

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3354

Title: Supporting and inspiring young Londoners – Mental health in schools

Executive Summary:

This Mayoral Decision is seeking approval of expenditure of up to £810,000 across the 2025-26 and 2026-27 financial years, to deliver the Mental Health in Schools project as part of the Mayor's Supporting and inspiring young London programme.

The Mental Health in Schools project aims to support children and young Londoners to achieve the health and learning outcomes they need to thrive at every stage of development. The project, delivered by a third sector organisation in collaboration with partnered London boroughs, will help schools to implement a whole school approach (WSA) to wellbeing, fostering a preventative strategy for young Londoners' mental health within these school communities.

The funding allocation will cover project delivery and evaluation, with £80,000 to procure an independent evaluator, £650,000 to grant fund a voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisation to act as delivery partner and £80,000 to be grant funded to boroughs for administrative costs.

Decision:

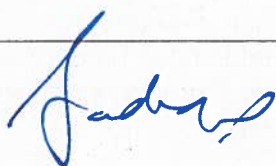
That the Mayor approves expenditure of up to £810,000 in 2025-2027 to deliver the Mental Health in Schools project and its evaluation as part of the supporting and inspiring young Londoners programme.

Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

28/4/24

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. This decision relates to the mental health priorities of the supporting and inspiring young Londoners programme, as well as reducing health inequalities.
- 1.2. The Mayor wants to support Londoners' mental health and wellbeing. The Mayor is particularly committed to ensuring that children and young people have good physical and mental health and that all Londoners live in a city that supports their mental and physical health.
- 1.3. In the Mayor's 2024 manifesto, he pledged to pilot new mental health initiatives focused in and around secondary schools.
- 1.4. Young Londoners are facing significant challenges with their mental health. While specific data for London is limited, national trends in young people's mental health are also likely to be reflective of the situation in the capital:
 - The number of young people facing mental health problems is growing. This has increased to one in five young people living with a probable mental health disorder in 2023 ([NHS](#)).
 - Young people now have the poorest mental health of any age group in the UK ([Health Foundation](#)).
 - Young people's mental health challenges are getting more complex, with the number of young people referred to emergency healthcare increasing by another 10 per cent in 2024 ([The Guardian](#)).
 - NHS London estimate there to be 400,000 children and young people with a mental health need in London, with an approximately 75 per cent treatment gap ([London Leaders Group NHS presentation July 2024](#)).
 - The mental health of children aged 10-15 years has declined in the last decade ([Snapshot of Health Inequalities in London - London Datastore 2024](#)).
- 1.5. The Mental Health in Schools project will support children and young Londoners to achieve the health and learning outcomes they need to thrive at every stage of development. The project, delivered by a third sector organisation in collaboration with partnered London boroughs, will help schools to implement a whole school approach (WSA) to wellbeing, fostering a preventative strategy for young Londoners' mental health within these school communities.
- 1.6. A WSA is a holistic set of interventions, that aim to involve the whole school community in shifting the school environment towards being more supportive of, and responsive to, mental health and wellbeing.
- 1.7. The Mental Health in Schools project will be based on forming a strong partnership with boroughs and wider partners who have insight and understanding of local and regional needs to identify schools and to deliver the project.
- 1.8. The project will target up to eight London boroughs based on a need and inclusion analysis criteria, with each borough nominating up to two secondary schools, ensuring alignment with local mental health strategies to achieve long-term impact.
- 1.9. The project is informed by the Inclusive and Nurturing Schools Programme, currently in delivery and scheduled to complete in January 2026. Nurture UK and Tender Education and Arts are being funded by the Mayor's Violence Reduction Unit to offer targeted and whole-school support around nurture/social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) support and healthy relationships education.

This funding provides whole-school healthy relationships education and training, as well as tailored small-group workshops for children.

1.10. Similar to the Mental Health in Schools project, boroughs have been identified through an expression of interest, and data indicators such as children in need, domestic abuse incident rates, absence rates, per cent of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support and more.

1.11. Each school will receive comprehensive support from the project's voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) delivery partner, including:

- an assessment of the work each school is doing to support students' mental health
- a collaborative process between students, staff and parents to create a delivery plan for elements of a WSA to mental health
- bespoke training on areas that the school has identified
- potential for engagement with other participating schools within a Community of Practice and the development of a toolkit to support implementation of WSAs in other schools.

