

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM**

Chair of the London Assembly Health Committee  
C/o [Tim.Gallagher@london.gov.uk](mailto:Tim.Gallagher@london.gov.uk)

**Our ref:** MGLA140423-5003

**Date:** 23 June 2023

Dear Onkar,

Thank you to the London Assembly Health Committee for sharing with me its report on Maternal Health and Care in London.

First, I would like to thank the Committee for its investigation into maternal health and care services in London and for its thoughtful report. The challenges around maternal and infant mental health are a great concern to me. Effective, timely support and treatment are vital, especially during the first 1,001 critical days of a child's life.

Please find my response to the recommendations in the annex below. Thank you again for investigating this very important issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small '2' written below the name.

**Sadiq Khan**  
Mayor of London

# MAYOR OF LONDON

## Annex

### **Mayor of London's response to the recommendations of the London Assembly Health Committee's report on Maternal Health and Care in London**

#### **Recommendation 1**

The Mayor should advocate for the NHS in London to carry out a review to learn lessons from the pandemic, with the aim of determining how maternal health services in London should respond to future pandemics. This could be done via a meeting of the London Health Board in 2023, as well as through his wider advocacy

The Mayor agrees that it is important that the NHS learns lessons from the pandemic and that maternity services form an integral part of this learning.

The Mayor meets regularly with London's senior NHS leaders and has raised with them the need to understand the impact of the pandemic on maternal services.

#### **Recommendation 2**

The Mayor should use his convening and advocacy powers to encourage higher standards of care and help prevent a postcode lottery in the delivery of maternity services in London, so that pregnant women and birthing people know what to expect and can better advocate themselves for high levels of service. This should include advocating for all London trusts to implement the National Bereavement Care Pathway (NBCP).

The Mayor agrees that consistently high-quality NHS maternity services and, where needed, bereavement support services should be available to all Londoners. He also supports pregnant women and birthing people, understanding and advocating for these high standards.

The Mayor has raised this issue with London's senior NHS leaders at their recent meeting and discussed the recent investment in bereavement services in each service.

#### **Recommendation 3**

The Mayor should work with Mental Health First Aid England to explore creating a bespoke curriculum for the mental health of pregnant women and birthing people, new mothers, and parents.

Increasing awareness of maternal health issues and improving understanding of what mental health support services are available to women and families during pregnancy, childbirth and the post-natal period would undoubtedly be good for Londoners.

Working with the National Children's Bureau as set out in our response to Recommendation 4, we can explore what opportunities exist to address maternal mental health issues through the refresh of our Healthy Early Years London (HEYL) programme.

The [Perinatal Mental Health Programme](#) led by Transformation Partners in Health and Care focusses on improving access to the range of support available to ensure timely and appropriate care and support across London.

# MAYOR OF LONDON

## **Recommendation 4**

The Mayor should explore expanding the Healthy Early Years London (HEYL) programme to include maternal health services, or introduce a similar programme which is specifically targeted at maternal health services

We have recently appointed the National Children's Bureau (NCB) as our delivery partner for both HEYL and Healthy Schools London (HSL). As well as day-to-day management, NCB is leading a refresh of both programmes, aiming to ensure they are as effective as possible and well aligned with regional efforts to tackle child health inequalities in London.

As part of the refresh, we hope to strengthen the positive impact that these programmes can have on the mental health and wellbeing of young Londoners. We will be working with the NCB to explore what this means for HEYL, including considering how to better support the social, emotional and mental health of infants and mothers.

## **Recommendation 5**

The Mayor should lobby the Government to implement the recommendations contained within the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee's 2021 report to increase funding for maternity services to ensure sufficient staffing levels in London.

The Mayor agrees the government should increase funding for NHS maternity services to ensure the delivery of safe and effective care for Londoners.

He will continue to advocate for sufficient funding for this vital workforce.

## **Recommendation 6**

The Mayor should lobby the NHS to improve its support for maternity staff from ethnic minority groups and strengthen anti-racist initiatives that impact maternity staff.

The Mayor agrees it is vital that support is available to all NHS staff from ethnic minority groups, including maternity staff.

He has discussed this with senior NHS leaders. He understands that the NHS London is currently implementing a Capital Midwife Maternity Anti-Racism Framework, which includes nine areas to tackle racism and equity for both staff and service users. Another example of NHS leaders' commitment to addressing this issue is the creation of a fellowship for BAME midwives who want to progress.

The Mayor has made a commitment to addressing structural racism, including as a cause of health inequalities, and is working closely with health and care partners on a number of initiatives focused on improving equity in public services and moving further and faster on being actively anti-racist organisations. This includes the development of a framework for action on structural racism in health and care and an anti-racism 'hub' to support learning and changes to practice.

## **Recommendation 7**

The Mayor should challenge and lobby the NHS to improve training and education of health professionals about medical conditions that disproportionately affect ethnic minority groups, as well as the statistics about the disparities in health outcomes. This could be done via a meeting of the London Health Board in 2023, as well as through his wider advocacy.

# MAYOR OF LONDON

The Mayor agrees that training and education of health professionals should enable them to understand the clinical needs of all patients, including conditions that disproportionately affect ethnic minority groups.

This is necessary to ensure babies are delivered safely and birthing people are appropriately cared for, in both pre and postnatal settings.

The Mayor will discuss the training and education of maternity health professionals and the disparities in health outcomes, at one of his regular meetings with senior NHS leaders.

## **Recommendation 8**

The Mayor should use his convening and advocacy powers to encourage the NHS to ensure a minimum level of professional interpretation service provision, so that every woman can make informed decisions around their own pregnancy. This could be done via a meeting of the London Health Board in 2023, as well as through his wider advocacy.

The Mayor agrees that interpretation services are vitally important and should be available to all patients, where and when they need them.

He has raised this issue with senior NHS leaders who are delivering a range of resources to improve access to interpretation in London.

## **Recommendation 9**

The Mayor should work with the NHS to analyse and publish London-level data on maternal health outcomes, in particular to measure disparities between outcomes among different ethnic groups.

The Mayor is concerned that national reports show disparities in maternal health outcomes between different groups of people and is keen to understand the situation in London. He understands that NHS Trusts have been reporting outcome data, broken down by ethnicity, to the London Perinatal Board since 2020 and that Integrated Care Boards are now responsible for collecting and managing this information. However, these data are not currently publicly available.

The Mayor has raised this issue with senior NHS leaders; they welcomed the Assembly report's focus on inequalities and women's experience which aligned with their focus.