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NEWS

Coroner traces London girl's asthma death to air pollution

Asthma patient Ella Kissi-Debrah died in 2013 partly because of London's "excessive" air pollution, a coroner has concluded. The landmark finding follows a 7-year legal battle.



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The A205, aka the South Circular Road, is among the busiest in the capital

Britain's Lung Foundation and Asthma UK said the re-run inquest had laid bare the "[invisible dangers of breathing dirty air](#)" while Mayor Sadiq Khan said it was a "landmark moment" for London to [push for low traffic emissions](#).

Coroner Philip Barlow, revising an overturned 2014 inquest verdict that excluded smog, said Ella Kissi-Debrah "died of asthma contributed to by exposure to excessive air pollution."

Ella, who was 9 when she died of respiratory failure, had lived in southeast London, close the busy ring-road the South Circular Road (the A205), and had been taken to hospital nearly 30 times in

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She had been "exposed to levels of nitrogen dioxide in excess of World Health Organization guidelines," said Barlow. The WHO's guideline limit for nitrogen dioxide (NO2), adopted by the EU and by extension the UK prior to Brexit, stands at an annual mean of 40 micrograms per cubic meter of air.

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Likely to save 'more children's lives'

Ella's mother, Rosamund, told reporters after Barlow's verdict that the issue was "far from over," adding on Twitter: "Hopefully this will

mean many more children's lives being saved."

The Ella Roberta Family Foundation
@rosamund_ElsFdn

Today was a landmark case, a 7 year fight has resulted in air pollution being recognised on Ella's death certificate. Hopefully this will mean mean many more children's lives being saved. Thank you everyone for your continued support.

11:15 PM · Dec 16, 2020

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"As we walk around our city, there are still illegal levels of air pollution," she said.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan described the second inquest's verdict as a "landmark moment" that highlighted efforts to establish an inner-city low emission zone similar to some 200 already in operation across Europe.

The capital is not expected to lower its pollution to legal limits until 2025, according to a study by King's College London.

How COVID benefits from air pollution

Legacy in Clean Air Act

Rosamund Adoo-Kissi-Debrah said she hoped a new Clear Air Act would become her daughter's legacy.

Environmental law charity ClientEarth described the coroner's finding as a "legal first" that would "certainly send a signal to the UK government."



ClientEarth
@ClientEarth

Seven years after Ella Kissi-Debrah died following a severe asthma attack, an inquest has now found that air pollution made a material contribution to her death. Our lawyer, Katie Nield, said: "This is a huge moment for Ella's family – they finally have the clarity they deserve."

2:55 AM · Dec 17, 2020

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ipj/msh (Reuters, AFP, AP)

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