

# Making a Difference

## Coronavirus (COVID-19): Helping the High Street recover from the pandemic

Institute of Place Management,  
Manchester Metropolitan University



**Town centres and high streets are facing a turbulent time to overcome the effects of Coronavirus and nationwide lockdown measures on footfall numbers. To aid future recovery, a strategic framework has been developed by the Institute of Place Management, to support local authorities and policymakers as part of the government's High Streets Task Force.**

### The problem

Within a week of the announcement of the lockdown measures across the UK, figures from data and intelligence provider Springboard showed that footfall, a key metric in the management of town centres and other commercial areas, was down 81.4% compared to the same period last year.

Disruption during the pandemic has led to a wave of high-profile retail closures (for example, Laura Ashley, BrightHouse, Carluccio's), impacting first on the most vulnerable businesses, whose position was fragile even before COVID-19.

In order to assist people and organisations responsible for supporting their towns and cities through the pandemic, Manchester Metropolitan's Institute of Place Management (IPM) has developed a unique COVID-19 Recovery Framework.

### About the research

The four-stage framework is designed to be used by local authorities, Business Improvement Districts and policymakers to ensure as many businesses and consumers return to the high street as possible, as well as encouraging people to think about what type of high street or town centre they want in the future.

It also addresses the effect that a prolonged lockdown could have on fundamentally changing consumer behaviour, as people become dependent on having products delivered to their home and get used to exercising, socialising and working from home.

With the impact of travel bans already evident in many tourist and holiday destinations, the framework will provide guidance for those places where plans for transformation will temporarily be put on hold, as funding is diverted to recovering from the crisis.

As the international professional body that supports people committed to developing, managing and making better places, the IPM is already leading the government's High Streets Task Force to deliver support to local authorities and communities who want to transform their high streets and town centres.

## Recommendations

The new COVID-19 Recovery Framework is helping to frame the approach of the Task Force and calls for systematic analysis of data, coordination, collective leadership and management. It consists of four stages designed to help towns and cities to recover from the pandemic:

### Stage 1. Crisis:

Immediate actions to be done now and in the foreseeable future. This includes regular communication and providing data, advice, support and reassurance to businesses.

### Stage 2. Pre-recovery:

As well as dealing with the current crisis, place managers and leaders need to work together on ideas and plans for recovery and transformation.

### Stage 3. Recovery:

How the IPM and Task Force will support high streets and town centres in attracting visitors back, which includes nurturing the creativity and ingenuity of individuals and businesses, enabling new types of businesses and organisations to grow, and helping to collaboratively create places that people will want to return to.

### Stage 4. Transformation:

The conscious attempt to improve high streets, towns, cities and commercial areas – to do more than recover but to innovate and address new challenges.

The implementation of strict public health measures in the UK has seen the majority of service-based and non-food retail, hospitality and leisure business premises remain closed to reduce social contact. As a result, 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.



Image: The IPM's Coronavirus Recovery Framework

## On-the-ground use of the framework

Place leaders, local authorities, and Business Improvement Districts (BID) both across the UK and beyond, have already been putting the IPM's Recovery Framework – adopted by the High Streets Task Force – into practice, to help inform their recovery plans. This includes, but is not limited to, Banbury BID; Broadmead BID; Manchester City Council; Norwich BID; St Helens Local Council; Sunderland BID; Team London Bridge; Warrington BID; Worcester City Council; and the Chicago Loop Alliance (USA).

“The IPM’s framework gave confidence to Team London Bridge to identify where we were in the ‘process’, check our own rationale, consider consequences of each action and recognise ways to ensure our own organisational goals and values weren’t lost in the attempt to mitigate the situation... The clear four step path made it easy for us to communicate our intent and purpose without being tied to a rigid delivery programme that would have been impossible to predict, but that we can adapt as circumstances change.”

**Nadia Broccardo**

(Chief Executive, Team London Bridge)

## Further information

**Institute of Place Management (IPM).**

Formed in 2006, the IPM is the international professional body that supports people committed to developing, managing and making places better. The IPM is based at Manchester Metropolitan University's Business School.

Nikos Ntounis et al. (2020) *Coronavirus Recovery Framework for Towns and Cities*:

**[v2.placemanagement.org/news/posts/2020/april/coronavirus-recovery-framework-for-towns-and-cities/](https://v2.placemanagement.org/news/posts/2020/april/coronavirus-recovery-framework-for-towns-and-cities/)**

The High Streets Task Force:

**[highstreetstaskforce.org.uk](https://highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)**

Contact our academics at the IPM:

**[v2.placemanagement.org/about](https://v2.placemanagement.org/about)**

**[@mmu\\_business](https://twitter.com/mmu_business)**

**[@mcrmetribl](https://twitter.com/mcrmetribl)**

**[mmu.ac.uk/business-school/research](https://mmu.ac.uk/business-school/research)**