

2016 London Mayoral Disability Hustings

Text Transcript – 14-04-2016

ANNA: Hi. Welcome to our Hustings here today. I'm Anna; I'm from Leonard Cheshire Disability, thank you all for coming and travelling all this way, thank you for the candidates for coming as well. We are ready to start, so Peter White who is here our chair is going to introduce us. [Applause] In order to turn the microphones on, just press the red button on the microphones.

PETER: Can everybody hear at the back OK.

SADIQ: Is that working?

PETER: Excellent. So my first job as a blind person was to identify the letter red! [Applause] which I was unable to do! Anyway ladies and gentlemen, I'm really impressed at how many people we have here and I think that is an indication of how necessary this kind of operation that we're doing today is. How important it is. I'm Peter White, all I have to say about myself is I have done quite a lot of broadcasting on disability issues and we're going to get through as much as we can today. I know a lot of people have points they want to make so my main job will be to keep things moving. So, a warm welcome, as I say, to what London means to us. A special Hustings, designed to ensure that the many questions which disabled Londoners have about the way their city is run can be put directly to the candidates for Mayor of London. There is a genuine concern that these issues aren't often given the time they need to be explained, that often they're misunderstood, skipped over, briefly, or just ignored. This isn't just the responsibility of politicians or the candidates, it is also the responsibility of the press, broadcasters like me and therefore by definition the public who get their information from these sources. So the intention today is these questions can be put and addressed directly by the candidates. I'm not going to give long biographies of the candidates; they will have plenty of time today to explain who they are and why they think you should vote for them. Except just to introduce them by name. On the stage, except we are not on a stage. On the flat we have the Conservative candidate, Zac Goldsmith, for Labour Sadiq Khan, Caroline Pigeon is here for the Green Party, it was to be Sian Berry, and she has flu so at an hour-and-a-half notice Caroline Russell who is the green councillor for Islington. We have the British Deaf Association, Choice Support, Dimensions, Leonard Cheshire, Mencap, the National Autistic Society, RNIB, scope and the Thomas Pocklington Trust, the

questions have been selected in advance so that we can address the issues over which the mayor, whoever it turns out to be, will have a direct influence. So issues such as transport, housing and planning aspects of employment, policing and crime, social care, access and equality. My job is to keep order and make sure you do get answers to your questions. I'm well aware that on these occasions time can squeeze questions out, I also consider it my job to stick to a timetable that will allow all those who put questions in advance to get them answered. Which I reckon is likely to be about ten-minutes per question. I would like the candidates as well as the audience to bear in mind I will make sure everybody gets a fair crack of the whip. That means you have two-and-a-half minutes for each individual as candidates. However, life doesn't always work out neatly, does it; we will see how that goes. Just before the questions we're inviting each candidate to make an introductory talk, not longer than three minutes. We had a draw before the event to arrange the order, I'm not sure if it is lucky or not to go first, but first out of the hat was Caroline Pigeon of the Liberal Democrats. So I think that will be followed by Sadiq Khan, Caroline Russell and Zac Goldsmith. Caroline Pigeon, do we will us whatever you think you should tell us.

CAROLINE P: Thank you very much indeed. Thank you for inviting me along to the debate, I look forward to hearing your questions, it is mainly where I stand on a range of issues facing deaf and disabled people in London. Let me start by explaining my programme of policies and my overall approach to improving London for everyone. You know London's population is growing at rapid rate. So we need to ensure that we invest in public services to keep up with that demand. From housing and transport to nurseries, schools, open spaces, even our energy supply. The next Mayor of London has a big in-tray to tackle. I have the experience that London needs, as a Liberal Democrat on the London Assembly; I have been holding the current mayor to account for the last eight years. I have been working day in day out for Londoners at City Hall, and I have seen first-hand the challenges we face. One of the biggest issues in London is housing, the scale of the housing crisis is well known, but we need to more than double the rate of home building to around 50,000 homes a year, and we must ensure that many of these homes are fully accessible. We desperately need to increase the supply of all types of housing, from council housing, which I'm passionate about, to homes for private sale and rent. I have clear-funded policies to do just that and to get tough on rogue landlords who rip-off those who rent privately. But the other big challenge facing the

capital is to ensure that everyone can get around. You know CrossRail will soon be open. I'm proud to have been part of the campaign to finally ensure that every station is fully accessible. It is incredible that MPs in parliament a few years ago passed legislation for CrossRail but failed to build in that requirement from day one. I'm pleased to work with Transport for All and others to make sure it happens. We have to invest and expand the transport network, more tube upgrades and more access programmes and funding for Dial-a-Ride must be maintained and the service improved. But also we need new projects like the Bakerloo Line extension, the tramlink extension into Sutton; they will all deliver fully accessible transport to many more Londoners. There are many other issues we need to address, the needs for better skills training, the need to clean up the air we breathe, the need to tackle congestion on our roads. And we also need to put more police on public transport to tackle things like sexual assaults, but also hate crimes which are on the rise and to make sure the network is safer for everyone. I look forward to the debate this afternoon.

PETER: You me to it! [Applause]

PETER: I don't have a braille stopwatch, but I'm keeping as close an eye on this as I can. Sadiq Khan.

SADIQ: Thank you, good afternoon. [Applause]. It is wonderful to be here, for those that can't see there is standing room only and that is a tribute to the organisers of today. London is the greatest city in the world. But we're at a crossroads; too many Londoners are missing out on the chances that our city gave to me. To go from a council estate, to helping run a successful business and to stand here before you today, running to be the Mayor of London. Above all else the housing crisis means someone bringing up a young family, or wanting to own their own home, London is becoming too expensive. Londoners can't afford to live in our own city. I will be a mayor for all Londoners, giving everyone in our city the chances to succeed that I had. That includes the 1.2 million disabled Londoners. I want London it to be the most disabled-friendly city in the world. That means proper and meaningful consultation with disabled Londoners so the decisions I take on future of the city on transport, planning, housing are fully informed, not like they have been with this mayor in the last few years. It means I will work with businesses to create opportunities that fully include disabled Londoners. It means making sure that the homes we build are not just genuinely affordable to buy and rent, but meet

the needs of disabled Londoners too. And it means standing up for disabled Londoners when their rights and their benefits are being attacked by the Tory Government. [Applause] Let me by frank, anyone who voted for the Welfare Reform Bill, which cut ESA or was a cheerleader to the cruellest budget ever should be ashamed. In a world class city it is not OK that our buses, trains and tubes are not fully accessible for hundreds of thousands of Londoners, that must change. I will work to make sure we have more step-free access at existing stations underground and overground. And that every new station will be fully accessible and staffed by people properly trained to understand the needs of disabled Londoners. It means the next fleet of buses being designed with sufficient space for wheelchair users, it means ensuring that dial-a-ride and taxis provide access for those getting around London and it also means tackling disability hate crime. London must be a city open to all and opportunities for all. That is why I will be the mayor for all Londoners, thank you very much. [Applause]

PETER: Thank you very much indeed, Khan. We will make one quick point, one of the reasons why a question about benefits is not on the list is because it is not something that can actually be controlled by the Mayor of London. Of course if the Mayor of London is in the Commons that is a different issue, but that is why we're concentrating today on things that are directly manageable by the people who are running London and in this case the mayor.

FLOOR: It is the Government!

PETER: It may be, and when we have the whole of the Government here we can do that. Caroline. [Applause].

