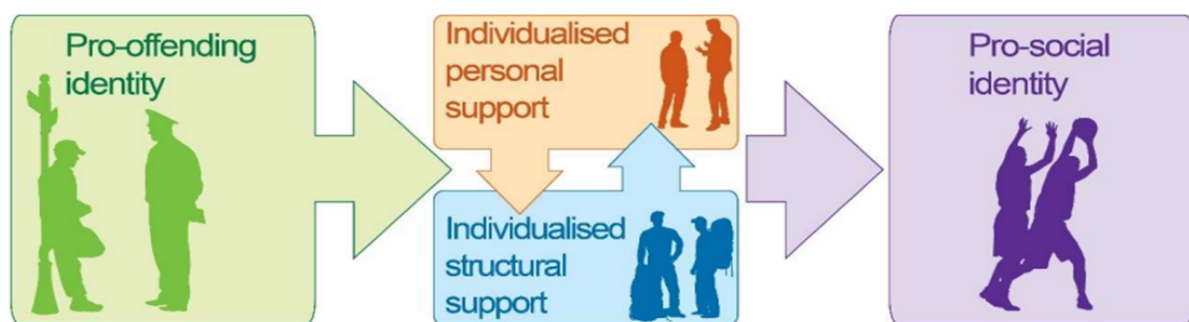
### Outcomes, objectives and key benefits

The LAP is one of two independent constituent pathfinder projects which form, and are under the oversight and governance of, the London Accommodation and Resettlement Partnership (LARP). The overarching aim of the LAP is to reduce the number of remanded and sentenced children within the secure estate and to improve outcomes for such children. This overarching aim has particular resonance in London where there is an over overrepresentation of black

and ethnic minority boys in custody (Barn et al, 2018). The project's enabling objective is to work to develop alternative accommodation within the community for children who would otherwise be remanded or sentenced to custody (LARP, 2021). The project is sponsored by the Ministry of Justice and the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and endorsed by the London Association of Directors of Children's Services (Knights, 2023).

Because the LAP provides an alternative to youth detention accommodation, its success is inevitably dependent upon the local courts making the prerequisite orders allowing children's participation. These follow recommendations to the court from Youth Justice Services which have been previously endorsed sub regionally at joint agency level.

The objectives of the LAP focus on a primary goal of leading the children towards a pro-social identity, away from a pro-offending identity, through individualised personal and structural support;



*Figure Two: Outcome of the LAP*

The outcomes to be delivered are:

- Reduction in numbers of London children in custody and reduced over-representation.
- Reduction in significant over-representation of BME children in custody.
- Improved outcomes for children through reduced custody and the psychologically informed approach (reduced recidivism, improved mental health, improved employment related skills and pathways to employment).

These outcomes will be delivered through achieving the project objectives:

#### Objectives

- Reduce numbers of children in custody both on remand and sentence to address over-representation of London children in custody
- Reduce numbers of children from BME background in custody, both on remand and sentence, to address significant disproportionality
- Reduce overall costs to public sector
- Improve outcomes for children through a psychologically informed approach
- To reduce re offending

This will result in key benefits as below:

- Improved outcomes for children
- Reduced disproportionately high level of children in custody from London and over-representation of BME children
- Improved collaboration in pan-London commissioning

*Figure Three* depicts the most recent timeline of the LAP;

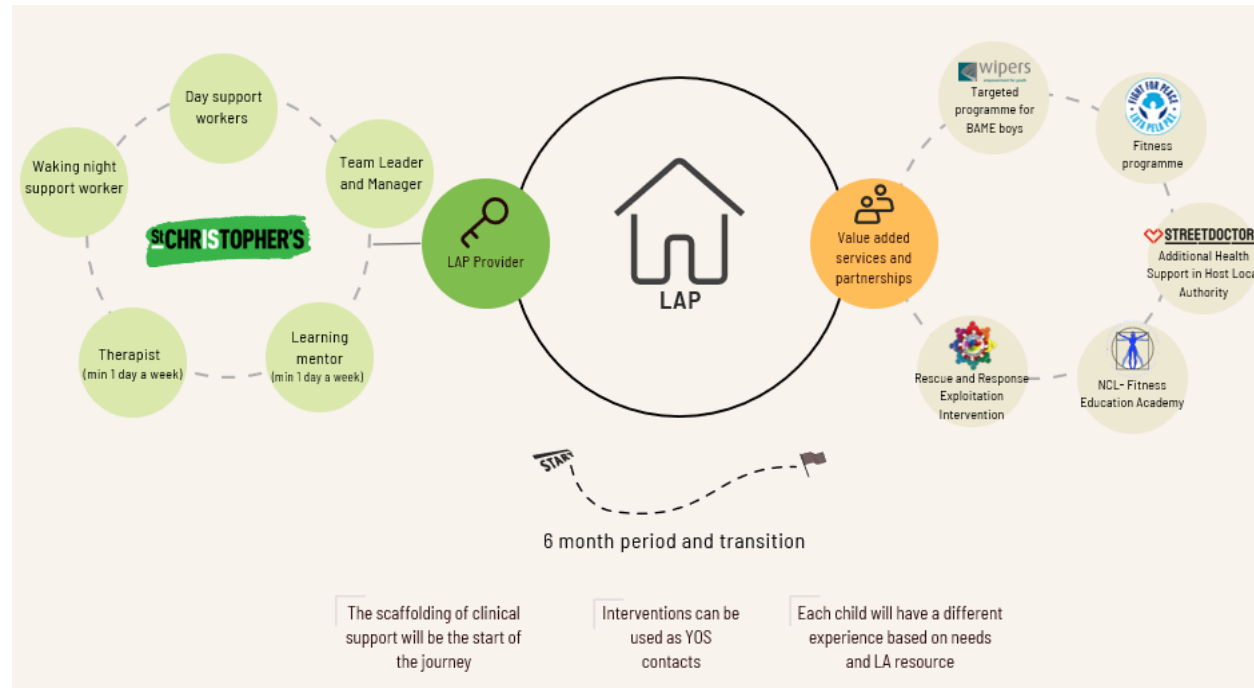
# LAP HIGH LEVEL KEY MILESTONES



Figure Three: Amended timeline for the LAP Project and Evaluation

The LAP follows the Child First approach. This is the guiding principle for the youth justice sector and its realisation is prioritised by the YJB. This approach is research-led which, in the context of the LAP, means: Placing the needs of a child first in a developmentally-focused way; taking a constructive approach, including highly supportive relationships, to the child's shift to a prosocial identity, including; collaborating with children wherever possible; and, diversion away from criminogenic stigma (Case & Browning, 2021). Germane to the LAP, Child First principles are not restricted to the justice sector; rather, they are applicable to interventions with all children. Consequentially, their enactment is dependent upon effective collaboration across all services concerned with children. For the LAP, collaboration is between health, education, social care, youth justice and other allied service providers. A unique feature of the LAP, at least within London, is a new sub regional joint commissioning framework by participating local authorities. The YJB business plan states they will create impact by: "Influencing policy and decision makers to choose an evidence-based Child First approach, prioritise prevention and diversion and invest in support for children to prevent offending and make communities safer." The LAP is mentioned explicitly in the business plan, which highlights the importance of this intervention: the LAP will "Deliver a psychologically informed alternative to custody which will reduce the number of children in custody from London. Provide supported housing for up to five males in one location. The children will benefit from integrated multi-disciplinary support services, within a setting that is safe."

Integral to the LAP is the support programme that it delivers to participating children. This includes two individualised stages designed to support children in their individual shift from their extant individual pro-offending identities to personalised pro-social identities. The first stage provides personal support led by the commissioned LAP provider (St Christopher Fellowships) and, furthermore, directs the structural support delivered in the second stage. Other commissioned organisations will provide support to the child to enable them to identify their personal pro-offending narrative, strengths and goals, prospective pro-social identity and a route plan for their move towards realisation of their individual target identity. Collaborating services offer individualised structural wrap around support, including mental health support, leisure and fitness, life skills etc., in the second stage of the programme. All of which can be seen in the LAP Model:



Whilst outside the scope of this evaluation, it is relevant that, as well as the LAP's core support mechanisms, there are some other provisions also available to the children. In addition, some upskilling activities for professionals have taken place, variously across participating boroughs and the city at large, to complement the LAP and to increase awareness of best practice more generally.

The range of the following examples of such activities highlight the complexities involved across the criminal justice system and in implementing this mandated change to the rehabilitation of children:

- **Wipers Youth CIC:** Piloted a mentoring programme for children subject to bail conditions within the youth justice system across 12 Local Authorities. This took place in year 3 of the pathfinder and up to 15 children benefitted. The final report has been published on the YJB resource hub and can be accessed via this [link](#).
- **Youth Justice Legal Centre:** They were commissioned to provide bespoke bail and remand court training for London's Youth Justice Services (YJS) practitioners and managers, which focused on upskilling court practice in the context of relevant legislative changes and best practices. Up to 100 YJS staff were trained during year 2 and 3 of the LAP.

- **Listen Up Research:** were commissioned to provide a combination of Webinar-based awareness training and in person training for senior leaders and operational staff across Youth Justice, Custodial Estate and Health services on the concept of ‘adultification’. Up to 110 staff received this training which is currently being evaluated by MOPAC.

By the term ‘adultification’ we apply this to a context in which a young black person is being treated as an adult, and not as their actual status of being a child (Antolak-Saper, 2020).

