

MAYOR OF LONDON

Krupesh Hirani AM

London Assembly Health Committee
C/o diane.richards@london.gov.uk

Our ref: MGLA060423-4509

Date: 5 June 2023

Dear Krupesh,

Thank you for your letter regarding the London Assembly Health Committee's investigation into the GLA Group Public Health Unit (PHU). Let me take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing service on the Committee and your contribution to the new GLA Group Public Health Forum over this formative year. I am also pleased to welcome Dr Onkar Sahota as chair of the Health Committee for 2023/24.

Please see the attached annex for my responses to the Committee's recommendations.

When I established the PHU in April 2022, it was to embed my 'Health in All Policies' approach across the GLA Group and develop a centre of excellence for public health practice. I am pleased to say that the PHU has already begun to deliver on this and more. Examples include their work to support the establishment of the London Drugs Forum, the Life Off The Streets Executive Board, and the inaugural Partnership for Healthy Cities Summit that I co-hosted in March.

I am confident that the PHU will support the GLA Group, in partnership with the wider London public health system, to continue to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of all Londoners as set out in my Health Inequalities Strategy. I look forward to working with you and the GLA Group to strengthen the progress and impact that the PHU is already making.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small number '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 investigation on the GLA Group Public Health Unit (PHU)

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should provide the Committee with an update on how the Public Health Unit is adding value to the organisations in the GLA Group beyond MOPAC, including the London Fire Commissioner (LFC), the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) and Transport for London (TfL), and the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) and where changes in those organisations' work or priorities have occurred as a result

The Mayor created the GLA Group Public Health Function, now fully mobilised as the GLA Group PHU, as a shared service across the GLA, TfL, MOPAC/VRU, OPDC and the LFC. The GLA Group Public Health Forum brings together the Mayor's most senior health advisors, the GLA Group Director of Public Health, and senior representatives from each GLA Group organisation in order to maximise the contribution their organisations make to improving health and tackling health inequalities in London, individually and collectively. It scopes and develops the public health priorities of the GLA Group and guides the priorities of the PHU.

Examples of benefits realised through the GLA Group Public Health Function in 2022/23 include:

1. Building on the London public health system COVID-19 legacy to protect Londoners from health shocks and stressors through GLA Group action. For example winter planning, extreme heat, and using GLA Group levers to support the response to disease outbreaks like Monkeypox.
2. Delivery of public health expertise to maximise the impact and value of GLA Group work – by recruiting to five Consultant (specialist) led portfolios;
 - Housing and vulnerable adults (Emma DeZoete) – for example, approach to specialist and supported housing
 - Community safety and young people (Farrah Hart) – for example, violence against women and girls strategy
 - Transport and air quality (Katie Hunter) – for example, working with TfL on strategies to support sustainable and active travel
 - Environment, planning and resilience (Emer O'Connell) – for example, scoping of climate change adaptations
 - Economy, culture and children (Alice Walker) – for example, providing public health input to work on skills or the night time economy
3. Creating linkages across the GLA Group and with wider system partners – for example supporting the establishment of the new London Drugs Forum (LDF), and Life off the Streets Executive Board.
4. Creating evidence for future action and advocacy – for example
 - publishing a [Snapshot of Health Inequalities in London](#)
 - commissioning reports on health inequalities and [The Rising Cost of Living and Housing](#)

MAYOR OF LONDON

Recommendation 2

The Mayor should convene public health officials through the Public Health Unit to develop a strategy to improve London's vaccination rates for childhood specific campaigns and influenza

Responsibility for vaccination lies with NHE England (NHSE), and work is already underway to improve London's vaccination rates.

The PHU, the Health, Children and Young Londoners Unit and Deputy Mayor Debbie Weekes-Bernard represent the Mayor on the London Legacy and Health Equity Partnership, alongside partners from NHSE, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and The Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH).

This is a 2-year NHSE funded programme of work, which seeks to build on the lessons from the COVID vaccine programme and broader health impacts experienced by communities during the pandemic. Working across a range of London partners, the programme has a specific focus on increasing vaccine and screening uptake and improving access to health for all.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should ensure that the Public Health Unit reports back to the Committee on the London Climate and Health Network's priorities for 2023.

The Mayor will ensure that the PHU reports back to the Committee on the London Climate and Health Network's priorities for 2023. The network has yet to agree priorities for the coming year, these will be provided to the Committee when they are available.

Recommendation 4

The Mayor should ensure that the Committee is updated on how the Public Health Unit is supporting the GLA Group to respond to the case of Awaab Ishak, and prevent deaths from mould exposure in London.

The Mayor recognises the need for system-wide reform, including in law, to bring about the changes needed in housing standards. Although many of the levers to tackle damp and mould are not within the gift of the GLA, the Mayor continues to lobby, convene and take direct action to encourage improved housing standards in London, including via the recent restriction of access of three social landlords to capital grant, and the development of training for local Private Rented Sector enforcement officers on damp and mould.

The PHU has been working with GLA Housing teams and key partners across the public health system on this issue. This has included promoting the Mayor's "Report a Rogue Landlord" tool for use among health professionals, inputting on the development of a new damp and mould referral tool as part of OHID London's Housing and Health Task and Finish group, and contributing to The London Public Health and Housing network.

Recommendation 5

The Mayor should convene representatives from the GLA Group organisations through the Public Health Unit to develop a strategy to combat the multiple factors influencing asthma rates in London.

There are multiple factors that influence asthma rates, including smoking, air pollution and poor housing. Since 2016, the Mayor has made it a key priority to improve air quality, and minimise the

MAYOR OF LONDON

negative effects on Londoners, including those with asthma and other respiratory conditions. The GLA and GLA Group organisations have been working together to deliver the Mayor's air quality policies, which include installing Breathe London sensors, implementing School Streets and introducing and expanding the Ultra Low Emission Zone. These policies and interventions have led to dramatic improvements in London's air quality, particularly in central and inner London.

Analysis by Imperial College London found that the rapid improvement in air pollution levels has reduced the number of hospital admissions for asthma and serious lung conditions by 30 per cent – from 2,450 (2014-2016) to 1,700 (2017-2019).

Alongside efforts to tackle air pollution, the Mayor is also continuing to support the work of partners across the system. This includes endorsing the Healthy London Partnership's annual #AskAboutAsthma campaign.

Recommendation 6

The Mayor should ensure that the Committee is updated on the work of the London Drugs Forum, and that the Health Committee's Reducing Drug Deaths in London report is presented to them for their feedback.

[Information about the LDF](#) and notes from meetings are now available online.

An item on drug related deaths was brought to the LDF in May. The distinct topics covered by the Health Committee's Reducing Drug Deaths in London report, including drug checking, naloxone, etc, are being covered through the LDF's agenda forward plan.

Recommendation 7

The Mayor should explore expanding the HIV prevention campaign Do it London through additional advertising opportunities on the TfL estate, in conjunction and with the support of the Terrence Higgins Trust.

The "Do It London" campaign is funded by London boroughs and the City of London as part of the London HIV Prevention Programme. This campaign has seen information about HIV prevention and testing posted across the TfL network. I would welcome the Terrence Higgins Trust getting in touch directly with the host commissioner, London Borough of Lambeth, to partner with them on this worthwhile campaign.

City Hall has very limited allocated space on the TfL network. Anyone seeking more [information about how to advertise or reach audiences](#) on the TfL network can get in touch directly. Additional information about how TfL makes decisions on advertising can also be found in a previous Mayoral response to [MQT 2022/4160](#).