We are London’s think tank.
Our mission is to develop new solutions to London’s critical challenges and advocate for a fair and prosperous global city.

We are a politically independent charity.
We help national and London policymakers think beyond the next election and plan for the future.

We have ideas with impact.
Through research, analysis and events we generate bold and creative solutions that improve the city we share.

We believe in the power of collaboration.
We bring together people from different parts of the city – with a range of experience and expertise – to develop new ideas and implement them.

As a charity we rely on the support of our funders.
Our work is funded by a mixture of organisations and individuals who share our vision for a better London.
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London is an old and resilient city, but we now find ourselves in unchartered waters.

The coronavirus will have profound repercussions for almost every aspect of our lives. It is laying bare hidden problems and revealing the fragility and interdependence of much of the infrastructure that supports us. But it is also unlocking new ways of working, new partnerships and new forms of social organisation, all of which should be harnessed to help London during the recovery.

There has never been a greater need for research to help us understand the impact that the pandemic will have on Londoners’ lives and the future of the city. And as we begin to emerge from the current state of crisis, policymakers will require new ideas. They will need an organisation able to bring different parts of the city together to share experiences, develop collective solutions and generate independent, long term thinking – an organisation like Centre for London.

This annual report gives a snapshot of some of the ways we’ve helped the capital over the past year. It also sets out how we hope to respond to coronavirus and its knock-on effects over the coming months.

Centre for London is committed to being part of London’s recovery story.

But we need your help. We are a small charity lacking a long-term, secure source of funding and we urgently need help to allow us to continue our vital work. If you want to invest in the capital’s future, then please support our projects and activities.

Ben Rogers
Founding Director, Centre for London

Liz Peace CBE
Chair of Trustees, Centre for London
Supporting London through the coronavirus crisis and recovery

Centre for London is committed to helping the city through the coronavirus crisis and as it meets the challenges of recovery. We have developed a new programme of work to provide short- and medium-term responses to the crisis.

1  Perspectives on the crisis
A series of digital events providing insights on London’s practical and policy responses to the coronavirus crisis. Featuring interviews with sector leaders and frontline workers, we’ll hear people’s personal experiences, professional responses and share examples of good news, resilience and adaptability.

2  The New London Intelligence
Digital reports produced in partnership with King’s College London and Savanta that bring together the latest data to understand and analyse how London’s economy and society are being affected by, and are recovering from, the coronavirus crisis.

3  Programme for recovery
A research and events series to produce new ideas and policy proposals that can aid London’s recovery and adaptation to a post-crisis world. The findings will be disseminated through short reports, The London Conference, a ‘manifesto for recovery’ and through our London 2050 programme.

→ If you value what we do, please consider supporting this work. Contact Richard Brown, richard.brown@centreforlondon.org
2019 in numbers

Shaping policymaking

Our experts spoke at over 65 external events, including private roundtables, conference presentations and panel discussions.
We submitted written evidence and consultation responses to 10 policy consultations and inquiries.

“Centre for London is making a real impact. Not only in terms of influencing the debate, but in shaping the approach taken by policymakers to the challenges facing our city.”

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, speaking at The London Conference 2019

Commentary on London issues

47 blog posts with 20,000 views.

Most popular blog post
Six graphs showing how London has changed since 2000 (3,469 views)

Convening London’s experts

1,474 event attendees. 232 roundtable attendees.

Research that captures headlines

Over 15 million people read about our work in the media.

Our team wrote 44 comment pieces for external media outlets in 2019.

Our work was covered over 310 times by the press. We had coverage in The Times, The Daily Telegraph, BBC Sunday Politics and The Guardian.

A growing audience

3,300+ people subscribe to our newsletter and are sent monthly updates with new insights and research on London’s challenges.

59,000+ people received a printed copy or downloaded our reports online.

