

## GLA Oversight Committee – Thursday 7 May 2020

### Transcript of Agenda Item 3 – COVID-19

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** I am now going to move on to item 3, which is our main item of business, and welcome our guests. Unfortunately, our notification for this meeting included a guest, Professor Kevin Fenton from Public Health England (PHE), who at very late stages had to submit his apologies. We are looking to reschedule a session with PHE as well as National Health Service (NHS) London to come and join us to ask some questions from London Assembly Members.

However, we are very fortunate that our other guests have been able to join us today during what is a very busy time for them. I welcome Dr Fiona Twycross, Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the London Resilience Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG), along with Eleanor Kelly, Chief Executive of the London Borough of Southwark and Co-Chair of the SCG, and John Barradell, Chief Executive of the City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG.

At this point can we just ask whether one of you wants to give a very brief summary of the work that you have been doing in the initial phase in dealing with the pandemic here in London?

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the London Resilience Strategic Coordination Group):** Would it be helpful, Chair, if I went first for this?

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Thank you very much, John.

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** The SCG is part of our normal response to incidents within London of various types. These have been used in the past from flooding through to the tragedy of the Croydon tram crash, the Grenfell [Tower fire] and so on. This is a multiagency organisation that is set up specifically in response to events such as the pandemic. Its purpose is to pull together different London institutions and different London agencies, both across the private and public sectors, and to try to make sure that there is a degree of co-ordination, understanding of risk and pulling together of activity to try to deal with the various issues and challenges that are presented to us.

This was first set up during the course of March [2020] at the request of the Mayor to pull together London's response to the pandemic and has developed over time into its current position of around 120 staff working socially distant, some onsite, some not onsite, in order to pull this work together. No doubt, Chair, there will be other questions you will want to go through to talk through what the aims, objectives and some of the activities are to date.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Thank you. If I may, can I begin with the first question, probably to you, John, but you may wish to offer it to other members of the team? How effective has the co-ordination between the COVID-19 SCG been overall? Then I have some follow-up questions.

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Chair, overall - and I said this to your scrutiny committee after Grenfell - this is probably one of the most complicated and complex scenarios we have had. This is not following any form of previous type of incident or event in London and has therefore meant that we have had to develop as we have gone. We have been building, as it were, the car as we have been driving along, if the analogy works, developing links and developing co-ordination across different agencies and using tried-and-tested methods as well as developing new ones.

Given the circumstances of Government announcements happening on the day that they are announced and giving us limited information in advance of those announcements, given the fact that this is extremely fast-moving, the degree of co-ordination between agencies has been very effective.

There have been challenges as we have gone along and no doubt you will come to some of those, particularly around some of the agencies in direct response mode, but overall I would say that the co-ordination and the activity has improved over time and is certainly stronger than it was than at the beginning of the incident or at the beginning of the pandemic.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Given the preparation work, if I can describe it as that, it has not been that but the formation of the London Resilience Forum (LRF), the fact that you had an established network, was that of help to you in terms of moving into dealing with this emergency? Then can you describe also some of those structural challenges that you have had to overcome in the last weeks?

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** As again I said before, a lot of the effectiveness of response in these situations in my experience is about personal relationships and understanding organisations and the relative strengths of individuals. What we traditionally do is to go from an as-is position prior to an incident, through the incident, through the co-ordination and recovery of that and try to return to some form of normality that was there before. We recover, in other words, to something there before using existing partners and existing people to do that.

This position is somewhat different. We are going from an as-is position - and we are still, let us remember, in the middle of this - through managing the pandemic through to something that is yet to be defined. There are lots of phrases being used for this, 'new normal' and so on, but I would almost describe it as 'what is next', whatever the condition will be given the circumstances and given what changes here. Therefore, we have had to develop and use the talents, skills and knowledge of individuals and organisations in ways that were not planned for before.

When we started at the end of March [2020], the structure of the SCG focused on creating subgroups under it to try to understand what was going on in London and its likely effects in the future. The first one of those was the funders voluntary sector group and that pulled together through London funders the various voluntary sector organisations within the community to understand need and understand channels and understand what was likely to be required in the future. The second group was an information cell led by members from the GLA and its role was to provide data and analysis and give us an indication of what was happening on the ground. The third group was a health oversight group that pulled together the NHS, PHE and local directors of public health, again to give an indication of what was going on in terms of the health sector. This was a health-led incident, if I could put it that way, and therefore they were quite key to this. The last group really was the communications subgroup and that was putting together the messaging that was required,

understanding what was coming from central Government, the GLA and local government into some form of consistent messaging.

We also had a number of the Government liaison officers with us. They are sent from departments during these kinds of incidents where they will provide liaison back into the home departments. We had, have had and still have them from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Home Office, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and so on. Their role is to facilitate and help this.

That structure has developed over time. I am quite happy to go through the detail of that, but where we now have ended up, again with a number of core agencies involved - the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), the GLA itself, the Fire Brigade, etc, but the subgroups being very similar now - added to by what we are calling mortality management. This is a group that is overseeing and making sure that there is sufficient capacity and the systems are in place to deal with the excess deaths in London.

We also have specific local authority strategic co-ordination taking place. Over the course of the last month and a half to two months, there has been a significant increase in the amount of work required from local authorities, shielding vulnerable people as an example. That has required the local authorities to change some of their working practices, to develop new ones and to respond to requests and requirements from the Government and other agencies. That is a key subgroup now.

We also then identified a series of what I call strategic risks that we focus the partnership and focus the work on. The first one of those is around care homes and the risk within care homes. These are the current ones. They have developed over time and do change, but the current set are around care homes, mortality and the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE), not surprisingly, and in the longer term looking at physical and mental wellbeing and the preparation for, as lockdown comes off, what the effect would be on London's health and wellbeing in the round, the economic impact, and finally the structure of lockdown and the exit from lockdown as and when it happens.

The message I am trying to portray there is that this is developing and has developed as an organisational structure from a very straightforward set of subgroups looking at their technical and expert areas, now to looking at strategic risk for London and trying to identify who would own, and who would develop the response to those.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** In dealing with some of those issues, of course, people have been working together and have built up relationships, but in some ways the task of dealing with the pandemic has been emergency services, the public and the private sector coming together to work to solve and tackle some of the impact that has been going on.

Are you in a position to comment about those relationships and how they have grown over the previous weeks in developing a response to the virus?

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** One of the striking things for me in this - and this is reflecting back, Chair, as you know, from 7/7 [7 July 2005 terrorist attacks], [Alexander] Litvinenko [murder case], the polonium [poisoning] case, through Grenfell [Tower Fire] to now - is that the private sector did come forward and make some very generous and useful offers of pro bono support to us, which meant we could add capacity as we were going along to some quite expert areas which we

do not normally have in the public sector. They were able to help develop some key plans and responses that were built in and used as part of it.

In terms of the public agencies, it is fair to say that, clearly, health has had a significant amount of work to do and therefore the capacity sometimes to be able to respond as quickly as some of the other partner agencies would wish has been limited, which is not surprising. Part of the role here has been to build strong relationships with the key leads in health to mitigate some of those information requests and some of those demands being put on the health service at the moment.

Relationships are strong. They could always be stronger, I have to say, but the key relationships were built up before we entered the pandemic.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Lastly from me before I open it up to some other Members, of course in terms of limited resources that people have been having to work within, I am always worried about that capacity for people to respond. Has that been an impact in terms of people's services initially as they started to gear up in terms of their response to the pandemic?

In the background of that narrative, have you had to deal with issues coming up from the frontline? I am conscious of a statement that was made by [the Rt. Hon] Robert Jenrick [MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government] who said London boroughs should not labour under the false impression that all costs incurred during this pandemic will be funded by central Government. Given that we are coming to this end of this first phase of dealing with the pandemic and moving on - hopefully after the weekend we will hear from the Prime Minister in more detail about how we are going to deal with some subsequent phases of it - have you been picking up now, as we are at the end of this phase, worries and concerns about funding issues and some of those conversations going on between different agencies?

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** It would, bluntly, be for someone else to comment on the political nature of funding from central Government. One of the key things that we always have to do here is make sure that we are tracking the costs and where the costs are occurring and where they are accruing to.

One of the challenges I have to say, going back to the beginning of your question, is frankly around the need for social distancing and the fact that it is impossible to form the team that would normally be able to be formed around. In fact, today's Assembly scrutiny is a good example of adaptation in a very short period of time and using technology where possible to get things done, but it undoubtedly impacts on our ability to respond to this and has undoubtedly also created some bottlenecks in systems and responsiveness in parts of the public sector.

As I said, in terms of the funding and the funding from MHCLG and the Government, that really is a matter for the Government and not for me.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** OK, thank you. Does Fiona Twycross or Eleanor Kelly wish to add anything to what John has said to us?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** On the finance point, it is no secret that COVID-19 is having a huge impact on finances at every single level of society.

It is impacting on individuals, businesses, London local authorities, the GLA, the country and the global economy.

At the moment, it is probably a little bit too early to tell exactly what that looks like, but conversations are taking place and continuing to take place with the Government about what that looks like, what that looks like for local authorities and for every different part of the London system. That is something that over coming weeks and months it would be useful to come back to.

I know from a GLA perspective that David Bellamy [Mayor's Chief of Staff] and David Gallie [Executive Director of Resources, GLA] hope to brief Assembly leaders in a few weeks' time when the picture becomes clearer, but from everything from Transport for London (TfL) to the cost upfront for councils to loss of income, it is clear that this is going to have an impact going forward. It is not something that is absolutely clear yet.

It is quite clear that the Government has been putting large amounts of money into the response, but there does need to be a discussion further down the line, which is already starting, about what this looks like in the future.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Thank you. Eleanor, do you wish to say anything?

**Eleanor Kelly (Chief Executive, London Borough of Southwark and Co-Chair of the SCG):** I would just add that one of the things that we have learned, given that our approach has been built on existing practices and existing relationships, is that it is very clear not to underestimate people's capacity to change and to adapt.

I would also say that the responses across all of the sectors have not been driven by the availability or the perceived promise of availability of funding. People have stepped up to the plate because it is the right thing to do. They have brought innovation. They have brought adaptiveness and they have brought genuine passion across all of the sectors to respond to the benefit of London across the piece.

That will continue, but I would not underestimate the issues that will face the individual boroughs in relation to difficult decisions, about things that they are not going to be able to turn off in relation to this response as it continues through recovery. That will lead to some quite difficult political decisions in relation to things that may well have been previously promised or things that would have been in council plans. I say that from a local authority perspective rather than across the other sectors but that is almost certainly true in public health and in the NHS too, and so those difficult political issues will continue.

The final thing that I would say is also not to underestimate individuals' capacity to want things to be normal. That does not mean that we will return to the way things were. We are still in an emergency and we are still in a level-4 national incident, but it feels like the current normal and therefore people want it to feel as normal as possible. Regardless of the circumstances, regardless of the emergency, they are trying to make it feel as normal as possible, particularly for their communities or for their organisations.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Thank you. I am going to bring in Assembly Member Susan Hall.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** Thank you, Chair. First of all, I will start by saying thank you to John, Eleanor and Fiona for the amount of work you are doing because we do appreciate you are putting a lot of work into this.

Our briefing states that there are four co-chairs of the SCG, but the Secretary of State gave John the power to direct all public authorities on response activities for COVID-19. Can you confirm who is actually the main chair and who is doing the majority of the work?

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** That would be me. Can I comment while you have mentioned the letter? The interpretation I have put on the letter is, for me, fairly straightforward. The normal way that SCGs work is that you have partners around the table, and you agree a set of activity. You listen to what is being offered, what is being developed, what the key skills and what the key attributes are for the organisations, and they identify their risks to that group. It is a collective decision as to what happens.

One of the risks with this, I believe, was - and it alludes back to the Chair's previous question a little bit - there would be a need sometimes to say to one of the organisations, "You really do need to work together to resolve this problem". The direction in my mind was simply about directing people to work together to solve. Each organisation is a sovereign body. The local authorities are sovereign within their territory, as are police, as are fire, as are the other utility companies and the other agencies. My interpretation of it was that I was given the ability to direct that co-working and that joint working together.

There is provision - not in the letter as far as I read it - for me to direct public services, to enforce a local authority to do something that they did not wish to do. That was the interpretation I put on the word 'direction'. If I needed to, I would need to go back - in my view - and ask for very explicit power under a Coronavirus Act or something like that to direct public services. It was simply to give heft behind the request.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** OK, thanks. Fiona, what is your exact role on the SCG?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Thank you. Before I say what, my role is, I would like to say thank you very much to John and indeed to Eleanor. They were appointed originally by the Mayor and we felt very much that the letter from Robert Jenrick was an endorsement of that decision. I think we can all agree that they have put a huge amount of effort and resource and personal time into this. It is hugely appreciated.

As Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience, I normally chair the LRF on behalf of the Mayor and cover that piece of work on behalf of the Mayor and the GLA. I generally have oversight of London's preparedness for emergencies including planning ahead to assess potential risks and preparing for the arrangement to respond, recover and indeed to learn from the emergencies.

Before the pandemic was declared a pandemic, the LRF had developed a specific COVID-19 response framework, which was agreed in February [2020] as the LRF observed the emerging crisis around the world. At that point, early March, we did set up a SCG from the LRF to provide oversight of the system-wide impact upon London. Very early on we saw that it was system-wide, which is why John and Eleanor were brought in, rather than it being viewed simply as a health crisis.

My main role now is as the Mayor's representative on the SCG and I have been involved throughout on the response to COVID-19 on behalf of the Mayor and the GLA alongside London's emergency services, local authorities and the Government to ensure that the plans are in place and that the city can respond as best as

possible to the public health crisis. It is indeed an incredibly complex and complicated piece of work, reflecting the nature of the pandemic.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** Yes. I must say particularly thank you to you, Fiona. You have been very helpful answering our questions.

