

GREATER **LONDON** AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2668

Title: Early Connect London Pilot

Executive Summary:

This Director Decision (DD) form seeks approval for the GLA to use £140,000 of Department for Education (DfE) funding to run an 'Early Connect' pilot in London. Through this pilot the GLA will use its network of stakeholders to encourage the development of new apprenticeship opportunities, and to increase awareness of them amongst 18-year-olds in the capital. The funding will be utilised to commission an external partner organisation which will provide a brokerage service, making young people aware of apprenticeship opportunities they can access. This organisation will also provide a wraparound service to young people to support them apply for these opportunities.

Decision:

That the Executive Director of Communities and Skills approves:

1. the acceptance of £140,000 of DfE grant funding for the purpose of participating in the Early Connect pilot
2. the use of DfE funding to procure, through an open and competitive tendering round, a partner organisation to provide brokerage and wraparound services to young Londoners.

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

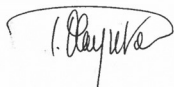
I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Tunde Olayinka

Position: Executive Director,
Communities and Skills

Signature:



Date:

27/11/2023

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 In 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) began a programme of work – the Apprenticeships Young People Strategy – to increase apprenticeship starts by young people. Analysis of DfE data led them to conclude that driving starts at age 18-19 had the greatest potential impact on increasing overall apprenticeship numbers, which have fallen across England since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. DfE understood that the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) were planning to improve their university placements offer by trialling the inclusion of apprenticeships and in February 2023, initial plans for collaboration were announced by the Secretary of State for Education and UCAS. This culminated in an announcement that from autumn 2024, students will be able to apply for apprenticeships within the UCAS Hub and employers will be able to manage applications for their apprenticeship vacancies through UCAS too. This is intended to support putting apprenticeships on an equal footing with university degrees in terms of respectability and visibility and increase their exposure amongst young people.
- 1.2 To understand how to maximise the effectiveness of this initiative, regional authorities were seen as key players in developing and filling apprenticeship vacancies and DfE will run pilots in three areas in England - London, Lancashire, and the northeast of England to test this. Funding was given to these areas to support their pilots, totalling £140,000, £55,000, and £75,000 respectively. Pilot areas will use their pre-existing network of employers, training providers and educational bodies to help create more apprenticeship opportunities locally and to ensure young people are aware of what is available. DfE also asked regional authorities to ensure young people were supported in their efforts to secure apprenticeships, recognising that many disadvantaged groups face barriers in being able to secure the roles that they want. There was additionally an expectation that all activities should be monitored to establish their effectiveness.
- 1.3 Under cover of [MD2522](#), the GLA has previously funded and supported a pilot (unrelated to the funding outlined in this form), led by the London Progression Collaboration (LPC (now known as WorkWhile)), which successfully tested how to increase the number of apprenticeships in London by brokering levy transfers between employers to create more apprenticeships and connecting them to Londoners. The evaluation of the LPC found that providing personalised support to young Londoners looking to access an apprenticeship is a successful model and will be built on through this pilot.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 The project aims to increase the number of apprenticeship starts from the 2023-2024 Year 13 cohort (17 to 18-year-olds).
- 2.2 The project will be aimed at all school and college leavers in their final year of full-time education; those seeking apprenticeships at any level.
- 2.3 The core objectives are to:
 - inspire students, their schools, parents and influencers to consider apprenticeships as a viable and credible next step, alongside higher education
 - bring apprenticeships closer to young people still in education – connecting young people in schools and colleges with employers and providers at the time when they are considering their future options

- provide employers with early access to talented young people
- provide wraparound support to students to successfully secure an apprenticeship – keeping the interest of those who might not have otherwise been successful.

2.4 It is expected that the above objectives will be achieved during the pilot. This pilot will aim to better support individuals who have traditionally faced barriers to accessing apprenticeships, such as those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or Special Educational Needs and Disabled (SEND) individuals. The funding will be utilised to commission an external partner organisation which will provide a brokerage service, making young people aware of apprenticeship opportunities they can access. This organisation will also provide a wraparound service to young people to support them apply for these opportunities.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1 Under Section one of the Equality Act 2010, the Greater London Authority must have ‘due regard’ of to the desirability of exercising decisions in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage. Section 149 of the same Act additionally states that public authorities must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 3.2 As outlined in Impetus’ paper [‘Research Briefing 3: Apprenticeships’](#) (2019), economically disadvantaged young Londoners are significantly less likely to take on apprenticeships compared those in other regions. This partially stems the fact that poorer pupils are 50 per cent as likely to receive good GCSE marks as their more affluent contemporaries, often a requirement of accessing apprenticeships. Additionally, research by the London Assembly Economic Committee ([‘You’re Hired: A Bright Future for Apprenticeships in London’](#), 2022) demonstrated that individuals with a disability or learning difficulty make up 12.4 per cent of apprentices, despite 19 per cent of the working age population falling under this category. Additional support to individuals with these characteristics, as proposed by this pilot, has the potential to reduce this gap in outcomes such as identifying apprenticeships with lower entry requirements or ensuring applications are written to a higher standard which may prove difficult to those with lower English language abilities.
- 3.3 A potential disadvantage of the pilot is its focus purely on those in the 2023-2024 year 13 cohort, young persons aged between 17 and 18. The choice to do this was based on evidence collated by DfE, which identified this age group to be the most optimal in increasing apprenticeship starts. The long-term value of running the pilot will mitigate this temporary issue however, as it will ensure DfE have a better understanding of how to make Early Connect effectively. This will benefit all age groups, who will benefit from the increased access to apprenticeships.

