

Aselo®

Evaluation of the Aselo Platform

Executive Summary

December 2025

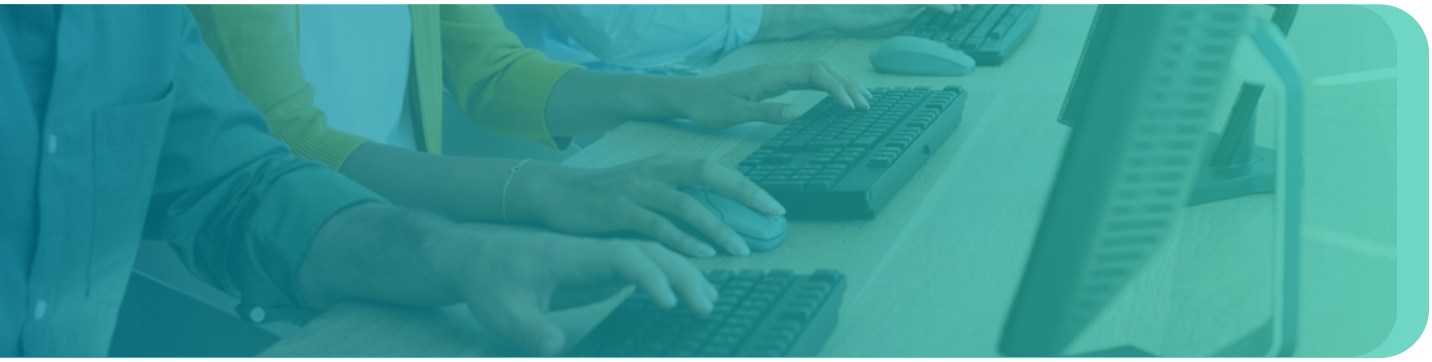
TECH MATTERS

Safe Online

Dr. Julia Muraszkiewicz, Dr. Lorleen Farrugia, Mr. Toby Fenton

This work was made possible through funding from Safe Online, whose support enables the development, scaling, and evidence generation of digital solutions to protect children online.

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Introduction



About Aselo

Aselo is an open-source Software as a Service (SaaS) platform, which has been designed specifically to support child helplines around the globe. Developed by US-based nonprofit organization Tech Matters, Aselo is used by 19 partners in 23 countries around the world, with over a million contacts to helpline partners; and it is growing. Aselo supports helplines by integrating multiple communication channels – including phone, SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Line, Telegram, and webchat – into a single browser-based interface. Aselo also provides key helpline functions such as secure data collection, referral databases, customizable workflows, and data visualization dashboards. Aselo's aim is to encompass a wide range of child protection and safeguarding concerns, activities and workflows.

About the Evaluation

Aselo was originally funded through a grant from Safe Online. Its beneficiaries include: Tech Matters, who develops and implements Aselo; other funders, such as the Oak Foundation; child helpline partners; and (indirectly) vulnerable children and youth seeking support. Tech Matters operates as a nonprofit entity in adopting Silicon Valley's innovation ethos and applying it for social good, and aims to build a sustainable software platform that helplines can rely upon in the long term.

This is the first external and independent evaluation of Aselo and it comes at a time of transition for the platform. Four years into its development, Aselo has successfully demonstrated demand and utility, but now faces key challenges related to scale, sustainability, and evidence of impact. The evaluation is being undertaken both in response to donor interest – particularly from Safe Online after three rounds of funding – and as part of Tech Matters' strategic review to refine and strengthen its offering to helplines globally.

Furthermore, the evaluation aligns with Safe Online's strategic goal of investing in actions backed by data and evidence, providing a strong foundation for advocating change with national authorities and the tech industry. By sharing the outcomes of this evaluation through Safe Online's knowledge exchange platforms and publications, the evaluation aims to contribute to the collective understanding and advancement of effective digital safeguarding solutions for children worldwide.



