

## **UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):**

**32,313: UK NOW HAS THE SECOND HIGHEST COVID-19 DEATHS IN THE WORLD**

**FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ**

**5TH MAY 2020**

Dear Newham Resident,

Today official deaths in the UK overtook those in Italy, with a further 693 people losing their lives in England and Wales in the last 24 hours. It brings the total of people who have died to 29,427 since the pandemic began. But, when figures from Scotland and Northern Ireland are included, the UK now has the highest death toll in Europe with 32,313 people registered as having died from the virus. Across the globe, only the USA has recorded a higher number of deaths.

The true figure is likely to be significantly higher due to missed cases and a lag in reporting, and the scale of this national tragedy is truly heart breaking. As always, my thoughts and prayers go to those who have lost loved ones, and of course all those families in Newham who have been devastated by the death of their mothers, fathers, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces.

It underlines the personal responsibility that each and every single one of us in Newham holds in following the restrictions in place as we live through week 7 of Lockdown Britain. The responsibility to follow the rules to protect yourself and to protect others in the borough.

Earlier today, we heard that Professor Neil Ferguson, who is an expert on the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), resigned after an 'error of judgment' for letting a friend visit him at home. Explaining that he acted in the belief that he was immune from the virus, having tested positive, he said: *'I deeply regret any undermining of the clear messages around the continued need for social distancing to control this devastating epidemic. The government guidance is unequivocal, and is there to protect all of us.'*

So please keep up with washing your hands, practise social distancing at all times, stop gathering in our parks with your mates because you think you are invincible, only go out for your required shop and one hour of exercise; and only travel to work if it is essential.

Once we are past this first peak, and have it under control, serious questions will need to be asked about how the health emergency has been managed nationally and its impact locally, so that we can prepare for any future outbreak.

With the UK having the highest number of deaths in Europe, searching questions will need to be answered through a public inquiry to understand why we are experiencing such large numbers in comparison to the rest of Europe. It puts into question whether the government's tactics at the start of the pandemic were sufficiently fast, and whether the lockdown should have happened earlier, why we didn't have the capacity for testing and contact tracing from the outset. All of these areas have been inadequate. You can read more here: <https://tinyurl.com/ycgvpr89>.

It's not about blame – it is about learning. That is why, this week we'll be publishing a report on the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic which will be discussed at a Cabinet meeting next week; setting out how we put in place all the measures we are legally required to by the government under this Covid-19 national emergency, and in line with the Responsibilities of Local Authorities under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA). More details about this tomorrow.

Yesterday I told you about the work the council is doing to deal with businesses who are flouting the law by trading illegally during the crisis. Today Newham Trading Standards officers mounted a concerted operation in some of our busiest high streets to ensure compliance, visiting High Street North in East Ham, and the Upton Lane area of Forest Gate.

During the patrol, at least 30 business premises were visited and of those trading unlawfully or failing to properly enforce social distancing, the following action was taken:

- 16 shops were given verbal advice, complied, immediately closed and know that they'll be checked again;
- 5 shops were given advice about how to effectively manage social distancing during their trading hours;
- 2 closure notices were served, when verbal advice to close was not followed;
- 2 Fixed Penalty Notices (or fines) were served for breach of a closure notice that had been served previously.

Trading Standards will continue this vital work to make sure those businesses who are playing by the rules are not put at unfair advantage by those who are not. We must not risk a second wave of infection.

We know boroughs like Newham, where we have high levels of deprivation and where 73% of our population represent a richly diverse Black Minority and Ethnic community, are being hardest hit by this virus. Therefore, it is absolutely clear that although on some measures we are passing the peak, different groups based on ethnicity, underlying health conditions, wealth, and where they become ill, are still seeing a disproportionate number of deaths.

That's why I'll be demanding a localised approach from the government on Sunday, when the Prime Minister is due to lay out his 'road map' for leaving lockdown. The statistics tell us that the virus is affecting different communities differently; it makes sense then, that any relaxation will have a similarly different effect in different areas of the country.

This morning I told Kay Burley on Sky News, that I'd like to see the government working with local authorities and our communities instead of a 'one-size-fits-all', top down approach to lifting restrictions. Crucial to this, and our recovery in Newham, will be more money from the government, who thinks that it has given us an adequate amount to deal with the pandemic.

Local authorities like Newham, who have borne the brunt of the last 10 years of austerity measures, are currently also bearing the brunt of the Coronavirus crisis. That's why the government must prioritise financial support and resources to boroughs like us, because the evidence shows us that this is vital to save lives and to stop people dying.

So on another solemn day for our country, when we've had confirmation that we have the highest official death rate in Europe, please take your personal responsibility seriously: to keep yourself, your families, your neighbours and your friends safe from this deadly virus.

**Best wishes,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rokhsana Fiaz', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Rokhsana Fiaz**  
**Mayor of Newham**

**People at the Heart  
of Everything We Do**