Has the Mayor been involved in any of these strategic groups? Has he chaired any of them or does he attend very regularly?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** The Mayor gets regular briefings and updates on the work of the SCG. It is relatively unusual for politicians to be directly involved in SCGs. The chairing of the LRF by me as Deputy Mayor is unusual. In most areas of the country it is seen as very operational and I think that reflects the nature of London.

Early on, the Mayor had a series of Mayor's advisory groups to set the scene, to see the picture and to identify the key issues. Throughout the crisis, he has had regular briefings both from PHE and from the NHS. We have a whole series of briefings for everything from faith communities through to the volunteer sector and so forth so that he does a deep dive on a one-to-one basis with organisations to assess and keep on top of the situation as it emerges in London.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** OK. It is such a shame we cannot do a deep dive with him because he is not even prepared to give us 30 minutes of his time. Clearly, then, he is updated regularly, from what you are saying, and so I cannot see why he could not be bothered to come and talk to the Assembly.

Do you think the role played by the Mayor during the crisis has been clearly defined?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** The Mayor is a spokesperson for London and indeed today the principal reason that he is as busy as he is today is because of the point we find ourselves at in this crisis where there are very high-level discussions on what the easing of the lockdown looks like. As spokesperson for London, he has clearly played a key role in reassuring Londoners but reaffirming the very strong stay-at-home messaging that has been going out. On a regular basis he and senior members of his team have been liaising with Number 10 directly, whether that is through a COBRA (Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms) meeting or through an almost daily meeting at some point of the crisis with Number 10, which the [Mayor's] Chief of Staff and John Barradell as the Chair of the SCG have attended to flag those urgent issues as they have gone through.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** OK. I would like to point out that we offered him to come to this meeting, Fiona, at any time to suit him, on any day to suit him. You are there and you have been working really well and so this is not a comment about you, but given he is the Mayor of London, he should have attended, especially if you are telling me he knows what is going on because many of us think he does not even know what is going on.

I will leave it there, Chair, but thank you, Fiona. Thank you for what you are doing. Very well done.

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** I know he is looking forward very much to the next Mayor's Question Time, which I understand is on 21 May [2020].

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** I bet he is. Thank you.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** It is fair to say that Assembly Members have received a regular briefing from the Mayor but no doubt that will form a number of questions on 21 May.

I am going to move on then to Assembly Member Keith Prince and question 3.

**Keith Prince AM:** Thank you. This is mainly to Fiona, but I will be interested in the views of the other panel members as well. What has been the impact of COVID-19 on supply chains and access to essential household items?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** OK. Thank you. John or Eleanor could probably talk best about the shielding scheme, which directly removes people from being able to go and get their own provisions. Early on, we did see stockpiling of normal household items and we saw a situation that reflected what we thought was likely to happen with some of the Brexit work we did. We were able to use some of the work we had done on Brexit.

The issue of supply chains is not one that I have a huge amount of detail on. John, are you able to come in on this? This is on household items rather than the general PPE, I think

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Household items only, frankly, would be in terms of shielding and this is for vulnerable people particularly, Assembly Member. The piece here was the Government sending lists out to local authorities of vulnerable people. The last list arrived yesterday into some local authorities with an updated list and its provision of food, medicines and so on to them.

Eleanor, I do not know if you want to cover a bit more detail with that. It is being led by a colleague, Ian Davis [Chief Executive, London Borough of Enfield], a colleague chief executive who is leading that cell or that work strand and co-ordinating that across local authorities. Eleanor, I do not know if you want to comment.

**Eleanor Kelly (Chief Executive, London Borough of Southwark and Co-Chair of the SCG):** I would just say that the numbers have not been evenly distributed across the boroughs and, therefore, the numbers coming in have formed a challenge across many of the boroughs in relation to responding to the shielding of individuals. Under, the SCG, it was a strategic risk and it remained a priority all the way through from when it was first notified that this would be the approach.

Certainly, in the SCG we have not looked in any granular detail at the requirements of the shielded individuals, but that information does sit in each of the community hubs and the contact that the boroughs have made directly with the people whose names and addresses they have been given.

The most recent arising issue was about liaising directly with community pharmacies and making sure that people had access to their medications because that did arise as a risk that needed to be particularly tackled. That was also tied into mechanisms within the community pharmacists and their ability to be able to get volunteers to work directly with them, but not in relation to household goods.



We are aware of course that certain sectors of the retail sector were able to stay open in relation to providing essential items and some of those essential items would have included household goods that would have been available through various companies so that the availability of them had not necessarily been compromised. What had been compromised was people's ability to directly access them. That is where the community hubs and the shielding came in.

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** If I can add, Keith, on the issue of access to food, around Easter there were shortages that people experienced through food banks. Those emergency supplies were under a huge amount of pressure. We now have a situation where each borough has a food hub which is operational, and the hubs are processing meals or emergency food parcels to deliver them to vulnerable individuals and households via the distribution centres.

However, as we see whatever shape the predicted recession takes and those impacts on household incomes in London, access to food through food banks is likely to come under pressure because the model of food banks is not designed for this kind of pandemic situation. It has thrown up a lot of very complex issues within society, but the immediate issues faced by food banks in that week in the run-up to Easter when they had a huge amount of demand, but food banks were finding it difficult to access supplies has for the moment appeared to be resolved.

I should thank publicly the staff from the political group offices who stepped up and helped to do a ring around of some of those food banks to make sure that we could match up information with the food banks and make sure that they had the information they needed in order to get vital supplies.

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** If I could quickly comment, Chair, on that, one of the things that is very positive out of this - if there is one - is that all 33 local authority areas in London now have signed up with the voluntary sector food provision, which is a significant achievement. Jackie Belton, who is the Chief Executive down in Bexley, is the lead officer for looking at food as one of our priority areas and core service delivery areas. She is due to report back to us on Monday on the current state of this. I am quite happy to give a written update to Members after that point.

**Keith Prince AM:** Thank you. One of the biggest users historically of food banks, of course, is rough sleepers. We now know that roughly 90% of rough sleepers are currently housed in hotels or similar accommodation. What plans does the Mayor have, Fiona, for after the lockdown and after the current agreements come to an end and those hotels want their rooms back?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** As well as working with the GLA Housing team, this is a piece of work that is being looked at through the accommodation cell at the SCG. At the moment, as you will be aware, we have over 1,000 rough sleepers who are in safe accommodation secured by the GLA. The GLA is working closely with Government departments to try to make sure that we apply the Mayor's 'in for good' principle, which means that nobody who has been placed in emergency accommodation in response to the COVID-19 crisis is asked to leave that emergency accommodation without an ongoing offer of support to end their rough sleeping.

Clearly, you will be very mindful of the fact that this is a huge challenge in terms of the numbers who are currently in emergency accommodation. We have really welcomed some of the Government's moves that will,

hopefully, avoid additional people becoming homeless, things like the three-month mortgage repayment holiday and the ban on evictions, but that is not to underestimate the challenge.

