

MAYOR OF LONDON

Emma Best AM

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

Our ref: MGLA201125-8889

Date: 14 January 2026

Dear Emma,

Thank you for sending me your report following the London Assembly Health Committee's investigation into men's mental health in London.

First, I would like to commend the Committee for this important work and for placing the voices of men with lived experience at the heart of the report. Too often, co-production is an afterthought, but your approach ensures solutions are grounded in real experience.

I agree that addressing men's mental health is important, given the disproportionate impact of stigma, entrenched gender norms, and harmful narratives on men's willingness to seek help. Suicide remains one of the leading causes of death for men under 50, and we must work collectively to change this. That is why I have welcomed the Government's recently published Men's Health Strategy, which includes a focus on mental health and suicide prevention by improving access to mental health support and reducing stigma.

In London, I remain committed to working with partners to share learning and strengthen support for men's mental health. I have been and remain passionate about ensuring all Londoners have an equal opportunity to achieve good mental health and ensuring that good mental health is embedded in everyday life.

The Committee's report aligns with the Health Inequalities Strategy Implementation Plan that I published for London in June 2025, where I signalled that I would continue to help ensure that mental health is valued and protected as much as physical health.

Through my previous support for Thrive LDN and partnerships with boroughs, the NHS, voluntary organisations, and employers, I have invested in campaigns and resources to encourage Londoners to seek help. I will continue to work with Thrive LDN on a prevention-focused approach to tackle some of the causes of poor mental health. We are also working with partners to improve signposting, expand digital support, and strengthen community-based approaches.

Alongside these targeted mental health initiatives, I will continue to drive broader efforts, recognising that many of my key manifesto priorities – from tackling poverty and housing inequality to supporting people to attain the skills that open doors to positive work opportunities – have a direct impact on mental health and wellbeing.

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As you know, I do not have power over the commissioning or provision of health and care services in London. However, my officers continue to work closely with the NHS and other relevant partners, and the Greater London Authority (GLA) is represented on the London Mental Health Board, which plays a lead role in shaping how mental health services and support are organised across the city.

Please find my response to the recommendations, and how we and partners will approach these, in the annex below. Thank you again for shining a light on this critical issue.

Yours sincerely,

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

Sir Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

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Annex

Mayor of London's response to the recommendations of the London Assembly Health Committee's investigation on Men's Mental Health in London

Recommendation 1

As part of its upcoming men's health strategy, the Government should include a programme for tackling the stigma associated with mental health that prevents men from accessing services. The Mayor and the GLA Health Team should work with the Government to design and publish a London-specific approach

The Mayor welcomes the Government's [Men's Health: A Strategic Vision for England](#) strategy and its action plan to tackle stigma around mental health and improve access to mental health support. This aligns with the Mayor's Health Inequalities Strategy (2018-2028), which committed to making mental health a critical focus. The Health Inequalities implementation plan for 2025-2028 committed to continued targeted funding for work on mental health. This includes Thrive LDN campaigns, suicide prevention initiatives and community-led projects that support Londoners' wellbeing.

Through the [London Mental Health Strategy](#) and the London Mental Health Board, a London-specific approach to mental health, including reducing stigma in accessing services, continues to be led by NHS England and developed in partnership with London boroughs, Integrated Care Boards and voluntary organisations. Together, these London-wide efforts will continue to focus on men's mental health as part of our efforts to reduce health inequalities and improve access to services.

Recommendation 2

As part of its upcoming men's health strategy, the Government should develop an action plan to increase access to, and take up of, Talking Therapies amongst men

This recommendation addressed to the Government is noted.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should use the Adult Skills Fund and the Skills Academies programme to invest in training courses for counsellors and therapists. These courses should be promoted to and targeted at men in particular. The Mayor should also explore promoting this training to demographic groups where there is the greatest need.

In response to this report, the Mayor should set out:

- 1) How many counsellors and therapists have received training over each of the last 5 years through the Adult Skills Fund and Skills Academies programme, and how many of these have been men.
- 2) How much funding has been provided by the GLA for the training of counsellors and therapists in London through the Adult Skills Fund and Skills Academies programme

The Mayor continues to invest in learning that is suitable for training counsellors and therapists through the Adult Skills Fund (ASF). In addition, through the Skills for Londoners

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Community Outreach Programme, community organisations are funded to raise awareness of London's adult skills opportunities and reach Londoners who otherwise would not have had knowledge of adult education opportunities, including Londoners from Black and minority ethnic groups. Although data on the occupations of learners is not available, we can share that:

