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Dear Secretary of State,

PrEP Funding

I'm writing to you today to urge that the government funds PrEP (Pre-exposure prophylaxis) for all.

The Government's aim to eliminate new HIV infections by 2030 is something that is welcome - however without adequate funding it simply will not be achieved.

I represent a borough where we have a high number of at risk groups from HIV. PrEP offers a solution that would have been unimaginable at the height of the HIV crisis. We now have the means to protect at risk communities through the universal provision of PrEP. However, a lack of funding means people are still being unnecessarily infected every day.

The NHSE/PHE PrEP trial has been welcome in providing access to PrEP in England. However, the experience in Scotland, where PrEP is part of mainstream provision provides strong evidence that the places allocated in the trial are likely to be significantly less than the level required to meet need. This translates into missed opportunities to not only prevent new infection but prevent the high personal impact of acquiring HIV and the associated costs of a life time of HIV treatment and social care costs.

In Tower Hamlets we have been working closely with our local community organisations and clinical providers to ensure the potential benefits and protective effects of PrEP are effectively communicated to all our residents.

Tower Hamlets is estimated to have the second highest uptake of PrEP amongst men who have sex with men in the country. Encouragingly our community providers have also effectively promoted PrEP to women and residents from other high risk groups. However, the trial ran out of places at our local clinic at the Royal London Hospital within a year.

Tower Hamlets remains an area of large population growth and we have seen a significant increase in the number of gay and bisexual men attending sexual health clinics in the borough. In 2018 approximately half of all specialist sexual health attendances of male Tower Hamlets residents were from men who have sex with men, double the average for England and a local two fold increase over the last ten years.

However, as you will be aware the Public Health grant from the Department of Health does not respond to demographic change and has been reducing year on year. As elsewhere, this has resulted in increasing pressures on all areas of public health expenditure in Tower Hamlets including sexual health where the cost of increased PrEP related activity constitutes a significant additional burden (estimated to be at least £290,000 in 18/19).

In this context, London Councils has highlighted the importance of PrEP being delivered sustainably and in a way that does not destabilise sexual health services. The London Sexual Health Programme have been highlighting to the PrEP trial board that whilst further expansion of the trial is welcome it places increase cost pressures on already very stretched council budgets.

We have been keen to explore with the trial committee the potential role of the Eservice in allowing the cost pressure to be reduced. As part of the London Sexual Health Programme we are part of the discussions with NHS England to increase the trial places on the basis that we would currently be able to commit to an increase in trial places of 60%.

At the same time, we remain acutely aware that this level of provision does not address the full potential to prevent new HIV infection in our borough.

Government can't simply hand the financial burden to councils. Our residents need you to step up and ensure a uniform national approach and committing to fully funded main stream provision of PrEP in England and Wales would show your commitment to preventing further HIV transmission.

The decrease in new infections has already produced a significant saving for NHS England in terms of the HIV treatment costs. I urge you to now properly fund PrEP for all and help end new HIV infections.

Yours Sincerely



John Biggs
Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets