

WEMATTER: RANDOMISED CONTROLLED TRIAL

Intervention protocol

Preferred citation

Victim Support (2026): WeMatter Intervention Protocol. Intervention delivered by Victim Support & funded by Foundations – What Works Centre for Children & Families.

<https://foundations.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/we-matter-randomised-controlled-trial-intervention-protocol.pdf>

Version control

Version	Date of publication	Summary of changes
V1	August 2024	Intervention protocol for the WeMatter pilot randomised controlled trial published
V2	May 2026	Updated intervention protocol for the WeMatter full-scale randomised controlled trial published

The intervention protocol outlines the background to the programme, provides a detailed description of the intervention, and sets out the context for implementation. It also includes an overview of existing evidence and the theory of change. The table below summarises the key points.

This work was funded by the Department for Education, England

Background	
Development, aims and policy context	WeMatter was developed and is run by the charity Victim Support, who designed the service based on the Rockpool CYP Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit.



	<p>As recognised in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children and young people who experience, witness or are exposed to the effects of domestic abuse are recognised as victim-survivors, with access to support services. However, those in need of support are not always able to access services, due to high demand and variability in services available around the country.</p> <p>WeMatter aims to address this gap by providing a specialised online group support that is easily accessible and tailored to the needs of CYP following exposure to domestic abuse.</p>
Intervention description	
Why	<p>Domestic abuse has a significant impact on the social development, mental and physical health and wellbeing of children and young people,</p> <p>WeMatter aims to provide timely support for children and young people to address the impacts of domestic abuse through a digital, group-based support service</p>
Who (recipients)	<p>WeMatter is a recovery service for children and young people (CYP) between the ages of 8 and 17 who have been affected by domestic abuse but are not classified as at high risk of harm and are not currently experiencing harm or living with the alleged perpetrator.</p>
What (activities)	<p>WeMatter is an online, group intervention where trained facilitators lead participants through a curriculum, based on Rock Pool's CYP Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit, and participants are supported in a peer environment. The service lasts 12 weeks in total, comprising of an introductory 1:1 session, ten weekly online group sessions, and a final 1:1 session.</p>
What (materials)	<p>Zoom, CYP Domestic Abuse Recovery toolkit, home tasks, WeMatter session content</p>
Who (provider)	<p>Victim Support.</p>
How (format) and where (location)	<p>WeMatter is delivered online through Zoom, allowing children and young people to access support during the school day or from their family homes.</p>



When and how much	12 weeks, including an introductory 1:1 session, ten weekly online group sessions, and a final 1:1 session.
Tailoring	Groups are formed based on participant's preferred setting and age, to account for the developmental stage of children and young people. WeMatter facilitators adapt materials and resources for sessions to accommodate participant's support needs.
Context of implementation and rollout	
Roll out	Referrals are accepted for eligible CYP across England.
Scalability	WeMatter is available across England.
BAU	In the absence of WeMatter, eligible children and young people will be referred to other relevant services if available. Services include those delivered by Victim Support though provision varies across England, influenced by local commissioning priorities.
Overview of existing evidence	
Impact, implementation and value for money evaluation	There has been one independent pilot evaluation of WeMatter and an internal evaluation conducted by the Victim Support research team. Following the successful pilot evaluation, Foundations have funded a full-scale randomised controlled trial of the WeMatter service.
Theory of change	
Theory of change	The theory of change is detailed in the evaluation protocol and sets out WeMatter's core activities and the mechanisms through which participants experience change. It explains how and why these mechanisms are expected to produce the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes described in the ToC.
Evaluation	



Evaluation Partner	Verian
Evaluation Protocol	https://foundations.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/we-matter-randomised-controlled-trial-evaluation-protocol.pdf

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Background

This section outlines the background to the WeMatter service, including how it was developed, the aims and the policy context.

