



## **THE AGE DEFICIT: ASSESSMENT OF LONDON RECOVERY BOARD MISSION ACTION PLANS FOR OLDER LONDONERS**

### **1. AMBITIONS FOR OLDER LONDONERS IN LONDON RECOVERY PLANNING**

The London Recovery Board was launched last year with an ambitious programme to “build back better” *for all*. COVID has had a dramatic effect on older Londoners, not just the tragic death toll, but continuing acute challenges to health and wellbeing and independent living, heightened with a further lockdown. Many older people have suffered from health issues, and experience loneliness and isolation. London data from Independent Age reveals 60 per cent of older Londoners were anxious or worried about the impact Covid was having on their lives and over 40 per cent said their mental health had worsened. As older people are being cautious and staying at home this affects their ability to contribute through volunteering and spending via the silver economy to help re-boost London’s economy. Getting confidence back for older Londoners will become a major challenge.

### **2. HOW POSITIVE AGEING IN LONDON AND OTHER AGE ORGANISATIONS CONTRIBUTED TO THE LONDON RECOVERY BOARD MISSION DEVELOPMENT**

Positive Ageing in London (PAiL) produced its own Recovery Plan for Older People in June 2020. This was followed by contributions made together with other age organisations and the London Age Friendly Forum to the consultation on the missions in the summer of 2020. Members also submitted views into Talk London. PAiL argued for there to be a mission specifically addressing older people. This was unsuccessful and the LRB approach was instead to rely on a cross cutting principle of equalities running across the missions. The GLA’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group role is to apply expert equalities insight and scrutiny of the missions.

### **3. TESTS OF A RECOVERY APPROACH FOR OLDER LONDONERS**

With the publication of the mission action plans we have applied four tests to judge whether older people have adequately been addressed in recovery.

- *What research has been undertaken of how Covid-19 has affected older people in London?*
- *How has consultation with older people been utilised in framing the mission priorities?*

- *How have missions addressed the needs of older Londoners and what actions are being proposed?*
- *What are the gaps in the missions facing older Londoners?*

#### **4. ASSESSING THE MISSION ACTION PLANS**

**Appendix A** provides an initial assessment of each of the mission plans looking at whether they have addressed age. We are aware that the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Group has also undertaken its own analysis of the action plans.

#### **5. KEY PROBLEMS FOUND IN OUR ASSESSMENT**

##### **5.1 Lack of recognition or identification of older people’s needs.**

Very few of the missions explicitly mention older people or age as an issue. Other protected characteristics do though get mentioned. The absence of age though is stark.

##### **5.2 Lack of research evidence about older people’s needs.**

There is a paucity of empirical evidence around older people’s needs in any of the documentation. The GLA’s own Rapid Evidence Review of research on the effects of Covid for use in planning is limited on age. The report’s authors admitted there was too much evidence about “age” to go through and so the review “was able to cover age to a *certain* extent”. Out of a weighty 80-page report less than two pages are devoted to older adults. But there is evidence from various organisations about age plus how older people have been affected by the pandemic which could be used. We have suggested in the mission action plans what evidence about older people is required (see ***Appendix A***).

##### **5.3 Lack of “a line of sight” from consultation responses from older people and mission development**

An audit of the consultation comments received by the LRB through Talk London and through focus groups and direct contributions by older people and age organisations reveals that many of the problems submitted never made it into the missions. A GLA document “*Overview: Community Insights on Recovery Missions Focus: Older Londoners*” though did collate some older people’s feedback. Yet the GLA document “*Disproportionate Impact of Covid 19 issues map*” grouped feedback into themes and this raised a few age issues. But what is unclear is how each of the missions have utilised feedback and the extent to which they have addressed older people’s needs.

##### **5.4 Lack of a clear assessment of the impact of recovery plan actions on older people.**

Most of the action plans don’t assess actions in terms of older people. For example, advice services in the Robust Safety Net mission could have assessed the key vulnerable groups within London’s older population and how they need advice and the current barriers

affecting them. PAiL did in the Autumn offer to “age proof” the developing mission actions but didn’t receive a reply!

### **5.5 Significant gaps in the needs of older people**

What is most worrying are the gaps affecting older people where there is no specific mention of solutions in any of the recovery planning. A very quick list is as follows:

<b>Poor housing effects on older people</b>	<b>Threat to travel concessions.</b>
<b>Difficulties facing BAME seniors</b>	<b>Reliance on buses.</b>
<b>Lack of access to health services.</b>	<b>Adequate Toilets in public spaces</b>
<b>NHS waiting lists for older people</b>	<b>Building confidence post Covid.</b>
<b>Support for carers.</b>	<b>Ageism in employment</b>
<b>Combatting loneliness.</b>	<b>Access to services for older people</b>

