

MAYOR OF LONDON

Navin Shah AM

Chair of the London Assembly

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Our ref: MGLA211220-2393

Date: 10 February 2021

Dear Navin,

London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting 11 December 2020 - Motions

Thank you for your letter of 18 December 2020 about the motions agreed at the London Assembly (Plenary) meeting on 11 December 2020. My reply to each motion is set out below.

Motion 1 – European Security Cooperation

Thank you for informing me that the Assembly has agreed this motion and that you have written to the Home Secretary.

Motion 2 – Youth Homelessness

I completely share your concerns about the high and rising levels of homelessness among young Londoners, who have clearly been hit particularly hard by the coronavirus pandemic. It is nothing short of tragic to see how the worsening and insecure job market as well as the impossibility of even insecure arrangements such as sofa surfing, have led hundreds into homelessness and rough sleeping for the first time. I am also extremely worried that as temporary protections for renters come to an end, along with the end of the furlough scheme, even more young people will find themselves pushed onto the streets. I am doing what I can within my limited powers and resources to support young homeless people and will update the London Assembly's Housing Committee every quarter on my actions in this area.

As part of the 'Everyone In' response to rough sleepers, we have provided safe accommodation and support to over 150 people aged under 25, and over 500 under 35, in our GLA-procured hotels. As part of this work, we wanted to provide a hotel specifically for younger people, with specialist support, but unfortunately the Government failed to supply the funding we needed to do that. In early November 2020, however, I launched a new specialist support service for young people, delivered by Depaul, and operating within a dedicated young people's floor of a GLA-procured hotel in Wandsworth. On-site support is provided five days a week, to help people to find safe, affordable longer-term accommodation, with ongoing support if required. Depaul has access to a move-on and resettlement budget to cover deposits and/or rent in advance for clients moving into the private rented sector. The service has so far supported 24 young people (three aged under 25, and 21 aged under 35), four of whom have already moved on into longer-term accommodation. Nine have also been supported to engage with services relating to mental health, drugs and alcohol, and employment education and training to date.

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Young homeless people are also a focus for my housing delivery programmes. One of the aims of my £40m Homelessness Change and Platform for Life Programme is to fund accommodation for young people in employment, education or training who are at risk of homelessness. In addition, I have recently allocated funding through my new Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme to a project that will deliver 32 homes for under 35s in west London, and to another that will provide three homes for under 25s. I am extremely keen to encourage more youth-specific bids, and my officers are in discussions with specialist youth homelessness charities to bring forward much-needed schemes for this group.

Almost all the GLA's budget for rough sleeping services is spent on vital major pan-London services, such as No Second Night Out, Rapid Response outreach and Tenancy Sustainment Teams, that benefit rough sleepers of all ages. These services were commissioned to make the best use of limited resources, in a context where around eight per cent of those sleeping rough in London were under 25. Their staff do a great job of tailoring their work to the needs of those young people. As we look to commission new services, we will review changes in the number and profile of rough sleepers, including their age.

I agree that more specialist provision is needed but given the GLA's limited resources the Government needs to step up and provide the funding required for this. Before Christmas, my Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development and I joined with the CEOs of four youth homelessness charities – New Horizon Youth Centre, Centrepoin, Albert Kennedy Trust and Depaul – to write to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rough Sleeping and Housing, Kelly Tolhurst MP, highlighting the huge impact the pandemic has had on the lives of young people and urging the Government to provide funding to enable the GLA to open pan-London, COVID-safe, emergency accommodation specifically for all young people who have been sleeping rough or are at risk of doing so this winter.

In addition, the Government must do more to prevent young people from becoming homeless and ending up on the streets in the first place, including by ensuring that local authority homelessness services are properly resourced and increasing benefits available through the welfare system to help protect young renters.

In recognition of the impact of the pandemic on younger people and the rising level of youth homelessness, this year the money raised by my winter rough sleeping fundraising campaign will be donated to the four youth homelessness charities named above. I hope that you will join me in promoting the campaign: <https://www.taplondon.org/donate>.

I will continue to work closely with youth homelessness charities to lobby the Government for more funding for specialist provision for young homeless people, as well the changes needed to prevent homelessness among this group.

Yours sincerely,

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

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London