

## REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2686

### CHAIN Development of StreetLink London

#### Executive summary:

The GLA commissions and funds a range of pan-London rough-sleeping services. This Director Decision seeks approval for expenditure of £82,260, to vary the contract with Homeless Link for the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN). This is to develop and implement the StreetLink London phonenumber in the CHAIN system by 31 March 2024. This expenditure will be funded from the GLA Rough Sleeping programme budget.

The funding for this service will provide support to people sleeping rough across London, furthering the Mayor's aim to end rough sleeping in London.

#### Decision:

That the Executive Director of Housing and Land approves expenditure of £82,260 to vary the contract with Homeless Link for the Combined Homelessness and Information Network to develop and support the StreetLink London phonenumber and an attendant exemption from the Contracts and Funding Code to allow for the variation to be undertaken in 2023-24 without need for a competitive procurement.

#### 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:** Tim Steer

**Position:** Executive Director of Housing and Land

**Signature:**



**Date:**

05/02/2024

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

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

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

- 1.1. A total of 10,053 people were seen sleeping rough in London during 2022-23. (This is a 21 per cent increase from 2021-22.) Of these, 64 per cent were new to the streets; 16 per cent were returning to rough sleeping after not being seen in the previous year; and 51 per cent were non-UK nationals. Additionally, 71 per cent had support needs, of which 51 per cent related to mental health; 31 per cent to alcohol; and 32 per cent to drugs.
- 1.2. In his 2018 London Housing Strategy, the Mayor set out his aim for a sustainable route off the streets for every rough sleeper in London. In June 2018 he published his Rough Sleeping Plan of Action, which outlines the steps that must be taken by City Hall, government and others to achieve this aim. In 2021, the Mayor refreshed his Rough Sleeping Commissioning Framework, which sets out the overarching and cross-cutting priorities underpinning the GLA's commissioning activities from 2021 to 2024.
- 1.3. Since taking office, the Mayor has been expanding the pan-London rough-sleeping services that the GLA funds and commissions. These services – collectively forming the GLA Rough Sleeping programme – are for people with experience, or at risk, of sleeping rough. They are initiatives to tackle rough sleeping that cannot or would not be provided at a London-borough level, as they either meet a very specific need or deliver at the pan-London/multi-borough level. Since 2016, the GLA Rough Sleeping programme has supported over 16,000 people to leave the streets for good.
- 1.4. The Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) is the most complete source of data on a rough-sleeping population within the UK. Commissioned by the GLA and provided by Homeless Link since 1 April 2022, the CHAIN system is the main recording tool for all street-outreach services across London. It plays an important role in monitoring the work of on-street services, and the needs and outcomes for the people they work with. CHAIN also produces regular published reports for the GLA, the homelessness sector and the public.
- 1.5. Since 2013, StreetLink has existed as a digital and phone service for England and Wales. It enables people to send an alert when they see someone sleeping rough. This alert will connect that person to local support services that can help to end their homelessness.
- 1.6. The Mayor has been contributing grant funding to the national StreetLink service since 2016 (Mayoral Decision (MD) 1532), recognising the additional and high-volume work to which the StreetLink service is required to respond in London, given the high levels of rough sleeping compared to other parts of the country. Historically, other funders have included the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC); the Welsh government; Homeless Link; and, more recently, London Councils and Bloomberg Associates.
- 1.7. In December 2022, the DLUHC announced it was procuring a new contract for the national StreetLink service, under a revised service model that reduced functionality to triage referrals and removed the phonenumber – aspects of the service that were critical to outreach in London. The new StreetLink service commenced in September 2023. To retain the enhanced service required in London to triage referrals, operate a phonenumber and respond to self-referrals, the GLA increased its contribution to the StreetLink budget in 2023-24 and created a new StreetLink London service. This was approved in MD3135.
- 1.8. The GLA Rough Sleeping programme is funded from the core GLA budget, supplemented by various government grants – such as the DLUHC's Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI). A series of previous MDs have approved receipt of Government funds and GLA expenditure in respect of the Rough Sleeping programme. Between March 2020 and December 2023, a total of £112.82m has been approved in this way.

