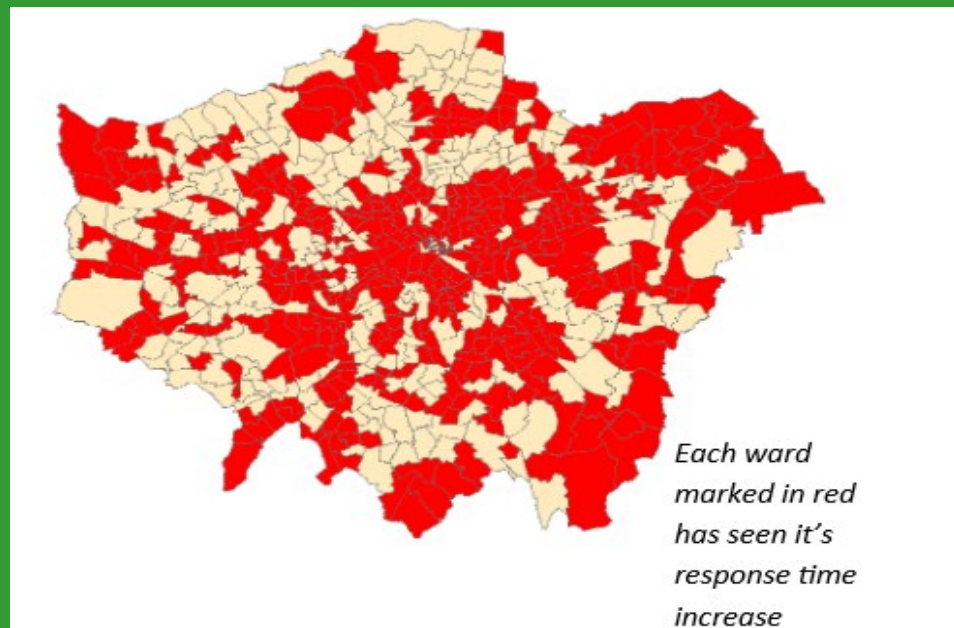


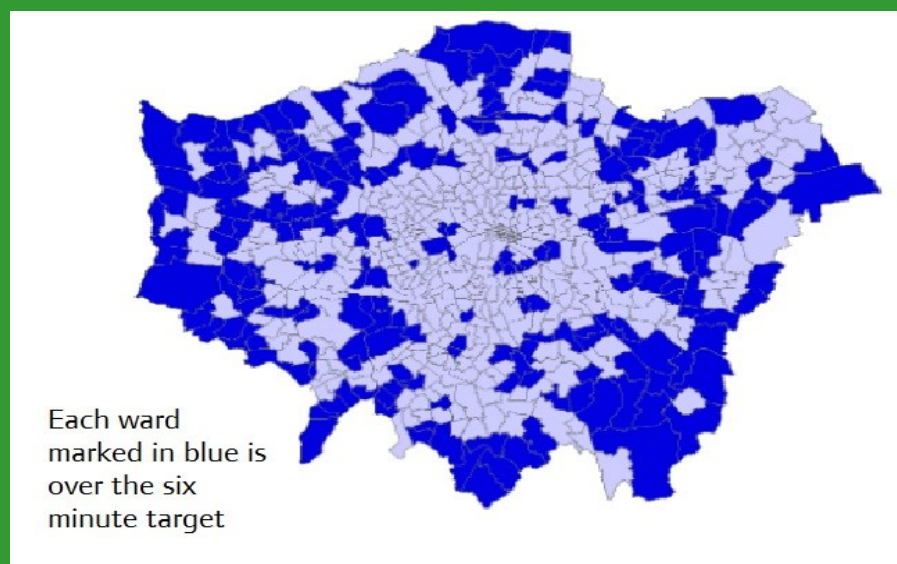
## The truth of Boris Johnson's fire cuts



Over half the wards in London have seen fire engine response times increase since Boris Johnson's 2014 station closures

214

The number of wards where fire engines are missing the six minute response time target since Boris Johnson's station closures



