

Update from the Mayor of London on COVID-19 - 28 April

- The Mayor continues to urge all Londoners to stay at home unless absolutely necessary to protect our NHS and save lives. He is also continuing to put pressure on the Government to ensure all the necessary measures are being put in place to support workers, businesses and families through this crisis.
- The Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) continues to manage the London-wide response to the crisis, working in partnership with the Government, NHS, local authorities and other public services. The Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience, Fiona Twycross, represents the Mayor at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre. The SCG is working through a wide range of practical issues, from securing the provision of PPE to dealing with mortuary capacity. If you would like more information about the work of the SCG please contact Ffion.Meagher@london.gov.uk.
- Sadiq is calling on the Government to update its advice to make the wearing of non-medical face coverings obligatory when using public transport and in other situations where people can't socially distance. He has been in touch with the Government's Chief Medical Advisor and Chief Scientific Advisor to ensure they are aware of the changing advice and guidance in other cities and countries around the world. The Scottish Government has today advised its citizens to wear non-medical face coverings in such situations.
- Extensive testing is a vital part of the fight against Covid-19 so the Mayor is pleased that the Government has confirmed coronavirus tests are now available to all essential workers, including transport workers and police officers. The Mayor will continue to push the Government to expand testing capacity as quickly as possible, and ensure it is accessible in a way that works for Londoners.
- TfL has been working closely with the Government to ensure that staff who are self-isolating can access testing in the most convenient way possible. TfL staff and their household members can now book a test through the new national website at <https://self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/>. They can select a home test kit or go to one of the regional drive-through centres or mobile facilities. Employers can also refer staff for a test if they or a member of their household are self-isolating
- TfL is in constructive talks with the Government about the urgent financial support it needs in order to be able to continue operating. TfL is the only major city in Western Europe that runs without a Government grant for day-to-day operations and fare income has fallen by about 90 per cent through this crisis.
- As of Monday, TfL placed 7,000 staff whose work had been reduced or paused as a result of the coronavirus crisis onto the Government's furlough scheme. TfL will top up the eighty per cent of salary provided by the Government scheme to one hundred per cent for all directly employed staff. This will help to reduce the huge financial impact on TfL of the ongoing crisis.
- Last week, Sadiq urged those celebrating Ramadan to do so at home. He was joined by celebrities and key public figures to help spread the message. You can watch their video [here](#).

- The Mayor has written to the Transport Secretary and BEIS Secretary as he is concerned about construction sites, some of which are beginning to remobilise, and the extra pressure this is putting on our transport services during this difficult time. There dangerous implications for key workers using our public transport network as well as for the health of workers on those sites. He is therefore urging Ministers to encourage the construction sector to put in place staggered start times on sites and to provide alternative and sustainable ways of travelling for their staff where possible.
- The recent economic projections and employment predictions from the Resolution Foundation both underline the sheer scale of the economic and social challenges the virus is likely to cause for many years to come. We will need unprecedented government intervention in the economy to ensure that COVID-19 does not leave millions of people unemployed, homeless or in poverty. The Mayor is working closely with the Government, business leaders, trade unions, local authorities and other Metro Mayors across the UK to develop a plan for London's economic recovery to help people back into work, 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.

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Topical issues

TfL staff on furlough

TfL has placed 7,000 staff on furlough whose work had been reduced or paused as a result of the coronavirus. This will allow TfL to access funding from the Government's Job Retention Scheme, saving an estimated £15.8m every four weeks, reducing the huge financial impact of the ongoing crisis. There are constructive discussions with the Government on the wider support that TfL will need to continue the effective operation of London's transport network.

The 7,000 staff will be placed on furlough for an initial period of three weeks. This represents around 25 per cent of the workforce employed. TfL will pay the remainder of salaries of all furloughed employees, and continue to pay pension contributions, to ensure that people are supported.

Pay it Forward London campaign

The Mayor is urging Londoners to 'Pay it Forward' to help their favourite local businesses stay afloat.

Pay It Forward London is a collaboration with Crowdfunder that encourages Londoners to pay for goods and services in advance, which will then be delivered once businesses return to normal or near-normal operation. The aim is to provide a vital lifeline to businesses struggling with cashflow. This is part of a wider package of help the Mayor is offering to small businesses, including the London Growth Hub, which is delivering tailored one-to-one advice to SMEs.

