

## REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2687

**Title: Extension of grant to support boroughs to achieve UNICEF Baby Friendly accreditation**

### Executive summary:

UNICEF's Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) is an accredited infant-feeding programme that helps public services better support families with feeding. Through the Healthy Place, Healthy Weight mission, the GLA is grant-funding UNICEF to support eligible boroughs (not in receipt of government family hubs funding) to achieve or retain BFI accreditation.

This Decision seeks approval to use up to £6,280 of funding in the 2023-24 financial year, to extend the GLA's support to boroughs through this grant.

### Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Health, Children and Young Londoners approves an additional expenditure of £6,280 in the 2023-24 financial year to extend our support to boroughs through UNICEF's Baby Friendly Initiative, taking total expenditure to £31,460 (*ie that agreed by MD2930 plus this extra*).

This funding builds on that already agreed through MD2930 to help us meet demand from boroughs.

### AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

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:** Jazz Bhogal

**Position:** Assistant Director, Health, Children and Young Londoners

**Signature:**



**Date:**

05/12/2023

## **PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE**

### **Decision required – supporting report**

#### **1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1. Breast feeding has numerous health benefits to both mothers and children, supporting the aims of the Mayor's Healthy Place, Healthy Weight (HPHW) mission for London.
- 1.2. The Mayor committed, in his London Health Inequalities Strategy and London Food Strategy, to work towards making London a baby-friendly city; and encourage boroughs to become accredited through the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) for maternity and community services.
- 1.3. The UNICEF BFI is an accredited, evidence-based infant-feeding programme that enables public services to better support families with feeding, and developing close and loving relationships, so that all babies get the best possible start in life.
- 1.4. As part of the HPHW mission, the GLA awarded grant funding of £25,180 to UNICEF (approved through MD2930) to support 17 eligible boroughs (please see Appendix 1) to achieve or retain BFI accreditation.
- 1.5. As agreed with UNICEF, this support comes via a series of sessions and courses, in which boroughs have expressed an interest:
  - information session on BFI (this took place on 17 October 2023)
  - one-day course for borough leaders (this took place on 24 October 2023)
  - six planning meetings for boroughs: these are one-day planning meetings, tailored for each borough and designed to kick-start their journey towards accreditation for children's centres (these will take place between November 2023 and March 2024)
  - a five-day-course: there are two sets of these taking place in early 2024, currently with 12 places in total available across both courses – course 1 is for health professionals, and course 2 is for early-years professionals.
- 1.6. Demand from eligible boroughs for the upcoming planning meetings and five-day courses has exceeded the current funding allocation. This decision is seeking approval to meet this unmet need from eligible boroughs.
- 1.7. The cost of £6,280 will be funded from the Children and Young Londoners team's 2023-24 early years budget. This will fund two additional planning meetings and three additional places across the two five-day-courses.
- 1.8. This would bring our total funding to UNICEF to £31,460.

#### **2. Objectives and expected outcomes**

- 2.1. Two additional planning meetings are to be delivered, bringing the total to eight planning meetings.
- 2.2. Three additional attendees will be given a place on one of the two five-day courses, bringing the total to 15 attendees.
- 2.3. Eligible boroughs are supported to achieve or retain UNICEF BFI accreditation. Services in these boroughs can better support local families with infant feeding, including supporting more women to breastfeed or to breastfeed for longer.

- 2.4. Promotion of good infant nutrition and increased rates of breastfeeding leads to improved outcomes for children, and a reduction in health inequalities. For example, babies who are breastfed are protected against infection, and are less likely to be overweight or obese in later life.

