

## REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD2560

### Title: Tackling child poverty through schools - pilot extension

#### Executive Summary:

Approval is being sought for expenditure of £20,000 from the £106,000 set aside for work on poverty, welfare and financial wellbeing that was approved by the Mayor under cover of MD2461. The money will be used to fund a three-month extension to the Equality and Fairness Team's pilot project to tackle child poverty through schools which is due to end on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019.

The current budget for the pilot project is £135,000 and the addition of a further £20,000 to the budget will take the total programme expenditure over the £150,000. Mayoral approval is, therefore, required.

#### Decision:

That the Mayor approves:

1. the allocation of £20,000 (from £106,000 set aside for work on poverty, welfare and financial wellbeing set out in MD2461) for use in the Tackling Child Poverty through Schools pilot project (approved under cover of MD2314, ADD2304, and an AD approved contract variation); and
2. expenditure of the additional £20,000 on the extension of that pilot project

#### 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:

17/11/19

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

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

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

- 1.1. There are roughly 700,000 children in London living in poverty – nearly four children in ten – with poverty rates particularly high in inner London, but with rising numbers in outer London<sup>1</sup>. The Mayor's manifesto included a commitment to take action to address child poverty in London. As a public service reaching families of all types, schools regularly witness the effects of poverty first-hand and are increasingly playing an informal role in feeding or providing basic forms of support for pupils and parents from low-income families.
- 1.2. To understand the broader role schools could play in tackling child poverty, the GLA commissioned the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) to carry out an initial scoping and action learning project in four primary schools in London in 2018. The main output of the scoping research was to provide recommendations or a framework for a pilot project to be commissioned in early 2019.
- 1.3. Expenditure of £80,000 on the 2019 pilot project was approved by the Mayor under cover of MD2314. The same MD also included the Mayor's approval of expenditure of an additional £50,000 on follow-up activity on child poverty in schools, making the total budget £130,000. The additional £50,000 was specifically used to fund the provision of welfare rights advice in the schools taking part in the pilot. Approval for this approach was granted by the Assistant Director of the Communities and Social Policy Unit under cover of ADD2304.
- 1.4. Following an open procurement process, CPAG were commissioned to deliver the pilot project which commenced in April 2019. They sub-contracted Diane Dixon Associates to act as school-based co-ordinators and assist the 11 primary schools<sup>2</sup> taking part with designing initiatives to support low-income families. The embedded welfare rights advice sessions began at the start of July 2019 and the project was formerly announced by the Mayor shortly afterwards during a visit to one of the pilot schools (Colville Primary School).
- 1.5. In August 2019 CPAG provided a short summary report to the GLA detailing the very early findings from the embedded welfare rights advice. In the first three weeks alone, more than £17,000 of additional annual income was secured for four families with many others still awaiting decisions expected to make similar financial gains. Due to this early indicator of success, approval to fund a small increase in welfare adviser capacity between October and December 2019 was sought via a contract variation. Additional expenditure of £5,000 was approved for this purpose by the Assistant Director for Communities and Social Policy
- 1.6. CPAG and the project evaluators have subsequently provided more detailed interim reports to the GLA which have provided progress updates on a wide range of innovative interventions, such as the implementation of a parent champion volunteering model and the creation of new local partnerships to tackle food insecurity and deliver holiday provision. The reports also highlight a significant number of positive outcomes which have already been achieved, most notably the embedded welfare rights advice which, by the fifth week of delivery had secured just under £50,000 of additional annual income for seven low-income families, with around 20 more still awaiting decisions likely to result in additional income.
- 1.7. As the findings of the project to date have been extremely positive, officers from the Equality and Fairness Team have been proactively exploring options for moving towards a larger-scale delivery

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/publications/londons-poverty-profile-2017/>

<sup>2</sup> The 11 schools taking part are located in four borough-based clusters in Kensington and Chelsea, Newham, Camden, and Southwark.

model based on the results of the pilot and have been working to identify partners who may be able to deliver aspects of the work sustainably and at scale. One option being explored is to work with borough councils who would be well placed to lead much of this work. Two of the boroughs where the pilot is currently taking place; Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) and Camden, have expressed interest in embedding aspects of the project in their 0-19 and welfare advice strategies next financial year. The school co-ordinators are currently working with them to help facilitate this, however, this work will be cut short when the pilot project ends on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019.

