



OUR TEN POINT PLAN FOR SUCCESSFUL LOCKDOWN AND RECOVERY

Core Cities city regions are home to 20 million people, deliver 26% of the UK economy, 20% of its trade and exports and host 40% of UK university students.

We are therefore making this public statement, to Government, but also through local networks to our millions of residents and many thousands of businesses who are all impacted by this Lockdown.

The health and economic impacts of COVID-19 have been worse in big cities, due to unique features and challenges of large population and economic hubs. These include high levels of deprivation and inequality, commuting patterns and business density, and the impacts on city centres.

Yet our cities are clearly the route not only to future recovery, but to the delivery of successful Lockdown measures right now. We have the expertise, local community and business links, and assets like health and learning institutions to make measures work. For example, Liverpool began a trial on 6 Nov that will see everyone living and working in the city offered repeated COVID-19 tests, combining local and national efforts.

And as major population and economic hubs, Lockdown must work in cities if it is to work anywhere. We are deeply concerned however that the mistakes of past lockdowns and related measures like Test and Trace are not being learned, that there is no clear exit strategy or consistent criteria in place for this new national Lockdown and what will come next.

The alternative is an extended Lockdown period, followed by further damaging restrictions, impacting community confidence and health, causing long-term economic damage and huge job losses, making Government's Levelling Up agenda undeliverable.

We all need this to work, so it is time for a new and direct dialogue between our city authorities and Government to ensure that happens, a 'Core Cities Transition Board', chaired jointly by us and a Minister.

Different measures will apply for Core Cities in devolved nations, but our cities face very similar challenges, and working together will strengthen all our responses. Support from UK Government should however be consistent across all nations and be responsive to local differences, for example for Furlough. It is important that any support also recognises the extreme challenges of cities, not just over-simplistic per-capita calculations.

This Lockdown must be a turning point in our fight against COVID-19, we cannot waste the month ahead. We are the places that can help Government deliver a successful Lockdown and phased exit strategy, but we must have the right tools for the job, set out in our Ten Point Plan.

1. **Clear, transparent criteria for entering and exiting Lockdown:** The previous national lockdown and its conclusion were based on national data and trends, which miss the significant regional differences which are now apparent. This time, local data going beyond absolute infection rates, needs to be part of agreed criteria including: infection rates in different sections of the population; local NHS capacity; impacts on jobs and business; and effects on poverty and deprivation. Clarity must be given on how we will de-escalate lockdown, which Tiers places will move into and who will make those decisions. Longer term, we need to establish local and regional observatories to base future action on solid data.



2. **Rapid, localised Test and Trace, and Vaccination planning.** A staged transfer of Test and Trace funding, responsibility and personnel to local and city government, with councils able to direct testing in their area including rapid expansion of testing for key workers and university students prior to their return. Lessons learned from Test and Trace must be applied to plans for a future vaccination programme now, including how take-up can be incentivised.
3. **Adequate Business Support Package.** Simple, accessible financial support for all businesses affected by Lockdown, with enhanced packages for hardest hit sectors including hospitality, culture and tourism. The full wage of anyone self-isolating must be met by this package. This is critical to maintain the economic infrastructure we will rely on for future growth, and ensure compliance with isolation.
4. **Extended Furlough and self-employed support.** Furlough at 80% of wages extended to all employers affected by Lockdown, with no-one's income falling below the national minimum wage. Increase self-employed support scheme including return to 80% grant. Introduce a new duty on employers to ensure they can't prevent employees from following the advice to self-isolate: no worker should have to choose between their job and health. Clear guidance on employment rights for those at risk.
5. **Sustainable financing of local government.** Our city authorities are entering this second Lockdown carrying big budget gaps. The added costs and reduced income resulting from COVID-19 amount to £1.147billion across our eight English members alone, and their current funding gap, taking account of all Government support, is £582million. This presents us with an immediate crisis, but also has grave implications for our citizens into 2021/22 and beyond. This must be resolved to maintain frontline service delivery through a minimum two-year settlement.
6. **Winter support package for vulnerable people.** Addressing immediate need including food poverty, mental health services, and extra support for communities disproportionately impacted in the first wave. A shielding support package to allow local authorities to support those most in need (clearly defining the new category of 'critically vulnerable'). A £20 increase to Universal Credit and other legacy benefits to combat fuel poverty, and an extension of Free School Meals to cover the Christmas holidays.
7. **Safe and secure places to stay.** Extension of the ban on evictions, and a return to 'Everyone In' rough sleeping policy to at least the end of March 2021. Suspend No Recourse to Public Funds so all those facing hardship have the support they need.
8. **Commitment to dialogue through a Core Cities 'Place Transition Board':** Based on the London model, co-chaired by Core Cities and a Government Minister, with representation from other key stakeholders across locally agreed geographies. The shared aims of a Board should be delivering a successful Lockdown, exit strategy, and future recovery planning across our vital economic hubs. An agreed outcome should be joint announcements of measures between local and national political leadership, which will greatly increase community confidence.
9. **Focused support for learning institutions:** Our aim is to keep schools and colleges open in a safe manner, but additional and focused support, alongside longer-term planning is required to do this. For example, rapid Test and Trace for all university students, staggering returns of universities and schools in January, and reviewing the May exam timetable for schools, exploring workable alternatives with us to maintain learning progress, particularly for the most vulnerable students who have limited or no alternatives.



10. **Increased local enforcement powers.** Stronger and easier to use powers to tackle non-compliance of businesses and individuals prior to exiting national Lockdown, and enhanced police capacity to support local enforcement action.