

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2645

Title: London Schools Pollution Helpdesk (2023-2025)

Executive Summary:

The Mayor has committed to improving air quality as one of his key priorities given its impact on public health and health inequality. Research shows that air pollution disproportionately impacts children, whose lungs are still developing.

The landmark ruling that exposure to excessive air pollution contributed to the death of nine-year-old Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah in 2013 underlines the need for continued efforts to protect health and improve air quality for children and around sensitive sites, including schools.

This decision seeks approval for expenditure to continue delivering the Mayor's London Schools Pollution Helpdesk in 2023-24 (£16,000) and 2024-25 (£20,000). This represents a considerable saving on costs from previous years.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Transport, Infrastructure, Connectivity and Air Quality approves:

1. Expenditure of up to £40,000 (£16,000 in 2023-24 and up to £20,000 in 2024-25) to deliver the Mayor's London Schools Pollution Helpdesk

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: Elliot Treharne

Position: Transport, Infrastructure, Connectivity and Air Quality

Signature:



Date:

15/05/2023

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Improving air quality continues to be a public health priority and it is essential that co-ordinated action is taken to reduce health inequalities and exposure, especially for the most vulnerable, such as school children and the elderly.
- 1.2. London is currently in breach of legal limits for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), for which the Government's Air Quality Action Plan (2017) requires measures to bring the city into compliance by or before 2025. Furthermore, the World Health Organization (WHO) has updated its guidelines, recommending lower thresholds for the main air pollutants to reflect the growing weight of evidence of the health risks of exposure to pollution – even at low levels. The UK government has also committed to updating its targets in recognition of the urgency of this challenge.
- 1.3. On 16 December 2020 the Assistant Coroner for Inner South London (the Coroner) concluded that exposure to excessive air pollution contributed to the death of nine-year-old Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah in 2013. The medical cause of her death was given as acute respiratory failure, severe asthma and air pollution exposure. The Coroner published a Prevention of Future Deaths Report on 20 April 2021 setting out areas of concern to be considered by central government, the Mayor, the London Borough of Lewisham and other organisations. The Mayor has formally replied, setting out his commitment to implementing the recommendations related to the GLA and Transport for London (TfL); and supporting the implementation of other recommendations.
- 1.4. The London Schools Pollution Helpdesk (LSPH) was launched in February 2021 (MD2714), in partnership with Impact on Urban Health and Global Action Plan. It was extended for the 2022-23 financial year under MD2813.
- 1.5. The LSPH (www.pollutionhelpdesk.co.uk) hosts a wealth of free information and resources on air quality, campaigning, mitigation and action planning. Borough officers and members of school communities who are seeking ways to reduce emissions and exposure to air pollution for pupils can also contact the LSPH for free, bespoke advice and support by phone, email, or web form.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The LSPH contributes to Objective 4.1 of the LES, "Support and empower London and its communities, particularly the most disadvantaged and those in priority locations, to reduce their exposure to poor air quality."
- 2.2. The project, which will continue to be funded by the air quality budget, will help address some themes explored during the Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah inquest. The LSPH will contribute to effective training, resources and support available to local authorities charged with addressing local air-pollution levels. It will also support the recommendation for improved provision of public information about the dangers of air pollution.
- 2.3. The project will continue supporting London schools by assisting with the implementation of measures that will reduce emissions and/or exposure by children to air pollution, raise awareness to the negative impacts of poor air quality, and drive change in travel behaviour. This could include the provision of free resources to promote air quality action such as active travel campaigns, as well as advice on Schools Streets and the suitability of green infrastructure and air cleaning devices, etc.
- 2.4. An evaluation of the project will also take place following project closure to help the GLA understand the barriers and aids that most hinder or support schools to act on pollution. The results of the