I am sure my colleague Tom Copley [Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development] would be happy to come along and talk to Assembly Members about that as it emerges. Indeed, we can make sure that you get a briefing specifically on this. People are working very hard to try to avoid this happening but are very mindful of the fact that it is a big challenge, as indeed the Government has recognised by its appointment of [Dame] Louise Casey to look at this area.

**Keith Prince AM:** I work pan-London in relation to homelessness and the provision of accommodation for homeless people. I would very much welcome a meeting with you and Tom or whoever else you think because I have an organisation that is coming up with some very innovative ideas on how we can provide quick accommodation for people.

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Why do we not set something up next week? My office will be in touch with your office and we can try to sort something out so that we can pick that up at an early stage. Thank you.

**Keith Prince AM:** OK. Thank you.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** OK. I need to move on. We will come back to Assembly Member Prince in a minute.

If I can move on to Assembly Member Jennette Arnold to further go into some of the issues around food. I am conscious, John and Eleanor, you need to leave at some stage to go back onto the job. I understand that Fiona is willing to stay on and so we are very grateful. Can I bring in Jennette Arnold to pose a couple of questions around some of the issues around food and issues relating to that?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM:** Yes, I am here, Chair. Can I start by thanking the three wonderful people we have with us today for all the work that they are doing at the SCG.

Let me be bold and get focused on, it seems to me, the communities that so much has been written about and that is rightly so because of the mortality rate that is impacting on them. That is London's members of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities. I just read this morning that the Office of National Statistics said:

*"A substantial part of the difference in COVID-19 mortality between ethnic groups is explained by the different circumstances in which members of those groups are known to live, such as areas with socio-economic deprivation."*

My question is: have you made any assessment and are you focusing much of your work in these areas where there is known disadvantage so that members of these communities can have access to food? John, can you start?

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Sorry, Jennette, yes. There are two parts to that question.

On the first one in terms of mortality rates, it is very clear from the data provided by PHE that there are three boroughs that are significantly above the national average and, again, there was announced by the Office of National Statistics some very clear data and some very clear evidence around disproportionality in effect and morbidity - death, basically - from COVID-19. The scientific cell, which is led by Kevin Fenton from PHE, is providing advice and guidance around this. We can provide that data to you. That is one, Fiona, you probably want to take away. There has been some briefing on that, Jennette.

In terms of food, again, what I would say is that this was very early identified as being a potential problem. The food cell - this group of people predominantly from the voluntary sector along with business and the GLA - was pulled together to start to address food poverty, likely where we had not got the infrastructure in place in some of the boroughs to support food banks. There were early indications from some food banks that they were not getting donations required. The boroughs did step up, as I said before, with food hubs, particularly around the Newham and Brent areas, for example, to do that. That has proven itself to be of great value.

The piece here for me will be what the local authorities then do subsequent to this to be able to maintain that support into the future. That is something we will be taking on.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM:** We know that London has one of the most mobile communities. If you look at children's school places, you will see that London has a huge swathe of people who move around. How are you working with local authorities to capture these people whom I can say could well be on the margins? They are on the move and in desperate situations. How are you attempting to relate to them and who are you working with?

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Part of the role in terms of the SCG is to encourage working across organisations around particular areas and particularly issues. The local authorities themselves - and the local authority lead would be Martin Esom [Chief Executive, London Borough of Waltham Forest] for this - would be pulling together responses to vulnerable people within communities, particularly.

If it becomes a strategic risk, for example, or something that they wish to raise with the SCG, the route would be for them to raise it through, identify it to partner agencies and then take that on. That has yet to be raised as a specific issue to the SCG by the local authorities, I have to say.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM:** Yes. Finally, can I say that that is such an important group just in terms of accessing them or getting access to testing for them and actually food. Without food, the body has no response to fight off any infection, never mind the coronavirus.

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Can I add on that, Jennette? This is something that the Mayor has been raising for some time. It is one of the really strong reminders that actually COVID-19 is not affecting the whole community equally. There is disproportionality that cannot simply be explained by socioeconomic reasons. At the heart of everything that the response relates to is about keeping as many people safe from this illness as possible.

It would be worth Members talking to Kevin Fenton about the work he is doing -- through PHE on this. Also, just to reassure people, as well as the public statements the Mayor has been making, Debbie Weekes-Bernard [Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement] has been starting to pick

this up with Nick Bowes [Mayoral Director of Policy, GLA] at City Hall about looking at what work the GLA can do in this area. We can try to link you up with them. I know you know Debbie quite well and so it would be worth you talking to Debbie about what the GLA is planning to do in this area as well.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM:** Thank you very much.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** OK. Can we go back to Assembly Member Prince for a final question in this section?

**Keith Prince AM:** The question has been answered insofar as what can the Mayor do to improve the supply chain resilience. We have heard very strong answers around the hubs that have been set up in the boroughs. I know that in Havering, for instance, we did have some issues with the food banks, but the hub was able to top up the food bank.

Going forward, we have some people who are going to have to remain isolated for a longer period, the very old people, the very vulnerable people. Are there any additional systems or processes that are going to be put in place for those people?

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** That really is part of the challenge we have in terms of 'what next', if I can put it that way. The Government's shielding programme is intended to continue for quite some time. One of the avenues we have been exploring is with David Farnsworth [Director, City Bridge Trust], who is leading the voluntary and community sector group, the forum, as it were, one of those working groups under the SCG, to look at how the voluntary sector could assist with this as well as local government.

It does go to the question of what follows where we currently are. We are in, as the Deputy Mayor said, a response mode at the moment. We do need to move to something more sustainable, bluntly. 53 days working is probably too much for me; I am now getting bags under my eyes. There needs to be something that follows this and setting that up would need to address exactly these much longer-term issues for those who are still vulnerable.

**Keith Prince AM:** That is the question, John. We were all caught flat by this and we have been very reactive, but you are quite right. It is now time to be proactive. What the Assembly and the people of London want to know is: what plans do you have? What are you putting in place? If you do not have anything in place, who is leading the charge on what we think we should be putting in place, and when are we going to hear more about it?

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** I am not sure, to be honest, that it is within the remit of what I am doing to answer the question, if I am brutally honest with you. This is co-ordinating the agencies. It is clearly an issue. It has been identified and commenced to be addressed in terms of the response phase. It is one of the strategic risks we have identified in terms of the longer-term impact, and it is currently being worked. Again, we can give details.

Fiona, I do not know if you want to pick this up as part of the move to recovery work that is taking place.

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Yes. Do you want me to talk about recovery now, Len, or do you have other questions?

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** There are further questions later on about recovery, but a lot will flow from when the Prime Minister makes his statement on Sunday about what new normal looks like. There would be expectations that some of these issues that we are talking about will be picked up and even carried forward and improved upon, if possible, depending on what circumstances we find ourselves in, in the various next phases.

Can I now move on to Assembly Member Berry, who has a question?

