

## **Update from the Mayor of London on COVID 19 - 15 April**

- Lockdown will continue in the UK for the foreseeable future. The formal decision to extend the current social distancing measures for another three weeks is expected to be taken at COBR this week, which the Mayor will attend. In London, there's still spare capacity in hospital intensive care units and the new NHS Nightingale hospital is open and receiving patients. However, 206 people tragically died as a result of Covid-19 in London hospitals yesterday, bringing the total number of hospital deaths to 3,071 – each one leaving loved ones grieving. Now is not the time for complacency and the Mayor is calling on the Government to keep the restrictions in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19, protect our NHS and save lives.
- Sadiq welcomes the fact that the vast majority of Londoners are staying at home and following the Government's rules. There were only around 64,000 journeys taken on the Tube on Monday – thought to be the lowest in a single day since the 19th century. Bus travel was also at its lowest level for close to a century. Londoners overwhelmingly followed the rules over the bank holiday weekend despite the weather – and there was good cooperation between local authorities and the Met Police to ensure compliance in parks and other public spaces.
- It is absolutely devastating that a number of London transport workers have tragically lost their lives after testing positive for coronavirus. Our heroic transport staff are doing a vital job under extraordinarily difficult circumstances to ensure nurses, doctors and other frontline workers can get to work and save lives.
- Sadiq and TfL are doing everything possible to keep transport staff and passengers safe. There is an enhanced cleaning regime on both the buses and tube. A protective film has been put over the screen on all bus driver cabs. TfL is urgently trialling middle-boarding only on a number of routes to see if it can help keep drivers safe without reducing social distancing for passengers. If it works, it will be rolled out across the entire network. Full details on all the measures already being taken to protect transport workers in London can be found below.
- Understandably, many frontline public sector workers are worried and have asked for personal protective equipment (PPE). The Mayor and TfL are working closely with transport trade unions to address their concerns. There are serious issues with the national supply of PPE, with hospitals and care homes still reporting shortages, and both Public Health England and the World Health Organisation advise that wearing PPE could be counterproductive for non-medical workers. However, Sadiq has asked TfL to urgently look at the availability of PPE and all options to keep staff and passengers safe.
- TfL continues to run as many services as possible. Around 1,900 frontline Tube staff have returned to work since the beginning of the crisis, but we still

have around a quarter of Tube workers off sick or self-isolating overall - which means it's not possible to run a full service.

- During this crisis, it's more important than ever to ensure that the most vulnerable Londoners are supported in clean, safe accommodation. Working with a coalition of organisations, charities and individuals, City Hall has now helped more than 1,000 rough sleepers to self-isolate in safe accommodation. Full details can be seen below.
- The Mayor continues to put pressure on the Government to ensure all the necessary measures are being put in place to support workers, businesses and families through the immediate crisis. Last week, he attended COBR, wrote to the Foreign Secretary on the lessons that can be learned from other cities around the world, and wrote to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the need for the welfare system to support the most vulnerable in society.
- The Office for Budget Responsibility projections released this week revealed the huge economic and social damage that Covid-19 will continue to cause for many years to come. We will need innovative economic solutions and unprecedented Government intervention in the economy to ensure that Covid-19 does not leave millions of people unemployed, homeless or pushed into poverty. The Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) has asked City Hall to lead on recovery planning. The Mayor will be working closely with Government, business leaders, trade unions, local authorities and other Metro Mayors across the UK to develop a plan for London's economic recovery to protect jobs, livelihoods and living standards over the coming months and years.
- Sadiq remains in regular contact with key London stakeholders, including business leaders, trade unions, the voluntary sector, faith groups and others, to develop our understanding of what additional support Londoners need through this crisis.

## **Topical issues**

### **Bus driver safety**

**On the tragic news that bus workers have lost their lives after testing positive for Coronavirus, the Mayor said:**

"It breaks my heart that 21 transport workers, including 15 London bus workers, have tragically died from Covid-19. My thoughts and prayers are with their families and loved ones at this very difficult time. This is deeply personal - I can't help but think that this could have been my dad or his colleagues and friends.

