



# RECOVERY PLAN FOR OLDER LONDONERS

## WHY A PLAN?

Within London's recovery from the pandemic we believe the needs of older people need to be protected, but also to use this opportunity to improve their lives through new initiatives. This **first phase** recovery plan outlines the current problems facing older people and proposes solutions for implementation. It assumes that social distancing will be required for some time before any vaccine is successfully introduced and that older people will continue to have greater health risks. But this plan is not just about helping older Londoners' wellbeing, it also recognises the economic contribution of older Londoners and paving the way for London to become an Age Friendly city.

## PRINCIPLES TO PROTECT OLDER PEOPLE IN LONDON'S RECOVERY

London's recovery will only work if planning follows a set of principles to protect the interest of older Londoners. (<http://pailondon.org.uk/making-the-process-good-for-all-ages/> )

1. Preventing age discrimination.
2. Older people are not all the same.
3. Need to identify those most at risk.
4. Using the right evidence.
5. Assessing the impact of plans on older people
6. Engaging and listening.
7. Achieving an integrated approach to public service reform in recovery.
8. Communicating effectively.
9. Helping support organisations for older people and local initiatives that have helped vulnerable older people.

A fundamental principle is older people are not all the same. Over 70s are **not** all vulnerable and in need. Stereotypes linger and can unconsciously creep into planning. Older Londoners are a truly diverse group with different needs, interests, and activities - who work, volunteer, and support the community. And they are all individuals and vary like in any age group. We argue that recovery plans need to be based on hard evidence not assumptions about what older people are thought to need. Research is necessary to assess these needs in tandem with engagement with older people to hear their views and interpret findings. Any plan needs to know the impact on older people rather than rely on untested assumptions. In short, we need a new policy playbook for addressing older people's needs. We want older people to contribute to London's recovery having high quality conversations with policy makers - we have valuable experience to give. But this must be at the start

of planning rather than post hoc consulting over plans. Recovery needs to be done **with** and not **to** older people.

## **NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE EFFECTS OF COVID19 ON OLDER LONDONERS**

COVID has had a dramatic effect, not just the terrible death toll, but acute challenges for health and wellbeing as we enter recovery. The pandemic has cruelly exacerbated the structural inequalities facing older people and the impact of this varies across London particularly affecting older BAME people. The long list of problems includes loneliness, poor housing, mental and physical health, delayed medical treatments, the digital divide, difficulties in accessing services, problems of shopping, employment risks and above all the loss of independent living. The one plus has been the immense practical and emotional support for older people from the community, local services, and families. We recommend:

- **There is an urgent need for research, data, and feedback from older Londoners on what has happened to them during the crisis to help frame the plan and solutions. Reviewing the impact on older BAME people is particularly important**
- **The London Recovery Plan incorporates needs of older people**
- **London Boroughs also have local plans to meet the needs of older Londoners**

## **THE ESSENTIAL ACTIONS FOR THE LONDON RECOVERY PLAN**

### **A. Community and support initiatives for older people**

#### **Our aims**

To ensure that the local initiatives and infrastructure continues to help older people particularly those more at risk and vulnerable and provide strong supportive neighbourhoods.

#### **The challenges**

Local neighbourhoods may be harmed by the effects. As local food supplies cease with the ending of shielding then many new volunteers may go back to work reducing local capacity. Local charities are experiencing loss of income. Over 70s volunteers may be restricted in their previous volunteering work and the significant contribution they make.

#### **How to get there**

- Each London Borough to work to maintain local initiatives through support as part of a community development policy to protect neighbourhoods working with older people
- Re-purpose mutual aid groups to other urgent needs e.g. helping promote digital inclusion
- Review and share best practise across London on what worked well in local solutions
- Publicise the contribution of volunteering for older people through a Mayoral awards scheme

## **B. Enhancing the confidence of older people**

### **Our aims**

Older Londoners are confident in being able to leave home and resume participating in activities aware of the risks and ways to handle these.

### **The challenges**

Many older Londoners not just those shielding are uncertain about what they can do safely. There has been a drop in over 65s participation in core activities – shopping and volunteering. Research shows a lack of confidence in resuming activities leading to fear and uncertainty.

### **How to get there**

- Better information on risks for older people and how to mitigate these
- Local information on Covid rates and any breakouts
- Priority testing for older people
- Tailored information from shops and amenities for older people
- Support the compulsory wearing of masks on public transport and in shops, offices, and indoor spaces where there is heightened risk, particularly where social distancing is reduced
- “Covid Safe” signs for shops, restaurants and public settings indicating they are practising Covid secure best practise
- Continuing to identify and support the most vulnerable

## **C. Improving Health and Wellbeing**

### **Our aims**

Ensure older people have access to health and care and have support and information on maintaining their health and wellbeing

### **Challenges**

Older people have experienced significant challenge to their health from the crisis. For those who suffered from COVID there are problems of recovery and the need for rehabilitation. Months of ‘shielding’ and subsequent isolation and inactivity may have had unintended consequences for physical and mental health. Usage of the health service has declined during the crisis by all age groups with a backlog of treatments which will need to be cleared. There has been a move to telephone and online consultations, but it is not certain how well these serve older patients. With the reduction in public transport, accessing medical treatment poses a further challenge, particularly if these take place far from home as may be the case in the re-organised NHS in London. There is also concern over the ease of use, updating and accessibility of related websites, such as those of GP surgeries and practices