**Siân Berry AM:** Yes. You touched on some of the issues, John, already, but I wanted to go back to when we previously discussed the Grenfell disaster with you and some of the issues there about councils who needed help not triggering requests for mutual aid. You have hinted today that there are differences in the burdens on different councils, and I just wanted to check with you whether there has been improvement since we wrote the conclusions we sent to the Grenfell Inquiry, based on your evidence and discussion with the boroughs.

Have there been improvements in councils asking for help when they need it and making clear to each other their own needs?

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** I think they have. What they have done is organised themselves in a way that is helpful with this in terms of identifying sub-regions of local authorities, identifying one chief executive to chair that sub-region, to pool together their issues.

One of our challenges, a little bit, goes right back to the first question from the Chair: Eleanor's and my roles in this are not as they appear but as, if you like, are sitting separately, doing a different role. Sometimes there has been a lack of understanding of that within the system that our role is different.

However, in terms of local government's response to this, I think the co-ordination they have done in sub-regions is extremely good. From what I have seen, the work of individual officers and their leadership teams, both political and Member-led as well as officers, has been extremely good in the boroughs and has undoubtedly made it a lot easier in terms of how London functions and its continuity, than otherwise would have been the case. I do think lessons were learned. The degree of co-operation has been very strong across the boroughs. Offering mutual aid in an unofficial way across the boroughs is very strong, and it is certainly part of the lessons learnt from the past.

**Siân Berry AM:** OK. Thank you very much.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** OK. I am now moving on to Assembly Member Pidgeon to look around some aspects of the lockdown.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Lovely. Thank you very much, Chair, and can I put on record my thanks to Fiona, Eleanor and John for the work they have done and the regular briefings we have had as Assembly Members from them.

I would like to ask you, what options is the SCG considering for a phased approach out of lockdown? How might London's approach potentially differ from other parts of the country, particularly because we have been ahead of the curve in this?

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** First of all, I have no knowledge whatsoever of what is likely or unlikely to be announced on Sunday, in January, February, March or anything else. However, the approach that we have taken is to be a little bit on the front foot, if we can. We know, for an example, the dependency on public transport in London in terms of work, in terms of moving around the city, is far in advance and well ahead of any other city in the country. London's dependence as a city on public transport is far higher, so public transport becomes the unlocking item of any sense of return.

The second issue, clearly, is around schools and opening of schools, and then releasing the workforce - people at work, people at home, carers and so on - back on to London. What we have done is identify, through the leadership of the MPS, a set of workshops that have taken place with the partner agencies underneath the SCG to work through what scenarios would start to look like, should those be measures that Government chooses to take. What would be the likely impact as best professional judgment at this stage, what those would be? Those have been fed back to Government to give an indication of what would be the impact, should they choose those things. I have to say these are ones we made up, rather than ones we were told. I will be really clear about that. "This is what would happen." We have fed that back, and that is probably as far, frankly, as we could go, without being told what the release of lockdown is likely to be.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** I completely understand that and your points about transport being so important in London. On that, as lockdown is lifted in whatever way it is, there are lots of discussions about staggering start times and finish times for people, but what about managing the actual stations? That we have seen was an issue early on. Has some of your scenario planning work looked at how you are going to manage people at stations so that they can social distance?

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Fiona, I do not know if you want to pick that up in terms of the TfL side. Chair, I am going to have to sadly leave you because I have another thing I have to do. Apologies.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** No, thank you, John, and Eleanor [Kelly] has to leave us, if she has not already, but thank you very much for your work that you are doing on behalf of Londoners, and your colleagues, who are not on this call, throughout London working in those key services. Thank you very much.

**Keith Prince AM:** Yes, thank you, John.

**John Barradell (Chief Executive, City of London Corporation and Co-Chair of the SCG):** I appreciate it. Thank you, Chair.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Fiona, over to you.

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** On the issue of transport, John is right. This has come through all the work on thinking about what release of lockdown might mean. I would repeat John's point that this is a decision for Government, and we do not have any clear view probably beyond that which is in the media in terms of ideas that are being floated in the media about exactly what might be announced on Sunday, although we probably all have our own personal pet things that we would like to see, but I will not go through my personal list of that.

In terms of TfL, it has been very much at the heart of discussions around what easing of lockdown means in London. John referred to the huge numbers of people in London who are reliant on public transport to get to work, compared to other parts of the country. This is a particular issue for London. It is not that London would have different rules to other parts of the country, but there are different pressures on our system, perhaps.

Planning is under way both in terms of discussions with the Government from TfL and with the trade unions. Nothing is off the table yet, but until we see where the Government is going with the easing of lockdown - which I think everybody is agreed is likely to be quite modest in the first instance for very good reasons - these are issues that are all being worked through. We will see announcements on these as the decisions from Government level - which the SCG and the Mayor and the GLA and TfL are feeding into - and what that means in practice going forward.

Nothing is off the table. We do need the public transport system to be up and running. You will have seen a lot of the announcements around the streets-based scheme, looking at how more people can walk and cycle to work to relieve some of that pressure. We have to innovate in order to get London moving again, but at the heart of anything that is announced will be public safety.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Lovely. Thank you. Management of stations and people going in will be really important as part of that. Thank you very much.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Thank you very much. Assembly Member Hall?

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** OK. Thanks very much. Just a few, if I may.

How we come out of this is so important, given it is London, the capital. What discussions have taken place regarding the impact of the pandemic on not just the budgets of the functional bodies but on the core GLA mayoral budget?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** I referred to this earlier in the context of the fact that COVID-19 is clearly having a massive impact on finances across the piece, so coming through to the functional bodies and to the GLA. The Committee will be firmly aware of the loss of revenue, as currently being discussed with the Government. As you will be aware, the GLA Group receives income from council tax and business rates, so there is likely to be an impact.

The GLA Finance Team is working closely with London boroughs to understand potential impacts that may be hugely significant for boroughs as well, and they are being highlighted to Government from a Government perspective but also from the functional bodies and through the boroughs.

As you will understand, this is a really complex piece of work with many moving parts, and the picture is not entirely clear. I mentioned earlier that David Bellamy [Mayor's Chief of Staff] and David Gallie [Executive Director of Resources, GLA] are working on this very closely and are hoping to be able to brief leaders of the Assembly groups in a few weeks' time as to what the impact might be on the GLA Group and the GLA itself as the picture becomes clearer.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** OK. Thanks, Fiona. How, in your view or from your briefings, has crime changed during the pandemic? Have criminals exploited the pandemic in cases such as targeting closed business premises or using face masks to conceal their identities when committing crimes? Have we seen much of that?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Overall, crime has fallen. There have been instances of things like fraud rising and so forth. I have not personally heard of any instances where face coverings have been used to target people particularly, but we can find out whether that is the case and we can get details of that to you. Overall, one of the positive things has been that the MPS has seen a fall in crime during this period.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** OK. Do you know how many police officers have been off work with suspected symptoms? We know how very high cases of sicknesses are in TfL. Do you have any figures around how this is affecting our police force?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** I do but let me just turn to the right page. At the moment, very sadly, a member of the MPS staff died from the illness. It is important to remember that the people being off sick has translated, in very tragic instances, to people losing their lives. The MPS has said that the current daily average through sickness and self-isolation is just over 10%, so 10.7%. Actually, that is much more positive than early projections thinking that it might be at 30% abstraction levels through sickness and self-isolation. That has been a better picture than people had planned for, which has been very positive.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** OK. I am going to ask Members to pick up the pace slightly. I have Navin Shah to come in around transport services. Navin.

