



BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS: MAKING LONDON MORE INCLUSIVE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

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Setting the scene

Disabled people face significantly larger social and health inequalities than people without disabilities. The odds are often stacked against disabled people; research shows they are more likely to be unemployed¹, a victim of crime², in poverty³ or have a mental health condition⁴ than non-disabled people. In addition to this, it is estimated that living costs on average are £583 more per month for disabled people⁵. In spite of these challenges, disabled people remain a vital and valued part of our society, for example, a much higher proportion of disabled people aged 16 years and over in England engage in civic participation than non-disabled people⁶. It is paramount that we do all we can to support disabled people and include them in our policy-making processes.

It is estimated that there are 14.1 million disabled people in the UK⁷, with at least 1.3 million calling London home. London is also a place where, before the pandemic, 2 million people would travel into the city daily – many of whom may have a disability. It is clear that disabled Londoners must be included when formulating public policy decisions in our city and therefore the Mayor of London has a huge role to play in making London more inclusive and accessible for disabled people. There are of course a huge range of different disabilities and, as such, a one-size fits all approach is rarely appropriate. Support for different disabled groups needs to be tailored and genuine consideration must be given to their needs when decisions are made, rather than simply using tick box exercises.

Although we are told that the impact on disabled Londoners is a consideration with mayoral policy making, sadly the reality has often been far from it, with the needs of disabled Londoners often not being addressed or simply being an afterthought. The COVID-19 pandemic has widened health inequalities faced by many Londoners and has exposed the existing health inequalities that disabled Londoners face. The Mayor of London has a limited remit when it comes to health policy but he has a clear duty to drive down health inequalities in London. It is therefore incumbent on him to do all he can to help support disabled people in our city. The Mayor has claimed to pursue a “*health in all policies approach*”⁸ where “*the GLA will consider health and health inequalities in everything it does*” but there have been many cases where the Mayor has failed to

¹ A08: Labour market status of disabled people, Office for National Statistics, 23/2/21, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusofdisabledpeoplea08>

² Disability and Crime, UK:2019, Office for National Statistics, 2/12/19, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/bulletins/disabilityandcrimeuk/2019>

³ Nearly Half of everyone in poverty is either a disabled person or lives with a disabled person, Disability Rights UK, 7/2/20, <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2020/february/nearly-half-everyone-poverty-either-disabled-person-or-lives-disabled-person#:~:text=Poverty%20is%20especially%20high%20among,face%20barriers%20to%20paid%20work.>

⁴ Mental Health Statistics: Physical Health Conditions, Mental Health Foundation, <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-physical-health-conditions#:~:text=People%20with%20a%20physical%20disability,experience%20a%20physical%20health%20problem.>

⁵ Disability Price Tag, Scope, 2019, <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/extra-costs/disability-price-tag/>

⁶ Community Life Survey 2019/20, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 14/7/20, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-201920>

⁷ Family Resources Survey 2018/29, Department for Work and Pensions, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874507/family-resources-survey-2018-19.pdf

⁸ The London Health Inequalities Strategy, September 2018, p31, https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/health_strategy_2018_low_res_fa1.pdf

deliver joined-up policy making and really address the needs of disabled Londoners.

This report will highlight some of the issues disabled Londoners have faced during this mayoralty and examine the Mayor's record in supporting and including disabled Londoners. From this, we will recommend some simple actions the Mayor can take now to help break down barriers for disabled people in London and build a more inclusive city.

Barriers for disabled people in London

Disabled people are an integral part of our city and must be fully included in all sections of society. To help disabled people lead free and fulfilling lives, it is vital that they are thoroughly and genuinely involved in policy-making decisions. London is the best city in the world – it is truly unique. London's uniqueness is what makes London so great, but it also presents exclusive challenges for disabled people. As the leader of our city, the Mayor must do all he can to break down barriers across the board for disabled people – particularly given his *"health in all policies approach"*⁹. Whether it is housing, transport, policing and crime, economy or health, the Mayor must do all he can to consider the impact of his policies on disabled people.

Transport

London has a huge reliance on public transport, as do many disabled people. It is therefore obvious that transport is a policy area which can make a huge difference to the lives of disabled people. When executed properly, transport can have a profoundly positive impact, but when implemented negligently, it can have devastating impacts. One of the simplest but most effective ways of ensuring that the impact on disabled people is considered is by including and engaging with them. Despite the simplicity of this, it is something that is too often neglected and the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed this.

Transport For All's *Pave the Way* report which investigated the impact of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) on disabled people, found that there were *"failures with the consultation process used to collect resident feedback, as well as with Equality Impact Assessments."*¹⁰ Their study also showed that *"72% of participants reported issues with how changes have been communicated, including the lack of information provided, its quality or accessibility, and not receiving a warning before an LTN is installed."*¹¹ And as a result, disabled people *"don't feel listened to by policy makers, or that they have opportunities to share their views."*¹² This could have been easily avoided.

⁹ The London Health Inequalities Strategy, September 2018, p31, https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/health_strategy_2018_low_res_fa1.pdf

¹⁰ *Pave the Way*, Transport for All, January 2021, p6, <https://www.transportforall.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Pave-The-Way-full-report.pdf>

¹¹ *Pave the Way*, Transport for All, January 2021, p6, <https://www.transportforall.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Pave-The-Way-full-report.pdf>

¹² *Pave the Way*, Transport for All, January 2021, p6, <https://www.transportforall.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Pave-The-Way-full-report.pdf>

Inclusion London, an organisation which supports Deaf and Disabled people's groups in London, recently published a report titled *Locked Down and Abandoned*. It reported that 36% of Disabled people responding to their survey said changes to roads and pavements during the pandemic created additional barriers for them.¹³ The report also said "These changes reduced access mainly because they were introduced without engaging with Disabled people or thoroughly considering our needs and the impact on Disabled people."

This long-running issue concerning rapid changes to roads and pavements, part of TfL's Streetspace programme, and its lack of consultation further emphasises the need for transport policy to thoroughly include disabled people, as well as for consultation to be improved. As the Mayor is responsible for Transport for London, the buck stops with him and he must address this urgently.

Employment

Disabled people face huge inequalities when it comes to employment. London is home to over a million businesses and its economy accounts for almost a quarter of UK's total GDP. London is the beating heart of the UK's economy, but sadly, disabled Londoners face severe challenges when it comes to employment. Our economy needs to work for everyone. My colleague Gareth Bacon AM's October 2018 report *Employ-ability: The disability employment gap in London*¹⁴, and the London Assembly Economy Committee's March 2019 report *Tackling London's disability employment gap*¹⁵, both highlighted London's shocking employment gap and made recommendations to the Mayor on how to take action. Disappointingly, not enough has been done.

Both reports showed that only around half of disabled Londoners were in work and that the employment gap between disabled Londoners and Londoners without a disability remained persistent, at around 27 per cent.¹⁶ Both reports highlighted that many disabled Londoners lacked the qualifications necessary to gain employment in London and recommended that the Mayor should set up a Disability Employment Taskforce or working group. The Mayor's reply to the Economy Committee's report stated that he works to address closing the disability employment gap through his Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group.¹⁷

Sadly, the latest figures show that the disability pay gap in London is 14%, which is higher than the 12% national average.¹⁸ The fact that the disability pay gap in London has remained broadly unchanged during Khan's mayoralty clearly shows the measures he currently has in place are not doing enough. It also further highlights the need to set up a Disability Employment Taskforce or working group as recommended by both reports.

¹³ *Locked Down and Abandoned*, Inclusion London, February 2021, p32, <https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/FINAL-Locked-Down-and-Abandoned-report-PDF.pdf>

¹⁴ *Employ-ability: The disability employment gap in London*, GLA Conservatives, Gareth Bacon, October 2018, https://bceec56b-1210-4f10-95fb-8537ce6eebd5.filesusr.com/ugd/047866_9761850c6c694d19973308bfb02f661f.pdf

¹⁵ *Tackling London's disability employment gap*, London Assembly Economy Committee, March 2019, <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/london-assembly/london-assembly-publications/tackling-londons-disability-employment-gap>

¹⁶ [Tackling London's disability employment gap](https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayor-replies-to-economy-committee-report), London.gov.uk

¹⁷ *Mayor's reply to Tackling London's disability employment gap*

¹⁸ *Disability Pay Gaps in London*, London Datastore, Greater London Authority, <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/disability-pay-gaps>

It is also clear that some groups of disabled people are also left worse off than other groups when it comes to the pay gap. Disabled employees with a mental impairment had the largest pay gap at 18.6%, while for those with a physical impairment the pay gap was 9.7% and those with other impairments had the narrowest gap, at 7.4%.¹⁹ Although all disabled people should be supported it highlights yet again that there are many different disabilities with different needs, and as such we need flexible systems in place to meet the relevant need and support level.