- 1.8. The end of the pilot will also see the removal of support for families with ongoing welfare benefits claims and appeals which can often take months to resolve depending on their complexity and available tribunal dates. Without further expert advice and support, many of these claims are likely to collapse resulting in low-income families losing out on additional income they would otherwise have received. This is an issue that has affected previous embedded welfare rights advice pilots, most notably a recent project commissioned by Tower Hamlets Council to embed welfare rights advice in food banks.
- 1.9. To ensure that all opportunities to work with borough councils to design a larger-scale, sustainable delivery model are capitalised on, and that support for families taking part in the pilot is tapered off gradually, the Equality and Fairness Team is seeking approval to fund a three-month extension to the pilot which will take place between January 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020. To fund the additional work £20,000 of the total budget of £106,000 set aside for work on poverty, welfare and financial wellbeing that was approved in MD2461 would be added to the pilot project budget (taking the total approved budget to £155,000).
- 1.10. An extension would have the additional benefit of embedding referral pathways established during the project more deeply; particularly those to local welfare rights advice services. It would also provide further support to the pilot schools who are still in the early stages of delivering innovative initiatives such as parent champion models and new holiday hunger programmes. This additional support is crucial to ensuring that the schools taking part can provide the same level of service to low-income families sustainably and independently beyond the end of the pilot and extension.
- 1.11. The Equality and Fairness team is currently developing budget proposals and options for continuing this work in 2020/21 at a greater scale. These proposals will be informed by the findings of this extension and will ensure that the schools and families taking part in the pilot will continue to receive support beyond the extension should they require it.

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

### **2.1. The objectives are to fund a three-month extension to the pilot to:**

- carry out intensive work with the borough councils where the pilot is taking place to inform the design of a scaled-up delivery model;
- ensure that all parents who have outstanding welfare benefits claims or appeals have been referred to, and accepted by, local welfare advice services who can continue to support them;
- provide assistance with ongoing school-based initiatives which could be included in a scaled-up delivery model;
- assist the schools taking part with designing specific holiday hunger initiatives which they can deliver in the summer 2020; and
- convene a series of roundtable meetings/workshops with wide-ranging stakeholders to inform the design of a scaled-up delivery model.

### **2.2. The expected outcomes are:**

- robust evidence of how aspects of the pilot can be delivered by local authorities;
- an increase in the number of families taking part in the pilot who have been able to secure financial gains as a result of receiving ongoing welfare benefits advice;
- an increased number of families experiencing positive health outcomes as a result of resolving social welfare issues that may be having a negative impact on mental or physical health;
- more sustainable referral pathways from schools to other types of social welfare advice or support services (e.g. debt advice, immigration advice);
- improved health and nutritional outcomes for children living in low-food security
- a tangible model for delivering successful aspects of the pilot at scale; and
- increased likelihood that a pan-London delivery model can be developed and delivered.

