

# Businesses, boroughs and the pandemic





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# Foreword

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The pandemic has had a huge negative impact on large parts of London's economy. It's been an incredibly difficult time, yet there are many examples of the amazing dedication, resilience and perseverance of businesses across London.

This report highlights the work of London boroughs to support their local economies and businesses during the pandemic. Boroughs have delivered billions of pounds to thousands of businesses, with targeted support for those most in need. Borough officers have visited thousands of businesses to provide them with advice to keep customers and staff safe and it has been great to see the overwhelming majority of London's businesses have adhered to the Covid secure guidance.

Boroughs have pivoted their resources towards supporting their economies. Over last year and this year, boroughs are committing a total of £497m combined capital and revenue expenditure on economic development and recovery programmes. The number of Borough staff working on economic development has increased by 42%.

The pandemic has had a terrible impact on many of London's best loved local businesses. Getting Londoners back to work, creating jobs and building thriving, successful high streets are priorities for London boroughs as we move towards recovery and look forward to building on the strong relationships developed with businesses throughout the pandemic.



**Cllr Elizabeth Campbell,**  
Leader RB Kensington and Chelsea  
and Executive Member for Business, Economy and Culture, London Councils.

# Delivering grants to business



Central government tasked local authorities with delivering targeted financial support to businesses affected by the pandemic. Using their business rates records, boroughs were able to rapidly deliver payments directly into the bank accounts of thousands of cafes, restaurants, pubs, retailers and other businesses that were mandated to close.

Via their discretionary grants, boroughs also delivered much needed financial support to a range of businesses, that while not forced to close, had their turnover slashed by the pandemic. From taxi drivers to dry cleaners, hotel laundry services to event management companies, boroughs have processed thousands of applications, pulling in additional staff and working weekends. Boroughs have worked hard to tackle potential fraud and ensure public money is

spent appropriately, but even with these additional checks boroughs have been able to turn applications around in days.

Since March 2020 London boroughs have delivered over £6bn in business rate reliefs and grants to local businesses.

Since November 2020 the Royal Borough of Greenwich has made over 11,600 Covid-business grants totalling almost £34m, including 250 businesses supported through their Hospitality Recovery Fund with grants of up to £25,000.

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**The discretionary grants distributed by the boroughs have supported thousands of businesses across London**

Direct Colour, is a second generation family printing company based in Kingston on Thames since 1947.

*“Having traded through various recessions and the 3 day week in the mid seventies we have seen pretty much every up and down in this business. But the Covid pandemic was a very different situation. Without the furlough scheme and the support of the Royal Borough the negative impact of the pandemic on our business would have been considerable. The efficiency and speed with which Kingston Council considered, processed and awarded the grant has been a key factor supporting our progress out of lockdown.”*

**Alan Briggs, Managing Director, Direct Colour.**

Databac, also in Kingston, is part of London’s vital and complex supply chain, producing ID cards and other products for businesses such as hotels and events managers. Databac was hit hard by the pandemic but excluded from the initial government grants to business.

*“The discretionary grants from the borough helped us meet fixed costs like payroll, supporting our efforts to protect employment. The effects of the pandemic continue and we’re not out of the woods yet, but grants such as these help relieve some of the pressure and we are very grateful and fortunate to have received them.”*

**Charles Balcomb, CEO, Databac**

From September 2020 to the end of May 2021 boroughs have delivered over £220m in discretionary grants via over 48,000 individual grants to local businesses, and will continue delivery through 2021/22.



# Supporting businesses to open safely

London boroughs have worked closely with their local businesses to support them to reopen safely, meeting the Covid-secure guidelines that protect customers and staff. Guidance was delivered to thousands of local businesses, via targeted publications and visits from trading standards and other officers.

- In the week in the run up to reopening of businesses on the 17th April 2021 London borough officers made 10,235 visits to businesses to support them meeting Covid regulations.
- In the following week in London there were an additional 15,750 covid-secure compliance visits or checks.
- Of these visits less than 10% were seen to have any issues, with the vast majority being fixed via a simple conversation.

Just before Easter 2021, Enfield Council sent a 'Welcome Back' pack to 2,600 local businesses, giving clear advice on reopening safely, including posters to display in shops and cafes. Neighbouring Haringey also produced Reopening brochures for businesses, with translations in three of the borough's main spoken languages (Turkish, Polish and Somali). London boroughs continue to send out multilingual teams to meet with business owners and support their reopening.

