

# **Building COMMON**



# **GROUND**

**London Co-operative  
Party Manifesto 2021**

# Building Common Ground

2021 Election Manifesto of the London  
Co-operative Party

Published by:

London Co-operative Party

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Street, London, SE17 3BQ, United Kingdom

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## **London**

The London Council of the Co-operative Party works to represent the party's members, support the election of elected representatives, and to promote the party's aims, values and policies across Greater London.

Our vision is of a capital city in which people's voices are heard; institutions and services are accountable to their users and staff, and ownership and wealth are shared.

**[www.party.coop/join](http://www.party.coop/join)**

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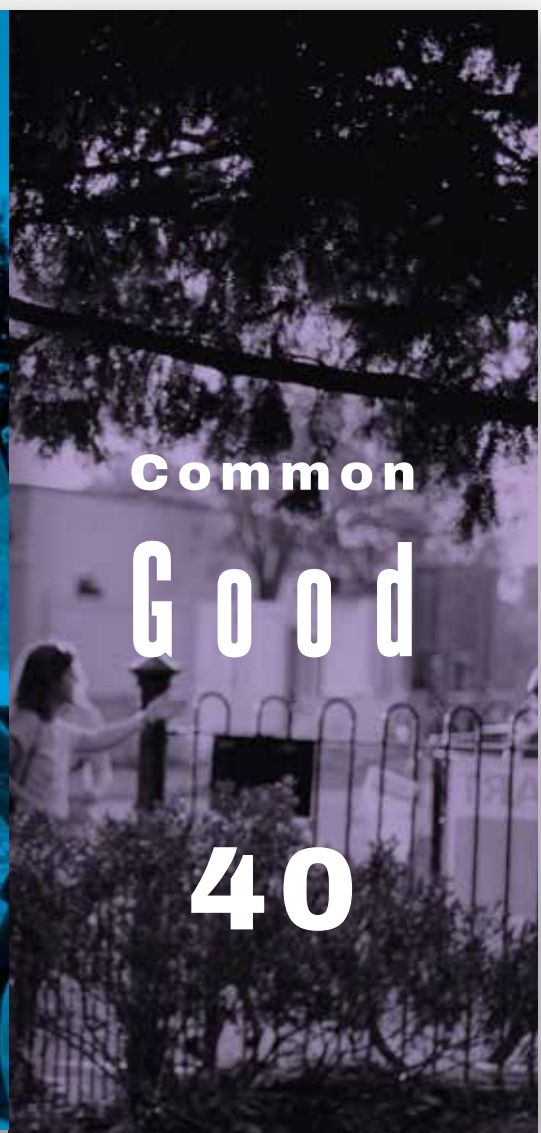
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# Preface

Ian Adderley

Chair, London Co-operative Party

This document sets out the London Co-operative Party's policy platform in the upcoming mayoral and London Assembly elections, and subsequent local elections. Coming amidst a global pandemic and in its aftermath, over the next two years, Londoners have an unprecedented opportunity to shape how our City is run.

The upcoming elections present an exciting opportunity for collaboration and for a cohesive vision at all levels of city government. We have a record number of Labour & Co-operative candidates, as diverse as the city itself. What unites them is a belief in the power of what can be achieved when we come together, and in the capacity of Londoners to create solutions to our common challenges.

This manifesto is the product of policy discussions held within the Party Council, contributions from party members, from our elected representatives, and from the wider co-operative movement across London.

At the fore of this vision is **a Co-operative Commission (page 38)** to take forward the co-operative agenda in London. Recognising discussion alone will not be enough, we call on the Greater London Assembly to establish **a Co-operative Development Agency for London (page 38)** to translate strategy into action.

The need for common decency drives us to call for improvements in the private rented sector through a Landlord's Register and support for **an umbrella organisation for London's private renter's groups (page 18)** and call for the Mayor to include a **co-operative and mutual housing vision at the heart of the next London Housing Strategy (page 35)**.

Harnessing the co-operative development agency, we call on the GLA to **support community-led social care co-operatives (page 21)** to help tackle the growing social care health crisis. Financial inclusion is at the core of our call for common wealth – whether through supporting the work of credit unions or providing **improved access to free-to-use**

**cash machines (page 34)**. Support for families and children, particularly in the early years, compels our call for the creation of co-operative-run nurseries (pages 25 and 43) and support for **networks of co-operative-run early years' centres (page 25)**.

Where we live, and the sense of community around us, underpins our calls for greater use of the listing of community assets for their protection, and improvements in the provision of **new genuine public space and amenities (page 31)** to help create common places for all. We use services in our day-to-day lives, whether these be London's transport network, power, energy or water.

In calling for the creation of common voice, we call for **a passenger's co-operative to direct the voice of London's transport users, and the conversion of London Power into a customer-owned co-operative (page 34)**.

Acting for the common good is essential in improving the quality of life for Londoners. We ask the GLA to safeguard community spaces for locally led initiatives to tackle intergenerational loneliness, alongside the Mayor supporting initiatives aimed at **facilitating greater intergenerational engagement (page 43)**.

Widening access to London's cultural capital – whether by enriching the cultural commons with support for new and existing art and creative communities or introducing **a levy to expand cultural and creative opportunities for young Londoners (page 43)** - is essential to the common good.

Taken together, these policies build common ground for all.





# Foreword

## Len Duvall OBE

Leader, Greater London Assembly Labour Group

The co-operative movement has a proud history in cultivating positive social change. This manifesto is rooted firmly in the 21st Century. If adopted, it will have a significant and positive impact on Londoners for years to come.

The London Labour Party consultation process for the Greater London Assembly elections, which were originally due to take place in 2020, benefited from engaging the wider labour movement. As we enter 2021 and prepare for the re-scheduled elections this May, we now face embarking on the GLA campaign against a back-drop of severe uncertainty. Even by the time of the elections we are likely to begin the new mayoral term with great uncertainty about the nature and trajectory of the economic recovery.

There has been much discussion about what the “new normal” might look like. In this document, the London Co-operative Party emphasises the need to recognise our role in creating a new normal that facilitates greater equality, commonality, cohesion and shared prosperity across our city. Instead of looking at the current context as an observer, this manifesto identifies the challenge of, and the opportunity to, create not just a new normal, but a better normal. They advocate for an iterative, community-led process conducted in collaboration with Londoners.

It is acknowledged that COVID-19 has had and will continue to have a substantial, detrimental impact on our economy. Equally, there is a recognition that this pandemic will accelerate changes in our economy, which can be harnessed to improve quality of life and facilitate greater equality among those living in our Capital. In this document, the London Co-operative Party sets out some clear aspirations for this new economy and new society, as well as recommending a range of policies that can help achieve this.

From policies aimed at making London a fairer city for all its inhabitants through promotion of financial inclusion, flexible

working, access to skills and training and co-operative business models, to giving all Londoners a voice in the services that they use, access to flexible working patterns, high quality housing and affordable access to child care, these policies all contribute to a capital that works for all its inhabitants.

Many of their recommendations would enable the GLA to address the multitude of challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. For example, the London Co-operative Party outlines how we can use this crisis not only to accelerate the change towards a greener economy – a priority for the GLA – but also changes that promote improved public health. COVID-19 has already demonstrated differential impact depending on social class, ethnicity and more. We need to ensure that the post-COVID London does not exacerbate any such disparity.

Throughout this document, the London Co-operative Party calls for some excellent manifesto commitments, which can offer solutions to the problems our Capital faces and new, innovative ideas for addressing the bigger question: what sort of London should exist in 2024? Moreover, with only one year between the mayoral elections and the local elections in London we need to develop a narrative, through collaboration with the broader Labour and Co-operative movements, which offers a clear vision and ambition for the better normal. If we can get that narrative right we will have created the strongest possible base for the general election likely to take place in 2024.

I very much welcome the vision and recommendations that the London Co-operative Party sets out in this document and encourage my colleagues in the Labour Group to take a moment to read through and consider the ideas presented.



# Introdu



ction



# In the past decade we have seen London at its most united, and at its most divided.

For three thrilling weeks in the summer of 2012, we caught a glimpse of how good we can be—a confident, global City open to the World. The Olympic Opening Ceremony, titled ‘pandemonium’, told the story of a rainy island’s unlikely struggle into a thriving and confident modern democracy. And Londoners, cheering on British athletes from backgrounds as diverse as our own, stood together.