Most read reports
Green Light: Next generation road user charging for a healthier, more liveable, London
Culture Club: Social mobility in the creative and cultural industries
London, UK: Strengthening ties between capital and country

Website page views and visitors

Over 160 speakers at our conferences, roundtables and public events including the Mayor of London, former Deputy Prime Minister Lord Heseltine and economist, broadcaster and writer Linda Yueh.
Our recent work
1. Responding to coronavirus: support for freelancers

As the coronavirus crisis hit London’s workers, Centre for London worked closely with the Greater London Authority to host an emergency roundtable to discuss the government’s lack of support for creative freelancers. A three-point action plan emerged from the discussion and resulted in the Greater London Authority writing to the Chancellor to advocate for additional support for self-employed workers. Later that week, the Chancellor announced a comprehensive relief package for self-employed people during the coronavirus pandemic.

Influencing highlights

- Over 30 roundtable attendees including Shadow Culture Secretary Tracy Brabin MP, Justine Simons, Deputy Mayor, Culture and the Creative Industries and Amy Lamé, Night Czar, creative industry freelancers and unions.

- We published a blog outlining the action plan that was read by over 300 people and generated 20,000 impressions on Twitter.

“
At a very worrying time for all, a really positive meeting both on the immediate need of workers in the sector, but also how we can help the wider community in the short term and come back stronger and fairer.

Sam Gurney, TUC Regional Secretary - London, East & South East England

“Working with Centre for London on setting up an emergency virtual roundtable was excellent. Not only were they extremely swift at getting it organised, sending out invites and bringing really key people together, but they managed to really effectively chair what had the potential to be a difficult discussion to manage, with over 30 stakeholders all dialling in from home.

Will Holmes, Senior Cultural Policy Officer, Greater London Authority
2. Working with policymakers

There isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to building influence and impacting policy. We work hard to identify the routes to change and to ensure that our reports and ideas don’t sit on a shelf gathering dust. We have established relationships with elected officials and local government advisers, and meet with them regularly to brief them on our findings. We are also proactive: last year we responded to over 20 government consultations and inquiries, built relationships with the 2020 mayoral candidates and regularly met with civil servants from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Department for Transport and other government agencies.

Influencing highlights

- Centre for London’s work was mentioned in the final reports from the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiries into Modern Methods of Construction and Local Government Finance.

- The Mayor of London published London and the UK: A Declaration of Interdependence, calling on the government to devolve more power to the capital and other cities. The government announced that they would be bringing forward a White Paper on English devolution. Both reflect recommendations we made in London, UK (2019).

"I welcome this research – it’s very good. Some of the specific recommendations such as rotating civil servants in and out of town halls are a very good idea. This would improve the connectivity between central and local government.

Greg Hands, MP for Chelsea and Fulham responding to our report London, UK: Strengthening ties between capital and country"
3. Preparing for the London mayoral election

Before the mayoral election was postponed until May 2021, Centre for London had been working hard to ensure it was at the heart of the debate. We developed relationships with the candidates’ teams, getting to understand their policy positions and motivations. We met with five candidates, briefed them on our ideas for the city and submitted recommendations to formal policy consultations. The leading candidates spoke at The London Conference 2019 and were also due to speak at a major political hustings, hosted by Centre for London and partners, in early 2020. We hope to reschedule this event for 2021 and will be maintaining relationships with the candidates during this pause in the campaign.

Influencing highlights

- Rory Stewart, Shaun Bailey, Siân Berry and Siobhan Benita, all spoke at The London Conference alongside the current Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan.

- In the lead up to the 2019 general election, Siân Berry, Siobhan Benita and Rory Stewart all signed a joint letter coordinated by Centre for London calling on all the parties running for office to commit to redoubling investment and devolving powers from Whitehall. Other cosignatories included Catherine McGuinness, Chair, Policy & Resources Committee, City of London Corporation and Jasmine Whitbread, Chief Executive, London First.

- We launched a blog series on ‘Power in London’ that has been viewed over 1,500 times.
4. Partnerships and collaborations

Over the past 12 months, we’ve partnered and collaborated with over 10 organisations to host events, undertake research and provide fresh insight into London’s challenges. We’ve coordinated open letters, cohosted roundtables and organised major conferences. Through these collaborations we’ve investigated how automation will transform the labour market, impact women and advance gender equity. We’ve discussed how the devolution of power could play a vital role in addressing the UK’s regional imbalances. And we partnered with the Connected World Summit to discuss the future of smart cities.