## Activity and funding profile

- 1.9. This decision seeks approval to vary the contract with Homeless Link, to develop and implement StreetLink London functionality in the CHAIN database in 2023-24. The approved expenditure of £82,260 will be spent in 2023-24.
- 1.10. Details of the service, and a more detailed breakdown of the funding mechanisms and budget, are set out in section 2.

## 2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. CHAIN is the most complete source of data on a rough-sleeping population within the UK. Commissioned by the GLA, and provided by Homeless Link since 1 April 2022, the CHAIN system is the main recording tool for all street-outreach services across London. It plays an important role in monitoring the work of on-street services; and the needs and outcomes for people they work with. CHAIN also produces regular published reports for the homelessness sector and the public.
- 2.2. Following an open, competitive procurement process to identify the provider, in compliance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code (the Code), the CHAIN contract was awarded to Homeless Link and entered into on 1 April 2022. The contract had an initial term of three years plus two further optional extensions of one year each. The value of the contract over the five years was £2m (£0.4m per annum). The contract was approved by MD2789. To date, three further pre-existing contractual options – in relation to additional services – have been exercised with a total value up to £0.4m. These were approved by MD2957, MD3043 and MD3161, bringing the total cumulative value of the contract to £2.4m in total, £1.6m of which has been spent to date. This is the first variation to the contract, which does not fall within a pre-existing option in the contract.
- 2.3. StreetLink is critical to the performance of rough-sleeping outreach services in London. This is because it uses members of the public as the 'eyes and ears' of the service, spotting and quickly reporting people sleeping rough. These people can then be found by outreach teams, and connected with support to end their rough sleeping. It also enables people sleeping rough to seek support for themselves via a dedicated phoneline. The primary role of the Mayor's Rapid Response Outreach Team is to rapidly respond to StreetLink referrals across 26 London boroughs; and offer an immediate route away from the streets to people found bedding down.
- 2.4. A consultation with London local authority rough sleeping commissioners, housing directors, and street-outreach team managers in early 2023 concluded that there was a need to retain an enhanced StreetLink service in London to triage referrals, operate a phoneline and respond to self-referrals under the new StreetLink London service. In light of the DLUHC's decision to remove funding for elements of the StreetLink service that meet London's needs, and the results of the consultation, the GLA and St Mungo's agreed to combine the Mayoral-funded StreetLink London Advice Line and StreetLink service into one team, to be known as 'StreetLink London'.
- 2.5. As part of the transition to the government's new StreetLink service, data that was previously captured by StreetLink pertaining to outreach activity in London and which was integrated with the CHAIN system will begin to be captured on a separate system with limited connectivity with CHAIN. To maintain CHAIN's objectives, and ensure that data on outreach activity continues to be captured consistently and coherently in a singular, reportable database, it is necessary to expand the database and make provision for additional data to be recorded by the StreetLink London service. This expansion of functionality within the CHAIN database falls within the scope of the original contract.
- 2.6. The agreements held by DLUHC with the former national StreetLink service provider, Homeless Link, also cease at the end of March 2024, meaning the facilitation of the StreetLink London phoneline as well as telephony licencing and call costs will also need to be replaced. The GLA Rough Sleeping team has confirmed with the provider of CHAIN, Homeless Link, that this functionality can be replicated within the CHAIN system.