### **3. Equality comments**

- 3.1. The Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy contains a specific objective to: "Work with early years and childcare providers, boroughs and businesses to help address the root causes of child poverty. This includes affordability of housing, childcare and transport, low pay and lack of flexible working." The core objective of this project is to address some of the symptoms and causes of child poverty through schools. As such it will directly contribute to achieving this objective.
- 3.2. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is underpinned by the following evidence relating to child poverty:
- a growing proportion of children living in poverty live in working families;
  - a majority of children living in poverty in London live in the private rented sector;
  - there is a higher poverty risk for families with a disabled child;
  - there is also a higher poverty risk for Black-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani families or families with parents born outside the UK (as a result of these families being more likely to have only one wage-earner or No Recourse to Public Funds status);
  - the risk of poverty is higher for single-parent families (due to unemployment or under-employment);
  - women and children – especially those from BAME groups – and disabled people have lost out most from welfare reforms; and
  - families from BAME groups are less likely to take up their entitlement to tax credits for their children.
- 3.3. The pilot project is developing and testing innovative ways for schools to provide services/referrals to services that will directly benefit families living in poverty. This includes improving the provision of – or access to – wrap around childcare, holiday provision, volunteering opportunities and employability skills/training. All of these measures are working to address some of the issues listed above and extending the pilot will ensure that a greater number of families facing disadvantage benefit from the pilot. The specific provision of income maximisation/welfare advice ensures that families living in poverty are empowered or assisted to claim all the welfare benefits or other benefits they are entitled to and will increase their household incomes. The pilot extension will ensure that the maximum number of families will receive support in claiming their entitlements. Embedded advisors are required to signpost/refer clients to other sources of support or advice (such as housing, debt or immigration) which assists with addressing some of the other inequalities listed above.

- 3.4. To ensure that the groups who are in most need of support are reached through this project, a significant focus of the pilot to date has been to co-design methods of engaging families that authorities are often less successful in reaching. The parent champion initiative has been designed specifically to improve engagement with the most disadvantaged groups (as well as improving the skills and confidence of the champions). As such, the pilot extensions will allow us to understand how to embed this approach into any scale-up model.
- 3.5. Data from the Survey of Londoners tells us that around 1.5 million adults and 400,000 children in London are living in low or very low food security. The groups most at risk of low food security are lone parents, families with a disabled person or child, Black Londoners, or those on a low-income. The pilot extension will ensure that more families with low food security are able to increase their household income through successful benefit claims and appeals. It will support the development of specific holiday hunger initiatives that the schools will introduce over the summer in 2020 which is a time when the effects of food insecurity are most evident.
- 3.6. To measure how successful the pilot project has been at addressing inequalities, the welfare rights advisers and schools taking part have been required to collect and collate demographic information about the families they have supported. A key aspect of the evaluation of the project is to measure the outcomes for different demographic groups and identify those who remain excluded. This learning will be used to inform the work to design a scalable model which will take place during the extension.

#### **4. Other considerations**

##### *Key risks/issues*

- 4.1. If the pilot project is not extended there is a risk that ongoing benefit claims or appeals being dealt with by the embedded welfare rights advisers may collapse. This would leave the low-income families in question without additional income that they would otherwise have been entitled to. The average amount gained for families by the welfare rights advisers in the first five weeks of the project was more than £6,000 annually with higher returns expected for more complex cases. For many low-income parents this represents a life-changing amount of money and could be enough to lift them and their family out of poverty altogether. Therefore, the collapse of any ongoing claims is likely to be extremely detrimental to the families concerned and reduce their chances of escaping poverty.
- 4.2. The relationship between the schools and families taking part in the pilot and the GLA may deteriorate if we do not ensure that the families with unresolved claims (owing to their complexity) are referred to suitable support services after the pilot ends. As such there is a reputational risk for the GLA if this decision is not approved and support is not tapered off appropriately. This reputational damage could lead to difficulties working with schools in the future and promoting the findings and benefits of the pilot to other key stakeholders.
- 4.3. There is a risk that suitable onward referrals for families currently receiving welfare benefits advice may not be found in every case. To mitigate against this, the GLA will use its existing stakeholder contacts in the advice sector to assist the delivery partner with finding suitable local referral partners. Failing that, we will ensure that all families have been supported in contacting pan-London or national advice services who can provide ongoing support with their claim.
- 4.4. There is a risk that the learning from the implementation of some aspects of the pilot at a borough level by RBKC and Camden councils may not be captured appropriately if they are not engaged early enough in the extension. To mitigate against this, representatives from both boroughs will be invited to the inception meeting of the pilot extension to ensure that any independent activity they carry out feeds into scale-up ideas.
- 4.5. Any data gathered throughout this pilot extension will be retained by the delivery partner and will be fully anonymised before being shared with the GLA or any other stakeholders as part of ensuring compliance with Data Protection legislation.

- 4.6. There are no known conflicts of interests or interests to declare associated with this decision.