Tourism & visitors

Last year it was reported to me on several occasions by visitors from England but outside of London that they have had their disabled bus passes wrongly refused when visiting London. This is a problem seemingly not faced when visiting other parts of England. This does not send a positive or welcoming message to disabled visitors to our city, despite the Mayor's insistence that "*London is Open*". When I asked the Mayor for data on how many times these refusals had taken place, he responded to say that TfL does not store such data.²⁰ Although it is understandable to some degree that TfL would not store data at this level, it identifies a clear need for them to review what data is held. Improving data collection on incidents such as this could help identify inequalities disabled people face in our city.

Making London more accessible and inclusive for disabled people will be a process over time, with different areas of London becoming more accessible at different stages. Whether it is accessible tube stations coming on stream or different businesses introducing disabled facilities, in the process of making London more accessible, some areas will be ahead of others. A key initiative that could be vital for disabled people is the introduction of a platform to map out the wide array of disability services and accessible areas across London. This would not only help disabled Londoners but help disabled visitors to our city, making their stay more inclusive and accessible; really showing that London is open. This is something we have previously called for specifically for autistic people in my colleague Andrew Boff AM's 2019 report *The Full Spectrum: Making London Autism Friendly*²¹. It could be hugely beneficial to expand such an initiative to all disabled groups and this is something the Mayor should seriously consider beginning work on in conjunction with London Boroughs, businesses and disability groups.

¹⁹ *Disability pay gaps in the UK: 2018*, Office for National Statistics, 2/12/19 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/disabilitypaygapsintheuk/2018>

²⁰ *Disabled Person's Bus Pass Refusal*, Mayor's Question Time, Susan Hall AM, 19/11/20, <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2020/4176>

²¹ *The Full Spectrum: Making London Autism Friendly*, GLA Conservatives, Andrew Boff AM, August 2019, https://bceec56b-1210-4f10-95fb-8537ce6eebd5.filesusr.com/ugd/047866_e208b5eeb1364a3e988214f47016fe93.pdf

The Mayor's record

As well as it being incumbent on the Mayor to genuinely include disabled people in the decision making process and consider the impact of his policies on them, he also made a number of commitments in his manifesto and mayoral strategies which directly impact disabled Londoners. Although any action to help disabled Londoners is welcome, it is clear that there are many instances where the Mayor has not done enough. Some pledges have fallen short and there have been instances where disabled people have not been included or were sadly just an afterthought. The Mayor should be held accountable for his record over his term and we will continue to push him on his broken commitments and failed policies.

Transport

In 2016, Sadiq Khan pledged, if elected, to make London a fairer, more open and accessible city to all. He promised to ensure London's transport system was accessible to all users and committed to a more ambitious approach to step-free access in London Underground stations²². The Mayor's Transport Strategy in 2018 proposed that 40% of London Underground stations would be accessible by 2022²³.

An accessible transport system is needed to allow disabled Londoners a better chance to travel and live independently across London. Every day, 1.3 million journeys are made in London by people with disabilities. TfL analysis suggests that journeys by step-free routes take about 15 per cent longer than the quickest route on average across London²⁴.

The reality is that the Mayor has only increased accessibility at London Underground stations by 5%, with 13 London Underground stations made step free since 2016. To reach the 40% target, the Mayor would need to double the number of London Underground stations he has made step free over 5 years in less than 1 year. It is clear that the Mayor has not done enough to deliver and must work with TfL to rapidly accelerate this rollout.