Impact highlights

- Our roundtable series with McKinsey & Company was attended by over 30 experts, with speakers including Cllr Carole Williams, Councillor and Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources, Hackney Council.

- We established a working group on devolution with senior representatives from London Councils, Greater London Authority, London First, Trust for London, the All Party Parliamentary Group for London (MPs) and LSE London.

- We attended the Labour and Conservative Party Conferences and cohosted a roundtable on devolution in partnership with the Northern Powerhouse Partnership. Speakers included Abi Brown, Leader, Stoke-on-Trent, and Lord Kerslake, Chair UK 2050 Commission.

- Central Saint Martins hosted our report launch on employment barriers in the creative industries. The event was attended by 120 people representing organisations who employ 55,000 people.

- Our London ideas publication on the future of central London, supported by Capco, included essays by Geerte Udo, CEO, amsterdam&partners and Adam McVey, Leader of City of Edinburgh Council.
5. Working with local government and mayoral agencies

Local authorities across London continue to value our insights and ideas. In 2019, 11 boroughs supported the Centre by co-funding our research. We also partnered with the Greater London Authority, Transport for London and London Councils. Their interests spanned a range of topics from making London’s transport system more equitable to rebuilding relationships between the capital and the rest of the country.

We have continued to build relationships with City Hall. The Mayor of London spoke at The London Conference 2019 and we also hosted four Deputy Mayors at our events, including Heidi Alexander, Deputy Mayor for Transport at one of our Partner Forum events.

A number of our recommendations have been adopted by City Hall. For example, the Mayor of London introduced polluting vehicle scrappage schemes for low-income and disabled Londoners, as recommended in our Streets Smarts report and subsequently advocated for during mayoral engagement.

Influencing highlights

- Eleven of London’s local authorities in London supported our work in 2019.

“This is excellent research and I will try to build some of it into the strategy I am currently writing at Transport for London.

Frances McAndrew, Diversity and Inclusion Lead, Transport for London, responding to our report Fair Access: Towards a transport system for everyone

“Centre for London’s report makes a welcome contribution to the debate on road user charging, which can have a positive impact on a city but also needs to keep pace with the changing needs of our residents.

Cllr Julian Bell, Chair of London Councils’ Transport and Environment committee responding to our report Green Light: Next generation of road user charging for a healthier, more liveable, London

- Our Founding Director, Ben Rogers, was invited to become a Commissioner of Brent Council’s Poverty Commission and a Member of Hammersmith & Fulham’s Industrial Strategy Board.

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor, Planning, Regeneration and Skills speaking at Developing Trust: Strengthening public participation in London’s planning system
6. Supporting London's communities

Through public events, conferences and research we have supported London’s communities and provided them with a platform to raise their concerns about the development of the city. We explored how community engagement in the planning system could be strengthened and highlighted areas for action by national and local government. We brought together communities and campaigners with private and public sector leaders to discuss how we can address concerns about new developments, promote better practice by planners and developers, and foster more constructive relations. We held two workshops with disabled and older Londoners as part of our research on barriers to accessing London’s transport system. And we hosted a roundtable with civil society organisations to discuss what civic and third sector leaders need from the next phase of devolution.

Impact highlights

- Our Developing Trust conference was a highly participatory event which encouraged honest, open discussion. It attracted over 235 delegates and 25 speakers, including Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills, Eileen Conn, Founder and Co-ordinator, Peckham Vision, Cllr Ravi Govindia, Leader, London Borough of Wandsworth, and Toby Lloyd, Special Adviser, Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street.

- A quarter of the attendees at the launch of Act Local were from national and local government, including representatives from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, six London boroughs and the Greater London Authority.

