

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3240

Advice in Community Settings grant programme 2024-25

Executive summary:

This decision form seeks the Mayor's approval for expenditure of £810,000, and receipt of £60,000, to deliver a further year of the Advice in Community Settings programme. It also seeks approval for expenditure of £197,000 on extending fixed-term staffing posts, to support delivery of this programme and the team's wider work.

This will enable the GLA to grant-fund up to 10 community-advice partnerships, to continue providing advice and support for Londoners on low and no incomes, and increase the accessibility of advice. The rationale for continuing to support partnerships is based on clear evidence of the programme's impact and continued need for advice, given a sustained rise in the cost of essentials.

Continued staffing resource will allow the Financial Hardship team to continue delivering work to support Londoners with the high cost of living.

This builds on previous approvals for the Advice in Community Settings programme in decisions [MD2732](#), [MD2869](#) and [MD3157](#) and previous approval for fixed-term posts in [MD2991](#).

Decision:

That the Mayor approves:

- expenditure of £720,000, to continue to grant-fund up to 10 partnerships to deliver a further year of the Advice in Community Settings (AiCS) programme
- expenditure of £90,000, over 2024-25 and 2025-26, on evaluation of the AiCS programme and flexible wraparound support to improve partnerships' service delivery
- receipt of £60,000 grant funding from Guy's and St Thomas' Charitable Trust to meet costs of the AiCS programme
- expenditure of £197,000 to extend funding for a second year for three fixed-term posts, to support delivery of work to support Londoners with the sustained high cost of living.

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:

26/2/24

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Subject to final approval of the [Mayor's Final Draft Consolidated Budget for 2024-25](#), this Mayoral Decision (MD) seeks approval for expenditure of £810,000, from the Mayor's budget for 2024-25, to continue providing grant funding to up to 10 partnerships under the Advice in Community Settings (AiCS) programme; and to fund evaluation and wraparound support for the partnerships.
- 1.2. This MD also seeks authorisation for income of £60,000 from Guy's and St Thomas' Community Trust (GSCT) (specifically the charity Impact on Urban Health, part of GSCT), to contribute to a mixture of activity that sits directly within and alongside the programme. This income was approved under MD2869, but the funding has not been received yet. It therefore needs to be approved again under this decision.
- 1.3. This MD also seeks approval for expenditure of £197,000 to extend three fixed-term staff posts to deliver the programme to support Londoners with the cost of living. Given the continued emphasis on work to support with the cost of living, and the budget allocated for this work in the Mayor's Final Draft Consolidated Budget for 2024-25, extended staffing is needed to ensure continuous delivery.
- 1.4. The Mayor authorised expenditure to fund previous phases of the AiCS programme under cover of:
 - [MD2732 Recovery Fund, Robust Safety Net Mission Projects](#)
 - [MD2831 Migration Programme](#)
 - [MD2869 Robust Safety Net workplan 2021-22 and 2022-23](#)
 - [MD3157 Robust Safety Net 2023-24](#).
- 1.5. Funding the AiCS programme since 2021 has enabled the GLA to support the most excluded Londoners, and those with complex needs, to access advice and support to increase their incomes and alleviate financial hardship. The programme was designed to fund new or emerging partnerships between advice agencies and community locations such as schools, food banks, community centres, faith settings and healthcare settings, to make advice more visible and accessible for Londoners who need it.
- 1.6. After an initialisation period, partnerships have been directly delivering advice since the third quarter of 2021-22. As of the end of the 2023-24 second quarter, the funding has enabled partnerships to provide advice to over 5,000 individuals; and, as a result of this advice, led to combined increases in income, for those individuals, of £3,380,610. In total, 6,500 Londoners are expected to have been supported by the programme by the end of its second year.
- 1.7. The recent [Year 1 evaluation](#) highlighted the success of the programme in embedding sustainable community partnerships; and its effectiveness in reaching groups that are under-served by traditional models of advice provision. Over 55 per cent of all advice seekers seen by the programme had not accessed advice before. Compared to the population of London, and advice seekers at Citizens Advice London branches, clients of the AiCS programme were more likely to be female and/or from a Black or Black British background. A final Year 2 evaluation of the AiCS programme is expected in July 2024.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

