

UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):

**40,496 COVID-19 DEATHS REPORTED BY THE OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS
& IN NEWHAM 274 HAVE DIED FROM COVID-19**

**FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ
12TH MAY 2020**

Dear Newham Resident,

Today, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) published figures of all Covid-19 related deaths up to the 1st May, showing that a total of 35,044 people have died because of the virus. Combined with the UK daily figures of those that have died from Covid-19 from the 10th May, deaths from the virus now stand at 40,496. Tragically, almost 10,000 of these fatalities were in care homes.

This contrasts with the daily Public Health England (PHE) figure for today, which states that the number who have lost their lives in the UK across all settings (hospitals, care settings and in the community) has reached 32,692, which is an increase of 692 in the last 24 hours.

In Newham, the number of deaths stands at 274, but we are being cautious with these numbers because while these are drawn from ONS data published today, they don't correlate with the PHE figures and we are undertaking further analysis. Based on the ONS data for Newham (up to the 1st May only), 201 of the 274 deaths reported were in hospital, and 38 were in care homes with the rest in other settings.

The Council does not run any of the 24 care homes in Newham (these include homes for people with learning disabilities, those with mental health conditions as well as homes for older people). These are all privately operated and regulated by the national Care Quality Commission. However, since the beginning of the outbreak officers across the Council and the NHS have been working tirelessly to support residents in these care homes and care workers.

That's why since the start of the Covid-19 outbreak, as part of our priority to save lives in the borough, we've been supporting them all by supplying Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), helping improve infection control across all the care homes, and providing financial as well as medical support, and accelerating their access to vital testing. We have also established a system whereby any Covid-19 positive patients being discharged from a hospital are moved to a dedicated Covid-19 centre to rest and be looked after for two weeks, before they go onto a care home setting.

The numbers of all our residents in Newham who have died in Newham is heart-breaking, and my condolences and prayers to all those families whose lives have been devastated by losing their precious loved ones.

I want to assure all of you that council officers from our Health and Adult Social Care team will continue to do whatever it takes to keep our most vulnerable residents as safe as possible during this dangerous time. And rest assured, we will continue to ask challenging questions of all our care providers, including the Barts NHS Trust in light of the numbers of residents that have died in hospital.

That's why, on the 27th May the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board, which I co-chair with Dr Mohammed Naqvi (a local GP who is also chair of the Newham Clinical Care Group which represents all our primary care partners in the borough, in other words all the GP surgeries), will be holding a public zoom meeting to address these and many other Covid-19 related issues. I'd encourage as many Newham residents to register for this important discussion and I'll be circulating more details soon.

In the meantime, I want to thank all those care home workers for their dedication and resolve during this unprecedented crisis.

Having written above, it is scant comfort that fatality rates are starting to fall – and for the first time since the pandemic began, every region of England and Wales has recorded a reduced death toll in the general population. Also for the first time, London, which was at the epicentre initial outbreak, did not have the highest count, with the capital recorded the sharpest fall in Covid-19 fatalities of any region in England and Wales.

Today we also heard from the Chancellor Rishi Sunak who has announced the wage subsidy scheme – known as “furlough” – is to be extended for another four months to end of October. There will be no changes in the system, which sees the government pay 80% of furloughed workers' wages up to £2,500 per month.

However the chancellor also revealed that from August employers will have to ‘share with the government the cost of paying salaries’ although he did not give any further details. I want to congratulate the trade unions, who have worked tirelessly with the Chancellor to ensure this vital scheme of protecting jobs and livelihoods is not wound up prematurely.

But there are two issues concerning me and Council officers about the situation in Newham. We've surveyed our local businesses and the results serve as a warning to the government not to pile more expense on our businesses before they have had a chance to recover. Why? Because our survey found that:

- 78 per cent of our business owners told us they are struggling to pay monthly rents;

- 58 per cent were struggling to pay staff wages;
- 55 per cent have had to furlough staff;
- When asked what support they would need in the next 6 months, the vast majority of businesses need some sort of financial help.

Our Community Wealth Building *Business Support Unit* has been working tirelessly with our businesses to help them as we face the worst economic crisis in generations. Since the start of Lockdown Britain, the Council has supported 3,226 firms to apply for loans worth over £46 million. This money will help them weather the storm, protect their businesses, livelihoods, workers and the local economy.

I also joined with other local authority leaders in successfully lobbying the government to introduce a top-up to Local Business Grant Funds Scheme - a discretionary fund to accommodate some small businesses, previously outside the scope of the business grant funds scheme. We are expecting this funding to come on stream soon.

I'm regularly talking with Newham's local businesses through regular zoom meetings to understand their challenges so that we can put their concerns to government, and offer them the support that they need to keep them afloat.

However, despite all our reaching-out efforts, we estimate that some 23 per cent of eligible local businesses are not applying for the support loans available to them – If you are one of them (or know someone who runs a business locally) please, please for the sake of your survival and the livelihoods of your workers - visit our web page at <https://www.newham.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-businesses-support/5> to see how we can help.

Finally, today we marked *International Nurses Day*, celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale where special events were held to celebrate the remarkable men and women who have been battling to save our lives, even at the risk of losing their own. I salute you all.

And on this day, I also salute Mary Seacole, a Jamaican-born nurse who was refused formal permission by the UK War Office to go and help alongside Florence Nightingale's more well-known mercy mission in the Crimea. But she did it anyway to help British soldiers during the Crimean War of 1853 to 1856, funding her own trip instead and establishing a hospital to provide support for officers wounded in the War. Also known as Mother Seacole, I am pleased that finally this month she was commemorated by having a hospital named after her in Surrey – and at long last.

Please continue to stay safe.

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

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