Research indicates that children and young people who witness domestic abuse are also directly impacted. Findings from CAADA research (SafeLives, 2014) suggests that 62% of the children exposed to domestic abuse were directly harmed, most often physically or emotionally abused, or neglected. The research also found that children and young people exposed to domestic abuse were more likely to display abusive behaviour in the future compared to those who had not been exposed to abuse.

Findings from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Report in 2022 found that less than a third of victim-survivor parents in England and Wales were able to access support for their children (Domestic Abuse Commissioner, 2022). Demand for support services exceeds capacity and many have waiting lists spanning several months, with 26% of providers reporting that they had waiting lists exceeding 1 month. (Domestic Abuse Commissioner, 2022).

WeMatter aims to address this gap by providing a specialised online group support that is easily accessible and tailored to the needs of children and young people (CYP) following exposure to domestic abuse. Many existing support services tend to focus on CYP who require safeguarding due to elevated risk of harm by the perpetrator or due to neglect, inadvertently overlooking CYP who have witnessed or experienced abuse but are not classified as high risk. Unfortunately, this oversight can have significant consequences, as young victims may carry the impact of their experiences into the future, becoming perpetrators or victims themselves (CAADA, 2014). Through Victims Support's extensive work with CYP a lack of provision to meet the needs of CYP affected by domestic abuse was identified. Whilst some areas have access to in-person support, the availability of online support programmes for CYP appears limited. WeMatter aims to address this gap by providing effective digital, group delivery to reach a broader range of CYP affected by Domestic Abuse.

The primary goal of the programme is to provide a safe, peer-supported environment to children and young people and equip them with coping strategies to aid in their recovery. By offering a safe space for exploration in a timely way, in a peer-supported environment, WeMatter aims to help participants understand their experience of domestic abuse, develop healthy coping mechanisms for difficult emotions, and explore healthy and positive relationships. The programme utilises trauma-informed cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) techniques, incorporating activities, games and discussions tailored to each individual's journey.

Programme development

WeMatter was developed by Victim Support (a specialist independent charity service provider), it was launched as a pilot in Devon, Cornwall, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Brent (London) in September 2022, ending in March 2024.¹ The service utilises the CYP Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit developed by Rockpool, the UK's leading trauma-informed recovery service for adults and CYP that have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse.



Recovery Toolkit for CYP

WeMatter draws from the *Recovery Toolkit for CYP*¹, which was developed by Rock Pool Life Community Interest Company in 2009, as a psychoeducational approach to supporting CYP to recover from the negative effects of domestic abuse. The material is written by Sue Penna, CEO of Rock Pool, and is informed by trauma informed cognitive behavioural therapy. Rock Pool's Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkits are the UK's leading trauma informed recovery programmes for children and young people that have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse. It provides knowledge and skills to CYP impacted by domestic abuse as an early intervention to reduce potentially more serious emotional and psychological impacts. As such, its aims are practical, helping CYP to feel safe psychologically, manage their own behaviour and develop healthy relationships. As a trauma-informed approach, there is no attempt to talk about incidents or events that have brought the CYP to the programme, as it was felt that this public disclosure to peers could be potentially triggering and counterproductive.

The CYP Recovery Toolkit was delivered in-person at several locations until COVID-19 restrictions in 2020 created a need to transition provision online. Victim Support worked in close collaboration with Rock Pool Life C.I.C and Sue Penna to develop and deliver the group programme safely and effectively online. The content of the programme was readily adapted with minor adjustments to activities.

The online delivery of the toolkit, the 'WeMatter' programme, was then piloted in Devon and Cornwall, Staffordshire and Warwickshire, and Brent in London from September 2022 to March 2024. Since 2018 Rock Pool have trained over 600 people to become programme facilitators, including the WeMatter team.