- Almost 18,000 (17,940) mayoral-funded (ASF) Counselling courses have been taken in the last five academic years (2020/21 to 2024/25). These were undertaken by 17,460 learners.
- In the 2024/25 academic year, common learning aims include a Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills, a Level 3 Diploma in Counselling Skills, and a Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling.
- 2,890 (17%) of the learners enrolled on Counselling courses in the last five years were male. The share of male learners has been growing over time, and in the latest academic year (2024/25), it was 19%. A large share of male learners were aged 24 to 49 (71%), a quarter (24%) were aged 50+, and 6% were 19-23.
- Across the five academic years, the total amount of funding allocated to Counselling courses was £16.2m.
- In addition, Londoners already working as a Therapist or Counsellor can undertake mayoral-funded courses aligned to their field for professional development (depending on eligibility criteria), including a Level 3 Certificate in Understanding Mental Health, a Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Children and Young People's Mental Health or a Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Mental Health in the Early Years.
- Lastly, the recommendation refers to the Mayor's Skills Academies programme. The Skills Academies fund staff resources to encourage closer collaborations between employers and training providers to address skills shortages. It does not fund direct delivery, and funding for this programme ends in March 2026. It is being replaced with new Sector Talent Boards and hubs, one of which will be focused on health.

Recommendation 4

It is not acceptable that the average spend on mental health services in London per person is lower than the average for England. The Government should provide sufficient funding to address waiting list times for vital mental health services for men in London. The Mayor should lobby the Government to ensure that the Government provides this.

The Mayor has welcomed the Government's actions to improve the quality of mental health care by strengthening the oversight and accountability of mental health providers.

He specifically welcomes the Government's commitment to the largest ever funding settlement for NHS England – a £29bn real-terms increase in annual NHS day-to-day spending to 2028–29 – as well as targeted investment in mental health services. This includes the rollout of new 24/7 neighbourhood mental health centres, £75m to upgrade inpatient environments, expanded mental health support teams in schools, the continued growth of NHS Talking Therapies and individual placement support, and increased investment in mental health research. Together, these measures aim to directly address the barriers men and boys face when seeking mental health support.

These recommendations have been shared with and discussed by the London Mental Health Board.

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Recommendation 5

The Mayor should actively work with the Government to roll out the dedicated mental health emergency departments in London, as set out in the NHS 10 Year Health Plan, and update this Committee on progress by the end of 2026. This should include details of the number and location of these departments.

The Mayor recognises the importance of improving access to urgent mental health care and supports the principle of dedicated Mental Health Emergency Departments as outlined in the NHS 10 Year Health Plan. These facilities can play a vital role in ensuring that Londoners experiencing a mental health crisis receive timely, specialist support in an appropriate setting.

The London Mental Health Strategy, published in May 2025, identifies ‘Urgent and Emergency Care’ as a priority focus area and aims to ensure people experiencing a mental health crisis in London should have access to safe, timely and appropriate support when and where they need it. This will be achieved by reducing length of stay, reducing and eliminating inappropriate out-of-area placements, and developing a common framework for crisis care delivery across London.

While the commissioning and delivery of these services sit with the NHS and the Government, the Mayor will seek an update on the progress made in London on this commitment by the end of 2026.

Recommendation 6

The Mayor and Thrive LDN should introduce a new programme along similar lines to the Right to Thrive programme, which funds projects delivered by grassroots and community-led organisations, including initiatives targeted specifically at men’s mental health.

In 2017, the Mayor commissioned the research report ‘Right To Thrive – Keeping Londoners Well’, which highlighted the role of stigma and discrimination on people’s wellbeing. This led to the Right to Thrive initiative, delivered by Thrive LDN between 2018 and 2024, which invested over £580,000 in 70 grassroots projects and supported nearly 8,000 Londoners.

While the programme has now concluded, the Mayor has continued to fund community-led approaches through Thrive LDN’s Grassroots Community Resilience Pilot, launched in August 2025. Developed following a review showing that vital support often sits within trusted, informal community settings, the pilot provides small grants of up to £1,500 to grassroots organisations to foster connection, belonging and wellbeing. This model reflects the Health Committee’s finding that informal, non-clinical support is often the first point of engagement for many communities and represents an ongoing commitment to strengthening community resilience. Men are among those accessing these projects, and this community-led, non-clinical approach can be particularly effective for men, who may find informal, culturally familiar spaces less stigmatising and more acceptable than traditional mental health services.

Recommendation 7

The Mayor and Transport for London should work with the NHS in London to advertise NHS 111 crisis services for mental health on TfL transport services and buildings, to increase awareness among Londoners about this critical service.

Advertising space across Transport for London (TfL) is managed by its media partners, who hold the rights to carry out advertising on the estate under commercial agreements. Income generated from commercial advertising is vital to fund TfL’s operations and enable TfL to continue to run a

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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.

As highlighted in a letter from the Mayor to the Committee in July 2025, the NHS and other health organisations already engage directly and effectively with TfL to run meaningful public health campaigns.