From restaurants and pubs to hairdressers and florists, businesses have already raised thousands of pounds through Pay it Forward London. It's easy for businesses to register and start raising funds, and Londoners can also nominate their favourite local business to take part.

You can access Pay if Forward London [here](#).

Triple Lock for Renters

Last week, Sadiq called on the Government to introduce a new 'Triple Lock' of measures aimed at protecting London's three million private renters from eviction as a result of rent arrears caused by the COVID-19 crisis. The 'Triple Lock' would include three key policies that would help shield many private renters from eviction who are at risk of falling into debt. Sadiq is calling on the Government to:

- Increase welfare support to cover the full cost of rent for those unable to pay as a result of the COVID-19 crisis
- Prevent private landlords from evicting tenants who have occurred arrears (ie prevent them from issuing Section 8 notices)
- Scrap section 21 no-fault evictions altogether

Full details of the 'Triple Lock' for renters is in the housing section below.

City Hall Action

Emergency response

The Mayor established a **Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG)** to manage London's immediate response to the pandemic. He asked John Barradell, the Chief Executive of the City of London Cooperation, to chair the SCG, and his Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience, Fiona Twycross, to act as his representative on the group.

The SCG has a physical base at London's temporary Strategic Coordinating Centre, with daily calls and meetings to manage the varied elements of the emergency response. The key issues the SCG is addressing are changing frequently as the situation develops.

The current strategic focus is now on lockdown release, testing, PPE, mortality management, economic impacts and mental health and wellbeing. Other issues being managed include NHS surge capacity, shielding, volunteering, testing and food poverty.

Health

Testing – Sadiq welcomed the news from the Government that all essential workers in England will be able to get tested for COVID-19. He has been clear that we need to do more testing to tackle the spread of COVID-19 and that, along with tracing and non-medical face coverings, it will be a critical part of the strategy to avoid a second peak of infections. It's vital that these testing facilities are expanded as quickly as possible and that they are convenient and accessible for key workers and communities.

Face Coverings – The UK is now an international outlier on its position on the public's use of non-medical face-coverings. Sadiq continues to urge the Government to change its guidance and recommend wearing non-medical face coverings when people can't keep a safe distance from others. You can watch Sadiq's interview with ITV on the issue [here](#).

Nightingale update – As Simon Stevens, the Chief Executive of NHS England, has said, there has been no need for extensive use of the Nightingale London hospital thanks to the hard work of NHS staff across the capital who have freed up more than 30,000 existing hospital beds and the great efforts of Londoners who are following the social distancing rules.

There is still spare capacity in the critical care network across London to look after all coronavirus patients and others who need care. As is always the case, patients are being transferred to other hospitals in the city if they are better placed to receive them at that time.

Volunteers from Team London, including those who had signed up to volunteer at the EURO 2020 tournament as part of the London Squad, have been helping to induct staff at the NHS Nightingale training centre in Greenwich. As of Thursday of last week, 157 volunteers had already completed 528 shifts.

Transport

Support for TfL staff - Key workers, including cleaners on the transport network, are doing an amazing job in these extraordinarily difficult times. TfL has ensured that cleaners can self-isolate with full pay so that they don't feel forced to attend work for financial reasons. They are also encouraging staff who meet the criteria to take up offer of testing essential workers for COVID-19.

This is on top of enhanced protection for bus drivers including adding another layer of protection to the Perspex screen shielding bus drivers from public interaction, using signs to actively discourage customers from sitting near drivers and making regular announcements to reinforce the need to keep a safe distance from others. As of last week, all customers on London buses are also no longer required to touch in at the front.

Responding to the announcement that 7,000 TfL staff have been furloughed as of Monday 27, London's Transport Commissioner, Mike Brown, MVO said: "The transport network is crucial in the fight to tackle coronavirus and it will play a similarly vital role in supporting the country's economy as it recovers from the pandemic. We have significantly cut our costs over recent years but nevertheless the success of encouraging the vast majority of people to stay at home has seen our main revenue, fares, reduce by 90 per cent. We are now taking steps to use the Government's Job Retention Scheme to further reduce our costs where work has been paused because of the virus, while at the same time supporting our staff financially.