4. Other considerations

Key Risks and Issues

Risk	Mitigation
Limited numbers of staff available to work on this project	This will be counteracted through the development of a project timeline. Through this, it will be possible to identify periods of increased staff demand and plan when to allocate additional staffing resources to respond to these.

	<p>Increased staffing capacity towards the end of the year following the completion of other projects, primarily the end of the European Social Fund, will additionally distribute a larger number of staff to this project.</p> <p>The use of a competitively selected delivery partner will additionally guarantee GLA staff are not required to work on the implementation of the brokerage and wraparound support aspects of the pilot.</p>
Limited availability of data relating to apprenticeships, required to enable the GLA and its selected procurement partner to make effective decisions in the design of this pilot.	<p>Steps have been taken to mitigate this through collaboration with DfE. Members of the GLA project team met with analysts from the Department to discuss data requirements and timelines for obtaining them. These have been agreed with the Department and the necessary data will be shared with the GLA project team prior to finalising the requirements of the delivery partner.</p>

Links to Mayoral Strategies and Priorities

- 4.1 Early Connect aligns with the principles of the [Skills Roadmap for London](#) (SRL). The SRL states; “Collaboration and partnership between London’s civil society, businesses, skills providers, local government, and support services... will mean that adult education can respond more effectively to these needs.” The Early Connect working group will bring together stakeholders representing the interests of both employers and young people to facilitate a dialogue which will help meet the needs of both sides. This will be achieved by ensuring businesses are aware of the pilot and can list their apprenticeship roles on UCAS, and that schools are aware of the opportunities available to their pupils who are interested in pursuing an apprenticeship.
- 4.2 The SRL additionally targets training which can meet the skills gaps in London’s labour market and direct Londoners towards sectors with many employment opportunities. The wraparound support element of this pilot offers an opportunity to influence young Londoners as to which direction they wish to take their career. Young adults can be encouraged to pursue an apprenticeship in sectors that offer them good employment prospects, while simultaneously filling London’s skills needs. According to a report by Education and Employers (‘[Disconnected: Career aspirations and jobs in the UK](#)’, 2020) this is necessary as there is a significant difference in what young people want to work in compared to what jobs exist in the labour market.
- 4.3 The SRL also prioritises the need for making skills accessible to individuals who need them the most but face barriers to doing so. Early Connect will prioritise supporting those who have traditionally faced additional challenges to accessing apprenticeships, primarily disabled and economically disadvantaged Londoners for the reasons outlined previously. Wraparound support will ensure they are better placed to enter apprenticeships and will therefore improve their long-term employment and earning potential.

Safeguarding

- 4.4 As Early Connect will involve working with young people, some of whom will be under the age of 18 or potentially vulnerable, it is necessary to ensure there are safeguarding arrangements in place when managing the relationship with the procured partner organisation. There are several steps

which will be implemented to manage safeguarding concerns. All staff coming into direct contact with school pupils will be required to have a valid DBS certificate. Partner organisations will be responsible for providing evidence of up-to-date DBS certificates. In exceptional circumstances where a staff member's DBS certificate has recently expired or they have significant experience working with children, they can instead agree to complete a disclosure form confirming if the individual has ever been reported to the police. In the application form, organisations will be asked if they have a pre-existing child and safeguarding protocol, with preference given to those that do. The GLA will offer the successful bidder a dedicated session focused on safeguarding, to ensure the partner organisation have a clear understanding of what the barriers are when working with young people.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.5 There are no conflicts of interest to note for any of those involved in the drafting or clearance of the decision.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 Approval is sought for the receipt of £140,000 funding from the Department for Education (DfE) and for the expenditure of this funding to procure through an open and competitive tendering round a partner organisation to provide brokerage and wraparound services to young Londoners.
- 5.2 This funding will be received from the DfE in two separate blocks: £75,000 at the end of October 2023 and £65,000 in 2024 in the Skills and Employment unit's programme budget within the Helping Londoners into Good Work mission.
- 5.3 The initial £75,000 will be spent in 2023-24 financial year and the remaining £65,000 will be spent in 2024-25 financial year.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 The foregoing sections of this report indicate that:
- the decisions requested of the Director concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive or incidental to the promotion of economic development and wealth creation in Greater London; and
 - in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:
 - pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people
 - consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom
 - consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.2 In taking the decisions requested, the Director must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation) and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected

characteristic and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Director should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

6.3 If the Director makes the decisions sought, officers must ensure that:

- to the extent that expenditure concerns the:
 - payment for services, those services are procured in liaison with TfL Procurement and in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code and contracts are put in place between and executed by the GLA and contractors before commencement of such services
- in any event, the GLA's use of the DfE funding, aligns with any conditions applicable to its award.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	January - February 2024
Delivery Start Date	February - March 2024
Final evaluation start and finish:	March - September 2024
Delivery End Date	August 2024
Project Closure:	September 2024

Appendices and supporting papers:

Early Connect Application Form (available on request)

Department for Education Grant Approval Confirmation (available on request)

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Andrew Maitland has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Ann-Marie Soyinka has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

Financial and Legal advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

Corporate Investment Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Corporate Investment Board on 27 November 2023.

✓

INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:



Date:

04/12/2023