1.12. An external evaluator will be procured to work alongside the VCSE organisation:

- this evaluation will look at the impacts of this work towards the implementation of a WSA, measuring the change in:
 - confidence levels in accessing mental health support for staff, students, parents and carers line
 - trust in the school environment on wellbeing issues
 - engagement in training and communities in practice by staff and schools.

1.13. Approval is being sought through this decision for the following work, which will be delivered across two financial years 2025-26 and 2026-27:

- grant funding a Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisation to deliver Mental Health in Schools WSA
- grant funding up to eight London boroughs to support the administrative costs of the partnership approach to delivery
- procuring an independent evaluator.

1.14. The table below provides a breakdown of the approval being sought under this decision for 2025-2027 expenditure:

Activity	2025-26	2026-27
Mental Health in Schools project delivery	£300,000	£350,000
Partnership with London boroughs	£80,000	-
Independent evaluation	£40,000	£40,000

1.15. Expenditure will take the form of grant awards to boroughs and a VCSE organisation alongside a contract for service for the evaluator, the procurement of which will depend on the nature of the activity concerned. The provision of grant funding and the procurement process will be conducted in accordance with relevant GLA procedures, including the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The Mayor's Mental Health in Schools project will build upon the Mayor's substantial body of work since the pandemic helping Londoners to champion better mental health and wellbeing through raising awareness, sharing resources, providing training and signposting to support.
- 2.2. The work within schools will aim to:
 - enable transformative systems change across regional partners and London schools
 - reduce health inequalities relating to mental health and wellbeing
 - improve schools' capacity to support students' mental health and wellbeing
 - increase awareness and understanding of mental health issues among students, staff, and parents
 - equip students with the skills and knowledge to manage their own mental health and support their peers.
- 2.3. Objectives of the project include:
 - building sustainable partnership with London boroughs, schools and wider regional partners to co-produce and deliver the project
 - implementing mental health education: integrate mental health education into the curriculum and provide workshops for students, staff, and parents
 - training staff: provide training for teachers and school staff on mental health awareness, early intervention techniques, and how to support students with mental health issues
 - establishing support networks: develop support networks within the school, including peer support groups and access to mental health professionals
 - engaging parents and carers: involve parents and carers in mental health initiatives (which could include resources and signposting) to support their children's mental health at home
 - promoting student voice: encourage students to share their experiences and ideas on mental health and involve them in decision-making processes related to mental health initiatives.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Equality Act), as a public authority the GLA must have 'due regard' of the need to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and any conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act
 - advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the identification and evaluation of the likely potential impacts, both positive and negative, of the decision on those with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation).

- 3.3. The Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy sets out how the Mayor will help address the inequalities, barriers and discrimination experienced by groups protected by the Equality Act. The above project aligns with the Mayor's EDI strategy objectives (2022). In particular:
- objective seven commits to removing barriers preventing children and young Londoners from realising their potential now and later in life
 - objective 12 commits to addressing the reasons for health inequalities that cause some groups to experience poorer physical and mental health outcomes.
- 3.4. This project will aim to support schools and students in London's communities facing greater challenges. The GLA and the priority boroughs will identify schools based on the analysis of needs in the areas, including but not restricted to:
- deprivation rates of the local area, including rate of Free School eligibility
 - schools without existing Mayoral or Mental Health Support Team involvement
 - rates of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
 - school absence rates
 - diversity of ethnic backgrounds
 - rates of young carers.

4. Other considerations

Risks and issues

Risk	Mitigation	RAG
Low engagement with boroughs due to their low capacity.	Funding for boroughs to support implementation and improve resource capacity.	Amber
Low engagement with schools / high dropout rates due to capacity.	Working with boroughs to identify schools best placed to participate in the project and with sufficient capacity.	Amber
The impact of the project is not sustained across London schools.	Implementing a Community of Practice between schools to share learning and best practice. Creation of a toolkit with learnings from this work which can be shared to help other schools implement a WSA.	Green

Subsidy control assessment

- 4.1. The Subsidy Control Act 2022 (SC Act) requires that grant funding of £80,000 and £650,000 (totalling £730,000) has been considered against subsidy control requirements. The subsidy has been assessed against the four-limbed test under the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and is confirmed to meet the necessary criteria, ensuring compliance with the UK's subsidy control framework.
- 4.2. The objective of the proposed funding aligns with the GLA's strategic objective to reduce health inequalities and is designed to target schools with the greatest need, in line with the Mayor's Health Inequalities Strategy. The proposed funding is considered a proportionate response, as it will enable boroughs to participate in the project, building stronger mental health infrastructure in secondary

schools. Furthermore, it will allow the VCSE organisation to support schools and students it would not otherwise have been able to reach.

