

# COVID-19 Recovery Framework

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# Introduction

Each passing day we are witnessing the unprecedented effects of COVID-19 on the heart of our cities and towns, as the pandemic is altering – and potentially displacing – their social and economic role. In the UK, the implementation of strict public health measures means that the majority of service-based and non-food retail, hospitality and leisure business premises remain closed to reduce social contact (MHCLG, 2020). This disruption has already triggered the first wave of store closures, impacting first on the most vulnerable businesses, whose position was fragile even before COVID-19. The 28th March 2020 saw UK high street footfall at its lowest, down 89.5% compared to the same date last year (Springboard, 2020).

The economic impact of the crisis puts many jobs at risk and will have a significant impact on the attractiveness of our towns and cities. Not only will their offer be reduced as less businesses come back to our town centres, post-COVID-19, but there may be less demand for these businesses in the future. Prolonged lockdown may fundamentally change consumer behaviour, as people become dependent on having products delivered to their home. However, the increasingly multifunctional town/city is not only at risk of being obsolescent to shoppers. People used to exercise in their front room, may not go back to the gym; employees who like working from home may not return to the office and friends accustomed to socialising online may no longer pop down the pub.

It is not just the everyday functions of towns that will be affected. The impact of travel bans is already evident in many tourist and holiday destinations, and looking ahead to the future, it is likely that many plans for transformation will be put on hold, as funding (public and private) is needed now for surviving the crisis.

# Developing the Framework

The Recovery Framework has been developed by the Institute of Place Management (IPM), lead Partner of the High Streets Task Force. IPM is the professional body for the place management sector and continuously monitors this unprecedented situation, providing guidance to members, partners, and places.

It is not clear what towns and cities will look like after the end of the outbreak, or even how we will come out of lockdown. Many town centres and high streets may not manage to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, unless they start acting immediately to develop the necessary capacity for recovery and then longer-term transformation.

In order to assist place leaders who are responsible with the gargantuan task of supporting their cities and towns through this pandemic, IPM has developed a 4-stage COVID-19 Recovery Framework as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

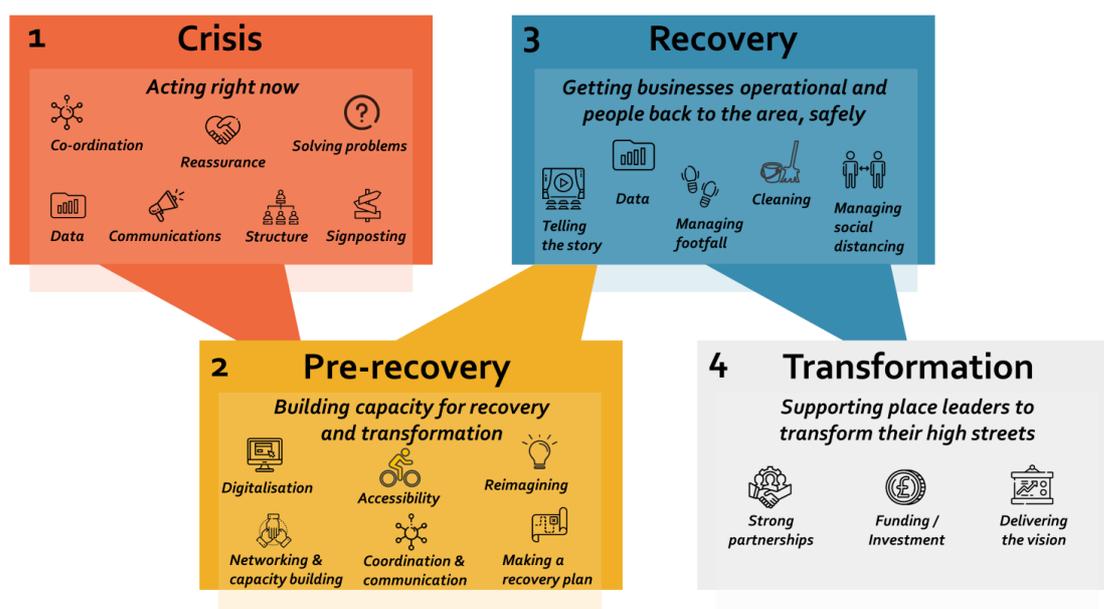


Figure 1. IPM COVID-19 Recovery Framework

# How to use the Framework

The framework is supplied on an editable basis where each stage can be adapted to guide your own local plans towards recovery. You can use this document to decide what activities are relevant to your high street. You should then identify who is responsible for the activity and how it is being done - so you have a more comprehensive plan to share.

