the listening place



Annual impact review 2025/26

Charity Number: 1164739

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A message from the Chair

Valerie Michie
Chair of the Board of Trustees



It has been a year of both great achievement and profound sadness for The Listening Place. In December, we lost our beloved founder, Dame Sarah Anderson, to cancer. Shortly before she died, Sarah was visited by His Majesty the King and received her damehood in recognition of her tireless work in suicide prevention and her many decades of public service.

Sarah leaves an extraordinary legacy in so many areas of her life. It is our privilege to carry her mission forward at The Listening Place, ensuring that people who feel life is no longer worth living can access compassionate, confidential and effective support as soon as they need it.

This year was the second of our three-year strategic plan, which set out our ambition to increase the number of visitors we support to more than 10,000 a year across London by 2027. Following the opening of our fourth site, on Cobb Street E1, in October 2025, we are on track to hit that target.

Demand was significant from the moment the site opened, with the majority of referrals coming from NHS Talking Therapies services, crisis teams and hospitals across East London. We are delighted to have been able to meet this demand, while maintaining our commitment to reach out to every referral within 24 hours and offer a first appointment within a week.

Cobb Street is our largest site yet. Over recent months, we have been steadily increasing capacity there, opening more and more shifts and bringing together a careful mix of highly experienced and newly trained volunteers. This contributed to an overall 14% year-on-year increase in the number of people supported, taking that number to 8,774 across all four sites.

This year, TLP's total income was £2.95 million, our strongest fundraising result to date. This enabled us to replenish our reserves after the substantial expense of purchasing and refurbishing the new building. We are deeply grateful to all the individuals and organisations that support The Listening Place and have such faith in our work and its impact.

Above all, we would like to thank the 899 volunteers who give their time to support people with suicidal thoughts—people who might otherwise have nowhere else to turn. As the charity grows, it is heartening to see its founding values—caring, collaborative, courageous, resolute and respectful—remain so strong and visible on every shift.

The commitment, warmth and skill of our volunteers are fundamental to what makes The Listening Place so special. We were immensely proud to receive the King's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a local voluntary organisation can receive and the equivalent of an MBE.



Our vision

Anyone who feels life is no longer worth living can find a confidential place with a compassionate listener who will give them time.



What we do

We reach out to all our referrals within 24 hours, and offer a first appointment within a week.

All of our support is delivered face to face at one of our four London sites.

Our visitors can rely on our policy of complete confidentiality; nothing they share with us goes beyond TLP without their explicit consent.

Support is delivered in regular 50-minute appointments, which continue on a fortnightly basis for as long as the visitor needs.

The same volunteer supports a visitor for at least six appointments, building a relationship of trust and sustained understanding.

Highlights of the year



A fourth London site opens

In October 2025, we opened a new site, on Cobb Street in East London. Our largest branch yet, the building has nine carefully designed appointment rooms as well as training space for our volunteer preparation programmes.



We receive the King's Award for Voluntary Service

The King's Award for Voluntary Service is given to truly outstanding volunteer-led organisations and is a lifetime achievement award. We were thrilled to receive it in November 2025, in recognition of the work of all our passionate and resilient volunteers.



Referrals increase by 20%

Last year, we received 10,593 referrals – a significant increase on the previous year's figure of 8,856. In October 2025, we received more than 1,000 referrals in a single month for the first time in our history



2,000 volunteers trained and 300,000 appointments delivered

We hit two important milestones this year, showing just how quickly we have grown since opening in June 2016. Our training process is rigorous and demanding, but we continue to receive huge volumes of applications from people who want to offer their time.



Dame Sarah Anderson DBE receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Our late founder was posthumously given a Lifetime Achievement Award in the Hammersmith & Fulham Civic Honours, celebrating people and groups who have made the borough safer, stronger and kinder.



The Listening Place's Christmas carol service

In December, we hosted a free carol concert at Holy Sepulchre Church in Holborn with plenty of mulled wine and mince pies, as a thank you to all our volunteers.



One of our volunteers leads a Three Peaks fundraiser

Listening Volunteer Ed led a team of colleagues from H/Advisors on an ambitious challenge. They climbed the tallest mountains in England, Scotland and Wales in under 24 hours, raising £10,000 for us in the process.



