



## BRIEFING PAPER

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECOVERY PLANNING AND OLDER PEOPLE

## 1. COVID RECOVERY PLANNING: HOPE AND AMBITION FOR OLDER PEOPLE?

Many local authorities have started recovery plans to address issues and improvement once the pandemic has ended. Core to these plans is using Covid as an opportunity to “build back better”, particularly tackling inequalities highlighted by Covid. But there are enormous challenges facing recovery planning - handling competing priorities notably the young, restoring and re-shaping services, coping with hard economic shocks, rebuilding confidence, as well as setting out an appealing vision for the future. The key question is how far they are helping older people and are they age friendly?

## 2. THE KEY TESTS OF EFFECTIVE RECOVERY PLANNING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

PAiL has been studying local government recovery plans across the UK, including the London Recovery Board, to assess whether they cater for the changing needs of older people with a view to making them more responsive to older people. The key tests in judging these plans have been:

- **Given the many priorities for recovery plans are older people prioritised and protected in recovery planning?**
- **Do recovery plans have an adequate handle on the problems facing older people now caused by the effects of the pandemic?**
- **Do recovery plans anticipate “living with Covid” for some time and adopt a staged approach to what recovery looks like?**
- **How does recovery planning embrace the age friendly agenda and how far has that agenda changed with Covid?**

The early assessment of plans is they are varied with little mention in many plans of older people.

## 3 KEY ISSUES FACING OLDER PEOPLE IN RECOVERY PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCILS.

### 3.1 Having adequate information about the changing needs of older people.

The effect of COVID on older people has been dramatic and will still present challenges during recovery. Covid has accentuated the inequalities facing older people particularly for BAME people. We know that for example their health and wellbeing, financial security, employment, independent living, and social connectedness have all been affected. Yet many recovery plans don't have clear reliable evidence about the short- and long-term impacts on older people and their changing needs to develop actions. Moreover, there is a risk they categorise older people as vulnerable and in need rather than a varied group who work, volunteer, support the community and help the economy.

**Recommendation 1** Local councils should undertake a clear assessment of how older people have been affected by the pandemic and segment older people in terms of different combinations of needs and issues in framing action plans.

**Recommendation 2** Councils need to undertake an inequality audit of older people post Covid looking at how age intersects with other protected characteristics to help develop action plans.

### **3.2 Tackling the immediate problems facing older people to ensure these don't get neglected.**

“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 \(olderpeoplewales.com\)](https://www.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 \(pailondon.org.uk\)](https://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 \(pailondon.org.uk\)](https://pailondon.org.uk).)

**Recommendation 3.** Recovery Planning should address urgent problems faced by many older people with continued lockdown, restoring services and social infrastructure, and NHS waiting lists as part of a cross cutting action plan for older people.

**Recommendation 4.** Tackle any key problems that have been exacerbated by Covid such as digital exclusion, poor housing, transport, health prevention, employment risks for older workers recognising these are system wide problems requiring effective partnerships with other bodies.

### **3.3 Ensuring recovery plan actions don't inadvertently adversely affect older people.**

Given the ambition of recovery plans the risk is that many actions don't look at how they impact on older people either by neglecting their needs or having adverse implications. Some recent initiatives on street and traffic changes post Covid illustrate how specific older people’s needs were not addressed.

**Recommendation 5.** Undertake age impact assessments of all recovery plan actions.

### **3.4 Recovery Plans need to address how to build the confidence of older people.**

Older people over the past year have followed rules but have been largely cocooned away. Recovery planning needs to ensure that there is support for older people to make their active contribution.

**Recommendation 6.** Build confidence of older people to restore their confidence and resilience to ensure they get out, are active, get necessary health support, feel supported and above all can actively contribute to their communities.

**Recommendation 7.** Set long term plans to achieve positive outcomes for older people following age friendly principles but with engagement and buy in from older people.