"Our work with the Government about the support that we need are ongoing and are constructive. We hope for an urgent agreement so that we can continue to provide the city with the vital transport it needs now and going forward."

The Met Police & LFB

There has been a considerable drop in overall crime during the lockdown. The Met has reported a reduction in total notifiable offences and the Met Commissioner has said that 'knife crime has dropped considerably' in the same period. However, there are concerns around likely increases in fraud, domestic abuse and online abuse.

The Met are aware of these issues and have been working proactively to address them.

Support for victims of domestic violence – The Met has reported that domestic abuse calls have risen by around a third in the last six weeks. As a result, they are continuing to prioritise domestic abuse calls to ensure that victims receive the support they need. Domestic abuse services are under significant pressure so the Mayor is continuing to lobby the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary to

coordinate a cross-Government response to domestic abuse and to provide emergency funding for support services.

The Home Affairs Select Committee published a report on 27 April which echoed the call for more support from the Government.

Sadiq has contributed £5m to the London Community Response Fund to create an 'easy to access' process for organisations across the capital to receive emergency financial support. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime has contributed £500,000 towards a ringfenced fund for its commissioned services, including those to reduce violence against women and girls. This is aimed at addressing immediate concerns and helping to adjust their service delivery to continue helping victims and survivors. Work at City Hall is also underway to assess the demand for emergency refuge space and to locate empty accommodation that can be used, as well as close partnership working with London boroughs.

While the Home Secretary has announced some limited additional support, the Government must go further. It's still not clear, for example, if any of the Chancellor's £750 million charity funding is earmarked for domestic abuse services.

Support for rough sleepers, housing tenants and owners

Triple Lock for renters – The Government has introduced some measures to support renters, but they will not be enough to prevent many households falling into financial hardship over the coming months and beyond.

The Mayor is therefore calling on the Government to urgently implement a 'Triple Lock' for renters. They should:

- Immediately increase welfare support for renters, suspend the Benefit Cap, restore Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to median market rents, and cover any shortfall in rental payments of private tenants unable to pay them due to COVID-19 – including those with no recourse to public funds. This could be achieved by setting aside LHA rates for those who are affected by COVID-19.
- Prevent private landlords from evicting tenants who have accrued arrears as a result of COVID-19. This could be achieved by making section 8 (the arrears ground for eviction) discretionary in court proceedings.
- Scrap so-called 'no fault' section 21 evictions. This would prevent landlords evicting tenants affected by COVID-19 using this route as an alternative to the section 8 method.

These measures would protect renters by giving them security of tenure for the duration of the crisis and would help to protect public health during the pandemic by making it easier for non-essential workers to stay at home rather than going out to work in order to pay their rent. This is particularly important for people on zero-hours

contracts or who are self-employed, for whom little up-front financial support is available compared to employees of companies. More information is available [here](#).

Support for rough sleepers – As of the night of Sunday 26 April, 1,137 rough sleepers are being safely accommodated in hotels to enable them to follow self-isolation guidance. Along with rough sleepers accommodated in self-contained units, 1,197 rough sleepers were accommodated on Sunday night.

Sadiq has welcomed the Government's measures for three-month mortgage repayment holidays, a ban on evictions and rent flexibility, but he's written to Ministers requesting they also ensure that:

- mortgage holidays are passed on to tenants;
- renters are protected by a 'triple lock' which would ensure the welfare benefits system is set up to cover, in full, the rents of private tenants unable to pay them due to COVID-19, prevent landlords from issuing Section 8 (rent arrears) eviction notices during the crisis and scrap Section 21 (no fault) evictions altogether. Sadiq repeated this call publicly on Wednesday 22 April;
- 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.

Business & employment

Growth Hub support for businesses - The Covid-19 page on the Growth Hub website is being regularly updated with more FAQs and more information. London Growth Hub advisors have held over 460 one-to-one calls with businesses seeking support since the start of the crisis. The Mayor's team has been working to increase the London Growth Hub phone line capacity to deal with COVID-19 related queries and have secured additional capacity to assist businesses – including advisors focusing specifically on construction firms.