Overarching objective

- 2.1. The AiCS programme aims to develop and/or strengthen partnerships between social welfare advice services and community settings – such as schools, food banks and community centres. In particular,

the programme aims to reach Londoners who do not traditionally access social welfare advice services. For Londoners in financial hardship, accessing advice and support can lead to increased incomes; better health and wellbeing; and improved confidence and resilience around managing money. In addition, the programme aims to improve partnership working between advice agencies and other parts of civil society/the public sector to improve equitable access to advice in the longer term. The programme is part of a wider scheme of income-maximisation work delivered by the GLA to help Londoners in financial hardship claim what they are entitled to.

- 2.2. The programme's impact is measured by capturing the number of advice seekers supported through the programme; financial gains per household; and the proportion of advice seekers seen who had never received advice before encountering the programme. Other qualitative metrics around improving health, wellbeing, confidence and partnership working are also measured through the independent evaluation of the programme.
- 2.3. In the [Mayor's Final Draft Consolidated Budget for 2024-25](#), the Mayor has allocated £4.3125m in 2024-25 to extend income maximisation services, to help Londoners facing financial challenges in accessing income to which they are entitled. Given the continued financial pressures facing Londoners on low incomes, and the funding made available for income maximisation through the Mayor's budget for 2024-25, there is a clear rationale for continuing to fund direct delivery of community-based advice in 2024-25.

Delivery method

- 2.4. Subject to final approval of the [Mayor's Final Draft Consolidated Budget for 2024-25](#), this decision seeks approval to provide £720,000 for 12 months of continued grant funding, to up to 10 community-advice partnerships that have been delivering under the AiCS programme.
- 2.5. This grant funding will enable these partnerships to capitalise on the success of delivery so far; and to continue providing community-based advice and support for Londoners in financial hardship for another 12 months. Advice interventions will support beneficiaries to claim benefits, or other financial entitlements; and to access help in dealing with debt. With this funding, partnerships can continue to grow and deepen their partnership arrangements within community settings; build sustainable relationships; and improve Londoners' access to advice in the longer term.
- 2.6. GLA officers will continue working with partnerships to facilitate shared learning; unblock barriers to delivery; and help partnerships to apply for and attain alternative sources of funding. There will be a continued focus on using the GLA's convening power to advocate to other funders about the value and impact of community-based advice.
- 2.7. The grant funding will be awarded to up to 10 lead partnership organisations under a new grant agreement that outlines their delivery plan for 2024-25. Each partnership will be funded in line with funding amounts they have received in previous 12-month periods. Due to some partnerships taking longer than others to complete their initialisation phase, the partnerships are on a staggered timeline – though all partnerships will begin their delivery “year” and be awarded funding in 2024-25, between the first and third quarters.
- 2.8. This decision also seeks approval to provide £90,000 to extend some elements of the programme's evaluation; and to provide flexible wraparound support for partnerships including training and knowledge-sharing opportunities. This expenditure may also be used for per-day funding for the evaluator to support partnerships to identify and apply for further funding.
- 2.9. We anticipate that commissioning evaluation will involve a procurement exercise or extension of existing evaluation contracts. The application of any funding towards this activity will be done in line with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code; and advice will be sought from TfL Procurement and Commercial.
- 2.10. It is expected that the evaluation contract will last from July 2024 (the end of the current contract) to October 2025, in line with partnership delivery timelines. Additionally, 65 per cent of expenditure for

evaluation will be spent in 2024-25; and 35 per cent will be spent in 2025-26 as a final milestone payment in October 2025.

- 2.11. In addition to the grant funding for another year of the AiCS programme, this decision seeks approval for receipt of £60,000 from GSCT/Impact on Urban Health for activity to support the programme.

Expected outcomes

- 2.12. Funding AiCS for a further year will enable more Londoners to access welfare entitlements and other financial support, through the provision of local, community-based advice. It is estimated that providing £720,000 funding for another year of direct delivery will result in a further £2.8m gained in increased income for Londoners; and a further 4,000 Londoners reached.
- 2.13. Extending the evaluation will enable longer-term indicators to be tracked, including the impact of the programme on beneficiaries' longer-term health, wellbeing and resilience. The evaluator will also support partnerships to identify and apply for further alternative or match-funding.

