

13 September 2020

From: Representatives of London Keep Our NHS Public health campaign groups

To: Mayor Sadiq Khan

Dear Mayor, Sadiq Khan,

Please stand up for the people of London and our NHS

We are urgently writing to you from health campaigning groups based in boroughs all over London. We come from 18 London-based campaigns affiliated to Keep Our NHS Public (KONP), a national organisation with 70 branches. We campaign on a wide range of issues about health and social care, on saving hospitals and community health services, monitoring changes to local NHS provision, supporting NHS staff for better pay and conditions, opposing the charging of migrants for NHS treatment under this government's 'hostile environment', opposing outsourcing which has undermined the Covid response, and much more

We were pleased to read your remarks in a recent article in *Cityam*

<https://www.cityam.com/exclusive-sadiq-khan-says-central-london-wont-be-busy-any-time-soon/> about issues relating to the health and safety of Londoners going back into Central London in face of government bullying. In response we are writing to you with our deep concerns about wider issues of health inequalities and the damage currently being done to the NHS in London. We know this is part of your role and remit as Mayor of London.

We urge you to use your powers and your voice to support the NHS and all its users at this critical time. We are asking you to lead the fight against the serious health inequalities that beset Londoners today, inequalities which have been significantly highlighted by the Covid-19 epidemic. As you know very well there continue to be high risks for people working in health, care, transport, shops and support services and in all our communities. In addition, Covid-19 has highlighted problems resulting from NHS service cuts and hospital reconfigurations in our boroughs, which are impacting differentially on BAME communities and working class people in general.

As you know people in London have paid and are paying with their lives and their livelihoods because of economic and social vulnerability.

So we ask you please, in standing up and speaking out for the people of London on NHS issues and driven by your duty to combat health inequalities, to use your convening power to arm yourself with the necessary information, analysis and advice to combat the careless incompetence of central government on this lethal epidemic, and to make an even bigger difference,

We urge you please to consider the following requests:

1. Please pursue issues with even greater vigour in order to protect workers, particularly those in transport, care and low paid service jobs, and in particular BAME and vulnerable workers.
2. Carry out a serious review of the impact on the population of the 'digital by default' option particularly on elderly, vulnerable and digitally disadvantaged people.

3. Use your resources to carry out a review of NHS service cuts and hospital reconfigurations and their impact on London populations.
4. We ask you, together with London's other democratic bodies, to please stand up for patients' rights to consultation, especially within democratic governance structures which do still exist. We ask you to ensure that Councils and Councillors are fully consulted and allowed to scrutinise new and developing NHS bodies, and that consultations are not in name only.
5. With the London Boroughs, and together with London Health Board: please make your voice heard on the issue of support for local Public Health and Local Authorities in order to create really effective Track Trace Isolate and Support systems for Londoners.
6. **Please agree to meet with us and others you feel relevant in order to discuss how we might campaign together to progress these matters. We look forward to hearing your response. Please see Appendix A for important further detail and helpful references**

We hope this letter is clear and helpful to your understanding of the threats to health within many London boroughs. We are also working to alert our elected representatives on local councils to the enormous further damage that will be done to the NHS in the coming weeks and months. It is a fast changing picture and we need your leadership to stop the vandalism of this Government.

Please will you use your voice as champion of the people of London to strengthen London's health services and minimise health inequalities at this crucial time.

We look forward to your response

With best wishes

Steve Lancashire, Southwark Keep Our NHS Public

Dr Tony O'Sullivan, Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign, Co-Chair Keep Our NHS Public (National)

Dr Wendy Savage, President, Keep Our NHS Public

Gaynor Lloyd, Brent Keep Our NHS Public

Martin Blanchard, Defend Enfield NHS

Jonathan Fluxman, Brent Keep Our NHS Public

Professor Sue Richards, Islington Keep Our NHS Public

Eve Turner, Ealing Save Our NHS

Oliver New, Ealing Save Our NHS

Merril Hammer, Hammersmith & Fulham Save Our NHS

Jim Grealy, Hammersmith & Fulham Save Our NHS

Jim Lockie, Harrow Keep Our NHS Public

John Lipetz, Camden Keep Our NHS Public

Gay Lee, Lambeth Keep Our NHS Public

Wendy Horler, Lambeth Keep Our NHS Public

Susan Sidgewick, Lambeth Keep Our NHS Public

Olivia O'Sullivan, Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign

Jane Mandlik, Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign

Dr Louise Irvine, Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign

Brenda Allan, Southwark Keep Our NHS Public

David Cooper, Southwark Keep Our NHS Public

Councillor Janice Long, Brent Keep Our NHS Public

Steve Burak, Camden Keep Our NHS Public

Phil Cohen, North Central London NHS-Watch

Vivien Giladi, North Central London NHS-Watch

APPENDIX A: Supporting information

Health inequalities

As you are aware, Covid-19 has had an unequal impact on people working in essential services, often disproportionately from BAME backgrounds, who are much more at risk from their working environment. But there are further health inequality risks which need action:

- Social distancing and ventilation for indoor spaces, as well as masks and sanitisation on public transport, must be prioritised.
- Many people in deprived areas cannot afford face masks; we ask you to work with employers and businesses to provide these free.
- There needs to be much greater awareness of airborne spread of Covid-19, especially in workplaces, which have seen large outbreaks among poorly paid workers.
- Please will you encourage more support for people self-isolating, including persuading business and public sector employers to pay sick pay. London Councils played a leading role in arguing for a Living Wage; we hope that you could support them to play a similar role in promoting sick pay for people forced to self-isolate.

Request no.1: We ask you to pursue issues with even greater vigour in order to protect workers in all workers, particularly those in transport, care and low paid service jobs, and in particular BAME and vulnerable workers.

