

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Andrew Boff AM**

Chair of the London Assembly

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**Our ref:** MGLA241121-8569

**Date:** 18 March 2022

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your letter of 23 November 2021 about the motions agreed at the London Assembly (Plenary) meeting on 11 November. Please accept my apologies for the delay, my response to motion 14 is set out below:

## **Motion 14 – Inclusive Youth Services**

I am proud to be Mayor of a city that embraces and celebrates diversity. It is vital that every young Londoner feels accepted, understood, and included, regardless of their gender identity and sexual orientation, or that of their families. I therefore welcome the Assembly's unanimous support for this motion, and I am proud to outline my support for LGBTQ+ young Londoners.

We know that research by Stonewall shows young LGBTQ+ people are more likely to experience mental health issues and self-harm. Furthermore, research by the Albert Kennedy Trust indicates that one in four young homeless people identify as LGBTQ+ and more than three quarters cite family rejection or abuse as the main cause. Recent rises in homophobic and transphobic abuse, including some shocking violent attacks, also remind us of the importance of young people understanding differences and learning to respect diversity from an early age.

In August 2019, I wrote to Gavin Williamson MP, then Secretary of State for Education, to make clear my support for statutory LGBTQ+ inclusive relationships education – in both primary and secondary schools – to help counter bullying and discrimination early. I also wrote to every London headteacher ahead of the 2019/20 school year to express my total and full support for schools as they equip students to make safe and informed decisions, show that LGBTQ+ relationships are part of everyday life, and ensure that all young Londoners can feel proud of who they are.

Since October 2019 and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, I have funded Free2B Alliance to deliver the Free2Talk LGBTQ+ youth service through my Young Londoners Fund (YLF). This project

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provides a valued LGBTQ+ specific service, providing targeted 1:1 and group support to LGBTQ+ young people who experience discrimination and inequality within education, resulting in social exclusion and a negative impact on mental health and emotional well-being. The project provides a much-needed safe space where young Londoners do not have to agonise over whether the professional will understand their gender identity or assume their sexuality.

Through the YLF, I have also funded Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid to deliver #RelationshipGoals. This project, which reached over 5,000 young people, raised awareness of healthy relationships in secondary schools and youth settings by providing talks and group work with the aim of tackling gendered attitudes and behaviours.

Best practice for supporting LGBTQ+ young Londoners has been widely shared through the Children and Young Londoners Community, my online forum for over 600 youth professionals. This has ensured that youth organisations are aware of high-quality services and resources that they can signpost to. For example, The Proud Trust's online search function enables young people to find LGBTQ+ youth groups near them. Officers have also shared information to support youth organisations that may be considering setting up LGBTQ+ youth groups, such as guidance provided by Stonewall, the Kite Trust and The Proud Trust. During Pride month in 2021, my officers ran a weeklong campaign to further raise awareness of the support available, including publishing a blog to highlight Free2B Alliance's work. You can [read the blog on the City Hall website](#).

You rightly point out that young people have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. They have endured interrupted education, restricted social and physical activities, and now face poorer employment prospects. I am aware that many more young people are suffering from poorer mental health than before the pandemic, and that LGBTQ+ young people are more likely to have been impacted. Through my New Deal for Young People, I am committed to ensuring that young Londoners in need have access to a personal mentor and access to high-quality youth activities. This spring I am allocating £4.85m to three mentoring focused programmes that will support young Londoners most in need, including LGBTQ+ young people, over the next two years.

I am determined to put young Londoners at the very heart of all our recovery efforts from the pandemic. It is essential that their voice and experience is shaping what quality mentoring and youth services look like, how mental health needs can best be addressed, and what is good and accessible employment. To further understand the needs of all young people, I have established a Youth Recovery Board. It will work closely with partners across London and convene a Youth Summit later in 2022. This will be an opportunity to bring together young Londoners and provide space for them to discuss issues they care about in shaping London's recovery.

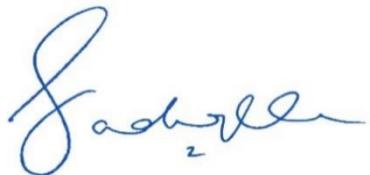
My Peer Outreach Workers (POWs) are a group of young people aged 15-25 from across the capital that influence decision making, service design, and policymaking. They include LGBTQ+ young people who are provided with a safe space to discuss their lived experiences. Recent sessions have included discussions with the Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime regarding abuse experienced by transgender people and I recently had the pleasure of meeting the POWs myself, where I renewed my commitment to them and the important work they do.

I am fully committed to continuing to work with the youth sector to strengthen citywide support for all LGBTQ+ young Londoners. I will ensure that my funding, youth programmes and campaigns are representative of LGBTQ+ Londoners, demonstrate a deep understanding of the barriers they face and tackle these inequalities at every opportunity. I will continue to engage and include the

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LGBTQ+ community in policymaking and use my leadership to advocate their right to health, happiness, and equity in London and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sadiq Khan".

**Sadiq Khan**  
Mayor of London