

MAYOR OF LONDON

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Chair of the London Assembly
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Dear Jennette,

Thank you for your letter of 20 February about the motions agreed at the London Assembly (Plenary) meeting on 6 February. My reply to each motion is set out below and I apologise for the delay in responding.

Motion 1 – Autism Strategy

“Autism is a hugely diverse and complex disability that affects thousands of people across London. It is currently estimated that there are around 88,000 autistic people living in London as well as the much wider group of people who live with, work with or come into contact with autistic people every day. Autism sits under the umbrella of neurodiversity. It is estimated that 10% of the population are neurodivergent. Despite this, autistic people and other neurodivergent people still face massive hurdles and health inequalities in their daily lives.

This Assembly notes the disproportionate challenges autistic people face, with research suggesting only 16% of autistic adults are in full-time paid work, over 50% of autistic people avoid public transport due to fears of disruption and 79% of autistic people feel socially isolated.

This Assembly believes that London should be a place for everyone and the Mayor should do all he can to tear down the unacceptable barriers and health inequalities faced by autistic people and other neurodivergent people across our city.

This Assembly therefore calls on the Mayor to develop an all-age London-wide autism strategy to be included within his Health Inequalities Strategy, working with Borough Councils, CCGs and others setting out how the right services and support will be provided, that all relevant professionals have the right level of autism understanding, and that our city is accessible to autistic people and open to neurodiversity.”

I welcome increasing awareness of the needs of neurodiverse and autistic people in London. As you know, I am committed to reducing inequalities for this group.

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Making London a more inclusive city for those on the autistic spectrum requires action across a range of different areas. Making London's transport system more accessible, closing the disability employment gap, and creating inclusive places and spaces through inclusive design are priorities being pursued through a number of my strategies that will benefit neurodiverse and autistic Londoners, as well as those with other conditions and impairments.

Officers from my Health and Equality and Fairness teams met with the National Autistic Society on 12 March to hear more about city-wide approaches to supporting equality for people on the autistic spectrum. We look forward to a continued dialogue as we learn more about how good practice can be applied in London.

Motion 2 – Police Funding Settlement

“This Assembly welcomes the Government’s announced ambition to recruit 20,000 police officers throughout England and Wales.

This Assembly notes that the Government announced £750 million of funding to support the introduction of these new officers, and that the Assembly called for 5,000 of the officers to be allocated to London; the Commissioner and Mayor have since called for 6,000.

This Assembly further notes that the Home Office has announced recruitment targets for each police force, with the Metropolitan Police expected to recruit 1,369 officers by 2020/21. While there has been no clarity over how many officers the Met will be expected to recruit in the subsequent two years, if the 1,369 figure were to be sustained, by 2023 the Met would still fall short of the number of officers asked for by the Assembly, Mayor and Commissioner.

This Assembly concurs with the Police Federation of England and Wales that police forces must be provided with a multiyear funding settlement in order to make their own long term, strategic plans to battle crime and support our communities.

This Assembly therefore calls upon the Government to agree to a sustained funding settlement for the police forces of England and Wales, to give the Mayor assurance that he can recruit the police officers that London needs in the knowledge that he will have secure funding for them in the years ahead.”

I have written to the Home Secretary on this matter.

I am also very grateful to you for writing to the Home Secretary asking for clarity over ongoing funding for policing in London. I will continue to make the case for London receiving at least 6,000 of the extra officers promised by the Prime Minister and look forward to the Assembly's continued support.

Motion 3 – LGBT+ Inclusive Relations Education

“This Assembly welcomes the introduction of compulsory LGBT+ inclusive relationships education in schools from September this year, following a partial rollout of non-compulsory Relationships/Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) from September 2019.

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Groups such as Stonewall, the Catholic Education Service, Terrence Higgins Trust, the NSPCC and the End Violence Against Women Coalition have campaigned for and

supported this move, which will see age-appropriate teaching of relationships education, including same-sex relationships, in primary school, and healthy relationships and sex education for older children, including LGBT+ issues.

This Assembly notes evidence from Stonewall showing that, nearly 20 years after the repeal of Section 28, just one in six LGBT+ young people have been taught about healthy same-sex relationships, but that in schools that teach about LGBT+ issues, LGBT+ young people are more likely to feel welcomed, included and accepted. Children and young people of all genders and sexualities should be equipped with the knowledge and confidence to make healthy, informed decisions.

This Assembly notes and welcomes the Mayor's previously stated support for schools teaching LGBT+ education, but believes that he should do more to ensure that schools are fully prepared for this transition. Research by the National Education Union (NEU) and NSPCC showed that half of teachers said they lack confidence to teach compulsory RSE. We are concerned this could undermine the effectiveness of this important element of the curriculum. The Local Government Association (LGA) has also stated that local authorities and schools should work together with local communities to support a smooth and inclusive rollout of the programme.