For a few weeks we all shared common ground.

Over the past ten years, we have stood on common ground in harder times too. In the Londoners who stood between terrorists and innocent fellow citizens during the terrorist attacks at Borough Market, London and Westminster Bridges. We saw it early in the pandemic, when groups of people spontaneously organised themselves to support their vulnerable neighbours in the dark days of lockdown; when our hospitals were full and our NHS workers faced agonising choices. We see that common ground every day, in the community groups and volunteers who fight to keep the fabric of our City stitched together.

After a decade of austerity, we have also watched as the common ground shrinks beneath our feet. The wealthiest City in the UK is also home to some of its poorest communities<sup>1</sup>. One in three children in London are growing up in persistent poverty<sup>2</sup>. A generation of young people see no future here, with extortionate rents, low-quality housing and home ownership an unattainable dream. Our broken housing market segregates communities, robbing them of the diverse outlooks which make our City the greatest in the world. And, in the World’s financial capital, the reality for too many is financial exclusion and high cost debt<sup>3</sup>.

London, our global city, may have remained largely united on the question of Europe, but it is complacent to assume that

our City’s divisions are only economic, and that we do not have deep social divisions of our own.

While some may prefer to see it as being in the distant past, the social alienation that drove the civil disturbances across London in 2011 has not gone away. We are yet to tackle the complex social and institutional failures which drive youth violence across our City. At Grenfell Tower, we saw the appalling human cost of institutions which turn their backs on those whom they are meant to represent, while the Windrush Scandal revealed a Westminster government which still regards some Londoners as less than full UK citizens. The Black Lives Matter movement is proof of the gap that remains between the hopeful vision of our country shown to the World in the Olympic Opening Ceremony, and too many Londoners’ daily reality.

With a population as large as Scotland<sup>4</sup>, those living in London’s Outer Boroughs see a City whose geographical common ground too, is shrinking. They see the same increases in housing costs, but lower rates of economic growth and transport investment than their Inner London peers<sup>5</sup>. These realities, paired with a sense of political neglect, too often has fuelled community resentments and provided opportunities for the Far Right to flourish.

## Practical politics

As co-operators, we believe that common ground is the place where a fairer, and more equal society can be built. Our politics are shaped by the conviction that we achieve more by working together than we do alone. We believe that when united in common endeavour, this City can be a model for the kind of country that a Labour & Co-operative Government, in power, will build.

<sup>1</sup> English Indices of Deprivation 2019, Office of National Statistics, September 2019 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>)

<sup>2</sup> Poverty in London 2018/19, London Datastore Rachel Leeser, March 2020 (<https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/poverty-in-london-2018-19/>)

<sup>3</sup> Short changed: the financial health of Londoners, Greater London Authority Economy Committee, January 2018 (<https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/financial-inclusion.pdf>)

<sup>4</sup> The Unspoken Decline of Outer London, Paul Hunter, Trust for London March 2019 (<https://trustforlondon.fra1.digitaloceanspaces.com/media/documents/The-unspoken-decline-of-outer-London.pdf>)

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, Hunter, pp 9

Getting there means a politics which constantly searches for, and seeks to grow, common ground between Londoners. It means politicians and institutions who actively create opportunities to bring Londoners together around common interests, common ownership, common wealth, and common values. The purpose of this document is to set out a vision in which politics acts as a convenor of a great collaborative project in which we can all play our part: creating opportunities for Londoners to work, live and prosper together, while confronting the injustices and inequalities which drive us apart.

As co-operators, our understanding of how to achieve this is deeply practical. Our political philosophy does not come from abstract theories or airy idealism, but from the lessons learned by a movement of ordinary people who, 150 years ago, sought to regain control over their lives and to empower their communities by democratising the places where they shopped and worked. The heroes of our movement are not revolutionaries or great philosophers in the conventional sense, but rather volunteers, mindful consumers, social entrepreneurs and community activists: ordinary people who, in the face of injustice, chose to act. As a collective, they did something to tackle the everyday injustices faced by so many and to improve the lives of those around them.

For us, the hundreds of co-operatives across our City are more than a better way of doing business; they are a template for the kind of society we want to build. In the co-operative movement, we see a practical model of how common ground can be nurtured and grown; with people of all backgrounds, united in common interest, coming together to solve their problems and meet their needs.

We see it in the co-operative models of home ownership that are sprouting up through cracks in London's broken housing market. We see it in the tenant groups and renters' unions which are demonstrating the same power in collective action that inspired both the Co-operative and Labour movements in the early 20th century. We see the common ground growing in co-operative early years settings, in which parents come together to provide a flexible option for the growing army of freelancers

and self-employed professionals, at the same time bridging the social divides which define inequality in the early years of life. We see it, too, in employee-owned businesses—from web developers to bicycle shops. They point the way towards a more productive economy, one built on dignified and fulfilling work in which employees share in the rewards, and not just the risks. We see it in the credit unions which are driving predatory lenders out of town and providing the start-up capital that enables hard-pressed parents to send their children to school with new shoes, pride and self-respect.

In the co-operative movement across our City, we see glimpses of how community is built and held together. It is in the community of traditional real ale drinkers and energetic craft beer enthusiasts coming together to save their local pub. The spirit of community is alive and well in community centres populated by baton twirlers and bingo players, in buildings kept open by the passion and social bonds of volunteers who do it because they have always done it. It's in the fans to keep the flame of grassroots football alive, fending off big money and the developers, in the dream of one day seeing their team play at Wembley.

We are the Party of community; and of the common ground that is created when communities do things together. Community is a word far too overused in politics, carelessly thrown about to describe any group with common characteristics, regardless of whether members of such groups view themselves as part of a collective whole or sharing a common interest. As co-operators, we believe that community is not based on being, but on doing. The strongest communities are formed when people are brought together around common causes, passions, interests and values, regardless of who they are or where they come from. Our own party, our movement and our country ought itself to be enough proof of that.

This Manifesto is all about what politics, and the people we elect, can learn from those small acts of community, and from the bonds that are created when people do things together. The London Co-operative Party believes that these small acts of co-operation can be the building blocks of a better



society. We take our inspiration from the principles that lie behind successful co-operatives; namely, democratic member control; open and voluntary membership; member's economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training, and information; co-operation among co-operatives and concern for community<sup>6</sup>. We believe that when we apply those principles to the most pressing challenges facing our Capital, then given the passion, commitment, talent and diversity of Londoners, there is little that we can't achieve together.

But it is up to us, and those we elect, to create the spaces in which that can happen. That means an approach focused on growing common ground in all areas of life in our City:

■ **Common decency**

Delivering a basic level of dignity for all Londoners, and confronting the abuses and injustices which offend our common humanity.

■ **Common wealth**

Reducing the inequalities in wealth and opportunity which keep us apart and which prevent us all from achieving our individual and collective potential.

■ **Common place**

Valuing the shared physical spaces, people and common cultural heritage which give us a sense of belonging and which transform neighbourhoods into communities.

■ **Common voice**

Creating space for Londoners to shape their City by making services accountable to the people who use them.

■ **Common weal**

Putting rocket boosters under London's co-operative sector, with consumer- and employee-owned businesses demonstrating a better way of doing business

■ **Common good**

Learning the lessons of the crisis to create a more liveable city, in which Londoners have the chance to live healthier, more fulfilling, and more connected lives.

## The story of now

The World in May 2021 will be very different from the one which could have been if we had gone to the polls, as planned, in May 2020. COVID-19 and the resulting shutdown are already changing our economy, society and politics in ways that none of us can anticipate. This is a disease which is probing the weaknesses in our society and exacerbating our divides. In this new world, lack of common ground is a weakness we cannot afford.

Our country faces the deepest recession in any of our lifetimes, perhaps even greater than that of the 1930s<sup>7</sup>, and the liberal, rules-based system of international co-operation which delivered 75 years of peace, seems shakier than ever<sup>8</sup>. Climate change is the gathering storm, and the background against which every other political issue must be viewed. In London, we have a City confident in its internationalist outlook, yet the capital of a country in the midst of a crisis of identity and confidence, struggling to understand its role in the world.