Aims of the programme

WeMatter is one of Victim Support's specialist services for CYP which uses Rock Pool's Recovery Toolkit for CYP© to deliver group work via an online platform. By delivering the CYP Recovery Toolkit, it provides support and information to CYP aged between 8 and 17 years who have experienced Domestic Abuse. This experience of Domestic Abuse may include observing abuse of a parent or carer, physical assault or being directly subject to abuse through coercive and controlling behaviours as part of wider abuse in the family. Evidence indicates that witnessing and experiencing DA can have a significant emotional and psychological impact on CYP. This may affect relationships with family and friends, school performance, and can result in behavioural changes. A central element of WeMatter delivery is the recognition of the trauma experienced by CYP in families where DA is present.

WeMatter sessions include a range of activities, games, and discussions to help CYP come to terms with their experiences, develop coping strategies, and achieve positive future relationships with

¹ [Trauma-Informed Practice Resources & Publications | Rock Pool Life](#)



family members and peers. The activities within this programme cover a range of topics including negative automatic thinking; self-esteem; gender roles; safety planning; and healthy relationships.

The expected outcomes of WeMatter are:

- Improved mental wellbeing
- Improved understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Increased increased ability to manage and cope with difficult emotions
- Increased feelings of being supported
- Improved awareness and understanding of safety planning measures

The mechanisms by which outcomes are achieved are detailed in the [theory of change](#) but include:

- CYP can successfully engage with session content and support
- CYP feel supported by peers in their WeMatter groups
- CYP feel safe in the session and have trusting relationships with the facilitators

Policy context

WeMatter pioneers digital, group support service for CYP affected by Domestic Abuse. This digital delivery approach ensures greater accessibility and convenience, enabling CYP to seek support regardless of their location or circumstances.



Intervention description

This section provides a description of the programme, using the TIDieR framework.

Why

Experiencing Domestic Abuse within the home significantly impacts the health and wellbeing of children and young people (CYP), posing significant risks to their emotional, physical, and social development. The landmark policy change in Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 now recognises CYP who witness, experience or are exposed to the effects of domestic abuse as victims, granting them improved access to crucial support services. Still, a nationwide shortage of specialised CYP services creates a ‘postcode lottery’, with services often favouring adult support. This disparity often overlooks the specific needs of CYP and fails to provide them with the necessary support to cope with and recover from their experiences.

Findings from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner’s Report in 2022 found that less than a third of victim-survivor parents in England and Wales, were able to access that support for their children (Domestic Abuse Commissioner, 2022). Demand for support services exceeds capacity and many have waiting lists spanning several months with 26% of providers reporting that they had waiting lists exceeding 1 month. (Domestic Abuse Commissioner, 2022).

WeMatter aims to address this gap by providing a specialised online group support that is easily accessible and tailored to the needs of CYP following exposure to domestic abuse. Many existing support services tend to focus on CYP who require safeguarding due to elevated risk of harm by the perpetrator or due to neglect, inadvertently overlooking CYP who have witnessed or experienced abuse but are not classified as high risk. Unfortunately, this oversight can have significant consequences, as young victims may carry the impact of their experiences into the future, becoming perpetrators or victims themselves (CAADA, 2014). Through Victims Support’s extensive work with CYP we have identified that there is a lack of provision to meet the needs of CYP affected by domestic abuse. Whilst some areas have access to in-person support, the availability of online support programmes for CYP appears limited. WeMatter aims to address this gap by providing effective digital, group delivery.

Who (recipients)

Target group

The target population for WeMatter and children and young people who:

- Are between 8 and 17 years old
- Have been affected by domestic abuse within their parent or carer’s relationship, or within the family home
- Reside in England.

Participants will be ineligible for support if:

- They are still living with the alleged perpetrator and the abuse is ongoing



- If they are younger than 8 or older than 17
- Do not speak English
- After conducting a review with a safe parent or guardian to assess digital competency, the service is not appropriate.

Referral process

Victim Support will continuously recruit CYP through existing WeMatter referral pathways, including schools, GPs, social services, the police, or charities. This is the standard process for referring CYP into WeMatter.