Given the extent of cuts to local authority and schools funding across London, and the importance for London's LGBT+ young people that RSE is introduced quickly and effectively, this Assembly therefore calls on the Mayor to provide strategic support across London. Through his education programmes, such as Schools for Success and the London Curriculum, as well as by engaging directly with the Department for Education (DfE), Boroughs and Regional Schools Commissioners, the Mayor is well placed to share best practice and deliver tailored support on a pan-London basis."

Our schools must be places where all children feel safe and included, regardless of their gender identity and sexual orientation or that of their families. This is not only the basis of our decency as a society, but ensures we are fulfilling our safeguarding duties. LGBTQ+ young people are more likely to experience bullying, mental health issues, self-harm and homelessness. Recent rises in homophobic and transphobic abuse also remind us of the importance of young people understanding differences and learning to respect diversity from an early age.

This is why I wrote to the Secretary of State for Education in August 2019 in support of statutory LGBTQ+-inclusive relationships education in both primary and secondary schools. I have been clear that promoting equality will always be age-appropriate. I have written to every head teacher in London, to express my total and full support 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.

As part of my Healthy Schools London programme, schools can already access support and resources on a range of topics including LGBTQ+ inclusion. I will continue to engage with the Department for Education, Ofsted, Borough leads and Regional Schools Commissioners to ensure we provide a strategic and collaborative approach to supporting LGBTQ+-inclusive education in London.

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Motion 4 – Food Insecurity and Hunger

“This Assembly welcomes the steps the Mayor has taken to tackle food insecurity. It notes the Mayor has developed a measure of food insecurity which shows that 400,000 children in London have low or very low food security. The Assembly further notes that 166,512 Londoners received assistance from a Trussell Trust foodbank – just under 60,000 of recipients were children.² This cannot be acceptable in one of the richest cities in the world. We are concerned that the chief operating officer of Food and Drink Federation has said that the Government’s planned future relationship with the European Union means that food prices are likely to rise at the end of the year.

The Assembly praises the work of a number of voluntary organisations that are working to tackle food insecurity such as the Trussell Trust, Sustain, End Hunger UK and local food banks such as the Pecan foodbank in Southwark.

This Assembly agrees with the Mayor that London should be a zero-hunger city. We call on the Mayor to commit to undertake research which examines the benefits universal free school meal provision could have on educational attainment and health outcomes in London. This should be done with a view to the Mayor and Chair of the London Assembly jointly writing to the Secretary of State for Education to outline the case for extending the provision of universal free school meals.”

Like you, I am pleased that we have been able to make progress in understanding the nature and prevalence of food insecurity in London. I note your concerns about Universal Free School Meals. Subject to budget approval, we will use funding in the new financial year’s food policy programme to undertake research examining how best to tackle the food insecurity faced by some of London’s children including benefits of universal free school meal provision. This will inform our ongoing work on the issue, and I shall use the results of that research to continue to lobby on this issue.

Motion 5 – Greater London Council Coat of Arms

“This Assembly notes that this year is the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Greater London Authority.

This Assembly further notes that the following year the Greater London Authority will have existed longer than the Greater London Council.

To commemorate this anniversary, this Assembly calls on the Chair of the Assembly and the Mayor to write jointly to the College of Arms to apply to have the Greater London Council’s coat of arms transferred to the Greater London Authority.”

I note the unanimous support of London Assembly Members for a Coat of Arms for the Greater London Authority. I am happy to support your proposition in principle but suggest this is reconfirmed this month. I would be interested to know if the London Assembly would be prepared to cover some of the costs of associated with this application and the extent to which London Assembly officers could be involved in the work. Perhaps you could let me know your thoughts on this.

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Motion 6 – Heathrow Airport

“This Assembly condemns the proposed third runway at Heathrow.”

I have been steadfast in my commitment to fighting a third runway at Heathrow, including my legal challenge of the Government’s National Policy Statement (NPS) in support of expansion. The Court of Appeal ruling on 27 February that suspended the NPS with immediate effect is a victory for the hundreds of thousands of Londoners who would suffer severe environmental impacts from a three-runway Heathrow, as well as those who were set to lose their homes.

Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) is now seeking to overturn the decision. I would urge HAL to accept the ruling and, once and for all, put an end to the uncertainty hanging over those communities affected by its plans.

Motion 7 – Undocumented Young Londoners

“This Assembly notes the recent study by the University of Wolverhampton, commissioned by the Mayor, that estimated there are around 107,000 undocumented children and 26,000 18- to 24year-olds in London.

The report also cautioned that the number of undocumented young people could rise dramatically after Brexit if the estimated 350,000 young European nationals in the UK are not helped to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme.

A young person’s irregular status could arise in variety of situations, including being trafficked, unaccompanied minors whose temporary leave to remain has been withdrawn when they turned 18, arriving without proper documentation or being born in the UK to parents without proper documentation.

Living without proper documentation means young people who are denied access to higher education, jobs, open a bank account or rent a home. They get left in limbo while their peers continue to progress. Living in fear of deportation, often to a country they have never known, is the cruel reality of the Government’s hostile environment policies. Children and young people who call the UK their home should be given access to a secure, and inexpensive, route to regularisation their status.