Objectives and Research Questions

The evaluation was conducted by a team of three independent consultants[1] ('the evaluation team') and had three key objectives:

1. Evaluate Aselo's contribution to improving the **accessibility**, **responsiveness**, and **efficiency** of helpline services;
2. Evaluate Aselo's **operational benefits**, such as case management, data collection, and counselor support;
3. Evaluate Aselo's **scalability**, **sustainability**, and ability to inform broader **industry learning** on building tech solutions for social impact.

To achieve the objectives, the evaluators sought to answer five core research questions. These questions reflect both the scope of the evaluation and the strategic interests of Tech Matters and its stakeholders. These questions, and corresponding findings, are as follows:

- **How effective is Aselo's onboarding process**, particularly regarding implementation, training, and feature adoption?
- **How has Aselo impacted helplines' operations**, particularly regarding workflow efficiency, case handling, data management, and service responsiveness?
- **Has Aselo improved helpline services' accessibility** for children and vulnerable users, including through multichannel access?
- **How sustainable is Aselo**, considering factors such as organisational ownership, funding models, and long-term operational integration?
- **How scalable is Aselo** (both within existing helpline contexts and in new geographies) and what lessons from its development and implementation are transferable to other tech-based social impact initiatives?

[1] Dr Julia Muraszkiewicz, Dr Lorleen Farrugia, Mr Toby Fenton.



Methodology

As was requested by the terms of reference the evaluation applied a direct and indirect influence CA (appropriate for near-term operational outcomes and emerging system impacts) and followed the following established CA steps:

1. Define the Attribution Problem
The evaluation examined how and to what extent Aselo plausibly contributed to improvements in accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency, and counsellor support, considering contextual factors such as capacity, infrastructure, and funding.

2. Refine the Theory of Change
The ToC was updated to reflect Aselo's logic and implementation across contexts, mapping causal pathways and clarifying assumptions, risks, and outcomes.

3. Review Existing Evidence
Documentation and data from Tech Matters were analysed to test the plausibility of the ToC and identify preliminary support or gaps in evidence.

4. Develop the Contribution Story
A draft narrative outlined how Aselo may have influenced outcomes and where evidence was weak or uncertain.

5. Collect Additional Evidence
Interviews were conducted with Tech Matters staff, helpline users (ranging from active to discontinued), and stakeholders to test and enrich the contribution story.

6. Refine and Validate Findings
New evidence was integrated to strengthen causal claims, assess alternative explanations, and confirm the plausibility of Aselo's contribution within its wider ecosystem.

Limitations

The evaluation was subject to a number of limitations, as follows. **First**, not all helplines or external stakeholders participated in the evaluation, which limited the perspectives available for inclusion. **Second**, participation was voluntary, which may have introduced sampling and response bias. **Third**, the helplines included in the evaluation vary in size, resources, and stage of Aselo adoption, making direct comparisons challenging and limiting the extent to which conclusions can be generalised across the helpline network. **Fourth**, several interviewees referred to organisational or contextual factors beyond the Aselo platform itself, while quantitative data was not consistently available across all themes. **Fifth**, the evaluation was grounded in a contribution analysis (CA) method, a weakness of which is the lack of standard procedures and performance indicators, which can therefore pose execution challenges and introduce positive bias. **Finally**, the absence of robust baseline data constrained the ability to measure change over time.



Key Findings

The evaluation found that Aselo has **demonstrably improved helpline services**, but it does face some sustainability challenges. Across all three above mentioned evaluation objectives, Aselo shows significant positive impact on helpline operations and child accessibility, though its long-term viability depends on addressing financial sustainability and strategic clarity.

Improving Accessibility, Responsiveness, and Efficiency of Helpline Services

Aselo has significantly enhanced helplines' **ability to reach** and support vulnerable children. The platform allows contacts to seek support via **multiple communication channels** (phone, SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Line, Telegram, and webchat), all consolidated into a single interface. This multi-channel approach has improved helplines' **overall responsiveness** to children who reach out for support. The chatbot feature helps manage call volume by triaging contacts before connecting them with counsellors, enabling helplines to **handle increased demand** more effectively.