## Evaluation

The evaluation specification is for an impact evaluation following the guidelines set out in the Magenta Book (HM Treasury, 2020) – Central Government Guidance on evaluation - for the purposes of learning and accountability. The evaluation was commissioned in September 2022, in anticipation of the first children arriving on the LAP in October 2022. The agreed research questions for the evaluation are:

- Have the objectives of the LAP been met?
- To what extent has there been an impact on the outcomes for children?
- What aspect of the LAP programme has been most effective?
- What aspect of the LAP programme has been least effective?
- What improvements could be made to the programme?

(Evaluation team presentation to LARP, 2022)

## Approach

The Magenta Book provides research-led Central Government Guidance (Guidance) on impact evaluations. This evaluation follows the theory-based approach advocated within the Guidance, adopts its terminology, and is also informed by the Evaluation Infographic (see Appendix 1). The Guidance describes impact evaluation as a test of changes that have occurred, including their scale, and an assessment of the extent to which these are attributable to the intervention. It emphasises the importance of placing what it calls the Theory of Change – how the intervention is intended to work – at the heart of any evaluation. The Theory of Change for the LAP is that children living in supported accommodation who receive personal support and individualised structural support will shift their extant pro-offending identities towards pro-social identities; thereby, building desistence.

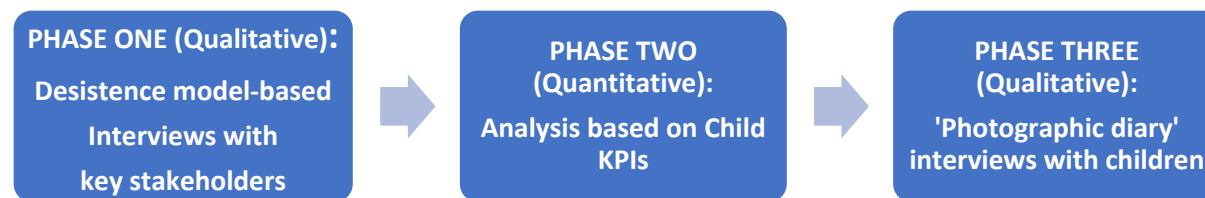


In order to identify a suitable framework for enabling theory-led evaluation design, as recommended by the Guidance (p23) for impact evaluations, a review of the literature was conducted. Previous work indicates that children's motivation is key for successful rehabilitation of children (Hagell, Hazel & Shaw, 2015) which is predictable based on the broader literature on training. For example, Colquitt, LePine & Noe's (2000) meta-analytical model explains that training motivation (motivation to learn during an intervention) is pivotal for an intervention to succeed in delivering its intended learning outcomes and, in turn, for the application of learning beyond the training environment (transfer of training). This model provides a useful framework for this evaluation because it explains the main factors that drive training motivation. These consist of two main direct proximal factors, valence and self-efficacy, and one main indirect – distal factor, organisation climate. Valence is the learner's perception of the desirability of the intended outcomes of the intervention (Mathieu & Martineu, 1992); in this case, the child's sense of potential benefit from developing a pro-social identity. Self-efficacy is the learner's self-belief in relation to a target attainment here, and the child's belief in their own ability to move towards a pro-social identity. And, finally, climate is the learner's perception of the prevailing attitudes within their social environment (Tracey, Tannenbaum and Kavanagh, 1995) and perceived favourability of adopting target behaviour (Ford, Quinones, Sego & Sorra, 1992); for the LAP child, the attitudes of the people around them towards pro-social behaviour and the child's perception of the benefits of adopting a more pro-social identity in their future lives. The model also explains how post-training self-efficacy as a direct predictor is, alongside other non-training related factors, for the application of learning beyond the training environment. Usefully, the model also explains non-training related factors predictive of application of learning outside the formal training environment. These include locus of control, conscientiousness, anxiety and climate, all of which are highly pertinent to the LAP support programme and to the children's out-of-house behaviour whilst in the LAP which, itself, will inform their learning whilst on the programme.

A steering group was set up to provide advice needed by the evaluation team. In addition regular meetings were held with the LAP Strategic Development Manager.

#### Originally proposed evaluation design

In order to address the evaluation questions, a mixed methods approach is used to explore the evaluation questions, thereby providing both the rigour of analysis of quantitative data and the richness of qualitative analysis. In order to explore the perspectives of those involved, variously, in implementation and delivery as well as the perspectives and experiences of the children themselves, the original design consisted of three phases:



*Figure Four:* Evaluation team presentation to LARP, 2022

### Response to changing situation

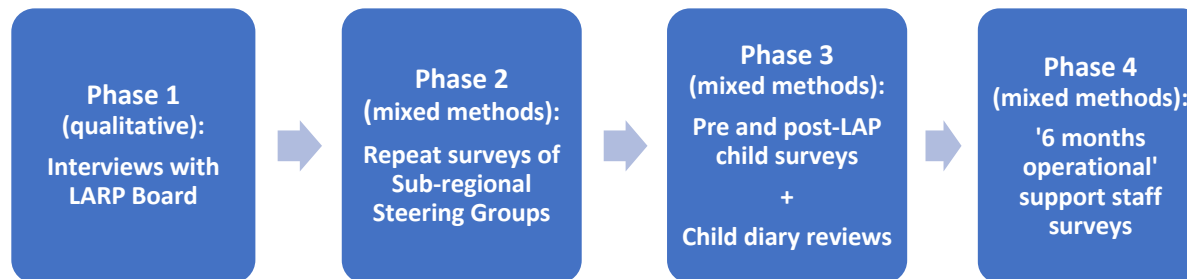
The original completion date for the evaluation was the end of financial year 22/23, with child level data collection due to take place during the period October 2022 to January 2023 (Evaluation team presentation to LARP, 2022). Unanticipated difficulties in the procurement of suitable properties due to availability and planning difficulties across participating host local authorities led to a decision by the LARP to reduce the supported accommodation provision to two ‘properties’ across two subregions (comprising of 12 Local Authorities). As well leading to the reduction in scale, these difficulties resulted in protracted delays to commencement of delivery. Consequently, the LAP expressed to the evaluation team its concern to avoid learning from dealing with the challenges in implementation being wasted. Additionally, the evaluation team became aware of the availability of an alternative source for accessing children’s personal experiences on the LAP as this was co-created with the children in the LAP. Subsequently, the LAP agreed to evaluation team’s suggestion that a slight extension to the scope of the evaluation, in particular venturing part way into process evaluation, would allow property acquisition-related learning to be captured. This was achieved at no additional cost and without jeopardising exploration of the core evaluation questions by exploiting the, newly discovered, more cost-effective options for obtaining information directly from the children via their personal diaries.

### Revised evaluation design

Process evaluation, as described in the Magenta Book, typically involves examining the pathways by which a policy is delivered and, similarly, the activities involved in an intervention’s implementation. In particular, it is concerned with whether an intervention is working as intended, whether its various elements – individually and collectively – are working and to what extent, and why. Ultimately, in common with its impact equivalent, the purpose of process evaluation is to capture learning and accountability for informing future development and decision-making.

The revised design is generally unchanged from that set out in the evaluation team's original proposal. It retains a robust mixed methods approach and continues to involve the collection and analysis of both quantitative and quantitative data. However, its scope is slightly extended to include light touch process evaluation elements and it uses some alternative data collection tools. Notably, the replacement of photographic diary-based interviews with the children with child surveys and child LAP Planner allows quantitative measurement of changes in the children's views. It also provides the additional benefit of reducing the numbers of unfamiliar people that the children are asked to meet as they navigate their likely stressful early days on the LAP; thereby, militating against the risk of jeopardising their early progress. Furthermore, as part of the revised methodology, the evaluation team introduced further methods of data collection: The interviews with the LARP Board; the survey with the sub-regional groups, conducted at different stages of the project; and the survey with operational support staff. The LARP Board interviews and sub-regional group survey were designed to measure satisfaction with the process and gather feedback as the LAP continues to evolve; and, the staff survey to capture first hand experiences of programme delivery. By conducting these interviews and surveys, the evaluation team aims to gain a deeper understanding of how the LAP is perceived at the governing, sub-regional and operational levels and to identify any areas that require improvement. These surveys are important components of the evaluation, as they provide valuable insights into the programme's effectiveness and allow the team to make data-driven recommendations for future development.

The four phases are represented below:



As previously mentioned, the delay in the schedule has meant that only Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the evaluation could be conducted. The following Stage 3 and Stage 4 half of the evaluation will be conducted once the children are established within the properties in each sub-region.

All data collection tools were designed by the evaluation team, approved by the LAP, the Ethics Committee at Middlesex University and conform to the ethical standards of both the British Psychological Society and the Health and Care Professions Council and, similarly, to the guidance of the British Sociological Association.

## LIGHT TOUCH QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE PROCESS EVALUATION

7.1 Phase One: In-depth interviews with Governing body

7.2 Phase Two: Repeated surveys of Sub-regional Framework Steering/Operations Groups

## QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE IMPACT EVALUATION

8.1 Phase One: Quantitative analysis of Child Key Performance Indicator data

8.2 Phase Two: Surveys of frontline service providers

### Qualitative analysis of LARP Board interviews

The interviews were designed to explore the general perspectives on the LAP held at governing body – LARP – level in respect of the four quadrants of the evaluation infographic: The set-up of the LAP; Sub-Regional Framework; Outcomes for Children; and Cost Benefits and Research. Five members of the Board were interviewed by members of the Evaluation Team. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and took place virtually using the communications platform Zoom. Using this platform, it was possible to download the transcriptions from the interviews. These were checked by the evaluation team before being uploaded onto the thematic analysis platform Dedoose for coding analysis. The structure for the coding was based on a loose coding structure based around the questions. Beyond this the process of coding was inductive as the codes were developed as the themes emerged (Soiferman, 2010).

