

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2361

Title: Destitution in the UK research – London sample boost

Executive Summary:

This ADD seeks approval for expenditure of £39,668 in 2019-20 to fund a London sample boost to a UK-wide research project on destitution being carried out this autumn by academics from Herriot-Watt University.

The research seeks to explore the routes into, and effects of, extreme poverty and to quantify the number of people (including children, migrants and those with complex needs) who have experienced different types of destitution in 2019.

GLA funding will pay for two additional case-study boroughs in London allowing the researchers to report in detail at a London level and produce a bespoke analysis and research report for the GLA independent of the national study.

The findings will fill an intelligence gap in the Social Evidence Base relating to the number and nature of people experiencing extreme poverty in London. This will assist with refining existing, and designing new, interventions to support low-income Londoners which work towards Mayoral manifesto commitments relating to economic fairness and tackling child poverty.

Outline approval for this expenditure was given in MD2461, subject to Assistant Director approval of detailed expenditure proposals.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Communities and Social Policy approves:

Expenditure of £39,668 in 2019-20 to fund a London sample boost of the latest Herriot-Watt University research project exploring destitution in the UK.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

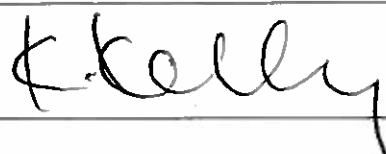
I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Kathleen Kelly

Position: Assistant Director of
Communities and Social Policy

Signature:



Date:

13/8/19

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 One of the key elements of the Mayor's Economic Fairness work programme is 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." He also stated in his manifesto 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."
- 1.2 At present around 2.4 million Londoners - including 700,000 children - are living in relative poverty, and around 1 in 6 households (and almost 1 in 4 children) are stuck in persistent poverty. A number of interventions by the Mayor and the GLA – such as building more affordable homes, freezing TfL fares, and promoting better pay and working conditions through the Good Work Standard - are working towards supporting this group by reducing costs and boosting incomes. However, very little is known about the number and nature of people in London who experience outright destitution making it difficult to design suitable interventions to alleviate extreme poverty. In part, this is because much of the existing data on poverty in both London and nationally is derived from large-scale household surveys which often fail to capture reliable information about people with chaotic lifestyles, complex needs or extremely low incomes.
- 1.3 To understand more about this group at a national level, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) funded leading academics from the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Herriot-Watt University to carry out a nationwide study of destitution in 2015, and again in 2017.¹ The studies involved carrying out surveys and depth interviews across a range of crisis support services in 16 council areas across the UK (including Newham and Ealing in London) along with a detailed analysis of secondary data. They defined an individual as being destitute if they have lacked two or more of six essentials in a one-month period because they cannot afford them:
- **Shelter** (have slept rough for one or more nights)
 - **Food** (have had fewer than two meals a day for two or more days)
 - **Heating their home** (have been unable to do this for five or more days)
 - **Lighting their home** (have been unable to do this for five or more days)
 - **Clothing and footwear** (appropriate for weather)
 - **Basic toiletries** (soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush), or
 - Had an income that was so low, and no savings, so that they would be likely to lack these essentials in the immediate future.
- 1.4 By using this method, a conservative estimation of the total number of people who have experienced destitution over a 12 month period in the UK can be made which, in 2017, was more than 1.5 million people including 365,000 children. The studies also returned a wealth of other data including:
- Demographic trends for people experiencing destitution including age, ethnicity, household type, migration status, housing tenure/living situation, disability, other complex needs.
 - The proportion of people experiencing different types of destitution (e.g. rough sleeping, extreme fuel poverty, chronic food insecurity, etc.).

¹ See <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk> and <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2018>

- Qualitative data about routes into destitution and some of the drivers (e.g. welfare reform, debt, addictions, etc.).
 - Estimates of where (geographically) destitution is likely to be more prevalent based on local authority profiles.
- 1.5 Following the launch of the 2017 research in the summer of 2018, the report authors were invited to present some of the findings to the cross-GLA Low-income Londoners working group. There was significant interest from a range of policy teams in obtaining more detailed data at a London-level to help shape existing projects and workstreams on issues such as rough sleeping, fuel poverty, food poverty and insecurity, health inequalities and destitution amongst migrants. However, due to the limited sample size for the 2017 study, the authors were unable to provide any detailed findings at a regional level.
- 1.6 Due to the significant internal interest in the 2017 study, including from the Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement, further engagement was carried out with JRF and Herriot-Watt to explore the possibility of funding a London sample boost for the next iteration of the research, due to be carried out in the autumn of 2019. Researchers at Herriot-Watt advised that two additional case study boroughs in London would be required (taking the total to four) to return the same level of detail as the national study for London. In light of this, Herriot-Watt produced a funding proposal with a cost of £39,668 (which is the subject of this ADD) to double the London sample size for the 2019 project and produce a bespoke analysis and report for the GLA.
- 1.7 The proposed funding for this project will come from the Communities and Social Policy Programme Budget 2019-20 which was agreed via MD2461. Half the funds will come from the £106,000 set aside in the Equality and Fairness programme for work on poverty, welfare and financial wellbeing and support for low-income Londoners (section 2.3.1 of MD2461). The remainder will come from the £140,000 Social Evidence Base budget (section 2.5 of MD2461) which has been allocated in part to fill gaps in the evidence base as and where required.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1 The objectives are:

- To provide funding to Herriot-Watt University to carry out primary and secondary research in an additional two London case-study boroughs (Camden and Bexley) as part of their UK-wide research project exploring destitution. The research will include:
 - Detailed surveying of a stratified sample of destitute service users in 6 to 8 crisis centres per additional borough (to be added to the existing samples in Ealing and Newham);
 - Depth interviews with 10 additional destitute service users of crisis centres in the additional boroughs (to be combined with existing findings from Ealing and Newham); and
 - Expert analysis of a detailed range of secondary data sources related to aspects of destitution across London as a whole.
- To work with Herriot-Watt University to agree a bespoke analysis for the GLA of all London data from the research project with a view to:
 - Quantifying the number of people in London who have experienced different types destitution in 2019;
 - Identifying the groups of Londoners or areas of London at most risk of destitution;
 - Identifying the main drivers of - or routes into - destitution in London;
 - Understanding the effect destitution has on Londoners;

- Identifying possible ways to alleviate destitution at a local, regional and national level; and
- To deliver a London-focused research report summarising the findings from the research and analysis.

2.2 The expected outcomes are:

- Increased understanding and evidence of the extent and nature of destitution and extreme poverty in London which will lead to:
 - Improved ability for the GLA to tailor existing projects to support those most at risk of destitution;
 - Improved ability to design and implement new policy interventions to support groups at risk of destitution;
 - Better strategic co-ordination of VCS services supporting people in destitution;
 - Development of various existing statutory and non-statutory strategies, action plans and evidence-bases including the EDI strategy, the Fuel Poverty Action Plan, the London Food Strategy, the Social Integration strategy, the Rough Sleeping Plan of Action and the Health Inequalities strategy; and
 - A robust evidence-base to support advocacy asks of local and central government.

3. Equality comments

3.1 The Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy contains a number of specific objectives which broadly align with particular aspects of the definition of destitution used in this project:

- **Child poverty:** "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."
- **Rough sleeping:** "Work with government, councils, the voluntary sector and communities to ensure rough sleepers are helped off the streets as quickly and sustainably as possible. There should be a way for every rough sleeper in London to leave the streets."
- **Food insecurity and health inequalities:** "To lead, and help coordinate, work to understand and address health inequalities and support at-risk communities to increase their health skills, knowledge and confidence." (including food insecurity)
- **Fuel poverty:** "To work with government, businesses, transport providers, voluntary groups and all relevant partners to help ensure our approach to tackling fuel poverty and improving green spaces is inclusive."
- **Unemployment and low-income:** "To work with employers, education and skills providers, and voluntary and community organisations so that as many Londoners as possible can participate in, and benefit from, employment opportunities in London. This includes providing employability and skills support for those who are disadvantaged in London's skills, enterprise and jobs market."

3.2 The core objective of this project is to gather new and unique data and insight to help us understand which groups are most likely to suffer from different types of destitution in London. Therefore, it will directly support the delivery of, or development of initiatives that work towards, the strategic objectives listed above.

3.3 The EDI strategy evidence (along with results from the Survey of Londoners and the Cumulative Impact Assessment of tax and welfare reforms since 2010) which underpins the objectives above shows that:

- Some BAME groups, migrants and families with non-working mothers are at greater risk of living in poverty.
- Low-income households, households with children (particularly lone parents), disabled households, people from Black ethnic groups, and women have lost out most from tax and welfare reforms since 2010.
- A third of Londoners do not have £1,500 in savings (33 per cent) with Black, disabled and young Londoners less likely to have £1,500 in savings.
- Londoners living in the most disadvantaged areas are more than twice as likely to not have savings than those Londoners living in the least disadvantaged areas.
- Low income Londoners, social renters, single parents and disabled Londoners are more likely to find their debts a heavy burden.
- More than half of London's rough sleepers (53 per cent) are from outside the UK, with about three quarters coming from other EU countries.
- Welfare recipients, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants are most at risk of food poverty.
- Single parents, disabled Londoners and Black Londoners are more likely to experience low or very low food security.
- The groups most likely to be fuel poor are families with children (particularly single parents), disabled Londoners and people from BAME groups.
- Black Londoners are more likely to self-report fuel poverty than White Londoners, and low-income, Londoners, single parents, social renters and disabled Londoners are more likely to struggle to keep their homes warm.
- Fuel poverty has a particularly damaging effect on children, older and disabled Londoners.
- Disabled people, young black men, veterans, carers, care leavers, mothers, older Londoners and homeless people are all under-represented in the workforce.