CAROLINE R: Thank you very much everyone. I'm really glad I managed to make it here; I did really have an hour-and-a-half notice to get myself over. I'm very honoured to be here to be speaking with the real mayoral candidates. I'm here not as a mayoral candidate, I'm representing Sian Berry who is standing to be the Mayor of London for the Green Party. Sian is running a terrible temperature and had to pull out at the last minute, she's very sorry not to be here and she has given me strict instructions to listen very hard to everything that comes up today and report back to her and I promise I will do that. I'm a councillor in Islington, I'm also standing on the London-wide list to be an assembly member, and I'm number two candidate for the Green Party. This election is the chance for all Londoners to think about what kind of city we want to live in over the next four years. We are seeing a situation that

everyone has been talking about it, we have a housing crisis with prices rocketing we have cuts to benefits which are making life much, much harder for people to just get through their lives. And in the context of all of that what the Mayor of London can do to make life better for Londoners is in some very particular areas, it is in housing, through planning decisions, it is in transport, thinking about how we make our streets into places that are safe to get around if you are blind. Where you know that you can safely cross the road where you are not going to be mown down by vehicles driving far too fast. We have ladder about the step-free access for the tube, absolutely crucial. And it is shocking when you look at the tube map where it shows you only the accessible tube stations and you just realise how unacceptably inaccessible London is. Sorry getting my words muddled there. So our manifesto has been put together by listening to Londoners. We have spoken to many, many different organisations across London. We have put together an Easy Read manifesto for anyone who needs it. I hope that is an indication of how important Sian and the Green Party think the agenda of making London, making politics accessible to everyone is. Was that a ping because I'm out of time?

PETER: Nobody explained what that was for, but it does mean that.

CAROLINE R: I will stop talking and looking forward to hearing all your comments. [Applause].

PETER: Thank you very much and it is, we do admire the fact that you managed to do it with so little notice. Finally, Zac Goldsmith of the Conservative Parties.

ZAC: Can you hear me, is that working. Thank you very much indeed. London is the greatest city in the world, but I want to make it the greatest city for all Londoner, including the one in ten Londoners who identify as having a disability. A number that is probably a gross underestimate, not least because we have a growing population and many of the issues affecting people with disabilities affect people as they get older. I know many of you face huge struggles and I saw a glimpse of this last July when I was invited to spend a few hours travelling by bus and tube with the very brilliant campaigner Alan Benson, also a constituent of mine. It was an eye-opening experience for me; it directly influenced my action plan for greater London. He told me after our journey that it was one of the best days he had on a public transport system. But from where I was standing it was appalling, it was shameful. I know there are similar problems when it comes to assessing housing, getting trains, finding a job and even when it comes to voting. So this is how my action plan for

London will make life easier for less able Londoners. First I will continue TfL's investment programme which will make sure that 95% of bus stops are accessible by the end of this year, and by 2018 over half of TfL stations will have step-free access, I want to go much further than that, I will review those plans immediately after taking office to ensure they are greatly more ambitious than the plans we have in place at the moment. Secondly I will ensure that workplaces and new homes are fully accessible. I will ensure the agencies that I'm directly in control of meet the highest possible disability standard. I will make sure developers build accessible homes and offices. Third I will back exclusive skills and education programmes. Next May we will have control over a huge £400 million a year adult skills budget, that is a massive opportunity. I will put more of that money into inclusive, life-long learning by working with small, local disability groups, organisations who know first-hand the barriers disabled people often face and how to overcome those barriers. I'm proud as an MP to have helped set up a social enterprise as part of my constituency in Kingston, called Community-upon-Thames which directly helps 100 people with learning disabilities find work locally. Fourth I will crack down on disability hate crime, the idea that a vulnerable person should be bullied because of their vulnerability is just extraordinary and appalling and disgusting, I will ensure the 900 officers, and working on hate crime and domestic violence are fully trained in disability awareness. I will back the London-wide Know Your Rights Campaign to raise awareness of this horrible issue so people are educated by disability hate crime so the authorities know how to record it and prevent it. Those are my commitments to you, and we will discuss them in more detail and more beside, thank you for inviting me and I look forward to the discussions. (APPLAUSE)

FLOOR: Can candidates not use offensive language like "people with disability" we are people.

PETER: There is a lot of debate about that, probably this is not the place to have a debate about it if you want to stick to the idea of having as many answers to the questions as we have got. You have made the point. Let's go to the first question. Which is from Paul Ntulila from the British Deaf Association. Would you like to put your question Paul?

PAUL: As a deaf person I face many barriers, accessing public services such as transport and health, all across London. As part of the deaf forum we campaign for better access I'm asking the candidates how are you going to

make sure that deaf people have better access to qualified BSL interpreters, and will you be signing the BDA's charter?

PETER: Can I just ask how much difficulty you have in getting the interpreters you need and in what situations, just to put it in context for people.

PAUL: Just to clarify, the barriers are services, public services, not being aware of their responsibility when it comes to providing BSL qualified British Sign Language interpreters for deaf people. There are many issues and we often aren't provided with interpreters.

PETER: Thank you very much. Zac Goldsmith? More interpreters, how is that going to be done as far as you are concerned?

ZAC: Thank you very much; this is a question that actually affects almost everything from access to transport to voting, to participation in the electoral system. I was reading some of the reports that I have been sent in the course of this campaign, it is amazing to me that one in five disabled people believe that they have been disenfranchised, or report they have, because polling stations are inaccessible, not just because of wheelchair accessibility, but induction loops for example. What I have committed in the manifesto is to appoint an inclusion Tsar in City Hall, not as a back water official, but at the heart of City Hall to ensure that every single decision, whether relating to transport expansion or anything else is made with disability in mind. So we don't repeat problems as we nearly did with CrossRail, the point that Caroline made earlier where an entire piece of kit risked being built only to be retro fitted later on as someone woke up to the reality of the need for accessible transport. I want someone at the heart of City Hall to advise me day in day out to help me make decisions. And to use every tool at the disposal of the mayor and City Hall. In relation to the BDA charter, absolutely.

PETER: We can kick this around a bit more each of you first. Sadiq Khan.

SADIQ: Thank you for the question. What's really important is that we mainstream accessibility of services as an issue. And not have it as an afterthought. So when it comes to decision making in City Hall with me as mayor, I will involve in the consultation process all Londoners, including disabled Londoners. But also public servants should be trained how to help all Londoners, including disabled Londoners, whether you are a bus driver, whether you are somebody who works in a department providing services or anywhere

else. What I will do specifically is set up a fairness unit in City Hall, giving advice to employers and everyone who serves the public to make sure that the quality of service is raised rather than reduced, one of the other things we are going to do is have a business advisory board and on that have representatives from all of London's community. The final point to make is this in relation to accessibility of public services, we have seen over the last few years the number of law centres, CABs closing down across London, with parts of London that are advice deserts, I'm not embarrassed today say I used to be a lawyer doing Legal Aid work, helping the most vulnerable in our society getting access to advice and assistance, we need to make sure we have more of these advice centres opening up rather than closing down, I will make sure City Hall helps Londoners be citizens by giving them the rights they are entitled to.

PETER: Caroline Pigeon.

CAROLINE P: Thank you for the question, I think it is really important that the transport network meets everyone's needs. I worked with colleagues on the Transport Committee at the London Assembly looking specifically at sensory impairments, we were looking at induction loops, piloting on some buses, why not at all stations. There are issues I have been battling for the last few years, not all crossings in London meet the 1995 guidance which means you have an audible beep and rotating cone to help visually impaired people. I was in Earls Court yesterday; the cone was not rotating and no audible beep to get across six lanes of traffic. TfL can do that just like that and they haven't, despite me pressing this mayor. We have to make sure we have the basics right and look at some of the other issues. If you are on a bus and you can't hear, actually if suddenly the route changes or there is some sort of emergency, you aren't aware what is going on, we have to train up drivers to deal with those situations. I have been quite pleased with the hidden disabilities card which Transport for London have piloted, I want to look at how to expand that, I have recently written to them and they are doing good work in that area. The clear thing is Mayor of London you have to work with all Londoners, I'm passionate about making sure we consult fully with deaf and disabled people in London to make sure we really understand your issues and to make sure that every decision we are making at City Hall won't have an impact on you in a negative way and enhances your life so you can enjoy London to its fullest. That means training up the work force, training the police, training our transport providers via services and others to make sure we absolutely have first class services for everyone in the capital.

PETER: And Caroline Russell.

