

## Update from the Mayor of London on COVID-19 – 2 June

- The brutal killing of George Floyd has rightly ignited fury - not just in America, but around the world. The Mayor completely understands the depth of anger it's caused. He stands in solidarity with the black community and millions of others across the world, who are outraged by these events.
- There have been some concerns about the police using excessive force on occasions in London, and the Mayor takes allegations like this extremely seriously. He fully recognises the hurt it can cause black Londoners in particular and is also aware that recent events mean that policing everywhere is under increased scrutiny.
- Londoners are seeking reassurance that their freedoms, including their right to protest peacefully, will be protected. The Mayor urges all protestors to adhere to social distancing regulations and cooperate with the police to ensure everyone's safety.
- Sadiq remains in regular contact with the Metropolitan Police who will be out across the city to engage with and provide reassurance to communities. He knows that the force recognises that community trust and engagement must be continually and consistently earned and worked on together.
- He is also writing to the British Transport Police this week to outline his concerns over reports of spitting attacks on London's transport workers during lockdown and following the tragic death of Belly Mujinga. Although she wasn't a TfL worker, the Mayor clear that spitting at staff or passengers on London's transport network is a disgusting crime that won't be tolerated. Anyone caught could be banned from public transport and the Mayor is determined to do everything he can to ensure that they face the full force of the law.
- Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Sophie Linden, and Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement, Debbie Weekes Bernard, are hosting a call on Thursday June 4 12.00 - 12.45 pm for London MPs to address ongoing policing issues. **If you would like to join the call please contact Sarah Gibson, Head of Government and EU Relations on [sarah.gibson@london.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.gibson@london.gov.uk).**
- The Mayor has expressed concern that the Government is rushing to ease the lockdown before the evidence suggests we should. The Government had previously said it would not ease restrictions before its own traffic-light system of coronavirus alert had moved from four to three. But over the weekend the level was said to only be 'transitioning'.
- If there had been a COBRA meeting before the advice was changed – as is the usual procedure – the advice from SAGE would have shown no change to the threat level. This follows a number of scientists who attend Sage warning that the easing of lockdown has come too soon. England is still projected to have around 8,000 new infections a day.
- The Mayor is also concerned that the Test, Track and Isolate system is not fully operational, with the much-heralded app still not up and running. He has

said this must be an urgent priority for the Government to help ensure we don't have a devastating second wave of the virus.

- As schools reopen to more children this week, TfL has issued advice for headteachers, parents and guardians across London on how they can play a part in preventing the spread of the coronavirus. This includes encouraging journeys to be made on foot or bike wherever possible.
- TfL is working hard to return bus and tube services to normal levels as soon as possible, despite many staff members still being off ill, or having to shield themselves or self-isolate.
- TfL is operating 85 per cent of bus services and 80 per cent of tube services, because of the number of staff still off sick, shielding or self-isolating, but even if 100 per cent of services were being operated, the number of people TfL would be able to safely carry would still be constrained to around 13-15 per cent of normal levels due social distancing measures.
- The Government said today that it is unfair for the rest of the country to fund free travel for Under 18s in London in defence of their decision to suspend it as part of the TfL financing deal. But the reality is that the Government's decision will hit the poorest Londoners hardest at a time when finances are stretched more than ever. Londoners are less likely to have access to a car than people living elsewhere in the country. And the most deprived households in London are almost five times more likely to not own a car than the least deprived, which means they are more reliant on public transport to make journeys. You can find more details on this below.
- Yesterday, the Mayor announced that BAME staff across the GLA family will have access to risk assessments as part of measures to help those who could be disproportionately affected by Covid-19. These additional measures are designed to ensure that working environments are safe for everyone.
- 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. **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](mailto: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**

### **BAME Risk assessments**

On Monday 6 June, the Mayor announced that BAME staff across the Greater London Authority family will have access to risk assessments as part of measures to help those who could be disproportionately affected by Covid-19.

The risk assessments will consider the physical and mental health needs of all those at greater risk, including BAME people, working across Transport for London, the Met Police and the London Fire Brigade.

The Mayor has consistently raised serious concerns about the impact of the virus on BAME communities, successfully lobbying ministers to routinely collect and publish demographics of those dying in hospital.