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## THE COST OF BORIS

*Playing with fire:*  
Cuts and closures

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LONDON **ASSEMBLY** LABOUR

# Playing with fire: Cuts and closures

***In slashing the London Fire Brigade (LFB) budget by £106m Boris Johnson forced through the closure of ten fire stations, cut 14 fire engines and axed over 500 fire fighters. The most worrying part is that he's still not finished.***

Under Boris Johnson's mayoralty, the fire service in London has had to survive the greatest cuts in its history. Despite opposition from 94% of Londoners taking part in the consultation, widespread campaigns against the closures and serious concerns about the impact on public safety, Boris Johnson forced the cuts through.

## ***Response times rocket***

The result was devastatingly predictable. Since January 2014, when the ten stations were closed, the time Londoners have to wait for a fire engine to reach them has increased significantly with response times jumping in over half the wards in the capital. Data produced by LFB shows that 214 wards in London are missing the six minute target for the fire engine to arrive at an incident with 141 wards also missing the second fire engine target of eight minutes. In 37 areas, response times have rocketed by over a minute.

For example, a recent incident near the now closed Belsize fire station, on a night when the Brigade were particularly stretched showed what an impact these reckless cuts are having. Despite people being reported as being involved in the incident, it took firefighters over 15 minutes to arrive. The fire eventually needed five fire engines and crew to bring it under control.

Of those areas affected, the most deprived are hardest hit. Two thirds of the most deprived areas in London are now forced to wait longer for a fire engine to arrive.

## ***Every second counts in a fire.***

The vicious speed with which fires take hold mean, that even a modest increase in response times can have far reaching consequences. There is no doubt that an across the board increase of only seconds puts lives at risk, all in the name of cost cutting – a legacy which will continue to hit Londoners far beyond Boris' term in office.

**Since the fire station closures, response times have jumped in over half the wards in the capital. That means Londoners waiting longer for help during a fire.**

## ***The threat remains***

The fact that the closures represented a scaled-back version of the Mayor's original intentions, thanks to sustained opposition across the political spectrum, is of little consolation. It does, however, offer a warning. Boris' initial intention to axe an additional eight fire stations and 18 fire engines has not gone

away. Already, we've seen a further 13 engines removed by stealth, taken out of service to be retained as 'strike cover' and the Commissioner is already drawing up plans for another round of cuts after Boris ordered another £27 million of cuts to be made. This is before any further reductions in funding are announced by the Government later this autumn.

As with so much Boris does however, it didn't have to be this way. The Mayor ignored fully costed proposals to maintain the service and pressed ahead with these cuts so that he could reduce his share of council tax by just a penny a day for each household in London.

## ***Politics ahead of public safety***

Taken as a whole, the Mayor's approach has been to undermine the fire service; putting politics ahead of public safety. On top of station closures, the Mayor has sought to lock out striking firefighters, when they return to work after short strikes, which would have resulted in less experienced private contractors being in place for much longer than needed.

Furthermore, the Mayor has pushed through the privatisation of non-uniformed staff and forced the fire service to consult for despotic regimes, who even his advisors admit are human rights abusers; and the Mayor even tried to sell off some former fire station buildings at knock-down prices.

**When fighting fires every second counts. Two thirds of the most deprived areas in London are now forced to wait longer for a fire engine to arrive.**

## ***Fire service in crisis***

The Mayor has a duty to protect the public and ensure the safety of Londoners. Currently he is failing to do this. Boris Johnson will be leaving a fire service in crisis when he departs City Hall next year.

The incoming Mayor will be faced with deep cuts coming down the line from central Government, with 'savings' requirements between 25% and 40% over the years to the end of the decade.

Put that into perspective: every 1% reduction in LFEPA's funding means the budget gap growing by £3.8 million. It is clear that with the levels of savings needed, every area of the London Fire Brigade's work will be impacted. A new Mayor will have the challenge of not only balancing the budget but also providing the service which Londoners expect and deserve.