We recognise that efforts the Mayor has made to provide legal advice for Londoners with insecure status, and EU nationals, and ask him to call on the Government to support the regularisation of young people with insecure statuses, the majority of whom live and work in our city.”

I thank the Assembly for raising this important motion and wish to take this opportunity to make clear that I am committed to supporting young Londoners to access citizenship and settlement.

I have called upon the Government to properly fund advice services that have been decimated by austerity, to cut extortionate immigration and citizenship fees and reinstate legal aid for children’s immigration cases.

Successive government policies have blocked children and young people from accessing citizenship and settlement, despite them being entitled to apply. This leaves them struggling to access

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education and work; at risk of grooming and exploitation; facing the risk of deportation in adulthood, and unable to thrive in this city as they deserve. Young Londoners affected by this situation include the family members of the Windrush generation, those born in this country to migrant parents and will include European Londoners who miss the deadline for the EU Settlement Scheme after Brexit.

You referred to the research I recently published on this issue which estimates there are more than 133,000 children and young people living in London without secure status. They end up struggling because of the Government's hostile environment policies despite having grown up in the UK. The research estimates that over half of undocumented children are born in the UK, but they face a lengthy process that costs thousands of pounds in fees to secure their right to citizenship. I will continue to advocate for young Londoners facing these struggles, to secure their status and be able to thrive.

The Government must prioritise supporting children to access citizenship so that they do not end up vulnerable to grooming, exploitation and deportation. There was a rightful public outcry against a recent charter deportation flight to Jamaica. Campaigners highlighted the leaked Windrush Lessons Learned review recommendation that the Government considers ending all deportation of foreign national offenders where they had arrived in the UK as children. Government policies that create barriers for young people to access citizenship and settlement have contributed towards this issue.

European citizens and vulnerable refugees, including people who have been trafficked, have also been deported by the Government. I am doing everything in my power to secure the rights of the more than 1 million EU Londoners and their families post-Brexit, who risk losing their rights overnight and becoming undocumented if they do not access the EU Settlement Scheme in time. The increasing severity of the hostile environment is putting Londoners with the right to be here at risk of deportation, exploitation and destitution. This is more dangerous than ever in the context of a global pandemic, while these policies limit people's access to healthcare and welfare support.

I am committed to leading by example in supporting Londoners of all backgrounds to secure their status and fully participate in the life of our great city. I have provided £370,000 to improve access to legal advice for Londoners with insecure immigration status and donated £20,000 to the Windrush Justice Fund to provide support to London-based organisations working with those affected by the Windrush scandal. I am updating the Greater London Authority website with more resources on citizenship and settlement for young Londoners.

For European Londoners, I have provided free legal advice with pro bono lawyers, guidance and funding grants to community organisations supporting European Londoners to secure their futures here beyond Brexit. The portal has recently been updated to offer support to a wider group of Londoners with immigration needs including specific support to help navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and we are working with lawyers to reach Londoners remotely during social distancing.

Through my Citizenship and Integration Initiative, I have worked with civil society organisations, supporting young Londoners to secure their legal rights to citizenship and settlement. I have worked with organisations such as We Belong, an organisation led by young people in this situation who are navigating the complex immigration system and calling for the process to be made easier.

In February, I announced at my annual citizenship ceremony that I am donating £24,000 to the Citizenship Payment Plan, which supports struggling families to fund applications for their children's citizenship applications. It is crucial that all young Londoners can access the wealth of this great city and reach their potential.

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I will continue to lead by example and call on the Government to give young Londoners with insecure immigration status the support they need while challenging the Government's hostile immigration policies to secure the rights of those whose futures lie in our great city. I have made specific calls in the context of COVID-19 to suspend no recourse to public funds and for an end to the discriminatory hostile environment.

Motion 8 – RAF Northolt Airport

“This Assembly notes the motion it passed unanimously on the 7 September 2017 calling on the Mayor to work with local residents in doing everything possible to campaign against RAF Northolt becoming a commercial airport.

This Assembly further notes the recent £23million runway renovation, which was undertaken with no public consultation at this RAF airport and that this renovation enables greater use by commercial aircraft. This Assembly also notes a recent poll by Regional and Business Airports Group highlighting that 68% of neighbouring residents were not aware that the airfield was reopening for commercial use.

This Assembly believes commercial flights at this airport are not acceptable, especially when planning and public consultation processes have not been undertaken, as would be required at any other commercial airport.

This Assembly reiterates its long standing opposition to RAF Northolt airport becoming a commercial airport by stealth and urges the Mayor to actively oppose commercial flights, including by immediately writing to the aviation minister and local MPs in the area, and publishing all their responses on www.london.gov.uk”

I am aware that the airfield reopened last year following its runway renovation; though my understanding is that this has not altered its ability to handle commercial flights. Indeed, I am not aware of any formal proposals to increase commercial flying. I will continue to monitor the situation and seek to ensure that no changes occur at RAF Northolt without the consent of local communities.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London