



London Resilience Handbook for Councillors Covid-19 Update

This briefing sets out an important addendum to the Civil Resilience Handbook for London Councillors in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Covid-19 update

All councillors can play a valuable part in leading our communities through the COVID-19 crisis. London Councils' **London Resilience Handbook for Councillors** and the separate checklists for both Leading Members and Ward Councillors role provide further guidance on the political leadership role. The Handbook includes:

- Leading members Checklist – Revised version follows at the end of this note.
- Ward members Checklist – Revised version follows at the end of this note.

However, in the light of the Covid 19 Pandemic, it is important that the role of Councillors should be discharged with reference to the Government's latest advice and guidance. In particular, it will be important to adhere to the social distancing guidance (As at 1 April 2020):

- Stay at home
- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home
- Do not meet others, even friends or family.
- You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

The full guidance is [available here](#)

NB: The Government is advising those who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures, to 'shield' themselves at home. This group includes those who are:

- Aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- Under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a

flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):

- Further guidance on shielding is [available here](#)

Keeping in Touch

If you are not clear on your council's processes for how it will keep you informed during the emergency response, you may wish to seek clarity on this. In turn, the London Local Authority Co-ordinating Chief Executive on a pan-London level, and the Sub-Regional Lead Chief Executives, will ensure that your authority is kept up to date with developments and guidance. Be mindful of the increased burdens on councils at a time when Members and officers may be required to self-isolate or look after family members – where possible minimise the usual requirements on officers as resources are focused on supporting the vulnerable, and ensure that your own efforts are focused on this overwhelming priority.

Demonstrate community leadership by taking a responsible approach to the information you share and the messages you give, and by following the guidance they receive from your council.

Base any information you provide to the public on confirmed messages from the council, local DPH and Government.

Make responsible use of social media –

- Used well, social media can be a vital channel for communicating with residents – whilst avoiding unnecessary physical contact
- Work with your council's communications teams and draw on your own council's guidance.
- Refer residents to trusted messengers, signposted by your council

CHECKLIST FOR LEADING MEMBERS DURING RESPONSE

During the emergency response phase, **Leading Members** should:

- Always Stay Safe

In the light of the Covid 19 Pandemic, the role of Councillors should be discharged with reference to the Government's latest advice and guidance. Please see the April 2020 Addendum for more information

- Contact the Chief Executive (or duty 'Gold' on-call senior officer) to receive an initial briefing and agree any urgent steps to be taken.
- Decide which member of the Cabinet will be the 'public face' of the council in support of its civic leadership role (by default, this would be the Leader/Directly-elected Mayor).
- Work with council's communications team to act as the 'public face of the council' in interactions with the media and local communities affected by the incident.
- Decide which member of the Cabinet will lead on 'business-as-usual'.
- Decide which member of the Cabinet will lead on providing political support to initial recovery work.
- Decide which member of the Cabinet will lead on Ward councillor engagement.
- In conjunction with the Chief Executive, senior communications officer and Cabinet member responsible for Ward councillor engagement, put in place arrangements for briefing Leading Members and Ward councillors during the response phase.
- Provide support and encouragement to council staff and others involved in the response effort.

- Maintain a record of significant actions and events for use in subsequent debriefs, scrutiny activity and official enquiries etc.
- If necessary, lead on making representations to the Government for financial assistance.
- Represent the council during visits by VIPs and ensure that such visits are sensitive to the 'mood' and needs of the community.
- Consider initiating dialogue with Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors of other councils impacted by, or responding to, the incident.
- Consider initiating dialogue with MPs whose constituencies are being impacted by the incident.
- Consider initiating dialogue with the Mayor for London – particularly where a pan-London response has been mobilised.

CHECKLIST FOR WARD MEMBERS DURING RESPONSE

During the emergency response phase, **Ward councillors** should:

- Stay Safe:

In the light of the Covid 19 Pandemic, the role of Councillors should be discharged with reference to the Government's latest advice and guidance. Please see the April 2020 Addendum for more information .

As community leaders

- Be a visible, trusted and reassuring presence in the community
- Advise the Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO) when providing direct support to communities, so that officers are aware of your involvement and can arrange necessary briefings etc
- Communicate key messages and reliable information to the public and media on behalf of the council.
- Signpost members of the public and businesses towards the right agency to get the support they need.
- Provide support and encouragement to council staff and others involved in the response effort.

As community representatives

- Be present locally to identify the needs of individuals and the wider community and feed them in to the appropriate response organisation via council officers
- Confirm the reliability of information before passing it on.
- Avoid attempting to get involved in the operational response to the emergency and do not cross access-controlled cordons
- Avoid attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of the emergency response.
- Maintain a record of significant experiences and actions for use in subsequent debriefs, scrutiny activity and official inquiries etc.

Addendum: Guidance for officers on supporting councillors to fulfil their civil resilience roles is available here [pdf]

This briefing has been sent to every London councillor