



BRIEFING | 008 | 19 APRIL 2021

# KEY WORKERS IN THE CAPITAL

One year in London



## 60-SECOND SUMMARY

Many of London's key workers are economically insecure. They face financial precarity, growing housing costs, less time for their personal lives, and increased strain on their mental health. Our findings show they need support to allow them to live comfortably among the communities they serve.

- 1 London's key workers are split in their finances and their economic outlook. Some are comfortable and optimistic while others are struggling and pessimistic about the future.
- 2 Ethnic minority key workers nationally (14% of all key workers are from an ethnic minority background), many of whom live in London, are especially pessimistic about their economic future.
- 3 Despite the Greater London rental market prices [falling by 6.4%](#) in the year to the fourth quarter of 2020, 23% of London's renting key workers say their rent has increased. This shows the differing rental markets of inner and outer London (where rental changes have held flat), but could also show that key workers in London have felt their other housing costs to increase too.
- 4 Key workers in London are also the most generally dissatisfied with their housing situation when compared to other regions.
- 5 London key workers have had to sacrifice their personal lives for their work to a greater extent than key workers in Great Britain as a whole. London's key workers were consistently the most likely to say they have found 'maintaining their work-life' balance and 'taking leave when they want' more difficult as a result of the pandemic.
- 6 London's key workers are more likely to cite 'money worries' and the number of 'people at work who have become very ill or died with coronavirus' as drivers of poor mental health, compared to the rest of GB.
- 7 To help support key workers in the capital, the RSA is calling on the next Mayor of London to set a wider definition of 'key worker' when prioritising affordable housing, and promise to freeze TfL fares for key workers in the capital.



## BACKGROUND

Through the last 12 months, the UK has faced two distinct and deadly waves of Coronavirus. The effect on London has been highly acute: successive lockdowns have caused decline for much of the London economy, particularly in the centre, where a high proportion of jobs and businesses are in industries face trading restrictions associated with lockdown: retail, hospitality, entertainment, and culture. It can be easy to think of key workers as standing apart from these wider troubles, but there are still significant numbers of London's key workers who are also suffering from poor **economic security**.

We define '**economic security**' as: "*the degree of confidence that a person can have maintaining a decent quality of life now and in the future, given their economic and financial circumstances*".

When asked this question directly, almost one in four of London's key workers do not feel confident they can maintain a decent quality of life. When asked why, pay and job security were by far the dominant reasons.

<i>Table 1 - March 2021</i>	<i>London</i>
"How confident, if at all, do you feel that given your home, work, and financial circumstances, you can maintain a decent quality of life both now and in the future?"	
<i>Total confident</i>	72
<i>Total not confident</i>	23

<i>(Of those not confident)</i>	<i>London</i>
"Which of the options below related to your job do you think would most improve the quality of your life over the next 6 to 12 months? Select the three best options".	
<i>More pay</i>	51
<i>Greater security in my job</i>	21
<i>More flexible working hours</i>	17
<i>More chance at promotion</i>	16
<i>Hiring more staff to reduce pressure</i>	16

The definition above is broad enough to allow us to take a holistic view of key workers lives. For instance, we have throughout the project explored the mental health of key workers, which is not a direct 'economic' factor, but could certainly have serious consequences for the working lives of key workers. **We call this interplay between economic and non-economic factors the 'security trap'**.



## The Security Trap

The 'security trap' is a position of economic insecurity in a person's life where there is a negative loop between a person's economic situation (e.g. income or assets) and personal life (e.g. mental health or family life), or vice versa. An individual's need for economic security could have negative consequences on their personal life, or their personal life could negatively affect their economic security. This trade-off can become cyclical and self-perpetuating. We believe it should be the job of public policy, employers, and unions to minimise the security trap. Minimisation can come through improved finances, support in personal lives, better working conditions and contracts, and more.

