*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\*\*\*EMBARGOED 0001 Wednesday 15th October\*\*\*\*\**

**London faces public health emergency**

* Mayor’s London Health Commission calls for Trafalgar Square, Parliament Square and 20,000 acres of parks in the capital to go smoke free
* Raft of other measures to tackle obesity, exercise, and drinking to make London a “healthier, slimmer, fitter, city”
* Chief Medical Officer, Professor Sally Davies, backs the smoke free park plan saying it will stop “role modelling in front of children”
* Ex-New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg weighs in, hailing the plan as a “major achievement” and that he is “looking forward to visiting London’s smoke free parks and squares”

A radical new plan to make London’s parks as well as Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square smoke free will be unveiled by pioneering surgeon and former health minister Lord Darzi today.

The plan is part of a major new drive that aims to make London the healthiest major global city – cities with over 5 million inhabitants – within 10 years.

Darzi – a cancer surgeon at St. Mary’s Hospital – was appointed by Boris Johnson to chair the London Health Commission. Over the past year, Darzi has led a panel of experts and involved 15,000 in developing the plan, called *“Better Health for London”*.

It proposes a raft of measures, unprecedented in their scope, to combat the threats posed by tobacco, alcohol, obesity, lack of exercise and pollution which harm millions. Together the proposals amount to the biggest public health drive in the world.

Around 1.2 million Londoners still smoke, causing 8,400 early deaths each year. The Commission found that 67 London schoolchildren take up the habit every day.

The smoke free plan would see the mayor use his byelaw powers over Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square, and his influence over the Royal Parks, the Board of which he appoints. Local councils would pass similar byelaws for their parks and open spaces. London has 20,000 acres of parks and open space, covering 40% of the city – more than any other capital in the world.

The London plan may form a blueprint for Britain. In his letter to the Mayor Lord Darzi says: “The ideas and proposals in this report have been developed for London. Yet they could just as easily apply to other big cities in the UK – London should be a leader, not an exception.”

Michael Bloomberg, 108th Mayor of New York City, commented:

“Breathing tobacco smoke – whether indoors or outdoors – is harmful to your health. That’s why we made Central Park – and all of New York City’s parks and beaches – smoke free, along with all indoor workplaces. That helped us extend life expectancy by nearly three years over my time as mayor.

London’s new initiative would be a major achievement, because no other capital city boasts so much parkland. London’s plan will help prevent children from picking up the habit, discourage adults from smoking, and improve the health of children and families.

I look forward to visiting London’s smoke free parks and squares, and I’m certain millions of others will as well – as they have here in New York.”

Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Sally Davies, emphasised the role modelling effect of adults smoking in front of children:

“We all know smoking is bad for health. So I welcome any measures to reduce both active smoking and its role modelling in front of children.”

Darzi points out that two classrooms full of schoolchildren take up smoking every day. Nearly three-quarters of Londoners strongly support or are neutral to the proposed smoke free measure.

“Each year, more and more Londoners are choosing to quit smoking, improving and lengthening their lives. We need to help more Londoners to do the same. After all, smoking is still the leading cause of avoidable deaths – every year, more than 8,000 Londoners die prematurely from tobacco.

Hundreds of children take up smoking every week – two classrooms full a day – with advertising outlawed they do so inspired by the adults that they see. Once they start, they continue, since cigarettes are more powerfully addictive than narcotics. It’s little surprise that in places where more adults smoke, more children begin smoking too.

Just as smokers’ lungs are polluted, the lungs of our city – our parks and green spaces – are polluted by smoking. London should lead the way for Britain, and the Mayor should lead the way for London by acting to make our public spaces smoke free.

The Mayor should use his byelaw powers to make Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square smoke free. It would be a powerful message for the iconic centre of our city and the political heart of our country to become smoke free. What better way to show our city’s ambition to be the healthiest major global city?

A smoke free London will be better for us all. A better example for children. Fewer opportunities for smokers to smoke. Less litter. More green and more pleasant places for us to come together for better health.”

Lord Darzi added:

“As a cancer surgeon working in the NHS, I see the terrible consequences for smokers and their families. We must do more to help people quit and discourage kids from taking it up. The 2007 legislation tackled passive smoking. We now need to do more to help smokers to kick the habit”

The plan has been welcomed by experts and campaigners.

Professor Robert West, Director of Tobacco Studies at University College London, said:

"I would expect it to save lives by reducing reminders of smoking in those who are trying to quit and providing more incentive to stop. I hope that most smokers would see this as a positive step and support it.”

Deborah Arnott, Chief Executive of anti-smoking campaign group ASH said:

“We are delighted by the Commission’s plan for smoking and tobacco control in London. We hope that the Mayor will implement it in full and announce that it will be a top priority for him. London needs to do more to tackle smoking, which is the major cause of preventable premature death in the Capital.”