CAROLINE R: How do we make sure that everyone has access to interpreters if they need them? Sian has said nothing about us without us, she wants to appoint a disability equality policy adviser in City Hall and bring all the London deaf and disabled people's organisations into City Hall so that they can be involved in decision making. But City Hall can be a shining beacon of good practice and it jolly well should be. We have heard examples from Caroline just now of things that Transport for London could very easily fix that could make people's lives easier. We should make sure that every department that is part of The City has properly trained and aware of the needs of deaf and disabled people so that we are truly looking after the needs of all Londoners. Thank you.

PETER: Thank you. Two points, one thing to say is that while we have got prearranged questions, if people want to get involved and make points from the floor do indicate. I think we can get microphones to you. Sticking to the time it will obviously have to be limited but get as many in as we can. I want to ask, the point was raised that if you need interpretation, and interpreters, you need it with almost every aspect of life. Are you actually saying that many of the places where interpreters are needed that people actually should, there should be part of the job qualification is that you actually know how to do this both in transport, in doctors' surgeries, in the town and City Hall and the Town Hall, are all four of you saying that should be a responsibility of local authorities, councils, the mayor. Let me put it to Zac, because you raised the issue of training within organisations like transport services.

ZAC: Absolutely it should be the responsibility of the local authority to ensure that where people need that kind of assistance it is provided. Even as an MP there have been admittedly only two occasions as an MP where I have had to bring interpreters along in order to be able to conduct a normal surgery, that is not a facility that is made available to MPs and it is not something the local authority was able to help with, so I think that the absolutely I believe that wherever problems are identified the local authority needs to respond to that and where necessary that the mayor needs to step in and apply pressure, I don't think it is something the mayor directly controls. Yes there are branches controlled by the mayor, the GLA, TfL and the Met and so on. But for the wider context it is for the local authorities to ensure that people are properly looked after.

PETER: Anyone else want to add to that. [Applause]

SADIQ: We just have to be a bit careful, local authorities have lost half their budget, 50% over the last six years. And most of the money local authorities get comes from central Government, so it is very easy for the mayor to say local authorities have to provide these facilities, I think what we need to do is make sure the staff we are responsible for are properly trained. If they themselves can't interpreter or sign know where to signpost people to get assistance and help.

CAROLINE P: City Hall when we were conducting our inquiry trying to get BSL interpreters along for our event, we used to have them for every single committee, we were asked to stop doing that because we didn't have the capacity and we didn't have the number of people. Whilst the mayor may not directly control with it, they should be meeting with the community and working on how to get more qualified BSL interpreters to make sure everyone has full access to services.

PETER: That works the other way around, if there isn't enough demand, if they are not actually being used by councils saying we can't afford them that naturally means that there isn't work to do, it is probably making it more difficult for people to actually get into the profession. There is a problem there. Let me go to the next question. Angela Playford.

ANGELA: Accessible housing is often ring-fenced by councils...

PETER: Can we get the microphone.

ANGELA: Accessible housing is also ring-fenced for people for privately rented housing and not for disabled tenants' needs; as a result thousands of disabled people are living in unsuitable and unsafe accommodation. What would you do to make more suitable housing available for disabled people?

PETER: Thank you very much. Angela asks accessible housing often ring-fenced by councils for elderly tenants and privately-rented housing can't be adapted for disabled tenants' needs, and thousands of disabled people as a result are living in unsuitable and unsafe accommodation, what would you do to make it more accessible.

CAROLINE P: Housing in London is such an important issue and enough accessible housing is also important. I would commit to build 200,000 homes

over the next four years. What is different about what I'm saying is one in four of those homes should be council housing, I believe in council housing, not this called affordable housing that stretches the definition that we all know in the dictionary to a large extent. It is really important we make sure we build good quality council housing that is affordable and that we have a minimum of 10% of developments with which have accessibility. [Applause] so as mayor in my London plan I would make sure that at least we have the minimum 10% of developments being wheelchair accessible, we need to see lifetime homes so as people grow older, their issues change.

FLOOR: 10% is not enough.

CAROLINE P: I'm saying as a minimum.

FLOOR: Hotels are 20%.

CAROLINE P: I have to make sure there is enough homes for Londoners, I would put money in, people are talking numbers of home but you have to put money into it. I would ask Londoners to continue paying the level of council tax they are paying last year, including some of the money paid across the Olympic Games. And I would use that to borrow against a £2 billion fund to put in the homes as well as the GLA land.

PETER: Sadiq Khan.

SADIQ: So we have had a Conservative mayor for the last eight years and a Conservative Prime Minister for the last six, and the housing crisis has gone from bad to worse, Angela. Londoners have been priced out of our city. I want May 5th to be a referendum on the Tory housing crisis circumstance I have a plan to bring together local authorities, Housing Associations, developers and finance with a team called Homes for Londoners which will do what it says on the tin. Making sure genuinely affordable homes are built for Londoners to buy and rent. We have homes costing up to £450,000 as some way, or 8% of market value as others say, but genuinely affordable to buy and rent. Either social properties or one third of average local earnings is the rent, a London living rent. Or properties where you part buy and part rent. If you imagine Hyde Park, us Londoners, Mayor of London opens 16-times that, that is how much he owns. Rather than a fire sale or joint sale that doesn't lead to enough homes, we should be building on that joint land. It is a scandal, before homes are completed they are sold to investors in the Middle East and Asia, using our

homes like gold bricks, we have got to stop that, I will make sure that...[Applause]...I will make sure that it is first dibs for Londoners, but also one out of four Londoners now renting from a private landlord as Angela asked in the question. We will set up a not for profit letting agency covering all of London. You won't be ripped off with letting agents' fees and a tendency for three years if you want it and rent only going up by inflation over the three years. The other thing is we are going to involve disabled Londoners when it comes to drafting our London plans, so you are involved in the process to make sure the next London plan meets the needs of all Londoners. [Applause]

ZAC: Thank you very much. The first point to make is the only long-term solution to the housing crisis, which manifests in so many different ways, the only solution is to build more. I think there is more or less a consensus now that we need around 50 thousand homes a year to begin to close the gap between demand and supply. The question is how do you do that? It is not as big a challenge as I think some people might imagine. There was an enormous amount of ground fill land owned by the Government, and Government is by far in and away the biggest landowner, we need to work with Government to release that land. We then need to grow the public transport network which is the only way to unlock that land. Every time a new rail network is created, it is not just about keeping London moving, it is about enabling London to grow. CrossRail too will deliver around 200,000 homes for example. As we build those homes we have got to make sure they are solving the problem. That means new homes being built on publicly owned land. I will commit in my London plan to ensure those homes are only sold to Londoners, the job of any mayor will be to scrutinise every single application on private land to ensure that the maximum amount of affordability is extracted from that development, clearly there is a finite amount, but the process is so oblique, so complicated, it is very hard know how much fat there is in the system. We need to open up the viability of the system to see how much fat there is in the system so people don't feel cheated and local authorities know how much to ask for without threatening the development itself. It is for the mayor and local authorities to spend that money in a way that delivers the maximum possible affordability. There are rules already in London.

PETER: The question wasn't just about affordability, it was about accessibility.

ZAC: Sorry I was giving the context, if we don't build more you will end up with 50% of nothing. It is important to build more. There are rules in London

already requiring that 10% of new build homes are accessible. There is a debate, we have already had a hint that have from the front row, 10% accessibility, that is a rule which I will obviously keep and enforce and make sure it happens. One in three people who are disabled in London today live in accommodation that is not suitable, it is not appropriate and not up to scratch. That leads to problems further down the line like avoidable accidents, people spending more times in hospitals than would otherwise be the case. We have to deal with the vast majority of homes in four years' time will not be new homes built by the next mayor, they are homes already built and many are already substandard, we need to put as much emphasis as possible on retro fitting and fixing existing homes so they can accommodate the very large number of people who do have disabilities who need accommodation that is appropriate. That is a massive problem but also massive priority.

FLOOR: You need 50,000 not 80,000. That is not enough homes.

ZAC: If we could build 100,000. I hope to deliver more 50,000.

PETER: You will need a microphone to intervene. I will go to Caroline Russell.

CAROLINE R: Accessible homes. We start talking about accessible homes when we have a crisis caused by legislation like the Bedroom Tax that means that some of the accessible homes that have been adapted, people are being forced today give them up because they have supposedly got an extra bedroom that they can't afford to pay the extra money for. So we have a Government system that is adding to the troubles that we have in London in terms of you know, it means that if you are disabled you have extra trouble on top of the trouble that all Londoners are finding to find a place to live that is affordable and available to them. If, sorry.

PETER: You can stop if you want to.

CAROLINE R: I will say a bit more, Sian has committed, like all the others to building 200,000 new homes in the course of the mayor term. What Sian wants to do which is different from other candidates is to use small developers, use community-led developments, and use Community Land Trusts so that people can be involved in the design of the homes that are being built. I think this is one way that one can make accessible homes that actually meet people's needs. Over last summer I was involved with a community of 18 people living in a Housing Association group home that catered for people with mixed needs.

And they were being evicted by a Housing Association who call themselves the Housing Association that likes to make profit. This is one housing group. I think they didn't understand what it was that they were throwing away. What this group of 18 people were doing was living collectively together, supporting one another, there were young people on very low incomes, and there were older people with Parkinson's, there were domestic violence survivors, a whole range of different people with different abilities and different needs. They were supporting each other, living together between the 18 of them. They had three washing machines, they cooked together and saved money in terms of the way they were feeding themselves. It is a much more efficient and economical way of living and we actually have to think about how we are housing ourselves, how we are living, what sort of models that we're using, so we need to think it is not just about the numbers, it is about thinking about doing things differently and working with communities.

PETER: Thank you very much. [Applause] like most subjects we could debate this all day, the next question is from Sue Smithers.

SUE: Hello I'm Sue Smithers, I'm 54-years-old and I live in south London, I'm here with dementia and my question is about policy and the safety of disabled Londoners. Will we have more police on the streets of London to defend hate crimes against people with learning difficulties.

PETER: Can I just ask, do you feel threatened when you are going out and at certain times?

SUE: I feel safe with the police, I like the police!

PETER: But you would like more of them.

SADIQ: Thank you for your question Sue, actually your answer is very important, you feel safer with the police. It is really important that we remember that, I will come to why it is important in a second. Just to give people who aren't aware of the statistics some idea of the problem. So the last few years disability hate crime has gone up, the number of successful prosecutions has gone down. There is a problem. Now over the last few years, over the last six years, just to give you an idea of the problems in London. London has lost £6 £600 million from the Metropolitan Police, London has lost 1500 uniformed officers from the streets, and London has lost more than 60% of our community support officers. If you remember in the last few

years we used to have what is called neighbourhood support teams, in each ward in London there was at least one Sergeant, two police officers and three community support officers, different wards have different numbers and Sue is right, they made us feel safer, they made us feel safer walking the street, using public transport. I'm a dad with two daughters, aged 16 and 14, I worry about their safety. I'm afraid fewer police officers needs to not leads to us feeling less safe but being less safe. Violent and knife crime has gone up and hate crime has gone up. What I want to do is return to neighbourhood policing, where we know that Bobby on the beat, you know them by the first names, they know you. You feel confident in the police to report crime, to be a witness and come forward and give intelligence. There is a saying Sue, we police by consent. That means we have got confidence in the police to give the information and they can police us and keep us more safer. I'm afraid over the last eight years we have got, there is fewer police officers than there should be and I will make sure that we return to neighbourhood policing and we make sure that Londoners feel safe. [Applause].

CAROLINE R: The growth in hate crime against any community is a really bad thing for our city. The police budgets are incredibly tight and they are having to make very difficult decisions about how they prioritise and what they spend their money on. One thing the mayor can do is to review how money gets spent by the police, the mayor can hold the police accountable. So it is something that the mayor has the power to commit to address and certainly addressing hate crime is something that Sian Berry as she is a Green Mayor for London would take as a very high priority. But the other thing we have to think about is the social environment in our city that allows hate crime to happen, that is something else that the mayor can do things to address. For example on Transport for London there are huge amounts of places where we can put advertisements and that is something that if there is a Green mayor for London we will use those advertising spaces on bus stops and the tube system to make sure that awareness is raised about height crime and more citizens feel able to intervene and make sure that the whole social environment, the culture in our city says that hate crime is just unacceptable and it shouldn't happen. So that would support the police by making sure that the whole community is on board with thinking that hate crime is not acceptable.

CAROLINE P: We absolutely need to see more police on our streets and more police on the tubes, trains and buses, which is why I'm the only candidate who is promising 3,000 additional officers to be on the tubes, to be on the trains and to

be on our buses. We have seen an increase in sexual offences on the bus network, we have seen an increase in hate crime, I want to make sure we tackle that and that's why on top of the 22,000 police officers we have, we need 3,000 police on the network. And some of the other cuts we have seen to safe neighbourhood teams, the safe neighbourhood teams are the best thing the Metropolitan Police ever did bringing local police and local community support officers to local areas, they got to know the officers and the communities, and the cuts have been a really backward step, I would reverse those cuts and strengthen our safer neighbourhood teams, in terms of height crimes we have to have a new strategy in making it easier to report them and investigate them and most importantly to prosecute them. We need to see more prosecutions and when you look at last year, over the last year we saw 323 victims of disability height crime, in this February alone we have seen 88 people coming forward reporting that they have experienced disability hate crime, it is on the up. We have got to do something about it and more police is part of my tactic to deal with that. [Applause]

ZAC: All forms of hate crime are on the rise and have been for some time. The ones that get most attention tend to be those relating to Islamophobia or anti-Semitism, but height crime for people with disabilities has also gone up significantly. One of the problems is those crimes are not reported often enough, when they are reported there is, the mechanism for capturing that information is inadequate, and there is not enough follow-up. In London we do have 900 specialist officers across London whose job is to investigate all forms of height crime, I'm advised by the disabled people's organisations that those officers are in need of education. That they need to be trained how to properly identify and follow up on disability hate crime, that is advice I will take on board. I want to go further than that, I was at an amazing organisation a week ago called the St Giles' Trust, an organisation largely run by people who used to be in gangs, these are now people deployed out in the community to try to steer young kids away from making bad decisions. One of the things they started doing is talking to teenage girls as part of the Know Your Rights programme and campaign. The purpose of that is to let these girls know that they don't have to tolerate violence or physical or verbal violence, that they can be empowered, that they can say no and according to the analysis and reports provided by the Trust is it has a massive impact. Whole classrooms of girls who are visibly puffing out their chests in the confidence that they don't have to put up with the kind of abuse they have become accustomed to believing is a normal part of

daily life. I want a similar programme, a Know Your Rights campaign for the whole of greater London, so people can understand, identify and shout when disability height crime happens to them. So we begin to capture that information and it becomes a key priority for the police. I know that button was pressed.

PETER: I have one question I want to put to you as a panel.

ZAC: The numbers do matter, Boris was elected promising to keep officer numbers at 32,000 and he has restored numbers to very nearly 32,000 just a few hundred beneath that threshold. We had a threat to the Metropolitan Police's budget, a significant threat, a billion pounds, I took a stand along with colleagues in London and we persuaded the Chancellor not to inflict those cuts because we felt it would have been a disaster for London. We won that argument and the funding is ring-fenced we can commit to guaranteed 32,000 police and putting 500 new police on the tube system which is a commitment I have made in the manifesto.

FLOOR: We need more policemen.

PETER: One quick question I would like to disobey the bell to some extent. That is, it is often said the argument about bobbies on the beat is made and often police themselves say that this doesn't necessarily bring down crime, that things like information gathering, the use of technology are actually more effective, I'm going to put it to Sadiq, you raised this as one of your main things you wanted to do. The police don't always agree that bobbies on the beat means less crime?

