



## Clean Air Parents' Network update - September 2019

From signing letters and responding to consultations to singing for clean air and lobbying at Westminster, as Clean Air Parents' Network (CAPN) members, you've been busy keeping the pressure on for clean air across the country. Read on for some of the highlights so far this year and what's coming up.

### Giving a thumbs up to Clean Air Zones

Clean Air Zones are key to tackling toxic air in many of our towns and cities and you've made it clear that parents and carers expect local decision makers to put forward bold plans to tackle illegal air pollution in the shortest possible time.

#### Bristol

CAPN members in Bristol didn't let the summer holidays stop them mobilising over 400 parents, carers, health professionals and educators to sign an open letter to Marvin Rees, the Mayor of Bristol, telling him that the City Council's plans to tackle its air pollution crisis simply weren't good enough. The plans are particularly disappointing given the city's reputation as a green city.

As part of this, Steph, a parent who signed the letter and whose son lives with a serious heart condition and asthma, spoke powerfully to the [Bristol Post](#) and on the [local ITV news](#) about how families like hers in Bristol's poorest areas are impacted by the city's unsafe air.

Bristol members have also won the council's agreement to address pollution at the school gate through the 'school streets' programme: on Clean Air Day, [the Mayor of Bristol announced](#) that the city would pilot the scheme to close roads outside of schools during drop-off and pick-up times. If you'd like to find out more, drop them a line on [schoolstreetsbristol@gmail.com](mailto:schoolstreetsbristol@gmail.com).

#### Greater London

CAPN members in London kicked off 2019 by grilling representatives from the Mayor of London's office, Transport for London and London boroughs about their plans to clean up the capital's air at our 'Clean Air for Children Question Time' event.

In April, the Evening Standard reported on our [open letter to Mayor of London](#), which was signed by more than 800 parents and carers, health professionals and educators. The letter urged him to stick to his promise to expand the soon to be introduced Ultra Low Emission Zone and called on him to extend this to the whole of Greater London to ensure that more people can benefit from this. The Zone marks the start of what we hope will be more Clean Air Zones across the UK and works by discouraging drivers with the most polluting vehicles from entering the central London area that it covers.

Local TV also covered the [Chorus for Clean Air](#), which was organised by CAPN members who are part of the wonderful Pram Chorus. Over 100 supporters including parents, children and

people living with lung conditions put their lungs to good use to leave the Mayor (who joined us singing in the rain) in no doubt that Londoners will not stop making a noise about clean air.

### Greater Manchester

We started the new year by taking over the Home Cinema for an evening for a screening of the BBC documentary, Fighting for Air and a Question & Answer session with air quality experts. The event was oversubscribed and CAPN was approached by a number of people who wanted to do something similar across Greater Manchester. As a result, screenings were also run in Chorlton, Trafford and Hale and some new local groups have been set up including [Clean Air for Chorlton](#) and [CleanAirM41](#).

In March the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) held its 2<sup>nd</sup> Green Summit. CAPN members took this opportunity to write an [open letter to Mayor Burnham](#), asking him for an update on progress towards protecting the health of children from the impact of dirty air and to call for Clean Air Zone proposals to be accelerated and address pollution from all vehicles, including private cars. His [response](#) underlined how important it is for us all to continue to push for the GMCA's clean air plans to go further, faster.

CAPN members did just this in May through the initial consultation on Greater Manchester's Clean Air Strategy. Many of you emailed the GMCA to let them know we are unimpressed by the proposals resulting in a meeting between parents and the Lead for the Clean Air Zone plan at Transport for Greater Manchester.

### Liverpool City Region

In February, CAPN took over the Box at FACT for a screening of the BBC documentary, Fighting for Air. This was followed by a lively discussion with the audience and panellists, including the British Lung Foundation's (BLF) Director of Public Affairs, Liverpool City Council's Executive member for Transport, Planning, Environment, Open Spaces and Air Quality and Assistant Director of Public Health.

On Clean Air Day, 20<sup>th</sup> June, members of CAPN were invited by the Royal College of Physicians to run a workshop at their air quality conference. This enabled the network to directly raise the air quality issues facing children and parents across to the Mayor of Liverpool and the Director of Public Health.