- Act Local was covered by the Evening Standard, The MJ, Local Government Chronicle and Estates Gazette and the research was endorsed by organisations including Locality, Local Trust and the National Association of Local Councils.

“...This report highlights the crucial changes needed to create an environment in which local people are given the opportunity to deliver long term, sustainable change for themselves.

Matt Leach, CEO, Local Trust responding to our report Act Local: Empowering London’s neighbourhoods.

↑ Jules Pipe, Toby Lloyd and Raji Hunjan , at Developing Trust: Strengthening public participation in London’s planning system.
The London Conference 2019 brought together influential speakers with London’s politicians, public sector, business and civic leaders to explore what Londoners want and need from their Mayor. With over 500 attendees and 41 speakers, this was the most successful Centre for London conference to date.
The London Conference is integral to London’s policy landscape, offering insights into employment, transport, housing infrastructure, all delivered by senior figures who are shaping the city for the 21st century.”

Cllr Carole Williams, Cabinet Member, Employment, Skills & Human Resources, London Borough of Hackney

Lord Heseltine reflects on London’s place in his career in government, the capital’s future in the face of Brexit, a general election, and the prospects for devolution.

87 per cent of respondents rated the onstage content as excellent or very good.

81 per cent of respondents rated the networking opportunities as excellent or very good.

Imam Mohammed Mahmoud, Senior Imam, East London Mosque reflecting on London’s faith communities on the frontlines of violent crime

Professor Tony Travers talks to Marisa Lago, Director of the New York City Department of City Planning and Chair of the City Planning Commission about creating more equitable cities through planning.

Jenna Goldberg and Robert Gordon Clark, London Communications Agency take the audience on a tour of key political trends.
As a charity, we rely on our supporters to make our work possible. Our work is supported by a mixture of organisations and individuals who share our vision for a better London. Supporters can help fund research, events or contribute towards our core funding.

Last year our funders included public sector organisations, businesses and trusts and foundations. We also focused on expanding and diversifying our income to give us greater flexibility to work on the issues that matter. We launched a new Partner Forum for organisations and an Investor Forum for individuals. These two high-level networks benefit from receiving the latest research on London and contribute to our core funding.

If you value what we do, please consider supporting our work in these turbulent times. Contact Max Goldman, Development Manager max.goldman@centreforlondon.org

We are hugely grateful to all the individuals and organisations who have supported our work over the past 12 months. We are committed to being fully transparent about our funding and each year we publish a full list of our funders. In the period to 31 December 2019, Centre for London received an income of £1,170,043 (2018: £1,123,844). Approximately 48 per cent of all funding secured during 2019 was research funding, 29 per cent event funding, and 17 per cent unrestricted core funding.

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Governance

Centre for London is led by Director Ben Rogers and Chair Liz Peace, who are supported by a core team and a Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees

Liz Peace CBE  (Chair of Trustees)
Chairman of the Old Oak Park Royal Development Corporation

Ben Page  
Chief Executive, IPSOS Mori

Shashi Verma  
Director of Strategy and Chief Technology Officer, Transport for London

Paul King  (Deputy Chair of Trustees) Managing Director, Sustainability & Social Impact - Europe, Lendlease

Peter Lewis  
CEO, Institute of Fundraising

Andrew Travers  
Chief Executive, London Borough of Lambeth

Fiona Fletcher-Smith  
Group Director for Development and Sales, L&Q

Sonal Shah  
Strategic Philanthropy Manager, University College London

David Slater  (Chair of the Finance Committee) Director, Trade, KPMG, UK
Despite changes to the way we work, our focus remains resolute. We must continue to discuss, debate and promote analysis and ideas that will help Londoners in the immediate, medium and long term.

Centre for London will do everything it can to help policymakers navigate through the unprecedented coronavirus crisis. As other major cities battle with the virus – and some start to emerge from it – we have much to learn.

Centre for London is a small charity and unfortunately lacks a stable source of funding in these turbulent times. If you value what we do, please consider supporting this new programme of work.

Ben Rogers
Founding Director, Centre for London

Supporting London through the crisis and recovery
# Contact information

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