The world has changed profoundly. But if there is anything that we have witnessed in the last six months that we can be confident in, it is that the old politics is, at long last, dead. COVID-19 does not care if economies are in the hands of unresponsive state bureaucracies or unscrupulous private ones. It does not limit itself to neat industrial-era classifications of social class, nor does it concern itself with the cute legal distinctions between employees who have legal rights, and workers who do not.

What matters in the era of COVID-19, and the similar challenges that are likely to follow it, is democratic accountability. In this new era, our institutions - both public and private - must be more responsive than ever, and more in touch than ever, with the people they serve. Above all else, we need them to be led by

<sup>6</sup> Co-operative Principles - International Co-operative Alliance (<https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity>)

<sup>7</sup> Coronavirus and the impact on output in the UK economy: June 2020 Office for National Statistics (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/articles/coronavirusandtheimpactonoutputintheukeconomy/june2020>)

<sup>8</sup> UK foreign policy in a shifting world order UK Parliament, Select Committee on International Relations, 2018 (<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldintrel/250/25002.htm>) ch 1.



a notion of a Common Good. COVID-19 shows the importance of societies which are built around widely-shared values and aligned interests, brought together to achieve a common goal. Across the world, the countries best able to defend themselves from COVID-19 have been those made up of citizens able to imagine themselves as part of something larger, willing to make sacrifices and endure hardship for the benefit of others, many of whom they may never meet. Like so many co-operatives, it shows that a successful society is a community not just of being but of doing.

In London, events of the past 18 months have put paid to the lie that has infested our politics for 35 years: that society consists merely of individuals motivated only by their own self-interest.

In the hardest of times, Londoners have not looked inwards, but instinctively to each other. When lockdown kept us confined to our homes, our instinct was to check on our neighbours and find new ways to connect with our family and friends. Faced with hardships, both large and small, we have done what is needed. Not only for ourselves, but to keep safe those who had the most to lose from this disease. Along terraced streets, boxed into one- and two-bed flats, Londoners leaned out of their windows towards their neighbours, craving the opportunity to be part of something larger, clapping for those putting themselves on the line to keep us safe. In the hardest of times, we have sought and created common ground.

For the lucky ones among us, we have re-discovered things we thought were long lost. We now hold our loved ones a little tighter, and relish the time we are able to spend with family and friends - perhaps wondering if our old priorities were the right ones. During daily exercise, we have had the chance to breathe clean air and experience quieter streets. Many of us have got to know our neighbourhoods and our neighbours, and made the most of simpler things. And as measures eased, we haven't rushed to the shops, but instead to reconnect with each other.

## The new normal

As this Conservative government races to return the country to 'normal', taking every opportunity to declare our faltering economy, for years built on unproductive consumption, debt and low-paid work, 'open for business', we say that our City, and our country, deserves much better. We have been through too much together. Too many people have made too many sacrifices. We have had a taste of what a society built on common ground can feel like. There can be no return to 'normal'—we owe it to ourselves, and to each other, to do much better than that.

And so, out of the same disaster which has cost us so much, we also see a way forward for our City and our politics. This moment has laid bare our weaknesses, as well as our strengths, and neither can be ignored for any longer. We know we have it in us to live up to the best version of ourselves. We can recreate the unity, compassion and solidarity that we have felt towards one another, not just in our better moments, but in the everyday.

The purpose of this manifesto is to illustrate how these defining ideas can form the basis of a wider political agenda for London. It sets out practical steps that London Boroughs, our Greater London Assembly members and the Mayor, can take to nurture 'communities of doing' that already exist, and ways that they can facilitate new ones. It sets out ways to reduce the economic, housing and health inequalities that drive us apart, and opportunities to make the institutions that serve Londoners, more democratically accountable.

It shows how growing the existing co-operative sector in London can serve as a catalyst for transforming London's economy with dignified work and shared opportunity. And it shows how, by truly valuing shared spaces and institutions, we can bring people together.

We are lucky enough to live in the most dynamic, restless, open-minded and creative City on the planet. Even in these hardest of times, we know, that if we stand together—on common ground—there is no limit to what we can achieve.

chapter  
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common

Decency





# 1 Common Decency

For all the deep cultural divides which have riven our politics over the past decade, it is all too easy to forget that most Londoners are focused on securing the basic ingredients of life: a safe and secure place to live, dignified work, physical safety, and making ends meet.

These are the fundamental ingredients of common decency, yet for too many Londoners they remain out of reach. Thousands of Londoners, including children, live and work in conditions which ought to shame us all. Yet this is not just a moral failing. For as long as some among us are exempt from the basic standards that ought to be the mark of a decent society, we will remain a divided city, unable to build or thrive together, or to achieve our shared potential.

## Improving London's private rented sector

In 2018, 26% of Londoners rented privately, compared to just 11% in 1990<sup>1</sup>. Private renters in London face one of the most expensive rental markets in the world, with average rents exceeding 50% of the average salary in all but one of London's boroughs.<sup>2</sup> The London Co-operative Party recognises that high rents themselves create a power imbalance between tenants and landlords, and that this leads directly to abuse and poor housing conditions. In a 'seller's market', few landlords have the financial incentive to properly maintain or invest in rental properties, and few tenants independently have the means or confidence to demand higher standards or to press their (already limited) legal rights.

1 Reforming Private Renting: The Mayor of London's Blueprint - Mayor of London, July 2019 ([https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/reforming\\_private\\_renting\\_-\\_the\\_mayor\\_of\\_londons\\_blueprint.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/reforming_private_renting_-_the_mayor_of_londons_blueprint.pdf))

2 Analysis carried out by rental firm Howsy based on ONS and GovUK data, June 2019 (<https://metro.co.uk/2019/06/26/map-shows-much-salary-spend-rent-different-areas-london-10072789/>)

The disparities in wealth and power between private tenants and their landlords risks creating a generation of transient Londoners who lack a stake in the physical fabric of our city or the ability to 'put down roots' and to play a role in the life of their communities. It is therefore essential that tackling the crisis in London's private rental market is not seen merely as an issue of a few isolated cases of rogue landlords, but rather as a systematic failure to fairly distribute economic and political power.

- The Mayor should introduce a voluntary London Landlord's Register, setting a standard of good practice for landlords and letting agencies. This register would be based on a similar model to the Mayor's Good Work Standard, and work in parallel with the Rogue Landlord and Agent Checker to empower tenants.
- The Greater London Assembly (GLA) should undertake an annual London private renter's survey, creating the first-ever London-wide picture of rental costs, housing conditions, and landlord management. Such data could be used to identify problem landlords and low-quality rental markets, and inform a London-wide strategy for improving the sector.
- The Mayor should work with Boroughs to implement a proactive approach to selective landlord licensing, within the constraints of current law. This approach would draw on intelligence from the renter's survey, the Rogue Landlord Checker, and other data sources, to identify and make the case for rental markets that would benefit from the use of landlord licensing powers.
- The GLA should examine what funding and logistical support it can provide for an umbrella organisation of London private renter's groups, and what formal consultative role it can provide in developing planning strategies, enforcement action and in shaping future reforms of the sector.

## Ensuring dignity at work

Thanks to a decade of austerity and the steady erosion of employment rights, Londoners in poverty are now more likely to be in work than not.<sup>3</sup> Nationally, poor enforcement of employment standards and the national minimum wage have created a 'race to the bottom' in employment, resulting in abuse, and, at its most extreme, modern slavery. Because of this, efforts to raise,

3 <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/oct/09/more-than-half-of-londoners-in-poverty-are-in-working-families>

and maintain standards of safe, fairly paid and dignified work, should be central to our efforts to tackle economic inequality.

- London Boroughs and the GLA should continue to champion the London Living Wage, making it a key condition for securing contracts with themselves, TfL and all bodies under their oversight. This should include agency staff.
- City Hall should incentivise a culture of flexible work and greater work/life balance. This should include recognising employers who give their workers the choice of flexible working as part of the Good Work Standard.
- The GLA and local authorities should build on their support for the Co-operative Party's Modern Slavery Charter by ensuring that it is fully integrated into their contracting and procurement policies, as well as establishing mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and auditing of contractors and suppliers. The GLA and local councils should undertake to report annually on the action taken to ensure modern slavery is kept out of supply chains, as Islington Council has done since 2019<sup>4</sup>.
- The Mayor should direct the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to work with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate to dedicate resources to identifying and investigating businesses at high-risk of modern slavery, such as nail bars, car washes and other types of informal labour. Given the links between these forms of labour exploitation and organised crime, tackling modern slavery should be an integral part of the upcoming Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) Police and Crime Plan for 2021 onwards.