Housing

Another area where the Mayor pledged to support disabled Londoners is through his 10% commitment of new homes being wheelchair accessible²⁵. Affordable wheelchair accessible homes play an incredibly important role in our society and allow for independent living amongst disabled and less mobile groups. With the right home, a disabled and less mobile Londoner can live their life in a comfortable environment, that is best suited to their needs and

²² Sadiq Khan: A manifesto for all Londoners, Sadiq Khan, 2016, p34, http://london.laboursites.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/02/x160668_Sadiq_Khan_Manifesto.pdf

²³ Mayor's Transport Strategy, Mayor of London, March 2018, p146, <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mayors-transport-strategy-2018.pdf>

²⁴ Investing in an Accessible Transport Network, Mayor of London, <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/transport/improving-londons-roads/investing-accessible-transport-network>

²⁵ Sadiq Khan: A manifesto for all Londoners, Sadiq Khan, 2016, p57 http://london.laboursites.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/02/x160668_Sadiq_Khan_Manifesto.pdf

requirements. A home that is not suitable can add to the struggles already identified throughout this report and be detrimental to the mental and physical wellbeing of the individual.

The truth is that the Mayor is under delivering on his promise to Londoners. The Mayor started with 9% of new homes being wheelchair accessible in 2016/17. This dropped to just 7% in 2017/18, and rose again to 9% in 2018/19. The Mayor has not hit his manifesto pledge once since coming to office, nor has he hit the 10% requirement in the London Plan.

Engagement & inclusion

When it comes to engaging with disabled groups, Khan's 2016 Manifesto pledged to have "genuine engagement between the Mayor's office and people with disabilities."²⁶ It is vital that the Mayor sticks to this promise, giving disabled groups a seat at the table to ensure that key decisions consider their needs.

The reality, however, has been very different. The Mayor left disabled groups out of the London Recovery Board which he co-chairs and was set up almost 5 years after coming to office. A disabled campaigner said that "disabled people who live in, work or visit London should be disappointed in this awful oversight which excludes us from the long-term recovery plans being formulated for this city... to omit the voices of disabled people from the work of the Recovery Board sends yet another signal that disabled people just don't matter"²⁷. It took my colleague Andrew Boff AM, to raise this issue with the Mayor for it to be rectified²⁸. But when quizzed further on this, the Mayor bizarrely blamed his predecessor whose term ended in May 2016 – 4 years before the Recovery Board was set up – demonstrating a huge refusal to take responsibility.²⁹ These issues with under-representation clearly stem from the top, as despite Khan having 10 Deputy Mayors, not one of them is listed on the website as having responsibility for including and supporting disabled Londoners.

Further examples of the Mayor saying one thing and doing the opposite can be seen in the LTN fiasco. Kirsty Hoyle, Chief Executive of Transport for All, said that "this heated and divisive debate has seen disabled people being spoken for, not to... this has added to the growing frustration, compounded by the lack of engagement and consultation, that disabled people's concerns are not heard".³⁰ Transport for All have also said an issue with streetscape schemes is that "Disabled voices are not present in decision making"³¹. This yet again shows how policy issues are too often created by simply not engaging with those who will be most impacted. Disabled people and groups rightly feel left out by the Mayor

²⁶ Sadiq Khan: A manifesto for all Londoners, Sadiq Khan, 2016, p57, http://london.laboursites.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/02/x160668_Sadiq_Khan_Manifesto.pdf

²⁷ Mayor defends failure to include disabled people in covid recovery board, Disability News Service, 17th September, 2020, <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/mayor-defends-failure-to-include-disabled-people-in-covid-recovery-board/>

²⁸ Access to Public Transport for Disabled people. (Supplementary) [1], Mayor's Question Time, Andrew Boff AM, 19/11/20, <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2020/3784-0>

²⁹ Oral Update to the Mayor's Report (Supplementary) [3], Mayor's Question Time, Andrew Boff AM, 21/1/21, <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2021/0393-2>

³⁰ Low-traffic schemes have ignored disabled residents, says new research, Disability News Service, 28th January 2021, <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/low-traffic-schemes-have-ignored-disabled-residents-says-new-research/>

³¹ Pave the Way, Transport for All, January 2021, <https://www.transportforall.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Pave-The-Way-full-report.pdf>

as despite promising to have “genuine engagement” the opposite has happened, with these groups being left out and unheard.

