

Government extends coronavirus support for buses and trams, total funding tops £700 million

- government extends coronavirus support for bus and tram operators across England as part of wider efforts to safely get people back to education and work spaces
- new model will provide rolling support for bus operators with up to £218.4 million guaranteed over the next 8 weeks
- five tram systems in the North and Midlands to receive funding of up to £37.4 million over the next 12 weeks

England's bus and tram services will receive extra support worth up to £256 million to help them ramp up services ahead of expected increases in public transport use in September, the government has announced today (8 August 2020).

Bus services across the country will receive up to £218.4 million of support over the next eight weeks, with rolling funding at up to £27.3 million per week afterwards, until a time when the funding is no longer needed.

From today, tram services also have access to up to £37.4 million over 12 weeks, at a rate of up to £3.1 million a week, with funding to be reviewed at the end of the period.

Currently, passenger numbers on bus and light rail services are significantly below normal levels despite the bus network now running at over 80% of normal service levels. The 5 light rail systems are also running at similar levels. The funding announced today will enable operators to mitigate the impact of the loss of revenue, while continuing to build back to normal service levels.

The latest round of funding – key to safely getting young people back in education settings and workers back to their offices – means total support during the pandemic for bus and tram services will reach at least £700 million.

This means that we have supported tram services as follows during the pandemic:

Light rail system	£m allocated
Manchester Metrolink	44
Sheffield Supertram	6.8
Nottingham Express Transit	12.1
West Midlands Metro	5.7
Tyne and Wear Metro	24.7

Our announced allocations for bus services which now total at least £600

million alongside a further £27.3 million per week means that our funding has helped to support over 13,000 local bus services across England, outside of London, as at the end of July.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

As we continue to open up the economy more people are using public transport and need sufficient service levels in order to travel safely.

That's why we took swift action at the start of this outbreak to ensure that these services were maintained for key workers then and would still be there for people when the economy opened back up. This extension of funding pushes our overall support past £700 million and means people across the country will have access to the transport services they need.

CPT Chief Exec Graham Vidler said:

Continued social distancing measures mean capacity on buses remains reduced and income from passenger fares is still significantly lower than normal. This latest funding will help us keep running a comprehensive bus network that millions of people rely on.

Bus operators remain committed to working with government, passengers, businesses and local authorities to provide a safe, flexible and sustainable bus network for local communities.

Further to today's funding, the government is also actively working on ways to ensure the bus sector can operate independently and be commercially viable.

The government is committed to a sustainable future for bus services across the country recognising the services are vital to millions of people's everyday lives. To ensure future bus services work for everyone the government will publish a National Bus Strategy to set out how it plans to support this vital sector going forward.

All bus operators in England outside London that previously claimed the Bus Service Operators Grant, as well as operators who run services tendered by Local Authorities, are eligible to claim the new funding and future provisional funding. Five tram services in the North and Midlands – West Midlands Metro, Sheffield Supertram, Manchester Metrolink, Tyne and Wear Metro and Nottingham Trams – will be supported by the light rail funding, with the money going directly to operators, as with the previous rounds.

Update on Randox test kits



The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has instructed Randox to recall the 'Randox COVID-19 Home Testing Kit' with the Catalogue Number: EV4429 from NHS Test and Trace testing settings.

This decision has been taken as a precautionary measure to prevent any further use of these Randox tests. Anyone who is in possession of this Randox test kit should follow the below instructions on how to return kits to Randox.

Action to be taken:

- discontinue use of and quarantine any stock of the Randox COVID-19 Home Testing Kit immediately
 - follow the instructions listed below to ensure the return of any stock of the Randox COVID-19 Home Testing Kit to Randox Laboratories Limited:
1. For the Care Home Channel: making use of the original shipping carton or the return boxes that were provided to Care Homes, package all remaining COVID-19 Home Testing kits into these boxes. If no suitable packaging is available, packaging may be requested (details to follow). A return label will be provided and must be affixed in a prominent position to the outer package for return to Randox Laboratories Limited. A courier will collect the unused kits within a specified time period, different to that for the collection of staff and resident samples that are being processed for COVID-19 testing.
 2. For kits at a Warehouse facility: Randox will arrange for collection and transport of this stock to Randox Laboratories Limited. The Warehouse facility will be requested to advise on the number of cartons to be collected.
 3. For the at Home Channel: a return postage paid envelope is included in the Randox COVID-19 Home Testing kit. Therefore, the kit should be opened and the contents repackaged in the return envelope and the return postage label affixed. The label will direct the kit to the Royal Mail Collection Centre in Northern Ireland. Randox will take receipt of these deliveries.

On July 15 NHS Test and Trace were notified that some test kits produced by Randox laboratories may not meet our required safety standards for

coronavirus testing. Alongside the Lighthouse Laboratories, NHS Test and Trace has a separate contractual arrangement with Randox laboratories. As a precautionary measure and while we investigate further, NHS Test and Trace paused the use of these Randox test kits with immediate effect.

The risk to safety is low and test results from Randox kits are not affected.

We have been supporting all testing settings to receive replacement kits as soon as possible.

Published 7 August 2020

Last updated 8 August 2020 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 8 August 2020

Updated to make it clear that this recall only applies to the 'Randox COVID-19 Home Testing Kit' with the Catalogue Number: EV4429.

2. 7 August 2020

First published.

[Announcement by UK Visas and Immigration regarding the validity of Venezuelan passports](#)

World news story

Venezuelan passports that were issued or expired on or before 21 May 2019 may be considered valid by UK authorities for 5 years beyond their expiry date



**UK Visas
& Immigration**

Venezuelan passports that were issued or expired on or before 21 May 2019 may be considered valid by UK authorities for 5 years beyond their expiry date

Announcement by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) regarding the validity of Venezuelan passports:

Effective immediately, Venezuelan passports that were issued or expired on or before 21 May 2019 may be considered valid by UK authorities for 5 years beyond their expiry date, with no requirement for an extension stamp/sticker/official marking, up to a maximum of 10 years from the date when the passport was issued.

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[UK medics fly to Beirut following deadly blast](#)

A British team of specialist medics will fly out to Lebanon today (7 August) to assess health needs on the ground and identify what more the UK can do to help following the devastating explosion on Tuesday.

The five medics from the UK's Emergency Medical Team (UK EMT) will leave from London Heathrow and travel to Lebanon, at the request of the Lebanese Government, to determine the urgent needs in the Beirut health system and look at how the UK can support.

The team specialises in trauma, emergency nursing and rehabilitation and is funded by UK aid. Another medic from the UK EMT is already in Beirut.

Earlier this week the UK also sent a team of four humanitarian experts to Beirut, comprised of two logisticians, a security advisor and a field support specialist

This comes as the UK announces £3 million has been allocated to the British Red Cross for the emergency relief effort following Tuesday's devastating explosion, which has left over 200,000 people homeless.

International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

"The Lebanese people continue to be in our thoughts at this terrible time. The UK is sending these world-leading medics to use their expertise and to make sure the people of Lebanon get the help they need as quickly as possible.

"Today's field team comes on top of the UK's substantial military support and aid package. We will do everything we can to help the people of Lebanon in their hour of need."

The charity UK MED coordinates the deployment of medics from the UK's

Emergency Medical Team.

CEO of UK MED David Wightwick, said:

“I’ve worked in and have friends in Beirut, so like everyone was shocked to see the devastation following the explosion in the city and so many people harmed.

“UK-Med and partners Humanity & Inclusion are supporting the UK Emergency Medical Team to make an assessment of how we might contribute to the health response, working alongside partners on the ground to support overstretched health facilities and provide specialist clinicians.”

Once in Beirut, the medical experts will visit hospitals and clinics, both functioning and damaged, to gain an understanding of the severity of the challenges and any further specialists that may be needed. They will also meet with the World Health Organisation, United Nations and NGOs to help coordinate the response.

The team, made up of volunteers from UK Med and Humanity and Inclusion, includes an orthopaedic surgeon and trauma consultant, senior health advisors, a paramedic and a rehabilitation specialist. They will join another team member who was already in Beirut at the time of the blast.

In addition to supporting the Lebanese Red Cross, UK aid is also supporting MapAction to provide specialist mapping services to help humanitarian experts understand the need on the ground at the port.

The damage caused by the blast is widespread and likely to have long-lasting consequences. Lebanon was already experiencing a major economic crisis and dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, as well as hosting over 1.5 million refugees from the war in neighbouring Syria.

The UK already works closely with Lebanon and this partnership is focused on managing the humanitarian, stability and security implications of the war in Syria.

- The £3 million for the British Red Cross is an allocation from the £5 million that the Foreign Secretary announced earlier this week.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-to-send-emergency-relief-to-lebanon>
 - The Ministry of Defence announced yesterday that Royal Navy survey ship HMS Enterprise will sail to Lebanon to assess the damage of Beirut’s port and help return it to normal operations.
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GAD's key role in pensions consultation

News story

GAD has provided key support and expertise for a government consultation on pensions.



The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) has worked closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on a consultation following a legal ruling.

Courts and consultation

The consultation, published on 16 July, is on proposals to remove age discrimination from the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) in England and Wales. The courts have found transitional protections given to older members in the judicial and firefighters' pension schemes directly discriminated against younger members in those schemes.

The government confirmed its intention to remedy the difference in treatment across all of the main public service pension schemes in a [Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament in July 2019](#). MHCLG together with HM Treasury and the Ministry of Justice all issued consultations on how such discrimination would be addressed.

The consultation from MHCLG is called [Local Government Pension Scheme – amendments to the statutory underpin](#). It sets out how the discrimination identified by the [McCloud / Sargeant](#) case will be removed. The operation of the existing underpin will be amended to ensure it remains appropriate for a wider application. GAD produced a series of worked examples (Annex D) which set out how the proposed underpin would work in different situations. Examples range from people who retire from active service at 65 to deferred retirement; who may or may not require an underpin uplift.

Remedy design

As part of this project, pensions experts in GAD also produced a specific supporting document called [Local Government Pension Scheme McCloud / Sargeant litigation: Equalities impact](#). This is designed to help MHCLG understand how LGPS members are likely to be affected by the proposed McCloud underpin remedy from an equality point of view.

GAD Actuary Jenny Bullen, who co-wrote the report, said: “This was a complex and important contribution to MHCLG’s consultation. We provided support in remedy design and assistance in considering the appropriate treatment of technical issues.

“In our specific worked examples, we also considered the impact of the revised scheme design on different member profiles.”

Consultation timeline

The consultation, which is open for 12 weeks, will close on 8 October 2020.

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