

MAYOR OF LONDON

Update from the Mayor of London on COVID 19 - 18 March

This is an extraordinary time for our city, our country and the entire world. We're in the middle of the biggest health, economic and social crisis since the Second World War. While we are only at the beginning of the process of dealing with coronavirus, it is already clear that we will be living with the fallout and implications for many years to come.

As I've said from the very beginning of the outbreak of COVID-19, it's essential that we act in accordance with the best medical and scientific advice. That's why I support the various decisions to introduce the new measures this week as part of our efforts to slow down the spread of the virus. These mean that:

- Anyone who lives with someone who has a continuous cough or a temperature should stay at home for 14 days.
- Londoners should work from home if they possibly can.
- Everyone should halt non-essential contact with others and stop all unnecessary travel. That means not going to pubs, clubs, restaurants or other people's homes.
- Mass gatherings should not happen.
- In particular, those who are over 70, those who are pregnant or those who have a significant health condition should limit contact with others.
- Those who are most at threat – with the most serious underlying conditions – should expect the NHS to be in touch shortly, to outline special measures that they will need to take to protect themselves – including being shielded from the wider population for a potential 12 weeks.
- The Government has ordered schools to close to the majority of pupils at the end of the day on Friday, but the most vulnerable children and those of key workers will be able to continue attending.

All Londoners must follow the advice that applies to them – and I would urge you to share this advice as far and wide as possible. You can find the latest advice and how it applies to you [here](#).

Please do not phone 111 unless your situation is deteriorating. We're clearly still in the early phase of this crisis, which means the Government's experts will need to introduce further measures at the point at which they will have the biggest effect. I can assure Londoners that this is under constant review.

As the Prime Minister has said, the spread of coronavirus is at a more advanced stage in London than in other parts of the country. As Mayor, I remain in regular contact with the Government, the Chief Medical Officer, Public Health England, business leaders, local authority leaders, the third sector, trade unions and the Metropolitan Police, Fire and Transport Commissioners. I attended the Government's COBR meeting earlier this week and will be meeting the Prime Minister and senior officials later today.

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London-wide strategic coordinating arrangements have been activated to address all aspects of this situation. First and foremost, this is about helping to protect the health of Londoners, particularly those most at risk, and giving the NHS and our incredible health workers the chance to save as many lives as possible. But it's also about dealing with the very serious economic and social consequences of coronavirus – which cannot be understated.

I have been clear from the outset that the Government's responsibility through the economic side of this crisis is to ensure that nobody permanently loses their job or their home, is evicted or left homeless as a result of coronavirus. There is no doubt this will require fundamental changes to our economy.

I welcome the first measures the Chancellor announced in the Budget last week and again on Tuesday to support businesses and workers. However, the Government will inevitably need to go much further and faster in the weeks and months ahead. I am particularly concerned about the need for the Government to move quickly – to ensure there is no lag between announcing support and it then being deployed to help those it is designed to support.

That's why I'll continue to stand up for London by putting pressure on the Government to do what it takes to help Londoners as quickly as physically possible. I am particularly concerned about those Londoners in the lowest-paid jobs, who are self-employed or who are working in the gig economy - many of whom may feel that they have no choice but to work, even if they fall ill.

Given the scale of the extraordinary challenge we face, we're changing the way we're working at City Hall – putting as much resource as we can behind this effort. We're already providing support – whether financial or advice - to businesses and employers. We're working with councils to see what more we can do to help support the vulnerable, those who require care and the homeless during this period. And just yesterday, we announced that we'll be investing one million pounds into a new emergency support fund to help community and voluntary organisations affected by the impact of the coronavirus.

We've understandably been getting many questions about Transport for London over recent days so I'd like to take this opportunity to outline the current position. Our transport network is still running for those who need to make essential journeys. TfL have enhanced their cleaning regimes and reduced services. This means the closure of the Waterloo and City Line and the Night Tube from Friday 20 March. Up to 40 stations will be closed from Thursday 19 March. People should not be travelling - by any means - unless they really, really have to. Scientific advice is clear - Londoners should be avoiding social interaction unless absolutely necessary – and that means they should be avoiding using the transport network unless absolutely necessary.

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I want to see more Londoners following the expert advice – which means it's critical that we see far fewer Londoners using our transport network than is currently the case. Essential workers still need to be able to get around our city – something which is vital to helping our emergency services function. I want to be clear now that the frequency of services will reduce – potentially very significantly – over the days and weeks ahead. We will do this in a way that makes sure essential workers can still get around and we will not reduce service levels so that the remaining trains and buses are crowded. This crisis will inevitably have a profound impact on TfL's finances – and we are talking to Government about managing this already – but saving lives must come first.

We're in the midst of an immensely challenging and anxious time for all Londoners. We're all rightly worried about our most vulnerable family members, friends and neighbours. But London has been through tough times before, and throughout our city's history, we've repeatedly demonstrated the power of coming together in common cause. Now is the time for us to do so again. Because we all have a part to play in preventing the spread of this virus and helping to save lives. So I'd urge all Londoners to pull together and to stay united as we seek to navigate our way through this difficult time.