## Delivering food justice

The rising number of Londoners who lack sufficient and nutritious food is a damning reflection of this UK government's failings on in-work poverty, cuts to services, and failures in welfare reform. While acknowledging that ultimately, food poverty is a symptom of economic failure, London's government should nonetheless be at the forefront of delivering food justice in our City, and supporting organisations to deliver immediate relief to those living in hunger.

- All Boroughs should nominate a Cabinet member/Lead member with responsibility for delivering food justice, setting up a food partnership, developing a food plan, and asking its scrutiny committee to investigate the extent of the issue and what can be done to tackle it.

## Collaborating to provide local safety nets

The London Co-operative Party believes that we need an integrated approach on issues such as indebtedness, rent arrears, welfare reforms and other issues driving inequality in the community.

- The GLA should nominate a Lead member to co-ordinate London's response to delivering food justice, working with lead members in local councils, to further develop the London Food Board and pioneer approaches to tackling the causes of food poverty.
- All Boroughs should be encouraged to establish Welfare, Financial Inclusion and Homelessness Forums, which bring together relevant council departments, Citizens Advice, Food Banks, Credit Unions, Housing Associations, Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) representatives and other relevant bodies to share intelligence and develop mechanisms for referral between their services.

## Community-driven policing

All Londoners, not least our young people, have the right to live in safety, and without the threat of physical violence. The 'public health' approach adopted by the current Mayor is a welcome acknowledgement of the multifaceted and deep-rooted societal causes of youth violence. It is a welcome contrast with the enforcement-first, top-down approach of his predecessor, which exacerbated tensions, alienated communities and eroded trust in policing.

As co-operators, we are proud of the UK's tradition of 'policing by consent', and believe that long-term crime prevention and de-escalation work must be combined with law enforcement that is directly accountable and responsive to the communities that it seeks to protect. This includes improving recruitment and internal promotion processes to ensure that a much greater proportion of police are drawn from, and representative of the communities they serve. The London Co-operative Party

<sup>4</sup> Islington Council's first annual report on tackling modern slavery - London Borough of Islington, February 2019 (<https://democracy.islington.gov.uk/documents/s17591/Modern%20Slavery%20Report.pdf>)

therefore calls on the Mayor to ensure that the next Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) Plan includes:

- A community-driven approach to policing, with greater integration between crime prevention and enforcement activity. This should be part of wider efforts to build trust and respect in communities affected by high levels of crime, with local residents involved in setting priorities for enforcement activity, and community representation on police recruitment panels and promotion boards.
- Strategies to reduce youth violence that draw directly on the experiences of ex-offenders and those currently at risk of offending. Services designed to deter and de-escalate organised youth crime should draw inspiration from 'public health' and co-operative principles, by directly involving intended service users in their design and implementation. This approach was piloted in Glasgow, where call-ins were held in a crown court and involved the police, health professionals, families of the victims of youth violence and ex-offenders.
- An integrated approach to tackling violence against women and girls. Multiple schemes can co-exist in local areas leading to fragmentation, inefficient use of resources and confusion. Therefore, developing stronger and more coherent partnership arrangements is one way of ensuring that councils are able to offer effective services.

Drawing on co-operative principles, Lambeth Council developed the Safer Lambeth VAWG Strategy (2011-2014)<sup>5</sup> through listening to insights of women who had accessed the service and identifying what worked well and what did not. The Gaia peer mentoring scheme in Lambeth, which brought a more informal approach to the service, was one innovation that came out of working with and listening to users rather than just taking an approach that implies service professionals always know best.

## Promoting Fair Trade

Common ground is eroded by the sense of there being 'one rule for some'. The minority of businesses who aggressively avoid tax or fail to deal fairly with suppliers abroad undermine public trust and have an unfair advantage over those who do the

right thing. The London Co-operative Party therefore supports initiatives which recognise businesses who 'pay their way', both at home and further afield.

- As the world's largest Fairtrade City, the GLA should continue to proactively support Fairtrade via its own procurement, and encourage other businesses to do the same. The GLA should regularly review its own commitments, and encourage a renewed effort by London Boroughs where Fairtrade status is yet to be achieved, or where it has lapsed - particularly those under Labour and Co-operative Control.
- The Mayor of London could incentivise businesses to secure the Fair Tax Mark by publishing a list of organisations who have secured it annually. The Mayor should work to encourage councils to sign up to the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration, with the objective of ensuring that at least half of London boroughs have signed up in the first year of the next mayoral term.

## Protecting shop workers

Almost half a million Londoners work in retail. The efforts of shop workers during lockdown are a timely reminder of the vital role that these key workers play in keeping our City running, and their under-appreciated role, even in normal times, in enforcing the law. In spite of this, too many face violence, threats and abuse while at work. According to a recent survey, over the past year two thirds of shop workers have endured verbal abuse and over 400 shop workers have been abused on a daily basis<sup>6</sup>.

We therefore call on the Mayor to direct the MOPAC to strengthen its approach to protecting shop workers from violence and abuse:

- In recognition of the seriousness of this offence, the issue of violence against shop workers should be included in the Police and Crime Plan for London. Given growing concerns about how COVID-19 is impacting levels of aggression and violence towards retail workers in our local communities, the Mayor of London should ensure the issue is included in the upcoming plan.
- The GLA and boroughs should use Respect for Shopworkers Week each November as an opportunity to raise public awareness of the vital role played by shopworkers, and efforts to prevent violence. This could involve promoting

<sup>5</sup> Lambeth: an integrated approach to tackling VAWG [accessed 7.11.20] <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/crime-and-public-protection/sexual-and-domestic-violence-including-vawg/case-studies-4>

<sup>6</sup> Accessed 6.10.20: USDAW - Freedom From Fear Campaign



the work of trade unions, such as USDAW's *Freedom from Fear* Campaign, and encouraging local retail businesses to sign up to UNISON's End Violence at Work Charter<sup>7</sup>.

- London Boroughs (through Community Safety Partnerships) should prioritise efforts to track, and reduce violence against retail workers. This could involve increased consultation and involvement from local businesses, making easier to report incidents of retail crime, as well as working with smaller independent retailers to strengthen policies and introduce measures to protect staff.

## Reforming social care

During lockdown, thousands of care home residents died unnecessarily as a result of failures in leadership from the UK government and in settings that were inadequately resourced and insufficiently-prepared to deal with a health crisis on this scale. The crisis in social care is UK-wide, and is accepted by all political parties. Despite this, the UK Government has yet to take decisive leadership on this issue, and the task of long-term reform seems likely to fall instead to the next UK Labour government.

The London Co-operative Party calls on London government at all levels to take the following opportunities to deliver immediate improvements in standards of care within our City, and to demonstrate that an alternative approach is possible:

- The GLA and local authorities should seek opportunities to co-ordinate with community groups seeking to create more community-led social care co-operatives, which are created by caregivers, community leaders and the service-users themselves. The GLA should promote the set-up of such initiatives by providing technical, financial and legal advice to such groups, in collaboration with Co-operatives UK and a future London Co-operative Development Agency.
- Over the long-term, the GLA should work to lobby the UK Government to amend legislation permitting private sector employees to have a 'right to own', while encouraging boroughs to make full use of the Social Value Act in giving preference to community-owned and not-for-profit social care models over private providers.

**For as long as  
some among  
us are exempt  
from the basic  
standards that  
ought to be the  
mark of a decent  
society, we will  
remain a divided  
city, unable to  
build or thrive  
together, or  
to achieve our  
shared potential.**

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<sup>7</sup> Accessed 6.10.20: (End Violence at Work Charter | End violence at work)

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common

Wealth





# 2 Common Wealth

As co-operators, we know that wealth inequality is inextricably linked to inequalities in power. Access to wealth affects not only an individual's access to opportunities, but also limits the choices available to them and their capacity to control the forces that affect their lives.

As Londoners, perhaps more than anywhere else in the country, we see the effects of disparities in wealth first-hand. But we also see the benefits of economically-mixed communities, and the cultural and social wealth that is created when people from different backgrounds and perspectives are able to live, work, travel, shop and socialise alongside one another. Our City is built on the stories of those who came here, built lives and succeeded in the toughest of circumstances, and its future relies on remaining such a place of opportunity.

## Promoting financial inclusion

The London Co-operative Party recognises the importance of greater financial inclusion in tackling the wealth inequality in our Capital. Reducing wealth inequality, preventing the segregation of our communities and the divisions arising from extreme disparities in wealth and opportunity is fundamental if we are to grow and succeed together.

The Mayor should work with credit unions to support the estimated one million Londoners who do not regularly access a bank account.<sup>1</sup> These individuals fall disproportionately into vulnerable groups such as those currently homeless, survivors of domestic violence, care leavers, those with no recourse to

public funds, and others who lack a fixed address or conventional identification documents.

- The Mayor and GLA should work with the credit union sector to help expand their existing work to promote financial education in primary and secondary schools. The objective would be to teach young people about sound financial management and raise awareness of community finance initiatives. Local authorities should work to encourage credit union membership, including through schemes such as those piloted by Southwark and Islington, in which credit union accounts were opened, and an initial £20 deposit made on behalf of every school child.
- Despite being on the doorstep of the world's financial capital, some boroughs have limited access to free-to-use cash machines. Cash machine fees place a disproportionate 'poverty premium' on Londoners who can least afford it, and disadvantage independent local businesses that are disproportionately cash-based. To widen access to cash machines, the Mayor should encourage boroughs to extend discretionary business rates relief to shops and other premises that provide publicly-available cash machines that are free-to-use.
- London's boroughs and other housing providers should be encouraged to work with local credit unions to proactively support financial education and to support sound financial management among tenants. Examples of this could include providing direct credit union advice through their own housing staff, training financially experienced residents to act as 'money champions'<sup>2</sup>, or offering one-off cash incentives or rental rebates to those who open accounts and commit to regular saving.

## Supporting families

Despite UK-wide initiatives over the past decade, children from disadvantaged families in London are disproportionately missing out on high quality childcare, often having no provision at all. London is far behind other regions in England in terms of take-up of state-funded early years provision<sup>3</sup>. This in turn is

1 'Short changed: the financial health of Londoners' - London Assembly 2018 [accessed 14.10.2020] ([https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/londonassembly/meetings/documents/s67625/7a%20-%20Financial%20inclusion%20report\\_FINAL%20EMBARGOED%20VERSION.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/londonassembly/meetings/documents/s67625/7a%20-%20Financial%20inclusion%20report_FINAL%20EMBARGOED%20VERSION.pdf))

2 An example of this is the Money Champions project, funded by Lambeth Council and delivered by West London Mission (<https://love.lambeth.gov.uk/lets-talk-money/>) [accessed 04.10.2020]

3 Take-up of free early education entitlements - NatCen / Department of Education, Sept 2018 ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/738776/Take-up\\_of\\_free\\_early\\_education\\_entitlements.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/738776/Take-up_of_free_early_education_entitlements.pdf))

reflected in maternal employment rates that are 10 points lower than for England as a whole.

Many of the reasons for this are cultural, with a significant number of communities in London that choose not to place a two year-old in childcare, even when it is free and locally accessible<sup>4</sup>. Efforts to promote gender equality, increase household incomes, and promote equal employment in London therefore rely on childcare solutions that work with, and around, the needs of the communities that they serve. Co-operative childcare models can help to achieve this, by providing greater flexibility to parents to combine employment with active participation in delivering their child's care.

- The GLA should advocate for the creation of more Co-operative-run nurseries to tackle the inequalities in the cost and standards of childcare, and to support parents in returning to work post-COVID-19. Local councils should be encouraged to provide premises to host co-operative-run nurseries and childcare centres.

As it looks increasingly likely that traditional working patterns will change in the post-COVID-19 era, this is an opportunity to address the gender inequality that persists in the work/life balance and division of family roles. The UK lags behind the Nordic countries in terms of both passing the legislation and the up-take of Shared Parental Leave, since its introduction in 2015<sup>5</sup>.

As the capital city, London should be setting an example by encouraging employers to extend family-friendly work practices. This would include encouraging uptake of shared parental leave as a means of promoting gender equality in the work/life balance.

- City Hall should include shared parental leave as part of the Good Work Standard, encouraging more employers to offer it as an option.

## Rebuilding Sure Start

Sure Start Centres, introduced in 1999, provided a space in which families, health professionals and early education staff came together to support and promote children's early development. They offered opportunities for families from different backgrounds to connect, facilitating cohesion within local communities. Sure Start was proven to be successful in

improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities, particularly in the poorest areas of the country<sup>6</sup>. It also led to proven improvements in early speech, language and communication skills<sup>7</sup> which are crucial to a child's longer-term social development, mental health outcomes, and educational attainment.

- City Hall should provide a framework in which a London-wide network of co-operative-run early years' centres can be established.

## Dignity for those seeking work

Amid the economic wreckage caused by COVID-19 and the shutdown, a long recession and levels of unemployment not seen since the 1930s seem a near certainty<sup>8</sup>.

Built on false assumptions about the nature of employment, and decimated by a decade of cuts, the current system of employment support is unfit for purpose; condemning job-seekers to a system which is as ineffective as it is punitive, degrading and cruel. Those out of work who lack the benefit of savings, social and family networks stand on a precipice. They face a system of unemployment benefit which does not provide enough to live on, and a punitive system which can destroy self-esteem, and is prone to pushing applicants into inappropriate, insecure employment.

While the Mayor's ability to reform social security is, of course, limited, it is incumbent on him to show that another approach is possible; one based on building the dignity, capacity and confidence of those seeking work.

- The Mayor should encourage schemes such as those piloted by Participle in 2011, called *Backr*, which used a participatory approach to support over 140 people back into work. Its methodologies included innovative tools such as group workshops, networking events and opportunities, one-to-one coaching, coaching in groups, telephone support and an online network to support job seekers to build networks, self-confidence and 'soft' skills.

4 Ibid Sept 2018

5 Campaign for Parental Pay Equality [accessed 1.9.2020] (<http://www.parentalpayequality.org.uk/>)

6 The Health Effects of Sure Start, Institute for Fiscal Studies, June 2019 [accessed 1.9.2020] (<https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/R155-The-health-effects-of-Sure-Start.pdf>)

7 Sure Start Evaluation Report (2018) [accessed 1.9.2020]: <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/surestart-evaluation-report-may-2018.pdf>

8 Labour market overview - ONS, October 2020 [accessed 10.10.2020] (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/october2020>)

- The Mayor should work with organisations like the Co-operative College and Co-operatives UK to ensure business and skills advisors have access to the knowledge and information to support those setting up co-operatives.

## Supporting small businesses

The Mayor and GLA should commit to fostering new small businesses which create jobs and are often the lifeblood of communities. A London economy in all our interests is one which is able to provide support for smaller enterprises, including local co-operatives, as they form the overwhelming majority of London businesses by number.<sup>9</sup>

- The Mayor and GLA should work with boroughs, established lenders and others to set up a Small Business Growth Fund for viable small businesses unable to access mainstream lending. There is great potential for City Hall to leverage investment from the private sector through the provision of first risk capital. The capital provided could be structured so as to benefit a portfolio of borrowers, including co-operatives and mutual enterprises. The private investment can be sourced from the very same mainstream lenders who are unable to offer the service needed by small businesses.
- The GLA should work to help small businesses and the self-employed through support for Community Development Finance Institutes (CDFIs) and mutual guarantee schemes.
- For the Mayor to instigate a task force to explore ways to harness open source and distributed ledger technology to connect the power of people and businesses through platform co-operatives.

## Tackling transport inequality

While London benefits from the most extensive and well-used public transport infrastructure in the UK, many older citizens and those living with disabilities rely on special provision to maintain their independence. Community Transport is the unsung hero of transport in London, providing 'dial a ride' services to individuals, as well as shopping trips and shopmobility schemes.

The sector consists of a significant number of charitable and volunteer-run schemes, as well as larger operators run on a not-for-profit basis. The London Co-operative Party strongly supports the work of the community transport sector, and calls on the GLA, and the Mayor, through Transport for London (TfL), to provide practical assistance in the following ways:

- Where they have the capacity to do so, ensure that community transport operators are able to access and tender for TfL contracts to run scheduled public bus services. Larger community transport operators such as HCT (which began as Hackney Community Transport), rely on the revenue from such routes to support the provision of community services such as minibuses and dial-a-ride schemes.
- Provide practical and financial support to enable community and voluntary groups to access MiDAS (Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme) training, enabling volunteers to train to safely drive and operate minibuses on behalf of community groups and community transport operators.
- Investigate an expanded role for community transport operators to take on and operate bus routes in Outer London boroughs. On routes with lower passenger volumes in lower-density areas, these not-for-profit operators may be better positioned to maintain timetable frequency, and be more responsive to local needs than their commercial peers.

<sup>9</sup> Business population estimates for the UK and regions: 2019 statistical release - ONS, Jan 2020 [accessed 12.10.2020] ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/852919/Business\\_Population\\_Estimates\\_for\\_the\\_UK\\_and\\_regions\\_-\\_2019\\_Statistical\\_Release.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/852919/Business_Population_Estimates_for_the_UK_and_regions_-_2019_Statistical_Release.pdf))



**Our City is built  
on the stories of  
those who came  
here, built lives  
and succeeded in  
the toughest of  
circumstances,  
and its future  
relies on  
remaining such  
a place of  
opportunity.**

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# common Place



3

# 3 Common Place

Communities are the building blocks of a better City. Many of us are lucky enough to live in areas with a strong sense of 'place' - with local landmarks, cultural and social institutions, a distinct cultural mix, and a shared heritage in which local people take pride. But in too many parts of the Capital, there is a sense that community is being lost.

The high turnover in short-term private renting means that in some areas, neighbours remain strangers, with little in common and few shared interests or shared spaces. In other parts of our city, rising housing costs and flat wage growth are changing many communities in ways that leave current residents feeling dis-empowered and divided, with a limited say over the changes which transform their lives.

This chapter focuses on how the next Labour & Co-operative administration restore a sense of 'place' in neighbourhoods across our city, nurturing community and collective action, as well as building links between disparate communities.

## Giving local people a voice in regeneration

Over the past decade, many London councils have undertaken projects to expand housing supply, replace ageing housing stock, and to revitalise economic activity in neglected areas. While many such schemes have been successful, some have met with local opposition due to a perceived lack of consultation, poor outcomes in terms of affordable housing provision, and resentments generated by perceived gentrification. These issues show the importance of ensuring that local redevelopment schemes not only consult, but are driven by, people in the areas affected, with a wide range of

community groups, small businesses and residents able to influence the development of their area, rather than the dialogue being dominated by vocal, but not always representative, groups. This should happen at the earliest possible stage, before views become entrenched.

- Individual Londoners, community groups and civil society should be supported to actively participate in the creation of a 'People's Plan', feeding into the development of the upcoming New London Plan. This would include workshops and public meetings at borough and GLA constituency levels, with the public encouraged to share their views and aspirations for the strategic development of their area.
- London boroughs should put local people in charge of regeneration partnerships to make sure they deliver the things local communities really want and need rather than serving the needs of developers.

## Listing assets of community value

All communities consist of people. But often, it is places where they meet that provide their distinctive identity and where social bonds are created, whether in pubs or sports clubs, playing fields or community centres. In too many parts of London, rising property values have put these community assets at risk, breaking down social connections and robbing communities of social and cultural connections that are not easily replaceable.

Existing Community Assets legislation provides community groups with routes to list, protect and, in some cases, take ownership of assets of community value, providing Londoners with a tool for safeguarding the places that are special to them.

- Whether through the proposed Co-operative Development Agency or another appropriate unit, the GLA should assist those wishing to transfer community assets, ensuring that community groups have access to the business planning, expertise and finance to make a transfer or purchase a success.
- Make use of Community Assets legislation to help communities save pubs, including LGBTQ+ venues, that remain viable but which are threatened by closure. This should happen in conjunction with greater community involvement in setting appropriate licensing conditions.



## Community sponsorship of refugees

London is a city of immigrants, and has a proud history of welcoming those escaping violence and persecution from across the world. Community Sponsorship Groups are voluntary organisations of local residents who agree to sponsor the settlement of a refugee family, providing them with practical and emotional support in adjusting to life in the UK, and facilitating their integration into the local community and access to services such as housing.

London has been quick to embrace the Community Sponsorship scheme piloted nationally, with 1,087 refugees resettled through the Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerable Children Resettlement Schemes<sup>1</sup>. Such groups are an excellent example of how Londoners can promote our shared values of human rights, tolerance and inclusion, supported by existing residents and the wider local community. The Mayor should continue to advocate for Community Sponsorship, lobbying national government for its continuation and expansion, and by encouraging the formation of at least one Community Sponsorship Group in every London Borough.

## Expanding shared space

London benefits from some of the best outdoor public spaces in the world, with parks, squares, canal paths and shopping precincts that act as focal points for social and economic life. As areas undergo change and redevelopment, it is vital that existing public spaces are maintained, and that we take opportunities to expand the public realm, with safe, high-quality and well-maintained public amenities that are open and accessible to all.

- Boroughs should make use of Section 106 to prioritise the provision of new genuine public space, open for all, in new residential developments, including for both educational and recreational purposes (e.g. outdoor education)
- The GLA should seek to encourage a common approach, by local authorities, to temporary road closures for events such as street parties, festivals, LGBTQ+ pride and melas. This should include a right by residents to request a road

closure for non-profit-making, freely accessible cultural activities free of charge for up to 5 days per year.

- In a post-COVID era, 24-hour widespread availability of free and hygienic washroom provision, including hand washing facilities, ought to be considered an issue of public health as well as being highly significant to those with disabilities. TfL should follow Network Rail's example by making toilet facilities in all TfL stations open to the public free of charge, and look to include expanded provision as part of its station refurbishment programme.

## Fan ownership and community sport

While London's Premier League clubs are known around the world, in many cases it is the lower-league football clubs which remain at the heart of London's neighbourhoods, remaining accessible to, and attracting supporters from all walks of life. With COVID-19 threatening the very existence of many small clubs, major reform at the national level will clearly be needed if local football is to survive in any recognisable form.

The example of clubs such as Dulwich Hamlets, AFC Wimbledon, Enfield FC and Clapton FC show that, with sufficient support, clubs can thrive when fans mobilise to save their club and to bring it into supporter ownership. In these cases, the process of saving and rebuilding the club has itself strengthened local identities and deepened social connections, with revitalised clubs acting as catalysts for wider positive change.

- The Mayor of London should bring together representatives of Football Supporters' Trusts across London (many of which are constituted as co-operative or community benefit societies), to look at ways support can be given to Trusts to secure a greater level of accountability and representation. This should include fan representation on club boards as a pre-condition for financial support, expertise and practical assistance given to fan ownership bids, and greater fan representation in the governing structures of football itself.
- The GLA should work to support community amateur sports clubs, many of whom face an uphill road to recovery post-COVID.

<sup>1</sup> What is Community Sponsorship? Citizens UK Foundation for Community Sponsorship of Refugees (<https://www.sponsorrefugees.org/>)

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common

Voice





4

# 4 Common Voice

Many of the divides and inequalities that drive citizens in our City apart are due not only to disparities in wealth, health, education or life chances, but also in power. From the transport that takes us to work, to the local health services upon which we all depend, in too many respects, many Londoners do not feel listened to, with few opportunities to directly influence the services which they rely on for their day-to-day lives.

Not only does this lack of power lead to disempowerment, alienation and detachment, but the services themselves are poorer for it. Over the past decade subscriber-based businesses - led by technology companies such as Netflix - have been quick to acknowledge what we as co-operators have long known to be true: that the strongest services are those which create a sense of ownership and which are rapidly responsive to the needs and preferences of their users.

The same is true of many of the services that fall under the direct control of the Mayor of London. To secure their long-term future, entrench public support, and to drive continual improvement, the Mayor should look for opportunities to give service-users a greater direct voice over the services upon which they depend.

## Giving commuters a voice over services

Oversight of Transport for London (TfL) is one of the Mayor's most important responsibilities, and one of the ways in which the Mayor's work most directly touches the day-to-day life of

many Londoners. In spite of this, TfL's governance feels remote to many of its passengers, with few statutory opportunities for them to directly influence the delivery of services.

