

# CITIES on the FRONTLINE



Bi-weekly Manchester Briefing #20 (12 November 2020)

## Cities for a Resilient Recovery: International Lessons on Recovery from COVID-19

This week, we consider how circular economy, open-source data, and digital capacities and inequalities play a key role in response and recovery from COVID-19.

### International Lessons

- Circular economy to promote healthier cities (Uruguay)
- Supporting small retailers through strengthening digital capacities (Brazil)
- Addressing the digital divide in education (India)
- Learning from COVID-19 to improve city resilience (The Netherlands)
- The release and use of Open Government Data (Germany)

### Useful Webinars

## INTERNATIONAL LESSONS

**Health and Wellbeing:** Everyone living and working in the city has access to what they need to survive and thrive

**Consider creating voluntary sector-led 'wellbeing hubs' to reduce pressure on the health and social care system.** Well-being hubs strategically placed across a location could build on successful initiatives already delivered by the voluntary sector. Such hubs can be used to tackle health inequalities and help reduce the rise in mental health issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hubs would ideally offer face-to-face support and would have to ensure COVID-19 safety measures. Hubs may support:

- **Health services** during the COVID-19 pandemic and relieve pressures on the system through partnership working between healthcare providers, local councils, housing and the voluntary sector e.g. The Hubs in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, relieve pressure on primary care - in six months The Hubs have seen almost 2,000 people including 636 urgent referrals
- **Preventative health and wellbeing policies** that protect people and reduce potential strains on health and social care services
- **Social prescribing**, whereby local agencies can refer people to a Link Worker who supports people in focusing on 'what matters to me' and taking a holistic approach to health and wellbeing. They connect people to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support.

**Sources:** <https://vcseleadershippgm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Building-Back-Better-in-GM.pdf>  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/integratedcare/case-studies/nhs-and-social-care-hub-helps-people-at-risk-stay-well-and-out-of-hospital/>

**Consider that many people may be anxious about returning to workplaces and how effective support can be offered.** Many people may be concerned about the rising cases in some areas and the risks of returning to work. So, the return to workplaces, including the risks this may pose to people's health, may cause anxiety due to a heightened sense of risk of COVID-19 infection and uncertainty. Consider how new routines may be developed to avoid people becoming overwhelmed. Consider:

- Regular team meetings and debriefs to **discuss anxieties** about returning to work and any concerns or learning that may arise
- Allocating **dedicated 'buddies' to support** colleagues at work. These people could be from other departments to support confidentiality, and have specific training on helping people to manage their anxieties, on the organisations' process and plans for safe working, and additional services staff may want to access
- Clear and **simple protocols** that outline how workplaces will keep employees safe and any workplace adaptations that have taken place
- **Accessible 'Frequently Asked Questions'** sections on organisations' websites to provide answers to the most common concerns, including signposting to other relevant services such as health and wellbeing support at work
- Providing **opportunities for e-learning or training** on managing anxiety about returning to work and COVID-safe practices in the workplace
- **Surveying staff** to understand their enthusiasm for returning to work and addressing concerns raised.

**Source:** <https://www.priorygroup.com/blog/managing-anxiety-about-returning-to-work-after-coronavirus-lockdown#:~:text=Make%20sure%20that%20your%20stomach,have%20about%20returning%20to%20work.>  
<https://www.cardinus.com/insights/covid-19-hs-response/anxiety-returning-to-work-post-covid-19>

**Economy and Society:** The social & financial systems that enable urban populations to live peacefully, and act collectively

**Consider how to invest in a circular economy to promote healthier, more resilient cities.** Alongside the health and environmental risks, COVID-19 has exposed the vulnerability of current economic models. Circular economies are those that produce significantly reduced waste with the aim of producing zero through sharing, reusing, and recycling products and byproducts – and the circular economy is becoming increasingly relevant during COVID-19. Consider:

- Developing more **'pay for service' models** that do not require people to own goods in times of financial uncertainty e.g. using launderettes rather than having the burden of owning a washing machine provides alternatives to manage consumption, either by reducing expenditure, or opting for the basic alternative. These can be designed to support social distancing and COVID-19 measures
- **Redefining and classifying what is considered essential** if resources are limited or strained in order to prioritise needs. The circular economy may require redefining and rethinking the importance of certain roles, tasks, products, and services e.g. the shift in perceptions of those in retail or waste management have been classified as essential workers
- **Focus on local supply chains.** Local supply chains can be more environmentally friendly and can also be more secure. De-globalization is a clear post COVID-19 trend. World trade is expected to contract between 13% and 32% in 2020, which indicates reliance on international supply chains may be seen as riskier than sourcing products and components locally
- **Incentivize businesses, big and small, to become part of the circular economy** e.g. encouraging businesses to take more responsibility for providing reusable facemasks to their staff, or supporting projects which aim to clean up and protect ecosystems from plastic waste such as disposable gloves and masks.

