

# *Sunbeams*

**ASCEND**  
for a thriving third sector

## **Rays of Hope**

A Sunbeams project, 2023-2026

Funded by London Propel (Deliver and Develop Grant)





# Rays of Hope

2023-2026

## The need for the programme

Orthodox Jewish (OJ) girls face barriers to emotional wellbeing support, including stigma, cultural barriers to accessing services, waiting lists and limited access to trusted early-help provision.

## About Rays of Hope

- Delivered between April 2023 and March 2026
- Funded via a London Propel Deliver and Develop Grant (The Mayor's Fund for London/The National Lottery Community Fund)
- Aim: to strengthen the emotional wellbeing, confidence and resilience of vulnerable OJ girls aged 10-16 in City and Hackney
- Objectives: to expand the scale of mentoring support available to girls, along with the organisation's capacity to influence wider systems surrounding them, including families, schools and local mental health services
- External evaluation with A5cend Ltd, 2025-6

# Rays of Hope

## The Headlines



### The need in the community

Orthodox Jewish (OJ) girls in North London face barriers to emotional wellbeing support, including stigma, cultural barriers within mainstream services, waiting lists and limited access to trusted early-help provision.

### What Sunbeams delivered

- 01 Culturally competent, non-clinical early-help support to 500+ girls** and often their families through a combination of mentoring, group activities and increasingly systems work with schools, families and local partners.
- 02 Mentoring** 200 +mentors delivered 21,092 sessions of 1:1 mentoring and 1,198 sessions of activity-based group mentoring with small groups of peers.
- 03 Youth voice** A new Youth Network empowered 60 girls annually to share experiences and shape services

# Headlines (continued)



- 04 **Culture change in schools** The Mental Health Network of 22 Charedi schools and the IWAS whole-school programme in 5 schools improved school leadership and wellbeing cultures
- 05 **Cross-coordination** Sunbeams worked closely with community organisations and statutory services to improve referral pathways and better coordinate support
- 06 **Strategic learning**  
The evaluation highlights the value of early-help models that combine individual mentoring, peer connection and systems work. Community organisations play an important role in improving girls' access to earlier, culturally-competent support and strengthening collaboration across services to benefit the whole family.

# Programme strengths

- Culturally competent: led by women with lived experience, delivering trusted, stigma-busting support
- Non-clinical and preventative: early relational support stabilised girls before difficulties escalated to crisis
- High-quality relationships: consistent, attuned mentors
- Flexible support options: 1:1 or group mentoring, or both, or the keyworker service - with easy pathways between
- Systems-level reach: strengthened schools, families and statutory partnerships, with onward referrals up 59%
- Youth voice at the centre: girls' experiences directly shaped school programmes and service design
- Community capacity building : nearly half of trained volunteer mentors moved into paid community roles



# OUTCOMES FOR GIRLS & FAMILIES



## Girls & Young Women

- **97%** of 127 respondents felt happier since starting Sunbeams
- **94%** said sessions made them feel calmer
- **76%** reported increased confidence
- **96%** recorded improved life satisfaction in relation to self, school and friendships
- Girls reported reduced anxiety, growing confidence and re-engagement with learning



## Families

- **86%** of 50 parents said daughter was more involved in family life
- **81%** reported things had become calmer at home
- **90%** reported knowing more about where to access help
- Parent self-referrals rose from **1% to 22%** — a sign of growing community trust
- **93%** of parents referred to CAMHS said they would not have sought help independently

# OUTCOMES FOR SCHOOLS & THE WIDER SUPPORT ECOSYSTEM



## Schools

- **100%** of MHN school respondents said training was relevant and helpful
- **85** unique school staff participated in MHN sessions across 3 years
- Staff grew more confident identifying need earlier and responding more thoughtfully
- **All 5 IWAS schools** improved wellbeing audit scores across multiple domains
- At least 2 schools reported a reduction in crisis referrals to external services



## Wider Support Ecosystem

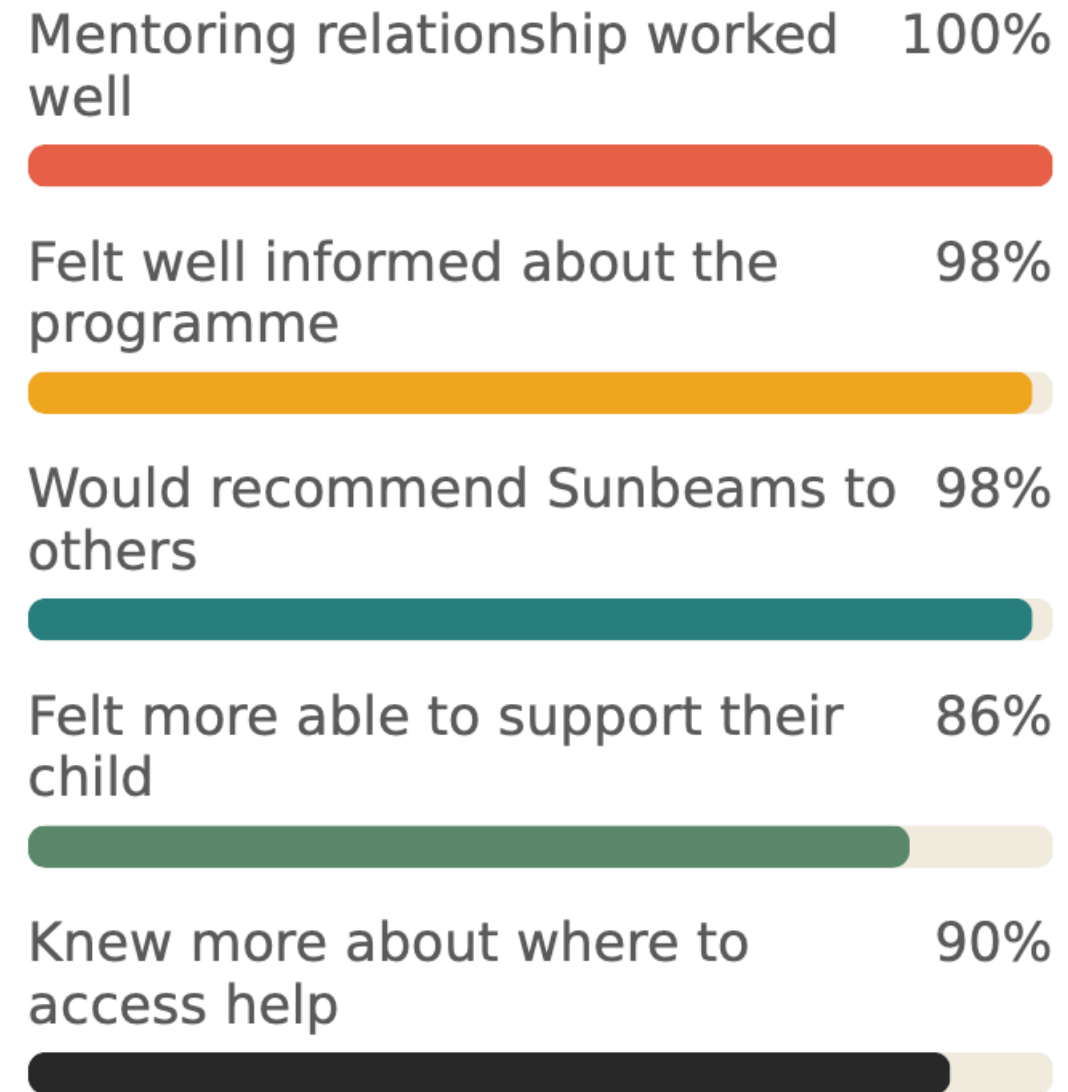
- Onward referrals and signposting rose **59%** (64 → 102 annually)
- At least **45** supported referral conversations into CAMHS from 2023-2025
- Stronger partnerships with CAMHS, First Steps and OJ community organisations
- Sunbeams supported Children Ahead in developing their boys' mentoring programme
- Referrals from First Steps to Sunbeams rose, reflecting growing recognition of the service

# MENTOR, COMMUNITY & PARENT OUTCOMES

## MENTOR & COMMUNITY IMPACT



## PARENT SATISFACTION



## YOUTH INVOLVEMENT OUTCOMES

**174**

girls attended  
180 Youth  
Network  
sessions

**54**

girls served on  
the Steering  
Group across 3  
years

**95%**

of Youth Network  
participants  
reported  
increased  
confidence

**58%**

felt more  
confident to  
speak up at  
home, school or  
with friends

- Girls reported feeling listened to and that their input was taken seriously and followed up on
- Youth Network discussions directly shaped priorities in the MHN and IWAS school programmes
- 7 participants specifically noted improved wellbeing support and staff training in their schools
- Young people flagged concerns about statutory services — informing Sunbeams' supported CAMHS referral pathway
- Steering Group members fed directly into Trustee meetings and programme design decisions
- Youth Network insights led to Sunbeams creating a dedicated upper-floor mentoring room for older girls
- Girls contributed to theory of change development and reviewed evaluation findings



***“We provide mental health services to adults, and very often we see the people who would not be in our system had they been supported by Sunbeams earlier on”***

Local partner interview, 2025



***A WORLD OF A DIFFERENCE! When she comes home from Sunbeams she is happy and calm and relaxed... It gave my daughter a safe space to process her feelings and brought a bit more calm and stability at home.”***

Parent survey, 2025

# Strategic learning

- Culturally competent, free-at-point-of-access provision fills a gap that statutory and private services can't reach
- Early relational support can stabilise girls before difficulties escalate - reducing pressure on specialist services
- Layering 1:1 mentoring, peer group work and systemic interventions produces stronger outcomes than each alone
- Community-led organisations play a unique role as trusted intermediaries between communities & statutory systems
- Volunteer-based models can build community capacity and reduce stigma as well as delivering direct support
- Sustained investment - not one-off funding - is what enables cultural change and systems improvement



# Areas for Development

- 01 Secure funding to sustain and expand mentoring, group programmes and the Key Working strand**
- 02 Procure funding to extend the MHN and IWAS programmes to additional OJ schools**
- 03 Deepen collaboration with statutory services to strengthen referral pathways and culturally responsive mental health support**
- 04 Maintain and develop the Youth Network and Steering Group, with clearer feedback loops to participants**
- 05 Build on growing interest from OJ organisations across the UK to share learning more widely**

