

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2551

Title: Raising awareness of early years entitlements

Executive Summary:

London's early years sector is essential in promoting social cohesion, improving school readiness and closing the inequality gap. This has become more important as a result of COVID-19. It is vital for parents, especially women, who wish to return to work. This is a key driver across many of the Mayor's priorities including health, equalities, adult education and the economy.

This DD seeks approval for £70,000 for activities to raise awareness of early years entitlements and the research recommendations. This is to promote the essential importance of high-quality early childhood education and care to London's employers, parents and carers, and the wider public.

Activities funded through this DD fall within or complement the "Robust Safety Net" recovery mission, one of the nine recovery missions signed off by the London Recovery Board on 15 September 2020. This project contributes to the mission's goal – that by 2025, every Londoner is able to access the support they need to prevent financial hardship ('A Robust Safety Net'), by raising awareness of early years and childcare entitlements. This is vital for parents, and especially women wishing to return to work.

Decision:

That the Executive Director of Communities and Skills approves:

1. expenditure of up to £60,000 across financial years 2021-22 and 2022-23 to run a digital campaign raising awareness of early education and childcare offers amongst parents and carers
2. expenditure of up to £10,000 in 2021-22 to grant-fund an organisation to explore ways of supporting employees to understand and access childcare support, through consultation with the GLA and a group of Good Work Standard accredited employers; and to create a toolkit that can be shared with London employers.

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: Sarah Mulley

Position: Executive Director of Communities and Skills

Signature:



Date:

22/9/21

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. London's early years sector is essential in promoting social cohesion, improving school readiness and closing the inequality gap between disadvantaged children and their better-off peers, something that has become more important as a result of COVID-19. Access to high-quality early education and childcare is essential to the city's economy, supporting parents, especially women, who wish to return to work and training. Quality early education is a key driver across many of the Mayor's priorities including health, equalities, adult education and the economy.
- 1.2. Evidence following the first national lockdown shows that the lack of access to formal early years education had a significant impact on school readiness and mental wellbeing.
- 1.3. Take-up of early education and childcare places amongst poorer families is historically lower in London than elsewhere. In January 2020, only 59 per cent of London's most disadvantaged two-year-olds took up a free early education place, compared with 69 per cent nationally. Take-up has reduced significantly during the pandemic: in January 2021, 50 per cent of eligible two-year-olds were accessing their early education place in London, compared to 62 per cent nationally.
- 1.4. London's maternal employment rate is nearly 7 per cent lower than the rest of the country according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The costs of childcare in London are the highest in the country according to the Family and Childcare Trust.
- 1.5. COVID-19 has disproportionately affected groups that were in a disadvantaged position before the pandemic. According to research by the Child Poverty Action Group,¹ the problems faced by low-income families have been magnified, with 40 per cent of low-income families missing at least one essential resource to support their children's learning. The Thomas Reuters Foundation² has reported that women and low-paid workers are among the worst hit by UK coronavirus job cuts.
- 1.6. The GLA commissioned a rapid evidence review on the inequalities in relation to COVID-19 and their effects in London³ and found that mothers were 47 per cent more likely than fathers to have lost their jobs or resigned from their jobs, and 14 per cent more likely than fathers to have been furloughed. Women have taken on more childcare responsibilities when working from home; yet more than half of those who needed childcare reported not having sufficient provision in place and reported that the lack of childcare was a substantial contributor to loss of a job and being furloughed, all of which will have long-term economic consequences.
- 1.7. ADD2459 (August 2020) approved £35,000 for research into the provision of sector-specific business support to make recommendations for the wider system to ensure the sustainability of London's early years sector through the transition and recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic; and research into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on parental confidence in accessing formal childcare.
- 1.8. The research brought together evidence from early years practitioners, business support organisations, sector representative bodies and local government. Evidence was gathered through

¹ www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/coronavirus-has-exacerbated-problems-for-low-income-families.