"I am doing everything I can to keep transport workers and passengers safe. We are also urgently exploring every possible additional option to protect our heroic

transport staff, who ensure nurses, doctors and other key workers can get to where they are needed.

“We have already put in place an enhanced anti-viral cleaning regime across the network, applied protective film to the Perspex screen of bus driver cabs to seal off holes, prevented passengers sitting next to bus drivers and are trialling middle-door-only boarding on several routes bus routes.

“I know staff are worried and many have asked for PPE. We are working closely with the trade unions. There are clearly issues in the supply of PPE, with hospitals and care homes reporting shortages, but I’ve also asked TfL to look into the availability of PPE stock for transport workers, in case advice from public health experts changes. “TfL will continue to do whatever it takes to keep our heroic transport workers and all Londoners as safe as possible.”

## **Domestic Violence Funding**

**Responding to the Government’s announcement of increased support for domestic abuse victims during the Coronavirus outbreak, the Mayor said on April 11:**

“I am pleased to see the Government finally starting to take this vital issue seriously but ministers must go further than this in terms of funding for services and as well as helplines.

“They must urgently convene a national working group comprising police, service providers, funders, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and National Victims Commissioner to introduce extra support and funding for victims of domestic abuse during the current crisis.

“We also need to see a coordinated response to ensure all services supporting vulnerable people, not solely domestic abuse, receive the support they need to maintain sufficient levels of support throughout this crisis, giving particular attention to small specialist agencies.

“The safety of all Londoners is my number- one priority and there is zero tolerance towards all forms of domestic abuse in our city.”

## **1,000 rough sleepers accommodated by Mayoral services**

The Mayor, local councils and charity partners have been working together to help more than 1,000 homeless Londoners to self-isolate in hotels and other safe locations across the capital.

This vital work is being supported by £10.55m of funding from the Mayor and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

As we approach the peak of the Coronavirus epidemic in the UK, it is more important than ever to ensure the most vulnerable Londoners are supported in clean, secure accommodation. Sadiq’s aim is to make sure that the ‘In for good’ principles are

applied for all London's rough sleepers – something that will require continued support from the Government.

## **City Hall Action**

### **Health**

Last week, NHS Nightingale started treating its first patients, although there is still capacity in the capital's Intensive Care Units. The new facility will play a vital role in providing support for our fantastic hospitals across London who are working around the clock to provide ongoing care and to save lives.

**PPE and Testing** - Our amazing doctors, nurses and NHS staff are working around the clock to support Londoners and save lives, and it's absolutely vital that they have the equipment they need to safely do their essential job.

It's hugely concerning that there is still not enough PPE and that some staff have had to resort to making improvised equipment for their protection.

The Government has said it will provide millions more items of PPE for NHS frontline staff, and Sadiq continues to urge them to do more to support and protect our health and social care workers in the fight against coronavirus.

**Non-medical face coverings** - Last week Sadiq wrote to the Foreign Secretary and First Secretary of State, Dominic Raab, to ask that the UK Government reviews its guidance on the use of non-medical face coverings by members of the public. Many of our closest international partners have already done this.

There is now an increasing body of evidence from multiple studies which show that COVID-19 can be spread by droplets from coughing or sneezing by individuals who are pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic.

Given this evidence, many international organisations, countries and cities have issued new guidance on the use of non-medical face coverings.

Sadiq recognises that the wearing of non-medical face coverings alone would not prevent the spread of the disease, and that hospital grade PPE must be reserved for the NHS and other health and social care workers. However, he now questions whether it is time for the UK Government to recommend that people should wear homemade and non-medical face coverings when in public or in populated areas.

