

**MAYOR OF LONDON**

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# **The London Early Years Business Support Programme**



**Request for Proposals**

**March 2021**

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## Summary

London's early years sector is essential in promoting social cohesion, improving school readiness and closing the inequality gap. This has become even more important as a result of COVID-19. It is vital for parents who wish to return to work and is a key driver across many of the Mayor's priorities including health, equalities, adult education and the economy.

The GLA recently published research<sup>1</sup> on the provision of early years sector-specific business support. This made recommendations for the wider system to ensure the sustainability of London's early years sector through the transition and recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research shows the urgent need for support with over 60 per cent of nurseries and childminders fearing bankruptcy in the next six to 12 months; rising to 70 per cent in deprived areas. The research brought together evidence from early years practitioners, business support organisations, sector representative bodies and local government. Its recommendations build on the London Business Hub infrastructure and the Mayor's business support offer and look to provide a regional platform for stakeholders to support a sustainable and viable support offer to the sector.

In response to the research recommendations, the Mayor is offering funding of up to £150,000 to an organisation or a consortium of organisations to develop an early years sector-specific regional one stop shop for business support, and deliver business support to London's early years providers.

Proposals should include the following elements of business support:

- develop content for a London focused page for the early years sector to be hosted on the London Business Hub ([www.businesshub.london](http://www.businesshub.london)), as the main access point for business support information, advice and guidance for the early years sector;
- pilot an enhanced personal early years sector-specific business support triage service;
- deliver intensive business support for London's most at risk early years providers in the 2021-2022 financial year that focuses on their sustainability and growth; and
- evaluate the impact of the investment on the take up of business support across the capital's early years providers and on the sector's sustainability.

The selected organisation or consortium of organisations will be invited to further refine their proposal with Greater London Authority (GLA) and the London Business Hub (LBH), to ensure maximum effectiveness and best alignment with LBH technical requirements.

Delivery will take place between May 2021 and March 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/education-and-youth/support-families-and-early-years/early-years-and-childcare/business-support-londons-early-years-sector>

This request for proposals is through a competitive grant process issued by the GLA Education and Youth Team.

Submissions are to be made by providing the following documentation to the GLA:

1. Application form (including delivery plan)
2. Appendix 1: Budget
3. Due diligence documentation (see: Funding Application Form, question 5)

**Please email submissions to [Education.Programme@london.gov.uk](mailto:Education.Programme@london.gov.uk). The closing date for proposals is 12pm Friday 16 April 2021.**

## 1. Background

*“The benefits of accessible, good quality childcare are clear all round – parents will be able to return to work, children will have more access to quality early years education, and employers will be able to reap the benefits of having skilled and eager parents back in the workplace.”* Sadiq Khan - Mayor of London

London’s early years sector is essential in promoting social cohesion and closing the inequality gap between disadvantaged children and their better off peers, something that has become more important as a result of COVID-19. The sector is also essential to the city’s economy providing access to high quality early education and childcare, which supports parents who wish to return to work.

The outbreak of COVID-19 and the mandatory closure of early years settings to most children from March to June 2020, and the subsequent lower and fluctuating number of parents using formal childcare, is predicted to have a significant impact on the medium and long-term sustainability of the sector.

Department for Education data from 5 March 2021 shows that only about 43 per cent of the number of children who usually attend early years settings in term-time had returned. Parental demand is predicted to decrease over a prolonged period. This will impact on the early years sectors sustainability and could lead to lack of childcare places as a result of permanent nursery and childminder closures.

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected groups that were in a disadvantaged position before the pandemic. According to research by the Child Poverty Action Group<sup>2</sup>, the problems faced by low-income families have been magnified, with 40 per cent of low-income families missing at least one essential resource to support their children's learning. The Thomas Reuter Foundation<sup>3</sup> has reported that women and low-paid workers are among worst hit by UK coronavirus job cuts.

GLA commissioned research<sup>4</sup> into the provision of sector-specific business support for London’s early years providers was undertaken in November 2020 by the Early Years Alliance and CEEDA. It found that over 60 per cent of nurseries and childminders fear bankruptcy in the next six to 12 months; this increases to 70 per cent for those nurseries and childminders located in deprived areas.