² <https://news.trust.org/item/20200406125229-0o4qn>.

³ [https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/rapid-evidence-review-inequalities-in-relation-to-covid-19-and-their-effects-on-london#:~:text=The%20Greater%20London%20Authority%20\(GLA,characteristics%2C%20as%20well%20as%20those](https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/rapid-evidence-review-inequalities-in-relation-to-covid-19-and-their-effects-on-london#:~:text=The%20Greater%20London%20Authority%20(GLA,characteristics%2C%20as%20well%20as%20those).

surveys and focus groups and followed up with interviews and a roundtable to test and shape recommendations.

- 1.9. The research produced three key recommendations on how the early years sector can be supported through and post COVID-19:
- bring greater coordination and accessibility to the offer of business support for the early years sector in London
 - deliver a sustainability support initiative across London during 2021-2022
 - promote the essential importance of high-quality early childhood education and care to London's employers, parents, carers and the wider public.
- 1.10. This DD seeks approval for £70,000 for activities addressing the third of these recommendations, raising awareness of early education and childcare offers amongst parents and carers. Activities funded by this investment will include:
- running a digital campaign to raise awareness of early education and childcare offers amongst parents and carers
 - grant-funding an organisation to explore ways of supporting employees to understand and access childcare support. This will be done through consultation with the GLA and a group of Good Work Standard employers, and will include producing a toolkit to enable sharing good practice amongst London businesses.
- 1.11. Activities funded through this DD fall within or complement the "Robust Safety Net" recovery mission, one of the nine recovery missions signed off by the London Recovery Board on 15 September 2020. This project contributes to the mission's goal – that by 2025, every Londoner is able to access the support they need to prevent financial hardship ('A Robust Safety Net'), by raising awareness of early years and childcare entitlements. This is vital for parents, and especially women wishing to return to work.
- 1.12. The campaign will build on the Mayor's London Early Years Campaign run in 2019, which highlighted an issue of high complexity of different types of childcare support. Depending on the parents' circumstances, navigating the system and transitioning from one entitlement to another was identified as one of the main challenges for both parents and professionals.
- 1.13. The 2021 Campaign will target working parents entitled to a wider range of childcare support offers (as opposed to the 2019 Campaign targeting parents entitled only to free early education for two-year-olds) to address the issue of navigating the system identified in 2019. As such, it will support London economic and social recovery by enabling parents to find childcare they need when they need it.
- 1.14. The Early Years Campaign will consist of two strands:
- a digital campaign
 - exploring ways of supporting employees to understand and access childcare support.

Digital Campaign

- 1.15. We are working closely with the GLA Marketing team to develop the campaign. This strand will target London's working families, to raise awareness of available support with childcare. It will

target families for whom the cost of childcare is one of the main barriers to increasing working hours or entering employment.

- 1.16. We will also work with the Marketing and Digital teams to shape the messages and to create digital assets that will link with the government information service. The digital campaign will target families eligible for support with childcare costs, including free early education, childcare elements of Universal Credit and Tax Free Childcare.
- 1.17. The digital campaign will run between October 2021 and July 2022 with a total budget of £60,000 (£36,000 allocated to 2021-22 and £24,000 allocated to 2022-23). A formal review at the end of 21/22 financial year will take place to look at costs and impact to ensure value for money on investment.

Grant-fund an organisation to explore ways of supporting employees to understand and access childcare support

- 1.18. We will grant-fund an organisation to work with the Good Work Standard accredited employers to explore ways of supporting employees to understand and access early years entitlements. This will build on our current work with the GLA staff networks and with colleagues from across the organisation (e.g. Health and Wellbeing, Skills, Economic Fairness and Enterprise teams) to ensure the Mayor becomes an exemplary employer. The grant-funded organisation will create a toolkit that will be shared with wider London employers. We are planning to allocate £10,000 for this strand.
- 1.19. The grant-funding process will be conducted in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code. A competitive process will be used to select the delivery organisation, which will be appointed. The GLA and the chosen organisation will enter into the standard GLA funding agreement. Payments will be made in line with the GLA financial procedures and as set out in the GLA funding agreement.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1 The objectives are to:

- improve the awareness of early years entitlements amongst parents and carers
- improve the understanding of different types of early years and childcare support offers amongst parents and carers
- increase the awareness of childcare support entitlements amongst businesses and employers
- create a toolkit which can be shared with London employers
- create a resource library through an early years sector community of practice by working with partners.