Further inequalities

Sir David Sloman's *April Journey to a New Health & Care System* contained a directive to GPs to go "virtual by default".

We are concerned that these measures will cut to pieces your initiatives to decrease London's health inequalities. London Councils were not consulted. **Face to face must remain an option. Not only for those who are digitally disadvantaged, but for clinical reasons, for all patients.**

Request no.2: Carry out a serious review of the impact on the population of the 'digital by default' option particularly on elderly, vulnerable and digitally disadvantaged people.

Cuts

David Sloman has also proposed centralising hospital services on fewer sites. In the last ten years the population of London has risen from 7.878 million to 8.982 million. During this time London's health service has seen cuts in the numbers of hospital beds and nurses, and GP practices – alongside cuts in community care. The dangers are highlighted by the appalling impact on the extended length of waiting lists for appointments and treatments following Covid-19.

In North West London "centralisation" of services has in fact had the result of moving services away from the most disadvantaged areas. The A&Es at Hammersmith and Central Middlesex Hospital were closed: the latter which covered Brent, meant that all acute services were moved to Northwick Park Hospital. Meanwhile Ealing Hospital has lost Maternity, Paediatric A&E, Urology, all elective surgery, nighttime emergency surgery and Trauma & Orthopaedics with ambulances being diverted to Northwick Park Hospital.

Over many years Ealing Hospital has developed a close relationship with the local communities, in particular Southall, an area with a large social deprived BAME population with multiple health problems. Following the closure of so many departments at Ealing Hospital, Northwick Park Hospital is very hard to get to from Ealing and Southall by public transport, being 1.5 hours away. It is especially difficult for the elderly, disabled, and those with language difficulties and/or little money.

Nowhere are the cuts more evident than in mental health where a growing shortage of inpatient, crisis, and community care staff faces an explosion. The Royal College of Psychiatrists indicates that unless urgent action is taken then the cuts to mental health services may make it impossible to provide safe, timely care for some of our most vulnerable citizens in London

Request no.3: We urge you to use your resources to carry out a review of NHS service cuts and hospital reconfigurations and their impact on London populations.

Accountability and transparency

Public accountability is one of our key concerns. In April Sir David Sloman's letter to NHS senior managers in London devalued the **legal rights to public consultation** in order to achieve speedy service reconfigurations. These re-configurations include denying the public open access to A&E and to GP surgeries, which are the cornerstones of our NHS. We must be free to call an ambulance without asking the permission of NHS 111, and to get an emergency appointment with the GP practice where we and our families are known.

All of this is being put under threat by the cavalier way in which the agenda is being seized by NHS London. The development of Integrated Care Systems, already in place in SE London, without any statutory basis. Merged CCGs (eg South East London CCG replaced the six borough CCGs 1st April 2020) are due to be in place throughout London on 1st April 2021. The combined changes have limited patients' and campaigning groups' democratic rights to scrutinise changes in the NHS and reduced real cooperation and consultation with Councils. Our elected councillors and their officers do not have voting rights on the merged CCG bodies or the local Borough Based Boards. These changes do not appear to be working in patients' interests.

Request no.4: We ask you, together with London's other democratic bodies, to please stand up for patients' rights to consultation, especially within democratic governance structures which do still exist. We ask you to ensure that Councils and Councillors are fully consulted and allowed to scrutinise new and developing NHS bodies, and that consultations are not in name only.

Test, track, trace and isolate

We thank you for your statements about the need for an effective test, trace, track and isolate system. Following the declaration by Greater Manchester and other local councils that they would undertake implementing their own systems, the Government announced that money would be withdrawn from failing call-handling track and trace services and would be transferred to local and regional Public Health services. Now, bizarrely, Matt Hancock has announced that Public Health England is to be replaced by a new structure, run by a private sector executive who is in charge of the ineffective privately run and owned NHS Track and Trace and has failed to transfer adequate resources to local authorities for their public health services.

Request no.5: We urge you and the London Boroughs, together with the London Health Board, to make your voices heard on the issue of support for local Public Health and Local Authorities in order to create really effective Track Trace Isolate and Support systems for Londoners.

Request no.6: We would like very much to meet with you and others you feel relevant in order to discuss how we might campaign together to progress these matters. Keep Our NHS Public has produced an NHS Rescue Plan (attached). We look forward to hearing your response.

References

Rescue Plan: 2020 vision for a post-Covid NHS. Keep Our NHS Public and Health Campaigns Together

<https://keepournhspublic.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Rescue-Plan-A4.pdf>

Health inequalities

<http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/marmot-review-10-years-on>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/10/england-worst-covid-figures-austerity-inequality>

London Health

Journey to a New Health and Care System ICS Chairs and SROs. 24 April 2020 Revised Following Meeting

<https://healthcampaignstogether.com/pdf/Journey%20to%20a%20New%20Health%20and%20Care%20System%2024th%20April%202020%20REVISED%202.pdf>

Letter from NHS England's London Regional Director Sir David Sloman, sent out internally on April 29 but not published

<https://healthcampaignstogether.cm/pdf/Letter%20to%20systems%20on%20ICS%20plans.pdf>

Mental Health provision

Exploring Mental Health Inpatient Capacity across Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships in England. This analysis was commissioned by and includes a response from the Royal College of Psychiatrists. November 2019. Midlands and Lancashire CSU

https://www.strategyunitwm.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/Exploring_Mental_Health_Inpatient_Capacity_accrossSustainability_and_Transformation_Partnerships_in_England_-_191030_1.pdf

Education Policy Institute

<https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/access-to-child-and-adolescent-mental-health-services-in-2019/>

Test, Track and Trace

<https://www.independentsage.org/an-independent-sage-discussion-document-on-contact-tracing-and-self-isolation/>