London cybercrime victims left without support as mayor ends pilot funding

A vital support service for cybercrime victims in London is set to lose funding, despite its success during an 18-month pilot.

The London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, confirmed the funding cut during Mayor's Question Time on 20 March 2025, after Deputy Conservative Leader, Emma Best, raised concerns about the scheme's future.

Launched in October 2023, the Cyber Helpline's London pilot received £170,000 from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) for a one-year trial.

It was later extended by six months with an extra £85,000, funding Best called modest: "In terms of bang for your buck, this is worth it, especially given the rise in cyber-related crimes," she said.

In its first six months (Oct 2023-Mar 2024), the helpline supported 8,789 victims. In 2023, Greater London reported over 58,000 cases of cyber-enabled fraud, with losses totalling around £353 million, according to Action Fraud/NFIB data.

Despite this, Sadiq Khan said there are no plans to continue funding. "Pilots are designed to be temporary initiatives to assess viability before determining long-term support," he said.

He continued: "We will now study what evidence was uncovered during the 18 months and decide what recommendations to make: are we funding it in the future, how the scheme should be changed, and so forth."

Best argued the evaluation shows the service works. She said: "It was a pilot, but it was evaluated as being extremely successful."

The helpline will continue to operate nationally, but without London-specific funding, local victims may face longer waits.

Rory Innes, CEO of The Cyber Helpline, said the organisation has handled over 70,000 cases, half involving women and girls targeted by cyberstalking and online harassment.

He said: "Around 25-30% of referrals come from law enforcement."

"The demand for this service has doubled every year," he added. "We deploy cybersecurity experts as volunteers, giving victims support they can't get elsewhere."

He also spoke to the strain on police resources: "If you're an officer, you're a generalist. One day it's a broken car, the next it's a fight outside a nightclub."

Officers often lack the expertise to handle cyberstalking.

"We can help by explaining what's technically possible, what's not, and where the evidence points," he said.

Innes also highlighted the toll on young people: "There are some horrendous stats out there - in 25% of youth suicides, technology is listed as one of the major factors."

Angeline*, a former victim who now volunteers with the helpline, said traditional law enforcement often failed her.

"The helpline was the only place that truly understood what I was going through," she said. "They helped me secure my accounts and supported me after my PayPal was hacked."

She added: "The police simply don't have the resources or knowledge to tackle cybercrime the way this service does," she said. "Without it, so many people will be left in the dark."

Best urged: "No other service fills this niche, and it's a crucial resource that Londoners need."

*Name has been changed to protect their identity.