2.2 This will be achieved by:

- running a digital campaign raising awareness of early education and childcare offers amongst parents and carers

- grant-funding an organisation to explore ways of supporting employees to understand and access childcare support, through consultation with the GLA and a group of Good Work Standard employers; and to create a toolkit that can be shared with London employers.

2.3 This funding will contribute to the following outcomes:

- improved awareness of the early years entitlements amongst Londoners
- improved awareness and access to different types of early years entitlements by parents and carers
- increased take-up of early education and childcare offers amongst London parents
- improved understanding of different types of childcare support amongst London employers leading to improved support for working parents.

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 first years of our lives are vital. Often, it is the poorest children who miss out. In 2019, only 56 per cent of eligible two-year-olds took up a free early education place in London, compared with 68 per cent nationally. By aged five, children entitled to free school meals are almost three months behind their better-off peers. Our report, 'Early Years in London', sets out more details on the key measures to monitor progress across early years and childcare, and the activity to be undertaken to address quality and access to early years provision. This early years campaign will help improve awareness of and access to early years and childcare entitlements for London parents, especially women, who want to work, and for those with children who have protected characteristics, including disabled children. Lack of awareness of childcare and early years entitlements acts as a barrier to labour market participation by parents, and mothers in particular. Increased female employment rates can contribute to higher rates of economic growth and address gender equality issues.
- 3.3 Findings from the GLA's research, undertaken in November 2020 by the Early Years Alliance (EYA) and CEEDA, found that over 60 per cent of nurseries and childminders fear bankruptcy in the next six to 12 months; this increases to 70 per cent for those nurseries and childminders located in deprived areas.
- 3.4 Children from some groups and communities do much worse than their peers, with initial gaps in development widening, as those children get older. There is a gap of 13 percentage points between the highest-achieving ethnic group (Chinese) and the lowest-achieving ethnic group (Black/Black British). The gap between children eligible for free school meals and their peers is 12 percentage points, up from 11 percentage points in 2018. Children living in the most deprived areas are also behind those living the least deprived areas: the current gap is at 13 percentage points, up from 12 percentage points in 2018.
- 3.5 Childcare remains one of the biggest barriers to accessing work and training opportunities. This disproportionately affects women, as the primary caregivers. Data published by the ONS from the

Labour Force Survey shows that 69 per cent of mothers with dependent children in London are in paid work. This is less than the national level.

4. Other considerations

Key risks

| Risk | Mitigating action | Risk rating RAG: Red/Amber/Green |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| Target group is much wider than the 2019 campaign; difficult to ensure the right messages as a wider/more diverse target group. | We are working with the Marketing team to create the right messages. These will be monitored throughout the campaign and can be adjusted if required. | Green |
| Difficult to measure outcomes. | We are working with the Marketing and Digital Teams colleagues to ensure best way to capture outputs and outcomes. | Amber |
| Insufficient bids are received. | We will work closely with the sector in engage relevant parties in the process | Amber |

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

4.1. The proposed research will contribute directly to the following strategies:

- The Health Inequalities Strategy identifies the importance of support to parents in the early years and the impact that quality early years provision can have on a child's development and school readiness.
- The Skills for Londoners Strategy focuses on education and skills with the aim to 'Empower all Londoners to access the education and skills to participate in society and progress in education and work'.
- The Economic Development Strategy identifies the importance of early years and childcare, with access to high-quality early years education and childcare providing a 'world-class education – which gives every child the best start in life'.
- It will also contribute to the Mayor's 'Inclusive London' Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

4.2. Activity directly contributes to the London Recovery Missions, in particular to the "Good Work for All" Mission, "Building Strong Communities" and "Robust Safety Net".