Staffing

- 2.14. Given the continued prioritisation of the team's work, we are seeking approval for expenditure of £197,000 to extend three fixed-term posts (one Grade 10, two Grade 8) for a second year within the Financial Hardship team at the GLA. Once approved in parallel through the GLA's establishment control procedures, these posts will continue to support the delivery of various aspects of the wider income maximisation work programme – including campaigning and awareness-raising activity, community engagement, grant management and procurement.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the GLA must have 'due regard' of the Public Sector Equality Duty – that is, the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; and advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. Experiences of financial hardship often interact with other forms of marginalisation, such as disability and racism. This means some groups of Londoners face more barriers to accessing advice and maintaining a claim for support. Equality, integration and inclusion are the drivers behind the AiCS programme, which aims to provide equitable access to advice and support.
- 3.3. Several groups of Londoners with protected characteristics are at greater risk of financial hardship. Examples include the following:
- Age: one-third of London's children (33 per cent) live in relative poverty, compared to a quarter (25 per cent) for total poverty and almost a quarter (24 per cent) for severe poverty. Almost half of single-parent households (47 per cent) live in relative poverty. In addition, almost a quarter of older people in London (23 per cent) live in relative poverty; and one in 10 (11 per cent) live in material deprivation – both rates are the highest for any English region.
 - Disability: one-third of London's households with a disabled person (33 per cent) live in relative poverty, compared to just over a fifth of households in which no one is disabled (22 per cent).
 - Race: one-third of households headed by someone from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background (33 per cent) are in relative poverty, compared to just under a fifth of households headed by someone from a White background (18 per cent).
 - Migrant Londoners – especially those with no recourse to public funds – face a particularly high risk of destitution.

3.4. The support offered through the AiCS programme will be available to, and may benefit, any Londoner who needs it. However, it has been designed to provide support to Londoners with protected characteristics. For example:

- Partnerships have been awarded because of their ability to reach Londoners experiencing barriers to accessing services. These include Deaf and disabled Londoners; Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Londoners; single parents; older Londoners; and migrant Londoners. This will advance equality of opportunity in relation to accessing services and forms of support.
- Increased access to rights and entitlements will lead to financial gains in Londoners with protected characteristics.
- The investment in community-based advice services will provide an effective support option for Londoners who lack either capability or confidence using digital resources; and those with more complex needs who cannot be served with digital resources. Some of the partnerships offer training in using digital resources to manage money, including benefits.
- Advice funding, particularly of specialist legal advice, will benefit Londoners with no recourse to public funds who require immigration advice.

3.5. To ensure the highest standards of equality, diversity and inclusion are upheld, GLA officers will work with delivery partners to use outreach and engagement approaches to build and strengthen partnerships with smaller and grassroots community organisations that directly serve Londoners who face barriers to accessing advice.

4. Other considerations

Key risks

4.1. Risks and mitigations are outlined in the table below:

Risk	Mitigation	Probability (with mitigation) (1-5)	Severity (with mitigation) (1-5)	RAG (post-mitigation)
The scale of the cost-of-living pressures Londoners face may limit the impact of this programme of work. This includes housing needs, which take longer and can be harder to resolve through advice.	Awareness-raising activity and the delivery of advice interventions will be flexible, and target communities with the most acute needs to maximise their impact. Monitoring data will yield intelligence on the scale of the problem and its policy drivers. This could be used to lobby government for additional support nationally; or to leverage additional funding from London-based partners.	4	3	A
Despite funding increased capacity in the advice sector, advice services may remain overwhelmed.	The funding will facilitate stronger relationships and referral pathways between advice agencies and other services, to help advice-seekers	4	2	A

Creating more equitable access to advice will create increased demand for services with limited capacity, resulting in not all clients being seen or having their needs fully addressed.	find the support they need. Partnerships will continue be supported through knowledge-sharing activities to share approaches to managing demand. GLA officers will continue to work with other philanthropic and statutory funders to advocate for investment in the advice sector.			
Withdrawal of support from national government, such as the Household Support Fund or cost-of-living payments, may limit financial gains available.	GLA officers will work with the evaluation partner to monitor financial gains and understand any reasons for fluctuation. Monitoring data could be used to advocate for changes to national policy and increased support.	4	2	A
Other funders' budgets are limited, and may not be able to take on funding the continuation of partnerships' delivery.	GLA officers will bring together funders to find ways to embed community-based advice, as an integral part of strategic advice plans for London. Opportunities will be identified for a diverse range of funders to collaborate on funding community-based advice.	3	2	G

Conflicts of interest

- 4.2. There are no conflicts of interest to note for any of the officers involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form.