Key workers are a perfect group to study this phenomenon because they are a wide-ranging and heterogeneous group, with varying troubles and needs which in many instances reflect the needs of the wider London and national economy. Furthermore, how key workers are thought of in the public and political consciousness will give important clues as to the future of public policy. How we respond to the needs of key workers fits across multiple domains:

1. Systemic problems in UK public policy (e.g. the social care market, underfunding of public services and benefits, housing costs)
2. Values and culture (e.g. provisions for mental health support, support for the low paid, in-work poverty, insecure contracts, wages for critical services)
3. Future and resilience of our cities and places (without a supported key worker base places will struggle to be resilient, safe, modern, adaptable)
4. Demand for 'populist' causes (e.g. 'thank you' bonuses).

More broadly, key workers are an interesting group to study because they speak to the adaptability and resilience of cities. The final instalment of the RSA's Economic Security Observatory will explore the concept of the 'security trap' in more detail.

In this paper we shall see further evidence of insecurity among London's key workers, namely through their finances, their housing, their ability to lead fulfilling personal lives and through their mental health. We will also touch upon the 'security trap' where appropriate.



## KEY FINDINGS

The economic fallout of the pandemic is hardly worth repeating. It has brought financial hardship and job insecurity for many. This story is particularly true for London and Londoners. The London economy contains a high number of jobs in culture, entertainment, and hospitality. London also has a high number of commuting office and service sector workers. In normal years, these office workers, alongside large numbers of tourists, sustain much of the hospitality, retail, and cultural sectors. But the pandemic has been a double blow to the sustainability of the London economy due to the combined effects of mass homeworking and the elimination of tourism. This has meant that London has had the [worst jobs losses](#) of any region in the UK.

At first thought, it may be easy to think that key workers are protected from the declining economy – they are a group characterised by the essential nature of their work. In our first briefing we found some key workers have done better financially during the pandemic than outside it, largely due to the restrictions on spending. However, our data also shows that London’s key workers are largely not immune from economic insecurity.

### London’s key workers are facing financial precarity

<i>Table 2</i>	<i>Jul-20</i>	<i>Nov-20</i>	<i>Mar-21</i>
Percent of key workers who would find it "very" or "fairly" difficult to pay an unexpected bill of:			
<i>£100</i>	24	17	19
<i>£500</i>	46	39	43

While the picture has been improving slightly, across the three waves of our research, an average of around 20% of London’s key workers said they would find it difficult to pay an unexpected bill of £100. For a £500 bill, this number is approximately 42%. Compared to the national figures, London was marginally less secure than Great Britain as whole in both July and March. This reflects House of Commons Library research from 2018 which shows that the average Londoner has [lower than average](#) income after housing costs are taken into account than the UK as a whole.

London’s key workers often score highly on other measures of financial precarity:

- London’s key workers are the least likely to have stable income month-to-month (72% vs 81% in GB)
- For those that said their standard of living had gotten worse through the pandemic, London’s key workers were more likely than the rest of GB to say a ‘cut in their hours or pay’ (32% London vs 23% rest of GB) or ‘cuts in the hours or pay of a household member’ (26% London vs 11% rest of GB) were behind the decline



- Unsurprisingly, key workers in London are most likely to rate their housing costs as “bad”, at 22% compared to 13% in the rest of GB. More on housing will be covered later.

**Londoners are split between optimism and pessimism when thinking about their financial security post-pandemic.**

When asked how they view their future finances, London’s key workers prove to be highly divided, often being both more optimistic and more pessimistic than other areas of Great Britain (Table 3).

On the pessimistic side, London key workers have often been more fearful of their personal economic future than all of Great Britain. This pessimism was much more pronounced in July 2020, far before there was genuine hope of the pandemic ending soon. The differences were more pronounced when key workers were asked specifically if they thought they would get a pay cut and earlier in the pandemic.

The finding that many of London’s key workers were pessimistic could be connected to the fact that key workers from ethnic minority backgrounds were also far more fearful of having their pay cut compared to white key workers (see Table 3).<sup>i</sup> 45% of the sample in London were White British compared to the 80% across Great Britain. A matching story is told when key workers were asked the same questions but in reference to members of their household, with London and ethnic minority key workers more likely to think members of their household will become unemployed, have their hours reduced, or get a pay cut. Of course, equally the reverse could be true – ethnic minority key workers could be more pessimistic by more commonly living in London. In either case, the difference between in outlooks is significant.