This research produced three key recommendations on how the early years sector can be supported through and post COVID-19:

- Bring greater coordination and accessibility to the offer of business support for the early years sector in London. London’s early years providers are generally satisfied with the business support they receive and are keen to receive more. To develop this positive position further a regional sector-specific web-based One Stop Shop should be established, maintained and promoted as the main access point for information, advice and guidance on all aspects of business support.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/coronavirus-has-exacerbated-problems-for-low-income-families>

<sup>3</sup> <https://news.trust.org/item/20200406125229-0o4qn>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/education-and-youth/support-families-and-early-years/early-years-and-childcare/business-support-londons-early-years-sector>

- Deliver a sustainability support initiative across London in the 2021-2022 financial year. Securing the survival of viable early years providers needs to be the principal aim of business support to the sector in London over the next 12-18 months. Support in the 2021-22 year should focus on PVI providers' financial forecasting, budgeting, marketing and human resource management. A programme of interventions should offer a range of delivery models, recognising the wide variety of demands facing early years providers in terms of time limitations and costs.
- Promoting the essential importance of high quality early childhood education and care to London's employer's, parents, carers and wider public Stimulating and maintaining demand for formal early childhood education and care is essential for both the economic and social recovery of London after the pandemic.

The London Early Years Business Programme is a direct response to the report recommendations 1 and 2. Bidders are highly encouraged to read the full report, which can be found [here](#).

It builds on the [support offered through the London Business Hub](#) to London's Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers between August and December 2020. Please see annex 1 for background information on the London Business Hub.

You can find out more about the Mayor's work on early years policy area at [www.london.gov.uk/early-years](http://www.london.gov.uk/early-years)

## 2. Programme Description

**The London Early Years Business Support Programme** will offer business support to London early years providers, by developing a regional one-stop shop, piloting an enhanced personal early years sector-specific business support triage service, and providing intensive business support to those early years settings most at risk of closure.

### **Aim:**

To support the early years sector's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and contribute towards the longer-term sustainability of London early years provision.

### **Objectives:**

- increase the knowledge, capacity and business acumen of London's early years sector;
- increase the early years sector's resilience and sustainability;
- increase the sector-specific business support offer for London's early years providers;
- offer advice, guidance and practical support to ensure sufficient levels of childcare provision for London parents;
- build the sector's capacity to respond to future challenges and changes in demand.

**Outcomes:**

- growth and long-term sustainability of London childcare provision;
- growth of community businesses and social purpose organisations in London;
- building and disseminating knowledge and best practice about sustainable business models which secure social infrastructure

**3. Target Group**

The beneficiaries of the London Early Years Business Support Programme will be private, voluntary and independent early years providers (PVIs) across London. This includes group settings and childminders, who usually work as self-employed individuals.

Two elements of the programme will specifically target a smaller pool of early years providers:

- the enhanced personal early years sector-specific business support triage pilot
- intensive business support for London's most at risk early years providers in the 2021-2022 financial year that focuses on their sustainability and growth.

Applicants must provide a clear rationale for their identified target group for those specific elements of the programme. This may be based on a matrix of needs, for example deprivation area, type of provider, size of business.

**4. Scope of project**

The London Early Years Business Support Programme will:

- develop a London focused business support page for the early years sector to be hosted on the London Business Hub ([www.businesshub.london](http://www.businesshub.london)). This will be the main access point for business support information advice and guidance for the early years sector (a one stop shop):
  - collate resources and links to specialist business advice for the early years sector, with a quarterly refresh; and
  - explore and develop an online business support triage tool
- promote the business support available to early years settings;
- pilot an enhanced personal business support triage service targeting early years providers based on a matrix of needs (i.e. deprivation area, type of provider, size of business etc.);
- deliver intensive business support for London's most at risk early years providers in the 2021-2022 financial year that focuses on their sustainability and growth; Including: financial forecasting, budgeting, marketing and human resource management.
- evaluate the impact of the investment on the take up of business support across the capital's early years providers and on the sector's sustainability.

## 5. Location

Early years providers supported by this programme will be based in the Greater London area. We expect that the One Stop Shop will be promoted across the capital. See paragraph 3 for more information on the other elements of the programme. Applicants must provide a rationale for any geographic targeting in delivery of these elements.

## 6. Who can apply

We welcome applications from organisations that have excellent understanding of the early years sector, its business support needs and the sector-specific impact of the pandemic on local and regional provision and a proven track record of successful, engaging business support offered to the sector.

