



## THE RESPONSE OF THE MADRID CITY COUNCIL TO THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The pandemic has hit the city of Madrid hard, and its human, health, economic and social implications are on a scale never experienced before.

No one could have imagined that we would have to face a situation like the one caused by COVID-19 and its containment measures.

Since the beginning of March, Madrid City Council has put a range of measures in place in accordance with the mandatory quarantine of citizens to guarantee the provision of essential services, including social services.

With respect to the actions of the Department for Families, Equality and Social Welfare, when we look back over the past two months, we would like to highlight the following essential elements:

**-Speed of action:** the total reorganisation of the Housing Network for Homeless People and the Elderly Care Network in a few days.

When it comes to swift action in emergency situations, Madrid has led by example.

**-The capacity of response from innovation to new realities:**

Without a doubt, in the worst crises the best of good teams spring to action.

This is shown through the “*Ayuda de emergencia exprés*” (Emergency express aid), to simplify bureaucracy in Social Services, the set up of a hotel for *Homeless and families in social emergency (with symptoms of COVID-19)*, and the New Apartments for the care of the elderly in sudden loneliness.

These are innovative responses to new situations that have emerged and have challenged us both in terms of immediacy and adapting to specific needs.

**-Providing responses to the crisis, from a reform-based approach, rather than a palliative vision:**

It has been said that crises are an opportunity, and we firmly believe that. We have sought to improve services, adapting them to the new confinement situation. All services have been converted to online and phone services, except those of a residential nature, and those provided in care homes (home help and food delivery programs).

All of this has been possible thanks to the professional, united and highly motivated team who have put all their energy and effort into helping citizens.

The most important actions are briefly listed below, by topic:

### **EMERGENCY PLAN FOR THE ELDERLY.**

An absolute priority as this is the demographic most affected by this health crisis.

#### ***The first challenge was the reorganisation of all services in just a few days:***

The decreed closure of **Day Centres and Civic Centres for the Elderly (leisure centres)** forced us into a **FAST reorganisation** of all the services of the General Directorate for the Elderly, in order to respond to ALL the vulnerability situations generated, which we resolved:

- Reinforcing the **home food delivery** service with **902 new registrations** (which means a 23% increase).
- Reinforcing the **Teleassistance** service: **1624 new registrations** have been processed.
- **Reinforcing home care** with **1655 new registrations.**

#### ***The second challenge was how to care for the elderly during confinement.***

*Addressing issues around loneliness, isolation, and fear that this crisis has caused.*

- That is why we set up the “**Minutos en compañía**” (**Minutes in Company**) line so that older people could chat with volunteers whenever they wanted. Minutes in company, to date, has registered **7,148** calls that are equivalent to **756.5** hours of conversation.



- We have strengthened communication with **Teleassistance** users, making up to **12,000 follow-up calls in a single day.**
- A total of **150,352** follow-up calls to **elderly people** were made **in a week**, and **cognitive stimulation activities** were also carried out at a distance with Day Centres.

***The third challenge was to respond to the new vulnerabilities that emerged.***

This includes initiatives such as:

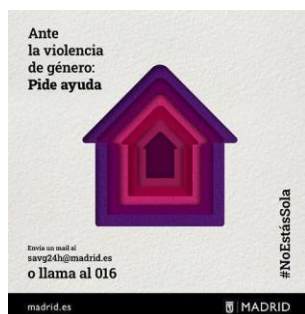
- The **grief counselling via the psychological support service**, aimed at relatives of our deceased users. We are here to help them at a particularly hard time.
- We have also created **apartments for the care of the elderly in sudden solitude**, with a design that represents real innovation in social and health care together with *Madrid Salud* (Madrid Department of Public Health).

We are already working on:

- Future programs to combat solitude adapted to the post-COVID period
- Future units of detection of risk situations that we want to set up across all of Madrid's 21 districts
- Advanced Telecare that will be launched in 2021.

## EMERGENCY GENDER VIOLENCE PLAN

From the very beginning, we understood that confinement posed an added risk to women suffering from gender-based violence.