Impact assessments and consultations

4.3. The 2021 Campaign activities have been consulted upon with external stakeholders, including the Department for Education, a stakeholder focus group discussion attended by representatives from

London boroughs and childcare providers and meetings with colleagues from across the GLA (Health, Skills, Economic Fairness and Enterprise Teams), held in July 2021.

- 4.4. According to the EYA survey,⁴ fewer than half of parents with young children plan to take up their childcare entitlements. Government-commissioned research⁵ found that around half (49 per cent) of nought-to-four-year-olds that used formal or informal childcare before COVID-19 have parents that intend to return their child to early years settings.
- 4.5. The GLA-commissioned research into early years sector-specific business support needs shows that over 60 per cent of nurseries and childminders fear bankruptcy in the next six to 12 months; this increases to 70 per cent for those nurseries and childminders located in deprived areas.
- 4.6. There are no conflicts of interest to declare for any of the officers involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 Approval is sought for expenditure of £70,000. This is split as follows:
 - Expenditure of up to £60,000 across financial years 2021-22 (£36,000) and 2022-23 (£24,000) to run a digital campaign raising awareness of early education and childcare offers amongst parents and carers.
 - Expenditure of up to £10,000 in 2021-22 to grant fund an organisation to explore ways of supporting employees to understand and access childcare support.
- 5.2 The £70,000 funding forms part of the Robust Safety Net.
- 5.3 This expenditure will be funded from the 2021-22 Early learning year's budget allocation. The expenditure spans an academic year and so there will be a request to carry forward £24,000 of funding into the 2022-23 financial year. The 2022-23 funding will be subject to this carry forward being approved. The expenditure in 2022-23 can be terminated should the carry forward not be approved.
- 5.4 The campaign will build on the Mayors London Early Years Campaign run in 2019.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. Sections 1 to 2 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, social development or the promotion of the improvement of the environment 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

⁴ www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jun/01/early-years-childcare-sector-at-risk-collapse-england

⁵ www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/parents-0-4-year-olds-and-childcare-1st-june-2020.

- 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 (race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment) 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. Any services required, must be procured by Transport for London Commercial who will determine the detail of the procurement strategy to be adopted in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code. Officers must ensure that appropriate contract documentation is put in place and executed by the successful bidder(s) and the GLA before the commencement of the services.
- 6.4. Paragraph 1.18 above indicates that the contribution of £10,000 to a third-party organisation amounts to the provision of grant funding and not payment for services. Officers must ensure that the funding is distributed fairly, transparently, in accordance with the GLA's equalities and in a manner which affords value for money in accordance with the Contracts and Funding Code. Officers must ensure that an appropriate funding agreement is put in place between and executed by the GLA and recipient before any commitment to fund is made.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

| Activity | Timeline |
|--|-------------------------|
| Work with City Intelligence to better understand the target group and with the Marketing Team to agree the design and the campaign messages | August 2021 |
| Testing proposed copies with external stakeholder | September 2021 |
| Digital campaign begins | October 2021 |
| Digital campaign ends | July 2021 |
| Work with the GLA Family HR and employees' networks to agree best practice in raising awareness of early years and childcare entitlements and for the Mayor to act as a champion | August – September 2021 |
| Scope the specification for employer support work | August – September 2021 |
| Grant-fund an organisation to explore ways of supporting employees to understand and access childcare support following undertaking a competitive process. | October 2021 |
| Launch of a toolkit | March 2022 |

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? 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:

Magda Balicka has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Jazz Bhogal 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.

✓

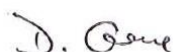
Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 13 September 2021.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature



Date

4/10/21