### Applicants should:

- demonstrate excellent understanding of London's early years sector
- demonstrate excellent understanding of their target group and the challenges they face, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, both in a short term and in a long term
- demonstrate strong links with London early years providers, local authorities, wider business support organisations and training providers and sector membership organisations
- demonstrate they can provide links with sector-specific business support and training providers
- demonstrate excellent understanding of barriers the early years sector faces in accessing business support and how this can be overcome
- demonstrate their experience and track record of providing successful, engaging business support offer to the sector
- outline how they propose to reach and engage early years providers
- demonstrate good understanding of London Business Hub functionalities and limitations
- demonstrate experience in developing and offering triage services in relation to business support
- outline how they propose to develop the online triage tool to support the assessment of needs of individual providers
- provide rationale for their chosen target group and/or geographical focus for piloting the personal triage service and the intensive business support elements
- outline their proposals to provide an intensive business support to providers most at risk and the process of identifying and engaging those providers
- outline how they are going to evaluate the impact of the programme

## 7. Funding and payment

The maximum budget for the London Early Years Business Support Programme is £150,000. It will be awarded to one successful organisation / consortium.

Match funding for the London Early Years Business Programme activities will be considered as part of the application process. We recognise that it can be challenging to



secure additional funds and therefore encourage and welcome in-kind funding. We have not set a minimum match funding requirement.

The funding will cover activities from May 2021 to March 2022, including a programme refining period, following the grant award. Payments will be based on achievement of key milestones and outputs, as set out in the applicant’s delivery plan and agreed by the GLA.

## 8. Project Management

The successful applicant will be expected to provide a work plan / delivery plan with key milestones and provide the GLA project manager with progress reports linked to key milestones and submit claims to the GLA.

The successful applicant will also be expected to make themselves available for an inception meeting and may be asked to contribute to future good practice activity being undertaken by the GLA as part of wider education activity.

## 9. Scoring Criteria

We reserve the right to ask for clarification on proposals through an interview process.

The GLA is not bound to accept the lowest cost or any proposal.

<p>Strength of rationale and evidence for proposal</p> <p>30%</p>	<p>Application demonstrates how the proposal addresses the project scope and meets the London Early Years Business Support Programme</p> <p>Strong rationale for proposed activities</p> <p>Demonstrates how the proposed activities are informed by the needs of London early years providers</p> <p>Clear evaluation plan</p>
<p>Clear delivery and impact</p> <p>35%</p>	<p>Clear outline of the proposed activities</p> <p>Clearly structured delivery plan and timeline</p> <p>Demonstrates that the applicant is able to engage early years providers, wider business support and training organisations and strategic partners (e.g. local authority) in order to successfully deliver the programme during the funding life</p> <p>Defined outputs and outcomes</p>

<p>Previous Experience and Expertise</p> <p>20%</p>	<p>Team expertise and previous experience</p> <p>Have a proven track record of successful engagement with the target groups</p> <p>Have a proven track record of collaborating with partners such as early years providers, local authority early years departments, training organisations and sector membership organisations.</p> <p>Have evidence of providing business support to the early years sector and proven track record of understanding the barriers they face.</p>
<p>Value for money</p> <p>15%</p>	<p>Cost of running the project</p> <p>Scale and scope of the project including the number of early years providers benefiting</p> <p>Consideration of how the project might be embedded beyond the funding period.</p> <p>Commitment to sharing learning with the wider sector.</p> <p>Additionality</p>

Each of the above areas will be assessed in accordance with the following criteria:

0 – No response	
1 - Unsatisfactory	No real evidence
2 - Poor	Criteria not met and unacceptable
3 - Satisfactory	Not met exactly but acceptably
4 - Good	Most aspects of criteria are met
5 - Excellent	Meets criteria exactly

## 10. Evaluation

The GLA is committed to promoting the highest standards of evidence and evaluation. The successful applicant will be expected to demonstrate how they will evaluate the impact of their programme on the anticipated outcomes.

## 11. Sustainability

The GLA wants to fund programmes that will have a lasting and sustainable impact. Organisations should develop a sustainability plan for their project following the end of the GLA funding.

## 12. Timetable

The anticipated timetable for the project is outlined in the table below.

