

MAYOR OF LONDON

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP

Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

Date: 2 April 2020

Dear Rishi,

The most vulnerable groups need our help and support more than ever in the current crisis, and charities, faith organisations, un-constituted groups, and volunteers have led the way in ensuring that support reaches those who need it most. The role of civil society in supporting London's communities and delivering vital services cannot be underestimated.

However, many of these organisations are themselves facing huge difficulties as a result of the outbreak – experiencing rising demand for their services at the same time as seeing income from donations, fundraising events, and shops falling severely. The sector is under enormous strain. NCVO reports that sector bodies have estimated a loss of at least £4.3bn of income in the coming 12 weeks.

I have been working to ensure that the sector can continue to operate during this difficult time, including by launching a new emergency support fund with London Funders to keep organisations affected by the crisis afloat – which now stands at over £8m.

I welcome the inclusion of charities and other civil society organisations in the Government's measures to protect salaries and prevent redundancy. But more must be done to ensure that the charitable sector has access to the same amount of financial support as the business sector. I am therefore adding my voice to the over 300 MPs and peers of all parties asking you to act now to protect the sector's ability to operate during this period of immense uncertainty.

This is particularly important in London. Many of our leading national charities are based in the capital, alongside a wide and diverse range of hyper-local organisations serving their communities' needs. Almost a fifth of all registered charities (excluding schools and government charities) are based in London. As you know, London is also several weeks ahead of the rest of the country regarding the progress of the crisis and faces many acute demands.

The charitable sector is on the frontline of tackling these urgent demands. London faces a particular challenge around food insecurity, for example. More than 400,000 children and 1.5 million adults in London lived in food insecurity before this crisis, and many rely on food banks for their daily food needs. These numbers will only increase as a result of COVID-19; yet food banks are struggling in the face of falling donations from the public, insufficient supplies from supermarkets, and a lack of volunteers.

Charitable organisations are also tackling issues such as social isolation and mental health, housing and homelessness, domestic violence, and advice and support for London's most vulnerable people. My teams are in regular contact with organisations across the capital, whose understanding of the immediate issues facing their user groups is second to none. This intelligence-gathering is a vital part of our ability to identify the problems Londoners are facing and respond quickly.

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Many of these organisations are volunteer-led, in fragile financial positions, and lack the resources to adapt their delivery to home working and meet social distancing requirements. They are becoming more stretched each day.

I therefore urge you to take the following immediate actions:

1. **Emergency funding** is needed to meet the increased demand created by this crisis. The Government has previously indicated that funding would be made available. This is needed now, and it must be of a sufficient scale to cover core running costs as well the increased demand for services.
2. The **80% salary support** should be made available not just where employees would otherwise be let go, but to contribute to the staff costs of those delivering these vital services – both during the response and during vital recovery work when that stage is reached.
3. Funding needs to be flexible and available to fund the **back office and governance work** that is required in order to continue with the frontline delivery work.
4. I welcome the launch of the **National Emergencies Trust (NET) appeal**. The way in which funding from the NET appeal is allocated needs to recognise the scale of London's issues, as well as the fact that we are some weeks ahead of the rest of the country in terms of infections.
5. Specific funding is needed for **advice and advocacy services to support those on the lowest incomes**, who are most likely to be impacted by this crisis. Existing provision is both underfunded and overburdened. This support needs to be fully accessible: online, phone, British Sign Language (BSL) video.
6. To ensure that any emergency funding allocated to London civil society organisations is able to flexibly meet need, Greater London Authority officers also recommend that any national funding should be **paid directly to City Bridge Trust and form part of the London Community Response fund** – where funders are working collaboratively to establish need and structure funds accordingly. This would ensure a single point of entry for London's civil society and streamline access to funding at this very pressured time.

I hope that you will be able to act swiftly and decisively to give the sector the vital support it is currently lacking, which will help millions of those who are most in need.

Yours sincerely,

Personal Data

Sadiq Khan

Mayor of London

Cc: Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Paul Scully MP, Minister for London
Sir Edward Lister, 10 Downing Street