*Links to Mayoral priorities/strategies*

- 4.7. The Mayor's manifesto contained a commitment that: "In a city as prosperous as London, there is no excuse for child poverty, or for people to have to rely on food banks in order to feed their children, and I will ensure that monitoring and effective, targeted intervention strategies are in place." A key element of the Economic Fairness programme is also to "Work with central government, local authorities, trade unions, civil society, financial institutions and Londoners to tackle poverty, financial exclusion and other issues that affect low income Londoners in particular."
- 4.8. Whilst a number of City Hall initiatives have directly benefitted low-income families by either reducing costs or raising and/or stabilising incomes (e.g. the freeze on TfL fares, the introduction of the Hopper fare, the regular promotion of the London Living Wage), this pilot project has addressing child poverty as the primary objective and has already resulted in significant increases to household income for families living in poverty. By extending the project, it will continue to work towards delivering these commitments.
- 4.9. The pilot is also contributing to delivering the Mayor's strategic objective in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to: "Work with early years and childcare providers, boroughs and businesses to help address the root causes of child poverty. This includes affordability of housing, childcare and transport, low pay and lack of flexible working." Any extension to the project would continue to work towards achieving this objective.
- 4.10. A range of data relating to poverty and deprivation was used to identify areas that would benefit most from the pilot project. This included the number of incidents of serious youth violence in recognition that there is a correlation between deprivation and youth violence.<sup>3</sup> This, in part, led to Southwark and Newham being selected as pilot boroughs with both being in the top five for incidents of serious youth violence. The pilot is also supporting a cluster of schools in North Kensington which serve families who were either directly or indirectly affected by the Grenfell fire. By extending the pilot, the Mayor and the GLA can demonstrate a continued commitment to supporting the communities affected by both these priority issues.
- 4.11. The pilot is also working towards achieving strategic objectives in both the London Food Strategy and the London Health Inequalities Strategy in recognising that poverty and low-income are key drivers in food insecurity and various mental and physical health inequalities. The parent champion model (which is based around volunteering) is also of interest to Team London. To ensure that all relevant policy teams are kept informed on the progress of the pilot extension, they will be invited to help steer the work, particularly the specific task relating to designing a scaled-up delivery model.

## **5. Financial comments**

- 5.1. Approval is being sought for expenditure of £20,000 to extend the Tackling Child Poverty through Schools' pilot scheme for an additional 3 months from January 1st 2020 to 31st March 2020.
- 5.2. This expenditure will be funded from the 2019-20 Equalities and Fairness programme budget held within the Communities and Social Policy Unit.

## **6. Legal comments**

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that:

- 6.1.1. the decisions requested of the Mayor concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the statutory powers of the GLA to do such things as may be considered to further, and

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<sup>3</sup> <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/a-public-health-approach-to-serious-youth-violence>

or be facilitative of or conducive or incidental to the furthering of, the promotion of social development in Greater London; and

6.1.2. in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:

- (a) pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people;
- (b) 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; and
- (c) consult with appropriate bodies.

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 and foster good relations 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 (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

6.3. Should the Mayor be minded to make the decisions sought officers must ensure that the GLA's contract with the Child Poverty Action Group is extended in accordance with its provisions and agreement is entered into and executed by the GLA and the Child Poverty Action Group before any extension of the pilot services commence.

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

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Contract signed	December 20 2019
Delivery Start Date – continuation of relevant work in schools	January 1 2020
Stakeholder engagement and roundtables	January & February 2020
Draft report on scale up proposals	March 15 2020
Final report on scale-up proposals	March 31 2020
Project Closure	April 1 2020

### **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**

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

### 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:

Nick MacAndrews has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

#### Sponsoring Director:

Sarah Mulley has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

✓

#### Mayoral Adviser:

Debbie Weekes-Bernard has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

#### Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

#### Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 16 December 2019.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature

Date

Tom Middleton on behalf of Martin Clarke 16.12.19

### CHIEF OF STAFF:

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

Signature

Date

D. Bellamy 16/12/2019.