

MAYOR OF LONDON

Andrew Boff AM

Chair of the London Assembly

C/o Davena.Toyinbo@london.gov.uk

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Date: 16 November 2021

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your letter of 9 September about the motions agreed at the London Assembly (Plenary) meeting on 2 September. My reply to motion 5 is set out below:

Motion 5 – Ending the HIV epidemic in London

Thank you for your motion supporting my manifesto commitment to reduce new HIV cases by 80% by 2025 and end new cases of HIV within London by 2030. As you may already be aware, I continue to work closely on these goals with NHS England and NHS Improvement – London, Public Health England, and local authorities, as well as representatives of the HIV clinician community, HIV VCO sector and People living with HIV, as part of the Fast Track Cities Initiative (FTCI) London.

Already one of the first cities to achieve the 90-90-90 HIV treatment targets, London has surpassed the ambitious 95-95-95 targets with 95% of all Londoners living with HIV knowing their HIV status, 98% of these on treatment and 97% of people on treatment being virally suppressed. In August, Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS, congratulated London as a City for being well on the way towards ending new HIV infections.

However, I agree that we have much further to go, as both a partnership and a city, if we are to achieve our ambitious goals for HIV reduction, as well as to tackle stigma, discrimination and lack of understanding about HIV amongst Londoners.

In response to the actions you have called for:

- Support opt-out HIV testing across the NHS. Many parts of London are areas of high HIV prevalence and HIV testing should be routinely offered to patients in relevant settings, such as GP surgeries, A&E departments and in all sexual health clinics.

I publicly support the recommendations of the HIV Commission as part of my manifesto commitments, which include the need for opt-out HIV testing across health settings.

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I am pleased to see that all five London Integrated Care Systems (ICS) have committed, through their sustainability and transformation partnership plans, to implementing opt-out HIV testing in emergency departments as recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. This was due to commence in April 2021 but was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the huge impact upon local NHS trusts. I am now, however, keen for this commitment to opt-out testing to be implemented as soon as possible so that we can diagnose and provide treatment for people living with HIV earlier, allowing them to live longer and healthier lives.

- Support HIV testing at home being made available in all 32 London boroughs and the exploration of the option of providing free HIV self-testing kits to those at highest risk of HIV.

The vast majority of London boroughs are already signed up to Sexual Health London's e-service (www.shl.uk), which provides free online at-home HIV and sexual health testing kits to all Londoners. The remaining three London boroughs also offer free online HIV testing kits via separate contracting arrangements. These are local commissioning decisions for London boroughs and are not within my remit: however, I wholeheartedly support these initiatives.

- Work with local NHS bodies to pilot a trial of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) availability beyond sexual health clinics.

I have already committed to doing all I can to support an increase in PrEP access to all who need it as part of my manifesto. Responsibility for the commissioning of PrEP medication lies with NHS England, and I will continue to work with local NHS bodies to advocate for increased PrEP access. However, increased access alone will not be enough to increase take-up in some of our most vulnerable communities. Alongside increasing access, we need to improve awareness of PrEP and the importance of regular HIV testing.

- Provide free Transport for London (TfL) advertising space to encourage HIV testing and up to date information about HIV.

I was pleased to see that the 32 London councils who commission "Do It London" have previously used the TfL network to share their important messages about HIV prevention and testing. However, unfortunately, I am not in a position to offer further advertising space for free as the Greater London Authority only has very limited allocated space on the TfL network, all our campaigns are already scheduled, and I understand TfL's own allocation is also already taken up with other important transport campaigns.

I will continue to promote this vital issue across other channels and platforms, including on my social media and in press comments. This not only includes promoting HIV testing but also publicising important information about PrEP and U=U. It is vital that we continue to work together across the city to share information that will help tackle the stigma that still sadly impacts those in our community living with HIV.

- Support mental health support being made available to all Londoners living with HIV and end HIV related stigma.

I was saddened by the results of the recent National AIDS Trust knowledge and attitudes survey that showed high levels of stigma, discrimination and lack of understanding about HIV amongst Londoners.

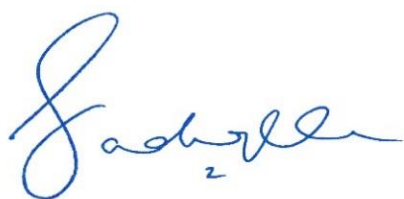
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I will be working with London FTCL to tackle this, through a dedicated workstream on ending HIV stigma from health professionals, from the general public, and amongst people living with HIV themselves.

Thrive LDN is already working with London FTCL to look at current mental health support provided to people living with HIV, as well as looking at specialist suicide prevention resources. I will also be working with FTCL to encourage ICS to improve both specialist and mainstream mental health commissioning for people living with HIV, as part of their new commissioning arrangements and structures.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours sincerely,

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

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London