The announcement of the risk assessment initiative accompanied the release of new research into the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on BAME communities. The study compared coronavirus cases in London to a range of measures, including ethnicity, job security, poverty, deprivation, age and a range of health conditions.

The results show that the highest Covid-19 death rate in London is an area of Newham, where 82 per cent of the population are BAME, one in three is in insecure employment and there are high levels of deprivation, obesity and diabetes. City Hall's mapping tool shows COVID-19 deaths against the local population, which is available [here](#).

### **Government suspension of Under 18s free travel**

Last week, the Mayor wrote to the Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, to urge him to drop the Government's plans to end free TfL travel for under 18s.

In the letter to the Transport Secretary, Sadiq warned that losing free travel would hit the poorest Londoners hardest at a time when finances are stretched more than ever, and parents are under enormous pressure.

In a normal school week, eight million journeys are made by under 18s. Social distancing means that many of these journeys will need to be made on foot or on a bike. But some journeys will still need to be made using public transport. And making parents – and local councils – pay for this during this crisis is simply not right.

The Mayor had no choice but to accept the terms of the Government's bad deal in order to ensure public transport could continue in London. But ministers must now reconsider the consequences of their demands as free travel for under 18s is a lifeline for many families.

There is no statutory obligation for councils to provide financial support for travel to and from school or college for teenagers aged between 16 and 18 years old. Therefore, Sadiq is seriously worried that many young Londoners from poorer backgrounds will be unable to continue their education due to the additional burden of having to pay for travel.

TfL and City Hall are making it safer and easier for more journeys to be made by bike or on foot but TfL analysis has found youngsters from more deprived areas, minority ethnic groups and the disabled experience the worst effects of road danger, noise and air pollution. Black and Minority Ethnic children are 1.5 times more likely to be killed or seriously injured on the roads than non-BAME children.

You can read the full text of the letter to the Transport Minister [here](#).

## **No recourse to public funds**

In March, the Mayor wrote to the Prime Minister to urge him to ensure those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), such as most non-EU immigrants, are allowed to claim benefits while the UK is dealing with the economic fallout from Covid-19.

Last week, the Prime Minister stated that he did not understand why migrants with leave to remain were not eligible for such benefits. The Mayor responded by saying:

“It beggars' belief that the Prime Minister is unaware of the Government's unfair policy that denies thousands of people access to the welfare safety net. I wrote to the PM in March about NRPF and I urge him to act on his instincts so that everyone can get the support they need”.

You can watch the Prime Minister's comments on this issue, which was made at the Work and Pensions Select Committee meeting, [here](#).

## **City Hall Action**

### **Transition and Recovery**

Although we are emerging from the initial response to Covid-19 in London, we will be living with the virus for many months yet and it will be a long time until all residual social distancing measures are lifted. This makes the boundary between response and recovery activity more blurred than it is traditionally after major incidents.

In light of this two key recovery strands will be run in parallel. One to co-ordinate London's early steps out of lockdown to ensure that we can make progress on reopening London's economy and society, while keeping the virus under control. The other to co-ordinate the planning for London's future post-COVID. The first is referred to as Transition; the second as Recovery. Both strands of work will demand a high degree of collaboration between a range of partners - some of them common to the two strands.

Two Boards have been established to oversee the Transition and Recovery work respectively. Leadership will be shared by the GLA, London Councils and Government.

### **Transition Board**

The Transition Board will focus on immediate issues of outbreak control, the ongoing ability of the health and social care systems to support the pandemic, the reopening of public services and the economy, and potential community matters arising from emerging from lockdown. This Board will be supported by a Transition Management Group which will be the successor to the SCG and chaired by John Barradell. The Transition Board will be co-chaired by the Mayor and the Secretary of State for MHCLG and is due to run until the end of the year, meeting every three weeks. The

first meeting will be on June 9. Membership of the Transition Board is drawn from Government, Local Authorities, London's core services and business leaders.

## **Recovery Board**

The Recovery Board will focus on how we secure the best possible future for London post-COVID. The objective of the recovery work is to restore confidence in the city, rebuild its economy and society and look to reshape London to be fairer, more equal, greener and more resilient than it was before the crisis. This work will take months, and in some respects, years.

This Board will be co-chaired by the Mayor and the Chair of London Councils and will meet for the first time on June 4, then will meet every six weeks to quarterly. Membership of the Recovery Board will be drawn from London Councils, business leaders, the community and voluntary sector, trade unions, academia and the health and police services. The Recovery Board will be supported by a Recovery Taskforce which will coordinate actions to meet these challenges, working in partnership across London.