Fiera Real Estate walk raises over £50,000 for us

Over 140 people from the real estate industry took on Fiera Real Estate's 'Walk Together, Listen Together' 10km walk through central London and Hyde Park to support our vital work.

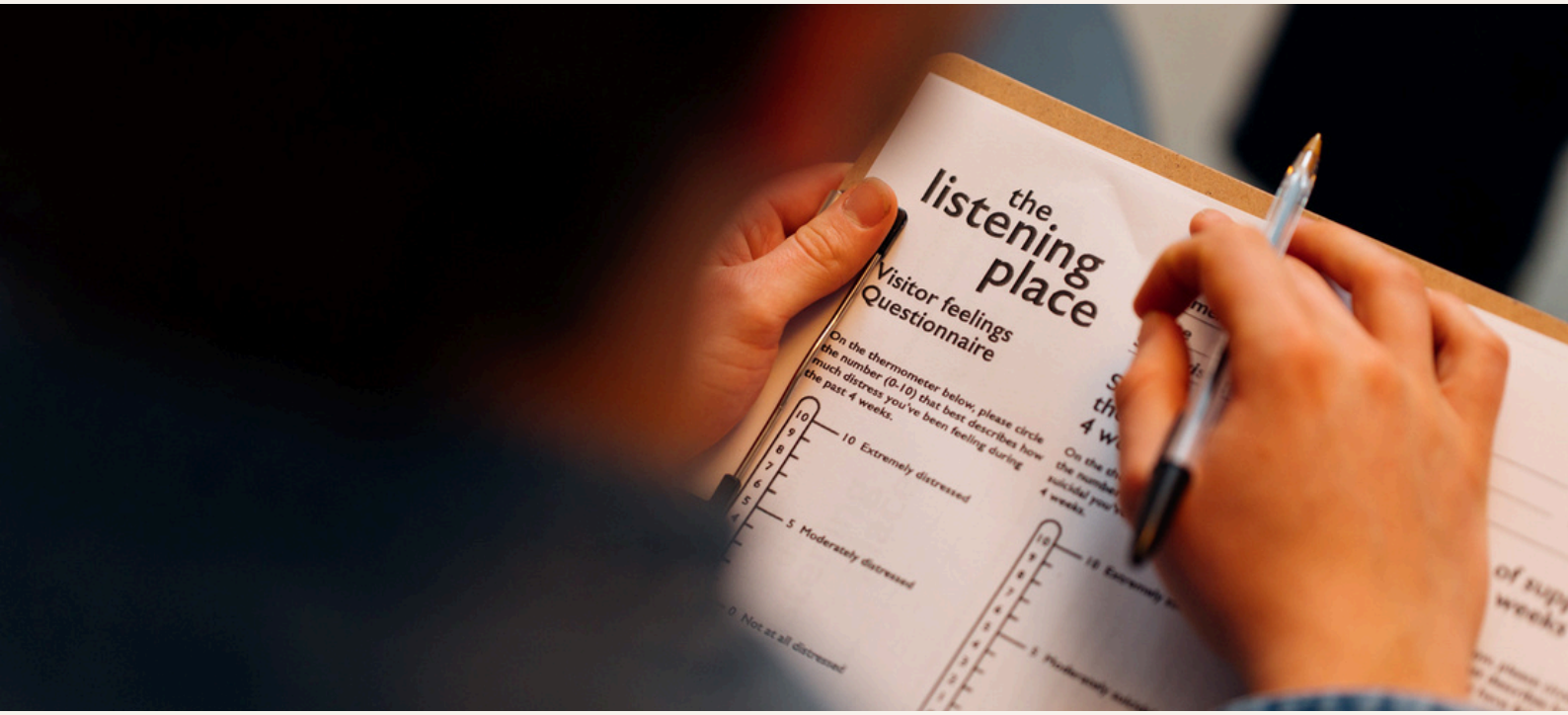
Our impact

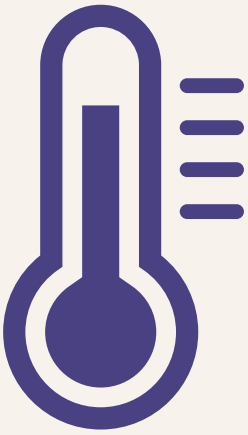
The Listening Place's most recent annual impact evaluation was published in August 2025.