- 2.7. CHAIN will develop and launch the new StreetLink London system by the end of March 2024.
- 2.8. This DD therefore seeks approval for a variation of the GLA's contract with Homeless Link via an exemption from the requirements of the Code; and expenditure of £82,260 to develop and implement StreetLink London functionality in the CHAIN database in 2023-24.
- 2.9. The proposed variation to the Homeless Link contract does not fall within the ambit of the pre-existing options allowed for in that contract. As such, this decision seeks an exemption from the requirements of the Code. Section 10.1 of the Code allows for an exemption to standard procurement processes where the service provider has previous involvement in a specific current project, or the proposed services comprise the continuation of existing work that cannot be separated from the new project/work. The services that are the subject of the variation cannot be separated from the existing work being carried out by Homeless Link, and any competitive procurement process would cause significant inconvenience to the GLA and would likely also lead to substantial duplication of costs. As the proposed variation is a continuation of existing work on terms that were originally the subject of a competitive procurement, it will provide a similar level of value for money as the GLA achieved following the procurement of the original CHAIN contract.
- 2.10. Subject to approval of the above, the total value of the current spend under the contract would increase to £1.68m, whilst the total cumulative value of the contract over its full five-year term would increase to £2,486,766.

### **3. Equality comments**

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as public authorities, the Mayor and the GLA are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty, and must have due regard of the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
  - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. Protected characteristics under section 149 of the Equality Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage or civil partnership status (all except the last being "relevant" protected characteristics).
- 3.3. Objective 3 of the Mayor's equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, Inclusive London, is "to address the specific barriers that prevent some rough sleepers exiting rough sleeping and rebuilding their lives".
- 3.4. The funding referenced in this decision will help to tackle the inequalities experienced by certain groups of Londoners most affected by homelessness and rough sleeping. Of those seen sleeping rough in 2022-23:
- 51 per cent were non-UK nationals
  - 19 per cent were Black or Black British
  - 5 per cent were Roma
  - 51 per cent had a mental health need
  - 17 per cent were female

- 58 per cent were aged 26-45
  - 8 per cent were under 26
  - 12 per cent were over 55.
- 3.5. Homelessness in London, and specifically rough sleeping, disproportionately affects people with certain protected characteristics. Increasing the provision of preventative homelessness interventions will help to achieve positive impacts in line with the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- 3.6. Recent data from CHAIN shows a large increase in the number of people seen sleeping rough by street-outreach teams in London. The national StreetLink service receives around 20,000 alerts per quarter. Around two-thirds of these are for people sleeping rough in London; this includes 2,000 phoneline self-referrals from people sleeping rough in London. The proposed service will enable people sleeping rough to connect with services and receive positive outcomes to help end their rough sleeping.
- 3.7. The allocation of funding in this decision is aimed at implementing the Mayor's policies set out in the London Housing Strategy. In May 2018 the GLA published an equality impact assessment (EIA) of that strategy. Policies related to tackling homelessness and helping rough sleepers, to which this service will contribute, were included in that assessment. The EIA concluded that measures to support rough sleepers off the streets, and to help them avoid returning, mean they will be removed from the acute risk and social isolation that sleeping rough creates. This will benefit those with protected characteristics, especially people with disabilities whom the baseline for the EIA identified as disproportionately more likely to be seen sleeping on London's streets.

#### 4. Other considerations

##### Key risks and issues

- 4.1. The key risks and issues for the GLA Rough Sleeping programme, and the service outlined in this decision, are set out in the table below:

<b>Risk description</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Mitigating action</b>
Insufficient staff resources within the GLA to develop, deliver and monitor the service will reduce their effectiveness. There is a potential risk to the clients' safety if services are poorly designed and delivered, or providers are not effectively monitored.	High	Low	There are dedicated GLA leads for each existing service. All services are monitored through quarterly formal reporting and more frequent meetings, as well as occasional audits. Senior dedicated service leads at Homeless Link and St Mungo's are working in close collaboration with GLA leads to set out clear policies and procedures to support people sleeping rough who contact StreetLink London.
The provider is delayed in developing the new service, leaving a gap in service delivery when the old service closes.	High	Low	The provider has agreed to supply a clear development timetable that will be monitored closely by the GLA Rough Sleeping team. Mitigation measures to keep the phoneline open will ensure service continuity.
The providers may perform poorly, negatively impacting on the	Medium	Low	Rigorous grant funding monitoring process by the GLA will ensure that poor

achievement of key mayoral objectives and more detailed service-specific KPIs.			performance is identified and rectified quickly and appropriately.
The numbers of people seen sleeping rough may change to the point where services are no longer appropriate at the scale envisaged.	Medium	Low	The GLA Rough Sleeping team constantly monitors the rough-sleeping landscape, through detailed quarterly CHAIN reports; and strategic and operational interactions with key stakeholders from, among others, boroughs, service providers and central government.

#### Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.2. The service for which this DD seeks approval will help meet Policy 7.2 of the Mayor's London Housing Strategy: supporting rough sleepers off the streets. This will occur through a range of actions to help meet the stated central aim of the Mayor "to ensure there is a route off the streets for every single rough sleeper in London". The GLA Rough Sleeping team works closely with partners in local authorities, London Councils, the DLUHC and the charity sector to support rough sleepers off the streets; and provides pan-London leadership and coordination. The services and projects funded form part of proposal B of the same policy, which states:

*"The Mayor will fund and commission a range of pan-London services and other initiatives to complement those provided by local councils. These will focus on identifying rough sleepers and intervening rapidly to support them off the streets, providing specialist support for particular groups, and helping rough sleepers stay off the street."*

- 4.3. The service funded through this DD will also help meet the objectives of the London Health Inequalities Strategy. Addressing homelessness and rough sleeping is one of the seven objectives set by the Mayor to achieve the aim that all Londoners benefit from an environment and an economy that together promote good mental and physical health.

#### Conflicts of interest

- 4.4. There are no known conflicts of interest for those involved in the drafting or clearance of this report.

## **5. Financial comments**

- 5.1. Executive Director's approval is sought for expenditure of £82,260 to vary the contract with Homeless Link for CHAIN to develop and support the StreetLink London phoneline. This expenditure will be funded from the 2023-24 GLA Core Rough Sleeping programme budget within Specialist Housing Services unit part of Housing and Land Directorate.

## **6. Legal comments**

#### Power to undertake the requested decisions

- 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 and fall within the GLA's statutory power to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive or incidental to the promotion of social development within 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, and foster good relations, 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 (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the director should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

#### Contract variation and exemption from the Code

- 6.3. The decision above seeks approval of the variation of the GLA's contract with Homeless Link for the CHAIN service to allow for the procurement of a further £82,260 worth of services. Regulation 72(1)(f) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR) provides that a variation may be made to a contract during its term where the value of the services the subject of the proposed variation falls below both the PCR threshold and 10 per cent of the initial contract value over its full term (including any optional extensions) provided that the variation does not alter the overall nature of the contract. The original contract has a value of £2m. Furthermore, officers have explained at paragraph 2.5, above, that the scope of the services the subject of the variation does not alter the overall nature of the contract. In light of this, the proposed variation falls within the ambit of a permissible variation under regulation 72(1)(f) of the PCR.
- 6.4. In addition to approval of the variation, the officers have asked for approval of an exemption from the requirements of the Code. Section 10.1 of the Code provides that an exemption may be approved where, inter alia, the services the subject of the variation cannot be separated from the existing work being carried out by the current service provider. Officers have set out at paragraphs 2.1 to 2.10, above, how the requested variation falls within section 10 of the Code.

## **7. Planned delivery approach and next steps**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Funding agreement signed	31 January 2024
Systems development commenced	1 February 2024
Systems development completed	31 March 2024

### **Appendices and supporting papers:**

None.

**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:**

Christian MacNamara has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

**Assistant Director/Head of Service:**

Natalie Daniels 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 5 February 2024.

✓

**INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:**

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

**Signature:**



**Date:**

05/02/2024