### **3. Equality comments**

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Equality Act), as a public authority the Mayor must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and any conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy sets out how the Mayor will help address inequalities, barriers and discrimination experienced by groups protected by the Equality Act. In this strategy, the Mayor of London has, for the first time, gone beyond these legal duties and contributes towards addressing wider issues such as poverty and socio-economic inequality, as well as the challenges and disadvantage facing different groups in London, including young people.
- 3.3. A large body of expert evidence confirms that breastfeeding is extremely beneficial for the health of both mothers and babies, in the short and longer term. For example, it protects babies against infection, and makes them less likely to be overweight or obese in later life.
- 3.4. However, breastfeeding can come with challenges, and some families need extra support to start and sustain it.
- 3.5. Although breastfeeding is free, women in lower-income households, or living in more deprived areas, are less likely to start or sustain breastfeeding.
- 3.6. At present, support and information for breastfeeding varies widely across London. It is important to take evidence-based approaches to enhancing support for those who need it most.
- 3.7. COVID-19 changed the daily lives of children and their families in ways that are likely to have exacerbated levels of childhood obesity. This included higher levels of food insecurity, and long periods of physical inactivity. These impacts have been disproportionately felt by communities who already experience the greatest health inequalities in London.
- 3.8. This was demonstrated in findings from the National Child Measurement Programme for the 2020-21 school year. This shows large increases in the proportion of children living with overweight (including obesity), obesity and severe obesity compared to previous years. The largest increase is found in London. For Reception-age children in London, obesity increased from 10 per cent to 15 per cent, and for Year 6 children it increased from 23.7 per cent to over 30 per cent. Over 45 per cent of Year 6 children are now overweight or obese.
- 3.9. There is a strong relationship between deprivation and obesity. The effects of deprivation can be seen at both ages 4-5 and 10-11, but they widen with age.
- 3.10. In light of the evidence set out above, it is felt that extending our grant to support boroughs to achieve UNICEF baby friendly accreditation will support the duties and policies set out in sections 3.1 and 3.2.

### **4. Other considerations**

- 4.1. Key risks are outlined below:

Risk	Mitigating action	Risk rating (red/amber/green)
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Boroughs drop out of training they have committed to attend	Boroughs have already given written confirmation (via email) that they wish to attend planning meetings and/or courses.  Formal UNICEF booking forms will be sent to all attendees of the five-day course, outlining the commitment and asking for a signature from the attendee and their head of services.	Green
Some additional support sessions cannot be scheduled/take place by end of March 2024 (project end)	Early conversations have been held with UNICEF regarding their capacity to deliver additional support by end of March 2024.  Dates of upcoming training sessions and possible planning meetings have been shared with boroughs at an early stage.  The GLA is working closely with boroughs and UNICEF to find dates for planning meetings that suit all.  As a last resort, delivery could slip into April 2024, as long as boroughs are booked onto courses (i.e. there is a definite commitment that sessions will take place).	Green

#### 4.2. Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities are outlined below:

- This work forms part of the HPHW recovery mission for London, which aims to ensure that, by 2023, all London's children and families will find it easier to eat healthy food and be active where they live, learn, work and play.
- In the [London Health Inequalities Strategy](#), the Mayor commits to supporting well-evidenced, health-promoting activities such as breastfeeding. He encourages all London boroughs to become UNICEF BFI-accredited in maternity and community services.
- In the [London Food Strategy](#), the Mayor commits to increase rates of breastfeeding, and to work towards making London a 'baby-friendly' city; making the GLA Group more breastfeeding-friendly; and encouraging boroughs to become UNICEF BFI-accredited in maternity and community services.
- In 2018, the Mayor established the London Child Obesity Taskforce (now the Mayor's Advisory Group on Child Healthy Weight) to give every child in London the chance to grow up eating healthily, drinking plenty of water and being physically active. Supporting women to breastfeed for longer is one of 10 ambitions set out by this group in their [Every Child A Healthy Weight](#) delivery plan

## 5. Financial comments

#### 5.1. Approval is sought for expenditure of £6,280 for 2023-24 to cover the cost of:

- two additional planning meetings delivered: £2,200 (£1,100 per meeting)
- three additional attendees across the five-day courses: £4,080 (£1,360 per attendee)

#### 5.2. This funding will come from the Children and Young Londoners team's Early Years budget

#### 5.3. This is in addition to £25,180 already being grant-funded to UNICEF in 2023-24, through the HPHW Mission Development budget approved by MD2930.

#### 5.4. This would bring our total funding to UNICEF to £31,460.

## 6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

6.1. The project will be delivered according to the timetable detailed below.

Activity	Timeline
Attendance at planning meetings and five-day courses confirmed – booking forms sent to boroughs	November 2023
Eight planning meetings take place	November 2023 to March 2024
Two five-day courses take place	January to March 2024
Project end date	April 2024

### Appendices and supporting papers:

Appendix 1: Eligible boroughs

### 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 be published either 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 the 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:

Alex Godbold has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

#### Corporate Investment Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Corporate Investment Board on 4 December 2023.

✓

### ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FINANCIAL SERVICES:

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

**Signature:**

*Anna Eastcott*

**Date:**

06/12/2023