

# West London Zone – potential partnership with Wigan Council

## Who we are

West London Zone (WLZ) is a charity that provides a system of early intervention support for children and families. We coordinate funding, and operational partnerships in communities with schools, local authority services and charities to proactively identify children and families who can benefit from help - and provide them with a system of social, emotional and mental health support for two years.

Our mission for children is to support them to **build the relationships and skills they need to get on track Socially, Emotionally and Academically to thrive into adulthood**. We call this creating a **SEA** change, which we hope to achieve with a generation of children and young people in West London.

## Our approach

West London Zone's approach combines a trusted adult relationship for each child and family for two years, alongside deep knowledge of local programmes, services and specialist support. This allows us to get to know children/families really well, build trust and co-design packages of support tailored to their strengths and needs.

### Our model of support

#### ▲ A Link Worker for every child

We have a team of trusted adults who are based in each child's school. They guide, support and champion each child and are responsible for designing and facilitating a 2-year programme with them, their families and their teachers.

#### ● Coordinating local partnerships

We harness the collective power of our community, bringing together the right specialist support for children at the right time - involving the local authority, charities, schools, families and funders.

#### ■ Impact and evidence-led

Working with schools, we use data and school judgement to proactively identify children before they hit crisis point to target those who most need our support and provide detailed insight into each child's needs and progress over the two years.



## Our Impact

75%

no longer at risk in their emotional wellbeing/mental health

2/3

improve their English and Maths grades

£44,000

average saving to state per child from WLZ outcomes

### Children's outcomes

- After 2 years, 75% of young people are no longer at risk in their emotional wellbeing/mental health, and two thirds improved their grades.
- For WLZ children reaching the end of Year 11, 64% achieved minimum Grade 4 in English and Maths at GCSE – against a national average of 51%.

## Wider school system

- Parents report high levels of trust in their Link Worker, and better access to local services when the programme ends
- Schools report better knowledge of and access to community-based services and programmes through WLZ (over 90% re-commission the WLZ service following the first 2-year programme)

## Wider benefit

- An independent analysis<sup>1</sup> of outcomes achieved with the first 730 children through the WLZ programme found total savings or wider benefits to the state of £31.6m at 2020/21 prices – around £44,000 per child

## How we achieve change

1. **Collective Impact, Collective Funding** – We coordinate strategic funding partnerships involving schools, Local Authorities and local private funders, and use their guidance to refine our programme design around local priorities – e.g. special educational needs, reducing exclusions, social/emotional and mental health (SEMH) support. These strategic partnerships help to drive our operational partnerships – ensuring integration in local systems, and knowledge of local services – to the benefit of our families. These funders are all minority payers – meaning sustainability for our model and excellent value for commissioners.
2. **Universal community positioning, targeted support** – reaching the right children at the right time is essential. We are based full time in schools and use data and school knowledge to proactively identify those most in need of early intervention support. Intentional development of trusted relationships and genuine co-design with parents/carers ensures we are able to engage families and give a positive experience of help
3. **Personalised Support** - The WLZ programme is a two-year personalised and flexible support plan that gives families things they want and need. Link Workers (LWs) are at the heart of our model. They get to know families really well, co-designing and coordinating a comprehensive plan involving programmes, therapies, tuition – whatever is needed at any point through the programme.
4. **Data- and evidence-led** – Our approach identifies children and young people through evidence-based characteristics and school knowledge at an early stage who are most likely to achieve poor outcomes later.<sup>2</sup> The data we use to identify children acts as a baseline from which we measure positive change. Progress data is shared with schools and local authorities to ensure visibility and accountability. Each child's plan is regularly adjusted as they progress, with input from teachers and parents.
5. **Accountability and Transparency** – We are accountable for all of the children and families we work with, and share progress data with local authority commissioners and schools. Our model allows for a transparency in allocating funding around individual *children*, rather than *programmes*.

## Establishing new Zones

WLZ is committed to **establishing new Zones** over the next 3 years to test and refine our model in different local contexts, and to help us prepare for national scale.

We have been chosen as one of 8 high-impact education charities globally to benefit from the Greater Share Education Fund, which will generate philanthropic revenue over 10 years. WLZ will use this unique funding opportunity to pilot our model in areas outside of London and establish new models in other Zones of need, where there is significant demand from schools.