The Mayor will also continue to promote vital public health messaging on his own channels such as social media and traditional media, where appropriate, to help keep Londoners safe and healthy.

Recommendation 8

The Government should deliver more mental health education in schools in London and across the UK to ensure young people develop an understanding of mental health and know where to go for support. MOPAC should also integrate a mental health aspect into the work it is doing across schools in London.

Building on previous investment in Mental Health First Aid training for education and youth workers and suicide prevention training for college and university staff, the Mayor is now delivering a new programme to better integrate mental health and wellbeing into London's secondary schools through Whole School Approaches. The Mental Health in Schools project is focused on 16 schools across nine boroughs, with an independent evaluation commissioned to ensure these learnings are shared with schools, boroughs and wider system partners across the city.

The project is designed to complement the NHS' ongoing rollout of Mental Health Support Teams to all schools by 2030, which continues to support clear signposting for young people to mental health services.

London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) leads a London-wide prevention and early intervention approach to tackling violence. Since 2019, it has invested in over 450,000 diversionary activities and positive opportunities for young boys and girls, positively impacting wellbeing.

The VRU is working to keep children and young people in school, where they are safe, feel like they belong and are supported to thrive through London's Inclusion Charter, a city-wide commitment supported by nearly all London boroughs and 30 national charities. Interventions such as mentoring, building healthy relationships and including families are having a positive impact across the school system.

Recommendation 9

Once the Government has published its men's health strategy, the Mayor should convene key partners in London's health and care system – including voluntary and community groups – to agree and publish an action plan for implementing the plan in London, and tailoring it towards London's distinct needs. The Mayor should commit to providing the funding required in order to implement the action plan.

The Mayor welcomes the Government's Men's Health Strategy and shares its ambition to reduce the inequalities affecting men's physical and mental health. He will support this work where it aligns with London's priorities and his existing programmes to improve health outcomes across the capital.

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London's Health Inequalities Strategy Implementation Plan 2025–28 sets out the Mayor's priorities for tackling health inequity during this term. This includes funded priorities for 2025–2028 and beyond, focused on prevention, early intervention and tackling the wider determinants of health.

Through this plan, the Mayor is taking forward work that will benefit men and boys. Men in London face unequal health outcomes, including significant differences in healthy life expectancy across boroughs and higher rates of suicide, one of the leading causes of death for men under 50. The plan addresses these issues by promoting good mental health, improving access to care, reducing social isolation and supporting communities at highest risk. It also includes supporting partnership programmes such as Million Hearts and Minds, which promotes heart-healthy behaviours and earlier detection of cardiovascular risk, an area where men are disproportionately affected. In addition, the plan addresses the wider determinants that contribute to poor health, including housing instability, financial insecurity and rough sleeping.

The Mayor will continue to work with boroughs, the NHS, Integrated Care Boards and the voluntary and community sector to champion health equity and to deliver the actions set out in the Health Inequalities Strategy Implementation Plan, which will in turn help to improve outcomes for men and boys across the capital.

Recommendation 10

In response to this report, the GLA's Chief Officer should review the GLA's initiatives around mental health to understand how they support male employees. Where any gaps are identified, the GLA should introduce new initiatives to support the mental health of its male employees.

The GLA is firmly committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all our employees. This commitment is embedded in an inclusive approach that ensures accessible support across the organisation.

The GLA's Chief Officer welcomes the Committee's focus on men's mental health. The GLA provides a comprehensive range of health and wellbeing services for all staff, alongside targeted support for men.

The comprehensive range of mental health and wellbeing services available to all staff, includes:

- **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** – 24/7 confidential helpline and online resources via Vita Health Group.
- **Emotional Support Service (Mind)** – bespoke counselling, coaching, and group sessions tailored to diverse needs.
- **Mental Health Advocates (MHAs)** – a staff-led network promoting awareness and hosting initiatives such as *Powerful Pause* and Brew Monday events.
- **Sports Clubs and Informal Support** – including cricket and other activities that foster physical wellbeing and social connection.
- **Financial Wellbeing Resources** – through platforms such as Moneyfit and My Money Matters.

Recognising the importance of addressing men's mental health specifically, we have already introduced targeted initiatives, including:

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- **Wellbeing Network: Men's Health/Talk Positive Series** – running since 2024, creating safe spaces for men to share experiences on health, family life, and overcoming challenges.
- **Dedicated Wellbeing Resources Library** – featuring men's mental health resources and links to external organisations such as CALM, Andy's Man Club, and James' Place.
- **Men's Health Panel Discussion (November 2025)** – convening health advocates, researchers, and community representatives to explore issues impacting men's wellbeing.

The GLA does not believe that there are any gaps which we need to fill at the moment but will keep our provision under close review. In the meantime, we will continue to proactively encourage and monitor take-up of these services by our male employees.