<i>Table 3</i>		<i>Jul '20</i>	<i>Nov '20</i>	<i>Mar '21</i>
<i>Becoming unemployed</i>	Great Britain	16	17	15
	London	24	19	18
	White (GB)	15	15	13
	Ethnic Minority (GB)	25	31	27
<i>Working hours being reduced</i>	Great Britain	15	16	14
	London	25	17	19
	White (GB)	13	15	13
	Ethnic Minority (GB)	26	25	26
<i>Getting a pay cut</i>	Great Britain	17	17	15

<sup>i</sup>Caution should be noted with all BAME statistics because of the known problems in the polling community with reporting on BAME groups, namely: reporting all non-white groups as homogenous; underreaching those with poor English, underreaching first generation immigrants. Also, BAME respondents account for around 12 percent (n = 187) of the sample, meaning the ability for us to drill down is possibly constrained by sample size.



	London	22	23	22
	White (GB)	15	16	14
	BAME (GB)	24	23	25

Yet despite being more pessimistic about their work, Londoners were simultaneously more optimistic about the financial position of their household in the next 6 months (Table 4).

		<i>Table 4</i>	<i>Jul '20</i>	<i>Nov '20</i>	<i>Mar '21</i>
Percentage of key workers who expect the financial position of their household to get "a lot" or "a little" better, worse, or stay the same in the next six months					
<i>Better</i>	GB		23	13	22
	London		30	21	27
<i>Stay much the same</i>	GB		50	54	56
	London		38	47	49
<i>Worse</i>	GB		24	28	19
	London		29	25	20

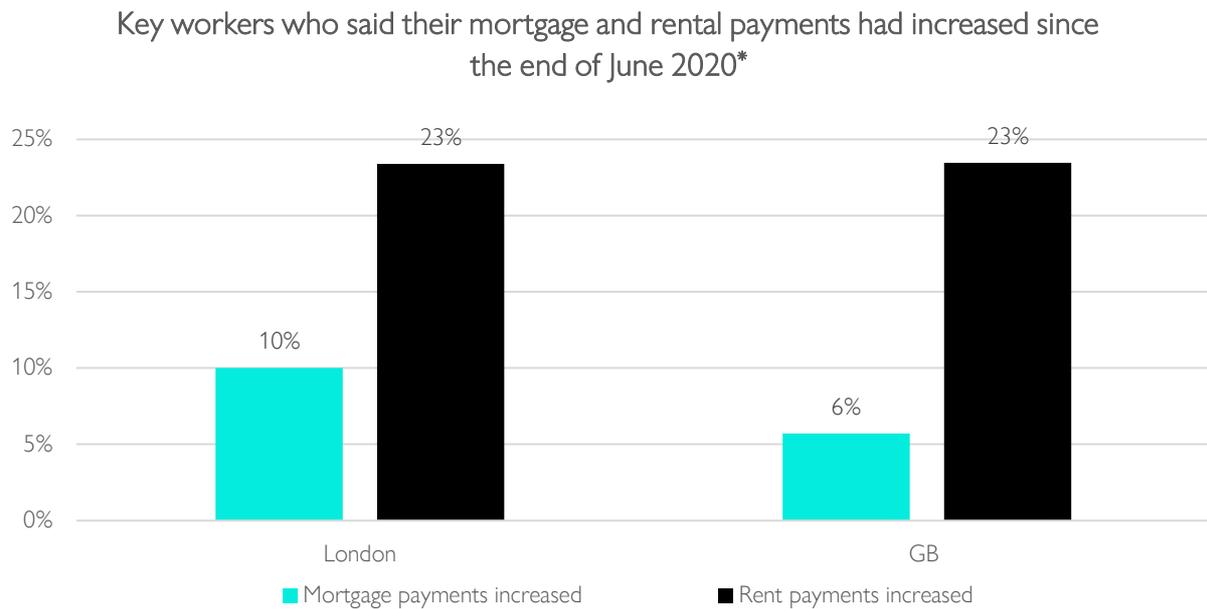
What is clear is that key workers in London were consistently less likely to think their lives would stand still. This speaks to the divided picture we see in London more broadly, where there are large numbers who have remained stable, or even done financially ‘well’ in the pandemic (e.g. those able to comfortably work from home), but there are also large numbers who have suffered, fallen further behind, or expect to do so (e.g. those in retail, hospitality or culture sectors).

**London’s key workers feel the housing pinch despite the rental market falling**

The issue of expensive housing in London is a well-known and well-studied one. Housing costs are far above the UK average, with the average 1-bed rental price in London being close to [50% of wages](#) in 2018. However, recent reports from [Rightmove](#) show that rented housing across London has seen drops by an average of -6.4% in the year to Q4 2020. In theory this should have made the situation easier for the [approximately 48%](#) of Londoners who rent, including key workers. This should especially be true for some key workers as, as we have seen, some have been relatively immune to the more extreme economic shocks. But the drop is largely driven by falls in rent within inner London (of 12.4%), which is thought to be a saturation of the market of what were short-term, ‘Airbnb’ style, lets. Meanwhile, outer London rental prices was on average flat at 0%. **However, our data shows that housing costs for many key workers have risen through the pandemic.**

If we look just at London key worker who are renters, 23% report having seen their rent increase. For Londoners with a mortgage, 10% report their mortgage payments having increased (Figure 1). At a national

level, rising rent appears to be worst for social care workers (14% said their rent increased in GB) and for those either renting from their local authority or from a housing association (44%). It is also possible that some respondents are including other general housing costs with their perception of increased rent, but even if this were true for some respondents, 23% indicating a rise in housing costs is significant.



\*The data has been filtered to only include those with a mortgage and those renting for each statistic. For London the unweighted sample sizes are 169 and 225 respectively. For GB the unweighted samples are 609 and 444 respectively.

Figure 1 - March 2021



### Supermarket and care workers are the least well prepared to face housing shocks

The table below (Table 5) highlights [our previous findings](#) that supermarket workers are commonly the least financially secure compared to other key workers, followed by care workers. This would give supermarket and care workers the least financial security to face any such housing shocks.

<i>Table 5</i>	<i>Jul '20</i>	<i>Nov '20</i>	<i>Mar '21</i>
Percentage of key workers in GB who would struggle to pay an unexpected bill of £100			
<i>All key workers</i>	17	17	14
<i>NHS Staff</i>	13	15	12
<i>Social care workers</i>	22	20	17
<i>Schools and nursery staff</i>	16	16	16
<i>Supermarket workers</i>	27	29	16

While the situation seems to have improved for supermarket workers in the last four months, the Living Wage Foundation [recently reported](#) that almost half of all supermarket employees earn below the Real Living Wage. Morrison's have improved their pay for staff to [£10 per hour](#), with a London weighting to be added, but other major supermarkets have yet to follow. It is possible the improved finances of supermarket workers are a result of a 3-month national lockdown which has constrained spending, which is also likely why the situation for all key workers has improved slightly, though to a far lesser extent. As we emerge from the third lockdown, and usual expenses reoccur, it is plausible that a rise in financial precarity, more in line with July 2020 after the first lockdown, will re-emerge.

It must also be remembered that many key workers, particularly care workers, are employed on Zero Hour Contracts. Estimates vary but Skills for Care estimate that 56% of adult care workers in [London](#) and just over one third (34%) of the adult care workers in [England](#) are on Zero Hour Contracts. While the Labour Force Survey estimates the number in the UK to be around 13%.<sup>ii</sup> Insecure contracts can often lock individuals out of getting a mortgage and the greater housing security purchasing can bring. Our final report will explore in more depth the relationship between job characteristics, such as contract type, and economic insecurity for key workers.

### London's key workers are the least satisfied with their housing

Finally, Key workers were also asked how they rates their housing across three metrics: housing quality, housing costs, and housing security rating them as "good", "bad", "very good", or "very bad" (Table 6).

Londoners consistently rated their housing as worse than the rest of Great Britain. Unsurprisingly this was

<sup>ii</sup> This is derived from RSA analysis of the Labour Force Survey. LFS is considered likely to be an underestimate due to some respondents not knowing their contract type.



most evident for those who rates their housing costs as “bad” or “very bad”. Though Londoner key workers were also less likely to think their housing was of good quality.