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.3. The extension of the AiCS programme is consistent with the Mayor's commitment to help hundreds of thousands of Londoners struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, and the worst effects of the continued rise in the cost of essentials. The latest YouGov polling commissioned by City Hall found that more than a third of parents or carers of children under 18 (35 per cent) are buying less food and essentials, with 41 per cent using less water, energy or fuel to help them manage living costs. Three in ten (30 per cent) say they are 'financially struggling'.
- 4.4. Providing this grant funding will contribute towards the Robust Safety Net mission's goal of ensuring that all Londoners can access the support they need to escape or avoid financial hardship.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Approval is sought for the expenditure of £1,007,000 and the receipt of £60,000 from the Low Income and Food programme budget in 2024-25 and 2025-26. This is broken down as follows:

	2024-25	2025-26	Total
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Expenditure of £720,000 to continue to grant fund up to 10 partnerships, to deliver a further year of the AiCS programme	£720,000		£720,000
Expenditure of £90,000 over 2024-25 and 2025-26 on evaluation of the AiCS programme and flexible wraparound support to improve partnerships' service delivery	£45,000	£45,000	£90,000
Expenditure of £197,000 to extend funding for a second year for three fixed-term posts, to support delivery of work to support Londoners with the sustained high cost of living	£117,000	£80,000	£197,000
Total Expenditure	£882,000	£125,000	£1,007,000
Receipt of £60,000 grant funding from GSCT/Impact on Urban Health to meet costs of the AiCS programme	£60,000		£60,000

- 5.2. Funding for future financial years will be subject to the annual budget-setting process and is subject to change. The expenditure of £1,007,000 across 2024-25 and 2025-26 is assumed to be affordable and can only be confirmed when the GLA: Mayor budget for each year is formally approved in March 2024 and March 2025.
- 5.3. Any contracts that commit the GLA in future years are subject to appropriate break clauses. Any amount of funding to delivery partners will be subject to satisfactory financial due diligence.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Mayor concern the exercise of the Authority's general powers, falling within the Authority's statutory powers to do such things considered to further, or that are facilitative of, or conducive or incidental to, the promotion of economic development and wealth creation, social development, and the improvement of the environment in Greater London. In formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers have complied with the Authority's related statutory duties to:
- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people
 - 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
 - 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 (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation) and persons who do not (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. Paragraphs 2.4 to 2.7, above, indicate that the contribution of £720,000 to up to 10 community-advice partnerships amounts to the provision of grant funding and not payment for services. Officers must ensure that the funding is distributed fairly; transparently; and in accordance with the GLA's public sector equality duty, and with the requirements of section 12 of the Authority's Contracts and Funding Code.

- 6.4. Furthermore, officers must ensure that an appropriate funding agreement be put in place between and executed by the GLA and the recipient before: any commitment to fund is made; and any funding is paid to the recipient.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 7.1. The project will be delivered according to the following timetable:

Activity	Timeline
Grant agreements signed	May – October 2024
Commission evaluation and learning partner	July 2024
Partnerships begin delivery	May – October 2024
Monitoring and evaluation activity	May 2024 – October 2025
Partnerships supported to secure alternative or match-funding	May 2024 – October 2025
Wrap-up activities	October 2025
Staffing	Throughout

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 be published either 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

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the 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:

Lizzie Mahoney has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

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

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Dr 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

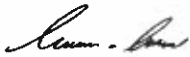
This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 19 February 2024.

✓

INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

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

Signature:



Date:

21/02/2024

CHIEF OF STAFF:

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

Signature:



Date:

20/02/2024