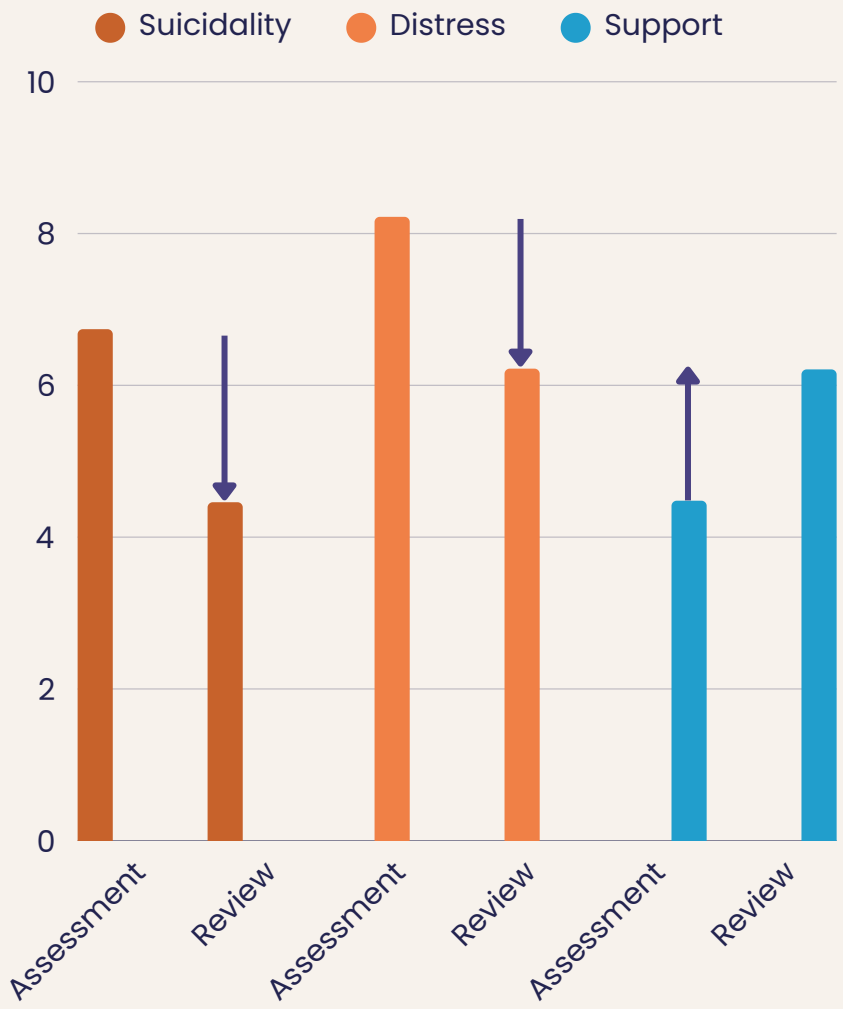
At an initial assessment, we ask our visitors to complete two brief forms: a) the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale and b) a series of three Likert thermometers that allow visitors to rate their suicidality, distress and feelings of support from 0 to 10. At each three-month review, this data is collected again, and we also ask for some qualitative feedback.

The anonymised data produced is used to monitor the efficacy of our support and ensure that our model of support is making a tangible difference.

Our last impact evaluation found a highly significant decrease in distress and suicidal feelings, and a highly significant increase in support. The average (mean) response on the feeling thermometers at the initial appointment were compared to the average (mean) response at the three-month review. The average suicidality rating decreased from 6.74 to 4.46. The average distress rating decreased from 8.22 to 6.22. The average feeling of support increased from 4.48 to 6.21.







98%

felt confident that their conversations with the volunteers would remain confidential within TLP.

99%

said that they felt safe, that TLP was warm and welcoming, and described volunteers as caring and compassionate.