### **Transport**

**Transport worker safety** - The number of journeys on London's transport network has dropped dramatically, which is helping to reduce the spread of the virus. Our heroic transport staff are doing vital work to ensure nurses, doctors and other frontline workers can get to where they are needed most. Sadiq is doing everything he can to keep all our transport staff safe and he is urgently exploring every possible option.

Our amazing frontline health and social care workers must be first in line for PPE. We also know that PPE needs to be used properly to be effective - which means changing and disposing of it after every use. If used incorrectly, PPE can actually be counterproductive and dangerous because it gives a false sense of security while providing very little protection.

That's why both PHE and the WHO are not recommending the use of PPE for transport workers.

However, our transport staff are understandably scared and want PPE as they think it could help keep them safe. So Sadiq is looking in detail at whether it's possible to get sufficient PPE stock for them, but there are serious concerns about the supply chain being able to meet this need at the moment.

TfL estimate that we would need three million masks and three million pairs of gloves a month for all transport workers in London in order for PPE to be used properly so that it's not counter-productive or dangerous.

Sadiq will keep pursuing every possible option and do whatever it takes to keep our bus drivers, transport staff and all Londoners as safe as possible.

In response to concerns about bus driver safety, numerous steps have already been taken and further initiatives are being progressed. TfL has already put in place an enhanced anti-viral cleaning regime across the network, and Union representatives have been released from normal duties to audit the regime. A number of other measures to keep bus drivers safe include:

- Adding a film to the clear screen in bus drivers' carriages on the vast majority of routes to provide an extra layer of protection.
- Extensive daily cleaning across the TfL network, ensuring that 'touch points' on buses - including steering wheels, poles, doors and handles - are treated with anti-viral cleaner every night after the regular cleaning is complete. Bus garages and rest rooms are also treated every day.
- Asking customers not to sit in seats nearest to bus drivers, with signs being delivered into all garages.
- Following discussions with Unite the Union, a 7 day trial of central boarding started on Friday 10 April on several London bus routes. This needs to be trialled to ensure that it is safe for both drivers and passengers given that it could lead to conflicting passenger movements as people get on and off through the same set of doors. Observations at bus stops took place on Tuesday 14 April and Wednesday 15 April. A quick decision on wider roll out will be taken by the end of the week.
- And writing to bus operators urging them not to require vulnerable employees with underlying conditions to come to work and to provide special leave with pay.

**Construction sites** – Sadiq is continuing to push the Government to ban all non-essential construction work, which is still contributing to significant numbers of passengers on specific parts of the Tube in the early morning. To help deal with the limited remaining crowding on the Tube, the Mayor is also working with utility

companies, telecoms providers and the broader construction sector to try to minimise construction work and stagger site start times.

**Low Emissions Zone deferral** – The coronavirus crisis has disrupted supply chains and placed additional demands on the freight industry, making it more difficult for new standards to be met on time.

To help ease pressure on the sector, Sadiq has asked TfL to delay the enforcement of new stricter rules for the **Low Emission Zone (LEZ) and the Direct Vision Standard** initially for four months, to allow the freight industry to focus on its core operations during the pandemic. Sadiq remains clear that people should not be travelling, by any means, unless absolutely necessary. London's roads should only be used for essential journeys.

**Dangerous driving** – TfL has issued a reminder, along with the emergency services, to drivers to abide by speed limits as dangerous driving will put an additional strain on the NHS at this difficult time.

**Support for NHS staff using the TfL network** - Over the Easter weekend, the British Transport Police focused the deployment of officers to mainline stations, including Stratford and Clapham Junction, and London Underground stations near hospitals.

TfL have also developed a travel advice leaflet for staff and visitors travelling to and from NHS Nightingale. This includes information on bus routes and car parks for the NHS to distribute to staff. The Emirates Airline is open exclusively for the use of NHS staff, starting 14 April.

## **The Met Police & LFB**

**Domestic Violence** – Following his letter to the Home Secretary last week, Sadiq wrote an op-ed in the Independent calling on the Government to make financial support accessible to all domestic abuse victims.