### **5.6 Tackling current live problems faced by older people as a precondition for full recovery**

The impact of Covid on older people is continuing. “Recovery” assumes an end in sight to COVID, but the spectre is now living with uncertainty of the effects of COVID for some time. Increasingly recovery should tackle the problems piling up as much as the longer-term aspirations. For example, Greater Manchester’s approach has been to concentrate on a year’s plan to build resilience with actions in a staged way. In Wales the Older People’s Commissioner report, “No One Left Behind” is also a good example of a plan outlining short-term priorities tackling immediate problems facing older people, before moving to medium and long terms goals. ([Leave no-one behind - Action for an age-friendly recovery.sflb.ashx \(olderpeoplewales.com\)](#)) Positive Ageing in London’s own Recovery Plan last summer argued for a staged approach for recovery ([London Recovery Plan | Positive Ageing In London \(pailondon.org.uk\)](#)) and it followed this up with a Survival plan to cope with the winter problems and a second wave ( [Older Londoners' Winter Survival Guide | Positive Ageing in London \(pailondon.org.uk\)](#))

## **6. HOW CAN THE LONDON RECOVERY BOARD REDRESS THE AGE DEFICIT?**

### **6.1 Age proofing exercise on the missions**

The missions would benefit from a full and rigorous age assessment of the emerging plans. There is value in that being undertaken by a body like Positive Ageing in London in conjunction with other age organisations rather than an equality and diversity group.

## **6.2 A cross cutting plan for older people is required within the overall London Recovery Plan**

There isn't a separate mission for older people and not all older people's needs neatly fit within missions. As such it's important there's a cross cutting plan in place addressing the complexity of older people's needs plus to ensure there is a coherent set of aligned actions to improve the lives of older Londoners along age friendly criteria. The Older people's Commissioner for Wales report "Leave no-one behind" is a good example of a coherent plan addressing different needs.

## **6.3 A co-ordinated conversation with older Londoners**

It's unclear how the mission development has sought to engage with older people. Whilst it is accepted that this work has been done quickly there is a risk there has been an unconscious bias against the needs of older people. It's important that the mission leads have conversations and engagement with age organisations how recovery can meet equality requirements but also is age friendly.

## **6.4 Better communications and building transparency.**

London's recovery is vital but equally the exercise is only as important as the trust and support it builds. The conversation about the missions with Londoners has been limited and a public reluctance to share in exciting plans is understandable given the fact that recovery is not seen as starting with continued lockdowns in place. We recognise there are plans to boost public communication, but this again needs advice from affected groups. Key is the need of transparency and a genuine conversation – it is wrong and hampers genuine transparency that papers from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group are classified as *not* for publication and *not* for disclosure under FOI.

**Compiled by Tim Whitaker, Vice Chair PAiL February 2021**

## APPENDIX ONE

### HOW DO THE MISSION ACTION PLANS MEET OLDER LONDONER'S NEEDS?

<b>A GREEN NEW DEAL</b>		
<p><b><u>Key Themes and any specific mention of age</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transforming Built Environment -NO</li> <li>• Green Transport -NO</li> <li>• Air Quality - YES</li> <li>• Fuel poverty - YES</li> <li>• Job creation and green economy - NO</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Implications for older people of Mission</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green transport (walking/cycling) requires assessments of safety for older people and accessibility.</li> <li>• Air quality for older people related to social deprivation.</li> <li>• Assessing older people at risk of unemployment for jobs needed by green economy.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Evidence needed.</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of older people engaged in active travel.</li> <li>• Audit of accessibility for older people across London – good and poor practice</li> <li>• Analysis of neighbourhoods with high older people and deprivation with poor air quality</li> </ul>

<b>A ROBUST SAFETY NET</b>		
<p><b><u>Key Themes and any specific mention of age</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum standard for local welfare - NO</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Implications for older people of Mission</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship between older people and poverty, race, poor and</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Evidence needed.</u></b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved co-ordination of advice and support and single point of access for advice -NO</li> <li>• Embedding advice in community settings - NO</li> <li>• Emergency support -NO</li> </ul>	<p>unaffordable housing, and other structural inequalities – 1 in 4 older Londoners in poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older people digitally excluded need special attention to receive advice and support.</li> <li>• Older people with caring responsibilities require support and advice.</li> <li>• Ensure that older people on low incomes receive necessary financial benefits e.g., pension credit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of patterns and incidence of poverty levels amongst older people post Covid.</li> <li>• Assessment of advice services used by older people and their effectiveness.</li> <li>• Research on older people receiving pension credit across London.</li> <li>• Research on how digitally excluded receive information</li> </ul>
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<b>HIGH STREETS FOR ALL</b>		
<p><b><u>Key Themes and any specific mention of age</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High streets inclusive and accessible - NO</li> <li>• Street space changes - YES</li> <li>• Social and cultural infrastructure - NO</li> <li>• Partnerships with community groups -NO</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Implications for older people of Mission</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring social infrastructure (libraries etc) and local services are maintained for older people needs.</li> <li>• Ensuring older people have healthy and accessible streets – walking and safety.</li> <li>• Toilet provision in high streets</li> <li>• Ensure digital access is available locally.</li> <li>• Consultation with age groups on planning high street changes</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Evidence needed.</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of the effects of closures of social infrastructure across London and the effects.</li> <li>• Audit of accessibility for older people across London – good and poor practice</li> <li>• Map of toilets across London and assessing those closed or reduced due to Covid</li> </ul>