Aselo's onboarding process is demonstrably effective and efficient, with a typical implementation timeline of six to eight months. The Aselo team provides **highly personalised**, **time-committed training and customer support**, which helplines commend. Most implementation challenges can be fixed with enhanced communication and coordination. One implementation (and usage) challenge beyond Tech Matter is internet connectivity issues in some regions.

Operational Benefits: Case Management, Data Collection, and Counsellor Support

Aselo has had a **positive impact** on helplines' day-to-day operations, as reported by **all helplines interviewed**. Key operational benefits include:

- **Easier caseload management:** consolidating all case information and communication channels in a single, centralised platform eliminates the need to navigate multiple systems
- **Faster data retrieval:** reducing the time required to gather and find data about cases
- **Enhanced supervision:** improving supervisors' ability to monitor service delivery
- **Stronger evidence-based advocacy:** enabling data-driven reporting for advocacy and other purposes



Scalability, Sustainability, and Industry Learning

From a technical perspective, Aselo is essentially **ready to scale as needed**. As a cloud-based platform hosted within AWS, Aselo can leverage resources that facilitate scaling-up of infrastructure (both compute and storage). However, scalability is constrained by non-technical factors: **financial challenges**; **dependencies** on third-party services (namely, Twilio Flex); and **balancing platform coherence with individual helpline customisation requirements**. Whilst data processing regulations are unlikely to be a major barrier, they may constrain which features (especially AI capabilities) can be offered to specific helplines.

Aselo's primary **sustainability** challenge is financial. Most helplines depend on donor funding to pay for Aselo, yet the donor funding environment is increasingly constrained. Whilst Aselo aims to support under-resourced helplines who cannot afford more expensive technical solutions, the platform still commands a price that may be too expensive for many target beneficiaries. Some helplines perceive costs as high or worry about affordability if their usage increases over time. Aselo's financial model will need to be strengthened and likely diversified to ensure the platform's long-term sustainability and alignment with its vision of supporting helplines most in need of additional resources.

From an industry learning perspective, Aselo demonstrates a proven model for building scalable nonprofit technology that balances standardisation with contextual adaptation across diverse settings. The platform's open-source architecture and collaborative approach offers valuable insights for the others in the tech-for-social-impact sector, and this was the view of external stakeholders interviewed.

Example of positive feedback from Aselo users

HL-2 [Aselo] *"created a great impact in order to continue receiving funding"*

HL-3 *"we're able to provide that data at the drop of a hat"* [about providing data for media commentary on child protection issues]

HL-7 *"it's improved even on service delivery...It's changing the narrating. It's changing the attitudes towards toll-free helplines"*



Recommendations

The authors of this report offer the following recommendations. These have been prioritised on the basis of business value, but without taking into account the associated costs and availability of resources.

Clarifying Strategy

As the platform matures and faces new challenges around scale and sustainability, maintaining strategic clarity and communicating it to relevant stakeholders becomes increasingly important for transparency, maintaining trust and to ensure resources are directed towards the highest-value opportunities.

Beyond the need to clarify the business strategy as a matter of course, specific recommendations include: (1) **systematic market development** to better understand the market environment in which Aselo is operating; (2) ensuring a **strategic approach to capability development**, including that the prioritisation of Aselo's capabilities – especially the more expensive ones, like AI – is informed by the business strategy; (3) further exploration (and development) of the scope of possible in-platform mechanisms for **data sharing and aggregate insights**, to add crucial value across the helpline community.

Securing Funding

Naturally, the funding efforts for Aselo are a direct function of its business and platform strategy. Aselo's core vision is to support under-resourced helplines who cannot afford the typically more expensive technical solutions, thereby filling a gap that remains unaddressed by the larger tech companies. However, while Aselo may be less expensive than many competitors in the market, Aselo still commands a price that may be prohibitively expensive for many helplines; some helplines perceive costs as high or worry about affordability if their usage, and therefore their expenses, increase over time. To make Aselo's vision viable, there should be greater focus in the short- and medium-term on securing Aselo's sustainability.