#### Set-up of the LAP

The first phase of questioning focused on the journey of the LAP set-up, the challenges faced, how the LAP is expected to work and the thinking behind it, both the strengths and weaknesses of the LAP, whether children and parents were consulted and finally, whether the respondents might have done anything differently upon reflection.

### Background to the Initiative

When asked to describe the history behind the LAP, four out of the five Board members focused on the need for an alternative type of accommodation from custody that was previously lacking. They explained aspirations for the LAP to reduce the high rates of children in custody, especially black males who are currently massively over represented.

There was a different perspective also applied to the journey of the LAP and this was taken from a more viable business model development. Whereby the participant discussed the set-up of the LAP from the notion of developing a sound model that was sustainable and viable to achieve success. It is important to note that there were some discrepancies relating to the transparency of progress in the LAP set-up. For example, the securing of housing and the stage of planning permission approval.

### Challenges to the Set-up

Participants all agreed that the biggest challenge in the set-up of the LAP related to the securing of the LAP properties. The delay in the acquisition of suitable, and approved housing units, was significantly under-estimated. So too was the process of obtaining planning permissions to essentially convert buildings into suitable supported accommodation for the children. It is important to note that the properties identified as being suitable for the children are local authority owned which meant that a significant proportion of the initial engagement took place with the local authorities. This engagement involved the exploration of what properties were suitable from the ones held in their property portfolios.

There were several additional factors that impacted on the acquisition of the properties, these included: the willingness of communities to accepting a housing facility for children who were viewed as being a risk to their communities, the area in which the property was proposed, and the risks of increasing vulnerability posed to the children.

It was voiced that some of the main barriers to securing properties and planning permissions was down to a significant degree of community resistance and a lack of willingness amongst local authorities to take ownership of such a project in their area.

*“Nobody wants to actually own it and drive it. Apart from a few people, a few honourable exceptions that’s why we’ve got the places open in Barnet.”* [PARTICIPANT 4]

There were several suspected reasons for this resistance, which were based on misjudged perceptions of risk, with a potential for there to be more political motivations.

Housing that was identified or offered for usage was occasionally determined to be in areas where there was an existing crime or gang related prevalence. Meaning that any supported accommodations in that area would increase the risk and vulnerability posed to the children staying in the property.

There were also some associated set-up challenges that related to identifying and meeting thresholds for access to the programme.

*“You create places and they’ll be filled but it might not necessarily be filled by children you would put in custody. They might be just below the threshold. I spoke about this with a colleague and getting this right in terms of suitability thresholds will be really difficult to put that into practice.”* [PARTICIPANT 1]

Indicating that this needs to be something that is clarified to a greater extent should this programme seek to be sustainable for those children intended to benefit from its use.

#### How the initiative is expected to work

When asked how this intervention is expected to work, four out of the five participants, highlighted that the main objective was to increase pro-social behaviour that was sustainable after the children left the LAP. In addition to this, the participants voiced that the goal for this process of reintegration to be an important stage in continuing prosocial behaviour after their stay at the supported accommodation has ended.

*“The other aspect is how it’s expected to work after that period of support accommodation, when the children move on. Not thinking of this just as a place to stay, but a place to stay while something else happens which changes the things that are happening in a young person’s life which reduces the risk of further offending, but also, increases the likelihood of successful reintegration. So, thinking about employment education, training thinking about social networks, the support needed for a pro-social behaviour.”* [PARTICIPANT 1]

It was acknowledged by the majority of participants that the intervention is expected to develop pro-social behaviours through the provision of high-quality wrap-around support, supplied by the LAP provider St Christophers Fellowship. Support which is trauma informed. This is being ensured by training provisions for all those engaging with the children who have potentially been victim to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and sensitive to how those experiences manifest in anti-social behaviours.

*“That means that you are understanding about adverse childhood experiences (ACES) the impact of trauma, the behaviour that children display because of trauma, and also culturally competent and sensitive. We’ve invested in training across the system.”* [PARTICIPANT 3]

The objective for the way in which the intervention is expected to work, and the roles of those implementing the support framework, are clear due to the professional practice experience of those delivering it. Which is a key component to the success of the LAP and one of the acknowledged strengths in its set-up.

### Strengths of the LAP

When the participants were asked what they perceived to be the greatest strengths of the LAP no singular theme emerged. All respondents regarded the greatest strengths of the LAP as its proactive targeting of negative factors on the prospective child participants' lives. These included;

- the increase of self-regulation,
- a decrease in deviant social learning behaviours, including peer influence,
- it prevents, or deconstructs, criminal identities by separating the children from their criminal ties to those who may exploit them
- to provide a viable alternative to custody.

The social environment within the properties was seen as very important in the provision of wrap-around care for the children:

*"It's a small home with a plan. It's got 24-hour support with additional types of interventions delivered by organizations with a good degree of experience of working with these children."* [PARTICIPANT 2]

And:

*"It's small, so there will be a small number of young people living together in a highly supported environment. And we think that will increase the likelihood of them successfully moving on from the accommodation. I think it's a real strength that it sets out a viable alternative to the courts."* [PARTICIPANT 1]

Another important strength mentioned by participants was the opportunity to reduce the negative effects of trauma on the children's lives by providing well-informed support.

*"These are children. It's about being incredibly mindful of what has happened to these young people before they even reached this point. About tracking what that journey might have involved, and the potential safeguarding risks to them. What other interventions have already happened, and what trauma they may have faced."* [PARTICIPANT 5]

A final theme is the LAP aim to reduce the over-representation of black boys in the secure estate;

*"I think I've said you know it's about making sure that we know the overrepresentation. Seventy-three percent of children ... in custody. We need to challenge that. And this is an alternative to custody. It can help and support some of those children into to these kind of provisions."*  
[PARTICIPANT 3]

### Weaknesses of the LAP

Regarding perceived weaknesses of the LAP set-up, the predominant theme raised by the participants relates to challenges around the implementation of the project itself. Specifically, the housing accommodation and the time taken to identify suitable properties obtain planning permissions for the change of use of the building, and the resistance from local communities.

These factors were all intrinsically tied as the time taken to identify suitable housing for the children was largely dependent on whether local authorities would permit the change of use and minor errors that were made in the classification of the building's usage. This in turn caused community tensions regarding the LAP and would have a negative impact;

*"A massive headache was actually getting one of them through planning permission. The first time around I think we made some mistakes about the of type of planning that was applied for. It essentially said it was a prison. So, when the neighbours were told we were building a prison next to them, that did not go down well."* [PARTICIPANT 2]

A factor that played a significant part in the community response to the planning permission application related to the characteristics of that community. It was suggested that this wasn't considered as much as it should have been;

*"Different constructs exist in each of the different areas, meaning that if we wanted to do one in each quadrant it's not as simple as that you think it would be. There are politics that play in each of those communities. We need to be really mindful of how different communities operate in different parts of the of the boroughs, who are the people involved? If we, if we thought it would be simple, we were kidding ourselves."*  
[PARTICIPANT 5]

Another factor that was raised by one participant related to the willingness of local authorities to invest in the future of the LAP. If the LAP is deemed viable then for the intervention to continue there would be a requirement for local authorities to financially invest. A factor which posed a "difficult sell" when there is no guarantee that they will use any of the bed spaces that they are paying for. Regardless of whether there is a significant saving in comparison to the costs of keeping a child in custody. Sustainability is therefore dependant on this investment agreement.



### Collaboration with Children

Despite a clear indication from the project management team regarding the fact that there was an engagement with children over the last three years, not all participants were aware that children had been involved in the design of the LAP and highlighted the importance of listening and responding to what children regarded as important. Further to this, the views of children were used in the recruitment of the development team, and throughout the entirety of the LAP design, which included the housing and the programme design.

### Involvement of parents

No respondents were aware whether or not parents of the target child group had been consulted as part of the design process.

### Reflection on what the Board might have done differently

The most common theme that emerged about possible alternative actions by the Board, with the benefit of hindsight, related to temporal issues. Firstly, unanticipated lengthy planning permission processing; secondly, staff changes and related weaknesses in knowledge sharing; and thirdly, earlier engagement with partners and politicians.

Participants viewed the planning permission stage as being significantly time costly to the project. This has been discussed previously in the findings but the participants made recommendations for ways in which these delays could have been avoided. One participant believed that, should the project be repeated again, time could have been saved if suitable housing was identified by the local authorities with existing planning permissions for similar usage. Another tied factor relating to this is that, by identifying properties with existing degrees of permissions in place, there would be less community-based oppositions. By engaging with local partnerships and politicians at an earlier stage, this too would avoid opposition and time loss. It was also added that a better insight into the processes and procedures would have helped the team foresee some of the requirements that lay in the road ahead.

The second most commonly discussed theme relating to staff changes and poor knowledge was tied to time management also. Over the three-year period in which the LAP set-up has been building there has been the natural turnover of partnership members. According to one participant, one of the time related challenges was caused by new members of staff being inadequately informed of progress and actions required.