Milestone	Deadline (Provisional)
Request for Proposals published	w/c 15 March 2021
Closing date for tender responses	12pm Friday 16 April 2021
GLA shortlisting	19 - 23 April 2021
Appoint	Week commencing 26 April 2021
Successful organisations to hold initiation meeting with the GLA	April 2021
Signing of grant agreements and GLA funding commences	May 2021
Programme refinement, technical setup and start of programme activities	May 2021
GLA funding ends	March 2022

### **Other formats and languages**

For a large print, Braille, disc, sign language video or audio-tape version of this document, please contact us at the address below:

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You will need to supply your name, your postal address and state the format and title of the publication you require.

If you would like a summary of this document in your language, please phone the number or contact us at the address above.

## **Annexe 1: London Business Hub Background Information**

### **The London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP)**

The London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP) is the local enterprise partnership in London. LEAP brings entrepreneurs and businesses together with the Mayorality and London Councils to identify strategic actions to support and lead economic growth and job creation in the capital.

For more information on LEAP visit [www.lep.london](http://www.lep.london)

### **London Business Hub**

The London Business Hub is the 'Growth Hub' in London. Growth Hubs are funded by central government via the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and delivered as regional public/private sector partnerships led by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) with the purpose of joining up national and local business support to make it easier for businesses to find the help they need. There are 38 Growth Hubs - one for each LEP region. In addition to providing a coordination function, each regional Growth Hub provides a different type of support, tailored to the needs of businesses in its region.

Launched in November 2016, the London Business Hub is managed by the London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP). The London Business Hub offers a combination of an online signposting tool and face-to-face support to help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) grow their businesses and connect them with the support that is available in the capital. Its aim is to make London based businesses more sustainable, productive and ultimately more profitable.

In December 2019, the London Business Hub opened its first five physical locations<sup>5</sup> that provide entrepreneurs, microbusinesses and SMEs the opportunity to receive free, face-to-face business support from a team of Business Advisers. The Business Advisers support companies that have already started trading and would value some objective, impartial advice on topics like finance, marketing, sales, management, leadership and digitisation.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 and the consequent requirements for social distancing, the London Growth Hub has been delivering all of its offer online. Businesses can book 1-2-1 appointments with Business Advisers that are delivered via online meetings or telephone calls. Additionally, businesses can access a wide range of business support programmes delivered via webinars.

For more information on the London Business Hub, visit:  
<https://www.businesshub.london>

### **Technical aspects of the London Business Hub:**

- Built on WordPress CMS

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<sup>5</sup> Vauxhall, Tottenham, Hammersmith, Woolwich and Croydon

- Current content tagging options (parent tags are set but there could be flexibility in the child tags to include more which are relevant to your content but please note these would be then become sitewide)

Stages ▲ Locations ▼ Sectors ▼ Needs ▼

Planning (85) Starting (364) Growing (366) Solving (285)

Stages ▼ Locations ▲ Sectors ▼ Needs ▼

Barking and Dagenham (3) Barnet (2) Bexley (4) Brent (1) Bromley (1) Camden (1)  
 City of London (3) Croydon (5) Ealing (2) Enfield (2) Greenwich (5) Hackney (8)  
 Hammersmith and Fulham (2) Haringey (4) Harrow (1) Havering (2) Hillingdon (1) Hounslow (1)  
 Islington (2) Kensington and Chelsea (8) Kingston upon Thames (1) Lambeth (3) Lewisham (3)  
 Merton (1) Newham (6) Redbridge (2) Richmond upon Thames (2) Southwark (6) Sutton (1)  
 Tower Hamlets (7) Waltham Forest (2) Wandsworth (6) Westminster (3)

Stages ▼ Locations ▼ Sectors ▲ Needs ▼

Arts and culture (9) Automotive (2) Business and finance services (11) Construction (7) Creative (14)  
 Digital and tech (37) Education (10) Engineering (7) Environmental (3) Fashion (9) Film and TV (4)  
 Food and drink (6) Healthcare (9) Hospitality (7) Life sciences (9) Manufacturing (5) Media (7)  
 Pharmaceutical (6) Professional services (7) Property (2) Retail (13) Science and technology (21)  
 Social enterprise (18) Tourism and leisure (6) Urban innovation (2)

# LONDON EARLY YEARS BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMME : REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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Stages ▾ Locations ▾ Sectors ▾ Needs ▲

