

Preparing for a

Local

Lockdown



Contents

Contents	Pages
Overview	1
The Challenges	2
What Charities Need to do Now	3-4

Overview



Across western Europe and the US, lockdowns in smaller regions have been enforced in response to local COVID-19 outbreaks. Unfortunately, the locations of these local flare-ups share characteristics that are prevalent amongst BAME communities in the UK. Overcrowded housing, poor living conditions, poor working environments and low socio-economic levels all point towards an increased risk of infection and transmission. This makes it particularly pertinent for charities operating in these 'high risk' areas to be prepared for a local lockdown. This guide will provide some advice on how this could be done.

An announcement by the government recently stated that local authorities in England will be provided new powers to impose a lockdown in their area. The lockdowns could take place anywhere, a hospital, school, factory, building, or even a whole city.

Specifically, local authorities will have the powers to:

- Close specific premises
- Shut outdoor spaces
- Cancel events

Meanwhile, ministers will have the power to:

- Close sectors or types of premises
- Impose localised stay at home orders
- Reduce the size of gatherings
- Restrict transport use
- Prevent individuals from leaving a certain area

For instance, Leicester's lockdown has involved:

- Non-essential shops were closing again
- Bars, restaurants and hairdressers closed
- Only children of key workers attending schools
- A maximum outdoor gathering of six people (with strict social distancing)
- Rigid shielding measures still in place[1]
- Places of worship not being able to offer congregational prayer[2]

[1] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-52934822>

[2] <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/closing-certain-businesses-and-venues-in-leicester#businesses-and-venues-that-must-remain-closed-to-members-of-the-public>

The Challenges

Organisations who have been responding to COVID-19 must now prepare for the worst possible situation in the community. Although charities already have the experience and knowledge of responding to a strict lockdown, further lockdowns after easing may provide a unique set of challenges. Some of these include:

- A large increase in demand for basic provisions – the immediate crisis has already plunged many households into debt, and so another period of lockdown could be disastrous with long term implications.
- General easing of the furloughing scheme – employers will be asked to contribute to the furloughing of staff from August^[3], which, if the scheme is not adjusted will likely lead to more redundancies if firms struggle to cover costs in the event of a city-wide lockdown.
- Increased social isolation – those who have fallen into poverty are likely to become more socially isolated now compared to pre-COVID-19. Those who have been unable to buy food are unlikely to spend money socialising, hence another lockdown could exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions due to loneliness and isolation challenges connected to poverty.
- The differing sizes and extent of local lockdowns – while the initial lockdown in March applied the same restrictions across the country, local measures are going to differ by both the extent of the limitations and the geographical areas they cover.
- Donor fatigue – with the national narrative of COVID-19 being towards a state of ease, donors may not be as motivated to support coronavirus relief efforts as they were in the immediate crisis. Also, lower-income levels and redundancies may affect donations too.

^[3] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme/changes-to-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

What Charities Need to do Now:

There are a number of things that can be done now to prepare for a local lockdown:

1. Cement Local Knowledge

With resources limited, it would be useful to engage with local stakeholders such as the council and other charities to identify current community needs and what is being done to solve them. Charities then may identify an unmet need and offer targeted support to fulfil it. By building up this knowledge of who is working in the community and who is still vulnerable, it will be much easier to collaboratively respond, whilst ensuring no-one is left behind if a local lockdown does occur. Since the crisis is a protracted one, ensuring cooperation over duplication is vital.

2. Identify Potential Resource Constraints

Consider how the charity will increase supply in the event of a spike in demand. To help meet the demand, charities should be connected to support services such as FareShare for food, and the Voluntary Community Sector Emergency Partnership (VCSEP) who can provide a range of resources such as PPE, transportation and volunteers. More information can be found here:

<https://www.muslimcharitiesforum.org.uk/support-with-resources/>

It would also be worthwhile to apply for funding from your local Community Foundation who are still providing grants to groups responding to COVID-19, more information on this is available [here:](https://www.muslimcharitiesforum.org.uk/support-with-funding/)

<https://www.muslimcharitiesforum.org.uk/support-with-funding/>. Having access to these resources will make charities more robust to shocks and stress and less reliant on community donations.

3. Build Community Resilience

Despite the number of ‘shielded’ individuals falling currently, there is still much that can be done to support them in preparation for another lockdown. For example, consider how volunteers could be used to remove digital barriers in local communities. Volunteer staff and students at Imperial College London have offered free weekly tech support sessions for elderly residents within the local area. This would certainly increase engagement and communication during a lockdown whilst also positively connecting different generations. Meanwhile, there is still support needed for individuals who lack the technology or language skills needed to receive the state support they are entitled to.

4. Maintain Volunteer Engagement

The immediate COVID-19 crisis saw a huge increase in the number of individuals volunteering to assist charities or mutual aid groups. With the lockdown eased, many of these volunteers have become surplus to requirement but may be needed to respond in another lockdown. Therefore, charities must remain engaged with them such that they are ready to respond when/if the time requires. This could be done by altering the services provided like the example from Imperial College which requires volunteers to use a different set of skills. Or charities may turn to more flexible volunteering arrangements which allow individuals to continue volunteering whilst working.

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