*“But of course, we forget that staff turnover even at the most senior level. We are consistently and constantly sending out updates and messages then halfway through the program, realizing I’ve got this director of children’s (DCS) service that hasn’t got a clue what we’re talking about, because I’ve not engaged because they weren’t a DC’s when we started.” [PARTICIPANT 5]*

### Sub-regional framework

Under this heading participants were asked questions that related to the sub-regional steering/operations groups, the stakeholders and the sub-regions that were involved in the set-up of the LAP.

#### Identification and development of the LAP sub regional Steering Group

This question explored how the members of the steering group were identified, brought together, and whether this approach proved to be effective in the implementation of the LAP. When questioned, only one of the participants was unable to answer this question, the remaining four interviewees provided a broad level of discussion in their responses. Essentially the consensus was that the steering group was established out of a framework that already existed as a London sub-regional services structure. Whilst a mapping exercise was undertaken, there was already a strong awareness of who needed to be on the steering group. The level of knowledge and expertise brought to the group was an important factor that enabled a shared degree of motivation towards the success of the LAP as all members recognised the importance of purpose.

As per the Terms of Reference provided by the LAP project management team there are two distinct LAP steering groups (North Central London and East London) who meet on a monthly basis. The Steering Groups also served as an important support for the LAP Strategic Development Manager getting external groups, such as different local authority departments, to increase momentum:

*“So, if there’s been not just resistance, but like a lack of urgency in a particular authority that’s been able to come back and talk to me, or to the board, or to the directors in the area, and say, I need your help now. I need to go and talk to somebody and just remind everybody about why this is important.”* [PARTICIPANT 1]

#### Most important facets of the Steering Group

Similar to the responses for the previous theme, the participants viewed the most important facets of the Steering Group being the breadth of representation held by its members. It meant that there were key members such as local authority children’s commissioners, Youth Justice Service managers and brokerage/placement team managers who were able to get requirements actioned and bring to the group a range of perspectives. This level of expertise meant that it was possible to have some very honest conversations that was a benefit to all:

*“They’ve got the right players at the meeting, so they’re the people who not only understand the project, but are also able to take back to their organizations if there are barriers, problems, or challenges. So that’s always been a really good flow up and down which I think we’ve all benefited from as well.”* [PARTICIPANT 3]

By having a Steering Group made of key representatives from children's services there was a sense of rigor in their approach, as all members were continuously motivated by a shared moral purpose with the children being at the forefront of all actions and deliberations.

### Rationale behind two Sub-regions

This was clearly understood and viewed by all participants that the rationale behind the two sub-regions was due to those locations being the only two in which properties could be secured. An issue which was not anticipated to be such a protracted challenge:

*"The property after the huge search, and the original kind of false start with Barnet, I think the recognition that finding a property would be such an enormous challenge to us. I don't think we originally thought it would be the challenge that it is that it has been so the 2 that have been chosen are where the property became available, and it looked like there was real feasibility to go with them."* [PARTICIPANT 5]

And:

*"But we've essentially taking a pragmatic decision to back winners where we we've been unable to, identify in a timely way at suitable accommodation in the other in the other areas."* [PARTICIPANT 1]

### Why the location of the properties was chosen and what challenges were faced

The locations of the properties were very much dependent upon factors that have already been raised in the discussion around the rationale for the chosen sub-regions. The participants stated that the locations of the properties were chosen due to their availability, the ability to obtain planning permission without any community resistance, and finally, depending on the crime level in that area as the children would be vulnerable to risks in the immediate environment. There was a considerable amount of lessons learnt in this process of managing the challenges. The first being the importance of identifying property that does not require a change of use in the planning application. This was specifically the case for the property in Barnet which took nearly 12 months to complete once a suitable property was identified. In contrast to this, the Newham property was a significantly easier planning process as it took 6 months in comparison.

The participants identified that an integral part to identifying and securing suitable properties was the need for increased transparency with local communities.

*"It's about you being upfront and open, I think it's about continuing engagement with residents and listening to their concerns. Yeah, and responding to them appropriately and making them feel that it is a part of their community. And you know every communities got people who need these homes. How is the community to do that in a way which doesn't have detrimental impact on the neighbourhood. I think it's reasonable for residents to want that."* [PARTICIPANT 4]

### How the wrap around support is set up to ensure the LAP's success

All of the participants believed that that level of wrap around support for the children has been effectively set-up to ensure the success of the LAP. This belief was based on several factors. The most commonly regarded reason was due to the partnership expertise of St Christophers Fellowship, health Support provision and commissioned services to support the children's wellbeing. Key to this is the continuous evaluation of the children's support plans which will be shaped as the children progress through the programme.

*"I think that the range of things that are lined up, the range of support and educational programs as well as the right type of staff. There's going to be an element of suck it and see, isn't there. You know we've not done this before, so I think for us, it's being really in tune to what the challenges are as they arise, and not being caught on the back foot by them. But also, being clear of what's in place, why it's in place, and what else might be needed to wrap around support and make it hold."* [PARTICIPANT 5]

### Outcomes for children

This third phase of questions focused on intended outcomes for children, in terms of both learning outcomes produce by the LAP programme, outcomes for the children beyond the LAP in their later lives and outcomes for communities and society more generally.

### Reason the LAP is a positive alternative for children

The purpose of this question was to identify why the participants viewed the LAP as being a positive alternative to custody for children, but not only that. It is also driven towards the development of pro-social behaviours and having the ability to get some key support. The most discussed theme for this question was that the LAP provided an opportunity for change.

*"If we can get young people into the supported accommodation, we can put that wrap around provision around them, and support them into, all the education training, informed support, and therapeutic support so that that they hopefully will be able to kind of shift their pathway."* [PARTICIPANT 3]

And;

*"This isn't just a place to stay. It's a place to stay with the purpose, and the purpose is making things better for you in the longer term. So, thinking about education, training, employment, suitable accommodation, suitable networks addressing health and mental health kind of challenges, and providing a space to think about what was happening in my life when I was getting into trouble. I've got this opportunity to think about that. How do I reset those things and give myself some agency?"* [PARTICIPANT 1]

As can be seen from these extracts, there is a significant degree of motivation towards the LAP and achievement of its aims, not only for the children but also for society at large.

#### Primary outcomes goals for children

The most commonly discussed outcome goal for the children engaging with the LAP was that it would provide an opportunity for change, enabling the children to obtain a break from some of the harmful cycles and relationships in their lives and have the opportunity to work towards a pro-social attitude and think about an alternative way of being;

*“These are children who are pretty well entrenched in cycles, behaviours and peer groups, which are really difficult to break from. And I think this provides something of a sort of a fire break, you know, as to reset and in recessing really think about that, different choices, different narrative for themselves, about who they could be and what they could be and how they want to live.”* [PARTICIPANT 4]

And also;

*“That they can get on with their lives that and be supported through to the next stage of their life in a really nurturing way that enables them to go on to either educate further education, training, apprenticeships. A life that that offers them a real opportunity and options, you know. Recognizing that you can make right decisions and that your past doesn’t have to mark you forever.”* [PARTICIPANT 5]

Participants viewed the programme goal as being an opportunity to increase life chances, reduce the over-representation of young black males in custody and provide children with the therapeutic support needed to give them a chance to improve their life prospects.

#### Main challenges for a successful outcome of the LAP

When it came to discussing the challenges to a successful outcome for the LAP and the children there were a significant number of factors identified by the Board. There was no singular, specific factor, that was unanimously viewing as being a particular threat to the successful outcome of the LAP. The range of factors included challenges relating to communication between all the partnerships once the children are in the supported accommodation, the potential rise in costs that could occur, and then a significant number related to the vulnerability of the children. The children coming into the supported accommodations were regarded as being victims of a failed system, who are vulnerable and will be arriving at the houses in a state of crisis:

*“First of all, by definition, this group of young people are already in difficulty. You’re working with a group of children who’ve already... well, where things have not worked well to date. So, I think that in itself is a challenge isn’t it?”* [PARTICIPANT 1]

It was also recognised that one of the challenges for the children will be the removal of them from their familiar local area and their peer groups. This will cause the children to arrive in the house with a degree of anxiety in which their ability to manage their emotions will be tested. Meaning that those working with the children will have to anticipate and be hypervigilant to the type of support being offered:

*“They will have these ‘push me, pull you’ moments, and I think that’s going to be an interesting thing about location locality of the unit. Will that young person be able to set up a new network? What does that look like? How do we support that? So, I think there is a lot of unknowns. There will be other challenges for them, and we need to make sure that the right control support is around them for managing that peer draw.”*  
[PARTICIPANT 3]

#### How a ‘Trauma Informed’ environment developed

For this topic, the majority (three out of five) Board members acknowledged that they were not involved in the process of either developing or ensuring that the LAP intervention was trauma informed. However, the remaining majority (three out of five) was confident that staff engaged with the project would have received training in this area, and that their capabilities would be continuously monitored. Despite this, it is important to acknowledge that the LARP slides which have been presented during events, such as the LARP Conference, outline the therapeutic provisions that are going to be provided by St Christophers. These include;

- Safe Homes framework which is adapted from psychiatric wards to create a therapeutically environment of containment
- Psycho-educational support which is offered through training workshops
- Debriefs that are targeted through 1:1 support for compassion fatigue, burnout, vicarious trauma
- Wellbeing that will be measured using Child Global Assessment Scale (CGAS)
- Health Passports that will be used as a “grab pack” as a quick overview of the young person’s needs

#### Most effective way of monitoring risk within the LAP properties

To begin with, it is important to acknowledge that two participants stated that they had no knowledge of how risk would be monitored. Therefore, the responses reflect the perspectives of only three members of the Board. There were three mechanisms for monitoring risks discussed, and these were; the monitoring of community tensions which involve listening to any new concerns raised by the local community once the children were in the houses; through the medium of data monitoring which would take place at regular occurrence throughout the children’s stays, as part of routine monthly returns; and finally, through surveillance which will be 24hrs a day. The response to risk was developed with the LAP steering groups, which was then subsequently embedded into the overarching LAP operational manual which can be accessed [here](#).