Support for vulnerable Londoners, the Voluntary and Community Sector and Charities

Extra £4m to the London Community Response Fund - Last week, Sadiq announced that a further £4m is being provided to the London Community Response Fund, taking the total to £16m to help the capital's community and voluntary organisations. £1.6m of this funding has already been distributed, reaching 319 groups.

Among those to benefit from the fund are civil society organisations co-ordinating volunteers and equalities groups working to support Londoners disproportionately affected by the coronavirus.

These groups are doing great work, bringing Londoners together to help those who need it the most, including those being disproportionately affected by the coronavirus. The rising need for their already-stretched services, after a decade of

austerity, combined with the huge demand already shown for the fund, shows just how much these vital organisations need help. Find out more [here](#).

Foodbanks – Sadiq is encouraging Londoners to help struggling foodbanks from home at a time when they are needed most by donating food, time and money. A range of sources have been collated on the City Hall website [here](#).

Culture and Creative Industries

The Mayor has strengthened the Culture at Risk Office, which is currently dealing with over 200 inquiries that have come in since mid-March. City Hall is working to showcase culture online, including programmes that are part of the London Borough of Culture, such as Waltham Forest's Google Arts and Culture and Brent's weekly podcast, which is hosted by young people sharing experiences about being in lockdown.

The Mayor is continuing to lobby the Government to support creative businesses and freelancers as there are many cases of people falling through the gaps of the Government's support schemes.

The Mayor is championing culture, the creative industries and the night-time economy as key sectors to drive London and the UK's recovery. Their economic and social impact should guarantee their status as a key industries. They not only have the potential to unlock significant growth and drive tourism and hospitality following the lockdown, but will help people who have been through a difficult time, bring communities together and rebuild confidence.

Impact during and post lockdown – The cultural, creative and night-time sectors have been seriously affected by the Covid-19 crisis and are at real risk. The impact could often also be long-term as adequate social distancing will not be possible for many businesses and organisations across the creative economy.

The creative sector relies on ticket sales, events and visitor flow as well as public funding and private donations. In addition, 99.9 per cent of the creative sector is comprised of SMEs. A survey by the Society of London Theatre and UK Theatre suggests that 80 per cent of SME sized venues will struggle to survive if the shutdown extends beyond May.

Cultural organisations have the highest level of furloughed workers, after the hospitality and construction sector. (Source ONS Business Impact of Covid-19 survey). Even after the lockdown has been lifted, social distancing measures will mean that it's highly likely that many creative businesses, such as theatres and cinemas, will be able to reopen in the short to medium term.

Environment

Air Quality – New evidence published last week by City Hall shows that there has been a dramatic improvement in air quality in London as a result of the coronavirus lockdown.

The report, which was put together in response to the Government's call for evidence on current changes in air pollution during COVID-19, shows that levels of the harmful gas nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) at some of London's busiest roads are on average about half of what they were before the lockdown.

This is in addition to the significant reductions delivered by policies including the world's first Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), which contributed to a 44 per cent reduction in roadside NO₂ in the central zone prior to lockdown.

This cleaner air should not just be temporary as Londoners deserve clean air at all times. So once the current emergency has passed and we start to recover, our challenge will be to eradicate air pollution permanently and ensure the gains we've made through policies such as ULEZ continue. It is critical that the Government keeps this in mind as part of the country's recovery from the pandemic. You can read the full report [here](#).

As mentioned last week, the GLA has advised boroughs that the maintenance of air quality monitoring equipment should be included in the list of essential activities to be continued through the lockdown period. The data collected through the air quality monitoring network is considered extremely important to the ongoing evaluation of risk during the coronavirus outbreak due to the potential impact of air pollution on respiratory illnesses. A letter granting authorisation for workers to conduct essential maintenance on air quality monitoring equipment across London is being provided.

Parks and green spaces – The majority of London's parks and open spaces remain open to allow people to exercise once a day. Those that have been temporarily closed (notably Brockwell Park in Lambeth, and Victoria Park in Tower Hamlets) have now reopened. Most users are behaving responsibly, maintaining social distancing. However, a minority of users are still not using these spaces for informal exercise, as a route to work, or are failing to maintain social distancing. Park managers continue to manage the situation locally (with the resources they have available) working with the Met where appropriate. This appears to be working effectively with no significant incidents reported.

The GLA continues to work with boroughs, other park managers and MOPAC to ensure consistency on borough closures and the approaches being taken to manage these spaces. Guidance on using parks and green spaces has been prepared with these organisations to ensure the core messages are communicated as widely as possible. This is available on the GLA website and is updated as required

Skills and Education

Skills - The GLA is supporting the adult skills sector in London through the current period of COVID-19 closures. Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe met college principals on 2 April having written to all London's skills providers on 31 March, confirming measures the GLA will take to provide them with funding stability, 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 also continue to encourage

providers to offer whatever provision they can online, including co-funding the Keep London Learning online portal, to enable some continuity for London learners.

Youth services - We continue to provide support for youth organisations that are helping vulnerable Londoners. The Mayor's Peer Outreach Team have recorded a series of Instagram clips in partnership with the Consumer Action Group. These give practical advice for young people on their employment rights, finances, and coping with extreme hardship.

Education - This week we have published free learning and cultural offers from our partners across the city that teachers and parents can access from home. We want to ensure that young Londoners still feel connected to the incredible people, places and culture of their city. We have focussed on London-specific offers, which add to the national list of online education resources published by the Department for Education. It can be accessed [here](#).

International Cooperation

International lessons on passenger arrivals at London's ports of entry – The Mayor continues to speak to Mayors around the world about how London and other cities are fighting the virus and what is working elsewhere.

One area of concern is that the UK has not adopted similar measures to limit the import of new cases of coronavirus into the country as those implemented by other countries. Many of those countries that are now able to reopen aspects of their economy because they are confident that the rate of transmission is being suppressed.

Other countries have rolled out measures such as testing, tracing and/or quarantining on those arriving at their airports, ports and land borders. This includes: Germany, which required people to provide immigration officials with details of their where they planned to travel within the country; Hong Kong, which introduced mandatory COVID-19 testing of arrivals from high-risk areas, such as the UK; and New Zealand, which effectively closed its borders to the vast majority of foreign nationals, and from today is starting to lift some of the restrictions on its economy.

The open nature of the UK border means that London, which is the arrival point for the vast majority of people still travelling to this country, has remained particularly exposed to the possibility of importing new cases that are then able to move throughout the city.

Media, social media

- Last week Sadiq hosted Cosmopolitan UK's Good News Gathered segment that celebrates the unity, strength and generosity of Londoners. You can read the uplifting stories collated as part of the #LondonTogether campaign [here](#).
- Sadiq's latest #LondonTogether video can be seen [here](#).

What you can do to help

City Hall is working hard 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:

- **Education resources** - Free learning and cultural offers from our partners across the city that teachers and parents can access from home. Please help promote these services by sharing the [link to this page](#).
- **How are you coping? Life in lockdown survey** - The GLA is hosting a survey to find out directly from Londoners how their life has changed as a result of the coronavirus crisis and what they'd like to see the Mayor doing to help. Please help to promote the survey by sharing this link on your social channels: [Life in Lockdown Survey](#).
- **Proud to care** – The care sector needs workers more than ever to provide essential care and support to elderly and vulnerable people during the outbreak. The Proud to Care website has collated vacancies for care workers, care managers, social workers, occupational therapists, chefs and cleaners.

Please help promote the Proud to Care website where the vacancies are listed [here](#).

- **Guidance and support for renters and landlords** - The GLA has collated advice for renters and landlords on their rights during coronavirus. Please help share the page which may provide support for those seeking it - it can be accessed [here](#).
- **How to cope with bereavement and grief during the coronavirus outbreak** - Support is available for those who have not been able to say goodbye to loved ones they've lost to Covid-19. Find the GLA's list of charities, helplines and online advice [here](#).
- **Pay it Forward London** – Londoners can buy goods and services in advance from small businesses to help them stay afloat via the new Pay it Forward London page [here](#). Please point Londoners to the page to help the thousands of small businesses at risk of collapse due to a lack of cashflow.
- **Volunteering** - [The GLA Coronavirus volunteering portal](#) remains live with updated opportunities for Londoners to safely volunteer.
- **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](#).**
- **Information on COVID-19 for non-UK nationals** - City Hall's EU Londoners Hub has specific information for non-UK nationals on how they can access to

healthcare, visas, 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](#).**