		<i>Table 6 - March 2021</i>	<i>GB</i>	<i>London</i>
		Percentage of key workers who rate as either net good or net bad their....		
<i>Housing quality</i>	Total good		72	64
	Total bad		6	10
<i>Housing costs</i>	Total good		48	42
	Total bad		15	22

The relationship between housing and economic security is a good example of a ‘**security trap**’ in action: work and career options can drive many people into poor quality or expensive housing. Equally, expensive housing and poor economic security can drive individuals out of locations, away from families, communities, and jobs. The relationship between economic security and personal lives can therefore become fractious.

All combined, we provide further evidence that London’s key workers face a tougher time with their housing, situation compared to the rest of Great Britain. We also know from our past research supermarket workers and care workers are often the least financially secure nationally. It is therefore critical that the financial and housing precarity **of all key workers**, are considered for housing support in London.

**London key workers have had to sacrifice their personal lives for their work**

The effects of the virus have been distributed unevenly. Coronavirus has hit areas of high deprivation and minority ethnic communities particularly hard, which unfortunately has meant some areas of London have been among the worst affected in the country. Our latest survey wave appears to show that London’s key workers have put in great efforts to combat the virus. We see that Londoners are struggling most with their mental health. There are also a significant number of London key workers who struggle with balancing their personal lives around work: facing restrictions on when they can take leave, and struggling to maintain a work-life balance or take time off if unwell.

		<i>Table 7</i>	<i>Jul-20</i>	<i>Nov-20</i>	<i>Mar-21</i>
		Percentage of key workers who have found it more or less difficult to deal with the following as a result of Coronavirus.	London	London	London
<i>Balancing your work and childcare</i>	Total more difficult		23	22	22
	Total less difficult		5	4	3
		Total more difficult	31	35	33



<i>Taking leave from work when you want</i>	Total less difficult	12	9	14
<i>Maintaining a healthy work-life balance</i>	Total more difficult	50	57	53
	Total less difficult	19	11	18
<i>Maintaining your mental health</i>	Total more difficult	56	66	64
	Total less difficult	13	8	12
<i>Taking time off work if you are unwell</i>	Total more difficult	22	26	29
	Total less difficult	15	14	15

We tracked whether key workers had found it more or less difficult to keep control of key aspects of their personal lives or personal time as a result of the pandemic (Table 7). this included: Balancing work and childcare, taking leave, work-life balance, mental health, time off if unwell.

It appears ‘maintaining your mental health’ and ‘maintaining a healthy work-life balance’ have consistently been the most difficult aspects for London’s key workers. More recently, London’s key workers have been finding it increasingly difficult to take time off if unwell. This has reached the point where nearly one in three of London’s key workers find it more difficult to take time away from work if unwell.

Why key workers in London have found it especially difficult to maintain these aspects of their personal lives in pandemic could have several causes. First is the fact that ethnic minority key workers were also more likely to find it difficult to maintain their work life balance, with 56% saying they have found it harder compared to 47% of white key workers. Younger people are also much more likely to say they have found it more difficult to maintain their work-life balance (Figure 2), which - given that London has the [youngest average age](#) of any UK region - will disproportionately hit the capital.

