



A SUSTAINABLE RETURN FROM LOCKDOWN: PRESSING RESTART FOR THE UK'S CORE CITIES

The UK's Core Cities are: Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield. Together, their leadership can manage a safe return from lockdown, harnessing local public opinion to support positive behaviour. These cities face increased pressures from the C19 crisis, but also have the capacity, economic scale and assets needed to deliver future economic recovery.

Return from lockdown relies on public opinion, shaped by local experience and trusted voices. Only Core Cities' leadership have the population-level engagement to successfully manage this for their places.

This crisis has made clear that a well-functioning economy relies on public services which must be resourced to manage a safe return and eventual recovery. These have been hit hard in cities, by higher levels of increased service demand and reduced income. More support is required, tailored to local needs.

We must also plan now for a greener, more inclusive economic future. We cannot simply forget the issues of climate emergency, a low-wage, low productivity economy and regional disparity that must be addressed.

Local knowledge and data on health, the economy and wellbeing of our communities has to be given greater consideration, working jointly with us on national plans and sharing information for the benefit of all.

Core Cities will bring forward further proposals to address all of these issues, and ask Government to work closely with us on plans to return from lockdown, based on the following four principles.

1. Public opinion will be shaped by local experience – plans must be locally tailored

Plans must meet the following tests.

- **Standards-led but practical:** is it deliverable, based on national standards matched with local knowledge, that businesses can make work, the public can trust and local authorities can manage?
- **Place-based:** is it capable of dealing with the complexity of place – business interdependencies, cultural diversity, inequalities and other differences?
- **Confidence building:** can it be communicated simply across a complex audience of local stakeholders, building prolonged confidence, ownership and a sense of shared purpose?

2. Only Core Cities authorities can deliver the leadership needed for their cities' successful return

Core Cities authorities can deliver this because they are:

- **Trusted by local businesses and communities** as convenors, leaders and honest communicators;
- **Intimately connected to local sectors and their supply chains**, able to see and work with the detail of local economic eco systems, where government will find this difficult; and
- **Local authorities with local public health capacity** and expertise to guide people through return.

3. We have to get return and recovery right in cities to help other places succeed

Cities are amongst the most challenged places in terms of recovery. As population and business hubs, they have seen some of the highest rates of infection, deaths and economic impacts. But they are also the places that hold the key to economic renewal for the whole of the UK.

Core Cities sit at the heart of interconnected networks of towns and cities, critical to each other's and their regional economies. Their city regions deliver 26% of the UK economy. Getting a phased return right in these places will underpin future national recovery.

4. We must plan now for a more inclusive, greener economic future

The challenges we had before the crisis still remain and must be addressed, including the following.

- Delivering a Green economic recovery and future, accelerating plans for Net Zero.
- Inclusive Growth to reduce economic inequality, which is being significantly added to by this crisis.

HARNESSING THE POWER OF CORE CITIES: A UK-WIDE NETWORK WITH GLOBAL LINKS

Core Cities face increased pressures, but have the capacity and scale to support return and recovery

Core Cities city regions face many of the same challenges as other places, but are densely populated, home to 30% of the UK population, with higher deprivation, large numbers of rough sleepers, concentrations of poverty and people with complex needs. This places greater pressure upon them, underlined by ONS figures which show a far higher COVID-19 death rate in major urban and deprived areas than for other places.

Managing these complex public health issues in cities in return from lockdown can only be done with local support, yet plans are currently decided centrally and data is not shared widely enough.

Core Cities city regions deliver 26% of the UK economy, but this means lockdown is having a disproportionately adverse economic impact too, particularly on the Core City which contains the business base, skills, assets, universities and institutions on which the wider area will rely for recovery.

But they also represent an opportunity for Government to draw more on their knowledge and expertise. Core Cities have skilled and experienced public health teams that can help lead an evidence-based return from lockdown. Their universities have leading data and health academics that can assist with tracking, testing and behavioural change. City authorities can convene local leadership across the private and public sector to support this, and have embedded skills and expertise in recovering from previous economic shocks over many decades.