Within 48 hours of referral, a Victim Support triage officer will conduct an initial triage call with the CYP's safe parent/carer. The triage officer will offer the parent/carer the opportunity for their child to participate in the service. At this point, the triage officer will complete the critical discussions risk assessment. This tool considers factors such as exposure to domestic abuse, suicidal thoughts, environment and impacts.

After the initial triage call, the triage officer will send the parent/carer written materials about the intervention. Approximately three days later, a Victim Support facilitator will recontact the parent/carer by phone to confirm that they have read and understood the written materials, and to collect consent.

If participants are not eligible for WeMatter, the triage officer will pass them back to the referrer or will signpost/refer them to alternative support, following Victim Support's standard processes.

The evaluation protocol includes further detail on the consent processes followed in the full-scale trial: <https://foundations.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/we-matter-randomised-controlled-trial-evaluation-protocol.pdf>

What (activities)

WeMatter programme

WeMatter is a ten-session group programme conducted over Zoom, lasting one hour per week. Participants receive one pre- and post-group 1:1 session with WeMatter facilitators, extending the programme to a total of 12 weeks. The programme utilises trauma-informed cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) techniques, incorporating activities, games and discussions tailored to each individual's journey.

Prior to the first 1:1 session, an initial triage call takes place. This call addresses CYP Critical Discussion questions, assesses suitability and address current risks/initial needs, such as ensuring adjustments are identified for CYP with disabilities such as sight impairments.

To qualify for the intervention CYP need to have digital access and competency (with support from a trusted adult if needed). As the intervention is delivered in English, the CYP also have to be proficient in English (which is assessed with the safe parent/carer in the triage call).

The initial 1:1 session includes:



- Digital competency assessment
- Platform familiarisation
- Opportunity for relationship-building with facilitators.

The final 1:1 session following the group section of the programme includes:

- Referrals for 1:1 support following the programme.

The programme is delivered by Rock Pool Life C.I.C trained Victim Support CYP facilitators to groups comprising 8 to 12 children and young people. The minimum groups size for sessions to be considered group work is four CYP.

All modules are mandatory, but participants can speak as much as they are comfortable with during the sessions.

The programme is split up into the following group peer-supported modules utilising Rock Pool's Recovery Toolkit resources that have been developed for an online peer support setting:

Session 1	Introductions Getting to know each other, setting ground rules and exploring what WeMatter sessions will cover.
Session 2	Who's in my family? Exploring relationships with family members and increasing levels of safety.
Session 3	Self-esteem, what is it? Exploring self-esteem, what it means and how domestic abuse can affect this.
Session 4	Why am I here? Exploring what has happened, and how we cope with difficult feelings.
Session 5	Talking positively. Re-visiting self-esteem and introducing positive affirmations.
Session 6	Ways to handle difficult feelings without getting into trouble! Exploring healthy ways to cope with anger and simple relaxation techniques.



Session 7	Healthy relationships and trust. Examining what a healthy relationship looks like
Session 8	Staying safe in relationships. Recognising harmful cultures and strengthening confidence online
Session 9	Ending and future planning Identifying helpful tools and preparing for the future.
Session 10	Celebrations and goodbyes. Reflecting on progress and looking forward with confidence.

Facilitators check in with CYP outside of group sessions to encourage engagement and provide opportunities for reflection. Between sessions, CYP are given non-mandatory tasks, called ‘try it at home’ tasks, designed to help them practice the skills and strategies introduced during the group. This allows them to reflect on what the techniques are like for them, identify what worked well, and seek additional advice or support if needed. This approach ensures that new strategies are not simply introduced and left for CYP to implement on their own, but instead supported through guided practice and ongoing engagement.

The core model remains consistent across all areas, yet the core content is tailored to suit the specific needs and maturity levels of different age groups. In certain circumstances, resources are modified slightly to better meet the needs of CYP with protected characteristics such as disabilities. Closed captions can be implemented where necessary and written materials are sent to participants in advance. Moreover, a co-facilitator is available within the group to provide 1:1 support during group work sessions when required.