## **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 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 the easing of the lockdown, testing, PPE, mortality management, the lasting economic impact and mental health and wellbeing.

## **Transport**

**Schools returning safely** - As schools reopen to more children this week, safety remains paramount. TfL has issued advice for headteachers, parents and guardians across London on how they can play a part in preventing the spread of the coronavirus.

Wherever possible, schools and parents should support pupils in walking, cycling or scooting to school. This will help make space for those who have no alternative but to use public transport. The majority of those traveling to and from primary schools do so on foot or bike. But there's still potential for thousands of more journeys to be made like this.

That's why TfL is working to rapidly create extra space as part of our world-leading Streetspace for London initiative, which is making temporary changes to roads to support safe walking and cycling and to enable social distancing.

The full advice can be read [here](#).

**London's buses to return to front-door boarding** - As of Saturday 30 May, front door boarding was reinstated on 120 London bus routes, with customers being required to touch in again. It's anticipated that all London buses will return to front-door boarding by mid-June.

Analysis by UCL found that safety improvements made by TfL, in conjunction with the trade unions, has made it possible to safely return to front-door boarding on London's buses.

The steps taken - including adding a film layer to screens and sealing off gaps around the screen and the Oyster reader – has substantially reduced the risk to drivers of contracting coronavirus from customers. This is on top of a range of other measures to improve the safety of transport workers, such as: putting in place a rigorous cleaning regime, offering all frontline staff simple facemasks, and introducing limits on the number of customers who can be on board busses at any one time.

Please get in touch if you'd like more information about how this will affect bus routes in your area.

## **Health**

**Testing** – The Mayor responded to the launch of Test and Trace by the NHS last week by stating:

“I've been clear that we need to urgently roll out an effective test-trace-isolate and support system to prevent a second wave of the coronavirus, so I welcome the Government's announcement.

“Rapid and accessible testing together with comprehensive contact tracing has been proven as an effective tool in efforts to control the virus, but it will only work if we all continue to follow the Government's instructions. All Londoners should get tested as soon as they exhibit symptoms, so their contacts can be rapidly traced and the rules to self-isolate can be followed.

“If you test positive for COVID19, you must give as much detail as possible to the contact tracer about where you have been and who you have been in close contact with to ensure the system reaches all Londoners. Controlling the virus also means continuing to wash your hands thoroughly and regularly and keeping a social distance from others at all times. Londoners should continue to work from home where possible, only using public transport if absolutely essential and wearing a non-medical face covering during your journey.

“Thanks to the monumental efforts of Londoners we have significantly reduced the virus in the capital, and by following these instructions we can work together to control the spread and help save lives.”

## **Business & employment**

**Pay it Forward hits £200,000** – Thanks to the generosity of thousands of Londoners, more than £200,000 has been raised for local businesses through the Pay It Forward platform. You can still encourage people to back their local businesses today by paying for services now and enjoying them later through the [Pay it Forward platform](#).

## **The Met Police & LFB**

**Application extension for domestic abuse funding** – The deadline to apply for Ministry of Justice funding for domestic abuse and sexual violence support services in London has been extended to noon, 5 June. Visit the [City Hall website](#) for more information on how to apply and the latest updates.

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

**London Fire Brigade** - Firefighters continue to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus by delivering medicines, care packages and food to vulnerable Londoners who are being shielded.

Firefighters are also helping to get vital protective equipment to frontline health staff. Local arrangements between London fire crews and the NHS are assisting those in hospitals and care homes.

## **Housing - support for rough sleepers, renters and owners**

**Protection for renters** – Last week Sadiq warned that many renters in London are facing homelessness unless the Government acts now to properly protect them from eviction.

Despite having no formal powers over the private rented sector, the Mayor is doing everything he can to stand up for London’s private renters, and is now rolling out training for borough housing and Trading Standards teams in how to deal with unlawful behaviour by rogue landlords and operators. This complements similar training being delivered with the Met Police.

The Government was right to take the required urgent action at the end of March to suspend eviction proceedings for 90 days, but this expires on 25 June. The Government should not risk the opportunity to shore up protections for private renters for the longer-term. Suggestions that landlords and their tenants should

agree 'affordable repayment plans' between themselves is totally unfair, and unrealistic in many cases. Ministers still have a chance to prevent renters from suffering needlessly, but they must act now.

