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City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

1st September 2020

Professor Kevin Fenton
Regional Director, London
Public Health England
Fleetbank House
2-6 Salisbury Square
London EC4Y 8AE

Dear Professor Fenton,

RE: Disparity in NHS Test and Trace performance across London boroughs

We write regarding the performance of NHS Test and Trace across London's boroughs. The strong and equitable operation of this programme is vital to keeping Londoners safe from coronavirus. The Government promised a "world-beating" Test and Trace system. However, we are concerned that its variable performance across London will worsen health inequalities.

Since NHS Test and Trace began operating in late May 2020, it has reached around three quarters of people testing positive for Covid-19, consistently below the 80% target. Though comment has focused on these national figures, more worrying trends have become apparent in the regional breakdowns.

In London, the proportion of people reached between the beginning of operations and the latest stats up to 19th August 2020, varies from 86% in Camden to 69% in Barking and Dagenham¹. Of these people, 73% of close contacts provided were identified and reached in Merton and Bromley, compared to 48% in Hackney and City. The distribution of performance across boroughs forms a long curve, with a significant group hitting percentages in the mid-70s while another cluster reach 81% and higher.

¹ NHS Test and Trace and coronavirus testing statistics: 13 to 19 August 2020, DHSC, 27th August 2020
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-test-and-trace-england-and-coronavirus-testing-uk-statistics-13-august-to-19-august-2020>

While local factors would be expected to produce some variance, the scale of the difference between boroughs is shocking. We are concerned that this programme is not sensitive to local requirements, not properly resourced and needs London-wide coordination to reduce inequality and boost overall performance.

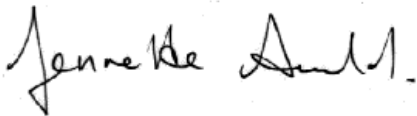
We would appreciate your assurances that PHE and your partners across London are taking steps to remedy the situation, including who is accountable for this workstream at a London level and in each borough.

We are aware that the data available publicly aggregates performance since late May, and the picture may have changed since then. Therefore, we would be grateful if you could provide a week by week breakdown of the performance of NHS test and trace for each London borough.

Yours sincerely,



Unmesh Desai AM
London Assembly Member for City and East



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