

Budgeted expenditure on Mayoral missions and themes from 2021-22 to 2025-26

Key information

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Introduction

Since 2021-22, the Mayor's budget proposals for London have set out how much the GLA intended to spend on the organisation's central missions. This has reflected a wider movement across government towards a [mission-based approach](#), which was also [adopted by the Labour Government](#) elected in July 2024.

The London Assembly Research Unit's **Richard Berry** explores how the GLA has presented its spending on missions and themes in the past five years.

Recovery missions from 2021-22 onwards

Moves towards a mission-based approach within the GLA began during the Covid-19 pandemic. The GLA's Recovery Board, which included representatives of a range of key stakeholders, defined [nine recovery missions](#) for London. These were:

- Building Strong Communities
- Digital Access for All
- Helping Londoners into Good Work

- High Streets for All
- Healthy Place, Healthy Weight
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- A New Deal for Young People
- A Green New Deal
- A Robust Safety Net

In budgetary terms, proposed spending on missions was first revealed in the draft budget submission released by the Mayor in November 2020. Information about proposed spending on these missions was then included in the Mayor's budgets from 2021-22 onwards. As well as these nine missions, the Mayor set out planned expenditure on 'foundations' and 'core' functions.

Table 1: Budgeted net spending on Mayoral missions and foundations, 2021-22 to 2023-24 (£millions)

	2021-22	2022-23 <u> </u>	2023-24
Missions			
A Green New Deal	20.7	22.3	33.9
A Robust Safety Net	16.9	18.8	90.3
High Streets for All	7.1	5.6	9.2
A New Deal for Young People	85.1	13.5	46.1
Helping Londoners into Good Work	191.4	10.5	253.1
Mental Health and Wellbeing	1.6	0.7	19.6
Digital Access for All	7.1	1.5	23.4
Healthy Place, Healthy Weight <u> </u>	1.4	1.4	150.3
Building Strong Communities	96.1	4.4	32.3
Missions total	427.4	70.7	652.8
Foundations			
Engaging Londoners	2.9	2.8	2.3
Public Health and Health & Care Partnerships	1.4	2.6	2.9
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	2.0	2.3	2.9
Transport and Infrastructure	6.0	4.8	5.4
Supporting Businesses, Jobs and Growth	25.6	31.3	24.5
Spatial Development	12.8	10.3	14.8
Capital Investment inc. Affordable Housing	11.2	27.7	17.0
Recovery Programme Support	0.8	0.8	0.1
Foundations total	62.7	82.6	69.9

It is important to note that the figures above do not represent direct allocations of funding. Budget allocations within the GLA are still primarily based on directorates and units. Rather, the figures above represent a way of describing what directorates and units were expected to spend on priorities considered to contribute to a particular mission.

Shift to themes in the 2024-25 budget

In the [Mayor's 2024-25 budget](#) – with the draft budget submission released in November 2023 – there was a change in approach to missions. The Recovery Board had been transformed into the [Partnership Board](#) as the Covid-19 pandemic waned. As stated in the final budget, there was a move away from the recovery missions and a focus on broader ‘themes’ of expenditure:

The Recovery Board was convened in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to support the work of the GLA and key partners in securing London's recovery. The Board made significant progress in leading London's recovery from the pandemic and many of the recovery missions are culminating. Accordingly, as set out in section 2, the GLA: Mayor budget for 2024-25 is now structured based on themes rather than the Recovery Board's missions. This new structure remains consistent with the partnership approach and the GLA: Mayor's contribution to Partnership Board recovery missions continues under the relevant theme.

