

MAYOR OF LONDON

**Representatives of London Keep Our NHS
Public health campaign groups**
C/o olivia.osullivan@btinternet.com

Our ref: MGLA140920-4148

Date: 20 October 2020

Dear Campaigners,

Thank you for the letter you sent on behalf of representatives of London Keep our NHS Public health campaign groups. The COVID-19 pandemic is the most significant public health crisis in living memory, and the challenges arising from both the virus itself and from the lockdown and continuing response are far-reaching. I am committed to securing a better future for Londoners. The city's recovery from COVID-19 must ensure that nobody is left behind, and no one organisation or sector can tackle these challenges alone.

I too am concerned about the growing health inequalities in London, including those that have been so strongly highlighted during the coronavirus pandemic. As the Mayor of London, I have a statutory duty to publish and deliver against a London Health Inequalities Strategy (HIS). This sets out plans to tackle unfair differences in health to make London a healthier, fairer city. The focus of this strategy is on addressing the underlying wider determinants of health that lead to health inequalities. My HIS continues to provide an evidence-based framework on which to build our response to the pandemic. I recognise though that much has changed since its publication in 2018 – including the information in the Marmot review¹, published in March, as well as of course the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 we have already seen, and which was highlighted in, the review of the impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities led by Professor Kevin Fenton, my statutory health adviser, published in June 2020². Though much has changed, many things unfortunately remain the same – we are still seeing stark inequalities, which lead, unfairly, to some people experiencing considerably worse health than others. No-one's health should suffer because of who they are or where they live, or, as emphasised also by the pandemic, whether or where they work.

I have also convened a Health Equity Group, which is focussing on health equity in London. Chaired by Professor Fenton and Will Tuckley, Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets Council, one of the priorities of the Group is the implementation of the recommendations of Professor Fenton's review in London. We are also leading by example in the Greater London Authority. Together we are committed to addressing the inequalities which led to disproportionate impacts on our BAME communities. I have also recently published a rapid evidence review focussing on inequalities in relation to COVID-19 and their effects on London specifically. This review highlighted the shocking disproportionate effect of COVID-19 in relation to disability, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic position, age and other factors, including homelessness and being in prison.

¹ <https://www.health.org.uk/publications/reports/the-marmot-review-10-years-on>

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892376/COVID_stakeholder_engagement_synthesis_beyond_the_data.pdf

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While I do not have any formal powers over the health and care system, as Mayor I have committed to using my influence and role as a political leader to champion and challenge the NHS on behalf of all Londoners. As part of this role, I have developed six tests designed to help me challenge the NHS to demonstrate that major changes are in the best interest of Londoners. The tests cover:

- health inequalities and the prevention of ill health
- hospital beds
- financial investment and savings
- social care impact
- clinical support
- patient and public engagement.

I apply my six tests to major service reconfiguration proposals – where significant changes are proposed and/or where large populations across multiples boroughs are likely to be affected. Recently I applied my six tests to the Improving Healthcare Together 2020-2030 proposals for South West London, and the North Central London Adult Elective Orthopaedic Services Review proposals.

I am aware of growing concerns about the changes happening within the NHS in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While I understand and support the need to move at pace during the pandemic to stop the spread and save lives, this will not stop me from seeking key assurances from health and care partners, particularly as we move to the next stage of coping with this deadly virus. I meet regularly with senior NHS and public health leaders – Sir David Sloman and Professor Kevin Fenton – and use that time to challenge them to provide the best services for all Londoners – particularly the most disadvantaged. I have specifically challenged Sir David to ensure that proper consultation does take place on changes – even when COVID-19 means that some changes are needed quickly.

You may be aware that earlier this year I commissioned The King's Fund to analyse the content of the five Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs)/Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) plans in London, taking into account the principles of my six tests. More recently I have commissioned a second phase of The King's Fund work to explore the changing health and care landscape across London in the light of COVID-19, focusing on the development of STPs/ICSs and using my six tests as a framework. The King's Fund analysis will include a consideration of the level of engagement and transparency about the proposals and changes brought on by COVID-19.

Beyond my commitment to champion and challenge the NHS, I am working closely with other agencies to support London's wider transition and recovery efforts. Together with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, I co-chair the London Transition Board³, and I co-chair the London Recovery Board⁴, together with Cllr Georgia Gould, the Chair of London Councils.

The London Recovery Board will plan and oversee the capital's wider economic and social long-term recovery, developing a strategy and plan of action to reshape London to be fairer, more equal, greener and more resilient than it was before the crisis. We have developed nine 'missions', designed to tackle economic and social issues. The focus of these missions is aligned with your requests – for example, a robust safety net, which is around support to prevent financial hardship; 'helping Londoners into work', which will involve supporting Londoners into good jobs, with a focus on sectors key to London's recovery; and digital access for all, which is about access to good connectivity, basic digital skills and the device or support they need to be online by 2025.

³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/londons-recovery-coronavirus-crisis/about-london-recovery-structures>

⁴ <https://www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/londons-recovery-coronavirus-crisis/about-london-recovery-structures>

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We have also committed to two missions focussed explicitly on health – on mental health and wellbeing, and healthy food. All of these missions though will be developed with a strong health equity lens, to maximise their positive impact on Londoners health and wellbeing. Overall, the missions aim to restore confidence in the city, minimise the impact on London's communities and build back better the capital's economy and society.

At this unprecedented time for our city, our country and, particularly for the NHS and care sector, I am unable to personally fulfil all meeting requests. However, my health advisor, Dr Tom Coffey, would be happy to meet with you to discuss your letter. To make arrangements, please contact him by email at Tom.Coffey@london.gov.uk.

I thank you for your commitment to advocating for Londoners and their access to healthcare, especially through this difficult time. I am committed to securing a better future for Londoners and will continue to stand up and speak out to ensure that our city is one that is open, safe, and healthy and fair.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small number '2' written below the name.

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London