

MAYOR OF LONDON

Krupesh Hirani AM

Chair of the London Assembly Health Committee

C/o Daniel.Tattersall@london.gov.uk

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Date: 14 June 2022

Dear Krupesh,

London Assembly Health Committee investigation into the indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

I am writing in response to the Health Committee's investigation into the indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on waiting times for elective and outpatient treatment, which I received from Caroline Russell AM. I am sorry for the delay in responding.

I want to begin by thanking the Committee for undertaking this important piece of work. This is a timely investigation, with some elements of your findings mirrored in the recent cross-party [Health and Social Care Committee's report into cancer services](#), which said staffing shortages and disruption from the pandemic were causing delays. As you know, I have no powers over or responsibility for the commissioning or provision of health or care services and therefore, it will be for the NHS itself to address many of the issues raised in your investigation and I know you will be sharing your findings with them directly.

I have been meeting frequently with senior leaders from the London health and care system throughout the pandemic. While our focus has obviously been on the status of the epidemiology at the time of each meeting, together with the progress of the vaccination programme and other public health measures, I have also regularly asked NHS colleagues to update me on how well the NHS has been coping with the pressure from the pandemic on hospital beds (including on intensive care beds), on primary care and other services, and on staff, but also on the plans for system recovery and to address the elective backlog.

My response to the recommendations made in the report is set out in the annex below. Thank you again to the Committee for raising these important issues.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan

Mayor of London

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Annex 1

Mayor of London's response to the recommendations of the London Assembly Health Committee's investigation into the indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Mayor should write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to call on the Government to accept the Lords' amendment to the Health and Social Care Bill, so that independently verified health and care workforce projections are regularly published.

Workforce across the health and care system in London is an important area of concern for the Mayor and he is aware of the significant workforce pressures the NHS in London is facing. That is why he asked health and social care partners to provide the London Health Board, at its meeting in November 2021, with a presentation on the impact of COVID-19 on the health and care workforce. We heard that while London's health and care workforce had seen sustained growth over several years, rapid population growth, particularly people over 65, would add pressure to the system in coming years, on top of existing high vacancy rates. The Mayor has asked them to provide a further update to the Board in the summer.

Greater London Authority (GLA) officers continue to work closely with Health Education England to support the CapitalNurse Programme, and the Mayor is proud to host access on the GLA website to CapitalNurse to 'get nursing right for London'. Officers are also working with the London Association of Directors of Social Services, as collaborative working has demonstrated the value of considering health and social care workforce issues alongside one another.

The Mayor recognises the value of the publication of independently verified health and care workforce projections and a fully-funded workforce strategy, if we are to adequately meet the needs of all Londoners in the future – and particularly those with the greatest needs, who are often the most disadvantaged. The Health and Care Act received royal assent in April, and so further correspondence on the Lords amendment is no longer relevant. The Mayor meets from time to time with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. Given you have already written directly to him about your investigation, the Mayor will look to raise issues about workforce with him at a future meeting.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Mayor should work with the London Health Board to understand what measures have been put in place to improve the working conditions of NHS staff in London, and any further plans.

The Mayor will continue to champion, challenge and collaborate with London's senior NHS leaders to reduce vacancy rates, promote NHS careers, improve retention of existing staff and contribute to influencing improvements in the working conditions of NHS staff, wherever he can.

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As well as meeting formally with London health and care partners on the London Health Board, he continues to meet regularly with the leaders of the NHS in London, as he has throughout the pandemic, to discuss a wide range of issues, including workforce. He has been briefed on the expanded range of support available to staff to [support their health and wellbeing](#) while looking after others. The NHS's own efforts to support hardworking staff – with new ideas such as well-being lounges – have been generously supplemented during the pandemic by a wide range of initiatives from many of those in our London business sector, and schemes like [Project Wingman](#), designed to ensure that frontline staff have had access to a wide range of additional free resources, from food and drink offers, to magazines and digital resources, during this very challenging time.

The Mayor will continue to use both of these forums to understand what measures have been put in place to improve the working conditions of NHS staff in London and any further plans.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should update the Committee on the development of his Academy Hubs Programme and how the health hubs will help to address NHS workforce shortages in London.

The Mayor launched his £44m Academies Programme on 31 January and announced the 22 Hubs that have been awarded funding to deliver sector skills hubs, bringing together employers and training providers to develop strong pathways into employment. Together with funding from the Mayor, a contribution by the London NHS and Health Education England of £250k each has enabled three health hubs to be funded in the South West London, North East London and North West London Integrated Care System (ICS) areas.

The Mayor also launched his Academies Quality Mark in early March – a training provider accreditation, identifying high-quality provision that responds to the needs of London's key sectors, including health and social care.

Following the successful health hubs launch, an opportunity to apply for funding to deliver social care hubs under the Academies Programme is in development and will be launched soon.

The hubs will support Londoners hardest hit by the pandemic into good work – key to London's recovery and long-term economic growth. They will provide bespoke support to help newly skilled people into work and will focus on enabling people from local communities to access high-quality work opportunities in health and care in London. The hubs are likely to initially focus on a range of entry level roles, providing access into a wide range of health and care career pathways.

The GLA will also be receiving funding to commission Skills Bootcamps in London across its key sectors. Skills Bootcamps offer free flexible higher-level skills courses of up to 16 weeks. They give people the opportunity to build up sector-specific and in-demand skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. Funding will be available to deliver Skills Bootcamps that deliver higher level health and social care provision.

The Recovery Board's work on anchor institutions and the Mayor's Academies Programme are examples of maximising our aligned priorities for the good of the NHS and London. The Mayor

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will also use his role to amplify messages wherever possible, both with the public and with national government.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Mayor works with partners to ensure that the focus on waiting times does not divert attention away from, and hinder progress in, improving public health and prevention.

As the Committee recognises, the COVID-19 pandemic has put unprecedented pressures on our health and care services over a sustained period. This is down to the dedication and tireless hard work of our fantastic NHS staff. However, the pandemic is not over and the number of patients with Covid in hospital remains high, which continues to mean there is still relentless pressure on services. Despite that, colleagues in the NHS advise that London is starting to make good inroads into the significant waiting times for treatments and tackle the elective backlog.

The Mayor has recognised the benefits of public health advice even more strongly during the COVID-19 pandemic and is committed to supporting work on health inequalities and embedding a 'Health in All Policies' approach. That is why he has set up an expanded GLA Group Public Health Unit to work across the GLA and GLA Group (London Fire Brigade, Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime and Violence Reduction Unit, Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation and Transport for London) to embed health in all policies, with a focus on ensuring prevention, health, wellbeing and health inequalities are part of every organisation and directorate's strategy and planning.

I know that the close collaborative working across the health and care system, developed in response to the pandemic is valued by all partners. The Mayor will continue to promote a public health approach in his engagement with them, supported by the specialist expertise in the new GLA Group Public Health Unit.