## HELPING LONDONERS INTO GOOD WORK

<u>Key Themes and any specific mention of age</u>	<u>Implications for older people of Mission</u>	<u>Evidence needed.</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult education and borough support services - NO</li> <li>• No wrong door - NO</li> <li>• London academies -NO</li> <li>• Promoting good work -NO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure tailored programmes of support for those unemployed and at risk of unemployment.</li> <li>• Assess over 50s in terms of work, unemployment and involuntary workless and the impact of unemployment and furloughing from Covid 19.</li> <li>• ageism in the employment of older workers and promote the benefits of an age diverse workforce in partnership with local employers, training providers and recruitment companies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment rate of over 50s in London - including age/gender breakdown and breakdown by London Borough.</li> <li>• Analysis of furlough rates of over 50s and in what sectors and geographic distribution</li> <li>• Analysis of unemployment rates of over 50s across London</li> <li>• Level of employment support offer for over 50s by London borough</li> </ul>

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

<u>Key Themes and any specific mention of age</u>	<u>Implications for older people of Mission</u>	<u>Evidence needed.</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health ambassadors in place - NO</li> <li>• Support for communities and voluntary sector -NO</li> <li>• Equipping places and settings to support wellbeing – NO</li> <li>• Digital Hub - NO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incidence of mental health issues of older people during pandemic and</li> <li>• Loneliness as a cause of wider mental health issues for older people</li> <li>• Access to specific mental health services for older people particularly the digitally excluded.</li> <li>• Effect of ageism on wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of incidence of mental health problems amongst older people since Covid.</li> <li>• Availability of services for those digitally excluded.</li> <li>• Assessment of changes to the level services and support by voluntary sector post Covid</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of physical activity affects mental health wellbeing of older people.</li> <li>• Impact of wider support from community for older people in helping wellbeing</li> </ul>	
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<b>DIGITAL ACCESS FOR ALL</b>		
<p><b><u>Key Themes and any specific mention of age</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data on exclusion -NO</li> <li>• Broadband availability -NO</li> <li>• Digital skills -NO</li> <li>• Devices for vulnerable - NO</li> <li>• Wi fi access outside of home - NO</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Implications for older people of Mission</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure hard copy information/telephone contacts available for digitally excluded.</li> <li>• Assessment of reasons for digital exclusion experienced by older people.</li> <li>• Programmes of digital skills training for older people across London.</li> <li>• Availability of digital in public places (e.g., libraries) used by older people</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Evidence needed.</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data on patterns of digital exclusion of older people – reasons and analysis of patterns and barriers</li> <li>• Effectiveness of digital training and support for older people – what works, why, and here</li> </ul>

## HEALTHY FOOD, HEALTHY WEIGHT

<u>Key Themes and any specific mention of age</u>	<u>Implications for older people of Mission</u>	<u>Evidence needed.</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowering people to maintain healthy weight - NO</li> <li>• Healthy food neighbourhoods – NO</li> <li>• Accessibility to healthy food options – NO</li> <li>• Enhance physical environment/ Green spaces to help physical activity – NO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food supply and choice for older people affected by lockdown.</li> <li>• Many older people are overweight with health risks and susceptibility to COVID.</li> <li>• Poorer older people have poor eating and suffer malnutrition leading to hospital admissions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects on diet of older people during Covid and reasons why.</li> <li>• Analysis of reasons for malnutrition amongst older people</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

## BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES

<u>Key Themes and any specific mention of age</u>	<u>Implications for older people of Mission</u>	<u>Evidence needed.</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to community hub - NO</li> <li>• Community strength -NO</li> <li>• Community spaces at risk -NO</li> <li>• Community voice -NO</li> <li>• Community connections and volunteering -NO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of local community support systems for older people varied across London.</li> <li>• Volunteering by older people affected by lockdown and is threatened now.</li> <li>• Cross sector partnership work for older people varies.</li> <li>• Digital exclusion reduces the voice of older people.</li> <li>• Older BAME people most affected by pandemic and their views need to be heard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of community support patterns for older people analysing those areas with low support.</li> <li>• Analysis of levels of volunteering across London since Covid and assessment of challenges.</li> <li>• Analysis of the views of BAME seniors since Covid</li> </ul>