With TfL's finances and services threatened as a result of the COVID-19 lock-down and the punitive conditions set by the UK government in return for necessary financial aid, there is an opportunity for the Mayor and GLA to galvanise the support of passengers and to mobilise them to defend services, by giving them a greater role.

- The GLA should exercise its power to reform and reinvigorate London TravelWatch. This should include reverting it to its previous name as the London Transport Users Committee, with the reformed body forming the basis of a passenger's co-operative, with an expanded remit to act as a direct voice for London's transport users.
- All Annual Travelcard users should automatically be members of the new body, with the right to stand for and elect members of the TravelWatch Board and to attend an annual general meeting. The reformed London TravelWatch would be entitled to seats on TfL's Board, providing a direct voice for transport users on matters including fares, staff remuneration and strategic investment.

## Making London Power accountable to its bill payers

In his first term, the Mayor established 'London Power', an energy supplier (delivered in partnership with Octopus Energy) designed to provide a straightforward option for Londoners in a broken energy market. This is a welcome step towards a truly accountable and sustainable energy system.

- Over the long-term, and supported by necessary national legislation, the Mayor should aspire to convert London Power into a customer-owned co-operative along similar lines to Glas Cymru / Welsh Water. Bill payers should have a say on community projects on which any surplus is spent, as well as on the possible payment of a dividend.
- The Mayor should consider how the London Power brand, as it develops, could be leveraged to facilitate the growth of community-owned energy schemes in London, increasing the share of energy it supplies that is generated here in London.

## Growing the Co-operative Housing Sector

Insufficient and inadequate housing stock in the Capital results in many being forced to move out of London, leading to the fragmentation of communities. Families are raising children in overcrowded, poor quality homes, which is having a detrimental impact on health and education outcomes, and exacerbating social inequality.

Young people are struggling to get on the housing ladder as they struggle to compete in an inflated housing market, fuelling intergenerational and social inequalities. The London Co-operative Party believes every Londoner should be able to live in safe, affordable, high quality housing, and therefore the GLA should actively promote and support the Co-operative Housing model:

- The Mayor should include a 'co-operative and mutual housing vision' at the heart of the next London Housing Strategy and London Plan which includes a commitment to raise the level of co-operative housing in London to the European average of 10%.
- The Mayor and Assembly should work with local authorities to encourage mutual alternatives in retirement housing.
- The Mayor should press for necessary legislative changes to give mutual forms of retirement housing a level playing field with private providers.

## Putting residents in charge

The tragedy at Grenfell Tower demonstrated all too clearly the need to rebalance power between tenants and their landlords. Trends over the past two decades mean that more Londoners than ever live in the social rented sector, or own their flat through leasehold. While there are, of course, significant differences between these types of tenure, both present similar problems in terms of limited legal rights, weak accountability, and limited routes for redress.

At the national level, action is needed to reform the law around leasehold, while steps should be taken to overhaul the Social Housing Regulator so that tenants can escalate issues and hold their landlords to account. In the meantime, the London Co-operative Party calls for the following steps to ensure a greater voice for social tenants and leaseholders.

- The Mayor should commit in the Housing Strategy to make subsidies for new developments for housing associations contingent on greater democracy in the association.
- Subsidy should only be granted to associations that enable their tenants to exercise the right to manage as a co-operative and include tenant participation on their board. With some housing associations running operating margins of over 30%, financial support should also be contingent on greater financial transparency.
- The Mayor should work to ensure leaseholders and tenants wishing to do so can access information and support to exercise their statutory 'right to manage'.

## Youth political engagement

As a young, diverse Capital City, it is imperative that young people are central to identifying solutions to the issues that affect all Londoners. The devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland have successfully secured the right to extend voting rights in devolved elections to 16 and 17 year olds, as well as to foreign nationals. Acknowledging London's status as the UK's global city, as well as England's youngest region by average age<sup>1</sup>, it is time for voting rights in the London elections to be extended in a similar way, and to take additional steps to promote political understanding and engagement in local issues:

- The Mayor should lobby the UK government to extend voting rights in GLA/Mayoral elections to resident foreign nationals, as well as to 16 and 17 year olds.
- The Mayor should actively promote 'Local Democracy Week' to young people each October and mobilising young people to participate in voter registration efforts within their communities.
- The Mayor should use Co-operatives Fortnight to educate young people about the value of co-operatives in their communities. The Mayor should partner with the co-operative movement to sponsor 'Co-operative Ambassadors' to go into London's schools and engage young people on co-operative values and principles. This should include City Hall flying the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) Flag and encouraging all London councils to follow suit.

<sup>1</sup> Ageing, fast and slow - Resolution Foundation, McCurdy, October 2019 [accessed 14.10.2020] (<https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2019/10/Ageing-fast-and-slow.pdf>)

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Weal





# 5 Common Weal

Each co-operative business is a microcosm of the kind of values we would like to see more widely adopted in our economy: entrepreneurship, investment in people and communities, shared profit, decent employment and long-term thinking.

For this reason, the co-operative sector can act as a catalyst, creating social and economic impacts beyond the co-operatives themselves. By supporting the growth of existing co-operatives and facilitating opportunities for new co-operative enterprises, the Mayor and Assembly can shape the transformation of London's economy, setting a clear direction for all businesses in the Capital. This section sets out the steps that can be taken to enable the growth of the co-operative sector in London.

## Leadership from City Hall

- The Mayor should appoint a Co-operative Commission<sup>1</sup> in City Hall, with strong links into co-operative and mutual businesses, to coordinate different agencies and funding streams to support the growth of co-operatives and creation of jobs.
- The GLA should support the establishment of a Co-operative Development Agency. Such an agency would provide the funding and support to deliver the infrastructure needed to grow London's co-operative sector. The new agency should seek to generate a proportion of its own funding from consultancy, which would also help to cement a culture of enterprise within the organisation.

<sup>1</sup> See 'Rebuilding London's Economy Together' for further details: <https://party.coop/wp-content/blogs.dir/5/files/2020/11/Rebuilding-London-Economy-Together-Final.pdf>

- The Mayor and GLA should put support for co-operative and mutual enterprises at the core of the London economic development strategy.
- An Assembly member should be given 'the co-operative economy' within their policy portfolio and tasked with promoting co-operative enterprise.

## Co-operative finance

- The Mayor should look at options for partnering with the co-operative sector to provide start-up finance for new co-operatives. This could include working with existing credit unions to expand their business operations into small business lending. Support could include helping them to build the staff capacity and infrastructure and providing and/or underwriting initial lending capital.
- The Mayor should use his profile and influence to facilitate greater collaboration between credit unions across Greater London. Following in the tradition of co-operative wholesale societies and other examples of secondary co-operatives in the UK and abroad, this could include providing seed funding, logistical and political support for the creation of a Credit Union Service Organisation (CUSO) to provide shared infrastructure and business services to credit unions across the Capital.

## Co-operative small business clusters

Independent businesses and sole-traders are the foundation of many of London's local high streets, with individuals from immigrant and ethnic minority backgrounds owning a higher proportion of these types of businesses than in other parts of the UK.<sup>2</sup> In the current crisis, national government support is welcome, but inadequate. Many businesses are likely to need additional support to remain sustainable even beyond the current crisis, while access to investment and credit remain long-standing issues.

<sup>2</sup> Minority Ethnic Group-led businesses are most common in London, making up 15% of SME employers in London, compared to an average of 5% across the rest of the UK: Longitudinal Small Business Survey: SME employers (businesses with 1-249 employees) – UK, 2018 pp 53 ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/803645/LSBS\\_2018\\_employers.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/803645/LSBS_2018_employers.pdf))

A solution to this are co-operative small business clusters, and mutual guarantee societies. These types of co-operatives allow sole traders to pool expertise and cost overheads, as well as supporting each other to secure capital and investment. The London Co-operative Party would like to see the Mayor and GLA commit to support co-operative financial institutions, such as Credit Unions.

- Local authorities and the GLA should look at how empty premises and office space could be made available to existing co-operatives on a short-term basis, as well as how such spaces could be used as 'incubators' for the development of new co-operatives and social enterprises owned by local people.
- The Mayor should investigate what scope there is within current legislation and regulation for small businesses to work together to support each other in securing and acting as guarantors of credit. More widely, the Mayor should lobby for regulatory reform to enable the creation of Mutual Guarantee Societies, which exist in other developed economies.