In the “Better Health for London” report, Lord Darzi will set out a further 5 steps to a healthier, slimmer, fitter city:

1. **Mandatory traffic-light labelling on restaurant menus**. All chains with more than 15 outlets would be required to show traffic-light labelling on their menus to help Londoners make healthier choices.
2. **Oyster card discounts for commuters who walk to work**. The scheme – financed by employers – would reward commuters who walk the last mile into work and the first mile home with discounts.
3. **Restrictions on junk food outlets near schools**. New planning guidance to prevent new junk food outlets opening within 400m of schools.
4. **Pilots for a minimum price for alcohol**. The plan would support Boroughs afflicted by problem drinking to use their licensing powers to set a minimum 50p per unit price.
5. **Speeding up air quality measures**. Measures to reduce pollution to be accelerated to save lives in the capital.

The report says a **London Health Commissioner** should be appointed reporting to the Mayor to drive through the necessary change.

Lord Darzi said:

“Londoners’ waistlines are expanding, since we eat too much and exercise too little. More than a million Londoners still smoke, and there is significant harm from problem drinking. Too many children get off to too poor a start in life. We can do better: the healthiest choice isn’t always easy and isn’t always obvious. The goal is to make each of those millions of individual decisions that bit easier.”

“A truly great global city is a healthy city. London aspires to be the world’s healthiest major global city. That means a city that helps its people to make healthier choices, it means a city that focuses on improving the health of the most vulnerable and it means providing consistently excellent care for people when they need it.”

Lord Darzi found:

* *1.2 million Londoners smoke, killing 8,000 people a year*. Moreover, 67 London schoolchildren start smoking every day, inspired by the adults that they see.
* *Half of all adults in London – 3.8 million people – are obese or overweight*. London now has more obese and overweight people than New York, Sydney, Sao Paolo, Madrid, Toronto, and Paris.
* *London has the highest rate of obese or overweight schoolchildren of any peer city in the world*. By the end of primary school, nearly a third of kids are obese or overweight.
* *Just 13% of Londoners walk or cycle to work or school*. This is despite around half living close to their schools or workplaces.
* *Pollution is killing 4,200 Londoners a year*. New stats show that 7% of deaths in the capital are directly related to poor air quality.
* *London employers are losing £1.1 billion from sickness absence due to stress, anxiety and depression*. London employers make minimal investments in health compared to the US where typical big employers invest £500 in health and incentive schemes.
* *Nearly 500,000 hospital admissions are related to excessive alcohol consumption*. Problem drinking is particularly acute in a small number of London boroughs putting big strains on the NHS.
* *1 in 3 GP practices are inaccessible for disabled people, and ¾ need rebuild or repair.* Shambolic estate management has left London’s GP practices in disgraceful states of repair.

The report is upbeat on London’s ambitions. In his letter to the Mayor Lord Darzi said:

“The ideas and proposals in this report have been developed for London. Yet they could just as easily apply to other big cities in the UK – London should be a leader, not an exception.

I passionately believe that Britain’s local and city governments can become the defining locus for better health.”

**BACKGROUND NOTES: SMOKE FREE LONDON**

*Key facts*

* 1.2 million Londoners – 18% – are smokers
* Smoking is the #1 cause of preventable deaths in London, sending 8,000 Londoners to early graves each year
* 67 London children start smoking each day; starting smoking earlier in life is particularly damaging to the cardiovascular system
* The top 3 reasons people cite for trying to give up are 1) the impact on their own health 2) the financial cost to them 3) the impact on children
* 38% of London is parks and other green spaces – that’s equivalent to around 20,000 football pitches
* The Mayor sets the byelaws for Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square; appoints the Board of the Royal Parks; and can influence London’s councils
* Expert analysis from the Commission suggests that it would contribute to a fall in smoking prevalence from 18% to 16%, by encouraging more people to quit and reducing the numbers of children who start smoking
* The lifetime value for the capital of this reduction in smoking is estimated to be between £210m and £590m, helping the NHS to financial sustainability

*Enforcement*

* Breach of byelaws is a civil offence, with each authority able to set a fine
* The Commission estimates that it would cost £6.5m implement over 5 years, including the cost of introducing new signage across parks and appointing compliance inspectors
* The 2007 smoke free legislation has a 98% compliance rate and is largely self-enforced

*Opinion*

* Nearly three-quarters of Londoners are either strongly supportive or neutral to the proposal:
  + Strongly support: 40%
  + Tend to support: 16%
  + Neither support nor oppose: 15%
  + Tend to oppose 8%
  + Strongly oppose 21%
* Strongly oppose is almost same percentage as smoking prevalence in London.