**Navin Shah AM:** Yes, thank you, Chair. I have a couple of questions on transport. One is to do with resources and the other one is to do with ramping up of the transport service itself.

On resources, London's transport service is currently operating at approximately 10% to 15% of capacity. This means major loss of revenue. Do you know, Fiona, whether the Government has stepped in with the emergency funding support for this service?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Discussions are going on probably as we speak around the financial issues TfL is facing with the Government. We know that other parts of the country have seen the Government step in to help meet the shortfall, so we are hopeful this will be the case in London.

**Navin Shah AM:** Let us hope it happens sooner than later, because we are facing a very, very serious situation as far as resources are concerned on transport-related activities.

Moving on to the level of service, we know that the Prime Minister will be setting out a road map on Sunday as to where we go from here, but to a question on public transport at the Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) he



referred to a “bigger and more expansive” transport service. It is envisaged that there will be a need to run more public transport services in order to maintain service levels.

The question is: is this feasible, particularly given the concerns about social distancing? Already the Deputy Mayor [Heidi Alexander, Deputy Mayor for Transport, GLA] has clearly indicated on transport that, if maintaining a 2-metre distance on an underground coach, an underground coach may not be able to contain more than about 26 passengers. Even if it is reduced to 1 metre, we are looking at some substantial changes. The question is about feasibility. How do we manage? Are you aware of what is being done on that?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** There is a huge amount of work being done on that. I mentioned the streets-based programme. That will be key to making sure that as many people as possible cycle and walk to work.

One of the big issues that we are going to have to address, though, is I can see from the images that most of you are actually working from home. In London, a reasonably large proportion of the working population has been working from home and will have to probably continue to work from home for some time. Part of the solution to the social distancing issues on transport will have to be about those people who can continue to not use public transport where possible, and those who can use another form of sustainable transport shifting to that, so the walking and the cycling and so forth. It is a challenge. As we see the announcements coming through from Government, this is going to be a key thing in terms of how London gets back to work, and London recovers and moves out of the current lockdown phase. It will be about making sure that we do manage people getting back on to public transport in a way that is as socially distanced as possible but also reflects the need for people to change their working practices and ways of commuting, where they do have to commute, as far as possible.

**Navin Shah AM:** Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Let us move on, then, to the next question.

**Siân Berry AM:** Thank you, Chair. Another question about workplaces and things that might reopen, essentially.

First of all, I know on a couple of occasions both you and John Barradell have said you have no idea what is going to be announced. I know that you cannot tell us in advance what is going to be announced, but just to get some reassurance, there is a leaked plan that is in *The Mirror* [Newspaper] today that talks about the exercise plan from Monday but then talks about schools and markets and garden centres and cafés and things of which we have a lot in London. There is no mention there, for example, of offices, and offices - I might have a further question about that in a second - are certainly a very high proportion of our most concentrated workplaces. There is no mention of that in there. You would hope that for shops and cafés the Government would have been talking to the Mayor about this plan that has been leaked, but also to unions.

I wanted to ask: do you know what has gone into the formation of that plan, and is the plan that is in *The Mirror* today something that the Mayor has checked off on or is that some sort of early draft that you will be looking at today?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** I would have to check what is in *The Mirror* today. Apologies. I have not read that. I know that the Government was working on guidance for businesses in terms of reopening that related very much to how you could socially distance within an office space.

In the short term, though, the best way to make sure that people who would normally work in an office environment can socially distance is to continue to do what most people have, where possible, which is to work from home. The GLA has done this; a whole load of organisations have done it, everything from banks through to smaller office locations. It is possibly not something that people are going to necessarily want to do indefinitely, but, in the short term, people continuing to work from home where possible will have to be a part of the solution until a vaccine is found.

Just to reassure you, we have absolutely no idea what it is likely to be. We are basing quite a lot of our assumptions on other leaked or floated ideas in the media. Although we have been inputting to Government about what we think the impacts of different measures would be, we have not been part of the discussion in terms of seeing draft documents that might be produced later over the weekend.

**Siân Berry AM:** OK. This worries me because we are a place where a lot of people come to in the course of the day. I mentioned before that we have a lot of offices. As far as I can tell from the most recent *Travel in London* report, there are about half a million people who come into our Central Activities Zone - presumably, that also includes Canary Wharf - using rail services. These are not people who can cycle their journeys. These are longer-distance commuters. Although they might be taking a Health and Safety at Work approach to whether or not certain kinds of workplaces can reopen, from a London-strategic point of view, if we have a million of those workplaces in the middle of our city, the transport question then becomes much more serious than whether or not you can distance when you get to work.

Are we having the right influence on the Government's thinking, do you think? Do we have the right access as a city?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** The Government is being given all the documents that the SCG has produced in relation to the impact various lockdown easing would have. We have had the input. We have forwarded documents, there has been those high-level conversations that I have mentioned between John Barradell, David Bellamy as the Mayor's Chief of Staff, and Number 10 and other Government departments we have had input into.

What I would say is that your example of Canary Wharf is probably a very good example of where people can continue to work from home quite successfully for some time because of the nature of the office environment. The City and Canary Wharf: if you look at the footfall and the patterns of commuting very early on, they were among the first places to have very low footfall. I might be wrong, and I will correct myself afterwards if I am, but at a very early stage there was about 1% of normal footfall in the City of London, certainly between 1% and 5%. It was really low because a lot of the professions that are carried on in some of these environments can be successfully carried out through use of technology, through home working. A reasonably high proportion of those people who have been travelling in quite long distances have been in those professions that are most easily transferrable to home working.

**Siân Berry AM:** Great. Just to clarify, finally, you are fairly confident that for the office workers and the commuters who come into the centre of the city, not only the advice from the Mayor but the advice from the Government will be, “Work at home for the foreseeable future”?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Without knowing what is in those documents, I cannot see a situation in which that is not a strong message from Government at the weekend.

**Siân Berry AM:** OK. Thank you.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Fiona, I know you are conscious of your time constraints. We have four more questions. If Members could be fairly brisk in those, I wonder if we can get through those. I am now going to call on Assembly Member Whittle.

**Peter Whittle AM:** Hello, Fiona. Hi. I just have one question. You covered a lot of it, but what do you think are the general challenges London faces in trying to maintain whatever that social distancing rule happens to be when we know from Sunday? What do you think are the factors that London particularly has, the challenges it has to face? You just mentioned there about a vaccine. We are talking about a year, I think, for that. What do you see going forward?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** The biggest challenge is the one that both John [Barradell] and I mentioned previously, which is the high level of people who normally, habitually travel by public transport. The movement of children to schools by public transport is also higher than other areas. Those are issues.

