

Update from the Mayor of London on COVID-19 – 28 May

- The overwhelming majority of social distancing measures are still in place. The message to Londoners remains clear - stay at home as much as possible, keep a social distance from other people at all times, and only use public transport if it's absolutely essential.
- The Mayor has urged everyone who can work from home to continue to do so, and has asked employers to do all they can to assist their employees with the resources they need to work remotely. Wherever possible, employers should also implement the new guidance around staggering start and finish times. This will play a huge role in preventing crowding on the public transport network.
- TfL is making real progress on the plans to build up transport services to where they were before the coronavirus pandemic started. As of the morning of Friday 22 May, TfL ran 80 per cent of bus services, 80 per cent of Tube services and 80 per cent of London Overground and DLR services. TfL has been working extremely closely with unions for many weeks now on its plans to ramp up services to pre-Covid levels, but it's still dealing with a significant number of staff unable to work, including staff off sick, self-isolating or shielding.
- Even when services are back to running at the highest possible frequency, the need to maintain safe social distancing will dramatically reduce the effective capacity on the Tube to just 13-15 per cent.
- The deal the Mayor received from the Government to support TfL is not the deal he wanted for London. But it was the only deal the Government put on the table and he felt that he had no choice but to accept it in order to keep the tubes and buses running.
- The deal is just a sticking plaster. The old model for funding public transport in London simply does not work in this new reality – income from fares will not cover the cost of running services while so few people can safely use public transport. Over the next few months, we will have to negotiate a new funding model – which will have to involve either permanent funding from central Government or giving London more control over key taxes so we can pay for it ourselves.
- In response to this crisis, there is an opportunity to build a greener city by putting clean and sustainable travel at the heart of our recovery. That's why the Mayor has bold plans to transform London's roads to give more space to pedestrians and cyclists including temporary cycle lanes on Park Lane.
- Over the past week, the Mayor has called for the benefit cap to be lifted as tens of thousands of Londoners are missing out on vital COVID-19 support. You can find full details below.
- 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 Coordinating Centre. **If you would like to join the next MP SCG briefing, or to**

receive more information about the work of the SCG, please contact Ffion.Meagher@london.gov.uk.

- Sadiq continues to be 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

Low-income households denied coronavirus support by the benefit cap

Responding to City Hall commissioned research which showed that tens of thousands of low-income Londoners are being excluded from COVID-19 support measures, Sadiq Khan, said:

“It’s appalling that tens of thousands of Londoners are be excluded from vital financial support during these challenging times because the Government has not lifted the cap on benefits. They claim to be standing by those who rely on these benefits, but by failing to raise the benefit cap they are actually preventing thousands of low-income families from accessing this crucial support. This will leave families unable to pay their rent and other essential bills, and ultimately at risk of homelessness. That’s why it’s so important that the Government urgently lifts the cap on benefits so that low-income households can get the support they need.”

Full information is below.

New COVID-19 Transition Board

Last week the Mayor and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick, announced plans for how the capital’s transition out of the Covid-19 crisis will be managed.

The new London Transition Board, co-chaired by the Mayor and the Secretary of State, will remain in place until the end of 2020 to co-ordinate London’s response to trends, issues and risks as London emerges from lockdown and begins to reopen its economy while controlling the virus. The Board will be made up of senior leaders from across the city and provide strategic direction for the next phase, focusing on the key issues London faces over the coming months, including infection control, phasing in and out of varying levels of lockdown and the impact on public services, such as transport.

The Mayor is committed to ensuring that nobody is left behind and knows that no one organisation or sector can tackle these challenges alone. These measures bring together local government, civil and civic society, faith organisations, business, unions and Londoners to work together to keep London as a safe and attractive city for all Londoners, visitors and investors. Find out more [here](#).

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.

Transport

Study to better understand deaths among bus workers - TfL has asked UCL's world-leading Institute of Health Equity to provide independent advice for a two-part review to help better understand the pattern of coronavirus infections and deaths among London bus workers. The review will help to ensure that every possible measure is being implemented to protect our heroic staff. As the son of a bus driver, this is deeply personal to Sadiq.

The first part of the study will review the range of measures that have been introduced to protect bus workers, including the rigorous cleaning regime in place across the network and social distancing measures. This work will take place within a matter of weeks, enabling TfL to quickly undertake any improvements to current measures as necessary.

The second part will examine the potential contribution that occupation exposure plays in differences in infection and death rates between London's frontline transport workers and the general London population by adjusting for a range of risk factors, including age, gender, ethnicity, economic status and non-occupational exposures.

The Mayor will continue to do absolutely everything he can to keep our heroic staff and passengers safe. He is urging Londoners to do their bit to keep transport workers safe by only using public transport if they have no other alternative. It is crucial that the demand on services is as low as possible to enable social distancing for the safety of both staff and passengers.

Re-introduction of Contactless and Oyster Card Payment on Buses – TfL has begun the phased re-introduction of the requirement for passengers to touch in on buses with their contactless, Oyster or concessionary card, starting with routes served by single-door and New Routemaster buses.

From Saturday 23 May, customers on 85 routes, served by more than 1,200 of these buses, have been required to touch in on the card reader by the doors as they board. Find out more [here](#).

Advice for businesses from TfL – Last week, TfL published advice for businesses on how to keep staff safe as they return to work. TfL is doing everything possible to provide a safe transport network for those who need to use it, and in line with the Government’s plans to increase National Rail services.

TfL is working hard to return Tube and bus services to normal levels as soon as possible, but businesses can also help enable social distancing wherever possible by keeping the numbers of people travelling on public transport to a minimum.

The TfL advice sets out that employers can play a vital role in controlling the virus by enabling employees to follow the latest Government and TfL travel advice, reinforcing TfL travel advice amongst employees and reducing the frequency of, or retiming, deliveries and servicing trips. You can read the advice briefing [here](#).

Health

The Mayor urges retailers to help make face coverings widely available – Last week, the Mayor urged retailers across the capital to work with City Hall to stock non-medical face coverings in all of their stores to help in the battle against COVID-19.

Sadiq appreciates all the work being done by retailers across the capital to keep Londoners safe during this crisis, including all the vital measures they have put in place to ensure we can all socially distance.

Now he wants to work with London’s retailers to go even further – ensuring they can supply reusable, non-medical face coverings in an affordable and accessible way for all Londoners. The full letter from the Mayor to major supermarkets can be found [here](#).

Testing – Sadiq has been clear that we urgently need to develop an effective test-trace-isolate and support system and have it in place before there is any further lifting of the lockdown. This will help to avoid a disastrous second wave of the virus that could overwhelm our NHS and result in more deaths. He wants everyone in London who displays symptoms of COVID-19 to be able to access a test the same day and receive a result in 24-48 hours. Those with a positive result could then be supported and their contacts who may be at risk of infection could be effectively traced.

Business & employment

Support for London Businesses - Rajesh Agrawal, Deputy London Mayor for Business, wrote an op-ed to highlight some of the challenges the business community are facing during the pandemic. He emphasised some of the support mechanisms in place, such as the London Growth Hub and the Pay It Forward London scheme. Read the full City AM piece [here](#).

Pay it Forward update - The Pay it Forward campaign, in partnership with Crowdfunder, to assist SMEs with cashflow issues is live. The programme is aimed at helping Londoners support businesses which are currently struggling in industries such as hospitality, retail and leisure. As of May 26 over £200,000 has been donated to 149 businesses by 3,332 members of the public.

The Met Police & LFB

Domestic abuse and sexual violence funding - £3 m of Ministry of Justice funding for domestic abuse and sexual violence support services in London is now available. The deadline for applications is 1 June. Guidance on how to apply and support for preparing bids can be found [here](#).

Support for victims of abuse - London's Victims Commissioner has produced a video outlining four ways those in lockdown with an abusive person can get immediate support. You can watch and share the video [here](#).

Violence Suppression work - The Met has established Violence Suppression Units (VSUs) to tackle violent activity at a local and neighbourhood level. The Met's VSUs are a dedicated resource working across London to spearhead violence suppression. The focus of the VSUs will be to identify and target the most serious offenders, infiltrate hotspot areas and tackle the key drivers of violence.

9 Million PPE Items Distributed by the London Fire Brigade - Last week, the London Fire Brigade distributed the nine-millionth item of Personal Protective Equipment to frontline health and social care workers to help them combat COVID-19.

The milestone was met as firefighters delivered over 1,000 bottles of hand sanitiser donated by Jo Malone to nurses and staff at Whipps Cross Hospital. The London Fire Brigade has transformed a former Brigade Distribution Centre in South London into the Operation Seacole distribution hub delivering masks, gloves and eye protection to 33 local authority centres and London partners, including police services and TfL.

Housing - support for rough sleepers, renters and owners

Support for Rough Sleepers - As of the night of Thursday 21 May, 1,294 rough sleepers were safely accommodated by the GLA in hotels to enable them to follow self-isolation guidance. Along with rough sleepers accommodated in self-contained units, 1,354 rough sleepers were accommodated by Mayoral services on Monday night.

Homelessness Change programme - The Mayor is making available a £40m fund to allow homelessness hostels and women's refuges to make their facilities safer for residents during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond. The Mayor's Homelessness Change programme will help to: fund work to remodel existing hostels to make it easier to maintain social distancing and self-isolation and ensure bathroom facilities aren't shared. This will help slow any spread of the virus.

Projects funded by this programme in the past have made a substantial and sustained difference to the lives of homeless Londoners.

Private Renting – The Mayor is calling for ‘triple lock’ protection from eviction for private renters. This includes:

- increasing welfare benefits so that they can cover any shortfalls in the rents of private tenants unable to pay them due to COVID-19 – including refugees, asylum seekers and those with no recourse to public funds;
- changing to eviction proceedings to prevent landlords evicting tenants for arrears accrued as a result of COVID-19 when the suspension on eviction proceedings is lifted; and
- Scrapping Section 21, preventing landlords using this ‘no-fault’ route to evict tenants.

Communities, support for vulnerable Londoners, the Voluntary and Community Sector and Charities

Mayor calls for urgent lifting of benefit cap - New City Hall commissioned research has shown that the number of low-income households in London having their benefits capped has doubled to 44,300. It also found that households already at the cap are missing out on an average of £320 per month in Government support. This has led to the Mayor calling for an urgent lifting of the benefit cap, which would stop tens of thousands of families being excluded from COVID-19 support measures. You can find more information [here](#).

Bereavement scheme for NHS support staff – The Mayor welcomed the news last week that the Government is extending its bereavement scheme to families of NHS support staff, including social care workers, cleaners and porters. However, he is clear that migrants shouldn’t need to lose a family member to COVID-19 before they can feel safe.

That’s why he is calling on the Government to scrap the discriminatory hostile environment, end the health surcharge and offer migrant NHS staff and care workers full citizenship rights. They’ve risked their lives to save others – it’s the least we can do.

London Community Response fund - Grants have been awarded to six equality-led organisations to ensure black and minority ethnic, deaf and disabled, women’s and LGBTQ+ led organisations are reached and supported by the London Community Response Fund. Find out more [here](#).

Culture and Creative Industries

COVID-19 is having a catastrophic impact on London’s culture, creative industries and night-time economy, which are worth £52 billion to the capital’s economy a year and account for one in six jobs.

The Culture Secretary has announced a new Taskforce that will develop blueprints to reopen cultural venues and businesses. Sadiq continues to call on the Government to do much more to provide the support the culture and the creative

industries need to protect their future, and recently launched a £2.3 million Culture at Risk Business Support Fund to support these sectors.

Whilst the extension of the furlough scheme is welcome, the proposed tapering in July will force redundancies and bankruptcy in parts of the creative economy. Tapering will only work when businesses are able to open and trade so they can generate the income required to contribute to the scheme. For example, theatres and their supply chain businesses, are unlikely to be able to contribute to the Job Retention Scheme until they can open to the public at full capacity. The GLA will continue to raise this issue on a weekly basis with the DCMS.

DCMS Cultural Recovery Taskforce – Deputy Mayor for Culture, Justine Simons, outlined the three things that the new DCMS Cultural Recovery Taskforce, which met for the first time last week, must do to support the sector:

- Bold financial packages to save culture, just like Germany, the Netherlands and France
- Accelerate economic and social recovery – a new deal for artists, young people, public commissioning and the creative industries,
- Mayor consumer confidence campaign so audiences and tourists return.

Justine also wrote to the DCMS Secretary of State, Oliver Dowden, last week. She asked for the Government to support and safeguard our cultural and creative industries through the impact of COVID-19. The need to do so is growing more urgent each day. You can read the full letter [here](#).

Environment

Air quality update – Before the lockdown, the ULEZ had already transformed air quality in central London. It contributed to a reduction of 44 per cent in roadside nitrogen dioxide in central London between February 2017 and January of this year. As traffic returns to London's roads, the Mayor is reinstating the ULEZ to prevent London's roads from becoming unusably blocked. He is clear that we mustn't replace one public health crisis with another.

The Mayor's plans to transform parts of central London into one of the largest car-free zones in any capital city in the world will also help support increased walking and cycling to improve our city's air quality.

Parks and Green Space - The GLA's guidance on using parks and green spaces can be found [here](#).

Waste and recycling – Nearly all of London's Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRCs) have re-opened following new government guidance. Recorded activity has been quieter than normal and no major incidents have been reported by London boroughs.

Skills and Education

Skills - The GLA is supporting London's adult skills sector through the current COVID-19 classroom closures, including through tailored funding support. We also

continue to encourage online provision, including co-funding the Keep London Learning portal, to enable some continuity for London learners.

Education – The Mayor continues to urge the Government to urgently provide teachers with further guidance on how to ensure more accurate exam predictions to reduce inconsistencies across schools and pupils. Given the concerns that unconscious bias could lead to the under-prediction of grades for some students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and BAME pupils, it is vital that the Government provides clear information on the grading appeals process - that is easy for both students and parents to understand.

International Cooperation

London as an international leader on walking and cycling plans - City leaders around the world have introduced measures to encourage walking and cycling over the past few weeks in response to the coronavirus crisis.

But the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group has singled out London for praise, saying our Streetspace plans put the capital at the forefront of global cities in the effort to keep people safe by encouraging walking and cycling, whilst also tackling air pollution and the climate crisis.

David Miller, the Director of International Diplomacy for C40 Cities and Mayor of Toronto from 2003-2010, said the plans announced by London stood out, saying:

“Congratulations to Mayor Khan for showing the world what is possible when we reimagine our cities for the benefit and health of everyone. These measures announced in London today, including major car-free zones, will clean the air that Londoners breathe, improve public health both during the Covid-19 pandemic and long into the future, while also helping to avert the climate crisis. This is the future we want.”

Media, social media

- To mark Mental Health Awareness Week, Sadiq spoke to GQ about his plans for tackling the mental health issues surrounding the lockdown in the city. You can read the full interview [here](#). He also spoke to Eddie Nestor about why it's important to check in with the ones we love. You can hear a clip of the interview on BBC Radio London [here](#).
- Sadiq spoke to Grazia magazine about how the COVID-19 crisis gives us the opportunity to create a society that is fairer, more equal and secure for all. You can read it [here](#).
- Sadiq was the first guest on Facebook's new series, 'What Matters Now', focusing on leadership during COVID-19. You can watch his interview [here](#).
- The latest #LondonTogether video, focusing on kindness, can be watched [here](#).
- Sadiq spoke to the Today programme to urge Londoners to walk and cycle wherever possible to help people keep safe as we carefully come out of lockdown. You can listen [here](#).

- The Mayor marked Eid by showcasing Londoners who were celebrating from home this year. You can watch their video [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:

- **Mental health** – Mental health experts have helped us collate advice on the GLA website to help those who may be feeling down or anxious. The tips can be accessed [here](#). It also includes information on how to access services if Londoners need support with their mental health. Help with how to cope with bereavement and grief during the coronavirus outbreak can be found [here](#).
- **Pay it Forward** - Business owners should visit www.london.gov.uk/payitforward and see how Pay it Forward could help them make their way through the challenges we now face as a city.
- **London Learning at Home** - The Mayor has launched London Learning at Home, which brings together the city's free learning and cultural resources that children can access from home. It can be accessed [here](#).
- **Guidance and support for renters and landlords** - The GLA has collated advice for renters and landlords on their rights during the coronavirus crisis. Please help share the page, which can be accessed [here](#).
- **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, including the Government's Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, which is now open for applications. **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](#).**