### West Midlands

After bringing together academics and politicians to raise the awareness of the city's air quality with [London Sustainability Exchange](#) (LSx) in December, Birmingham City Council invited us to organise a Clean Air for Children's summit in February. Over a hundred people attended, including many parents, children and teachers, with the overwhelming message calling for the Council to put protecting children's health at the heart of their Clean Air Strategy.

Following the summit, CAPN hosted a round table meeting with officers from Birmingham City Council to share local concerns and explore solutions. The Council launched a funding opportunity for schools to develop safer streets around their schools and these plans are now being rolled out.

At the end of March, Birmingham City Council published its draft Clean Air Strategy, outlining further actions to clean up the air, in addition to their plans for a Clean Air Zone in the city centre. We were delighted to see them take on some of our recommendations, including the need to focus on protecting children where they live, learn and play. To keep the pressure on, CAPN members wrote to the Executive Lead Councillor for Transport and Environment, welcoming the plans but calling on him to take more steps to protect Birmingham's young lungs.

## Telling the UK Government that 'The Time is Now' for clean air

Many of you were part of the 10,000 strong 'The Time is Now' lobby of parliament at the end of June calling for stronger laws to protect our health and the environment. Read [Birgitte's story](#) about why she travelled from Manchester to London to march for clean air with the British Lung Foundation.

## What's next?

Although we're living in uncertain times, we are absolutely clear that huge steps still need to be taken at national and local government level so that our children can breathe safely where they live, learn and play.

Below is a heads up about some of the ways in which you can get involved to make it clear to our elected representatives that they need to prioritise urgent action so that all children across the UK can breathe healthy air where they live, work and play.

### Reclaiming the streets on Car Free Day Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> September

The 22<sup>nd</sup> September is World Car Free Day. And this year there are set to be more events than ever across the UK. This is an opportunity to show how our towns and cities could be healthier and better places for all to live if in addition to cleaner vehicles we can also have fewer of them on our roads. Search online for events where you live.

London is kicking up a gear with many iconic streets and bridges in the centre closed to traffic and the majority of London boroughs are running 'play streets' on the day. [Take a look at the map of what's being planned across the capital.](#)

### Applying local pressure

#### Greater Manchester

We anticipate that this autumn will see the long-awaited formal consultation on Greater Manchester's air quality plan. Draft proposals published earlier this year do not go far enough and we will need as many local members as possible to show Mayor Burnham that he can't play politics with children's health and demand that the plans reflect this.

#### Liverpool City Region

National Government has asked Liverpool City Council to submit their Clean Air Proposals by 31<sup>st</sup> October. We need to be ready to make sure that the city's leaders understand that children in Liverpool deserve to have their health protected from dirty air as much as those in other cities across the country!

## 2020 Mayoral campaigns

There might be uncertainty about if and when a General Election will take place but one thing is certain: mayoral elections will take place in Greater London, Greater Manchester, Liverpool and the West Midlands in May 2020. Watch this space for information about how you can build on our success in these cities and make sure the air pollution is a key election issue during the campaign.

### **Calling for greater national ambition**

Look out for details of how you can help get ambitious new laws that set tougher legal limits based on the World Health Organization's guidelines to better protect people's health and enshrine our right to breathe clean air in UK law.

### **Got anything you'd like to share?**

We know that lots of you have been busy calling for action on clean air in your area so do get in touch to let us know what you've been up to or if you have any stories about the impact of harmfully polluted air on your family. If you live in Greater Manchester, Liverpool or the West Midlands do get in touch with [Sue](#) and if you live anywhere else, [Catherine](#) would love to hear from you!

Thank you to the hundreds of you who have written to MPs and mayors, completed consultations and come along to our events: we couldn't do any of this without your support. Let's build on this throughout the remainder of 2019 and into 2020 to make sure that we secure the action on air pollution that young lungs so desperately need.

*Catherine and Sue*

Clean Air Parents' Network Coordinators and ClientEarth and BLF



*The Clean Air Parents' Network is supported by the British Lung Foundation and ClientEarth. We are calling on all levels of government to take action to tackle illegal and harmful levels of air pollution to protect the health of people across the UK [www.cleanairparents.org.uk](http://www.cleanairparents.org.uk)*