**BACKGROUND NOTES: OTHER MEASURES**

It sets 10 big ambitions for the next decade in the capital:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| # | Aspirations | Ambitions |
| 1 | Give all London’s children a healthy, happy start to life | Ensure all London’s children are school ready at age 5  Halve the number of children who are obese by the time they leave primary school and reverse the trend in those who are overweight |
| 2 | Get London fitter with better food, more exercise and healthier living | Boost the number of active Londoners to 80% by supporting them to walk, jog, run or cycle to school or work |
| 3 | Make work a healthy place to be in London | Gain 1.5 million working days a year by improving employee health and wellbeing in London |
| 4 | Help Londoners to kick unhealthy habits | Have the lowest smoking rate of any city over 5 million inhabitants |
| 5 | Care for the most mentally ill in London so they live longer, healthier lives | Reduce the gap in life expectancy between adults with severe and enduring mental illness and the rest of the population by 10% |
| 6 | Enable Londoners to do more to look after themselves | Increase the proportion of people who feel supported to manage their long-term condition to top quartile nationally |
| 7 | Every Londoner to be able to a GP when they need to and at a time that suits them | General Practice in London to be open 8am to 8pm and delivered in modern purpose-built/designed facilities |
| 8 | Create the best health and care services of any world city, throughout London and on every day | Have the lowest death rates in the world for the top three killers: cancer, heart diseases and respiratory illness; and close the gap in death rates between those admitted to hospital on weekdays and those admitted at the weekends |
| 9 | Fully engage and involve Londoners in the future health of their city | Year on year improvements in inpatient experience for trusts outside the top quintile nationally |
| 10 | Put London at the centre of the global revolution in digital health | Create 50,000 new jobs in the digital health sector |

**TACKLING OBESITY**

More than 3.5 million Londoners are obese or overweight. London has the highest rate of children that are obesity or overweight of any major global city.

Lord Darzi says:

“Good nutrition is the foundation of good health.

We need to help our children make healthy choices. All London councils should follow the lead of Waltham Forest, Barking and Dagenham, and Tower Hamlets by refusing permission for fast food outlets to open within 400m of schools. The Mayor should include this guidance in his London Plan.

We also need to help ourselves to make better choices. Concerted action is necessary by London councils to use licensing arrangements to require all chain restaurants and food outlets to include nutritional labelling on all menus.

There are 8,000 junk food outlets in London and their numbers are growing at 10% a year. A single meal typically provides 60% of daily calories.

73% of Londoners supported restrictions on junk food outlets near schools in the Commission’s poll.

**GET FIT LONDON**

Huge health benefits come from walking 10,000 steps a day, an extra two miles a day for the average Londoner. Workplace campaigns in Australia, Japan and the US, as well as the UK, have raised average steps per day from 4,000 to 10,000. The Commission says the NHS and Transport for London should establish a scheme, paid for by employers, under which employees tapping in or out with their Oyster or contactless card at least one mile from their registered office would collect points and be eligible for rewards.

**PROBLEM DRINKING**

There are 490 admissions to hospital for binge drinking every night in London. London boroughs which introduce a minimum price for alcohol of 50p per unit to deal with problem drinking should be supported, the commission says. Piloting this policy in just three London boroughs could save 215 hospital admissions a year, saving the NHS £1 million.

**AIR POLLUTION**

Londoners are also being put at risk by the quality of the air they breathe. The Commission heard that 4,200 Londoners die each year as a direct result of air pollution – 7 per cent of all deaths that occur in the capital. The Commission says planned initiatives on air quality must be accelerated to help save lives and improve the quality of life for all Londoners .

**LONDON’S NHS**

The Commission says the NHS offers care that is among the best in the world. But with the system under intense financial pressure, care needs to be made more personal and organised round patients and their needs rather than the system and its rules.

Lord Darzi calls for:

* £1 billion investment over five years to modernise GP surgeries, one third of which are “very poor” or “unacceptable “.
* Centres of excellence for cancer and heart disease.
* Unused land owned by the NHS to be sold off
* NHS hospital to provide affordable housing for NHS staff.
* New mums to be put in control of 12.5 per cent of the NHS payment for their care

Measures in the report will make savings and improve lives but they will not close the “yawning funding gap” faced by the NHS and social care. Lord Darzi says politicians must explain how they will meet the challenge for the decades ahead.

**\*\*\*\*\*NOTES TO EDITORS\*\*\*\*\***

Release is embargoed 0001 Wednesday 15th October

Mayor Boris Johnson and Lord Darzi will launch the report at City Hall at 12:30 on Wednesday

15th October

They will announce the commitment of all 15 of London’s professional football clubs to promote fan health

Interviews with Lord Darzi can be arranged by calling Una Carney on 07813 023740

For an embargoed copy of the full report, contact una.carney@nhs.net