Boroughs recognise the important role of local markets to high streets and the local economy. Havering supplied support to traders on the historic Romford market and the City of Westminster produced a video about the Church Street Market and the extra safety measures that were put in place so that trading could start again.

Boroughs have worked to increase their engagement with businesses. Croydon's business newsletter goes to over 8,500 local businesses and has featured examples of local firms pivoting to new ways of working, such as the Mr Fox cocktail bar in the heart of the town centre, which linked up with on-line delivery services to deliver Sunday roasts and bottled cocktails every weekend. Havering's Business Support Helpline took over 11,000 calls from local businesses, with advisors offering guidance on government grants, reopening, and general Covid-19 safety.



# Supporting the safe reopening of major events



Boroughs have played a central role in test events to plan for the reopening of major venues. Brent's team played a central role in the successful delivery of three large testing events at Wembley, culminating with the FA Cup final, with over 18,700 attending. While Greenwich helped deliver a hugely successful Brit Awards 2021 at The O2, with 4,000 music fans (including 2,500 key workers).

A dedicated partnership including The O2, Greenwich's Public Health team and Charlton Athletic Community Trust:

- provided 700 self-testing packs for staff working on the night
- reviewed the testing arrangements of staff and spectators
- established a rapid testing site on the day for staff and spectators that had not self-tested. No one untested was allowed access to The O2.



# Outdoor hospitality



Boroughs have worked to deliver additional outdoor seating for thousands of cafes, restaurants and bars, making it easier to apply for tables and chairs licenses. Kensington and Chelsea have issued 500 licences for outdoor hospitality, resulting in 3,000 additional outdoor seats across the borough's bars, cafes, restaurants and pubs, while Westminster has opened up streets to weekend outdoor eating, including large parts of Soho.

Camden Council set up a multi-disciplinary cross council team, working solely on supporting high streets through the pandemic. Using public consultation tool Commonplace the Council consulted with residents and businesses on their high street plans and delivered new 12 streeteries - new spaces for alfresco dining which allow businesses to expand the number of tables they can offer safely into the road while being protected by barriers.

**Wandsworth Council and the Northcote Road Business Association** delivered weekend pedestrianisation of the popular Northcote Road high-street close to Clapham Junction, to provide additional outdoor space for the wide range of hospitality venues along the street. Originally introduced in summer 2020, it was so successful it is being repeated over summer 2021. The ambitious scheme, involving the redirection of two bus routes, has allowed hundreds of additional seating spaces and has been credited by local business leaders in saving a number of hospitality businesses and jobs along the road.

# Shop local campaigns



**SHOP**  
**LOCAL**  
**SHOP**  
**SAFE**

**FULHAM**

[www.lbhf.gov.uk/shoplocalshopsafe](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/shoplocalshopsafe) • [#hfshoplocal](https://twitter.com/hfshoplocal)

HM Government

European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

**h&f**  
hammersmith & fulham

Illustration of three people sitting at a table with shopping bags and a dog.

