



## **A brief response to the Mayor's budget consultation.**

As stated in the consultation, we recognise the many challenges that the Greater London Authority and its constituent bodies face. It will be important though for the Capital's economy and the well-being of its residents to prioritise London's recovery from Covid through the delivery of pan-London Recovery Board's missions agreed and designed through collaborative work between the GLA, London's boroughs, London Councils and other partner organisations: We limit our comments to the key 'missions'

1. A Robust Safety Net – By 2025: every Londoner will be able to access the support they need to prevent financial hardship
2. Building Strong Communities – By 2025: all Londoners will have access to a community hub ensuring they can volunteer, get support and build strong community networks
3. Helping Londoners into Good Work – Support Londoners into good jobs with a focus on sectors key to London's recovery from COVID-19

We regard the above missions as essential to achieving a just and inclusive London, and we therefore welcome the combined proposed gross expenditure of £30 million on these three missions alone. They also dovetail with programmes from other missions like wellbeing ambassadors, digital access for all the proposed New Deal for Young People to improve access to mentoring and quality local youth activities.

Within this, we would emphasise that access to good quality, free and independent advice is a key part of supporting people to escape or prevent financial hardship, pathways into employment and strengthening community cohesion and networks. Building on the GLA's Advice in Community Settings grant programme,<sup>1</sup> there is much that can be done to encourage and enable these organisations to work collaboratively to provide Londoners with the support they need to boost their incomes and reduce their outgoings. But London's Advice sector needs more support to deliver targeted interventions to help families or individuals on low or no incomes to access advice and support. As the Advising Londoners report commissioned by the GLA makes clear, London's advice sector is under strain from increased demand with growing disparities between inner and outer London boroughs.<sup>2</sup> The report estimated a funding gap of around £13 million, and recommended that the GLA lead on a strategy for social welfare advice in London to galvanise boroughs and funders around the importance of adequately funded and resourced social welfare advice, identify appropriate funding channels, and support a new social welfare advice hub or unit should be established to coordinate strategic action and provision across policy areas (health, poverty, equality, employment, and so on).

The agenda is both a budgetary and policy challenge for the GLA and involved many interlinked issues including

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/civil-society/advice-community-settings-grant-programme>

<sup>2</sup> <https://asauk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Advising-Londoners-Report-30072020-1.pdf>

- Inconsistent commissioning practices as between London Boroughs
- The importance of co-production with the advice sector in designing funding models
- Ensuring that the economic value that advice providers are understood as essential complement to public services, and their need for certainty of funding
- Addressing consistency of service provision

Our submission to this Budget consultation therefore asks the GLA to give explicit reference to this agenda in its budgetary framework, highlighting the importance of advice services in achieving the objectives of the London recovery Board's missions. Missions such as the "robust safety net" need both a financial mandate, and also a mechanism for delivery. We believe that supporting a pan-London advice services strategy, and providing the required strategic funding, can provide that mechanism.