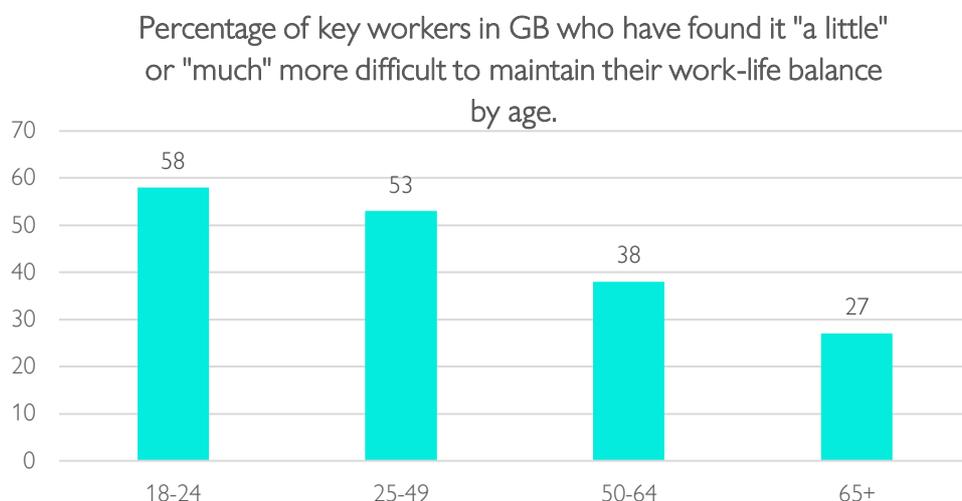


Figure 2 - March 2021



Third, London’s key workers could find maintaining work-life balance more difficult because the spread of the pandemic was often more extreme in the capital than elsewhere. [Data from the ONS](#) shows that the rates of death caused by COVID-19 per 100,000 people were higher in London in both the April 2020 and January 2021 peaks than all other regions. The North West has been the second hardest-hit region in total between March 2020 and January 2021, but deaths were more spread out between September and January, meaning the effect on some key workers was possibly less intense. [The Financial Times](#) also recently reported on three highly deprived East London boroughs – the ‘Covid Triangle’ – which were particularly devastated by the pandemic.

**London’s key workers are becoming less pessimistic about their short-term future at work**

When looking forward, London’s key workers were the most pessimistic about their future working conditions and the number of hours they will have to work, though this gap has closed in March.

Do you expect the following to get better or worse over the next 6 months? (In November respondents were asked the same question but for the period 'this coming winter')		Table 8 Nov-20		Mar-21	
		GB	London	GB	London
<i>The conditions you work under</i>	Total better	6	12	15	18
	Total worse	35	40	22	24
<i>The hours you work</i>	Total better	7	7	9	13
	Total worse	22	31	20	23

**Key workers in London are more likely to cite money worries and the level of disease and death at work as drivers of poor mental health.**

Finally, our data shows that London’s key workers have had a longer period of increased strain on their mental health compared to other regions. The majority of all key workers across Great Britain report finding it more difficult to maintain their mental health. At no point across our three waves did less than 56% of key workers in London say they have found it “a little more” or “much more” difficult to maintain their mental health.

Percent of key workers who have found it more or less difficult to deal with the following as a result of Coronavirus		Jul-20		Nov-20		Mar-21	
		GB	London	GB	London	GB	London
<i>Maintaining your mental health</i>	Total more difficult	58	56	58	66	65	64
	Total less difficult	10	13	8	8	9	12

Concerningly, the proportion of key workers across all of Great Britain who say this has steadily increased over the nine months of our surveys. This increased difficulty with mental health occurred earlier in London than the rest of the country, first becoming apparent in November 2020, before the rest of Great Britain caught up in March 2021.

When asked what issues around work were affecting their mental health, the top reasons both nationally and in London were ‘stress and workload’ and ‘people not following the rules properly’ (Table 10). However, London’s key workers were more likely to cite ‘not feeling able to talk about my problems’, ‘money worries’, and the health impacts of Coronavirus around them as problems. Key workers in the capital were also less likely to state that none of the options had affected their mental health.

Top ten issues around work cited by London’s key workers as having negatively affected their mental health? (March 2021)	GB (excl. London)	London
<i>Stress and workload</i>	44	44
<i>The people around me not following coronavirus rules properly</i>	32	35
<i>Fear of catching coronavirus at work</i>	33	30
<i>A lack of recognition for my work</i>	26	25
<i>Not feeling able to talk about my personal problems (including mental health) or not feeling listened to</i>	18	24
<i>Money worries</i>	18	23
<i>Not feeling satisfied with my level of pay</i>	20	21
<i>None of these have impacted my mental health</i>	24	17
<i>The number of people at work who have become very ill or died with coronavirus</i>	11	17
<i>A poor relationship with my line manager or employer</i>	11	15

Mental health is another clear example of seeing the ‘security trap’ in process. Poor mental health can be both a consequence and a cause of economic insecurity, and equally either can be a cause or consequences of problems in an individual’s private life. For key workers in London and across the country, work-related



pressures on mental health are evident. It is the job of public policy, employers, and unions to work together to limit the impact on their personal lives.