The power of Core Cities' UK-wide network and international links can also be deployed not just in sharing practice, but working jointly wherever we can, drawing on the best ideas and results internationally through our links with other cities and networks like the OECD, EURO CITIES and the Global Parliament of Mayors.

Return and recovery cannot happen without high quality, properly resourced public services

This crisis has revealed the links between a well-functioning economy and public services, including education, which are 'restart enablers'. City authorities must be supported to play their economic leadership role fully, yet they are experiencing increased service demand alongside reduced income and face a mounting financial crisis. The recent additional investment for local government does not go far enough.

Increased financial demands, for example for Council Tax Support, alongside reduced Business Rates and other commercial income are pushing authorities to their financial limits. This risks cities not being able to play their full economic role in recovery, leading to deeper financial crisis and increased service demands.

Public transport is experiencing severe challenges, with greatly reduced use and revenues, yet is fundamental to a phased recovery. Fears over social distancing could see a return to increased car usage, compounding this issue and reducing air quality.

An injection of investment is needed now to sustain local networks, without which recovery will falter. In the medium term, more innovative financial instruments might be required to sustain public transport, for example spreading investment and payback over longer periods.

- Government funding for the increased costs and reduced income resulting from the COVID crisis.
- Bespoke packages of investment for successful return (linked to City Recovery Deals below)
- A sustainable long-term solution to issue of Local Government Finance, including Social Care.
- Increased financial support for public transport now, new instruments explored for the future.
- Modal shifts like cycling and walking incentivised, increasing bike loan schemes.
- Accelerating regulation of bus services to support return plans.

Core Cities can harness local public opinion to support plans and positive behaviour

Polling suggests the majority are nervous about emerging from lockdown. It is therefore essential that public support is mobilised, giving people a sense of ownership and shared purpose. Local leadership must play the key role in communicating and convening across local businesses and communities.

Workers and businesses returning will need to be presented as aiding not adding to the crisis, getting the economy moving and providing much needed funds for the public purse and NHS. Individual and organisational behaviours, like continued social distancing measures, will make or break a phased return. These have to be clearly communicated and incentivised, with measures in place for non-compliance.

- Communications and behavioural toolkit: Working with local universities / Behavioural Insights team
- Behaviours incentivised by terms of financial assistance, powers locally to enforce compliance.
- Joint cities / govt communications group, resourced to take forward a Return Communications plan and undertake regular local public opinion polling

City leadership can manage a standards-led safe return, and greener more inclusive recovery

Return to activity should be standards-led, which will be easier for some sectors like construction and elements of manufacturing to achieve. But this approach should allow each area to determine which businesses are able to comply with standards, and are most important to their locality to reopen.

It will help to prioritise the return of workers not living with parents or vulnerable groups first, alongside a rigorous testing regime, use of tracking apps and staggered shift working and commuting patterns.

This will need to be closely linked to public service delivery, for example schools and transport, where city leadership can play a coordinating role, including timetabling around changed working patterns.

Many businesses will be returning with significant debt, and a national programme, locally delivered to help business recapitalise through a patient-debt Business Equity Fund should be considered.

Plans for return must also factor in building a greener fairer future economy from the start, aiming for a very different, more inclusive recovery than that experienced after the financial crisis of 2007/8.

- Local Sector Leadership Groups could be convened to help open supply chains and reduce risk.
- National Business Equity Fund of patient capital, which would have a local decision-making component.
- Bespoke Cities Recovery Deals, complementary to the Towns Fund and other similar support, supporting phased returns and recovery.
- National support for local plans to build a greener more inclusive recovery and future economy.

Access to better and more transparent data is fundamental to return from lockdown

Implementing return plans is reliant on the ability of cities to access data from key partners, as follows.

- **DWP.** Sharing Universal Credit and JSA claimant data in close to real time.
- **BEIS.** HR1 forms, which companies have to fill in if they want to make twenty or more employees redundant. LEPs see this, but are unable to share with cities.
- **HMRC.** Data on reimbursements from the furlough scheme by area.
- **British Business Bank.** Giving business loans through 40 banks; locational data will help cities tailor support.