- That is why we coordinate with other administrations such as the region of Madrid to provide a **16-spot emergency centre** just for the city of Madrid.
- We carried out a large communication campaign across social networks, television and radio. The message was quite simple: tell women that **they are not alone** and remind them of the municipal network's resources.

## EMERGENCY PLAN FOR THE HOMELESS

The challenge in relation to the homeless was far-reaching. Not only was it one of the groups most vulnerable to the virus, but the slogan 'stay at home' made no sense to them.

- Speed: Achieving **more than 1,000 additional spots**, an unprecedented expansion of the network, in a few days. (IFEMA, the **Samaranch** sports centre, Hotel Arganda, the extension of the *Campaña del Frío* [Campaign Against the Cold], hostels)
- Innovation in response to new realities: **Hotel in Las Tablas** with capacity for 120 people with mild symptoms of COVID-19 – a completely new program.

- But the most important thing is the quality of the psychosocial and health care they have been given. This crisis is an opportunity to reach out to homeless people who have never been in contact with municipal resources and support them in getting off the streets.  
And we will take advantage of this opportunity from a reformist vision in the coronavirus de-escalation plan.

## EMERGENCY PLAN FOR FAMILIES

*The first challenge was to provide for the communal living and the psychological wellbeing of families.*

The Department gave us a fast and creative response to the problems arising for families in relation to confinement:

- On the one hand, by managing to maintain telephone and online support by adapting existing services: **14 Spaces for Equality, in the Centres for Support to Adolescents in Vulnerable Situations (ASPA), Social Education Service, Child Care Centres (CAI), Family Support Centres (CAF) and Family Meeting Points (PEF)**. Helping more than **2,000 families**, and developing **6 Teaching Guides** with information on supporting families in crisis, such as the 'Guide to legal support' for the Spaces of Equality.
- Additionally, managing to keep most primary schools open through distance learning activities in order to support families.



And, with a special mention of the success of the **Conecta Juventud** project, with dozens of online leisure and fitness activities, **with more than 800.000 registrations**.

*The second Challenge was for Social Services to respond to the Food Crisis*

First, we made a Social assessment and projected possible implications of the crisis and then we created and completed a survey.

And the results are unequivocal:

- The group most affected by the crisis are **families with children**. No less than 46% of these families have already suffered income cuts due to quarantine. Families and children will suffer from this crisis more than anyone else.

We are facing a food crisis that Spain has not known since the post-war period, and which we have already tackled with different measures and resources:

- Emergency healthy feeding contracts for **500** vulnerable **children** in our nurseries.
- Meals-on-Wheels services for 3,600 older people via the contract managed by the Department.

The 21 Districts' Social Services are leading the response, providing food to **82,000 people a day, some 30,000 families**, with €8.6 million being put into food contracts.

But that's not all. The Department is preparing a strong support response in terms of food resources with a stable and unitary solution.

This crisis must be an opportunity to address the necessary reform of Social Services. In these two months they have experienced a 52% increase in their activity compared to the same period last year.

Therefore, the challenge is to:

- **Facilitate access, reduce bureaucracy**: since April 27<sup>th</sup>, the “*Ayuda de emergencia exprés*” has been in operation in all 21 Districts, with simplified processing.
- **Unifying and centralising information**, another of the area's historical shortfalls.
- And of course **the historical reinforcement of staff**, with an interdisciplinary vision, which we are already working on with the Department of Staff.

## Conclusion

**This social crisis that we face will be an unparalleled challenge, but we face it with the confidence and pride of having responded in this first phase with:**

- Fast responses
- Innovative capacity
- And reformist vision

Which has been an example for all of Spain.



**What we now have ahead of us will be challenging**, but Madrid is at the height of the challenge.

- **We have a united municipal government facing a common objective** (Department of Finance, Staff, Territorial Coordination, *Madrid Salud*) are acting as a block led by the Deputy Mayor and the Mayor, to respond to this challenge.
- Political **opposition has proven to be loyal and constructive**.
- And above all, we have professionals **with an admirable capacity for effort and dedication to citizens**.

Together we will not only overcome this crisis but we will get out with reinforced social services in accordance with what a city in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should offer.

Madrid, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020