100%

said that their volunteer listened to them and rated their experience as very good, good or fairly good.

Visitor feedback

Blown away by the experience of this place. Even just its existence is sometimes enough to help lift my mood or help me see the good in the world. Matt has always been engaging and listened so thoroughly, recalling comments from sessions weeks ago. The space helps me to ask and answer questions myself, rather than anything being pushed on me, which is such a powerful feeling.

My experience with The Listening Place has been amazing! The team has been very supportive and understanding of my busy schedule. When I came here for my sessions with Dessi, she provided a safe and comfortable environment for me to express my thoughts. As someone who is constantly in a high-intensity job, this place has given me a safe space to put my thoughts together and to just feel, when outside I need to put on a brave face. Thank you for all your help and support over these last six months.

I have felt immensely supported and guided from my three months at The Listening Place. Megan was exceptional, highly trained and insightful in so many ways. I looked forward to being here every fortnight and it was the only thing I could manage at the beginning of my journey. I had to make myself get the tube here, which was so difficult. The helpers throughout are amazing and I would not have known such a place existed had I not been referred by my GP. I will be eternally grateful for your support.

“I really felt comfortable in this place. Felt so good that people are there to understand what I've been through and to support me. After coming here, I realised what my husband has been saying is true: that there are people to understand and help, and not to lose hope. Thanks for giving that support and hope in my life, where the majority of the time I wasn't heard.”

Our objectives

Our activities and priorities are guided by our 2024-2027 strategic plan, which was formulated by our trustees with input from staff and volunteers. This plan identified four objectives:

- Support more people across London
- Collaborate with other organisations
- Invest in our volunteers, staff and culture
- Scale and manage the organisation responsibly



How we performed

Support more people across London

In October 2025, we opened our fourth site, on Cobb Street in East London. This has given us a base—our largest site yet—in a previously underserved area of the capital. People living in Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney and the City of London can now access our support much more easily, and we have also increased our total capacity by over 25%, allowing us to meet growing demand while maintaining our commitment to offer every referral a first appointment within seven days.

In 2025/26, the number of people we supported increased by 14%, from 7,688 to 8,774. This growth reflected increased awareness of The Listening Place across London, particularly in East London, where recommendations between clinical professionals created a strong pipeline of NHS referrals to Cobb Street from the day it opened. In October 2025, we received more than 1,000 referrals in a single month for the first time in our history.

Our East London presence, combined with the work of our Partnerships Coordinator, helped us attract more referrals from a broader cross-section of London, making referrals less concentrated in the three boroughs (Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth) that were accounting for approximately 40% of demand when we first created our strategic plan.



Collaborate with other organisations

The opening of our Cobb Street site resulted in a significant expansion of our referral partnerships, as GPs, crisis teams, NHS Talking Therapies services and A&E departments across East London welcomed the opportunity to refer patients to a local service offering swift, effective support.

We ran 12 face-to-face suicide intervention training workshops for teams from Hammersmith & Fulham council, sharing our skills and experience in order to better equip those who may find themselves supporting someone in distress through their work or everyday lives. These interactive sessions include plenty of discussion, demo role plays and opportunities to practise skills in a safe and supportive environment, helping participants learn how to build rapport, listen without judgement and signpost to the right support. We also delivered regular training in collaboration with Thames Skills Academy for organisations working on the river.

Lastly, we continue to contribute to suicide prevention strategies and steering groups in Camden and Islington, Lambeth, Hammersmith & Fulham and Westminster, as well as participating in real-time suicide monitoring groups.



Invest in our volunteers, staff and culture

We received a record 1,923 volunteer applications in the 2025/26 financial year, a 67% increase on the previous year. Although our training is selective, time-consuming and rigorous, we increased the number of volunteers completing training to 311, bringing the total active volunteer pool to 899.

The number of Supervising Volunteers increased by 21% to 184, allowing us to open up enough new shifts at Cobb Street to meet swiftly increasing demand.

