



Invitation to Tender: Evaluation Partner

Evaluating Effective Support for Care-Affected Girls and Young Women

Summary

- Deadline for applications: 23rd October 2026
- Budget: £40,000
- Project timeframe: November 2026 - August 2028 (22 months)

[Sister System](#) is looking for an experienced evaluation partner to help us understand what works in supporting the mental health and long-term outcomes of the care-experienced young women we support, and to use this learning to shape our services and our next organisational strategy.

We're particularly interested in hearing from evaluators with experience of mixed-methods, outcome-focused evaluation in mental health, youth work or care-experienced settings, who can work sensitively and accessibly with a small, values-led charity and the young people we support.

Key deliverables:

- Analysis of existing monitoring, evaluation and learning data and a literature review, with first insights and recommendations (Phase 1, months 1-4)
- Support to pilot and refine our M&E tools (Phase 2, months 5-16)
- An in-depth final evaluation report and accessible outputs for internal and external audiences (Phase 3, c. months 16-22)
- Ongoing light-touch advice and coaching to our Impact Committee and wider team on evaluation and learning

1. About Sister System

Sister System is a London-based registered charity (No. 1177669) supporting care-affected girls and young women aged 13-24. We work with young women through our North London hub and spoke network, offering mentoring, therapeutic support, clinical psychotherapy, accredited (OCN) qualifications, resilience and wellbeing workshops and education, employment and training (EET) pathways.

Over 75% of the young women we support are from Global Majority backgrounds, and there is currently limited evidence about what effective mental health and relational support looks like for this group of care-affected young women. We currently support around 200 young women a year, and our ambition is to double this within our next strategy, and to explore replicating our model elsewhere.

We are in the final year of a three-year strategy (launched September 2024), developed alongside a refreshed programme model, Theory of Change, and set of MEL tools. Data and evidence are used regularly to inform decisions at every level of the organisation, overseen by our Impact Committee (our CEO, Director of Learning & Partnerships, Director of Impact, trustees, and an external investment/impact adviser).

2. About this evaluation

Over the past two years we've invested in strengthening our MEL framework and now hold a growing, high-quality dataset; but day-to-day delivery, reporting and service pressures mean we don't yet have the capacity to dig into what these data are really telling us.

As we approach the end of our current three-year strategy and start shaping the next one (from 2027 onwards), we want to ask bigger questions about the effectiveness of our support - not just whether it works, but which approaches work best, for whom, and at what stage of a young woman's journey. This evaluation is designed to answer those questions and to directly inform our next strategy.

Our internal team has strong data collection, CRM and interpretation skills, and an embedded learning culture, but as a small organisation, we'd benefit from specialist external expertise to design and deliver more complex, robust evaluation methodologies, and to undertake deeper longitudinal and comparative analysis than we can currently achieve in-house.

3. What we want to find out

We want the evaluation to explore three linked questions:

Question	Current challenge	Decisions we can make after evaluation
1. Does access to clinical psychotherapy improve long-term outcomes, compared to mentoring alone?	We currently offer clinical psychotherapy to those with the most acute needs. We believe earlier or wider access could be beneficial.	The best service, frequency and combination for young women by broad need type; the right recruitment, training and allocation of staff skills and resources.
2. What is the most beneficial service (or combination) - peer mentoring, therapeutic mentoring, clinical psychotherapy - for the range of needs we see?	Young women receive 1-1 support from our trained mentors from a range of backgrounds. Peer mentors are those who may have less experience and hold lower risk caseloads. Therapeutic mentors are those with greater experience, often with qualifications in talking therapies. We want to understand the distinct and combined benefits of these approaches, alongside clinical psychotherapy.	How to design service pathways and combinations of support that match different needs.
3. What is the best mix of low-burden tools to capture our outcomes - particularly mental health change and transition readiness?	Since 2024 we've measured resilience and self-esteem using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. From September 2026 we will be adding the 'My Mind' Outcomes Star. Our clinical psychotherapist has been using Core-10. We want to explore the most useful mix of tools to capture meaningful change.	What tools we use to capture mental health and transition readiness, so we can keep shaping our services in response to data.

Together, these questions will help us move beyond measuring outcomes alone, towards evidence-informed decisions about how support should be designed, targeted and delivered - and will contribute wider sector insight on effective support for care-affected young women, especially those from Global Majority backgrounds.

4. The evidence and data we already have

We have a growing, high-quality evidence base. By September 2026, we expect to have clean, digitised data including:

- 24 months of demographic, programme engagement and attendance data, held on our Salesforce CRM.
- 24 months of resilience, self-esteem and healthy relationships survey data, using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.
- 12 months of Development and Progress reports completed by mentors.
- 12 months of Records of Activities (completed by mentors) and Reflective Logs (completed by mentees) after 1:1 sessions.

Clinical psychotherapy is available to young women from the point of referral, and we hold data on referrals and those that access external services (e.g. CAMHS, Open Door) alongside our own provision. Our psychotherapist is available for interviews.

5. Key deliverables and phases

We anticipate the evaluation running in three broad phases over 22 months. We're open to discussing the right approach and methodology with our evaluation partner, and welcome proposals that reflect your expertise.