Our first step will be to launch in up to 3 pilot sites outside of London, starting from September 2024. We're currently seeking local partners outside of London who are passionate about early intervention to support young people: as part of this work we are excited to be exploring the opportunity to work together with you at Wigan Council.

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<sup>1</sup> ATQ analysis as part of evaluation of WLZ 'Commissioning Better Outcomes Fund' contract

<sup>2</sup> Social Finance, 2019: Maximising access to education: Understanding Risk Factors for exclusion and school moves

## Alignment with Wigan Council

We believe our model aligns closely with several of Wigan Council’s current priorities, including **Supporting Families**, the **Borough’s Locality Plan**, and **The Deal 2030**.

### Supporting Families

Within two of our current Local Authorities (Westminster City Council and Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea) we are in discussions on how to support delivery of the Supporting Families agenda under the new framework. In these LAs, 40% of the families that we already work with meet at least two SF outcome areas within the existing framework, and a further 50% meet one outcome area (with the potential to meet further outcome areas dependent on the collection of additional data on these families). We believe it is likely that the majority of families that we work with will meet at least two outcomes under the existing framework, with potential for this to increase under the new SF outcomes framework (which is based around ten outcome areas vs six in the existing framework).<sup>3</sup>

The incoming SF outcomes framework includes opportunities to use practitioner assessment as a central means of providing evidence (as well as data matching). WLZ is well-placed to support this effort, as our Link Workers hold trusted relationships with many of the families the SF programme will be seeking to engage. Moreover, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is encouraging SF programmes to engage families through schools (where WLZ is based), and with the wider Early Help ‘system’ (i.e. not only the targeted EH service, but the wider voluntary sector and families who present with a broader range of needs). These are also priorities echoed in the recent SEND Review (DfE, March ‘22), which called for more targeted support in mainstream primary and secondary schools to build capacity to address behavioural or other needs that present a barrier to learning.<sup>4</sup>

### Wigan Borough’s Locality Plan

The WLZ model is strongly aligned with Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 of Wigan Borough’s Locality Plan (2020-25)<sup>5</sup>.

Outcome	How WLZ addresses this outcome
Outcome 1: All children and young people will be treated equally, feel safe and care about their education, health and future employment	<p>Being treated equally doesn’t always mean being treated the same. It requires services to have a strong understanding of children and young people’s individual needs, and to develop plans that respond to those needs.</p> <p>West London Zone works with children with multiple inter-related needs, who might not meet thresholds for additional support and could ‘fall through the cracks’. We design and deliver individual plans for these children to feel safe, re-engage with education, and thrive into adulthood.</p>
Outcome 2: Enable physical and emotional wellbeing, increase independence and reduce reliance on health & social care services	<p>West London Zone identifies children and young people who are already ‘at risk’ in terms of their peer relationships and their emotional wellbeing, measured through the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. We support these children and young people to develop the skills and relationships they need to thrive into adulthood: enabling them to thrive, and preventing a ‘step up’ to health and social care services.</p>
Outcome 3: Focus services more towards early intervention, with access to timely and responsive services	<p>West London Zone uses a combination of detailed quantitative data and qualitative feedback from schools to identify 30-40 children within each partner school who are most in need of early intervention. We</p>

<sup>3</sup> There is strong alignment between WLZ and the new outcomes framework - particularly a) persistent absence from school, b) delayed child development (e.g., communication skills/speech and language, problem-solving, personal social and emotional development); c) mild to moderate mental-ill health. These outcomes are highly relevant for the prevention of exclusions.

<sup>4</sup> SEND Review - right support, right place, right time, Dept for Education, March 22, p. 57

<sup>5</sup> <https://healthierwigan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Happy-Healthy-People-Wigan-Borough-Locality-Plan-2020-FINAL.pdf>

	then work intensively with these children for a two year period, providing timely and responsive support where needed whilst also preventing escalations to more acute services.
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The West London Zone way of working also closely mirrors The plan’s vision for “place-based, integrated public services in our communities.”

The collective nature of our funding model, drawing from schools, local authorities, central government, as well as philanthropy, drives operational integration – allowing Link Workers to liaise with school staff, families, early help teams, youth clubs and the voluntary sector. This ensures that local systems of support are ‘joined up’ for children and families. Further, it allows for the recognition of the importance of local context. Where local mental health services are available and accessible, Link Workers link children and families to them. However where we find gaps, we micro-commission specialist services from our delivery partnership of over 40 delivery organisations. This ensures that each child has access to the right services at the right time, and that communications are joined up between school, family, professionals and other relevant people in the lives of each child. Moreover, the model ensures true collaboration with the local community – schools, voluntary organisations and parents are all inputting into the plans for each child.