- 4.3. The subsidy will support the local authorities to engage with the project, building strong links between the schools and the VCSE partner and supporting the data collection for the project's evaluation. The subsidy will also support the VCSE organisation to provide interventions within the selected secondary schools to support mental health. This work will directly inform and shape future projects.
- 4.4. There is no alternate route, within this period, for the GLA to ensure London boroughs are capable of engaging with and supporting the objectives of this project. Local authorities are unique in their ability to connect schools with the provider and source the data needed to evaluate this work. The VCSE organisation which is grant funded will have the expertise and capacity to support the selected schools.
- 4.5. The subsidy enables participation in the project by funding boroughs' administrative costs and supporting a VCSE organisation to deliver interventions in schools. Without this subsidy, boroughs would lack the capacity to implement the project, and the VCSE organisation would be unable to reach and support young people who need these services. The funding directly incentivises engagement and ensures that necessary mental health interventions take place, which would not otherwise occur.
- 4.6. The grant funding is intended to support system change across schools in London for children and young people's mental health. The subsidy is considered the most appropriate mechanism because it provides direct and targeted support to boroughs who are uniquely placed to support schools directly with the delivery of the policy objective. Additionally, it provides for school support that would not otherwise be in place. Given, the urgency and scale of the challenge, no alternative means would achieve the objective as effectively.
- 4.7. This time-limited intervention by the Mayor of London strengthens borough capacity to address mental health challenges in secondary schools. It does not negatively impact competition in children's mental health support or investment within the UK or internationally. Any potential negative effects are outweighed by the significant benefits of the subsidy. As a strategic authority, the GLA aims to reduce health inequalities. By targeting funding to high-need boroughs and a single VCSE organisation, this intervention aligns with the Mayor's Health Inequalities Strategy and ensures maximum impact.

Links to Mayoral strategies

- 4.8. The Mayor's ten-year London Health Inequalities Strategy (HIS) 2018-28 (published October 2018) outlines a vision and aims for Londoners' mental health:
 - Healthy Children – every London child has a healthy start in life
 - Healthy Minds – all Londoners share in a city with the best mental health in the world.
- 4.9. The project links to the mayoral commitment in his manifesto of providing 250,000 opportunities for young people, mental health training for mentors and addressing health inequalities.
- 4.10. Additionally, this work interacts with important outcomes for both the 'Reducing Inequalities' and 'Celebrating London' programmes as it provides support for low-income families and other communities facing disadvantage as well as helping more young Londoners to have access to positive opportunities.
- 4.11. The WSA project contributes to the Mayor's cross-cutting principles of building a 'resilient city' and 'health in all policies'.
- 4.12. By providing schools with robust frameworks to support young Londoners' mental health, giving young Londoners a more effective safety net through their mentors and equipping young people with