Thankfully, we have not yet seen an increase in reports of domestic abuse in London, but evidence from other countries shows there has been at least a 30 per cent rise in incidents while restrictions have been in place. There are already reports from police forces elsewhere in the UK that they are experiencing an increase in the number of calls relating to domestic abuse.

Sadiq has called on the Government to do all it can to protect victims and to take a zero tolerance approach to domestic abuse during this crisis. You can read the article [here](#).

## **Support for rough sleepers, housing tenants and owners**

On Monday night, 1,027 rough sleepers were safely accommodated in hotels to enable them to self-isolate.

Sadiq welcomes that the Government has announced a three-month mortgage repayment holiday, a ban on evictions and rent flexibility, but has written to the Government requesting they ensure that:

- mortgage holidays are passed on to tenants;
- the welfare benefits system is set up to cover, in full, the rents of private tenants unable to pay then due to COVID-19;
- the Bedroom Tax is suspended; and
- the Mayor is given flexibility in allocated funding from the Affordable Homes Programme in order to best support the sector at this time.

**Recovery plan for London's housing sector** – Thousands of residential building projects are on hold at the moment, but the Deputy Mayor for Housing, Tom Copley, has said he will develop a recovery plan to get London building at pace and scale once it's safe to do so.

In an open letter to the London housing sector, Tom pledged to develop a plan that will leave London's housing sector well-placed to bounce back and to deliver the social rented homes London needs in the long-term. He is ready to work with the Government to ensure that housing partners are not penalised for having to compromise on delivery times during this crisis.

To inform the recovery plan, Tom has set up a small taskforce of leading housing delivery professionals. You can read Tom's full open letter on Inside Housing [here](#).

## **Business & employment**

**Support for self-employed workers** - Sadiq wrote to the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, and the BEIS Secretary, Alok Sharma, to demand that more financial help is given to the capital's self-employed workers. The £9bn Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) sees the Government paying 80 per cent of profits, up to £2,500 a month, to self-employed workers affected by the coronavirus crisis but up to 290,000 Londoners, 12 per cent of the total workforce and one in three self-employed Londoners, are not eligible to receive anything from the Government's support package. You can read the full letter in City AM [here](#).

**Government grants support** – Last week the GLA delivered a webinar to over 50 representatives from local authorities in London to help ensure a coordinated approach for businesses to access the Government's grants and reliefs.

**Pay it Forward Crowdfunder campaign** – The GLA is working on a "Pay it Forward" Crowdfunder campaign, which should go live shortly, to assist SMEs with cashflow issues.

## **Support for vulnerable Londoners**

**Food supply and food poverty** – Foodbanks in critical need of support have been identified by the GLA and volunteers were mobilised to urgently shop and deliver supplies over the Easter Weekend. City Bridge Trust contributed £100,000 to this effort, which the GLA matched.

**Letter to the UK's main supermarkets on foodbanks** - Foodbanks in up to seven London boroughs are reporting critical shortages of food. Some have been forced to close because of a shortage of supplies and people to run them.

Last week Sadiq wrote to the UK's main supermarkets (Tesco, Sainsbury's, Aldi, Waitrose, ASDA, CO-OP and Lidl) to ask for their help to address these shortages and to thank them for helping to support those at risk of food insecurity during this crisis. He requested that as a matter of urgency they:

- Organise additional direct donations to those foodbanks facing critical shortages.
- Make available priority online booking slots for foodbanks and other emergency food aid organisations (including women's refuges and homeless hostels) and make it clear how organisations access these bookings.
- Implement measures to help foodbanks save time when shopping.
- Lift the restriction on the number of items per person that individuals can purchase to enable foodbanks to properly replenish stocks.

You can read the full letter [here](#).

