

MAYOR OF LONDON

Emma Best AM

Chair of the London Assembly Health Committee
C/o Diane.Richards@london.gov.uk

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Date: 17 July 2025

Dear Emma,

Thank you for your letter as Chair of the London Assembly Health Committee regarding public health awareness campaigns on the Transport for London (TfL) network.

Advertising space across TfL is managed by its media partners, JCDecaux and Global, who hold the rights to carry out advertising on the estate under commercial agreements. As previously explained, income generated from commercial advertising is vital to fund TfL's operations and enable TfL to continue to run a safe, inclusive and reliable transport network.

Under the existing guidelines, any organisation considering a public health campaign is welcome to get in touch directly with TfL's media partners to discuss opportunities – and they do.

As I have previously highlighted, the NHS and others have contacted TfL directly to bring important messages to Londoners. For example, "Do It London", which is commissioned by 32 London boroughs, has previously used the TfL network to share important public health messages about HIV prevention. The messages encouraged condom use as an effective way to prevent HIV and a range of other STIs. Another example is TfL partnering with Thrive LDN to support suicide prevention in London, with activity running across key moments in time, such as Mental Health Awareness Day and World Suicide Prevention Day.

I also want to share another example from a Londoner whom I had the privilege of meeting during my blood donation drive at City Hall, Lisa Wilson. In 2023, Lisa and the Tom Wilson Memorial Fund joined forces with the Organ Donation Committee at a London hospital trust to run a bus poster campaign on local routes throughout Havering, highlighting the tremendous impact that Tom's decision to be an organ donor has had on others. The campaign ran for three weeks, including Organ Donation Week (18-24 September), and encouraged Londoners in the area to discuss their organ donation wishes. Lisa wrote to me personally to tell me about this.

Earlier this year, the NHS also launched its first-ever breast screening awareness campaign to support more women to attend – and this campaign had a specific focus on London and prioritising women invited for screening for the first time, as well as those from minority, ethnic and disadvantaged communities. The campaign included communications and engagement activity in multiple languages and formats – including TV, radio and online ads, community media, street teams, events, and outdoor advertising on digital displays and buses – all to help reach as many communities as possible.

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These examples make clear that health organisations already engage directly and effectively with TfL to run meaningful campaigns, and there is a clear and open route for any organisation to do so.

Although there are some provisions in the agreements relating to the free use of commercial space by TfL, this is intended for TfL operational messaging only. TfL would no doubt review this position if there was a national threat, in the same way it displayed COVID-related messages and instructions during the coronavirus pandemic.

To your point about City Hall's allocation – as I have previously shared, we have a very limited allocation of space on the TfL network. We use our space to share information on Londoners' priorities and to signpost to services and initiatives. This includes ensuring London families understand their Universal Free School Meals entitlement, that Londoners know where to report rogue landlords, and operational messaging to aid public safety during New Year's Eve.

Specific decisions about advertising agreements or individual campaigns are for TfL to make and are not something I have the power to direct. Additionally, there are no provisions in TfL's advertising agreements that allow City Hall to direct the use of advertising space. That is why I would welcome any organisation getting in touch directly with TfL to discuss opportunities – particularly where TfL's advertising space is key to reaching audiences and the evidence supports this. In fact, TfL provides clear instructions on how to get in touch via its website, and many organisations, as I have outlined above, do so.

TfL provides an outstanding service through its advertising, but I also want to note that when it comes to reaching groups most impacted by health inequalities – some of the most marginalised and vulnerable Londoners – other channels of communication have a vital role to play. Especially when it comes to social media, which is at the fingertips of many Londoners.

For example, you may have seen the campaign #TalkMoreThanFootball – developed in partnership with Chelsea F.C., the Samaritans and Three and aimed at getting football fans to open up and talk beyond the game with people they care about. It included a powerful hero film with Vinnie Jones, which featured signposting to support services. Over the course of the campaign, the film has been seen more than 140 million times across social media platforms.

You may also be aware of the television advert produced by Terrence Higgins Trust and a number of partners in Scotland in October 2023 to raise awareness of how harmful HIV stigma can be. The advert aired just before an episode of Coronation Street – one of STV's most watched shows – and brought its powerful message directly into the homes of millions of viewers.

I am sharing these campaigns with you to demonstrate that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to reaching the public and inspiring behavioural change. It takes a blend of creativity, originality, harnessing the power of traditional and social media, meaningful partnerships and public engagement to capture attention and drive lasting change.

I have always done my part to reach the public with vital public health messaging across other channels – including traditional and social media platforms – to help keep Londoners safe and healthy. As you know, some of my previous work includes working with partners to combat HIV and mental health stigma or promoting vaccination to help Londoners stay healthy in the winter months. As opportunities arise with health and care partners that also align with my work to reduce health inequalities in London, I will continue to play a role in amplifying their important messages.

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In closing, I hope this in-depth response provides you with the clarity and answers you need.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sir Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London