

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2198

Title: Child poverty: school-based interventions

Executive Summary:

Approval is being sought to spend £40,000 to scope potential interventions to address poverty in school-based settings.

The scoping work, which will be commissioned from an external provider and will seek to understand what role schools could play in tackling the causes of poverty (for example, by addressing maternal unemployment or underemployment through the provision of wraparound childcare) as well as the effects of poverty (for example, by providing referrals to advice services). The goal is to co-design options and interventions with families and schools. The scoping will include action-learning via the delivery of a limited number of poverty-related interventions (for example, one-off workshops on employability/work-search skills).

This would be the first stage of a programme of work on poverty and schools and would be followed by pilots in five to 15 schools next year to test the recommendations/options that emerge from the scoping stage – subject to approval via a subsequent decision form.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Communities and Social Policy approves expenditure of £40,000 to scope potential interventions to address poverty in school-based settings, with the scoping work delivered by an external service provider.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT:

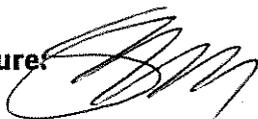
I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Sarah Mulley

Position: Assistant Director of Communities and Social Policy

Signature:



Date: 05.02.18

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

There are roughly 700,000 children in London living in poverty – nearly four children in 10 – with poverty rates particularly high in inner London, but higher in absolute terms in outer London¹. The Mayor's manifesto included a commitment to take action to address child poverty in London.

One factor contributing to London's high child poverty levels is its low levels of maternal unemployment – at 60.7%, maternal employment in London is lower than in any other region and significantly below the national rate of 68.6%². Affordable, accessible childcare holds the potential to help mothers return to work – 40% of unemployed mothers say childcare is a barrier to getting a job³. The Mayor is already taking action to improve access to high quality early education for the most disadvantaged families through his Early Years Hubs initiative, Childcare Deposit Loan Scheme and by promoting more family friendly work practices for all Londoners. Further support includes producing a Childcare Sufficiency Template for London boroughs to better understand and effectively intervene in local childcare markets and promoting children's health through Healthy Early Years London Programme. Subject to the results of ongoing DfE-funded research into take up of the current early years offer, CSP are also intending to support work next year to ensure that families are accessing the childcare support to which they are entitled.

Schools offer a complementary route through which interventions targeted at low income families with older children – including, but not limited to, 'wraparound' childcare in the form of breakfast or homework clubs for example – can be delivered. Research by Child Poverty Action Group has found there was unmet demand for the provision of holiday and after-school childcare, particularly in primary schools⁴.

As a public service reaching families of all types, schools are also increasingly playing an informal role in dealing with the effects of poverty, with recent media reports^{5 6} highlighting the role schools play in feeding or providing basic forms of support for pupils and parents from low-income families.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

The Mayor wants to explore the role that schools could play in helping to address poverty by providing support to the most vulnerable or disadvantaged families. To this end, we propose to support pilot interventions or packages of support (including wraparound childcare) in a small number of primary schools.

Stage one

This ADD relates to an initial scoping stage. In addition to summarising existing evidence and developing selection criteria for participating schools/organisations, we would expect the successful bidder to work in between two and four primary schools to conduct qualitative research through focus groups and interviews with parents, teachers and providers of relevant services whilst also testing potential interventions targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged families.

The aims of this first stage would be to:

- Arrive at a set of recommendations for the design of a full 12-month pilot, co-designed with families, schools and partners (e.g. local Children's Centres and voluntary groups).

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

² <https://www.ippr.org/publications/the-future-of-childcare-in-london>

³ *ibid.*

⁴ http://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/Extended%20Schools_web.pdf

⁵ https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/22/is-this-the-most-inspiring-school-in-britain?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

⁶ <http://www.itv.com/news/granada/update/2017-12-12/the-frightening-truth-about-child-poverty-in-working-families/>

- Inform the future provision of services, interventions and other poverty-related activities in the scoping sites, including through action learning during the scoping phase. Possible interventions might include the provision of more/different wraparound childcare, advice on welfare/housing/employment/immigration, or support for families with employability/work-search skills.
- Develop recommendations for lobbying or influencing activity targeted at: a) local authorities and academy providers (e.g. borough anti-poverty strategies); and b) national government (e.g. regulatory requirements for providers of school-based services or interventions).

Target groups

We propose to focus in particular on groups where the provision of accessible childcare or other poverty-focused interventions has the greatest potential to make an impact. This would include:

1. Couple households of mixed-employment status (i.e. with a non-working second earner)
2. Non-working lone-parent families
3. Families with no recourse to public funds

Stage two

A second stage would draw on the findings of the scoping stage, and will be the subject of a further CIB proposal in due course. The aims of the following 12-month pilot would be to:

- Test and evaluate an evidence-based and user-designed model for the most effective forms of support to disadvantaged families that schools could offer to address the causes and effects of poverty
- Develop an in-depth understanding of the barriers that disadvantaged families face in taking advantage of existing extended services in schools
- Expand the ability of London's government, civil society and schools sectors to advocate for change through the development of school leaders, teachers, governors and parents as advocates for change

After stage two

The results of the pilots would be used and further developed with a view to supporting the wider take-up of the approaches and interventions developed and tested. This might involve seeking to secure co-funding for a wider programme across London.

The intended impact would be to:

- Support parental employment by providing affordable, flexible childcare for low income families
- Improve social and welfare outcomes for low income families
- Support GLA work led by Education and Youth to improve the educational attainment and career prospects of disadvantaged children

3. Equality comments

The evidence base commissioned for the Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy highlights the following issues relating to child poverty:

- Growing proportion of children living in poverty being in working families
- Majority of children living in poverty in London live in private rented sector
- Higher poverty risk for families with a disabled child;
- 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)
- Higher poverty risk for single-parent families (due to unemployment or under-employment)

The role that affordable, accessible early education and childcare can play in addressing maternal unemployment or under-employment is a basis for this proposal, and so should address some of the points

above, as should our intention to target the groups we mention above for scoping/co-design work. We will give extra consideration to how we ensure our co-design activity is inclusive of the families we know face a higher poverty risk.

In addition, given the known links between poverty and both disability and housing tenure, we will give consideration to how the relevant forms of support (housing advice, for example) could be delivered in a school setting and how wraparound childcare can be as accessible as possible for disabled children.

4. Other considerations

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."

While a number of initiatives already launched will be directly beneficial to 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 ticket, the promotion of the London Living Wage), this one would represent an initiative in which addressing child poverty is the primary objective and provide a basis for further activity on this issue.

This initiative would also contribute towards delivering the Mayor's strategic objective in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to: "[W]ork 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."

As an intervention targeted at addressing child poverty, this initiative would also be highly relevant to key themes within the new Vision for All Young Londoners including a focus on early intervention and prevention, a good start in life and opportunity for all.

Through the focus on maternal unemployment and child poverty, there is also a potential link into the #BehindEveryGreatCity campaign.

The wide range of interventions that could be delivered in a school setting that could be beneficial to low-disadvantaged or vulnerable families means there is a risk of having too broad a scope. In addition, the potential links into both early years childcare and improving attainment/outcomes for the most disadvantaged children and young people means that close co-ordination between the CSP and Education and Youth teams will be required. This will be ensured by including EY officers on the steering group for the scoping work, as well as any follow-up governance arrangements.

There is a reputational risk for the Mayor if stakeholders feel their input has either not been sought or has been ignored. To manage these risks officers have conducted extensive internal and external engagement in the drafting of this proposal. Specifically, we have met with:

- The GLA's Education and Youth team
- London Councils
- Child Poverty Action Group
- Family and Childcare Trust
- Naomi Eisenstadt (Independent Adviser to the Scottish Government on Poverty and Inequality and formerly the first director of the Sure Start Unit, director of the Social Exclusion Task Force)

It will be important to engage the boroughs and schools directly in this work. We would continue to follow a programme of wide stakeholder engagement through phases one and two.

There is a linked procurement risk that some of this engagement to inform the proposal is used as a basis to challenge the award of any tender. To mitigate this risk, officers will include any pertinent correspondence alongside the invitation to tender.

5. Financial comments

The expenditure of £40,000 will be funded from the 2017-18 Social Mobility Programme Budget within the Community and Social Policy Unit

6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract [for externally delivered projects]	Mid-Feb 2018
Announcement [if applicable]	Late February 2018
Delivery Start Date [literature review and design of field work]	Late March 2018
Delivery Start Date [Co-design and action learning]	Mid-April 2018
Interim findings – [Co-design and action learning]	June/July 2018
Specific activities in Summer holidays	July-August 2018
Delivery End Date [Findings and final report]	September 2018

Appendices and supporting papers:

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act) 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 approval 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 secure best value from bidders for resulting contract

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring): 19th March 2018

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be 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:

Dan Drillsma-Milgrom has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms that the Finance and – if relevant - Legal teams have commented on this proposal as required, and this decision reflects their comments.

Corporate Investment Board:

The Corporate Investment Board reviewed this proposal on 5 February 2018.

HEAD OF FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE:

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

Signature:



Date:

05-02-18