The new ‘themes’ introduced in 2024-25 covered most of the priorities that had earlier been defined as missions, although reduced in number to eight. The eight themes [set out in the budget](#) were:

- **Housing:** increasing the numbers of Londoners who have a safe, decent and affordable home.
- **Social Justice:** working to ensure that Londoners of all backgrounds feel welcome and can play a full and equal part in the life of our city.
- **Environment:** helping to ensure London is on the path to net-zero carbon emissions by 2030; responding to the climate and ecological emergencies; and improving London's air quality to meet World Health Organization guidelines across our city.
- **Health:** reducing London's health inequalities – that is, reducing the link between Londoners' health outcomes and their incomes or backgrounds – and working with partners to ensure Londoners have the best health outcomes.
- **Skills:** working to ensure Londoners have the right skills to access decent, well-paid jobs; and that London's businesses have access to the skills they need to grow.
- **Children and Young People:** working so children and young Londoners in need have the right positive opportunities to fulfil their potential.
- **Economy:** delivering our commitment to good growth and prosperity while ensuring London's economy works for all Londoners.
- **Global City and Culture:** working to promote London as a world-leading city; supporting our cultural and creative institutions; promoting tourism; and strengthening London as a world-leading destination for business and leisure.

In addition, the final budget set out an intention for two additional themes on ‘transport’ and ‘safety’. Primary responsibility for these themes would not sit with the GLA, but with Transport for London (transport) and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, Metropolitan Police Service and London Fire Commissioner (safety). The final budget did not specify planned expenditure on these themes, beyond setting out the budgets of these functional bodies.

A further change was that ‘foundations’ was removed as a spending category in the budget. The ‘core’ functions remained as a category, although were defined differently to those included in the preceding years.

The same, theme-based approach has been taken to the Mayor's current budget proposals for 2025-26, which will be considered in draft for the final time at the [London Assembly meeting](#) on 25 February 2025.

Table 2: Budgeted net spending on Mayoral themes, 2024-25 and 2025-26 (£millions)

	2024-25	2025-26 (proposed)
Housing	22.2	5.7
Social Justice	14.4	26.3
Environment	29.2	24.0
Health	4.7	1.7
Skills	8.2	8.5
Children and Young People	158.7	160.4
Economy	24.3	29.6
Global City and Culture	2.9	20.3
Themes total	264.7	276.5

In addition to the eight themes in the Mayor’s draft 2025-26 budget for the GLA, the Mayor also set out 14 ‘strategic, high-level programmes’, which sit under the themes. These were described in the [draft budget](#) in the following way:

We are developing 14 strategic, high-level programmes to ensure that the GLA, in partnership with others, works towards Londoners’ aspirations for the city. This section of the draft budget lays out what we are seeking to achieve with each programme, to contribute to the outcomes captured under each theme. The aim of this is to better describe the breadth of the Mayor’s work to use the full range of his powers and influence to improve the lives of Londoners. These programmes are cross-cutting, and in most cases will deliver against outcomes across more than one theme. For the purposes of structuring the budget, however, programmes have been assigned to a lead theme as follows:

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Programmes</i>
<i>Housing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Building more homes</i> • <i>Making best use of land</i> • <i>Improving London’s housing stock</i>
<i>Social justice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reducing inequalities</i> • <i>Accommodation and wider support for those who need it most</i>
<i>Environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reducing non-residential emissions</i> • <i>Delivering a greener, more resilient London</i>
<i>Health</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cleaning London’s air</i>
<i>Skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Supporting Londoners to benefit from growth</i>

<i>Children and young people</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Supporting and inspiring young London</i>
<i>Economy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Boosting London’s growth sectors</i> • <i>Helping local economies to thrive</i> • <i>Upgrading London’s infrastructure</i>
<i>Global city and culture</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Celebrating London</i>

The draft budget documents do not set out expected spend on each programme, only for the overall missions.

Gross and net expenditure

The budget documents for past two years have shown significant differences between gross and net planned expenditure on themes, which was not the case for the missions in the prior three years. For instance, the Housing theme had budgeted gross expenditure of £81.9 million in 2024-25, and net expenditure of £22.2 million, partly due to the receipt of a Government grant to tackle homelessness.

Indeed, budgeted gross and net expenditure on missions was almost identical in the Mayor’s 2023-24 budget. In the 2024-25 budget, budgeted net expenditure was less than one-third of gross expenditure. It is likely that this reflects the fact that the current themes are broader than the previous missions, and capture a larger number of programmes for which the GLA receives significant grant income.