### Method of monitoring better health outcomes in the LAP

None of the Board members felt able to answer the question. One did state that there will be a health specialist “On the board”. Again, whilst the participants were unaware of the monitoring processes, this is captured in the YJS monthly monitoring spreadsheet and the young person’s planner which the children will complete with their key worker.

### Cost benefits and research

The purpose of questioning under this final heading was to explore any learning about cost implications of implementation of the LAP so far, not least in relation to sustainability of the LAP and its viability in comparison with equivalent child rehabilitation within secure settings.

### How the LAP is cost effective in comparison to other forms of accommodation including secured settings

For this theme all participants agreed that the cost of the LAP is significantly lower than the cost of having a child placed into custody. Not just for duration of their childhood but also throughout their adult lives beyond. There are other factors and other costs that participants viewed as important when considered against the potential harms caused by putting a child into custody, particularly human costs.

*“Ultimately it’s not about the money. The money helps in terms of a saving, but it’s about the cost to the children. If children have the best start in life, and they have the investment that they deserve throughout their childhood, and as they get older into adulthood, they need to be secure in themselves and have resilience.”* [PARTICIPANT 3]

And;

*“You need to take into account when you’re thinking about cost in a broader sense those outcomes that we’re seeking for the children in terms of looking at those that reduce risk, that increased wellbeing. The ability to engage in pro social activities and skills development. All those things which lead them to be better equipped, as future adults that contribute.”* [PARTICIPANT 4]

### The greatest unforeseen cost to the LAP set-up

Three out of the five participants viewed the greatest unforeseen cost to the set-up of the LAP was the delay in the acquisition of suitable properties, due to difficulties in gaining planning permission, local community opposition, and the degree of unknowns that the team have been faced with:

*“I think the greatest unforeseen cost has been the delay caused by the identification of a suitable property, but ones where there was an opposition that led it into the planning process was in itself a labyrinth.”* [PARTICIPANT 1]

Another accommodation delay raised was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, one participant did not perceive there to be any unforeseen cost at this stage in the set-up of the LAP.

### Sustainability of the LAP

It was agreed by almost all participants that the LAP project would be sustainable subject to certain caveats. One Board member was more hesitant and wanted to reserve judgement until delivery was underway. All believed that sustainability was dependent upon several key factors which included; the need for long term sponsorship; centralised management; long term commitment to the initiative; and a collaborative approach.

*“It will be able to keep going on the money, but it needs some centralized management or something with an alongside roadmap.” [PARTICIPANT 2]*

The need for a collaborative, supportive, approach was viewed as necessary to ensure that the programme remains viable post the set up and pathfinder period 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 as this is when the YJB grant expires. There are factors which could destabilise the potential for sustainability and this lies with any potential for increased risk within the supported accommodations. Should any serious incident occur then this would jeopardise the opportunity for the LAP to continue:

*“I think it is. I think it is because I know there’s been really good support with the Youth Justice Board and MoJ. It’s quite a hard thing to walk away from once it’s established. So as long as there’s no horror shows. In which case you would be shut down very quickly. I think it is sustainable but it needs to be carefully nurtured.” [PARTICIPANT 4]*

Financially, the sustainability of the LAP was viewed as being integral to long term commitments from the London boroughs. The reason for this being that local level investment in the LAP is only sustainable for a limited time period. Long term it will require some form of cross-borough investment to provide sustainability:

*“Oh, I’m very optimistic. It’s back to the cost benefit of doing it in terms of that lifetime cost. It’s got to be. I guess, there’s another element. As long as we have those long-term commitments from each of the boroughs, because they see this as an appropriate viable and worthy thing to be investing in. Then yes, I think it is.” [PARTICIPANT 5]*

### Summary of interview findings

SUMMARY
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1.	The participants perceived the strengths behind the concept of the LAP to be the ability to keep children out of custody, an opportunity to increase self-regulation and create separation from deviant social environments.
2.	The perceived greatest challenge the unforeseen time delay in obtaining planning permission, usage of the property and the willingness of the local communities to have such a property within their neighbourhoods.
3.	Other challenges include the LAP staff facing children in a vulnerable state when entering the supported accommodations and the potential for a significant increase in costs and the continuation of effective communication.
4.	Participants (mostly board members who were not involved in that level of detail in comparison to the sub regional steering groups) lacked knowledge around the level of involvement of children and parents in the development of the LAP, how the LAP was trauma informed, or how the health outcomes of the children will be evaluated and monitored. Not all participants were aware of how risks to the children would be monitored.
5.	The greatest unforeseen cost was the delay access to the properties, and the cost of making the supported accommodations suitable for habitation based on Health & Safety guidelines when converting them.
6	Participants felt that it is important to include the voices of the parents, for those children engaging with the LAP
7.	Participants viewed the LAP as being sustainable, but this was dependent on a centralised approach to management and the long-term commitment from all boroughs in relation to the contribution to costs. Sustainability is dependent upon several key factors which include the need for long term sponsorship; centralised management; long term commitment to the initiative; and a collaborative approach.

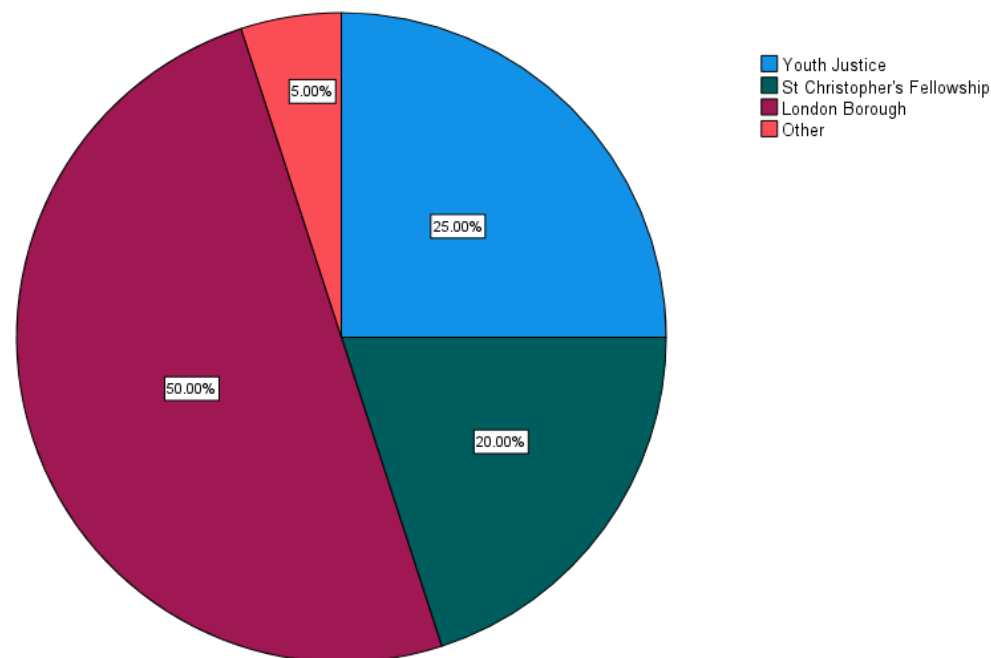
## Quantitative and qualitative analysis of Pre-delivery survey of Sub-regional with Steering/Operations Group

A survey of the two Sub-regional steering groups members was used to explore their pre-delivery views on: the LAP as an alternative to custody; its prospects for success in delivery of the personal support stage; and prospects for successful engagement of children in the structural support stage. The survey (see Appendix 3) contained a series of 16 questions, each consisting of a set options to choose from and a space for explanatory narrative responses. The survey will be used as the basis for comparing the steering groups' intuitive pre-delivery views on the LAP with their later delivery-informed views. Currently, due to delays in delivery of the LAP, a more limited mixed-methods analyses has been conducted to explore the steering groups' intuitive views on the LAP based on their responses to the Pre-delivery survey:

### The Respondents

Twenty (66%), out of a possible 30 individuals answered the survey (see Graph 1 for a breakdown of participants). Of those answering, 50% reported they would have no direct involvement with the children, 40% stated they would and 5% were not sure.

Graph 1: What organisation or borough do you represent?



### LAP as an alternative to custody

Almost three quarters (70%) of the respondents believed that the service was different to other alternatives to custody programmes that they had worked on, whilst 25% were not sure. Of those that were not sure, the majority (75%) had never worked on child offender programmes before.

The majority of respondents (55%) believed that roughly half of referrals to the LAP would be endorsed at the LAP multi-agency referral meeting stage of the child selection process which takes place before the child's court hearing, 40% thought more than two thirds would be endorsed and 5% thought less than one third would be endorsed.