What (materials)

To support the effective delivery of WeMatter, a range of resources, materials, and services are required including the Rockpool CYP Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit, Zoom access, training for facilitators provided by Rockpool and Victim Support.

Who (provider)

The intervention is delivered by Victim Support, an independent charity in England and Wales that provides specialist support to victim-survivors and witnesses of crime. The WeMatter team consists of managers, triage officers, administrators, and a group of WeMatter facilitators who engage with CYP and parents/carers, and who deliver the sessions:



- **Area Manager:** Provides strategic leadership and oversight for service delivery, maintaining strong relationships with funders and evaluators to support operational excellence, compliance and contract management.
- **Senior Operations Manager:** Leads the operational delivery of the WeMatter service, ensuring high-quality standards across all functions.
- **Project Leaders:** Ensures effective programme delivery, accountable for increasing the number of referrals into the service and strengthening stakeholder relationships across England.
- **Triage & Early Intervention Officers:** Initial point of contact for CYP accessing support, assessing support needs, initiating engagement and ensuring informed consent for participation in the evaluation and intervention.
- **Service Delivery Assistants:** Supports communication between all key stakeholders, and ensures smooth coordination of pre- and post-course activities.
- **CYP Programme Facilitators:** Responsible for delivering the CYP Recovery Toolkit to CYP, ensuring a trauma-informed and empowering experience throughout the programme. Victim Support have four full time and two term time CYP Programme Facilitators.

All CYP Programme facilitators are accredited by Rock Pool in the delivery of the trauma-informed psycho-educational CYP Domestic Abuse toolkit. Also, every member of the service team (e.g. triage officers, administrators, project leaders etc.) is trained in the toolkit. All Victim Support staff complete mandatory safeguarding training, and the WeMatter team also receive internal CYP training which highlights the risk of engaging in digital support and potential online harms. The Victim Support team also receives additional rigorous training on neuro-divergence, DA, and on gathering insights from CYP focus groups. Victim Support also offers Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities throughout the year for all staff, including CPD from Rockpool.

How (format) and where (location)

WeMatter is delivered online and be available to eligible CYP residing in England. Delivery will build on the successful pilot RCT delivered nationwide in 2023-2025 and an initial pilot before that delivered in 2022–2024 to CYP living in Devon, Cornwall, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Cumbria and Brent.

Facilitators lead a 1:1 introduction session, ten group sessions, and a 1:1 conclusion session. The intervention is delivered digitally through Zoom. The target group size is eight CYP, but there could be groups of up to 12 or down to four. Group members generally remain the same throughout the whole service.

When and how much

The intervention consists of ten weekly one-hour group sessions, delivered by two specialist facilitators trained to deliver the Rockpool Toolkit. All CYP will complete an introductory 1:1 session with their facilitator in the week or two before the first group session. CYP will also have a concluding 1:1 session with their facilitator in the week or two after the tenth group session.



Children and young people who have completed at least six of the 10 sessions are considered to have completed WeMatter programme.

Tailoring

Groups are formed based on CYP's preferred delivery setting (school or home) as well as their age, to account for differences in the developmental stages of the CYP and allow the content and activities in the group sessions to be tailored to age. The default age group cohorts are 8–12, 13–15, or 16–17, although Victim Support may make slight alterations if specific groups are slow to fill.⁵

Facilitators make adaptations to session materials based on the results of the 'all about me' assessment in the introduction 1:1 session to accommodate CYP's support needs (e.g. reading difficulty, autism). Group dynamics are taken into consideration from the initial point of risk assessment during the triage call and are also considered following the 'all about me' assessment. For example, if a CYP has triggers related to loud noises, Victim Support would avoid placing them in a group with another CYP who has additional needs that may cause them to shout unpredictably. Facilitators manage group dynamics initially by establishing a group contract, which sets out expectations throughout the sessions. During the delivery of the service, break out rooms can be offered to CYP who may need additional support—such as taking a short pause from the session or having a brief conversation with a facilitator. Facilitators remain mindful of group dynamics and adapt activities to ensure a safe and supportive environment for all participants.



