

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD 2552

Title: Extend a contract to provide emotional support to Black and Black-Mixed race colleagues

Executive summary:

Approval is sought for expenditure of an additional £15k for an emotional support service for Black and Black-Mixed race staff at the GLA provided by Black Thrive. This will take the total spend with the provider to £40k.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development approves:

- the expenditure of £15k to provide further emotional support to Black and Black-Mixed race colleagues, taking total expenditure to £40k
- that a single-source request is currently being progressed with TfL, so we can continue to use Black Thrive to provide the emotional support service. The original procurement was for under £25k spend, and TfL Procurement has advised that we need a single-source request and an ADD to proceed.

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:

Raj Bhamber

Position:

Assistant Director HR & OD

Signature:



Date:

3/2/22

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 Following the murder of George Floyd and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter Movement, Black and Black-Mixed race colleagues in the GLA reported feeling emotionally distressed as a result of the effects of systematic racism in society; the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on particular communities; and their experiences in the workplace. Our 2019 staff survey indicated that Black staff were significantly less engaged (69 per cent) than White staff (81 per cent). Proportionally more Black staff experience bullying than White staff; 76 per cent of Black colleagues felt they were treated fairly and with respect, compared to 89 per cent of those who identify as White. Following a follow-up consultation with the GLA's Race Equity Staff Network, and a July 2020 survey of 137 Black/Black British and 58 Mixed race colleagues, a need was identified for a service to provide tailored emotional support to Black and Black-Mixed race colleagues at the GLA. The survey saw 30 per cent of staff respond, and 25 per cent of staff identified a need for tailored support. All respondents identified the biggest barrier to accessing emotional support via the GLA employee assistance programme (EAP) as "having to explain their lived experience to a provider who doesn't understand their cultural context".
- 1.2 The project was procured (with advice from TfL Procurement) and managed by Human Resources Staff in the Organisational Development and Engagement Team. The spend was considered routine and within delegated HR&OD budgets. Black Thrive was appointed following a competitive tender process, with the value of the work to not exceed £25k. The Workforce Equalities, Inclusion & Diversity Manager and Adviser are responsible for the contract management and evaluation.
- 1.3 The service was initially delivered as a pilot for 2020-21. It was co-designed with staff from the GLA's Race Equity Network, ensuring the service is tailored to the specific needs of the intended users. The initial phase of work has been completed, and consisted of the following:
 - One-to-one therapy and group coaching: these sessions provided participants with tools and techniques that helped them build confidence and achieve their personal and professional goals.
 - Emotional Emancipation Circles: these sessions, designed by the Healing Network and the Association of Black Psychologists, were delivered in the framework of an evidence-informed, culturally grounded and psychologically informed support group that has helped participants to deal with the traumas caused by anti-Black racism. These sessions offered a safe space where people shared their experiences; deepened their understanding of the historical roots of racism; and developed emotional wellness techniques.
 - Wellness workshops: these sessions equipped staff with the skills to help them maintain their wellbeing, and develop strategies to manage the daily stressors they have experienced. For example, a well-attended session around returning into the workplace was delivered on 28 July 2021.
- 1.4 As a result of continued demand from Black and Black-Mixed race staff (25 staff members to date) and the pending publication of the independent review (which has looked at whether there are structural barriers in place that prevent Asian, Minority Ethnic and – in particular – Black staff progression), this decision also asks for an additional £10k expenditure for Black Thrive to build on the service delivered to date, and to continue the following:

- Ongoing support to staff who have accessed individual coaching and therapy, with a particular focus on career support and progression within the GLA. Following a co-design approach, Black Thrive suggests three two-hour workshops, where participants will learn how to find their path, develop their confidence, motivation and resilience.
 - One-to-one therapy for staff who have yet to access the service.
- 1.5 The GLA Collaborative Procurement team at TfL has advised that this additional work can be awarded to Black Thrive without going to tender again, via a single-source request approved by an ADD. A single-source request to continue with Black Thrive is currently being progressed with TfL.
- 1.6 There are no previous approvals or decisions related to this matter. The initial spend was considered routine, within existing HR&OD budget.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 The objective is to continue to provide tailored emotional support to Black and Black-Mixed race colleagues at the GLA. This includes GLA staff who identify as Black and Black-Mixed race (including Black African, Caribbean or other).
- 2.2 The outcome is to help make the GLA a more inclusive place to work; and one that attracts talented people and is demographically representative of London.
- 2.3 The GLA considers that this support would particularly benefit Black and Black-Mixed race staff who were impacted by the murder of George Floyd. This event triggered discussions about the impact of racism within society on GLA staff, and the need to support colleagues navigating these important issues.
- 2.4 The GLA's EAP provides emotional support to all staff, and aims to provide a diverse pool of counsellors able to respond to a wide range of issues; but it does not specifically respond to this need for tailored support.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1 The GLA must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; and to the need to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This involves having due regard to the need to remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share a relevant protected characteristic that is connected to that characteristic, taking steps to meet the different needs of such people, and encouraging them to participate in public life or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low.
- 3.2 The Mayor's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy outlines that the GLA needs to be "leading by example". Specifically, we should be an inclusive employer. The objective that directly links to this decision is: to take the steps needed to ensure that all organisations within the GLA Group have open and inclusive cultures, and are great places to work.

3.3 The Equality Act 2010 contains provisions concerning lawful positive action that is designed to apply where persons who share a protected characteristic suffer a disadvantage or have a particular need. Employers may take certain actions to address these problems. The GLA considers that the action proposed within this decision falls within this category.

4. Other considerations

4.1. This work links to Inclusive London; the Mayor’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy; and our ambitions to be a more inclusive work. It also responds to a need for support amongst our Black and Black-Mixed Race staff, which has been clearly identified via feedback and consultation.

4.2. There are no conflicts of interest to note for anyone involved in the drafting of or clearance of this form.

4.3. The key risks and issues are set out below.

| Risk | Mitigation |
|--|---|
| Service does not meet the culturally specific needs of Black or Black-Mixed race staff | A detailed brief was sent to potential providers that have been researched and recommended by GLA Social Integration Team. The brief includes co-design sessions with staff to ensure their needs are met. Feedback from service users has been positive. |
| Black or Black-Mixed race staff that could benefit from the programme are not aware of the service | A comms plan was created in collaboration with Internal Comms. The provider will work with the Race Equity Network to run engagement events as part of the project brief. |

5. Financial comments

5.1 Assistant Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development approval is sought for additional expenditure up to £15,000 to provide further emotional support to Black and Black-Mixed race colleagues, taking total expenditure up to £40,000 (no previous approvals or decisions related to this are in place as the initial spend was considered routine).

5.2 This decision also seeks approval of a s single-source request so Black Thrive can continue to provide the emotional support.

5.3 The expenditure on this is to be met from HR&OD Corporate Learning & Development 2021-22 budget (£5,000) and the planned 2022-23 budget (£10,000), subject to the approval of the final 2022-23 budget via the budget-setting process. This contract will be managed by the H&OD unit within the Chief Officer’s Directorate.

6. Legal comments

6.1 The Equality Act 2010 (EqA 2010) contains provisions concerning lawful “positive action” that are designed to apply where persons who share a protected characteristic suffer a disadvantage; have particular needs; or are disproportionately under-represented. Employers can take certain actions

to address these problems without opening themselves up to discrimination claims brought by people without the relevant protected characteristic.

- 6.2 Section 158 of the EqA 2010 makes provision for general positive action where an employer reasonably thinks any of the following:
 - persons who share a protected characteristic suffer a disadvantage connected to the characteristic
 - persons who share a protected characteristic have needs that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it
 - participation in an activity by persons who share a protected characteristic is disproportionately low.

- 6.3 In these circumstances the employer can take any action that is a proportional means of achieving any of the following aims:
 - enabling or encouraging persons who share the protected characteristic to overcome or minimise the disadvantage identified
 - meeting the needs identified
 - enabling or encouraging persons who share the protected characteristic to participate in that activity.

- 6.4 The GLA has conducted official surveys of employees, which have identified that Black/Black British and Mixed-race employees have a need that is different from the needs of other employees who do not share their race. The GLA sets out, above, this need and how the proposed action has the aim of meeting the needs identified. It is therefore permitted action within the meaning of the EqA 2010.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

| Activity | Timeline |
|--|-----------------|
| Extension of contract to deliver additional services | January 2022 |
| Delivery end date | September 2022 |
| Project closure | September 2022 |

Appendices and supporting papers:

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 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:

Douglas Russell 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 31 January 2022

✓

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE:

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

Signature

Anna Custodt

Date

2/2/22