



Dr Onkar Sahota AM
Chair of the Health Committee

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
(Sent by email)

5 March 2021

Dear Sadiq,

I am writing to you on the issue of long COVID and how it is impacting Londoners across our city. Long COVID refers to when the symptoms of COVID-19 last for weeks and months. The symptoms of long COVID include fatigue, breathlessness, anxiety and depression, palpitations, chest pain, joint or muscle pain and not being able to think straight or focus.¹ As more research emerges on long COVID, the list of symptoms is bound to get more extensive.

It is estimated that one in five people who have COVID-19 will experience long COVID. Up until 1 March 2021, 696,649 Londoners have tested positive for COVID-19 since the pandemic began.² That means, from our analysis, 139,330 Londoners have had or are experiencing long COVID. As COVID-19 continues to spread and the number of reports of long COVID is getting higher, our city must be prepared to treat those Londoners who are experiencing prolonged symptoms linked to this deadly virus, all of which are having a devastating impact on their quality of life.

As Mayor of London, your Health Inequalities Strategy commits you to working with the NHS to ensure that all Londoners have equal access to healthcare but there are still gaps in our health services that need addressing. Data published by our Committee in December 2020 revealed trends where more ethnically diverse and deprived boroughs have lower GP satisfaction and higher COVID-

¹ British Heart Foundation - <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/news/coronavirus-and-your-health/long-covid>

² <https://www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/coronavirus-covid-19-numbers-london>

19 deaths. As the boroughs get less diverse and deprived, GP experiences and COVID-19 death rates improve. We know that COVID-19 has not affected all Londoners equally. BAME Londoners and the most disadvantaged Londoners have experienced a far higher likelihood of illness and death from the disease. If the current COVID-19 trends are anything to go by, the effects of long COVID will not be distributed equally across our city.

In light of these new figures, please could you outline to our Committee what you are doing as Mayor of London, through the Health Inequalities Strategy and working with the London Health Board, to support all Londoners who are experiencing the life-changing symptoms of long COVID.

I would be grateful to receive a response to our findings and recommendations by 17 March 2021. Please send your response by email to the Committee's clerk, Lauren Harvey (Lauren.Harvey@london.gov.uk).

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Onkar Sahota', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM
Chair of the Health Committee