What I would say is, though, that while we have seen some instances of people breaking the social distancing rules around lockdown, we have had a huge level of compliance from Londoners on this. There have been well under 1,000 fines imposed for what is a huge population. I think that as long as the Government tells the story to the public and we continue to reinforce that as to why social distancing needs to be maintained and reinforced over coming weeks and months -- Londoners have been incredibly compliant, much more so than people envisaged when the measures were first introduced. There is no reason, as long as there is a good reason why people should continue to do so, why this will not continue to be the case.

**Peter Whittle AM:** Thank you. Can I just come back on one thing? Assembly Member Berry was talking about office workers, quite rightly. A lot of people who are office workers, a lot of professional people, happily can adapt to being at home and it is all very well, but they are a particular section of society. The fact is that there are millions of people who work in things like retail and whatever and work in hospitality. They cannot work at home. How will social distancing affect them?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** This is one of the massive dilemmas that we have as a society, both here in London and more widely. I know that the question about wearing face coverings has been quite hotly contested, but one of the reasons why the Mayor has been suggesting that people should wear face coverings where social distancing is not as easy or as possible as it might be in other contexts is not that it protects the person who is wearing the face covering, but actually it protects the people who are in your vicinity if you are ill. Just as people have been very compliant with social distancing, if the evidence is such that people are asked to wear face coverings to protect those

people who they do not know who are standing alongside them, who may be those front-line workers - the nurses, the doctors, the physios, the ambulance drivers and so forth - who we need to continue the response effort, I think people will be very open to wearing face coverings. A lot of people already are.

I have not travelled on the Tube recently, but I know from colleagues who have, that a very high proportion of people who are travelling on public transport currently already are wearing face coverings of some sort. It seems a very small ask, if it is protecting people who are travelling in the same carriage as you and you are not aware, you are asymptomatic -- obviously, if you have symptoms, you should not be travelling. There are things like that, that could potentially make a difference not necessarily to the person who is wearing it but to those people around. Given the high level of compliance and willingness the public has had to protect other people, to protect the NHS by staying at home - two or three months ago we would not have imagined that people would have been as compliant as they are - people will be willing to consider things that they might not have imagined we would do as a society in very recent weeks in order to protect other people.

**Peter Whittle AM:** I see. OK. I should leave it there because we do not have much time. Is that right?

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Thank you. Yes, if you can. We will be able to follow up these issues because the challenges will continue into the next phase as well. We will return to those.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Great. Fiona, thank you very much for all the hard work you are doing, and to the Mayor for what he is doing in giving leadership in London.

My question is about the BAME community, and of course it has already been alluded to that the BAME community is being affected disproportionately. I should put on the record the tremendous contribution of the BAME community in the NHS, and the soldiers who have been fighting this war have been the NHS. When the history will be written, it will be the NHS who will stand up as the heroes of this fight. Of course, we know that only a few days ago, when I looked at the figures, 119 people who work for the NHS, members of staff, died, 119 of them, of which 64 were from the BAME community. Of those 64, 53 were born outside the United Kingdom. These are the people who came to this country to work for the NHS and have now given their lives in the defence of Londoners and for people in this country. I want to put on record the tremendous contribution of the NHS and also of the BAME community in particular. As Assembly Member Arnold alluded to earlier on, today the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said that black and Afro-Caribbean people are more than four times more likely to be suffering as a consequence of COVID-19.

Of course, what this pandemic has shown has been the impact of social deprivation and social disadvantages and inequalities in health. This will be a big issue for London. What have you done and what has the Mayor done to investigate this matter further?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** The Mayor has been at the forefront of calls for the disproportionality to be looked at and taken seriously. Early on in the pandemic there was very much a sense that people were saying, "We are all in it together". Quite clearly, the disproportionality says that some people are more in it than others, and this has to be a concern for us all.

As I mentioned to Assembly Member [Jennette] Arnold, Debbie Weekes-Bernard [Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement, GLA] has been leading some work on this for the Mayor. Kevin Fenton, who as well as being the Regional Director of PHE is the Mayor's formal Public Health

Advisor, is picking this up for the SCG and will be doing work on this, no doubt, for the Mayor, but it continues to be something that is at the forefront of what the Mayor has been calling for and will be a key piece of work for the GLA through Debbie Weekes-Bernard and, through PHE, Kevin Fenton. I would suggest that either an early meeting either of this Committee or the Health Committee speak to Kevin Fenton to discuss the work that he has undertaken in this area.

As you rightly point out, this is disproportionality that we cannot just skim over, and we do owe a huge amount of gratitude to those health workers who are out there on the front line. It is absolutely tragic that so many people have died as a result of being there on the front line. This is something that we have to take seriously as a city. The Mayor has been calling for this for some time. As well as linking Debbie Weekes-Bernard up with Jennette [Arnold], I will make sure that she speaks to you at an early stage as well.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** OK. I just want to put it on the agenda that it may be worth it for the Mayor in the months to come to set up a special review on what happened in London, maybe commission some report on it particularly. Also, has the Mayor made any representations to the Government on the terms of reference of the inquiry that the Government is holding?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** The Government inquiry on disproportionality?

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** On the impact on the BAME community. The Government is holding an inquiry on the --

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Yes. I understand that he has written to the Government on this.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** -- I was suggesting that I wonder whether the Government has asked the Mayor to comment on the terms of reference, or has the Mayor made any representations of what he thinks should be covered in the terms of reference of that inquiry that the Government is setting up?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** The Mayor has definitely written to the Government about this issue. I am not aware that the Government has asked the Mayor to comment directly on the terms of reference, but that is something that my colleague, Debbie Weekes-Bernard, would be able to enlighten you on. Kevin Fenton has been very much involved in this work, and there is a paper that went to the SCG on this, which we can also ask if we can forward to Members of this Committee.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** That would be very helpful, Fiona. Thank you.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Thank you. Can I bring in Assembly Member Pidgeon?

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Thank you. Just quickly, following up on this point about a review, clearly there have been a number of transport workers - particularly bus drivers I am thinking of at this point - who have died. I am wondering whether the Mayor, with TfL and bus companies, who have a big role to play here, are doing anything to review the working conditions and the environment on and off buses to see what more can

be done to protect bus drivers. This is not going to stop overnight. This is going to be something we are going to be living with for some time.

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Yes. There has been the work on bus drivers in relation to the entry to the middle or the back part of the bus. We would take the view that the face coverings are also partly to protect the transport workers as well as other passengers. You rightly point out that there have been a number of tragic deaths of public transport workers, and this is clearly a huge issue of concern. TfL is working closely with the Government but also with the transport unions to look at what can happen going forward to make sure that these transport workers who are on the front line - but who are, as we have identified, hugely important to London getting back to whatever the new normal looks like - are protected as far as possible.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** OK. Very quickly, Assembly Member Arnold.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM:** Can I just say I agree with everything that my colleague Assembly Member Sahota has said?

