

Boris Johnson

Mayor of London

(Sent via email to mayor@london.gov.uk)London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London, SE1 2AA

8 March 2016

Dear Boris,

End of life care in London

I am writing to you to highlight the findings of the Health Committee's recent investigation into end of life care in London. We undertook this investigation in response to discussions with stakeholders, who told us that end of life care in parts of London is among the worst in the country.

In October, we held a public meeting with representatives from the Pan-London End of Life Alliance, Age UK, NHS London and the National Council for Palliative Care. We also received written responses from a wide variety of stakeholders. Our evidence highlighted the scale of the challenge in ensuring that all Londoners have equitable access to end of life care services, and demonstrates the need for a joined-up approach from providers and policy makers. The attached slidepack outlines our key findings, including:

- The quality of end of life care varies widely across London, particularly for certain groups including the oldest old, black and minority ethnic people, and people with a diagnosis other than cancer.
- Fewer than half of Health and Wellbeing Strategies in London mention end of life care, indicating a lack of focus on this vital issue.
- Discussions around death and dying need to be normalised, and individuals and healthcare professionals need to talk about, plan for, and support others in preparing for the end of life.

Our investigation highlighted some key areas which would benefit from strategic leadership from the Mayoralty and which support the aims of your Health Inequalities Strategy.

Empowering Londoners to take control of their own health and wellbeing

Our investigation found that many people were unaware of the choices available to them, and their loved ones, when planning for the end of life. People need to have better information about the different options and tools available to help them make decisions about how they would like to spend their last days and weeks of life, and to ensure that their needs are met with dignity and compassion. There are a number of positive initiatives already taking place in London, including the [myhealthlondon](http://myhealthlondon.org.uk) website, which the GLA supports. However, we believe that more could be done by the Mayor and partners to champion this issue, as set out below.

We welcome the Mayoral commitment, as set out with partners in the recent London Health and Care Collaboration Agreement, to work towards shared delivery of integrated health and care that “focuses on maximising people’s health, wellbeing and independence and when they come to the end of their lives supports them with dignity and respect”. We were concerned to find that fewer than half of London’s boroughs currently include end of life care in their Health and Wellbeing Strategies. We will be writing to borough Health Oversight and Scrutiny Committees to draw attention to this issue.

We therefore urge the London Health Board to consider end of life care at the earliest available opportunity. We also suggest the GLA Health team considers how to incorporate end of life care into any forthcoming review of the Health Inequalities Strategy, with a particular focus on ensuring equality of access for all groups within London regardless of age, background, economic status or diagnosis.

We also ask you to push Health and Wellbeing Boards to include end of life care in the next updates to their Health and Wellbeing Strategies, to ensure that effective services to deliver the best quality end of life care options are available across London.

The Committee would be happy to discuss our findings with you in more detail. We would welcome a response to our proposals by 25 April. Please copy the response to Lucy Brant, Scrutiny Manager for the Health Committee, via Lucy.Brant@london.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Onkar Sahota', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM
Chair of the Health Committee