

CITIES on the FRONTLINE



Bi-weekly Manchester Briefing #28– 25 March 2021

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

This week, we consider how assessing the negative environmental impact from recovery strategies, supporting those who have anxiety about lockdown ending, and addressing the healthcare backlog can play a key role in the response and recovery from COVID-19.

International Lessons

- Supporting people who may be anxious about lockdown ending (Australia)
- Regeneration and renewal of local businesses (Pakistan, South Africa)
- Addressing the backlog of people needing healthcare (USA, UK, Canada)
- Negative impacts of recovery strategies on the environment (Burkina Faso, Philippines, Guatemala)
- Relieving the mental fatigue of COVID-19 through positive news and stories (India, China)
- Activities and partnerships required to initiate recovery planning (Australia)
- Considering the concept of 'as low as reasonably practicable' when assessing risk as we live with COVID (New Zealand, UK)

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 how to support people who may be anxious about lockdown ending. People have experienced different levels of isolation during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Many people will be enthusiastic about socialising again, but others may be nervous or anxious about resuming activities that they once took for granted, such as returning to shops or busy spaces. Having to process and remember new rules as restrictions ease may be an additional concern for people who are already feeling overwhelmed. Consider:

- Work with befriending services and community organisations to **mobilise volunteer 'buddies' to help those who are feeling anxious** about coming out of isolation. For example, buddies can:
 - Accompany people on their initial outings, perhaps starting with a walk down the street and working up to a trip to shop for food
 - Support those who are socially isolated for reasons other than 'vulnerability', e.g. they have recently moved into an area and have not established social networks
- **Communicate directly with community members** to help them understand their local restrictions as lockdown is relaxed, and the support that is available, e.g. through traditional media outlets, social media, or leaflets directly to people's homes
- **Educating people on how they can reduce their stress** through self-care, e.g. breathing exercises, or signpost to support from mental health services

Sources:

<https://tinyurl.com/sehrjadk>

Consider lessons learned from the USA, UK and Canada in addressing the backlog of people needing healthcare.

In health systems across the world, screening programmes and non-emergency surgical operations have been postponed and cancelled to reduce transmission and free up capacity to treat Covid-19 patients. The USA, UK and Canada have been working to re-start non-COVID related healthcare since the first wave of COVID-19, with subsequent COVID-19 surges creating further challenges, particularly for those countries who are yet to tackle healthcare waiting lists. Those working to reduce the backlog report that some patients continue to defer seeking care so not to increase pressure on services, or because they fear catching the virus. Continued delays will decrease quality of life, increase treatment costs, and worsen outcomes, as the conditions individuals are suffering from deteriorate. There may also be knock-on effects on social care. Consider the measures explored by the UK, USA and Canada:

- **Proactively engage the public** (e.g. through local communications) to instill confidence in the safety and continued functioning of healthcare systems and encourage them to seek care if they need it
- Ensure ample PPE is available to prevent unnecessary challenges in the delivery of health and social care
- Inform plans by developing rigorous forecasts of future patient demand and service pressures
- **Enhance national and local partnerships** developed during the pandemic to address the backlog of people needing care. For example:
 - Begin to increase resource capacity through recruitment now to ensure sufficient capacity is available in the future
 - Extend surgical operating hours, including at weekends
 - Draw on volunteers to support vaccination programmes to enable trained healthcare staff to focus on elective care
 - Pool resources between local hospitals and centralize waiting lists so that patients can be treated wherever there is capacity
 - Make greater use of virtual care to increase outpatient access
 - Pilot alternative health care testing programmes

Sources:

<https://tinyurl.com/t824w44f>

<https://tinyurl.com/2v7sfju2>

<https://tinyurl.com/rut6z68x>

Consider how positive news and stories can relieve the mental fatigue of COVID-19. COVID-19 has dominated news, media, and local and national government communications for the best part of a year since the pandemic began. One study found that excessive media use was associated with negative psychological outcomes, such as anxiety and stress. Positivity can aid stress management and reduce levels of anxiety/depression. Consider:

- Demonstrate that there is a **world outside of COVID-19** by communicating positive stories unrelated to COVID-19
- Encourage more **positive COVID-19 stories to come through**, for example:
 - Create a **local news special that celebrates the effort of local volunteers or local government** during the pandemic
- **Use communication channels** (e.g. social media/newsletters) to communicate positive stories:
 - Invite local community members to share positive news and stories that can be shared and promoted through these channels
 - Invite school children to draw and write positive messages and hang them on the trees/fences of local parks/buildings
 - Encourage people to take regular breaks from consumption of COVID-19 news (signpost to community groups that may be running weekly bingo/quizzes online)
- **Create a call-to-action for local volunteers** and begin inviting the community to take part in and create new positive local initiatives that are focused on recovery and renewal from COVID-19

Sources:

<https://tinyurl.com/y5u6nnz5>

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

Consider how to support the re-generation and renewal of local businesses. Many local/town centre businesses will be micro- and small-medium enterprises (MSMEs) that have been severely impacted by the pandemic and lack internal resources to support recovery. In Pakistan, MSMEs contribute 40% to GDP and are critical to the economy, as they are in many other countries. In developing support strategies for local businesses and MSMEs, it is **important to recognise that the pandemic has changed working practices and locations, and how we shop and entertain ourselves.** Small businesses may not have the resources to access the type of data that can inform them on these potential changes to consumer habits, which in turn could impact trade levels as restrictions ease and these businesses re-open. Local governments can support them by facilitating access to this information. Consider:

- **Build capacity of local government** staff to undertake local economic assessments and develop small town regeneration and renewal plans (e.g. train staff to conduct economic impact assessments to identify businesses that may struggle post-lockdown and strategies that will support local economy recovery)
- **Engage with local businesses, MSMEs and organisations that represent them** (e.g. FSB UK) to draw on their perspectives and expertise when developing recovery and renewal plans
- Identify what has gone well in previous phases of re-opening, what could be improved and the support needs of these businesses (e.g. management of queues/health and safety measures to mitigate and contain the virus)
- Provide **support grants** to MSMEs for business regeneration or local marketing strategies to promote local businesses
- Conduct local and regional consumer habit surveys, **in partnership with neighbouring local authorities**, to identify the expectations of local consumers, and their potentially changed habits
- Communicate findings rapidly to local businesses so that they are informed and can prepare/pivot their businesses appropriately
- **Develop an evidence-based local economic strategy** that recognises changed consumer habits and demands, in partnership with local businesses
- Provide guidance to local businesses on how to adapt and where new business opportunities may lie (renewal)
- Signpost local businesses, particularly MSMEs, to training for digital skills and to advice on finance/investment in new technologies
- **Develop a mechanism whereby local government can share lessons** and knowledge between each other easily to learn from each other

Sources:

<https://tinyurl.com/ykz38ufa>
<https://tinyurl.com/8p447tn8>
<https://tinyurl.com/6emcsh88>

Infrastructure and Environment: The man-made and natural systems that provide critical services, and protect and connect urban assets, enabling the flow of foods, services, and knowledge.

Consider if recovery strategies will have negative impacts on the environment. Economic re-generation by increasing industrial production will be a priority for many countries globally as restrictions begin to ease. This type of activity will inevitably lead to a rise in CO2 emissions and pollution. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) highlight the need to integrate environmental concerns into recovery plans and strategies, to re-start the progress gained in addressing climate change and biodiversity prior to COVID-19. New environmental issues that the pandemic itself has caused also need to be recognised and addressed, such as large amounts of medical waste from increased use of disposable PPE, single-use plastics and sanitization chemicals. Consider:

- Conduct an **Impact Assessment** as part of the recovery planning process **to identify and evaluate current and predicted future environmental issues** (see TMB Issue 8)

- Plan for, and secure, resources to implement programmes that advance sustainable development
- Ensure broad stakeholder involvement in the planning and implementation of environmental interventions, in order to manage expectations, utilize local knowledge, and address issues affecting local populations:
 - To promote ownership, interventions to address climate change impacts, disaster risk reduction and natural resource management should incorporate local community knowledge
 - Intervention design and implementation should recognise, and be sensitive to, ethnic minority communities and to the rights, culture and knowledge of indigenous people
- **Establish local environmental education programmes** through targeted awareness building activities (e.g. school field trip initiatives, Burkina Faso)
- Review and enhance policy and regulatory frameworks to support the integration of environmental interventions in recovery and renewal planning at national and sub-national levels
- **Engage the private sector to mitigate conflicts** of interest and create opportunities for long-term sustainability of environmental interventions and outcomes:
 - In Guatemala, the involvement of the private sector in an ecotourism programme increased the chances of sustainability of actions implemented as the private sector applies them in practice and is less affected by political changes.