The explanations of those who believed 'roughly half' of LAP placements would be granted revealed cognisance of factors beyond individual child characteristics relevant to endorsements, particularly limited availability of places and inter-child and inter-gang related risk (n=9):

*"The only reason for saying half is that we can anticipate to have more children referred at once and only so many spaces can be endorsed."* [Respondent 1]

*"The risk matching for young people with each other will need to be carefully considered to avoid exacerbating their risk of offending or risk of physical harm through gang associations/reprisals."* [Respondent 12]

In contrast, the explanations offered by those who believed 'more than two thirds' would be granted suggested their decision reflected their beliefs about the merits of the endorsement process:

*"We would only refer those that meet the criteria to avoid rejection."* [Respondent 20].

Overall, it seems that there is optimism within the Steering Groups about the suitability of the referral process. However, there is also a recognition that endorsement decisions may be determined by factors beyond a child's personal suitability, for example demand for places and child compatibility.

Half the respondents (50%) believed that at least two thirds of placement applications will be granted by the court, 45% thought roughly half would be.

The narrative responses indicated a belief that the courts were aware and confident in the endorsement stage of child selection:

*“Court are fully aware of the LAP and are on board to consider proposals put forward by the YOS ...”* [Respondent 3])

And:

*“Court want to use custody as a last resort ... I also believe that the court have confidence in our proposals and are willing to try something different with a view to avoiding unnecessary custodial options.”* [Respondent 9]

When asked about the greatest challenges they had encountered in their role, three quarters of respondents reported one or more challenges in their Steering Group role, while the remaining 25% reported that they experienced none.

Amongst the explanations of those experiencing challenges, delay in provision of accommodation was mentioned by 53% of participants:

*“Patience, waiting for the properties to be ready for us to start our work”* [Respondent 14]

And:

*“planning permission delays”.*

The impact of delays in the provision of accommodation seems to have been a major challenge within the steering group, regardless of individual members’ operational roles.

#### Prospects for success at personal support stage

A four-part question set out to explore steering groups’ views on the prospects of success in each of the four steps in the personal support stage of the programme.

All the respondents were confident that the LAP would be able to identify the children’s pro-offending narrative. The majority (95%) of respondents were confident that whilst developing the support plan the LAP would be able to identify the children’s strengths and goals, personal pro-social identity and route plan for developing a pro-social identity, while 5% were unsure.

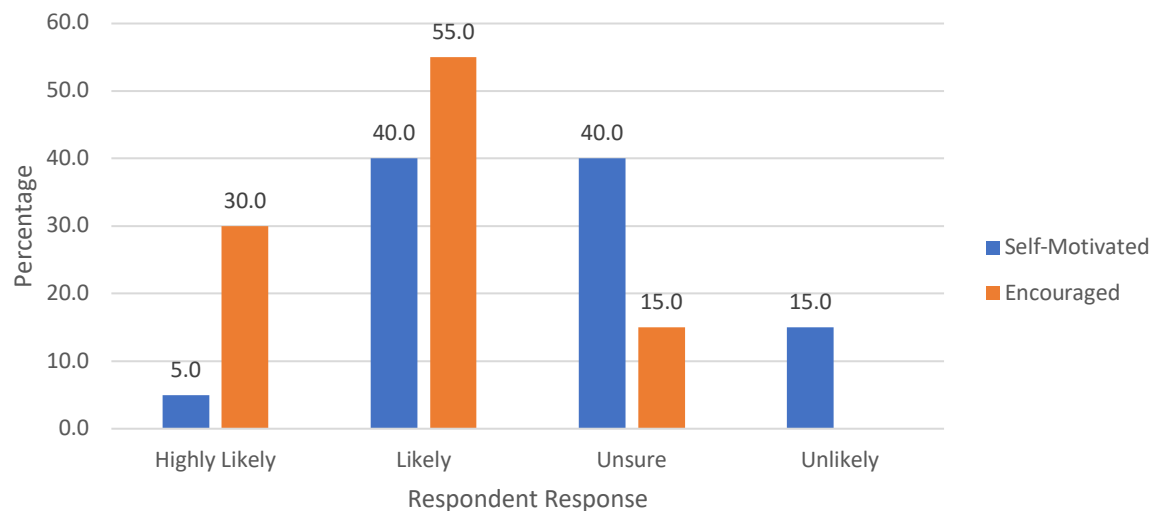
#### Prospects for success at structural support stage

##### *Child engagement with education activities*

The respondents thought it was significantly more likely that children would be encouraged by staff to engage in education activities than to be self-motivated. Almost half the respondents thought that the children would be self-motivated to participate in the educational opportunities

provided by the LAP, whilst 15% thought this unlikely. However, 85% thought that the children could be encouraged to participate in the educational opportunities and no-one thought this was unlikely (see Graph 4).

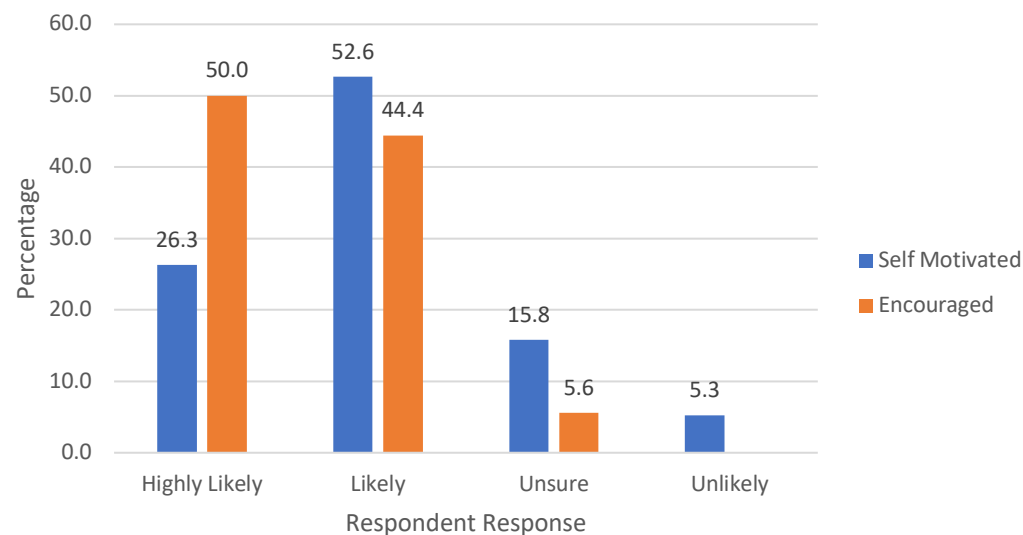
Graph 4: How likely are the children to be self-motivated vs. encouraged to take part in educational opportunities



#### *Child engagement with leisure activities*

The respondents also thought it was significantly more likely that children would be encouraged by staff than they would be self-motivated to engage in structured leisure activities. Over three quarters of respondents thought that the children would be self-motivated to take part in the structured leisure activities, whilst approximately 5% thought this unlikely. However, almost all respondents (95%) thought that children could be encouraged to participate in structured leisure activities, with a similar proportion being unsure (see Graph 5). Additionally, respondents believed that the children would be significantly more likely to be self-motivated towards structured leisure than education but that they were equally likely to be encouraged to take part in structured leisure and education ).

Graph 5: How likely are the children to be self-motivated vs. encouraged to take part in structured leisure



#### *Prospects of improving children's health and wellbeing*

The steering groups were invited to provide their views on the likelihood that the LAP would improve the children's wellbeing and mental health.

Ninety percent of respondents believed that the LAP will improve the children's wellbeing and mental health, 10% were unsure. Eighty percent of respondents believed that the children will shift towards a pro-social identity as a result of their participation in the LAP, with 20% unsure. However, 70% believed that the children would be self-motivated to continue their journal to a pro-social identity after the LAP, but 30% were unsure.

Overall, these results reflect that the steering groups are optimistic that children selected for participation will engage with both education and structured leisure activities and that the staff will be able to successfully encourage the children's engagement.

#### *Most helpful support provisions*

The steering groups' were asked to share their views about which of the support provisions would be most helpful for supporting the children's shift to a pro-social identity

Explanations were provided by eighteen respondents and from those only one unifying theme emerged which is strong relationships between each child and their support worker/s ( $n=10/18$ )<sup>1</sup>:

*“Strong relationships with workers who they can identify with and feel they can rely on.”* [Respondent 14]

And:

*“simply listening and being there and unpicking identity as a whole.”* [Respondent 1]

This seems to suggest that regardless of the merits of other support provisions – many were mentioned within the responses – the steering groups are united in their belief that strength of relationships between the child and their support worker/s that will be instrumental in the shift in identity.

#### *Staff challenges*

The steering groups views on the greatest challenge likely to be faced by staff providing support to the children. All respondents answered this question. From amongst the many and varied potential staff challenges identified by the steering groups only one theme emerged which is difficulty in securing child engagement ( $n=6$ ):

*“Getting young people to engage with the LAP placement intervention process”.* [Respondent 2]

And:

*“... Its their impression of themselves we have to change, and people generally do not like changing their identity”.* [Respondent 6]

This seems to suggest that the steering groups’ feel that staff motivating the children to engage with the programme will be central to the children’s shift in identity which, notably, reflects pertinent empirical research.

#### *Weakest element of the LAP*

The groups opinions on the weakest element of the LAP were also explored.

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<sup>1</sup> N represents the term ‘number’. In this instance the numerical value is telling us that 10 out of 18 respondents held this predominant view.