*Case study: Joined-up family support to prevent escalation of mental health issues*

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*One Link Worker was working closely with a child who had started to refuse to leave his Mum at the school gates in the morning. He had been identified by West London Zone as having low self-esteem and confidence and having a negative attitude to learning. Around the same time, his Link Worker had flagged concerns around Mum’s wellbeing after a meeting at school, which exposed the nature of the rift between the parents - now separated - and the extent of Mum’s resulting emotional distress.*

*It was clear that since the parents’ separation there had been a communication breakdown and a build-up of resentment which had negatively impacted the child. Our West London Zone Link Worker initiated conversations with the school safeguarding lead, class teachers and SENCO, which led to an agreement that Family Therapy might help re-establish constructive co-parenting, with a particular emphasis on helping Mum to work through her own trauma. WLZ made a referral to a local community organisation specialising in therapeutic family support. Our Link Worker’s trusted relationship with Mum meant they could talk it through and that this idea was well received – a crucial factor for her initial engagement with this service.*

*Our Link Worker supported the family closely through this process and was in regular contact with the therapist. After the group sessions concluded, an assessment signposted Mum to trauma-based CBT, and the therapeutic community organisation continued to see the child for 1-1 sessions.*

*In the course of the sessions, Mum showed an increased capacity to manage her own anxiety and stress, and both parents appeared more able to disentangle this from their immediate parental responsibilities. It is perhaps partly for this reason that the child’s school refusal quickly stopped; helping to repair his relationship to school, notably making a new significant friendship that term.*

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**The Deal 2030**

WLZ is closely aligned with The Deal’s ambitious goals of giving the **best start in life for children and young people**, and **creating strong, safe and friendly communities that care about each other**.

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Wigan’s Part</b>	<b>How we align</b>
<b>best start in life for children and young people</b>	<i>Providing positive opportunities for young people to engage with their local community and do things that</i>	WLZ Link Workers are fully embedded within the local community. They commission organisations to work in schools with young people, and also refer

	<i>interest them, keep them safe and make them happy</i>	children and families out to services and organisations within the local area
	<i>When children and young people need help with their mental health and wellbeing, support will be easy to access in their community, readily available and effective</i>	WLZ proactively identifies children within schools who may have poor mental health and/or a mental health disorder. Link Workers commission intensive 1:1 mental health support for children and young people where required, so that they receive this support when they need it.
<b>creating strong, safe and friendly communities that care about each other</b>	<i>Value the importance of family and make sure that we involve you and your family to create the best possible outcome</i>	Link Workers build trusted relationships with both the child and the family to ensure that support is holistic, integrated and beneficial to families as a whole. The personalised support programme means that each Link Worker gets to know the family well and can provide bespoke support.
	<i>Continue to invest in our community groups to offer a diverse range of opportunities and support communities to live happily together</i>	<p>WLZ works with over 50 local community partners in West London to provide both specific, targeted support and a broad range of opportunities to young people and their families that they otherwise might not be able to access. Our partnerships operate on a broad spectrum of intervention, from after-school circus skills to 1:1 therapeutic intervention, drawing on the diversity of the community and providing the right personalised plans for each participant.</p> <p>For every child on our programme, the Local Authority invests c.£500 p.a.. Through our match funding model we raise a further £2,300 per child, of which we use c.£800-£1,000 to commission direct support from local third sector organisations, effectively multiplying the Local Authority's investment in local community organisations.</p>

At West London Zone we have also embedded many of the Deal Principles. There is key strategic alignment between **Empowered communities** and **Working together**: WLZ, as a place-based organisation, places community linking and partner delivery at its core, which would enable us to work with Wigan to build those trusted partner relationships and connect young people and their families to the support within their community. *Reclaim*, the youth leadership and social change organisation collaborating with Wigan Council, is a good example of the type of delivery partners WLZ would seek to engage in order to deliver a model that is both place-based and community-led.

There is also strong alignment with **Freedom and permission to innovate**. Our model is designed to enable our Link Workers to ask children and families 'what do you need to thrive?'; not to say 'this is what our service offers you'. Link Workers' freedom to listen to families and children and to link them to the services that they need – or commission the right support if it is not available – is core to what we do, and we're delighted to see this reflected in the principles of the Deal.