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

Response to the Chancellor's rescue package on 17 March:

While Sadiq welcomes the range of measures to support businesses, individuals and workers that were announced by the Chancellor on Tuesday evening, he is concerned that much of the additional support will not come fast enough for some businesses and will be in the form of loans which must be repaid. It's clear the impact of Coronavirus on London's businesses is potentially catastrophic, as it is across the country.

While it is welcome that businesses in retail, hospitality, leisure and tourism will be exempt from business rates for a year, Sadiq is extremely disappointed that many small businesses in London will be excluded from the £25,000 cash grant the Chancellor announced. Sadiq also remains concerned about those in the lowest paying jobs, the self-employed or those in the gig economy and urges the Government to do more to support these individuals.

There was also nothing from the Chancellor about any Government intervention to help the 2.4 million Londoners who are renters. *[NB: The PM has since announced that emergency legislation to suspend new evictions from social or private rented accommodation and that no new possession proceeding through applications to the court will start during the crisis. Sadiq's response to this development is below]*

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Sadiq will continue to stand up for London by working with the Government to ensure that businesses are able to recover from this crisis and can continue to power our economy for many decades to come. **You can read his full response [here](#).**

Business letter to the Prime Minister on 17 March

Sadiq wrote to the Government on Tuesday 17 to urge the PM to go much further in providing urgent aid and support to meet business critical needs and provide increasing financial relief for London's businesses affected by the Coronavirus outbreak.

The letter follows a meeting of business community leaders Sadiq convened which highlighted the need for more rapid and ambitious action to support the economy and prevent widespread job losses and business failures.

He called for:

- Action to be taken to prevent widespread job losses and keep people in work, learning from international examples of support schemes.
- Further extensions in support for statutory sick pay and benefits so those who're unable to work - including the self-employed, freelancers and those in the gig-economy so that they can meet their living costs. Following the Chancellor's announcement on Tuesday evening, Sadiq remains extremely concerned about this group and urges the Government to do much more to help them.
- Government to give greater assistance to businesses facing financial difficulty, cash flow and rent payments through the tax system and in the form of cash grants. Sadiq remains concerned that so far there has been no Government intervention to help the 2.4 million Londoners who rent a home in the capital. *[NB: The PM has since announced that emergency legislation to suspend new evictions from social or private rented accommodation and that no new possession proceeding through applications to the court will start during the crisis. Sadiq's response to this development is below]*
- Government to make support available to cover lost revenue as a result of its advice to avoid pubs, clubs, theatres and crowded places. Sadiq welcomed the Chancellor's announcement on Tuesday evening that these businesses will be exempt from business rates for a year, however he remains disappointed that many small businesses will be exempt from the Government cash grant.
- A subgroup of COBRA to be set up to coordinate cross Government action to support businesses and the economy, along with a single Cabinet Minister responsible for dealing with the economic impacts of the crisis. *[NB: This has been implemented by the Government.]* **Read more [here](#).**

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Ahead of the Housing Secretary's statement on 18 March Sadiq urged Government to:

- Support private renters by banning evictions and ensuring that the housing costs of all those unable to pay rent are covered by the welfare system
- Suspend the Bedroom Tax
- Ensure all London's homeless can access emergency support to self-isolate

Reaction to the Government's ban on evictions from social or private rented accommodation for three months on 18 March:

Sadiq said: "This simply doesn't go far enough to protect renters. As well as the ban on evictions, the Government must ensure that the benefits system covers the housing costs of all tenants affected by Coronavirus so that renters don't get into debt"

Reaction to the announcement that schools will close for most children made on 18 March:

"The Government has ordered schools to close to the majority of pupils at the end of the day on Friday, but the most vulnerable children and those of key workers will be able to continue attending.

"The Government's scientific and medical experts say this unprecedented step is now necessary to slow down the spread of coronavirus.

"Many parents will be concerned about what this means for their children's education and the difficulty of juggling childcare and jobs. This is not a decision that the Government has taken lightly. And I support it.

"It is crucial that the Government sets out how it will support parents, teachers and staff during these difficult times. I look forward to more clarity about which key workers will still be able to send their children to school and as well as the government's plans to support those who usually receive free school meals and those who would have had exams in May and June.

"This will also have a huge impact on many other vital public services, together with businesses whose workers will have to stay at home to look after their children due to the lack of affordable childcare alternatives.

"Londoners must always follow the latest expert advice that applies to them. The timing of these measures is designed to have the maximum possible effect. It will clearly also affect teenagers who have learned that GCSE and A-level exams will now not take place as planned this summer.

"London will get through these extraordinarily difficult times, not least because of the continuing hard work of teachers and other school staff who are playing their part. Our city has faced many challenges in the past and always come through them by staying united – as we must do again now."

