

UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

912 CONFIRMED CASES OF COVID-19 INFECTIONS IN NEWHAM, BAME COMMUNITIES & LEAKED CABINET REPORT CONFIRMS LACK OF 'PREPARE'

APRIL 24

Dear Newham Resident,

As we settle in for the evening, I've been reflecting on the cautious optimism that we may have reached peak – but the numbers are still climbing.

Today, there's been 684 hospital-based deaths in the UK in the last 24 hours – bringing the UK total to 19,506. The number of infections in London has also increased by 296 to 23,063 with 14 of the increased number registered in Newham, bringing the borough total 912.

As I always say behind each death there is human story. However, other stories are emerging from the numbers, like the inescapable fact this virus appears to be affecting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community more than others. That's why I welcomed the news today that Baroness Doreen Lawrence to lead a review into the impact of the Coronavirus on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities (BAME) and you can read more about that here: <https://tinyurl.com/y9omp3mk>.

It's a concerning issue that all Council leaders in London have been raising over the past couple of weeks, because of London's amazing diversity where some 4 out of every 10 residents in the capital are BAME; and that's why I also welcome the research that Public Health England has started to understand why a disproportionate number of BAME people are being infected – accounting for over a third of critically ill Covid-19 patients– when they only make up 10.8% of the population in the UK.

In Newham, almost 73 per cent of our population are from BAME communities, so it is vital that we understand and tackle the apparent disproportionate effect this disease is having on people of colour. Our public health team continue to monitor the situation with our local health partners to understand what factors put people at greater risk and influence poorer health outcomes.

In a timely message, coinciding with the beginning of Ramadan, I was joined by Dr Farzana Hussain from the Project Surgery in Plaistow E13, alongside Miqdaad Versi, who is the Assistant Secretary General at the Muslim Council of Britain; and Imam Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi, Director-General and Chief Imam of the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society. They provided words of guidance and comfort about how Muslims in our borough can still observe this Holy month of fasting during the Covid-19 crisis in safe ways. You can watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUjAy4RMIqc>.

Today, we've also heard that Transport for London (TfL) have lost 30 of its staff, who have died from Coronavirus and the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan confirmed 7,000 of staff members will be furloughed through an employee relief scheme, where 80 per cent of staff wages (up to £2,500) will be paid by the government. TfL have pledged to pay the remainder to ensure workers do not lose out financially.

I am sure you will join me in sending our condolences and thoughts to the families of those TfL workers who have died, and all families who have lost loved ones.

Last month, I reported that as part of the council's battle to control infection spread, the Stratford Mall was been closed overnight for the past month. In that time over 250 members of the rough sleeping community from Newham and other areas, have been found alternative accommodation. Today, with no sign of any immediate relaxation of lockdown, The Council has been granted an extension of the night-time closure for a further 28 days to protect the health of rough sleepers as we contend with the public health emergency that coronavirus has unleashed.

Today we also heard that the government was warned last year that it must have a robust plan to deal with a pandemic virus and its potentially catastrophic social and economic consequences in a confidential Cabinet Office briefing leaked to the Guardian, which you can read here: <https://tinyurl.com/ybvm75po>. The 600-page leaked report reveals a number of recommendations including the need stockpile PPE that were highlighted but never followed through.

We also found out more details of the government's obscure 'Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies' aka SAGE, following another leak to The Guardian. You can read more here: <https://tinyurl.com/y8vx5xkt>. Serious concerns are being raised about accountability and transparency – with questions about whether it has the right balance of mix of scientific experts to advise on coronavirus, which is new.

This weekend could provide yet another test of our resolve to follow the rules and #StayAtHome – as the weather is again set to tempt us outside. In Newham our parks remain open to allow limited exercise, and a welcome breathe of fresh air, but please continue to follow the rules on social distancing, do not gather in groups, do not picnic or sunbathe, and do not use restricted play and exercise equipment.

Doing the right thing not only protects you and your family, but will protect our whole community, and will help reduce infection rates.

So have a restful night and I wish you all a safe weekend at home.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rokhsana Fiaz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rokhsana Fiaz
Mayor of Newham

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of Everything We Do**