evaluation will support the development of future programmes to help reduce children’s exposure to poor air quality.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. The Mayor, GLA and TfL are subject to the “public sector equality duty” contained in s149 of the Equality Act 2010. This duty requires each body to have due regard to three outcomes when exercising their functions: (1) the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; (2) to advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic¹ and those who do not; and (3) to foster good relations between such people.
- 3.2. The protected characteristics and groups are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation and marriage/ civil partnership status. Compliance with the Equality Act may involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without the characteristic. The duty must be exercised with an open mind, and at the time a decision is taken in the exercise of the GLA’s functions. Conscientious regard must be had that is appropriate in all of the circumstances.
- 3.3. Populations living in the most deprived areas are on average currently more exposed to poor air quality than those in less deprived areas. An independent report by Aether published by the GLA in 2019 showed that, in 2013, people living in the most deprived areas of London were on average exposed to 24 per cent more nitrogen dioxide air pollution than those living in the least deprived areas.
- 3.4. The Aether report also showed that while everyone will benefit from improved air quality, those living in the most deprived areas would benefit the most on average. However, exposure is not completely uniform and there are also some prosperous areas with very high levels of exposure, e.g. those living in Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.
- 3.5. The London Schools Pollution Helpdesk supports action on air pollution in and around schools and is thus considered to be beneficial for children, who are identified as a vulnerable group, and will contribute towards improving air quality, reducing exposure as well as health and social inequality.

4. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

Risk description	Likelihood of risk occurring	Impact if risk occurs	Mitigating action
Costs exceed those outlined	Low	Low	Project will be managed by a Senior Policy and Programme Officer in the GLA’s Air Quality Team, with issues escalated as appropriate
New evidence suggests that advice provided by the LSPH is not as effective as expected	Low	Medium	The recommendations and resources offered by the LSPH are based on research undertaken by academics and air quality industry professionals. However, this evidence will be reviewed continuously and any updates

			will be reflected in the advice provided through the LSPH.
Lack of staff resources to deliver project	Low	Low	Internal staff resources have been identified within the Air Quality team to manage this project. Furthermore, an external contractor will be procured to ensure the LSPH website is kept up-to-date and other services are delivered within agreed timescales.

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.1. Further to the objectives listed in Section 2, the LES sets out the following commitments relating to the project:
- Proposal 4.1.1.b: The Mayor will aim to do more to protect London’s young and disadvantaged people by reducing their exposure to poor air quality, including at schools, nurseries, other educational establishments care homes and hospitals.
 - Proposal 4.1.1a: The Mayor will provide better information about air quality, especially during high and very high pollution episode, and use emergency measures where appropriate.
- 4.2. The project aims to influence behavioural change, promote active travel, and introduce School Streets where appropriate. In doing so, it supports Proposal 27 of the MTS, which sets out that ‘The Mayor will tackle pollution from transport in local air quality hotspots and at sensitive locations (such as around schools), including through the MAQF and other funding.’

Impact assessments and consultations

- 4.3. A comprehensive Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) was undertaken to support the LES, which covered air quality. The IIA found that the GLA had considered aspects for improving London’s air quality based on four policy options. This was recognised in the LES IIA as the most effective approach for addressing human health impacts. The LES includes targets for some of the pollutants identified in the IIA recommendations.
- 4.4. Evaluation of the impact of the air quality programme’s projects is delivered through the London Atmospheric Emissions Inventory, which estimates key pollutants across London and is updated every three years.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.5. There are no known conflicts of interest to note for any of those involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Approval is requested for expenditure of up to £16,000 in 2023-24 and £20,000 in 2024-25 to deliver the London Schools Pollution Helpdesk.
- 5.2. This expenditure will be funded by the Air Quality Team’s budget within the Environment and Energy Unit as approved in the Mayor’s 2023-24 budget. Funding for 2024-25 will need to be approved as part of the Mayor’s budget setting process. To mitigate any risk of the programme not being sufficiently resourced in future years to cover costs following the budget-setting process, any

contractual agreements will include the usual break clauses that could potentially be exercised if required.

6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	April 2023
Delivery Start Date	April 2023
2023-24 midpoint impact measurement and evaluation of barrier and aids identified	September 2023
2023-24 year-end impact measurement and review of option to extend project into 2024-25	March 2024
Delivery End Date	March 2024 or March 2025
Project Closure:	April 2024 or April 2025
Final evaluation start and finish (self):	April – July 2024 or April – July 2025

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

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:

Stella Yeung has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Corporate Investment Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Corporate Investment Board on 15 May 2023.

✓

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL SERVICES:

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

Signature:

Anna Gustolt

Date:

24/05/2023