The framework is pre-populated with activities that IPM research has suggested are necessary. All these activities are briefly explained in the sections in this document. Tick those you find relevant and then make sure these are included in your framework which you will build in the editable PowerPoint slide provided. You can decide to keep the pre-populated activities, move them to another stage - or, if you are doing something different - then you will find that the PowerPoint slide we have provided to you has an icon pack for you to add your own activities (to access this, in the tool bar click 'Insert' and select 'Icons').

Titles for any new icons of activities you may insert in the framework can be created by inserting a text box beneath. When distributing your framework, ensure that any new activities you add are explained in detail (similar to the brief explanations of activities provided in this instruction document) when distributing your framework.

## Creating your own COVID-19 recovery plan

Once you have identified the various activities that seem sensible in your place then you should pull these together into a recovery plan. For each activity you will need to consider what it entails – in other words some brief instructions explaining what needs to be done and other important details like, for example, frequency. For example, for signposting you may want to include information on national and local sources of advice to businesses and communities under three categories.

- Funding and support for businesses.
- Operating businesses during COVID-19.
- Public health advice.

You may think that these should be updated daily. For the 'Reassuring' activity, you might decide to run a weekly webinar for your town centre businesses. The structure you develop to coordinate the recovery may need to be reviewed at different stages.

Finally, for each activity you should identify who is responsible for it – and how they may link to the recovery partnership. For example, the local authority may update their website daily to reflect any changes in advice to business and communities, and set up an automatic email alert letting you know when this is updated.

# Crisis

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*The crisis stage focuses on how town centres and place managers act immediately, supporting and helping stakeholders through the initial stages of the crisis.*

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This first stage 'crisis' is where all towns and cities around the world started, and where many will remain, for the foreseeable future. With lockdowns and closures of all business premises apart from essential retail, and with the majority of the population working or learning from home, UK high streets are currently deserted.

Ramping up communication attempts via all channels, reassuring businesses and residents that protective measures and support mechanisms are in place, and slowly discussing the next steps of action, including ideas that can provide some short-term relief and normalcy, especially for small businesses, are crucial. Place leaders and their teams should encourage innovation and make it easier for these to be adopted across the town. Initiatives such as selling pre-paid vouchers and gift cards in exchange for services in the future are already proving popular.

At the town centre level, data is also important. Footfall is an important baseline for recovery. Likewise, other data, such as having accurate information on the type of businesses in the town can help to guide the type of support that is needed in this crisis stage and model what the likely impact will be of various lockdown and exit scenarios.



## Coordination



Organising effort to make the response more efficient and/or the outcome more significant.



## Communications



Ensuring the right information reaches the right people at the right time.



## Reassurance



Doing what you can to remove people's doubts/fears



## Data



Collecting, disseminating and using information to plan the response



## Signposting



Helping stakeholders access the help they need from a range of agencies



## Structure



Reviewing local governance structures and - if necessary - establish (temporary) body to coordinate action during the crisis and plan during pre- recovery stage.



## Solving problems



Gathering and developing ways to respond to the immediate needs of local stakeholders

# Pre-recovery

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*The 'pre-recovery' stage is a crucial step towards building collective capacity and moving towards more reflexive forms of place governance and coordinated leadership.*

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It is important that place managers and leaders, as well as dealing with the current crisis, start planning for recovery. There is a need to work together now on good ideas and plans to encourage people back to our high streets – recovery will depend on building more local capacity for action and effective mechanisms for coordinating this.