**Sources:** [https://resilientcitiesnetwork.org/urban\\_resiliences/waste-circular-economy/](https://resilientcitiesnetwork.org/urban_resiliences/waste-circular-economy/)  
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/opportunities-circular-economy-post-covid-19/>

**Consider how to support small retailers and protect them from the impacts of COVID-19 through strengthening digital capacities.** Many smaller retailers have less digital capabilities, and it is these skills which can help smaller business survive the pandemic. The loss of smaller retailers will inhibit the economic recovery at the local and national level. Consider how to encourage partnerships between larger and smaller companies to help accelerate digital transformation for small business owners:

- Offer **digital solutions to support infrastructure development** of small businesses to establish brands via mobile apps and digital menu applications for consumers. Additionally, develop simple online supply platforms for small and medium-sized business e.g. Menu in Brazil and MiMercado in Mexico
- Encourage **financial inclusion** through affordable financial products and services. Consideration may be given to the development of local fintech services and partnerships that extend credit to small retailers to help save businesses and make them more competitive
- Encourage **collaborative platforms to share knowledge** between well-established, experienced companies and vulnerable business e.g. Movimento Nós in Brazil an initiative created by eight of the main food and beverage companies in the country (Coca-Cola, Heineken, Nestlé etc.) to help 300,000 small businesses employing one million people, to get through COVID-19 and guarantee their reopening when possible. This will support the recovery of smaller supply chains and encourage customers and suppliers, which in turn will continue to have a positive impact on global supply chain recovery.

Source: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/09/covid-19-has-intensified-the-digital-divide>

**Consider how to mitigate a deepening digital divide in education.** The impacts of COVID-19 have seen millions of children worldwide lose months of face-to-face education with their teachers at school. Globally, children continue to be sent home from school due to outbreaks or face complete school closure. The availability of adequate digital technology and internet access at home has a huge impact on the ability of children to engage in e-learning. The rapid shift to e-learning prompted by the pandemic has resurfaced long-standing issues of inequality, including the digital divide once bridged by schools. Consider:

- **Shortening online lessons** by a small margin to create a space **for one-to-one discussions** or problem solving with tutors that are often missing when lessons go online
- **Household disparities in access** to the internet and technology and the impacts this may have on girls. If there is competition in the home over resources, it may be that the male child is given priority access while girls are increasingly asked to support with domestic chores rather than complete schoolwork. Consider how schools can be supported in providing technology or access to technology to vulnerable children.
- Ensure teachers are trained to use new technology for online teaching. This includes making use of more innovative modes of engagement beyond a lecture e.g. interactive voting, message boards etc.

Source: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/how-covid-19-deepens-the-digital-education-divide-in-india/>

**Leadership and Strategy:** The processes that promote effective leadership, inclusive decision-making, empowered stakeholders, and integrated planning

**Consider how lessons from COVID-19 can improve city design and future resilience.** Many cities have been severely impacted by the pandemic due to inadequate access to basic services, healthcare, and adequate accommodation. Lessons from the pandemic can be used to reimagine city design and deploy solutions that can build health, equity and climate resilience. Areas with high deprivation have been hardest hit by COVID and are more susceptible to other emergencies. Steps made pre-pandemic in Rotterdam to improve the region of BoTu, a densely populated area and one of the most deprived in the Netherlands, offers lessons for recovery and renewal from COVID-19:

- Tackle climate change, social and economic challenges, and resilience building in one overarching plan due to the crosscutting nature of COVID-19 and its impacts
- Consider partnerships that link multiple services with households such as Go BoTu, a collective comprising doctors, health workers, teachers, local business people, and community workers that help involve local people in city planning and wider resilience measures e.g. workers replacing heating systems with environmentally friendly alternatives in BoTu will be trained to identify households with other needs, such as debt counselling

- Expand the use of green spaces to meet community needs e.g. more sports fields or cycle lanes. Use community capacity for building and renovation work to stimulate the local economy
- Climate change adaptability will depend on greater water absorbance to prevent flooding, consider how the city stores rainwater and how stored water can be used.