Budgeted and actual spending

Analysis by the Research Unit has shown that there are discrepancies in the figures approved in the Mayor’s final budget, and those used for the purposes of budget monitoring. This is a long-standing issue that occurs in the reporting of directorate and functional body spending, as well as in relation to missions and themes.

The GLA produces [quarterly financial monitoring reports](#), which are published and submitted to the Assembly’s Budget & Performance Committee. These give a breakdown of spending across the eight GLA themes. However, the budget amounts that are used in these breakdowns do not match the amounts included in the Mayor’s final budget.

To demonstrate this, the table below shows the amounts of budgeted net expenditure for each of the themes in 2024-25, as already set out in Table 1 above, from the Mayor’s final budget. It also shows the amounts included as the ‘original’, full year net expenditure budget for each theme in the quarterly monitoring report for Quarter 1 2024-25.

Table 3: Discrepancies between reported amounts budgeted for themes in 2024-25

	Net budget figures in Mayor’s final 2024-25 budget	‘Original’ net budget figures in Q1 2024-25 monitoring report
Housing	22.2	21.0
Social Justice	14.4	14.7
Environment	29.2	29.7
Health	4.7	4.2
Skills	8.2	8.1
Children and Young People	158.7	151.9
Economy	24.3	25.0
Global City and Culture	2.9	19.3

In some cases the discrepancies are small, but in others they are substantial. Subsequent monitoring reports are based on the ‘original’ budget figures, which makes it difficult to compare actual spend to the amounts approved by the Assembly in the Mayor’s final budget.

There is no explanation in the budget or monitoring documents for why these discrepancies exist. However, it has been noted as an issue to be addressed. In the Mayor’s [Budget Guidance for 2025-26](#), he made a new request for consistency in figures used in the budget process and in-year monitoring:

In the interests of efficiency and the need to consolidate into a group format and aid budget consultation, information must be presented in a consistent format throughout the budget process and the in-year quarterly monitoring reports which follow. GLA Group Finance officers will work with the GLA and its functional bodies to seek to minimise these burdens; and templates for budget submissions, to meet the requirements in this Guidance, will be issued in due course.

New missions

The GLA is currently looking to develop a new set of missions. As discussed at a Partnership Board [meeting in December 2024](#), it is expected that six new missions will be defined. These are in Housing, Growth, Health, Opportunity, Safety, and Energy & Environment.

The new missions have not been finalised in time for the Mayor’s 2025-26 budget proposals but, in keeping with current practice, it is likely that future budget documents will present the GLA’s planned expenditure according to how it contributes to these missions.

Further information

For more information on the Mayor's budget for 2025-26 and previous years, please visit:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/governance-and-spending/spending-money-wisely/mayors-budget>.

For more information on how the London Assembly has scrutinised the Mayor's budget proposals for 2025-26, please see the work of the [Budget & Performance Committee](#). The Committee held a series of meetings with senior officers from the GLA and its functional bodies to examine draft budget proposals, providing advice to the Mayor on how to improve the proposals and address London's financial challenges.

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References

- [Sources](#): Mayor's final consolidated budget for 2023-24; Mayor's final consolidated budget for 2022-23; Mayor's final consolidated budget for 2021-22. Spending on 'core' functions is not shown in the table above. The total proposed expenditure on these items was £119.3 million for 2021-22, £94.5 million for 2022-23, and £87.3 million for 2023-24
- [In 2022-23](#), the Adult Education Budget and European Social Funds were also listed as Missions; in both cases, expected income matched planned gross expenditure, giving net expenditure of zero.
- [The 'Healthy Place, Healthy Weight mission'](#) was also named as 'Healthy Food, Healthy Weight' in a number of instances in the budget documents across this period. The Mayor's expenditure on Free School Meals in primary schools accounts for a large proportion of the 2023-24 spending on this mission.
- [Sources](#): Mayor's draft consolidated budget for 2025-26; Mayor's final consolidated budget for 2024-25. Spending on 'core' functions is not shown in the table above. The total proposed expenditure on these items was £129.5 million for 2024-25, and £84.4 million for 2025-26.
- [Sources](#): Mayor's final consolidated budget for 2024-25; GLA Finance Report, June 2024