## NEXT STEPS

The problems outlined in this briefing are in many unsurprising, and reflect familiar problems for Londoners. For instance, evidence on economic disparity throughout the pandemic has shown ethnic minority groups to be financially disadvantaged to a greater extent. The unaffordability of housing is a common gripe for those who live in London, key workers and non-key workers alike.

Yet key workers are unique in the essential services they provide for the functioning of society. Our common conception of key work is centred 'blue light' emergency services like NHS staff and the police, but we should extend the same concern and gratitude to those who care for the elderly and vulnerable, workers who allow us to safely purchase food, and delivery drivers who deliver groceries to the home-bound.

**Key worker services are, at all times, a pre-requisite for a functioning society and economy. How we view and support these services needs to change.**

London should lead this change, not least due to the uniqueness of its housing situation. It should lead both within the UK and internationally by supporting all key workers to live and work comfortably in the areas they serve. This will both thank key workers for their efforts and help establish the view that there are wider societal benefits in key workers being integrated in the communities they support. This should be done in two primary ways: firstly, by adopting a wider definition of key work, and allocating discounted housing accordingly, and secondly, by protecting key workers from future fair rises on the Transport for London network.

**1. Including occupations such as care and supermarket workers in the Greater London Authority's 'core' definition of key workers, therefore giving them priority for cheaper housing.**

The past year has demonstrated that the old definition of 'key worker', which typically included only those in services such as the NHS, police, fire service, and teachers, is out of date. These roles are of course central to the effective running of society, but we should now see this list of exclusively 'blue light' occupations as too narrow.

On 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021 a scheme of prioritising affordable housing for key workers was announced by the Mayor of London. However, a detailed list of who will form a 'core list' of key worker occupations is yet to be published by the Greater London Authority (GLA). The indication from [the GLA](#) is they will currently include NHS staff, police, firefighters, transport workers and teachers.



We believe this core list should include wider ‘key worker’ roles, such as **care workers, supermarket workers, and delivery drivers for supermarkets**. The Mayor of London should give priority access to the London Shared Ownership and London Living Rent schemes to these groups.<sup>iii</sup> Other roles within the central government list of key worker occupations, such as food factory workers or utilities workers can be included by boroughs if deemed necessary.

Care workers and supermarket workers should be included for three reasons: One, they have proven to be essential to the normal functioning of both London and wider society. Two, they are also most often those on the lowest incomes, least financially resilient, and the most likely to be in insecure work like zero-hour contracts. Three, they are the most numerous occupations of those not already on the core list.

In London, the average wage for care workers in the independent sector (which account for around 78% of the adult care workforce in London) is estimated to be £9.25 per hour (£17,800 per year or £1483 per month Full Time Equivalent). The median monthly rent was most recently estimated at £1475 per month, under the London Living Rent this would be around £1050 per month.

Wages in London	
London adult social care:	Workforce: 129,000 ( <a href="#">Skills for Care</a> ) Below <a href="#">Real Living Wage</a> : Approximately 90% of those in the independent sector <sup>iv</sup>
London independent sector care worker average pay ( <b>pre-tax</b> ):	£9.25 per hour £17,800 p/y FTE  <b>£1,483 per month</b>
London Supermarket sector:	Workforce: Approx. 105,000 employees Below Real Living Wage: approx. 62% (65,000) <sup>v</sup>
London <a href="#">Sainsbury's</a> worker minimum wage:	£10.10 p/h minimum (Inner London rate)

<sup>iii</sup> London Living Rent is currently set at 1/3 of the average local household income but adjusted for house size. The London Shared Ownership scheme is a way for middle income households to be able to buy a proportion of a property, renting the rest, in order to lower the deposit and income thresholds needed for a mortgage.

<sup>iv</sup> According to Skills for Care the independent sector account for 78% of all adult care workers in London and tend to be lower paid. The average pay for those employed by local authorities is generally higher and was on average £26,500 per year in 2020.

<sup>v</sup> Figures were provided by the Living Wage Foundation



	<p><b>£1,641 per month</b> (37.5h) £19,695 per year</p>
London <a href="#">Morrison's</a> worker minimum wage:	<p>£10.85 p/h (Inner London rate)</p> <p><b>£1,763 per month</b> (37.5h) £ 21,157 per year</p>
<b>London's housing market</b>	
<a href="#">Median London rent</a> 2020:	<p>£1475 per month £737.50 per month (assuming working couple household)</p> <p>Approximately:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 49% of full-time adult care worker's pre-tax average wage</li> <li>• 44.5% of Sainsbury's worker's pre-tax minimum wage</li> <li>• 41.5% of Morrison's worker's pre-tax minimum wage</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Median London Rent</a> under 'Living Rent' scheme for 2-bed 2020:	£1050 per month
London median flat <a href="#">purchase price</a> 2020:	<p>£426,000</p> <p>This is approximately:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23x adult care worker's average wage</li> <li>• 21x Sainsbury's worker's minimum wage</li> <li>• 20x Morrison's worker's minimum wage</li> </ul>

While the details on prioritisation around the Mayor of London's housing policy for key workers is still yet to be set, we believe the support for key workers should be assessed on an individual basis prioritising those most in need and those who have served their community longest. To determine priority, a scoring system could be devised by boroughs with guidance and support from the GLA. We believe the GLA should set the following factors as guidance when determining priority:

- Length of time in the role (or very similar role) – those working as a key worker for longer will have greater priority.



- Length of time working in London – those who have served London the longest will receive greater priority.
- Usual working hours per week – those on average working longer hours per week will receive greater priority.
- Household income – those on a smaller household income, or who are the sole breadwinner earner in the household, will receive greater priority
- Local need for that role – Boroughs will be able to work alongside the GLA to determine the borough and city-wide need for the non-core list roles in question.

For instance, a local care worker who has lived in London for 10 years and worked five days a week consistently will be of greater priority than a supermarket worker on equivalent household income who is new to London. The usual financial limits on intermediary housing, i.e. household income of less than £60,000 per year, should still apply to ensure we only help those most in need.

## 2. Key workers should be protected from any future fare rises on the Transport for London network

One of the possible societal changes after the pandemic will be an increase in the number of office workers working from home for a portion of the week. This will have a disproportionately large effect on London. The [ONS estimated](#) that in April 2020 57% of Londoners did at least some work from home compared to the UK average of 47% and London was the region with the highest proportion of people able to work from home. As a consequence, there could be permanently reduced use of public transport in London, which has financial benefits for those able to work from home but has significant negative consequences for TfL finances, as can already be seen in the central government bailouts of TfL. Reduced passenger numbers is likely to mean fares will have to rise to compensate. Key workers have no choice but to travel to work and so will disproportionately be 'paying' for the work-from-home shift.

**We therefore believe all key workers within the GLA's 'core list' should also have their fares frozen on the TfL network until at least the next Mayoral election.**

The pandemic has shown there are societal benefits in allowing key workers to access their work easily and cheaply. For instance, both Northern Ireland and Wales introduced temporary free public transport for NHS staff, and London offered free cycle hires. The benefits are most obvious in a crisis but will still be realised over a longer period following the crisis. This is especially true in a city such as London where it is likely rarer that a key worker can get to work without using some form of public transport. It is therefore critical we do not allow transport to become more expensive for key workers. However, we also recognise the financial difficulties faced by TfL. Freezing fares is therefore a fair solution to both key workers and Transport for London.



*Notes on methodology:* RSA conducted three surveys with approximately 1200 key workers throughout Great Britain alongside YouGov. This includes an added sample boost in London to bring the unweighted sample in London to approximately 300 respondents. For the March 2021 wave, the total sample was approximately 1600 with an unweighted sample of 600 in London. Unless otherwise stated, all results refer to March 2021. To define key workers, we use the Government's list from the first national lockdown on who had access to schools for their children. We then use ONS research to weight our sample.<sup>vi</sup>

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<sup>vi</sup> This meant that around 32 percent of our weighted sample were in health & social care, 21 percent in education, 18 percent in key public services (a combined grouping of some services such as those in the justice sector, local/national government, public safety, and national security), 15 percent in a utilities, communication and transport, and 14 percent in food and necessary goods.

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