During, and after lockdown, it is anticipated that our town and city centres will undergo a period of change, during which many businesses are not expected to survive. Some towns will be more resilient than others and it is unlikely that businesses that do not have, at least, some online presence and way to communicate with customers can survive. However, with the appropriate prioritisation of problems and solutions, town centres can develop place specific recovery plans to adapt to the impact. Moreover, it is an opportunity for reimagining town centres. By using the lockdown as time to assess and imagine new possibilities, place managers can - in collaboration with stakeholders - develop capabilities and skills for recovery and transformation through learning and training.



## Digitalisation

Using digital technology, where appropriate, to facilitate placemaking and actions at all stages of COVID-19 recovery.



## Coordination & communication

Acting as a central hub through which plans can be made and delivery tracked and communicated. Knowing your role in wider coordination and communication plans.



## Networking & capacity building

Finding and bringing together people and organisations to deliver the recovery plan.



## Reimagining

Using lockdown as time to assess and imagine new possibilities as well as develop capabilities and skills for recovery and transformation through learning and training.



## Making a recovery plan

Developing a deliverable, recovery plan that will support businesses being operational and people returning.



## Accessibility

Consider usage of different modes of transport to your centre. Plan for more walking and cycling.

# Recovery

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*We have already seen, at the crisis stage, the enormous creativity and ingenuity of individuals and businesses – and we must ensure this is nurtured in the recovery stage, and not side-lined in an attempt to go back to how things were. However, there will be an immediate need to react quickly in order to revise plans that do not work.*

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The framework seeks to provide guidance on the tasks that should be undertaken once the lockdown measures start to be lifted in order to get businesses and people back to places. There will be no one-size-fits-all solution, however; collating stories about how places across the UK and internationally are recovering will be crucial for town centres to learn from each other and adopt suitable approaches or new remedial action.

Data collected regarding day-to-day indicators such as footfall, sentiment and spend will be crucial to establishing what the 'new normal' for town centres is looking like, and how to best manage social distancing in public spaces. The widespread dissemination of case studies illustrating adaptable solutions for businesses and retail centres can also boost the recovery process in localities.



## Telling the story

Sharing stories about your place and its recovery. Encouraging confidence and stimulating pride in what is being achieved.



## Data

Gathering information which can be used to monitor and evaluate the impact of your recovery strategy and identify where (and when) it may need to change. Understand how the function and attractiveness of your location may have changed and use this to plan for the future.



## Managing footfall

Monitoring activity and using your recovery plan and networks to encourage people to return safely.



## Managing social distancing

Managing the space outside of stores, public space, and pavements etc. to allow safe social distancing.



## Cleaning

A cleaning regime to reduce risk of transmission of virus from fomites.



# Transformation

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*The 'transformation' stage points at the conscious attempt to improve the place – to do more than recover but to innovate and address new challenges, such as climate change, decarbonisation, economic inequality, and social justice.*

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The lessons learnt from the three previous Recovery Framework stages will contribute to high streets and place leaders leading the long-term transformation and evolution of their places.

We may witness new and strong public-private partnerships attracting investment and funding, and the emergence of more grassroots projects can be expected as a result of the pandemic. At this stage, transforming town centres must deliver a good range of goods and services for visitors, a good trading environment for businesses and a good quality of life for their residents. However, the pandemic has prompted a wave of critical reflection – and more demands for our high streets, town and city centres to be better places – safer to walk, with better air to breathe, with more community uses and local businesses, less homelessness but more opportunities for local employment, health and education.

In many ways, the transformation stage will be about creating a 'new normal', which will reflect both the economic and social impact of coronavirus in our towns and cities, mitigating measures and the aspirations of people for their high streets, towns and cities to be better places.

*In conclusion, we hope that this framework will help place managers and other relevant audiences to not only start acting immediately towards combating the crisis, but also to develop a coordinated and systematic approach to the management of its improvement.*



Strong partnerships

Creating, maintaining and refreshing place governance structures to meet the management and development needs of your place.



Funding / Investment

Building on your successes to secure internal and external support for your place.



Delivering the vision

Delivering the vision - Using newly joined-up strategic partnerships of local stakeholders, to deliver long term transformation and improvement.