This crisis has exposed the poorly regulated state of the rental market, which is why Sadiq will continue to fight for the rights of London renters.

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.

**Support for Rough Sleepers** - As of the night of 31 May, 1,285 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, 1,346 rough sleepers were accommodated by Mayoral services that night.

Projects funded by this programme have made a substantial and sustained difference to the lives of homeless Londoners. The Mayor's team have been working closely with boroughs, charities and the Government on the next steps, with the aim of ensuring that no-one currently accommodated as a result of the pandemic returns to the streets.

As well as sustained funding from the Government, we need a change in the rules around non-UK nationals and the eligibility for welfare support, particularly for those with No Recourse to Public Funds.

**Housing Delivery** – Alongside the Housing Delivery Taskforce, chaired by the Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development, Tom Copley, the Homes for Londoners team is continuing to work to safeguard the delivery of genuinely affordable homes in London. This week, the Mayor announced a ground-breaking £50m deal with the developer Mount Anvil, which secures 50 per cent genuinely affordable housing across their London delivery pipeline.

### **Communities, support for vulnerable Londoners, the Voluntary and Community Sector and charities**

**Support for community and voluntary organisations** – The Mayor is investing £5 million to help community and voluntary organisations deliver their important work during Covid-19. City Hall is hosting an online discussion on what more can be done - you can contribute to this discussion [here](#).

**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 first meeting of the Government's Cultural Renewal Taskforce took place on 22 May, chaired by Neil Mendoza. It will now meet on a weekly basis. 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.

## **Environment**

The Mayor has shared a blog on five sustainable ways we're helping to get London moving. These are:

- Making central London the world's largest car-free zone of any capital in the world
- Widening pavements and trebling cycle lanes
- Opening up our world-famous bridges and streets
- Expanding the Santander Cycles hire scheme
- And keeping our commitment to improve air quality.

**Air quality update** - Following the decision to go into lockdown, traffic levels on TfL roads fell by as much as 60 per cent and harmful nitrogen dioxide dropped by around 50 per cent on some of London's busiest roads. But as the capital starts to get moving, traffic and pollution are now starting to rise.

The Mayor's air quality programme, including the introduction of the ULEZ, had already contributed to a reduction of 44 per cent in roadside nitrogen dioxide in central London. It has been reintroduced to reduce congestion and pollution and help tackle the climate emergency.

**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 with no major incidents reported by London boroughs.

## **Skills and Education**

**£9 million skills funding boost** – The Mayor is making up to £9 million available to help skills providers to switch to remote training to help reach those who may struggle with online learning. This will help learners develop the skills they need to access employment, gain confidence in using digital tools and help them gain the wider social and economic benefits of acquiring new skills. You can find out more about the fund [here](#).

**Education and children returning to school** – This week, more children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 have been attending school in accordance with the latest government guidance. Schools are having to take into account their individual situation to ensure that it is safe to take additional children. Many schools are taking a phased approach, which is different from school to school.

**Emergency School Streets** - The Mayor’s Walking and Cycling Commissioner, Will Norman, has written to borough Directors of Children’s Services to encourage them to work with schools to implement emergency School Streets, which will create safe spaces for social distancing by banning traffic outside school entrances during drop off and pick up times. As more children return to school, there is a need to manage the space outside school gates and on the main routes to schools. You can find out more information [here](#).

## **International Cooperation**

**Call with European city leaders** - On 26 May, the Mayor joined a video conference with the Governing Mayor of Berlin and Professor Christian Drosten, the Director of Germany’s Institute of Virology and advisor to the German Federal Government, for a discussion about the lessons we can learn from Germany’s response to the pandemic. This included talking about the importance of mass testing and contact tracing and what we can do to reduce the likelihood of a second wave, such as continuing with physical distancing and wearing non-medical face coverings in confined public spaces. The video conference was also joined by the Mayors of Los Angeles, Buenos Aires, Madrid and Budapest.

## **Media, social media**

- Glamour magazine has covered the critical work being done in London to protect victims of domestic abuse during lockdown by the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Sophie Linden, MOPAC and London’s Victims Commissioner, Claire Waxman. You can read the piece [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](http://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](#).**