

# GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

## REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2504

### Title: Recovery fund – Addressing loneliness and isolation in research

#### Executive Summary:

The Social Integration Team seeks approval to spend £50,000 of the recovery fund to commission research into the groups most at risk of loneliness and social isolation in London and the services that support them. This work will contribute to two missions of the London Recovery programme: Mental Health and Wellbeing and Building Stronger Communities.

#### Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Communities & Social Policy approves:

Expenditure of £50k to commission a supplier to undertake research to help inform and shape efforts to tackle loneliness and isolation in London.

#### AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

**Name:** Tom Rahilly

**Position:** Assistant Director,  
Communities & Social Policy

**Signature:**



**Date:**

16 February 2021

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

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

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

- 1.1 This decision seeks the approval for expenditure of £50,000 for the commissioning of in-depth research into the groups most at risk of loneliness and social isolation in London and the services that support them.
- 1.2 This builds on work agreed through MD2715 which approved the spend of £275,000 for grants to civil society to address loneliness and isolation. This was part of a £1.4 million contribution to Wave 4 of the London Community Response Fund which helped community and voluntary organisations who have been badly affected by the impact of Covid-19. These included recipients who exist to tackle social isolation and promote good mental health and wellbeing. In total the Mayor has donated close to £9 million to the fund.
- 1.3 The nature of loneliness in London is different from other parts of the country and the current understanding of loneliness is narrow. This means the mainstream services supporting those who are lonely do not necessarily meet the needs of diverse Londoners we know are disproportionately impacted. The loneliness of some Londoners is hidden, meaning services are not targeted, available or inclusive and the loneliness sector's traditional narrow focus has in turn influenced research agendas, government funding streams and service provision.
- 1.4 It is intended that the research proposed in this document will influence key decision makers to close the gap between what is being funded/provided and what is needed by Londoners, it will also shape future GLA work on loneliness and social isolation.
- 1.5 The project identified in this ADD will contribute to two of the missions outlined in the London Recovery programme:
  - Mental Health and Wellbeing; and
  - Building Stronger Communities.

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

- 2.1 Londoners are more likely to feel lonely than people living in other parts of the UK and London is ranked one of the loneliest cities in the world. The unique context of London means the nature of loneliness is different from other parts of the country and can be hidden within London's diverse communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in rising levels of loneliness across London's different communities. This is having an immediate negative impact on Londoners' mental health and wellbeing and will make it less likely that Londoners build meaningful relationship with others from different backgrounds as well as their own.
- 2.2 The proposed research will deliver a rapid literature review of existing data, insight into the unique London context, case studies of good and innovative practice; with an overarching focus on the role of inequalities in increasing the risk of loneliness and barriers to accessing support. This research will also build the evidence base needed to achieve this work at scale.
- 2.3 We will commission an external organisation to develop and deliver the research. We will work with Transport for London's Commercial team and undertake a competitive procurement process. We will work with the identified organisation to co-design and deliver the research and will enter into a contract for £50,000.

### 3. Equality comments

- 3.1 Supporting Londoners to have meaningful relationships across difference, including protected characteristics, is a core part of the Mayor's social integration strategy. Loneliness is an acute breakdown of social integration. The research will help identify levels of loneliness in groups most at risk, barriers to building connections and interventions that work.
- 3.2 The research will have an overarching focus on the role of inequalities to increasing the risk of loneliness and barriers to accessing support. This is in line with the Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy to help understand and address inequalities and barriers experienced by groups with protected characteristics.
- 3.3 The Rapid Evidence Review: Inequalities in relation to COVID-19 and their effects on London identified higher levels of loneliness and reduced wellbeing in groups with protected characteristics, including disabled Londoners, BAME groups, LGBTQ+ Londoners, young Londoners and older Londoners. These findings are consistent with the GLA's 2019 Survey of Londoners.

### 4. Other considerations

#### a) Key Risks and Issues

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating Action</b>	<b>Risk Rating - RAG: Red/Amber/Green</b>
Failure to appoint a supplier with suitable skills and capacity to undertake the work	Suppliers with previous work and experience in this space have already been approached to test appetite for the project	<b>G</b>
The providers may underperform, negatively impacting on the achievement of key objectives	A robust contract and rigorous monitoring by the GLA will ensure that poor performance is identified and rectified quickly and appropriately. Adaptable plans for COVID-19 restrictions will be included in the proposal.	<b>G</b>

#### b) Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.1. The Mayor's strategy for social integration: Loneliness is the breakdown of social integration. An in-depth understanding of loneliness will support the Mayor's vision to improve social integration by understanding how to build relationships between Londoners, especially across difference, and reduce loneliness and isolation among groups most at risk.
- 4.2. The Mayor's strategy for equality, diversity and inclusion: The research will provide an overarching focus on the role of inequalities in increasing the risk of loneliness and barriers to accessing support.
- 4.3. The Mayor's London health inequalities strategy: The research will support the Mayor ambition to work with partners to help prevent mental ill health and tackle the stigma and discrimination that may hold people back from seeking help and support

#### c) Conflicts of Interest

- 4.4. There are no conflicts of interest to note 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 £50,000 to commission a supplier to undertake research to help inform and shape efforts to tackle loneliness and isolation in London.

- 5.2 The expenditure will be funded from the 2020/21 'Recovery Fund' [approved by MD2666] and allocated to the Social Integration programme budget with the Communities and Social Policy Unit.

**6. Planned delivery approach and next steps**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Budget sign off	February 2021
ITT published	Feb/March 2021
Research delivery partner appointed	March 2021
Research begins	April 2021
Research interim findings	June 2021
Final research report finalised and published	September/October 2021

**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**

If YES, for what reason:

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:**

Kat Radlett has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

**Corporate Investment Board**

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 15 February 2021.

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL SERVICES:**

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

**Signature**

*Anna Eastcott*

**Date**

16 February 2021