Sources:

<https://tinyurl.com/bk87btjt>

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

Consider the activities and partnerships required to initiate the recovery planning process. Strong collaboration between local government and their partners, communities and local businesses is required to anticipate challenges in the aftermath of COVID-19. Further, co-operation in the design of recovery strategies is critical to ensure communities are engaged and empowered in their recovery. Recovery strategies will need to be tailored to address the diversity of impacts and needs of different communities. Consider how to:

- Conduct an **Impact Assessment to identify where COVID-19 has created effects**, impacts and opportunities (see TMB 8) – and identify which of these impacts will bring longer-term challenges in recovery
- Refresh impact assessments with updated information as other effects, impacts and opportunities become known
- Identify other challenges that lie ahead as we progress to living with COVID
- Review what planning is required and what partnerships will support recovery:
 - **Define recovery goals** in partnership with the community and local organisations, and account for the need to measure progress and outcomes in the future
 - **Plan for the need to adapt/pivot and establish new local resources**, services and programmes to address pre-existing, new and emerging needs of communities, e.g. infrastructure planning to address housing supply challenges/employment programmes for young people
 - Maintain and enhance partnerships that have been developed through the pandemic, by bringing these partners together to co-produce plans and actions to address the new and emerging challenges
- **Identify logistical and operational challenges** that may occur as continuous management of the virus is required
- Review lessons from previous phases of track and trace/vaccination programmes, recognise the challenges, such as people not responding to track and trace or vaccine hesitancy, and prepare strategies to address these (see TMB 31)
- **Manage the expectations of communities**, to ensure that they understand that potential future outbreaks may mean restrictions may be re-introduced
- Review communication strategies for previous localised restrictions, consult with local partners on their effectiveness

Sources:

<https://tinyurl.com/563w3ujj>

<https://tinyurl.com/2k9hkned>

Consider the concept of “as low as reasonably practicable” (ALARP) when assessing risk as we live with COVID. The ALARP principle acknowledges that we might not be able to eliminate all risk, as risk is part of life, but we may be able to manage it. It is necessary to control risk, particularly when it comes to public health and

safety. Throughout the pandemic we have continuously acknowledged the existence of COVID-19 risk and managed this risk to as low a level as practicable through various containment measures. When assessing COVID-19 risk ALARP, consider:

- **What level of COVID-19 risk is as low as reasonably practicable and acceptable**, e.g. for lockdown to end (this could be based on factors such as levels of hospital admissions due to COVID-19, or the number of people vaccinated)
- The likelihood of the hazard or the risk occurring and what degree of harm might result from the hazard or risk
- What actions are available to minimise the risk
- What cost is associated with available ways of minimising the risk – Is the cost proportionate to the risk
- **Communicate with the public and educate them about risk being ALARP**, to increase understanding that we will continue to live with COVID-19, and that recovery will consider risk in terms of ALARP
- Develop guidance for businesses (e.g. nightclubs) on operating according to the principles of risk ALARP in relation to COVID-19 containment

Sources:

<https://tinyurl.com/6ur9we68>

<https://tinyurl.com/54zjh8pj>

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)
Previous	
24 March	Psychological Health in the Wake of Covid-19
Upcoming	
25 March	Resilient Cities Network, World Bank: One Year of COVID-19: Delivering a Green and Just Recovery
26 March	Recovery and Renewal from Covid-19: A year of the Manchester Briefing

Produced by The University of Manchester, UK (Professor Duncan Shaw, Róisín Jordan, Alan Boyd) in partnership with the Resilient Cities Network (Femke Gubbels, Archana Kannan)

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

Every fortnight the [University of Manchester](#) brings together relevant international practices and examples on recovery from COVID-19. The bi-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

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