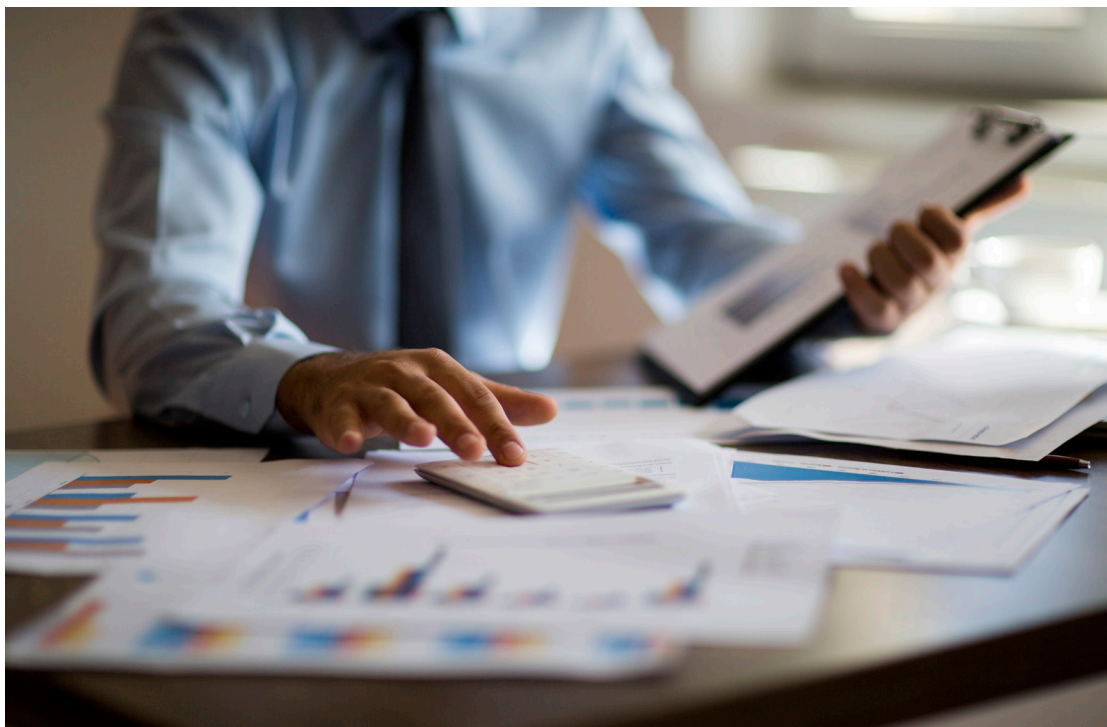
Boroughs continue to promote their local economies via local campaigns to support residents to shop local. Hammersmith and Fulham's "[Shop Local Shop Safe](#)" campaign makes the point that for every £10 spent with an independent local business £3.80 is directly retained in the local economy. The council has produced a series of posters bespoke to their local highstreets to support the reopening of businesses.

With over 520 businesses and a 350 pitch street market in Walthamstow alone, Waltham Forest's [Choose Local](#) social media campaign champions locals' favourite businesses, including [Mario's Barbers](#) in Leytonstone a mainstay of the area for over 50 years and has stayed in the family since it opened in 1967. Waltham Forest's #ChooseDayTuesday, where residents recommend local businesses (themed differently each week), has seen online engagement levels triple and a clear link between social media and visits to businesses webpages.

Richmond Council is working with MyTown Shops, an e-commerce and eco-friendly home delivery company to bring their service free of charge to all independent retail businesses in the borough. Residents will be able to order from multiple local retailers and either have their combined shopping brought to their doorstep in one simple electric bike delivery or use the click & collect service.

# Opening up procurement – keeping money local

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Opening up procurement to local businesses is an on-going priority for London boroughs even during the pandemic. Brent Council has worked hard to support local businesses to secure procurement opportunities in the borough by:

- Delivering three Meet the Buyer events to help prepare local businesses to apply for £11million worth of live supply chain opportunities.
- Holding a “Doing business with Brent “ webinar supporting 26 businesses on how to bid for Council contracts and sign up to the borough’s local supplier list.
- Partnering with HS2 to deliver a “Doing business with HS2” webinar to inform businesses about a range of opportunities with HS2, from tendering for contracts to offering a service to HS2’s workforce.

# Supporting young people into employment

Boroughs have been quick to engage with the government's Kickstart scheme which provides paid work placements for young people. In total 27 London boroughs are involved in the Kickstart scheme as employers and as gateway organisations, working with small local businesses. Through this work they have placed hundreds of young people with employers. Camden has already delivered 150 paid Kickstart placements. London Councils, boroughs and the Greater London Authority have produced a [short guide](#) for promoting high-quality placements through the Kickstart scheme.

More broadly boroughs are supporting residents as they look for new skills. Hounslow's adult and community education service is running training to support residents' entrepreneurial ambitions, with training in areas such as business websites and setting up a catering company.



Tower Hamlet via the Kickstart Programme supported Abida Miah to join the team at **a-n The Artists Information Company** as an Administrative Assistant. She is currently responsible for the administrative support of the a-n Programme and has worked on multiple projects. She is particularly interested in developing her communications and marketing skills and has been directly contributing to the promotion of a-n's public events including artist research, copy writing and content creation for social media.

*"Working at a-n has helped me to gain and improve many professional skills. The company has helped me to advance and broaden my knowledge in my career and I have enjoyed working within the programme team."*

**Abida Miah**  
**Kickstart placement**

*"Abida Miah is our first Kickstart placement and has embraced the challenge of remote working due to Covid-19, which will stand her in good stead for future employment. As a small company we value the support from London Borough of Tower Hamlets Kickstart and we could not have done it without their coordination of the bid and regular employer forum meetings."*

**Julie Lomax**  
**CEO**

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