SADIQ: The expert advice is it does bring down crime, we can also look at crime, having cars with proper alarm systems reduces crimes, having burglar alarms reduces crime, having more police officers on the streets does reduce crime. Having police officers using our buses and tubes, using overground, using DLR does reduce crime. The public know in the police officer in their community, having the confidence to report crime, the police officers know in the local community, know who the troubled families are, know who is a mischief maker and it does reduce crime. It is not simply a question of being tough on crime, it is being tough on the causes of crime as well. Which is why investing in youth facilities is so important. Giving young people hope to get the skills for the jobs for the future, investing in youth clubs, going into schools and doing assemblies so young people know every time you carry a knife that is

a risk of your own life it does reduce crime. Caroline is right, being more respectful of people, people who are male, Jewish, disabled, it reduces crime, we don't assume cutting police officers has no consequence it does.

PETER: I put that question purely because you raised it. Forgive me if I gave him a bit of extra time. I wanted to get an answer. You may say similar things to that. Can we go to the next question.

ALBERTINA: Hello everyone. My name Albertina Prata, I'm 32-years-old, I live in Collingdale, my question is about employment. What are your plans to improve job opportunities for young people with disabilities?

PETER: Zac Goldsmith first own that.

ZAC: Thank you very much for the question, disabled people are roughly four-times less likely to be employed than people without a disability according to the very latest figures, that is not acceptable, there are so many barriers in place, we talked about one or two of them already, transport, lack of accessible application processes, lack of accessible work spaces and so on, and there is the extra difficulty of learning new skills, the number of disabled people in apprenticeships has really gone down very significantly, despite overall the number of people taking up apprenticeships, being a great success story I think of this and the last Government. I set up or helped to set up an organisation on my patch in Kingston, which is a very simple social enterprise, it was about working, it was about a very effective local campaign working for local businesses to improve the employment chances for people with learning difficulties. At that very local level it worked. I do think that when it comes to City hall or Government awarding contracts, there is a lot to be said for working with grass roots organisations as opposed to the big clunky Capita and Circa organisations who apply one size fits all and don't know the people they are dealing with or opportunities and the area. I would like to break up the contracts and work with organisations doing great job. The privilege of having the Poppy Factory in my constituency, the first social enterprise in this country, it began a very simple model, you create poppies, sell them and more people buy poppies and more people employed making them. It has got a bit more sophisticated and it has become an organisation whose only purpose is to find employment for people otherwise struggling to find employment, if they were paid by results as job centres are, they would be raking it in, they are finding jobs for hundreds and hundreds of people who otherwise simply wouldn't be able to find employment. An extraordinarily successful organisation. I look forward to

the opportunities backing the grass roots organisations.

PETER: Are you saying they are more successful than job centres?

ZAC: I think they are, not from an empirical point of view, but the success I have seen in my constituency these small organisations work on small budgets and the success has been astronomical, it seems crazy we are not backing those organisations. From a mayoral point of view are direct things that can happen, the bell has gone.

PETER: Quickly.

ZAC: The disability forums, the ten-point disability standard is something that I think needs to be, the current mayor has shown by working with businesses, pushing businesses, using the soft power of the platform of the mayoralty he has persuaded a lot of businesses to adapt the London living mayor, the next mayor needs to do the same with the disability standard and we need as many businesses signed up to it and all branches of associated with City Hall, TfL and the Met have to aspire to the gold standard.

CAROLINE R: Thank you, great question, and really important one, I think you say you are 32, there is a lot of young people who have disability who leave school and then find suddenly they are in a big gap and there is nothing for them. Something that City Hall can do is to show the way in terms of apprenticeships and good practice. So we could identify the best practice in terms of inclusion for apprenticeships and make sure that we then start rolling that out across the capital. We must make sure that any apprenticeships that City Hall is involved in are accessible to disabled learners. It means that the employers are going to have to sign up to some basic standards of inclusion and awareness around disability and also with training for their whole work force. Sian f she's mayor, would make sure that the apprenticeships and the other initiatives, skills and employment, are tailored to help people with disabilities to achieve their potential and make sure that the Access to Work scheme is promoted to all employers. She is also going to want to take a lead in City Hall and make sure that all service providers who work for City Hall, so City Hall has lots of contracts to serve out to people and Sian will make sure that everyone who takes on a contract with City Hall can show a track record of providing accessible and inclusive services and also a track record of employing people with disabilities. So that's something that the mayor could do to show an example and lead the way for employment in London for disabled people.

[Applause]

PETER: Caroline Pigeon.

CAROLINE P: There are a number of things I would like to see happening, early on start a London-wide careers service, there is a real issue in school perhaps with a disability or other needs are not getting proper quality careers advice, there is an opportunity here for me, how can I get that, that is one of the things I would be doing. I would set up a one-stop-shop for apprentices at City Hall to make sure we match the opportunities there are with Londoners to make sure it is not a who you know which often these roles can be and make sure that it is properly inclusive for disabled learners. And that could be in a whole range of things, whether the tech sector or construction, arts, you know, there is a huge number of areas, finance, that we can make sure we have proper apprenticeships that are inclusive. Whether there are opportunities that are coming through City Hall where we have the huge development, you have the rest of the Olympic Park we need to make sure that there are opportunities for disabled people to have jobs there and the apprenticeships as well. I also work with employers, I think the mayor has a far greater role than technically what it says in the law. They can really influence businesses across London. City Hall has to be a model employer in every single thing it does. That needs to be rolled out across the whole group, let's be honest TfL are a law unto themselves and they employ so many people. We need to make sure we promote the Access to Work scheme to employers. Things like flexible working and homeworking may also provide opportunities for ultimately one of the big things is about accessible transport, I'm committed to making sure that London has as much accessible transport as is possible. I won't waste money. The staggering thing is one of the first things Boris Johnson did is cancel a huge number of step-free access schemes, he cancelled when £64 million had been spent already. Including £39 million spent at Shepherd's Bush yet it is still not acceptable. That is not acceptable and I will make the transport system as accessible as possible. [Applause].

PETER: Sadiq Khan.

SADIQ: When we began Peter said he would limit the questions to those areas over which the mayor has powers. I think one of the roles the mayor has is not simply to pull the levers of powers, but to be an advocate, a champion and a fighter for Londoners, and I will be an advocate for disabled Londoners, so for example the question I was asked was how would I support disabled people

getting into work. For example I would have spoken up and said you are wrong, cutting the employment support for nearly 50,000 Londoners as they did last month, and if the Government comes back to try to cut the support for those on PIP disability support, many of whom are working I will say no, you shouldn't do that because that allows disabled Londoners to work, it is really important that you have a fighter in City Hall. [Applause] Is there is specific things a mayor can do, I will set up a fairness unit to cover employers not just to have a living wage, but employ disabled Londoners. The mayor has procurement power, he gives out huge contracts to people, just on transport, £12 billion a year. I will make sure I use the levers of procurement saying if you are providing apprenticeships and paying a living wage and only employing disabled Londoners you are more likely to get a contract than not. We will make sure the apprenticeships that the mayor provides are inclusive, I want disabled youngsters getting those. My skills for Londoners will be working with employers and businesses to train up today's youngsters for the skills for the jobs of tomorrow and that includes disabled youngsters as well, giving them the skills for the jobs of tomorrow. What's really important if you mean what you say about being a mayor for all Londoners, you include disabled Londoners as well.

PETER: Throwing that back to Zac, do you agree the mayor should have, I think procurement powers to say that if companies are working for them then they should have a certain number of disabled people.

PETER: While we are doing that can you answer the question Zac, do you agree with the point that if there were procurement responsibilities the mayor's office to say that if they are giving contracts to people, then they should have, you know, certain numbers of disabled people working for those companies.

ZAC: Absolutely, I suppose that is an extension of the point I was making about the disability plan, the disability standard, the mayor has direct control, as a very significant employer in London to ensure that those branches controlled by the mayor are adhered to and aspire to be the highest possible level of the disability standard. That can extend also indirectly to the contracts awarded by City Hall and associated branches to drive the disability standard through the supply network, I think there is a huge amount that can be done through procurement, absolutely right.