### **How to get there**

- Restore public confidence that the NHS is capable of treating non-Covid cases safely
- Ensure that necessary levels of rehabilitation services are in place to meet the needs of people of all ages

- Review services and support for BAME older people
- Develop and extend local initiatives to promote physical activity for older people
- Research patient experience of remote consultations to inform professional practice
- Work with older people and their representatives in any new strategy for the NHS in London
- Ensure hospital transportation is adequate to meet the increase in demand
- Support provided and information sent to all health and age-related online information and websites to make them accessible and understandable to older people

## **D. Shopping, retail, and hospitality**

### **Our aims**

To enable older people to go out and eat, drink and shop safely.

### **Challenges**

Research shows that many older people are lacking in confidence in shopping and going out for drinks and food again and are uncertain about what to expect and the safety considerations.

### **How to get there**

- Support the Mayoral campaign that face masks are worn in shops
- Ensure safety measures are in place in all retail and hospitality establishments and these are widely publicised to older people
- Publicise a COVID Safe sign scheme for establishments who follow good practise in Covid security
- Work with bodies such local Chambers of Commerce, Save the High Street and Federation of Small Businesses that risk assessments on Covid consider the needs of older people e.g. queuing and seating areas
- Ensure cash can be used for purchases by older people where necessary
- Ensure older people have accessible and safe public toilet facilities available and also those toilets in private establishments are encouraged to participate in schemes allowing older and disabled people access to their toilets

## **E. Travel and transport**

### **Our aims**

Older Londoners to feel safe when they want to travel

### **Challenges**

Evidence shows older Londoners are concerned about the safety of travelling on public transport which they are reliant on rather than walking or cycling or traveling by car. Whilst social distancing is in place then there are constraints on capacity of public transport. The free travel for older 60s has been suspended. Financial constraints on TfL may lead to routes being cut or longer waiting times which impact on essential travel such as hospital appointments.

### **How to get there**

- Improve public confidence in travelling by public transport in London through communicating safety provision
- End the suspension of free travel for over 60s before 9am
- Priority given to those older people who require it at bus stops and queuing into tube stations
- Engage with older people organisations on any route changes or major frequency changes

## **F. Public spaces and amenities**

### **Our aims**

Older Londoners feel able to use public spaces and amenities and are safe getting there.

### **Challenges**

Public transport may not be used for some time. Confidence levels at visiting major amenities such as parks is low. Social distancing means that streets have changed to allow greater use by pedestrians and cyclists.

### **How to get there**

- Street changes to include an assessment of older people and disabled needs
- Audit of safety for amenities and older people's needs assessment
- Ensure seating available in any changed public places or streets
- Ensure there are accessible and safe toilet facilities in public spaces
- Older people to carry out street audits in partnership with local authorities to ensure that streets and adjoining buildings and open spaces are evaluated for their accessibility and health and safety of older and disabled users

## **G. Work and Employment**

### **Our aims**

Older workers are not neglected in the job market and suffer unfairly.

### **Challenges**

Older workers are at risk of being laid off and face a tougher job market. Many older people have decided to take early retirement or an enforced drop out of the job market. Apprehension of older workers who face a return to work in terms of safety

### **How to get there**

- Assessment of local rates of furloughing older workers and redundancies
- Introduce tailor made job seeker support for older workers
- Develop schemes for skills development for older workers
- Ensure employers do not discriminate against older workers through better monitoring
- Ensure safety protocols in place for older workers returning to work
- Support for an educational programme to be promoted to and with London's employers around the benefits of an age diverse workforce and retaining and hiring older and younger workers in a fair and equitable way

## H. Housing and living

### Our aims

Older Londoners live in homes suitable for them and safe.

### The challenges

The lockdown exacerbated the problems of those living in unsuitable accommodation. There have been problems of rent issues for some older people with private landlords .

### How to get there

- Ensure older private renters under threat are protected
- Review the needs of older people in unsafe accommodation
- Develop programmes of aids and adaptation where necessary
- Support the development of building more suitable accommodation for independent living
- Support for improvements in the support and implementation of adaptations required by older and disabled owners and tenants regardless of type of tenancy and ownership

## I. Tackling the Digital Divide

### Our aims

To ensure older people do not suffer from being unable to engage online and to improve the rates of older people being connected digitally

### The challenges

The pandemic has vividly illustrated the plight of those who are not able to engage online and therefore excluded from vital information, social connections, and ability to do transactions and apply for jobs. There are mixed reasons for the lack of engagement – the lack of resources, fear of technology, and lack of skills

### How to get there

- Continue to ensure that those who do not have online access received printed information about core information and services
- Ensure shops and public services have efficient phone systems to ensure people can ring with queries or to book services
- Local authorities to identify those who are digitally excluded which is causing problems and the barriers
- Provision of free Wi-Fi to those older people in need
- Provision of pay as you go handsets and tablets for those who do not have equipment
- Use mutual aid hubs to act as digital befriending services to help older people get online

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