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Industry Sector Leaders,

Please see below urgent message from the Mayor's Office - for your info.

Mayor declares 'major incident' as rapid spread of Covid-19 threatens to overwhelm hospitals in the capital

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has today declared a 'major incident' due to the rapid spread of the coronavirus across the capital and the increase of Covid-19 cases in hospitals, which has left the NHS at risk of being overwhelmed.

The Mayor took the decision as the formal Chair of the London Resilience Forum following discussions with leaders from NHS London, local authorities, Public Health England and the emergency services in the capital.

It comes as the number of Covid-19 cases in London has exceeded 1,000 per 100,000, putting immense pressure on an already stretched NHS. Between 30 December and 6 January, the number of patients in London hospitals grew by 27 per cent (from 5,524 to 7,034) and the number on mechanical ventilation grew by 42 per cent (from 640 to 908). Over the last three days alone the NHS has announced 477 deaths in London hospitals following a positive test for Covid-19.

The 7,034 people currently in hospital with Covid-19 represents a 35 per cent increase compared to the peak of the pandemic in April. There are currently around 830 admissions to London hospital trusts per day – up from around 500 before Christmas - which could rise further over the next two weeks.

The impact is also being felt right across the emergency services with hundreds of firefighters from London Fire Brigade once again assisting London Ambulance Service by volunteering to drive ambulances as the ambulance services faces one of the busiest times in its history. Since volunteering to help in April last year, firefighters have now responded to 100,000 incidents whilst driving ambulances.

The London Ambulance Service is now taking up to 8,000 emergency calls a day now, compared to 5,500 on a typical busy day.

A major incident is defined as being “beyond the scope of business-as-usual operations, and is likely to involve serious harm, damage, disruption or risk to human life or welfare, essential services, the environment or national security”. In addition, “the severity of the consequences associated with a major incident are likely to constrain or complicate the ability of responders to resource and manage the incident.”

The Mayor re-established a Strategic Coordinating Group in September as the spread of the virus increased. He has now taken this further step as the increased pressures on responders, combined with the impact of increasing numbers of their staff being ill or having to self-isolate, means that the existing coordination arrangements need to be further stepped-up.

The Mayor has written to the Prime Minister with asks from City Hall and London Councils leaders for greater financial support for Londoners who need to self-isolate and are not able to work, daily vaccination data, the closure of places of worship and for face masks to be worn routinely outside of the home, including in supermarket queues and other places outside that may be crowded.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: “The situation in London is now critical with the spread of the virus out of control.

“The number of cases in London has increased rapidly with more than a third more patients being treated in our hospitals now compared to the peak of the pandemic last April.

“Our heroic doctors, nurses and NHS staff are doing an amazing job, but with cases rising so rapidly, our hospitals are at risk of being overwhelmed. The stark reality is that we will run out of beds for patients in the next couple of weeks unless the spread of the virus slows down drastically.

“We are declaring a major incident because the threat this virus poses to our city is at crisis point. If we do not take immediate action now, our NHS could be overwhelmed and more people will die.

“Londoners continue to make huge sacrifices and I am today imploring them to please stay at home unless it is absolutely necessary for you to leave. Stay at home to protect yourself, your family, friends and other Londoners and to protect our NHS.”

Georgia Gould, Chair of London Councils, said: “Cases are rising at a dangerous rate in London, putting extreme pressure on the NHS.

CSSC London GREEN Message - GLA - Mayor announces Major incident - 8 Jan 2021

“One in 30 Londoners now has Covid. This is why public services across London are urging all Londoners to please stay at home except for absolutely essential shopping and exercise.

“We know how tough this is for Londoners. Councils are here to support anyone struggling to access food or medicine.

“Today, the thoughts of London leaders are with the thousands of Londoners in hospital battling Covid and the amazing carers fighting to save lives. We owe it to them to do all we can to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe.

“This is a dark and difficult time for our city but there is light at end of the tunnel with the vaccine rollout. We are asking Londoners to come together one last time to stop the spread - lives really do depend on it.”