3.4 The data returned from this project will be cut and analysed by a whole range of demographic metrics. This will allow us to explore which of the groups mentioned above (or others) not only face an increased risk of living in relative poverty but are also more likely to slip into extreme poverty or destitution. It will also allow us to understand some of the causes or routes into destitution in London which will support policy development, programme delivery and advocacy asks to alleviate extreme poverty for the protected groups who are disproportionately affected. For instance, in previous national versions of this study issues like welfare reforms, problem debt, public sector debt collection practices, and complex needs (such as mental health issues or addictions) were identified as drivers of destitution.

3.5 To ensure that data and insight is gathered from the groups we know, or suspect, are at most risk, the GLA will work with the delivery partner to promote the research to a wide range of crisis support centres based in the target boroughs and use their existing stakeholder networks to disseminate surveys, etc.

4. Other considerations

4.1 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.” He also committed to establishing an Economic Fairness team at City Hall that would work to deliver a range of pledges through an Economic Fairness work programme. One of the key elements of this programme is “Working 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.” This work will be a vital piece of evidence to help shape interventions to deliver both the above pledges.

- 4.2 Due to the wide range of reporting measures and topics this research covers, it will be of significant interest to a number of other policy teams across the GLA who are working to support low-income Londoners. The findings may also help these teams deliver against various objectives in a wide-range of statutory and non-statutory strategies and action plans including (but not limited to):
- The Fuel Poverty Action Plan;
 - The London Food Strategy;
 - The Social Integration strategy;
 - The Rough Sleeping Plan of Action;
 - The Health Inequalities strategy; and
 - Skills for Londoners.
- 4.3 To ensure all interested teams are kept up-to-date on progress and have the opportunity to feed into the research, analysis and outputs, the relevant teams will be regularly engaged through the Low-income Londoners working group and will be invited to bespoke steering meetings where appropriate.
- 4.4 A key stakeholder, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), are funding Herriot-Watt University to carry out the UK-wide aspect of this research project. Subject to approval via this ADD, we will be providing a grant to JRF to pay for a London sample boost. Due to their need to stay politically neutral as an organisation, we may face some restrictions on how and when we can talk about the London-wide results (or risk damaging a key stakeholder relationship and suffering reputational damage). To ensure that we have the freedom to use the findings at our discretion, part of our grant agreement with JRF is that we will receive a standalone London report and will not directly name them in any media work (beyond a footnote reference in notes to editors). Both parties will also have the right to comment on any press releases in advance and representatives from the GLA will be invited to sit on the national project steering group.
- 4.5 Herriot-Watt University will retain ownership of all the data gathered during the project. Any data provided to the GLA will be fully anonymised to ensure compliance with GDPR.
- 4.6 The Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement (who has oversight of the work of the Communities and Social Policy Unit) previously worked at JRF leading their work on poverty and ethnicity. This could be perceived to be an interest relevant to this decision; however, in these circumstances it is not deemed necessary to take any action for the following reasons:
- the Deputy Mayor is not directly involved in this decision. Her only role in the lead-up was to indicate that she would be supportive of officers from the Equality and Fairness team exploring the possibility of funding a sample boost for the 2019 study. This support was given almost six months after officers initially met with JRF and Herriot-Watt about the research in August 2018.
 - Agreement on the objectives, scope, outputs and cost of the funding opportunity outlined in this document was reached directly with Herriot-Watt University, not JRF.
 - The funding will result in an independent analysis and report for the GLA which will be carried out by Herriot-Watt University, not JRF.

- This is a unique funding opportunity and is the most cost-effective way for the GLA to gather detailed data about destitution in London. The only funding method that can be used to facilitate this opportunity is to provide grant funding to Herriot-Watt University via JRF (the funder of the national study).
- The data gathered this decision will fill intelligence gaps in the GLA social evidence base and support a wide range of GLA strategic objectives and manifesto commitments as laid out in parts 4.1 and 4.2 of this document.
- The findings from the national project (funded by JRF) and the London boost (funded by the GLA through this decision) will be entirely independently published and promoted by both parties.
- All data gathered as a result of GLA investment will be owned by Herriot-Watt University, not JRF.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 The expenditure of £39,668 will be funded from the Communities and Social Policy Programme Budget 2019-20 agreed via MD 2461.
- 5.2 £20,000 of the total will be taken from the Low-income Londoners budget (see MD2461 part 2.3.1) with the remainder (£19,668) taken from the Social Evidence Base budget (see MD2461 part 2.5).
- 5.3 The payment will be made to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (funders of the full national study) in the form of a grant agreement with a memorandum of understanding to deliver the objectives and outputs between the two parties.

6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Grant agreement signed	August 2019
Delivery Start Date	August 2019
50% of survey fieldwork completed	30 November 2019
Interim findings	31 January 2020
Delivery End Date (draft report)	30 June 2020
Delivery End Date (final report)	31 July 2020
Project Closure: [for project proposals]	31 July 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

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date:

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:

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 12 August 2019.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE:

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

Signature



Date

13.08.19