Half of the respondents indicated that it was too early for them to express a view in relation to potential weaknesses of the LAP and the remainder revealed no common ground. Nonetheless a singular response seems especially noteworthy:

*“The emphasis on fitness comes at the expense of a formalised emphasis on the arts. We will seek to off set this by purchasing music, drama and art sessions for young people who identify strongly with creative areas.”* [Respondent 10]

This is the only response which relates to an absence of a recognised therapeutic tool, the others all concerning adequacy or relative merits of LAP provisions. It also seems to reflect a response approach to implementation and delivery of the programme.

#### *Main In-house risk*

All respondents provided an answer to this question, albeit one simply expressed lack of qualification to answer. It emerged that the steering groups’ felt that negative influences between children housed together is likely to be the main In-house risk to the LAP achieving its aims ( $n=12/19$ )<sup>2</sup>:

*“A group of children from similar backgrounds may reinforce each others negative view of themselves as “offenders”. ”* [Respondent 6]

And:

*“Peer pressure and holding on to the identity they wish to project.”* [Respondent 14]

And:

*“possible conflict with others or being around others who are not ready to make positive changes”* [Respondent 20]

This suggests that steering groups recognise the important of a constructive climate within the houses but also recognise that this may be difficult to provide.

#### *Out-of-house risks*

The groups were invited to share their views on the greatest out-of-house risks to the children

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<sup>2</sup> Twelve out of the 19 respondents held this predominant view.



From their responses, a unifying theme of risk from the negative influence of characters outside the LAP emerged ( $n=16$ )<sup>3</sup>:

*“A young person still active in committing criminal offences in the community, paranoia of being attacked by rival enemies”* [Respondent 15]

And:

*“local area issues such as serious youth violent groups, grooming and exploitation.”* [Respondent 13]

This seems reflective of steering groups’ acute awareness of the risk to LAP children when they are outside the houses and the risk to vulnerable children transitioning from safe to unsafe environments even for relatively short periods of time.

#### *Challenges for children in adapting to the LAP*

Finally, the steering groups were asked what they perceived as the greatest challenges facing children in adapting to the LAP. One almost unanimous theme emerged which was adapting to an unfamiliar regime and new people:

*“a sense of isolation. Possibility of feeling overwhelmed by the amount of different professionals in the house. Different young people in place.”*

And:

*“Understanding that if they mis behave they could face a custodial remand. Children will be anxious about court date and sentence as it is likely they would be facing custody (otherwise they would not be in the LAP)”*

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<sup>3</sup> Sixteen participants held this as a predominant view.

## Summary of survey findings

SUMMARY	
1.	Respondents were optimistic about the suitability of the referral process. However, there is also a recognition that endorsement decisions may be determined by factors beyond a child's personal suitability, for example demand for places and child compatibility.
2.	Whilst respondents were optimistic about the proportion of applications to the courts being granted but less confident than they were about the prospects of endorsement at the LAP Multi Agency referral meeting stage.
3.	The majority (75%) of respondents reported challenges in their Steering Group role all of which related to the delay in provision of accommodation.
4.	All the respondents were confident that the LAP would be able to identify the children's pro-offending narrative. With 95% being confident that whilst developing the support plan the LAP would be able to identify the children's strengths and goals, personal pro-social identity and route plan for developing a pro-social identity.
5.	Participants were significantly confident that the children could be encouraged to proactively engage with the educational and leisurely activities being run by the staff. In addition to this, 80% believed that the LAP would develop a pro-social identity by being in the houses and engaging in the activities.

## Concluding comments

From these initial findings, it is possible to conclude that participants perceived the London Accommodation Pathfinder (LAP) to have several strengths, such as its ability to keep children out of custody, offer an opportunity for increased self-regulation, create separation from deviant social environments, and route plan for developing a pro-social identity. However, they also identified challenges to the LAP's effectiveness, particularly regarding supported accommodation. Obtaining planning permission, the usage of the property, and local community willingness to have such a property in their neighbourhoods were cited as potential obstacles.

However, there were challenges in terms of the endorsement of referrals and placement applications, and uncertainties around the willingness of children to participate in educational and structured leisure activities. Interestingly, those who worked directly with the children were generally more confident in their beliefs about the success of the service.

Additionally, the participants identified the vulnerable state of the children entering the LAP supported accommodation as another challenge for the staff to face. These children, who have been failed by the system, are likely to be in active crisis and vulnerable. Furthermore, the potential for a significant increase in costs and the need for continued effective communication were also identified as potential challenges.

At board level, some participants' lack of knowledge about the level of involvement of children and parents in the development of the LAP, how the LAP was trauma-informed, or how the health outcomes of the children would be evaluated and monitored was another notable finding. Not all participants were aware of how risks to the children would be monitored.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the challenges, the participants viewed the LAP as a positive project as it offers promising alternatives to custody for children, but its success is reliant on effective management of the supported accommodations, and long-term financial commitment. Further, stakeholders should be adequately informed and engaged in the LAP's development, and those measures put in place to ensure the safety and well-being of the children in the program are regularly reviewed. It is also recommended that the voices of the parents, for those children engaging with the LAP are included.

As the LAP continues to be implemented and evaluated, it will be important to address the challenges identified by respondents, particularly around endorsement and participation, and to ensure that the needs and perspectives of both children and staff are considered. Nonetheless, the results suggest that there is a general belief in the potential of the LAP to make a positive difference in the lives of vulnerable children.

Responses to the questions around trauma and risk responses could indicate that information needs to be shared more frequently to all of the multiagency partnerships. This is not due to the information never being shared, more to the turnover of staff that has been experienced over the last three years.

In development from this initial stage of evaluation into the set-up of the LAP it is essential that we progress into exploring the experiences of those at the heart of the project, the children. The second phase of the evaluation will focus on a combination of the children's voices, through their planners which will be completed monthly and thematically analysed by the team, as well as the data reports that will be completed by the children's YJS practitioners.

## Summary of recommendations

- The LAP should focus on effective management, supported accommodation, and long-term financial commitment for success.
- Stakeholders should be adequately informed and engaged in the LAP's development.
- Regular reviews should be conducted to ensure the safety and well-being of children in the program.
- Include the voices of parents whose children are engaging with the LAP.
- Address challenges related to endorsement and participation, considering the needs and perspectives of both children and staff.
- Share information more frequently with multiagency partnerships, considering staff turnover.
- Progress into exploring the experiences of children at the heart of the project.
- The second phase of evaluation should involve analysing monthly thematic analyses of children's voices and data reports completed by YJS practitioners.