PETER: Have we time for a question from the floor. We will take two questions at this point and then try to take some more as we go along, we are reasonably

on time.

FLOOR: I'm Mike Lambert a Trustee for the an lines for inclusive education, and I would just like to ask a question that fits in with what has just been said, specifically on the subject of apprenticeships all of the candidates agree that there need to be more apprenticeships in London. The question is what will be done to make sure that they are fully inclusive for people with disabilities and I'm thinking of some of the specific problems that applicants face when they go to colleges, they are given standardised tests that require specific levels of maths and English which are not actually a requirement for the job that they are doing. They may face inadequate support directly in colleges during their time in colleges.

PETER: You do work at a further education college.

FLOOR: I have done for many years. Also that certain hurdles are set up in terms of having to reach for example a certain level in maths and English and these things they are not functional, in other words you have-to-someone swaying in maths that you can become a hairdresser for example. It is not actually set in terms of the skills that they need, it is completely abstract, it is not tailored to they need.

PETER: You are asking for more flexibility.

FLOOR: What would you like to do about it.

PETER: If you don't stop asking the question we won't get an answer. You heard the point made.

ZAC: I have spoken to a number of representatives from disabled people's organises to try to understand this issue, it is very clear that the answer, it is more complex than this, but the answer is one of common sense, it is about the Government using a more flexible criteria. It is crazy that apprenticeship opportunities are not made available to people because they can't fit the maths and English standards even though there is a complete irrelevance with the job going for. There are two ways of dealing with it, to use the platform to lobby Government to take a more flexible approach. But also to work with people on the frontline to develop a London inclusive apprenticeship formula, a new model for London which can be a pilot for rollout throughout the country. That is something I would encourage those who represent the organisations to take a lead on, under the umbrella of the mayor.

PETER: Anyone want to respond directly to that.

CAROLINE P: It is important I want a one stop shop for apprentices at City Hall to deal with these issues, the other huge opportunity is the mayor will have control of the further education sector over the next few years, I see that as the real opportunity to bring business, the community, all Londoners together to look at what are the needs of Londoners and how can we make sure there are job opportunities and training opportunities for Londoners that meet the needs of London. This whole issue of English and maths, I was discussing it last week with some young people at Lewisham Southwark college in Deptford, what the teachers have had to do is adapt some of it so when it is about maths they are trying to teach a builder if they were running their own business how the maths would make sense in that. Teaching I don't know algebra and goodness knows what is not much use to any of us, but teaching practical skills on applying maths can help some individuals. It has to be sensible, we need that control in London over further education.

PETER: Sadiq you wanted to come back.

SADIQ: Thank you for the question, I'm a Governor of a primary school and we're very proud about being, about mainstreaming education. It encourages applications from disabled children, what you recognise is there are different ways to fulfilling somebody's potential. The law is quite clear whether it is an employer or somebody else, they should provide reasonable adjustments to that individual to have the ability to use the service to apply for the job or whatever. The obstacles mean disabled Londoners suffer indirect discrimination, we are right in the importance of inclusiveness, education, apprenticeships or the provision of goods and services. So we need to think about what reasonable adjustments we need to make to for all Londoners to have the potential for fulfilment. The point you made, I spoke to Simone from the society for further education about some ideas to take on in City Hall.

CAROLINE R: Yes, this is absolutely crucial, this starts in schools and what's important is that we have genuinely inclusive schools. The problems of schools not including children and young people who are disabled means that they are being excluded right from the beginning, before they even get to college and before they get to that point. So Sian will have a Deputy Mayor for inclusion, for education, sorry, and she wants to make sure that they are involved in ensuring that across the boroughs in London that inclusion in education is an important thing, because if we have a more inclusive education system, at the

point when people get to college they will be less likely to be disadvantaged by these specific requirements about maths for hairdressing. But obviously also it requires flexibility as everyone has said in terms of how people are dealt with when they do get to that college level.

PETER: Thank you very much. Is there one more question before we move on to the next one. We need to give you a microphone otherwise nobody will hear.

FLOOR: My question is not to do with disability, my question is about the funding that George Osborne is cutting from the NHS the amount of people who, kind of don't want to work four hours over the weekend and what is your opinion on that.

PETER: Can you repeat that please.

FLOOR: My question would be to junior doctors are worried about working extra hours...

PETER: We are not going to take that question because it is not related.

FLOOR: It is not related. I wanted your opinion.

PETER: You have had your say but you are not taking your question that is not the purpose of today's discussion. Let's move to the next questioner who is Michelle.

MICHELLE: I'm Michelle, I'm 21-years-old, and I'm here with Mencap and my question is about safety for disability people, wherever I go out at night I get anxious about not being safe about people behaving badly or trying to target me. I want to be able to go out independent lowly, but I'm afraid, what will you do and pledge as mayor to make it safe for people with a learning disability to go out late at night. [Applause]

PETER: What Michelle asks is whenever she goes out at night she gets anxious about not being safe and people behaving badly and wanting to be able to go out independently but I feel afraid, what will you do as mayor to make it safer for people with learning disabilities to go out late at night. I know that to some extent we addressed this on the issue with hate crime, but Michelle's point is the misunderstandings about people with learning disabilities. If the panel would concentrate on that aspect of it I would be grateful.

CAROLINE R: Thank you, it is an important question for all Londoners, everybody needs to feel safe when they go out at night. It can be really scary and particularly if the platforms are quite empty and you are not quite sure exactly where you are going. So one of the main things is obviously making sure that our buses and our tubes are properly staffed. And that people can be confident that when they get to a station that they are safe that they can get home safely without worrying. But it is also about making sure that our streets are safe, we have a lot of people getting run over every year by buses and cars and taxis and lorries. It has to be safe to cross the road. It has to be safe to cross the road even if you have had something to drink and I think some of our roads are designed in a way that is just too dangerous, we don't have crossings where people want to cross the road. Things like when you get off the bus, very often you need to cross the road. But you often have to walk 100-200 yards down the road before you will find a safe place to cross the road. If we are going to have streets that are really safe for people to get around, we need to make sure that they are designed for people on foot and maybe on bicycles and perhaps in wheelchairs but not just for people who are in cars. [Applause]

SADIQ: Thank you for the question. This links back to the question Mike asked from alliance for inclusive education, one of the huge benefits of mainstreaming education is everyone understands people who have differences. That is important people understand people with different needs as another benefit of mainstreaming education. I'm afraid if you remove staff from our tube stations, as has happened over the last eight years, don't be surprised if people don't feel safe tubes. We also have to think about the fact that when it comes to designing, you know, roads, pavements, we have to design them in a way that designs out crime but makes them well lit, visible to people can see, if you feel safer when there are other people around it is really, really important. Sometimes people feel safer when there are CCTV cameras, they know someone is watching them. We discovered recently in many of the CCTV cameras monitoring our stations no-one is monitoring them, it is really important they are monitored in real time. So you raise a really important issue Michelle and I understand the concerns you have got as somebody who has two children who are always out and about in the evenings, I worry about their safety, I wish they were more concerned but I'm worried as their dad.

CAROLINE P: Thank you, it is really important everyone feels safe whatever time of the day they go out in London. That is why I mentioned the 3,000 additional police officers I would put on the tube, train and rail network. We

have also got to make sure our tube network, that every station is fully staffed at all times, and I really support Transport for London taking over the Metro rail services across London, particularly South-East London, because that will mean every station there will be fully staffed and if you are in a wheelchair it means you will be able to turn up and go and use the rail network which you can't with train companies at the moment. [Applause] I know lots of people rely on taxis and private hire vehicles, perhaps later at night to come home. We need to make sure that our taxi and private hire network is safe because which is why I would more than double the number of enforcement officers out there making sure everyone is fully licensed, the driver is who they should be and they need to have the checks in place.

FLOOR: They need to stop charging extra for wheelchairs.