Context of implementation

This section explores implementation to date, the potential for scalability and what happens in the absence of the model.

WeMatter implementation

Building on referral networks developed during the full-scale trial, WeMatter will continue to be delivered across England.

Victim Support will build referrals through targeted promotion activity (briefings, attendance at local meetings and distribution of service literature).

Delivery will be planned to work around statutory holidays and during the summer six-week break plans will be developed to identify alternative sites for CYP to access to programme if home-based access is not suitable – e.g. out of school or community hubs.

WeMatter will be delivered online and be available to eligible CYP residing in England. Delivery will build on the successful pilot RCT delivered nationwide in 2023-2025 and prior delivery in 2022–2024 to CYP living in Devon, Cornwall, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Cumbria and Brent.

Scalability

The Children’s Commissioner estimates that 830,000 CYP in England have been affected by domestic abuse (Children’s Commissioner, 2020).

The geographical distribution of CYP affected by DA is comparable across England, with local authority rates ranging from 4.89% to 10.4% (Children’s Commissioner, 2024). Higher percentages are observed in cities, while lower percentages are found in rural areas. Victim Support aim to successfully provide WeMatter as a standard, nationwide offer, aiming to reduce waiting lists and eliminate the ‘postcode lottery’ of support currently experienced by CYP.

Through online group delivery, WeMatter has the potential to reach more CYP at a lesser cost than traditional in person 1:1 support models. Multiple groups of up to 12 participants can be run in parallel and early internal evaluation findings suggest many CYP welcome the opportunity to be in a group environment with peers who are not local to them. Designed as a group programme, WeMatter aims to alleviate the high demand for services supporting CYP affected by DA, presenting a cost-effective solution to this supply and demand issue. However, the online-only format may limit scalability to those children and young people with access to a device and internet at home, or who can access a device at school.

WeMatter is currently delivered in English only. Victim Support currently do not provide course content translated in other languages, but this has been considered for future rollout.



Business as usual

Services for children and young people

Victim Support has 59 services providing direct support to children and young people affected by crime and traumatic incidents. This specialist support is delivered both in-person and via technology, offering children and young people 1:1 support, access to group work programmes and peer support opportunities, as well as universal prevention and awareness sessions. Victim Support's services are designed to provide high-quality support, to identify and reduce risks, to recognise and build upon protective factors, and help young people increase their levels of resilience. These 59 services include:

- **Multi Crime Services** – Services providing support to children and young people who have experienced a wide range of crime and traumatic incidents, including domestic violence and sexual abuse. These services are broad and open to children and young people regardless of the type of crime they have experienced.
- **Domestic Abuse Services** – Services providing support to children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse. This could be abuse in their own relationship or abuse in the home (i.e. parent/carer's relationship). Some services also provide support to young people who have experienced domestic abuse and have started to display their own abusive behaviours. Commissioning of services to support children affected by DA (Domestic Abuse) varies across England. CYP currently affected by Domestic Abuse may receive support via Social Services or Early Help partners, but support to address longer-term impacts is variable, driven by local commissioning priorities. CYP may seek support via GP or CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) for mental health interventions but again access and thresholds for support will vary across England.



Overview of existing evidence

This section aims to explore the existing evidence in line with the three overarching strands of the evaluation. This helps ensure the evaluation is grounded on what is already known. It provides information on what the intervention is intended to change and in which direction, to guide the selection of primary and secondary outcomes, hypotheses to be tested and expectations around timing and dosage of effects. The evidence has also been used to develop the theory of change.

Summary of previous evaluations

There have been two evaluations of the WeMatter service to date. An internal Victim Support evaluation conducted between November 2022-July 2023 and external evaluation commissioned by Foundations-What Works Centre for children and families, conducted by Verian in 2024-2025.