The results of our anonymous Volunteer Satisfaction Survey, sent in September 2025, indicated that our volunteer population is very satisfied with their experience at TLP. The survey uses a Net Promoter Score (NPS) to indicate overall levels of satisfaction at TLP, and asked volunteers how likely they would be to recommend us as a place to volunteer, on a scale of 1 to 10. Scores run from -100 to 100 and anything above 50 is considered excellent. Last year, we scored 73; this year, we scored 80.

Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion lead helped to ensure that TLP remained inclusive and welcoming by producing and sharing materials on gender identity, Ramadan and Pride Month, in careful consultation with volunteers with relevant lived experience.



Scale and manage the organisation responsibly

This year our income was £2.95m, allowing us to complete the renovation of our fourth site and replenish our reserves after this significant expenditure, bringing them up to nine months' running costs.

We have continued to build our reputation and awareness of our service, as shown by the increase in referrals and the 67% increase in volunteer applications.

In November, we received the King's Award for Voluntary Service—the equivalent of an MBE for voluntary organisations—which provides significant recognition of the quality and credibility of our work.

We continue to collect quantitative and qualitative feedback from our visitors at each review appointment, where visitors are able to discuss their experiences with a Supervising Volunteer and are asked to fill in some brief paperwork that covers distress, suicidality, feelings of support and what each visitor feels about The Listening Place. There is always the opportunity to suggest potential improvements, and each piece of feedback is carefully considered by our Visitor Support team and, if necessary, our leadership team.



Future plans

We are now approaching the end of our strategic cycle and beginning to think about our ambitions for the next three-year planning period.

Since 2016, we have grown from a single site, open two days a week, to four sites across London open 9am to 9pm, Monday to Sunday. After a decade of rapid growth, our immediate priority is to make the fullest and most effective use of our sites, while building the financial and organisational resilience needed to sustain and grow our service in the long term. We provide a lifeline to thousands of people a year, and it is critical that our service continues in its current format, without interruption or reduction.

As The Listening Place matures as an organisation, we will be looking to develop and deepen what we offer. We will be working to build awareness at borough level in areas of London with high referrals but low partnership participation, and continuing to expand referral partnerships, especially in East London boroughs. We will deliver more trainer and volunteer conferences in order to build engagement and upskill our current volunteers, and we will be piloting a commercial offer of active listening training for businesses in order to give us another income stream. We will also be strengthening our internal systems, taking all necessary steps to ensure the security of our visitor and supporter data.

The Listening Place now has experience and expertise derived from hundreds of thousands of face-to-face sessions with people who feel suicidal, and we will explore whether the charity should now be playing a more prominent role in policy debates around suicide prevention, sharing insights from our frontline service, championing the value of confidential, non-judgmental listening and contributing selectively to policy conversations where we have direct expertise.

Support our future

How you can help

We depend on financial contributions from major donors, trusts and foundations, corporate partners and individuals. The support we offer is extremely cost-effective—it costs just £260 for us to support someone with suicidal thoughts for as long as they need, and around £600 to carefully select and train a Listening Volunteer.

Volunteer

We are always looking for empathetic, resilient people to volunteer with us. If this sounds like you, and you can commit to a fortnightly four-hour shift at one of our London sites, you can find out more or apply at listeningplace.org.uk/volunteer

Corporate partnerships

We have long-standing relationships with a number of corporate partners, as well as benefiting from annual 'Charity of the Year' and payroll giving programmes. Please get in touch at corporate@listeningplace.org.uk to find out more about supporting us this way.

Fundraise for us

From climbing mountains and running marathons, to pub quizzes and gigs, there are dozens of ways you can raise money for The Listening Place—and we'll be there for you, every step of the way. To find out more about the challenge events we have available or to request a fundraising pack, contact community@listeningplace.org.uk

the listening place

Hammersmith
1 Cambridge Court
210 Shepherds Bush Road
London
W6 7NJ

King's Cross
3rd floor
Hunter Street Health Centre
8 Hunter Street
London
WC1N 1BN

Liverpool Street
1-3 Cobb Street
London
E1 7LB

Pimlico
3 Meade Mews
London
SW1P 4EG



listeningplace.org.uk

020 3906 7676

@the_listening_place_london

The Listening Place is a charitable incorporated organisation.
Charity Number: 1164739