At the London Assembly Plenary meeting in September, the Deputy Mayor for Transport shockingly refused to say whether TfL had considered the impact of the Bishopsgate Streetspace scheme on the disabled after concerns were raised about the scheme’s detrimental impact on disabled people’s travel³². Following this, in January, the High Court ruled the scheme to be “unlawful” with Justice Lange adding “the needs of people with protected characteristics, including the elderly or disabled”, were “not considered” when the plans were put in place.³³ This landmark decision highlighted gross negligence from TfL and the Mayor. It is clear that the Mayor must improve the way consultations are carried out in future as the current system is simply not good enough and has created costly and damaging mistakes.

Policing & crime

Sadiq Khan committed in his manifesto that he would “direct the Met to adopt a strict zero tolerance approach to hate crime – be it on the basis of someone’s age, sexuality, gender, religion, race, nationality or disability – and ensure officers have the resources and training they need”³⁴. It is pivotal that the Mayor tackles hate crime in London. It is an abhorrent crime, that has no place in our society today. No group in our society should face hate crime. Unfortunately, despite a promise to tackle hate crime, the opposite has happened over Khan’s term. Disability hate crime has soared 102% from 2015 to 2020³⁵. Inclusion London reported this increase and said that the groups they support have seen a rise in verbal abuse, spitting and online hate crimes, particularly throughout the pandemic³⁶. The Mayor promised to act, but he has clearly failed, as disability hate crime continues to spiral out of control. London needs a plan to tackle hate crime fast.

Domestic abuse is another crime where disabled people are sadly more likely to be victims. It was reported that around 1 in 7 disabled people aged 16 to 59 years experienced some form of domestic abuse in the last year in England and Wales, this compares to 1 in 20 for non-disabled people of the same age. ³⁷

³² London Assembly Plenary, Thursday 10th September 2020, pp 36-39, <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/londonassembly/meetings/documents/s84918/Minutes%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Transcript%20QA.pdf>

³³ High Court Rules TfL’s ‘Streetspace’ plan unlawful, CityAM, 20/1/21, <https://www.cityam.com/high-court-rules-tfls-streetspace-plan-unlawful/>

³⁴ Sadiq Khan: A manifesto for all Londoners, Sadiq Khan, 2016, p43, http://london.laboursites.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/02/x160668_Sadiq_Khan_Manifesto.pdf

³⁵ Hate Crime Dashboard, Disability Hate Crime filtered January 2015 – January 2021, Met Police, <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/hate-crime-dashboard/>

³⁶ Inclusion London Briefing - Disability Hate Crime, Inclusion London, 16/7/2020, <https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/campaigns-and-policy/facts-and-information/hate-crime/inclusion-london-briefing-disability-hate-crime/>

³⁷ Disability and Crime, Office for National Statistics, 18/2/21, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/datasets/disabilityandcrime>

Conclusion and recommendations

This report gives a snapshot of some of the issues disabled Londoners face and the Mayor of London's record in supporting and including them. There is a lot to be done across different levels of government to ensure disabled people are sufficiently supported and included, but it is clear there has not been enough progress in London and disabled people have fallen through the gaps. The Mayor must take action now.

Making London fully accessible and inclusive to all people with disabilities will be a process that takes time but there are still some immediate steps the Mayor can take now to work towards improving this. We therefore recommend that the Mayor should:

Recommendation 1: Work with boroughs, disability groups and businesses across London to establish a platform where disabled people can find disabled accessible venues and areas to help make London more accessible and inclusive for disabled people.

Recommendation 2: Review the membership of the Mayor's advisory boards and panels to identify any gaps where disabled people are being under-represented.

Recommendation 3: Commit to including people with disabilities in London's recovery plans with specific considerations given to the impact on disabled Londoners.

Recommendation 4: Review and identify gaps in the Mayor's stakeholder engagement lists to ensure disabled groups and advocacy groups are sufficiently consulted on key decisions.

Recommendation 5: Commit to ensuring all future Mayoral Strategies genuinely consider their impact on disabled Londoners.

Recommendation 6: Review and improve what data is collected by the GLA group on disabled people to help fight the inequalities they face.

Recommendation 7: Set up a disability employment taskforce to help address the disability employment and pay gaps in London - which are higher than the national average.

Recommendation 8: Work with disability groups to set out an achievable action plan to review and identify why disability hate crime has risen across London and take action to drive cases down.

Recommendation 9: Instruct TfL to review its step-free access rollout to identify where this can be accelerated across the London Underground Network.



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