## **Support for the Voluntary and Community Sector and Charities**

**Communities response fund** - A new emergency support fund to help London's voluntary and community (VCS) organisations affected by the impact of the coronavirus crisis launched on Friday 27 March, initially focussed on food and essentials.

The Fund now stands at over £10m, and includes £1m from the Mayor, as well as contributions from the City Bridge Trust, Bloomberg and Trust for London. The first 100 grants were allocated by the London Community Response funders last week, and the second wave of applications is now open and the full list of funded groups will be published [here](#).

You can find all the relevant information and guidance about the next waves of funding and the relevant deadlines on the London Community Response fund website, [here](#).

**Government package of support for charities and the VCS** - A £750m Government support package was announced last week for the voluntary and community sector. £360m will be directly allocated by the Government to charities providing key services and supporting vulnerable people. The remaining £370m will be for small to medium size charities. This package is a good start, but much more needs to be done to support the sector.



## **Skills and Education**

**Skills** - The GLA is supporting the adult skills sector in London. The Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills, Jules Pipe, met college principals on 2 April to discuss the measures the GLA is taking to provide them with funding stability during the Covid-19 crisis. This followed letters to all skills providers in London, including independent training providers, outlining the support measures from City Hall - some of which go further than the Government's offer to providers outside London. The GLA's commitments have been well-received by the sector.

We are also encouraging providers to offer whatever provision they can online to enable continuity for learners.

**Youth services** - We continue to provide support for youth organisations that are helping vulnerable Londoners. On 8 April, our Young Londoners Fund local networks met to share how they are helping youth projects in their area.

## **International Cooperation**

**We will only beat coronavirus if cities around the world pull together** - As Mayor, Sadiq is doing everything he can to foster international co-operation with existing mayoral networks being repurposed to exchange advice and resources. He wrote in the Observer about his commitment to working with, and learning, from other cities and how he will continue to urge the international community to tackle this crisis as one. More than ever, now is a time for far-reaching international collaboration, not narrow populist nationalism.

You can read his piece [here](#).

**PPE** - Sadiq co-signed a joint letter with the Mayors of Paris, Brussels, Lisbon, Warsaw, Florence and Budapest calling on national governments and European institutions to mobilise manufacturers to produce life-saving PPE, medical equipment and medicines.

## **Media, social media**

- Sadiq posted a video on Friday evening to promote the #LondonTogether campaign, which celebrates and shines a spotlight on inspirational stories and acts of kindness in London. You can watch the video [here](#) and follow the campaign hashtag #LondonTogether on social media.
- Sadiq wrote about his calls on the Home Secretary to ensure that domestic abuse victims are sufficiently supported throughout the crisis in the Independent: [The Government must do the right thing and make financial support accessible to all domestic abuse victims.](#)
- Sadiq's op-ed in the Observer about the importance of international cooperation in tackling this crisis is here: [We will only beat coronavirus if cities around the world pull together.](#)

## **What you can do to help**

City Hall working to develop and establish new structures to support Londoners and to improve the city's resilience at this difficult time. You can help by promoting these services:

- **Volunteering** - There is a lot of need for volunteers in London at a local level, particularly to help food banks. Please do encourage constituents to visit [the GLA Coronavirus volunteering portal](#).

The portal will connect people with:

- Their local volunteer centre or CVS
  - Their local authority who will also be coordinating offers of help from volunteers
  - Local COVID-19 mutual aid groups
- **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 people are entitled to. **You can access, and point those who may be concerned, to the Hub [here](#).**
  - **Free advice from the Good Growth Hub** - The COVID-19 page on the **Growth Hub** website has been updated with more guidance and information. There are multiple factsheets and guides on **the Hub which can be accessed [here](#).**
  - **Information on COVID-19 for non-UK nationals** - City Hall's EU Londoners Hub has specific information for non-UK nationals on healthcare, visas and immigration, the EU settlement scheme and employment rights and how they are affected by the crisis. **The Information on COVID-19 for non-UK nationals page can be accessed [here](#).**