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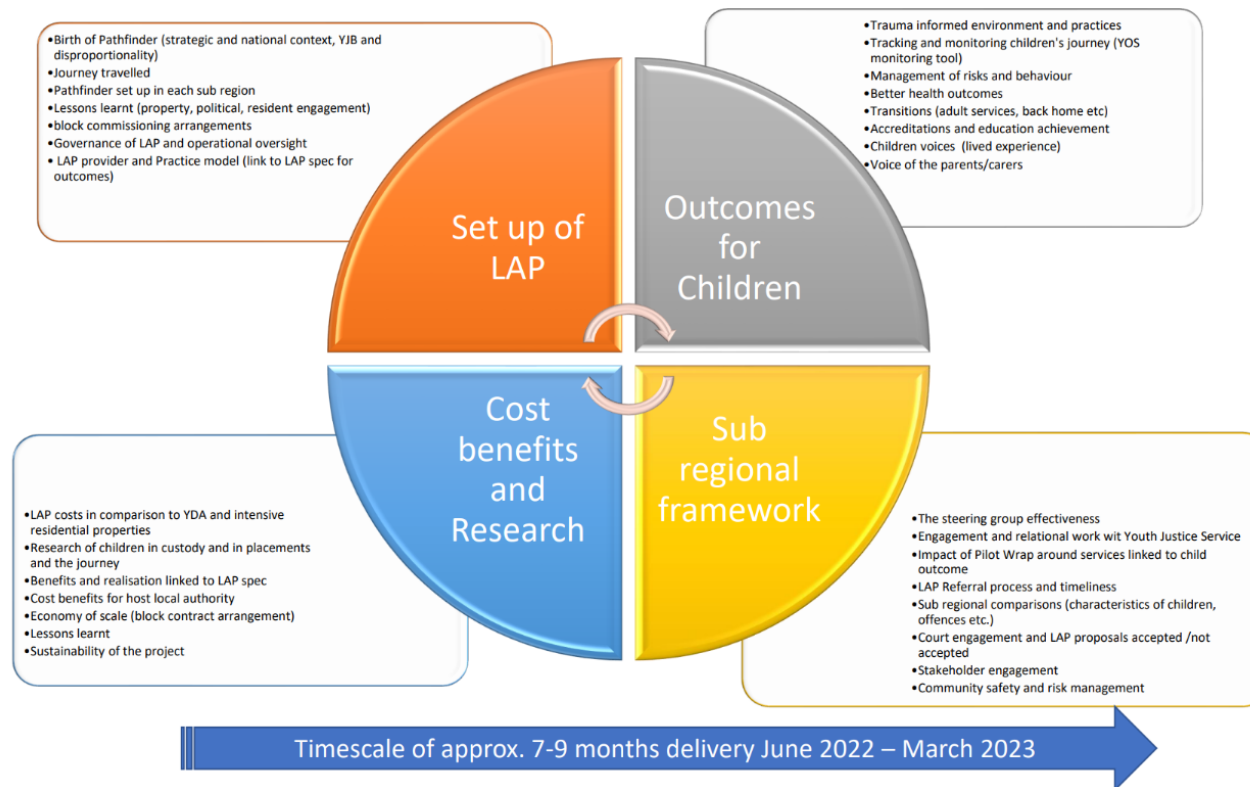
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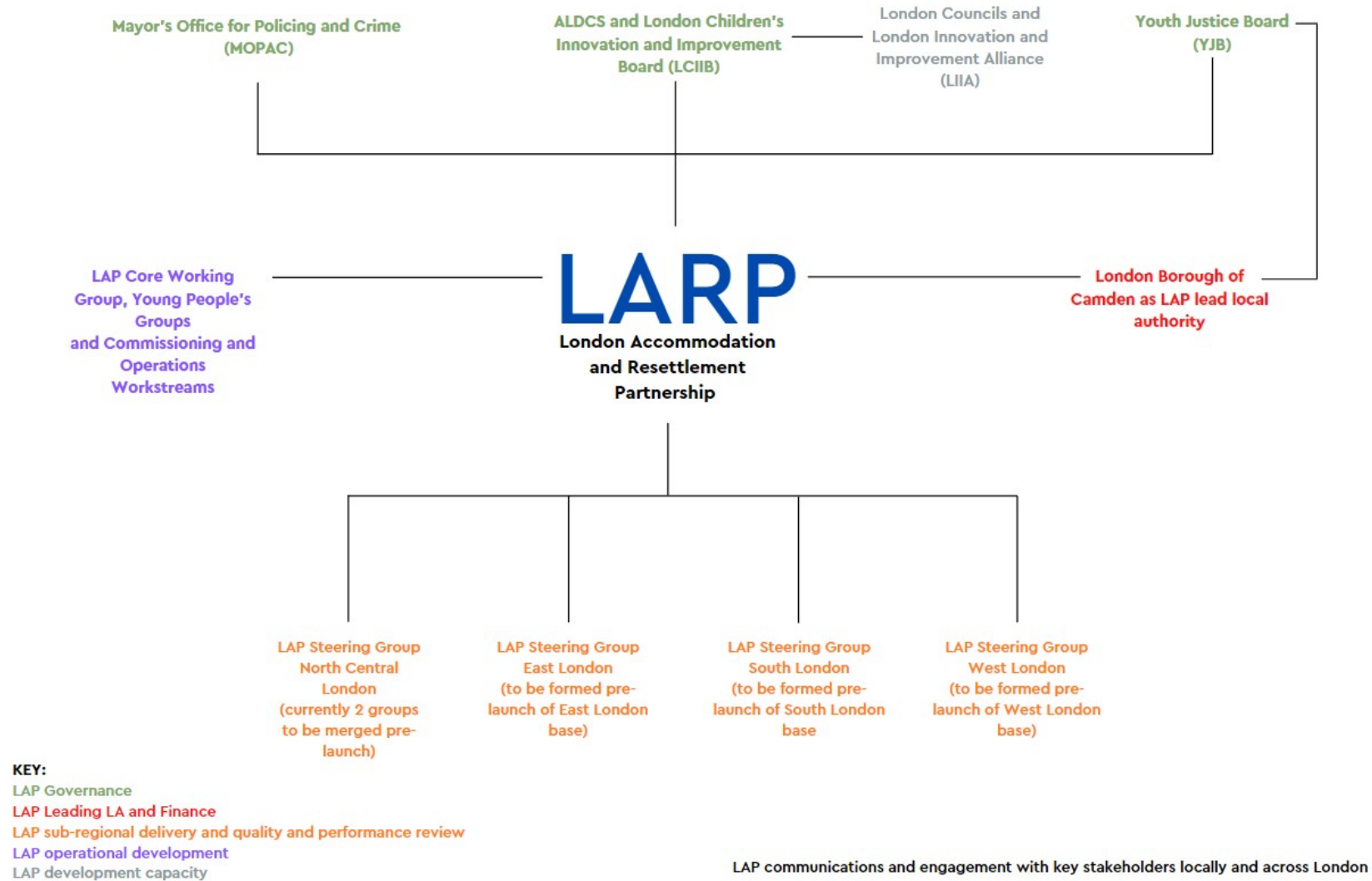
## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: Evaluation Infographic





## Appendix 2: LARP Structure





## APPENDIX 3: LARP Board Interview Questions Stage 1

### SET UP OF THE LAP

1. Can you take us through the journey of the LAP development?
2. What were the greatest challenges in the design process? How did you overcome these challenges?
3. How is the intervention expected to work and what is the evidence that supports this thinking?
4. What do you perceive to be the strengths in the design/set-up of the intervention? Why?
5. What do you perceive to be the weaknesses of the design/set-up of the intervention? Why?
6. Have the children been involved in the development of the lap. If so how?
  - a. What was their feedback?
  - b. Did you make any amendments based off this?
7. Did you involve the parents/carers of those children engaged in the LAP, if so how?
  - a. What was their feedback?
  - b. Did you make any amendments based of this?
8. If you had the opportunity to repeat this process what would you do differently, if anything?

### OUTCOMES FOR THE CHILDREN

1. Why is this programme a positive alternative for the children?
2. What do you envisage as being the primary outcomes goals for the children engaging with the programme?
3. What are the main challenges for successful outcome of this intervention? Why?
4. How did you develop a trauma informed environment and practice approach to tracking the children's journey?
5. How did you determine the most effective way of monitoring risk behaviours within the LAP housing?
6. How did you determine the most effective way of monitoring better health outcomes within the LAP?

### COST BENEFITS AND RESEARCH

1. What would render the LAP cost effective in comparison to the Youth Detention Accommodation and the alternative intensive residential properties?
2. What has been the greatest, unforeseen, cost to the set-up of the LAP so far?
3. Is this model, as it has been designed, sustainable?

### SUB-REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

1. We understand that there are a lot of stakeholders and groups involved in this programme, how were these groups identified and brought together? Has this proven to be effective? Why?
2. What are the most important facets of a steering group in effectively contribute to the set up of the LAP?
3. Can you explain why these two specific subregions were chosen?
4. How were the locations of the housing chosen and what obstacles did you face in their set-up within these regions?

5. Do you believe that the wrap around support needed for this LAP to be successful is in place? Why? And how have you ensured this?

## APPENDIX 4: The LAP Steering Groups Questionnaire

### MANAGER QUESTIONS

No.	Question	Question Type	Expansion Box?
Q1	What is your role in the development of the Supported Accommodation?	Text Box	NO
Q2	What organisation or borough are you representing?	Text Box	NO
Q3	How long have you been employed in your current role?	Text Box	NO
Q4	Do you anticipate having any direct involvement with the children participating in the Supported Accommodation?	Text Box	NO
Q5	How does the design of the Supported Accommodation compare to other (child focused) programmes that you have worked on?	Very Alike - Very Diff	YES
Q6	What proportion of referrals to the Supported Accommodation do you anticipate being endorsed (as opposed to rejected) at the Joint Agency Meeting stage of the child selection process?	Volume options	YES
Q7	What proportion of Supported Accommodation placement applications do you think will be granted by the court?	Volume options	YES
Q8	<b>How confident are you in the ability of the Supported Accommodation to identify...</b>	<b>Matrix</b>	
	A child's pro-offending narrative in the development of a support plan	Highly Likely - Highly Unlikely	YES
	A child's strengths and goals in the development of a support plan	Highly Likely - Highly Unlikely	YES
	A child's route plan for developing a pro-social identity as a part of their support plan	Highly Likely - Highly Unlikely	YES
	A child's personal pro-social identity as a part of their support plan	Highly Likely - Highly Unlikely	YES
Q9	<b>Based on your experience of similar children, how likely is it that...</b>	<b>Matrix</b>	
	The children will be motivated to participate in the education opportunities provided by the Supported Accommodation?	Highly Likely - Highly Unlikely	YES
	The children could be persuaded to participate in education opportunities provided by the Supported Accommodation?	Highly Likely - Highly Unlikely	YES
	The children will be self-motivated to participate in structured leisure activities (Boxing/fitness etc) provided by the Supported Accommodation?	Highly Likely - Highly Unlikely	YES

	The children could be persuaded to participate in structured leisure activities (boxing/fitness etc) provided by the Supported Accommodation?	Highly Likely - Highly Unlikely	YES
	The Supported Accommodation will improve the children's wellbeing and mental health.	Highly Likely - Highly Unlikely	YES
	The children will shift towards a pro-social identity as a result of the Supported Accommodation.	Highly Likely - Highly Unlikely	YES
	The children will be motivated to continue their journey to a pro-social identity at the point they complete the Supported Accommodation.	Highly Likely - Highly Unlikely	YES
Q10	<b>What do you consider the likely most helpful support provision for the children in their shift to a pro-social identity?</b>	Text Box	NO
Q11	<b>What do you think is the greatest challenge facing In-House staff providing support to the children in their individual shifts to their personal pro-social identities?</b>	Text Box	NO
Q12	<b>What do you consider to be the weakest element of the Supported Accommodation for supporting children's shift to a pro-social identity?</b>	Text Box	NO
Q13	<b>What do you anticipate as being the greatest In-House risk to the children's shifts to a pro-social identity?</b>	Text Box	NO
Q14	<b>What do you anticipate as being the greatest Out-of-House risk for the children's progression to a pro-social identity?</b>	Text Box	NO
Q15	<b>What do you consider to be the greatest challenge for the children in adapting to the Supported Accommodation?</b>	Text Box	NO