PETER: That seems a fair point.

CAROLINE P: We need to make sure there are taxi ranks at all of the stations at the network so when you come off the tube you know there is taxi fully accessible for you. There are lots of things we can do own the transport network, people who rely on dial-a-ride we have to make sure it is improved, I have heard too many stories of someone going into town for a night in the theatre and left stranded trying to get back, the vehicle hasn't turned up and they can't get hold of them. We have to make sure whatever transport option people want to use is safe and available for them when they need it.

ZAC: Thank you very much. Thank you for the question Michelle. Very sad question, because I don't want London to ever be a place where people feel they can't move around at night safely. I don't want to repeat what I said about how to tackle height crime, height crime is top, front and centre of the safety manifesto, I want to stamp hate crime out, and I don't think it is a big leap from verbal violence to actual violence. We do need more police, which is why I pledged to put 500 new, British Transport Police on the tube network. I also want to reform the late night levy so that local authorities are able to extract a charge from premises where there are particular problems with people drinking too much and to use that to put more police in town centres working with local authorities. When we talk about better transport accessibility, it is more than that, not just about accessibility on the transport system, it is also about the culture. We have had a couple of horror stories in my own constituency reported in the local paper and people being really badly treated by bus drivers, and buses refusing to stop and put ramps down and driving on and leaving

people in the cold. There are at least two occasions in the last few months that has happened in my own constituency and a problem that happens in the whole of London. We need to take a really tough approach and renew and ramp up education and training for our bus drivers. We need to couple that, I think, with a "zero tolerance" approach to those bus drivers who fail to show courtesy to people who they are paid to show courtesy to. I think we need to show a really tough approach. I don't want to read about it in the local papers or a constituent writing to me saying they couldn't use the bus for that reason. It is unacceptable. [Applause]

PETER: I'm conscious we have about quarter of an hour to fit in two, maybe three questions. Let me go to Venessa from the National Autistic Society.

VENESSA: I'm Venessa Bobb and I live in Wandsworth in London, I'm 47-years-old and a parent of an autistic child, I'm here in the National Autistic Society, my question is about autism awareness amongst the black and minority ethnic communities.

PETER: Specifically what is the question?

VENESSA: From my own experience, understanding autistic conditions is lower in the black and ethnic minority communities, I do a lot to increase understanding among the BME communities in my area, what would you do if you are elected a London Mayor to increase understanding and awareness amongst the black ethnic minority communities about autism and other hidden disabilities.

SADIQ: Hi, so the mayor currently is in charge of public health inequality. I want the mayor to be given the powers over leadership and co-ordination for health across London. Physical, mental, social as well as public health as well, that would mean that he or she would make sure that we you know dealt with the issue of education of people, in the BME community there is a lot of stigma around the number of things they are talking about today. Not simply autism, but mental health and other issues as well, so we need to micro-target the resources to those communities where actually if they knew more about it they could befriend, help and assist and remove some of the stigma. One of the things we talked about is schools, teachers in some of the schools, governors, understanding the importance of inclusive education, the additional things you need to provide for children with autism and it is a really big issue and the population is rising, it follows there will be more young people with autism.

There will be more members of the BME communities with autism, we have to be aware about these sorts of issues.

PETER: Thank you very much indeed. I understand you have to leave a bit earlier than we thought is that right.

SADIQ: 15 minutes ago.

PETER: Another ten won't make the difference! We will try and accommodate that. But let me go to Zac.

ZAC: Thank you very much, I think the role of education generally is absolutely essential, I'm proud of my own area, I represent part of Richmond borough and Kingston borough on the Richmond side I genuinely think we are leading the way in terms of breaking down the barriers between different forms of education, I remember one of our local schools, now an academy, was championing, the head teacher was championing a cause which she felt effectively dismantling a very dilapidated SEN school next door to incorporate it into the school she ran. A lot of people in the community were not happy and felt it might damage the quality of education in the school their children went to, there were all sorts of petitions and activities to stop that happening, she ploughed on and I backed her every step of the way, with the effect that today what was an embarrassment in my borough, really Victorian conditions a building that should have been pulled down years ago, it has now been removed and the education that happens in that school is happening in three mainstream schools in the borrowing borough, I would be willing to wager that the barriers are broken down better than anywhere in London and the country. I believe the mainstream children in the school will grow up, I believe they will find it much easier to understand differences that exist between different people and I think the quality of the education for everyone in the school, mainstream or SEN has gone through the roof as compared to how things worked before. This is a big part of the question you have asked about education more generally public education, for that as mayor I will rely as I will on many other areas of discussion on working with the organisations that understand these issues far better than I do. People on the frontline. Disability organisations, representative organisations, I will take my advice from them and through a Tsar in City Hall who will make sure everything I do, every decision I have taken is taken on disability.

CAROLINE R: For any parent with a child with autism it is a huge, huge thing to

live with and to learn to live with. It is a question of getting your friends, the people you work with, the people at your child's school to understand the what having autism means for your child and what it means for their relationship with your child. I have huge, huge admiration for all parents of young people with autism. It is obviously a spectrum and some young people with autism have much, much more extensive needs than others. But certainly in City Hall I know that Sian would want to be listening to the people, both people with autism themselves and to their families, their carers. So that...

FLOOR: I'm asking about BME.

CAROLINE R: Sorry I lost the plot on the question. OK, in terms of making sure then that BME communities take on board autism and also taking on board what it means, I think it does actually matter for the carers and the families of people who have children with autism, but making sure that we are bringing in to City Hall, that we are listening to BME communities who if someone like you were to, your name is Venessa, I think we would need to get you into City Hall to advise what needs to be done. I suspect you have got probably got some good ideas and perhaps within City Hall there would be the resources to be able to act on those ideas so that we can actually change current practice so there is more awareness. I hope that's good enough.

PETER: Did you want to come back. You don't have to?

VENESSA: I will, what I think is important, my experience is I went to four tribunal appeals and because my son, I don't like to use the word high-functioning autistic, but I had to battle with the local authorities until I isolate myself from everybody, family, friends, everybody because nobody understood that when you have sub who is high functioning, they need just as much support, not just children, adults as well. It is not just, the I'm a black mother, but I know there is a lot of people from other communities, Polish, the Muslim community, Spanish, Turkish and a lot of them feel they are not being represented. Yes you can put somebody with autism but everybody's journey is different, my son is autistic and ADHD, I have had to go a long journey and fight everybody, not just the local authority, family, friends, it is society. Because it is a social condition we have got to look at social safety and awareness but you have a lot of young girls getting caught up in sexual exploitation and young boys, like my son likes to wear a hood, people automatically think he's in gang, I don't want him to be out on the streets. It is looking at the bigger picture, it is about the police and the local authority and

the law as well to understand when you have these young boys on the streets with their hoods on their head or even if they have awkward behaviour it doesn't mean they are awkward it is about the sensory environment. So that's what we have to look at as well.

PETER: Thank you very much indeed.

CAROLINE P: Thank you very much, and thank you for the question and some detail there, I'm afraid your story is not uncommon, most parents in similar situations to you across London. We need to increase the understanding for all communities on autism in London. Lots of us don't have the detailed knowledge we should have, clearly some of that does need to be targeted at particular communities as you highlighted the BME community. I want the London Mayor to have more control over health services, Manchester is leading the way and able to run its NHS and other services and not in London, the capital city, something has gone wrong we need far greater say over our health services and that includes the ability to be able to run London-wide and targeted health campaigns. A few years ago the money would be top sliced so City Hall could run those campaigns, unfortunately the Government went back on the promise and we don't have that ability and funding and that is regrettable. We have also got to make sure staff across things like the transport network fully understand people with autism and are able to help them more. I want to make one final point, we have been talking with various questions about inclusive education, I want also the mayor to have a greater say over education in the capital, in terms of school place planning and nursery planning, something dear to my heart as a parent to a toddler. But making sure we have one London schools commissioner, this Government has divided London into three, we have three schools commissioners, that is wrong, we need to make sure question we need inclusive education but there are sometimes where a young person does actually need to be in a very special school and we need to make sure those places are provided in London so those young people aren't having to trek halfway across the capital city to get the education they deserve. [Applause]

PETER: We have two questions and I'm going to ask with the co-operation of the panel we might just about be able to, we need to be brisk. Sadiq Khan has had to leave us, so our thanks to him, but he did have to go to a prior engagement. I will try to get these two questions in, if you could give your absolute basic top dollar answer to this. Roy Benjamin is from the RNIB, this is the question put

from them Roy would you like to put it.