stronger mental health skills to reduce systemic strain, this work will support the aim of making London a more 'resilient city'.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Approval is sought for the expenditure of £810,000 over the 2025-26 and 2026-27 financial years to deliver the Mental Health in Schools project and its evaluation as part of the supporting and inspiring young London programme.
- 5.2. The funding allocation will cover project delivery and evaluation, with £80,000 to procure an independent evaluator, £650,000 to procure a delivery partner and £80,000 to be grant funded to boroughs for administrative costs.
- 5.3. The table at paragraph 1.14 above shows the breakdown of expenditure across financial years with £420,000 expenditure expected in the 2025-26 financial year and £390,000 expenditure expected in the 2026-27 financial year.
- 5.4. This expenditure of £810,000 will be funded from the Mental Health in Schools project budget which falls within the supporting and inspiring young London programme.
- 5.5. Funding for future financial years is subject to the annual budget setting process and is subject to change. The expenditure of £810,000 is planned in the Mental Health in Schools project budget in 2025-26 financial year. The 2025-26 budget will be reduced to reflect the changed anticipated spend in this financial year. The 2026-27 expenditure will be subject to budget being made available in the future financial year.
- 5.6. Any contracts that commit the GLA in future years will be subject to appropriate break clauses.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The decision requested of the Mayor falls within the general powers of the Mayor in section 30 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (GLA Act) to do anything which it considers will further any one or more of its principal purposes. Those principal purposes include furthering the promotion of social development in Greater London. Section 34 of the GLA Act also allows the Mayor to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the exercise of any functions of the GLA exercisable by the Mayor. 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 (section 33(1) of GLA Act)
 - consider how the proposals are best calculated to promote the improvement of health of persons in Greater London, promote the reduction of health inequalities between persons in Greater London, contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom and contribute towards the mitigation of, or adaptation to, climate change in the United Kingdom (section 30(5) of the GLA Act)
 - consult with appropriate bodies or persons (section 32(1) of the GLA Act).
- 6.2. In taking the decisions requested, the Mayor 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 Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

Grant funding

- 6.3. The decision above, seeks approval of a budget of £810,000 to deliver the Mental Health in Schools project. Part of the budget will be used to provide grant funding to a selected VCSE organisation to deliver the Mental Health in Schools project and grant funding to up to eight boroughs to provide administrative support. To that end, the GLA will be funding the delivery and administration of the project by the VCSE organisation and the selected boroughs to school children. Accordingly, there is no direct benefit to the GLA, and this part of the funding may be viewed as a grant rather than a contract. Officers are reminded to comply with section 12 of the Contracts and Funding Code (the Code). Furthermore, prior to the provision of the additional funding, officers must put in place either deeds of variation of existing funding agreements or new funding agreements between the GLA and the recipient boroughs.

Subsidy control

- 6.4. The Subsidy Control Act 2022 (“SCA”) requires that grant funding be assessed in relation to its four-limbed test. Officers have made this assessment in section 4, above, and have concluded that the proposed funding meets each of the limbs of the four-limbed test.
- 6.5. Where grant funding meets each of the four limbs of the four-limbed test and there are no relevant subsidy-control-related exemptions, the SCA requires that the grant funding be assessed in relation to its seven subsidy control principles. The officers have set out in section 4 above their assessment of how the proposed grant complies with each of the seven subsidy control principles.
- 6.6. Finally, given that the proposed grant amounts to a subsidy-control-principle-compliant subsidy and that it exceeds £100,000, officers are reminded to register the grant on the Department for Business and Trade’s Transparency Database.

Procurement

- 6.7. All procurements of works, services and supplies required for the project must be procured in accordance with the GLA’s Contracts and Funding Code (the “Code”) and with the Procurement Act 2023 and the Procurement Regulations 2024 (the Act and Regulations). Furthermore, officers must liaise with Transport for London’s procurement and supply chain team to determine the detail of the procurement strategy to be adopted in accordance with the Code and the Act and Regulations. Officers must ensure that appropriate contractual documentation be put in place and executed by chosen service provider/supplier and the GLA before the commencement of the attendant works, services or supplies.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Mental Health in Schools grant funding launched Evaluation procurement launched	April 2025
Grant agreement with a VCSE partner signed Contract with evaluator signed	June 2025
Engagement with boroughs and schools	June 2025 – September 2025
Engagement with the Mental Health in Schools delivery partner, boroughs and schools	June 2025 – September 2025
Mental Health in Schools delivered across 16 schools	September 2025 – March 2027
Data collection and evaluation activities	September 2025 – March 2027
Interim evaluation report	August 2026

Final evaluation Report	September 2027
Sustainability and community of practice	January 2027 – March 2027
Project ends	March 2027

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 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? YES

If YES, for what reason: to ensure a fair and competitive procurement process.

Until what date: 15 July 2025.

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:

Sarah Dobson has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

Sponsoring Director:

Tunde Olayinka has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's

Mayoral Adviser:

Joanne McCartney has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

Mayoral Delivery Board

This decision was agreed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 14 April 2025.

✓

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CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

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

Signature:



Date:

22/04/2025

CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor

Signature:



Date:

22/04/2025