Specific recommendations include: (1) **prioritise high-resource helplines**, to drive revenues that can provide the platform with a longer runway for sustainable growth; (2) **diversify revenue streams** by exploring adjacent/alternative markets (such as humanitarian response, policing, and established counselling services), including those that may be higher value and higher margin.



Demonstrating Impact

While Aselo's real-world impact on helplines and vulnerable children appears significant based on the interviews conducted for this evaluation, articulating this impact is difficult due to the lack of a data-driven evidence base. Using the renewed ToC and corresponding results framework, Aselo's M&E's practices should be strengthened to generate the kind of data needed to fully demonstrate Aselo's impact and gain further buy-in from funders and the helpline eco-system.

Specific recommendations include: (1) adopt and periodically update, through new data collection, the **results framework** outlined in the evaluation report to systematically track progress against the Theory of Change: (2) introduce a **baseline data collection** process prior to onboarding any helpline to Aselo, to allow stronger tracking of progress in terms of service development and improvement; (3) establish **regular feedback loops** with helplines and external stakeholders to inform ongoing development and ensure the platform continues to meet helplines' needs; (4) establish and maintain a **risk register** to map and monitor risks identified in the Theory of Change and any new ones that emerge.

Implementation as Change Management

Aselo's implementation is a structured and systematic process, and there are already aspects of change management included in this process, such as training sessions for frontline staff, identifying helpline 'champions' to advocate for Aselo's use in the helpline, allocating practice time, using phased rollouts to ease the changes to organisational processes, and building data visualisations and metrics. However, the challenges this report identified regarding Aselo's implementation – including ensuring the effective adoption of Aselo within helplines' operational processes, and reducing organisational resistance to change – could be addressed through viewing implementation as fundamentally a change management exercise, which requires a more systematic and comprehensive change management programme.

Specific recommendations include: (1) developing a **structured communications plan** to align stakeholders around expectations, timelines, benefits, roles and responsibilities; (2) ensuring a full **orientation** package for each helpline; (3) conducting a formal stakeholder **needs and readiness** assessment at each helpline prior to starting the configuration of Aselo; (4) guiding helplines to establish a **peer support network** within their organisation to facilitate the effective adoption of Aselo; (5) developing a **change management toolkit** for each helpline, including FAQs, guidance on addressing common challenges, communications templates, and suggested timelines for implementation; (6) reaffirming transparency around Aselo's costs during the implementation phase, ensuring helplines can factor these costs into the budget planning and fundraising work.