ROY: Just waiting for the microphone.

ROY: Roy Benjamin from the RNIB and Merton Centre for Independent Living. If elected would the candidates give equal consideration and priority to the needs of pedestrians, particularly those pedestrians with visual or other sensory impairments or mobility impairments as is currently given to cyclist, this clearly relates to...[Applause]. Can I just emphasise we're not anti-cycling! But we do want equal treatment.

PETER: Thank you Roy. Let me try to get quick answers to this so we can just about fit in the other question as well. The implication is clear there that cyclists and maybe motorists get more consideration than pedestrians.

ZAC: Like you I'm pro-cycling, I'm pro-electric cars, I'm pro-transport, and we need to sort our air quality issues, a problem in London. There is a growing competition for limited space, our population growing by 100,000 a year, these tensions will grow. It is essential as we grow and improve and develop our transport system that we take into account the tensions that inevitably are going to arise. I won't give you a detailed answer now other than to say if I'm elected Mayor of London I will ensure, that on the board from TfL we have someone who is expert in holding that board to account and me to account and making sure that transport decisions in London that these tensions are properly addressed that is in addition to an inclusion adviser at the heart of City Hall to get the decisions right. I recognise the problems you have identified, it is an issue in my own city, and it is about balance and ensuring that everyone is able to use a complicated system.

FLOOR: We are losing the competition at the moment.

PETER: Obviously the issue in people's mind is shared surfaces.

FLOOR: Island bus stops we can't cross over the road.

CAROLINE P: Thank you for the question, it is important that pedestrians rise up the agenda of TfL, we have seen them pushed to the bottom of the pile over the last few years. We need floating bus stops...[Applause]...I have seen some in practice, whilst we need to make sure cyclists are safe, pedestrians have to be as well, some of the designs at the moment are not good enough for everyone. Actually one of my biggest achievements on the London Assembly and one of

the things I'm most proud of was work I did for visually impaired Londoners with guide dogs for the blind, I managed to get changed an outdated bylaw which meant if you had a guide dog you couldn't go on the moving escalator, it had to be turned off so you could walk down in order to use the tube. It means people who were blind using a guide dog were not able to use the network. I managed to lobby the current mayor to change that and the Department of Transport to change it as well. It is really important that some of these very small things actually make such a big difference to people's lives that change that is why I'm a strong champion for disabled Londoners particularly in the field of transport for the last eight years and I hope continue to that after May.

CAROLINE R: I have been a campaigner with Living Streets for about 17 years, Living Streets is the organisation that stands up for pedestrians I made sure that Living Streets two or three years ago invited people in from the RNIB and Transport for All that we could have a discussion about shared space and understand the problems, that was to the policy Living Streets in relation to shared space because we were being asked to contribute to consultations on so many new schemes in London. I think cycling is part of the solution for our city, it has to be. It is a very, very efficient way of getting a lot of people around. And if we get more people cycling then that will free up a bit of space on the tube and on the buses. It will also allow people to get out of their cars and it will mean that London has the right amount of capacity to move this growing group of Londoners around. But the cycling facilities have got to be made so that they are safe for pedestrians, they have to come top of the pile. [Applause] pedestrians have to be able to get across the road, access a bus and navigate our streets safely on their, without being mown down either by a cyclist or someone in a car. We have to be very careful that we don't get into a battle with cyclists, because I think that cyclists can be part of the solution and I think that it is about making sure we have enough space on our roads that is given to people on bicycles and to people on foot. Where we need to be putting the space is cutting the space from the cars. Because the cars are actually contributing to air pollution, they are worsening our health, they are contributing to the obesity epidemic and we really need to make sure that both pedestrians and cyclists are getting the space that they need and the safe designs for our streets.

PETER: We are going to squeeze this in, we have a question from Katherine Toomey and it does relate to transport as well let's try to fit that in. We will need to be quite quick.

FLOOR: The cost of living is higher for disabled people because of costs of products and services, one particular issue is taxis and private hire cars, while black cabs are accessible, not all private hire cars are, attitudes vary between drivers and that's a problem for all of us. What action would you take to ensure that disabled people have access, equal access to the taxis and private hire vehicles that are available for everyone else?

PETER: This is already been mentioned. If you could tell us what you would do about this very specifically and this issue of not all cabs being accessible or sometimes ignoring disabled people I would be grateful because we will have to do this quite quickly.

CAROLINE P: I'm a big supporter of the taxi train, it is really important we support them in terms of moving over to a new cleaner fleet of vehicles, but also maintaining their full accessibility, which is so, so important. But private hire, they are there are some great companies out there and some which I would describe as "rogue" what I find shocking is when I see people with guide and assistance dogs getting turned away because the private hire vehicle doesn't want to take them. We need to stop it and where there is evidence we need to take away the license of that driver. [Applause] we have also got to make sure that where there are bigger fleets we try to move so that is one in four vehicles are accessible in the fleet. Training is accessible, before you get a license to drive in London that you would have done proper disability awareness training so you are able to serve your customers, many of whom may well have a physical or a hidden disability.

FLOOR: Awareness and equality please.

CAROLINE P: Of course.

ZAC: Dial-a ride taxi cars very important, both need protecting. I agree with car lion that we need to take a much tougher approach to the drivers who engage in anti-social behaviour who don't show courtesy, equal courtesy to their different customers, that is something which I think TfL needs to come heavily down on. Much of the problem does come down to attitudes as opposed to regulations, I talked earlier a little bit about buses, but the same is true occasionally for black cabs, I'm a massive fan of the black cab training in London, one of the most valuable things we have, but it is based on the reports coming back that some within the trade need to be reminded it is their responsibility not just to be wheelchair accessibility but making sure that those

who depend on wheelchairs have access to their vehicle. That is a problem. I have been lobbied in the last few weeks by organisations suggesting that 25% of all licenses awarded for new cabs should be more wheelchair accessible cabs. I don't know if that is the right figure and I will consult on that. Clearly somewhere in that area is the solution, but I will talk to the organisations on the frontline before settling on a clear view. But, yes, when it comes to awarding licenses for private hire vehicles we need to make sure there are more private hire vehicles available for people who are wheelchair dependent.

FLOOR: Not only wheelchair but scooters as well. It is very important. They are refusing at the moment.

ZAC: Absolutely.

CAROLINE R: OK, obviously I agree with everything that has been said so far about black cabs, providing a really important service in London. Once we can get them all running on clean fuel then they will be a really, really essential part of our transport system in London. I think what Sian, the very brief conversation I had with her before I came to this meeting, we actually discussed this issue, she said one of the big issues is regulation of the minicab industry, private hire industry and she would seek more powers in terms of regulating the minicab industry so that we can make sure that accessibility is going much further up their agenda and that there are more minicabs with accessible access.

PETER: Caroline thank you very much. There we are going to have to leave it. We did fit in as much as we possibly could. My thanks to the audience for your courtesy, enthusiasm and sometimes disagreement. [Applause] you have applauded yourselves vigorously! I would also like to thank Zac Goldsmith, Sadiq Khan who had to leave us, and Caroline Pidgeon and Caroline Russell with particular congratulations for stepping in and being here and answering questions. [Applause]

>>: Ladies and gentlemen can I ask you to remain seated for a moment whilst we clear the entryway to provide access for everyone to leave in an orderly manner, if you don't mind waiting a few minutes thank you very much for your patience. Please don't congregate at the front, please allow the wheelchair access first.