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Media and social media

- Sadiq appeared in the media on Tuesday morning to repeat Government advice on social distancing, and to call on the Government to provide additional support for London's businesses. He appeared on [BBC Breakfast, GMB, Sky News, the Today programme](#).
- You can watch Sadiq's message to Londoners following the Government's Coronavirus announcement on 16 March [here](#).
- Sadiq posted a thread following his meeting with business leaders on Monday providing guidance on what must be done to protect jobs and businesses, [see here](#).
- The Foreign Office has posted guidance on international travel, [see here](#).

City Hall action and support

- Sadiq has been providing advice and reassurance for Londoners since the start of the Covid-19 outbreak.
- City Hall and the wider GLA family (including TfL, the Met Police and London Fire Brigade) are focused on providing support for Londoners. This will be targeted at individuals and groups who are most vulnerable to the consequences of the pandemic as well as the virus itself.
- City Hall is shifting the way it operates to increase resilience in the face of the pandemic.

Specific action includes:

Charities and the voluntary sector: London's community and voluntary organisations support our communities and provide much-needed help to the most vulnerable, so in these challenging times their work is more important than ever. That's why Sadiq pledged today, Wednesday, £1 million to a new emergency support fund to help London's community and voluntary organisations affected by the impact of the coronavirus.

The Mayor has joined City Bridge Trust, the City of London Corporation's charitable funder, and London Funders, a network of investors of London's civil society, to launch the new fund – with an initial £1 million provided by City Hall and £1 million from City Bridge Trust. He has urged other groups and central Government to join this fund.

Mayor's Advisory Group: Sadiq is regularly convening a Mayor's Advisory Group of senior officials from Public Health England, the NHS, the Met Police, London Fire Brigade, London Ambulance Service, Transport for London and representatives from London's local authorities to make sure London is as prepared as possible.

He remains concerned about the potential impact of coronavirus on those on the lowest-incomes – including those working in the gig economy.

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Monitoring London's economy: City Hall's Economic Development team are reporting to Sadiq on key issues as part of the regular meetings he set up to monitor this issue since the outbreak occurred. To support the pan London Strategic Coordination Group, which Fiona Twycross Co-chairs, a formal business sub-group has been collated to gather intelligence and insight on impacts, and to make recommendations to the Mayor and other partners across London.

Current GLA support for rough sleepers and housing tenants/owners: In recognition of the specific needs and vulnerability of rough sleepers, City Hall officials are actively working with Boroughs and the Voluntary Sector on COVID-19 to develop plans to ensure that they are able to self-isolate. This may include procurement of accommodation to facilitate this – for example block-booking hotels, which should be coordinated at a pan-London level.

The Met Police: Like London, the Met Police is resilient in moments of uncertainty. They are responding to new information, planning ahead, and working around the clock to help keep Londoners safe at this challenging time. [Read more from Cressida Dick and their plans for the Met here.](#)

The GLA is also exploring:

- Identifying sector-specific issues where London Growth Hub support could be utilised through direct delivery or funding to partners to increase existing support capacity.
- Progressing proposals to flex current London Growth Hub and other business support programmes to provide COVID 19 specific support (both in person and through webinars or podcasts, webinars as traditional channels of communication).
- Sadiq's Construction Academy programme team is looking at how it can pivot its work to respond to the new construction skills crisis.

TFL

People are being advised to travel on TfL services only if it is absolutely necessary. A reduced tube and bus service will be introduced. But, crucially, a basic public transport service is needed for frontline workers, including medics, firefighters and police officers.

TfL have announced a reduced service to enable these key workers to make essential journeys. This means the closure of the Waterloo and City Line and the Night Tube from Friday 20 March. Up to 40 stations will be closed from Thursday 19 March.

TfL already has high hygiene levels, but it's now working to reduce the risk of the Coronavirus spreading by implementing enhanced cleaning. This includes additional substances that kill viruses and bacteria.

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New antiviral cleaning fluid was rolled out on the tube on Friday 6 March to provide additional protection. Enhanced cleaning regimes have been implemented in all modes of transport operated by TfL.

Sadiq unequivocally supports TfL in its call for the Government to provide the financial support needed to keep our city moving and to provide the essential services Londoners need.

The Deputy Mayor for Transport, Heidi Alexander, has [offered her thanks to the train operators, bus drivers, maintenance crews, tube cleaners and station staff who are enabling other essential workers to make necessary journeys.](#)

What you can do to help

City Hall is hard at work, developing and establishing new structures to support Londoners and to improve the city's resilience at this difficult time. You can help by promoting these services:

- **Employment Rights Hub:** Many people are concerned about the financial impact of self-isolating or taking time off work. The Mayor's Employment Rights Hub has the latest information about what those who may be concerned about their rights are entitled to. **You can access, and point those who may be concerned, to the Hub [here.](#)**
- **Free advice from the Good Growth Hub:** A new portal has been set up to support London-based businesses and employers to manage and mitigate their exposure to Coronavirus. **The free advice can be accessed [here.](#)**
- **Advice for EU citizens on the EU Londoners Hub:** City Hall's EU Hub is being updated to provide information for EU Citizens in these uncertain times. **The EU Londoners Hub can be accessed [here.](#)**