## Co-operative education

COVID-19 has brutally exposed the attainment gap in our schools, and the extent to which the home and living circumstances of a child are inextricably linked to their educational attainment and life chances. This is particularly true in the case of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) where the disruption of the past year will have been particularly damaging.

The scale of the catch-up that will be required is daunting. The Co-operative Party believes that a co-operative approach to education, focused on bringing together schools, parents and the wider community to address the physical, emotional, mental and academic needs of the child, can play an important role.

- The Mayor, working through a future Co-operative Development Agency, should provide practical advice and support to schools wishing to adopt the co-operative schools model, including through Co-operative Trust Schools and the formation of co-operative Multi-Academy Trusts.

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Good







# 6 Common Good

From the disruption, trauma and tragedy of lockdown, many of us feel that whatever the government might say, 'back to normal' is simply not enough. The experience of being separated from family members, of losing loved ones, and of working from home has led many of us to reassess our priorities. Many of us have a renewed appreciation of the value of health, well-being, and the value of time invested in our own human relationships.

In this section, we outline some of the ways in which a Labour & Co-operative administration in London would seek to improve the mental, physical and emotional health of all Londoners; increasing quality of life in ways that politics-as-usual can sometimes overlook.

## Air quality and the environment

- As part of TfL's strategy, the GLA should commit to a target for the number of children (aged 5-10 years old) regularly walking to school, drawing on Living Streets' Walking to School Programme<sup>1</sup>.
- To counter deforestation taking place around the world and improve air quality in the capital, London Authorities should coordinate the planting of a tree for every school child in their borough.

<sup>1</sup> Small Steps, Big Outcomes - Living Streets, (<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/walk-to-school/>) [accessed 07.10.2020]

- To promote healthier physical and mental health, employers should be encouraged to sign-up to an 'employee walk-to-work day' each month. Employers would commit to offering flexible hours to enable staff to walk for all or part of their daily commute.
- The Mayor should implement a road closure scheme, limiting traffic during peak drop off and pick up times. Councils would be tasked with putting up signs, barriers and/or cameras to stop non-residents driving through the area. This type of initiative has been outlined by the charity, Living Streets, and their *School Streets* initiative has been shown to have minimal impact on residents and businesses on the street as access is still permitted if driving at a walking pace.
- In parallel with the UN COP Climate Summit due to be held in Glasgow in 2021, the Mayor should convene a London-wide climate assembly bringing together civil society, business and citizens' juries to develop the Capital's response to the climate crisis.

## Building intergenerational links and tackling loneliness

Increasing levels of loneliness in our society has attracted even more attention during the COVID-19 crisis as people have remained behind closed doors and been discouraged from interacting with friends and neighbours.

While loneliness is perceived as being associated predominantly with old age, the Community Life Survey (2019/20) found that loneliness was greatest amongst young people, with 10% of 16-24 year olds reporting feelings of loneliness compared to 4% of 65-74 year olds and 6% of the over 75s<sup>2</sup>. Further still, rates of loneliness have been found to be higher amongst women and those living with long-term disabilities<sup>3</sup>. Older people (aged 75+) are more likely to feel a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood than 16-24 year olds who reported a lack of belonging to their neighbourhoods according to data from the ONS<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Community Life Survey - DCMS/GOV.UK, July 2020 [accessed 14.10.20]

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-life-survey-201920-wellbeing-and-loneliness/wellbeing-and-loneliness-community-life-survey-201920>)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, ONS

<sup>4</sup> National Well-being Survey - ONS, April 2018 [accessed 14.10.20]: (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/measuringnationalwellbeing/qualityoflifeintheuk2018>)

As our communities become more fragmented, intergenerational separation and isolation becomes an ever-present part of our society. Therefore it is imperative that City Hall generate opportunities for local people to foster greater cohesion within their own communities:

- The GLA should safeguard community spaces that residents can use for locally-led initiatives, for example book clubs, board game clubs, coordinating shopping deliveries for vulnerable neighbours. This can be further supported by identifying and empowering local residents to protect assets of community value, such as libraries and children's centres.
- As part of a long-term commitment to facilitating greater intergenerational engagement, the Mayor should promote schemes in which young people sign up to initiatives bringing young and old together to support and spend time together, similar to community network organisations such as North London Cares<sup>5</sup>. This could be instigated within individual London boroughs and set up as co-operative initiatives.
- The creation of more Co-operative nurseries and Co-operative care models provide an opportunity to strengthen engagement between the generations. For instance, placing co-operative nurseries and children's centres nearby or in the grounds of care homes.
- Schools should be encouraged to utilise the skill-sets within their local communities. For example, inviting older adults to come into school and participate in paired-reading with primary school children.

## Widening access to cultural capital

From museums, to historic landmarks and art, London is home to some of the world's greatest cultural treasures, many of them free to enter, thanks to the last Labour government. Yet just miles away, there are children and young people who will never be given the opportunity to experience them due to barriers, both practical and invisible.

The London Co-operative Party believes that all children growing up in our Capital ought to have the opportunity to have their eyes opened and horizons widened by experiencing the

best of what our capital has to offer, just as millions of tourists and visitors do every year.

- The Mayor should introduce a 1% levy on all London hotel bedrooms. This would raise £50m a year to be spent on funding projects and initiatives which expand cultural and creative opportunities for young Londoners, outside of the traditional school curriculum.<sup>6</sup>
- The levy should also be used to provide funding to every school in London to meet costs of a school trip to one of London's free museums and art galleries for every school child.
- The Mayor should look to enrich London's cultural commons - with support for the new and existing art and creative communities in London

## Improving health and well-being outcomes

The current public health crisis has put even greater emphasis on the need to promote healthy living and well-being. Co-operative models of health and social care act as a bulwark against further intrusion by for-profit operators into our NHS, complementing the essential core services delivered through the public sector. Due to the nature of their governance structures, they put the patient and community at the heart of their decision-making.

- City Hall should use its communications and advertising capacity to pro-actively promote patient involvement in patient participation groups (PPGs) in local GP surgeries. Characteristic of co-operative principles and values, PPGs bring together groups of service-users and medical practitioners to discuss, evaluate and make suggestions of how local GP services can be improved. Individuals of all backgrounds and age groups should be encouraged to take part in these groups to ensure services continue to respond to the needs of all sections of the local community.
- The GLA should promote democratic participation in NHS Foundation Trusts by running an awareness raising campaign about residents registering as a member of their

<sup>5</sup> About Us - North London Cares, [accessed 14.10.20] (<https://northlondoncares.org.uk/about-us>)

<sup>6</sup> This policy draws on a proposal made by the late Dame Tessa Jowell in 2015 (<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jul/20/jowell-offers-10-life-forming-experiences-before-age-10-for-london-children>)

local Trust, to widen and broaden representation among members of the organisation.

- There should be a coordinated effort, led by City Hall, to publicise elections for the Board of Governors and Board of Directors of Foundation Trusts. This is in light of the fact that turnout in governor elections was as low as 15% and the proportion of uncontested elections was as high as 58% in 2017<sup>7</sup>.
- The Mayor should ensure that third sector, social enterprise, co-operative and mutual providers are given preference in commissioning healthcare-related services outside of the NHS, and take action when there is a bias against using these providers.
- Accessing facilities that promote healthier physical and mental health should not be off-limits to some in our city due to cost. Leisure Centres are important spaces in our communities, where families, friends and neighbours can meet in an environment that promotes healthy living.
- When councils put leisure facilities out to tender, they should give preference to mutuals to empower communities to have a say over the facilities that they would like to see and use.

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<sup>7</sup> Turnout and behaviours in NHS Foundation Trust elections - Civica, 2017 [accessed 14.10.20]: (<https://www.membra.co.uk/globalassets/7.document-downloads/2.uk-docs/white-papers/engagement-solutions/turnout-and-behaviours-in-nhs-foundation-trust-elections-2017.pdf>)











**co-operative  
party**

**London**

**Building Common Ground**

2021/2022 Election Manifesto of  
the London Co-operative Party

Published by:  
London Council of  
the Co-operative Party

[london@local.party.coop](mailto:london@local.party.coop)  
[www.londonparty.coop](http://www.londonparty.coop)

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United Kingdom

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30027R