Conclusion

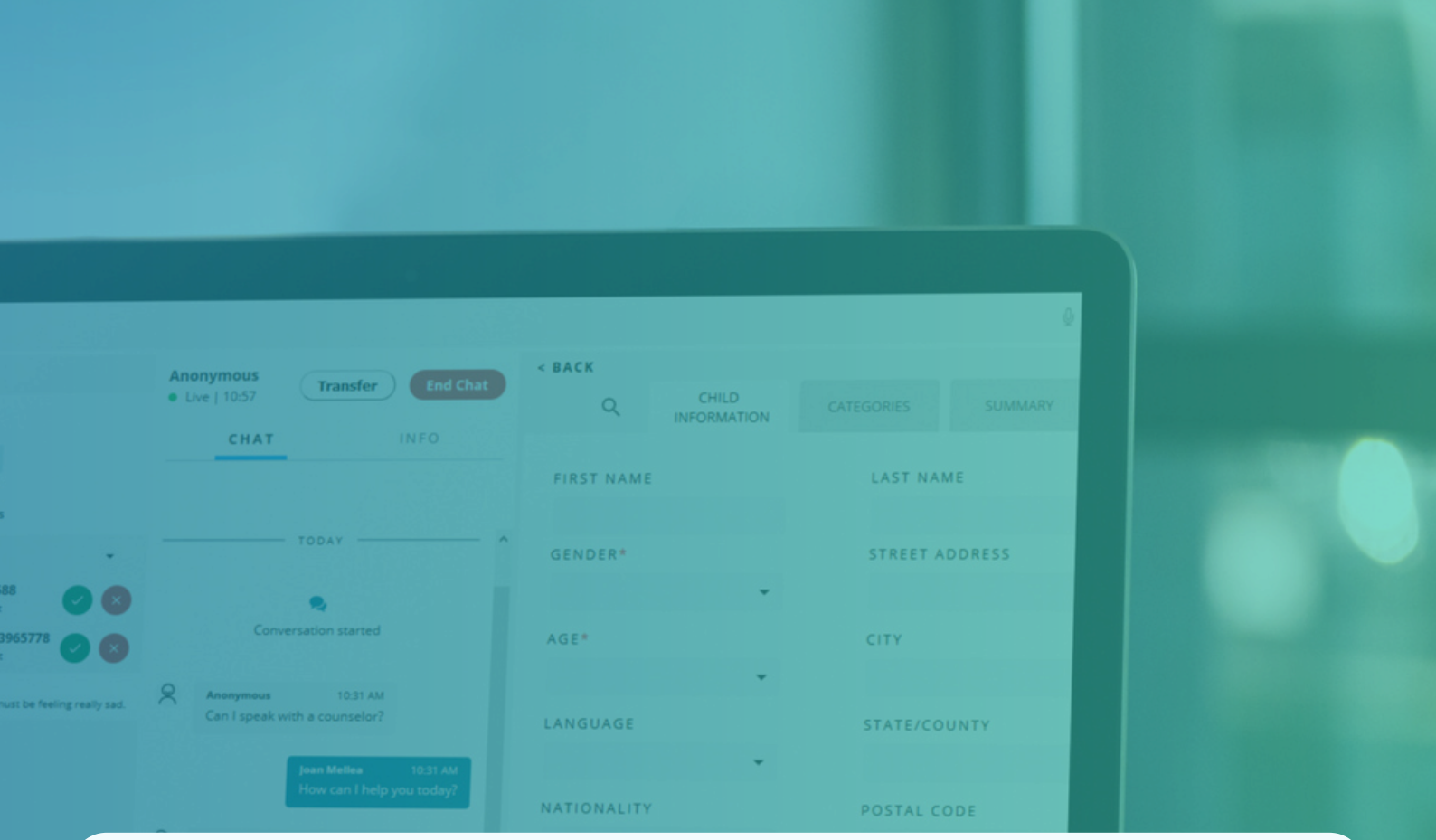
The platform's impact is perhaps best captured by those who use it daily. As one helpline manager from HL-3 stated:

> *"Aselo has been a complete game changer for us, because of where we're coming from, having virtually nothing to be able to produce and be as efficient as other helplines and participate in these types of discussions... The more we utilise Aselo, the more that we appreciate how comprehensive the system is... it's really an amazing platform. I cannot say it enough."*

This transformation extends beyond individual helplines to strengthen the broader child protection ecosystem. As Tech Matters staff member TM-5 observed, helplines now have ***"a lot more data that they can use themselves to be able to make decisions, advocate for their organisation, just to make them a stronger organisation overall."*** This evidence-based approach aligns precisely with Safe Online's strategic goal of investing in actions backed by data and evidence, providing a strong foundation for advocating change with national authorities and the tech industry.

The evaluation confirms that Aselo has successfully moved from proof-of-concept to proven solution. Helplines report that the platform has ***"created a great impact in order to continue receiving funding"*** (HL-2), enabling them to demonstrate their value to donors and policymakers with clarity.

As Aselo enters its next phase, the challenges ahead—financial sustainability, strategic clarity, and continued scaling—are those of a maturing platform with demonstrated demand and proven impact.



Thank You

For questions about this report, contact j.muraszkiewicz@gmail.com.

www.aselo.org
contact@aselo.org
linkedin.com/company/tech-matters

www.safeonline.global
info@safeonline.global
linkedin.com/company/safeonlinefund