Phase 1: Analysis and first insights (c. months 1-4, Nov 2026 - Feb 2027)

- Review and analyse our existing MEL data against the three evaluation questions
- Learn from our staff mentors and the young people we support about their experiences of the usability and effectiveness of our current information collection tools (and/ or what could be better)
- Complete a literature review on the relative and combined effectiveness of mentoring, therapeutic mentoring support and clinical psychotherapy for care-experienced young people, to enrich our findings
- Provide a first set of insights and recommendations, including proposed adaptations to our current M&E tools
- Facilitate interpretation sessions with our Impact Committee and Youth Advisory Board

Phase 2: Piloting and continued data collection (c. months 5-16, Mar 2027 - Feb 2028)

- Support us to pilot amended or additional M&E tools based on Phase 1 recommendations
- Review the pilot and refine tools accordingly through bimonthly or quarterly meetings with the Director of Impact and/or Impact Committee.

Phase 3: In-depth evaluation and dissemination (c. months 16-22, Mar - Aug 2028)

- Complete an in-depth evaluation drawing on the additional 12 months of data, potentially including further qualitative data collection (e.g. interviews with young women, mentors or staff)
- Facilitate collaborative interpretation sessions with the Impact Committee, delivery team and Youth Advisory Board, setting findings in the context of the literature review and our lived and working experiences
- Finalise the evaluation report and support us to prioritise key messages for internal and external audiences
- Support development of accessible outputs for external sharing (e.g. a short thought piece, contributions to sector webinars, events, key meetings, newsletters)

Throughout all three phases, we'd like our evaluation partner to provide light-touch advice and coaching to our Impact Committee and wider team on evaluation and learning, so that this expertise also builds our own internal capability.

6. What we're looking for in an evaluation partner

- Strong expertise in designing and delivering programme evaluations with small-medium charities, including both lighter-touch and more in-depth approaches
- Proven ability to use mixed-methods data - quantitative and qualitative - including surveys, interviews, focus groups and data analysis
- Strong data analysis and interpretation skills, translating complex findings into clear, practical insights and recommendations
- Experience working with databases or Salesforce CRM systems
- Ability to communicate findings in accessible, engaging ways - including to young people, team members without a MEL background, and community partners
- Experience giving practical recommendations that are proportionate and sustainable for a charity of our size (income, number staff, current skills)
- Ability to produce high-quality, jargon-free evaluation reports
- A genuine understanding of, and commitment to, working sensitively with care-experienced young people, and cultural competence in supporting young women from Global Majority backgrounds
- Experience of, or familiarity with, outcome measures relevant to our themes (e.g. resilience and self-esteem scales) is an advantage, though not essential
- Access to relevant networks to add value to dissemination and profile raising would be advantageous

7. Who you'll work with

Our Director of Impact will be accountable for the delivery of this project and will be your main point of contact. You'll also work closely with our Director of Learning & Partnerships and Head of Programmes, who ensures insights and recommendations feed directly into programme design and staffing. You will also work with external affairs colleagues to disseminate learning.

8. Safeguarding, insurance and compliance

This project involves working with young people and, at times, vulnerable adults, so safeguarding is central to how we work. We ask that:

- All project staff have appropriate DBS clearance
- Your individual or organisation's safeguarding, data management and risk management policies and practice reflect best practice for working with children and young people
- You hold appropriate public liability and professional indemnity insurance for this work - please share your current levels of cover with your application

Our safeguarding policy is available here: sistersystem.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Sister-System-Safeguarding-Policy-Procedures-V4.pdf

9. Budget

The total budget available for this work is £40,000.

This should include all costs, including VAT and expenses. We're open to proposals structured as a day rate, a phased fixed fee, or a combination - please indicate what would be feasible within the budget, and what you'd prioritise if the budget were higher or lower.

A payment plan will be agreed as part of contracting, likely in instalments aligned with the three phases and their deliverables.

10. How to apply

Please send your application to [Fran Humber, fran@sistersystem.org] by the deadline above.

Please include:

- An outline of your proposed approach across the three phases, including how you'd approach the analysis of existing data and the literature review (this may evolve once appointed - we're keen to draw on your expertise on methodology)
- A short proposal for how you'd approach one of our three evaluation questions, sharing your proposed methodology - this is to help us understand your thinking, and we realise it may evolve before delivery
- CVs or a short team profile demonstrating relevant skills and experience, particularly in mental health, youth work, care-experienced young people, or mixed-methods evaluation
- Examples of similar work with other charities, ideally with young people, care leavers, or in mental health or educational settings
- A costed proposal, including day rate or phased fee, and what would be achievable at different budget levels
- Confirmation of your safeguarding, DBS and insurance arrangements

If you're applying as a partnership or collaboration, please include this information for each organisation involved.

11. How we'll score applications

We'll score applications against the following weighted criteria:

- Quality and fit of your proposed approach against our evaluation questions and values (c. 40%)
- Skills, relevant experience and qualities of the consultant(s)/team, particularly experience with care-experienced or vulnerable young people (c. 25%)
- Value for money and clarity of your costed proposal (c. 20%)
- Strength of safeguarding, data management and insurance arrangements (c. 15%)

12. Application timetable

Stage	Date
Tender published	30 th September 2026
Informal call slots available (optional, bookable)	1 st -14 th October 2026
Deadline for applications	23 rd October, 5pm
Interviews (via video call)	26 th October-30 th October

Evaluation partner appointed	6 th November
Anticipated start date	Mid-Late November 2026

We'll offer a small number of short, informal calls for potential partners to ask questions before applying - these tend to be useful for everyone as proposals take shape. Details of how to book will be shared alongside this brief.

13. Contact

If you have any questions, or would like to book an informal call, please contact: Fran Humber, Director of Impact - fran@sistersystem.org

Please submit your application to fran@sistersystem.org