I thank Fiona for her responses, but I do just want to widen this out in terms of deprivation and say that every death from coronavirus is a tragedy, and behind every statistic there is a family that will never be the same again. Let us not forget that it is having a disproportionate impact on men, so we need to understand that. It is definitely having an impact on elders and obese individuals. What I have heard Fiona say is that when we get Professor [Kevin] Fenton in front of us in his role as Regional Director of PHE and NHS London - because he has convened a group, including former Assembly Member Trevor Phillips OBE - that we have alongside him the Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement, because part of her long title is about social inclusion, and that would include issues of deprivation. We need quite a bit of time when we meet these people because this is such an important issue, Chair. Thank you.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Yes. It is a very important point you make there. We will look at that when we invite them in the future. I need to move on. I have three more Members, very quickly. Quickfire questions on these ones. Assembly Member Dismore.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Yes. Thanks, Chair. I want to come in on PPE, Fiona. Are you happy that front-line workers now have access to sufficient quality and quantity of PPE? We get these conflicting stories. The Government says there is plenty of PPE going around. We know, for example, that the Fire Brigade has set up the distribution network for local authorities, but you see stories all the time, particularly in care homes, of care workers saying they just do not have enough of the right equipment. That may well be behind this upsurge of serious cases in the care homes, which is where the big problem now seems to be.

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** PPE has been a perennial issue that is being raised on pretty much every meeting of the SCG I have been on. At the moment, as we see the current wave start to tail off, it does not appear to be such a problem. It would be absolutely scandalous if we entered a second wave or even a third wave and the issues from the first wave have not been addressed. That is really where the SCG is now. We have seen people at times be very close to running out of PPE. Part of the mutual aid that was discussed earlier has been mutual aid around people redistributing very scarce supplies of PPE. What we need to make sure is that, going forward, that is addressed, particularly if, as we see lockdown easing, new guidance has additional burdens on the PPE supply

chains to enable people to get back to work. It has not been perfect. It has been pretty close to the opposite of perfect at some points. This is an issue that the SCG is clear needs to be addressed. The Mayor has written to Government on a number of occasions about this, and it has to be something that is got right for the future pattern of this disease going forward.

Just to reassure colleagues from the Assembly, the London Resilience Forum is going to do an interim review at its meeting in June just to look at what we have learnt from the first wave, so that we can address issues from the point of view of London resilience but also can feed back to Government on issues we feel that they need to be on top of. This is an issue that has been raised throughout the crisis and has to be got right for future waves.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Thanks for that. We have to make sure that the kit is fit for purpose. We saw this story today that the much-trumpeted 400,000 gowns from Turkey are substandard, so we have paid for something again that is of no use, like we did the tests from China.

London's Pandemic Strategy noted that central Government maintained appropriate quantities of PPE. That is obviously before the event. Are you going to be lobbying the Government to stress-test its stocks and supply chains more rigorously for the future, both in terms of quantity and quality, so that we do not get these perennial stories of people having to do their jobs unprotected and expose themselves to the risk? We see how many people have died as a result.

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** The Mayor has already been lobbying very hard on PPE as we have gone through the crisis, and I cannot see that this is going to be a demand that goes away. We have to make sure people are protected in doing their jobs.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** OK. Thank you.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Assembly Member O'Connell?

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Fiona, thank you very much for what you are doing and your support.

My questions largely have been asked and answered, so I will be quite brief. Following on from Andrew Dismore [AM], this is the issue about the face coverings. There seem to be mixed messages coming out from Government - this probably is a better question for PHE - and from the Mayor. The Mayor seems to be having one view that may be contrary to Government. Could you just simply give the present position around face coverings that is held by the Mayor and yourself, please?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** I personally do not see why we would not go down that route. My mum has made me some face coverings in advance of changes to easing of lockdown. This is something that I think people would be willing to do. We have already seen people willing to curtail their freedom in order to have the lockdown. We have seen that as other countries in Europe and around the world have eased lockdown, face coverings or face masks have been introduced not for their own personal protection but for the protection of others.

The Prime Minister has indicated that he thinks it is likely that we would go to a situation in which face coverings would be considered. The Government, as we would in London, needs to consider every single

option, and if we can make the vision for when people have strong social distancing, as the 2 metres that people have been advised to have currently. If face coverings are part of that solution, then we would support that.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** OK. Thanks. Thank you on that. More will be revealed at the weekend, so there may be some more guidance there. Thank you very much, Chair, Fiona.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Very quickly, Navin Shah.

**Navin Shah AM:** Thank you. PPE for transport workers is currently a major issue. Transport unions have been very actively lobbying us about their concerns on this matter. Will there be sufficient supply of PPE available for transport workers, and will this be procured by Government or will it be left to TfL, the Mayor and bus operators, for example?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** TfL is already looking in detail at the issue around PPE. It has followed the scientific guidance at all points. Just to reassure you, the Mayor has said that he will do whatever it takes to keep all transport staff safe, and it is clear that the shortages that Andrew Dismore [AM] alluded to, that health and social care workers had to be first in line for PPE. TfL is actively looking at this. Should national public health guidance or guidance from the Government change about the use of PPE by transport workers, appropriate training in how to make sure that PPE is used appropriately as well as making sure that the secure supply chains would be needed to ensure it was used safely. My understanding is - although I would need to clarify this if it is not the case - that TfL would be responsible for procuring PPE for its own workers.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** I just want to say thank you to those Assembly Members who sacrificed asking any further questions of Fiona. She needs to go. One last question. Assembly Member Berry.

**Siân Berry AM:** Thank you, Chair. Just very quickly, Fiona, I know the Government's centralised app approach is raising some concerns about the tech and also about how it might be organised. Are you exploring a role within London for strategically co-ordinating more community-based, low-tech contact tracing and isolation as part of the work that you are doing, as a back-up for the Government's plan in case it fails?

**Dr Fiona Twycross AM (Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience and Co-Chair of the SCG):** Our first instance would be to hope very much that the Government did not launch an app that was going to fail. Contact tracing formed quite a key part of the initial containment phase and that it is the - I will probably say it in the wrong order now - test, trace and isolate. Track, trace and isolate is going to be a key part of that, and that has to involve the contact tracing to make sure that people are aware of where people are. The app does seem to be a really effective means. -- But with a city as large as London, getting an app that works effectively, potentially one that works in a major city as well as on the Isle of Wight would be really key.

**Siân Berry AM:** OK. Thank you very much. Clearly, there is a London-wide aspect to this. You would not expect each borough to be doing this. That is why I asked you. Thank you.

**Len Duvall AM (Chair):** Fiona, can we thank you again? We know you have overstayed, and you have other meetings to go to, but can we thank you and the rest of the team for the work they are doing on behalf of Londoners. We have some more formal items on the agenda, so you may wish to leave us now, but we cannot



thank you enough. We are a little bit more enlightened about some of your work. We are, no doubt, going to return to this subject in the coming weeks and months as well. Thank you very much for the briefings that you have given to key Members of the Assembly over and above the written ones. We are very grateful for that. Thank you.