



## **ADPH London consultation response to the Mayor's Draft Environment Strategy**

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This response is from the London regional network of the national Association of Directors of Public Health, which seeks to improve and protect health. The ADPH London programme brings together Directors of Public Health and their teams to work together to address issues which can either only be successfully tackled on a pan-London basis and/or which enhance the ability of boroughs to meet their responsibilities locally, for example through delivering efficiencies, sharing of best practice, reducing duplication, and improving coordination of related work.

Further information on the network, including current priorities, is available here <http://adph.org.uk/networks/london/>

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the Mayor's draft Environment strategy. Our response does not attempt to provide a comprehensive public health response, but rather pulls together our thoughts on how the strategy can most effectively;

- Improve public health outcomes in London
- Assist Councils in developing high value approaches to support their resident's health and wellbeing
- Reduce demand on health and social care services

### **ADPH London welcomes and supports the Mayor's Environment strategy – a strategy focused on the health of Londoners now and into the future.**

The environmental determinants of health are well recognised and the environments in which people live, work, play, learn and grow have the potential to strongly promote health and reduce inequalities. The design and function of the urban environment, through improvements in access to green and open space and controlling exposure to air pollution, have a significant role in establishing the health and wellbeing of both current and future populations.

London can be a city that promotes the health and wellbeing of all through creating an environment in which everyone can flourish. To ensure its potential is realised, a health and equity approach, guided by evidence is required. We therefore welcome the Mayor's Environment Strategy and its overarching focus on health. The strategy recognises the need for policies and actions that are health-focused and that consider the implications of climate change and the need for sustainability, an approach that we support strongly. To ensure the strategy translates to positive outcomes and protects against creating and/or exacerbating urban social and health inequalities, health and equity will need to remain core objectives across all sectors.



Londoners' mental and physical health and well-being are significantly shaped by their experience of the city's environment. As such, creating an environment that facilitates a better quality of life for all Londoners is of utmost importance.

Exposure to harmful levels of air pollution contributes considerably to premature deaths in our city, with long-term exposure responsible for thousands of early deaths each year. Poor air quality also discourages people from walking and cycling around the city at a time when rates of physical inactivity, sedentary behaviour and obesity are at an all-time high. To address these health-related issues, strong leadership and a strategic approach which acts on all the different levers available are required. In this, we strongly support the Mayor in his efforts to improve London's air quality through the environment and transport strategy.

Beyond tackling air pollution, creating a cleaner and greener London has the potential to have significant other beneficial impacts on the health of our population. An appealing and accessible environment can create a positive experience for all Londoners, increasing the likelihood of individuals wanting to be outside, to be active and to enjoy parks, open spaces and everyday life. The more positive an experience that Londoners have of their city the more likely people are to go out to enjoy, explore and benefit from it and to connect with others. The numerous benefits on both the mood and mental wellbeing of our population and the cumulative benefits this would have for the city as a whole means we strongly support this aim and the strategies in place to this end.

A thorough environmental plan also allows for greater opportunities to make London more inclusive and welcoming to all people - including children and young people. A more accessible, healthy and enjoyable environment supports positive and healthy child development by opening avenues and opportunities for children to play, be active and explore in areas that would previously have been prohibited.

Overall, there are numerous benefits to making the city more environmentally friendly, including helping to alleviate health inequalities across the capital. This, in turn, will positively impact on the most prevalent health conditions in our city, improving mental health, reducing obesity rates, improving air quality and increasing physical activity.

Whilst we strongly support the Draft Environment Strategy, we believe that it can be further strengthened by additional consideration given to:

**Transport Strategy & System:** London's transport system has a significant impact on our city's environment and air quality. The Healthy Streets Approach, as presented in the draft Transport strategy represents a significant opportunity to establish a shift away from a car-dominant transport system and environment by prioritising walking, cycling and public transport. The positive environmental and public health impacts of such a shift are vast and we ask the Mayor to ensure there is strong alignment across both, these strategies, and the London Plan and Health Inequalities strategy, to achieve a clear and consistent message to Londoners and the system.

**Multi-sector influence:** With the majority of London's environment privately owned, the role of the private sector in driving improvements cannot be under-estimated. The success of the Environment strategy will, to a large part, be decided by the extent to which the Mayor is able to engage and influence the private sector and businesses to adopt the strategy's vision to make London cleaner, greener and ready for the future. We strongly support the Mayor in his efforts to do so and think that



the strategy would be further enhanced by focusing on the required multi-sector approach and the Mayor's plans to influence legislation and wider sectors to achieve the strategy's vision.

**Safety:** The potential of a cleaner and greener London will only be realised if people feel safe and able to move around the city and enjoy the space and infrastructure it has to offer. With an increase in crime and anti-social behaviour on the streets of London, and the presence of knife and gang crime, it is vital that the Mayor continues to prioritise the safety of Londoner's and that this is emphasised in the strategy. Whilst increasing green space is valuable, its full benefits will only be realised if it is well lit and people feel it is a safe place to be. We ask the Mayor to ensure that the strategy clearly acknowledges the importance of safety in creating a positive environment for our city and outlines the measures that will be put in place to address this.

To ensure that the strategy becomes a reality and that meaningful impacts on health outcomes and inequalities are achieved, we strongly recommend that the Mayor:

1. Provides **ongoing support to boroughs** and local communities to implement the strategy and identify the interventions that will have the greatest impact at local level.
2. Establishes **clear channels of accountability and governance** for achieving the strategy's goals, indicators and time-scales for implementation.
3. Ensures **equity and fairness** remain at the centre of all strategy initiatives.
4. Calls upon a **multi-sector approach** to implement and embed the strategy and the Healthy Streets agenda. Partnership working across all sectors, from health, planning and development to education and business, and through the established borough led Healthy Places Network, is vital to maximise the impact of the strategy.
5. Implements a thorough **evaluation and development process** to demonstrate impact and identify areas for improvement.
6. Establishes a widely disseminated and clear **communication** strategy to share his vision with all Londoners, articulating the benefits to their lives, their health and how they experience and interact with their city.

Finally, we encourage the Mayor to do all he can to lobby central government and other city-leaders to adopt the principles of the Environment strategy and share learning across the nation so that everyone in the UK can benefit from breathing clean air, being active and enjoying the places where they live, work, play and grow.