**Sources:** <https://www.resilientrotterdam.nl/en/news/making-rotterdams-1st-resilient-neighborhood-through-social-cohesion>  
<https://gca.org/solutions/building-climate-resilient-and-equitable-cities-during-covid-19>

**Consider the release and use of Open Government Data (OGD) in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.** The scale of COVID-19 requires information to be shared across countries and regions effectively. Consider how your organization can contribute to open data sets such as The Living Repository and the 'OECD - GOVLAB- Call for Evidence: Use of Open Government Data in COVID-19 Outbreak'. Consider contributing or using open data to identify:

- COVID-19 cases, individuals at risk, and forecasting future scenarios, including disease spread/contraction, and possible treatments for those infected
- Availability and demand for supplies, locating and connecting actors with medical supplies
- Whether communities adhere to guidelines and recommendations outlined by health authorities
- Public perceptions and how restrictions are affecting well-being, including crime e.g. the rise in domestic violence and child abuse
- Whether efforts are efficient, transparent, meet needs, and do not violate democracy, privacy, ethics or fundamental human rights
- Misinformation including accuracy, speed, and scale of fact-checking
- How, where, and when lockdowns are lifted
- How the pandemic affects those who live and travel outside their country of national origin
- The most effective forms of aid to those most vulnerable to the pandemic's economic shocks
- The risks and challenges workers face to their health and safety and the protections available
- The impact on the ability of students and workers to meet learning and training outcomes
- Institutions most likely to be closed as a result of the pandemic and providing support
- The pandemic's effect on climate-related activities, global emissions, energy usage, and wildlife
- Disruptions caused by confinement measures on the economy e.g. analysing data on supply chains, trade, impacts on inclusive growth.

**Sources:** <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/en/>  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BdSnXzCZ1Z7ovOrPue3O0osRUpiqTKlu8pwG9U4DwWw/edit>  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UiMn61AF0770AC-YikYsunOYSp6lrsqJ6\\_T7p6Ds0Zl/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UiMn61AF0770AC-YikYsunOYSp6lrsqJ6_T7p6Ds0Zl/edit)

**Consider evaluating and revising non-statutory guidance on emergency preparedness and management in light of lessons learned from COVID-19.** COVID-19 has shed new light on the way in which countries respond to, and recover from emergencies. This includes COVID-19 specific advice and broader lessons about emergency preparedness and management. For example, previous guidance on volunteer management has traditionally assumed a point of convergence at a disaster site, while this still holds true for many emergencies e.g. floods, lessons from COVID-19 demonstrate that volunteer management may also be dispersed, large-scale and without face-to-face contact. Consider how lessons from COVID-19 may help to revise emergency plans:

- Conduct a '**stock take**' of **current emergency guidance**, and consider what may be missing or no longer fit for purpose
- **Implement debriefs, peer reviews and impact assessments**, drawing on expertise from local government and emergency practitioners, to evaluate how well current guidance worked and where it needs revising
- Consider that emergency planning must remain relevant to specific types of emergencies, but that **broader lessons** from COVID-19 can help strengthen guidance e.g. issues of inclusion such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality; health and socio-economic disparities and vulnerabilities; volunteering capacity; supply chain stability; green agenda; and partnerships arrangements
- Draw on resources **beyond government guidance** from global networks e.g. Resilient Cities Network's revised toolkit which builds recovery from COVID-19 into a wider resilience agenda for a safe and

equitable world, and resources from International Organization for Standardization (ISO) which is developing new recovery standards in light of COVID-19 lessons (ISO 22393).

Source: [https://resilientcitiesnetwork.org/urban\\_resiliences/sdg-agenda-comeback/](https://resilientcitiesnetwork.org/urban_resiliences/sdg-agenda-comeback/)

## USEFUL WEBINARS

Key past and upcoming webinars on how cities are building resilience in the face of the pandemic and other shocks & stresses.

Date	Webinar Title (Click to register or to access materials)
15 October	<a href="#">Leaving no one behind – Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in our Cities and Communities</a>
21 October	<a href="#">How a Digital Boost and help Small Businesses survive and thrive in the wake of COVID-19</a>
22 October	<a href="#">Cities on the Frontline Speaker Series: Funding and Financing Recovery</a>
12 November	<a href="#">Cities on the Frontline Speaker Series: Resilient Leadership</a>
24 November	<a href="#">Implications of COVID-19 for Global Value Chains</a>

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### What is the weekly briefing on Cities for a Resilient Recovery?

Each week the [University of Manchester](#) brings together relevant international practices and examples on recovery from COVID-19. The weekly briefing is curated by the [Resilient Cities Network](#) to bring key lessons and examples targeted for resilience officers, emergency planners and other city practitioners. The structure of the briefing follows the [City Resilience Framework](#) – specifically the four drivers that cities have been identified as mattering the most when a city faces chronic stresses or sudden shocks – Health & Wellbeing, Economy & Society; Infrastructure & Environment; and Leadership & Strategy.

For more international examples please register @ [ambs.ac.uk/covidrecovery](https://ambs.ac.uk/covidrecovery)

**Join the Coalition of Cities for a Resilient Recovery [here](#)**

If you would be willing to contribute your knowledge to this briefing series (via a 30-minute interview) please contact [Duncan.Shaw-2@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Duncan.Shaw-2@manchester.ac.uk)