Internal evaluations

Victim Support has delivered WeMatter since September 2022 and an internal evaluation of the WeMatter pilot, was undertaken by Victim Support's Research Team between November 2022 and July 2023.

The internal evaluation found that in the first six months of WeMatter accepting referrals, the service received a total of 172 valid referrals for CYP needing support – 100% of these CYP were contacted within 48 hours of their referral being received. WeMatter successfully engaged with 169 of these CYP (98% engagement rate), and 123 (73%) CYP went on to access the group programme.

Outcomes in the internal evaluation were measured using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales (SWEMWBS), plus an additional survey question on CYP perceptions of improved sense of safety.

Independent evaluation of the WeMatter service

Supported by the Evaluation Accelerator Fund, which is managed by the UK Cabinet Office's Evaluation Task Force, Foundations commissioned Verian to conduct an independent pilot evaluation of WeMatter.

The pilot evaluation consisted of a pilot randomised controlled trial (RCT) and an implementation and process evaluation (IPE). The focus of the pilot was not on providing robust estimates of impact but rather on trialling methods that would help inform the design of a full-scale RCT, while providing some indicative evidence about the impact of the intervention.

The pilot showed that WeMatter is promising and worth testing at scale. It demonstrated that a full trial is feasible with adjustments, and early findings suggest that the programme has the potential to improve children's mental wellbeing. As expected for this pilot, the relatively small sample size and some data quality issues with the endline data means that we cannot conclude that changes seen in the outcomes were caused by the programme. A larger trial will help us determine the effect of the programme. Full findings from the pilot trial are available here:

<https://foundations.org.uk/our-work/publications/wematter/>



Based on the findings from the pilot evaluation, Foundations commissioned Verian in November 2025 to conduct a full-scale RCT evaluation of the WeMatter.

The full-scale evaluation will include:

An impact evaluation which aims to answer the following research questions:

- **Primary research question:** What is the short-term impact of WeMatter on the mental wellbeing of participating CYP, compared to a no-intervention (waitlist) control?
- **Secondary research question:** What is the short-term impact of WeMatter on participating CYP's feelings of being supported, compared to a no-intervention (waitlist) control?

The overarching aims of the IPE are:

- To assess the extent to which WeMatter was implemented as planned, identify any variations, and when and why they took place.
- To explore the experience of WeMatter from the perspective of those receiving the intervention (CYP and their parents/carers) and of those involved in delivering it in schools (this will vary across schools but will likely be pastoral care or safeguarding leads) and referring CYP to WeMatter such as local authority stakeholders with a view to identifying the facilitators and barriers to effective delivery.
- Where possible, to also explore whether Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity (EDIE) characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, disability and diagnosed/undiagnosed extra needs) of CYP shaped their perceptions and experience of the intervention.
- To qualitatively assess the mechanisms of change as captured in the ToC.
- To qualitatively assess the extent to which WeMatter was perceived to achieve the targeted outcomes, both in the short term and the longer-term.

The aim of the cost evaluation will be to provide an analysis of:

- The total cost of running WeMatter for a year
- The average cost per CYP accepted to receive WeMatter, i.e. CYP who are referred to WeMatter, who are deemed eligible to receive the service, and whose needs assessment suggests WeMatter is an appropriate intervention for them
- Costs of introducing WeMatter to a new local authority (start-up costs)
- Estimated values of the prerequisites for running WeMatter

More detail on the background and methods for the full-scale trial can be found in the evaluation protocol: <https://foundations.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/we-matter-randomised-controlled-trial-evaluation-protocol.pdf>



Theory of change

The WeMatter theory of change (ToC) was developed during the pilot evaluation and was updated to reflect its findings. It includes a narrative description, followed by the theory of change diagram, which illustrates the causal links between activities, mechanisms, and outcomes, providing an overview of the service. This detail is presented within the intervention description section of the evaluation protocol



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