

UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):

291 NEWHAM RESIDENTS HAVE DIED FROM COVID-19, 1001 HAVE TESTED POSITIVE AS THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES MORE LOCKDOWN EASING, SAGE EXPERTS WORRIED.

**FROM MAYOR FIAZ
29 MAY 2020**

Dear Newham Resident,

As we end week 10 of Lockdown Britain, there have been further announcements from the government about loosening some aspects of the restrictions in place, signalling a move to the next phase of the government's Covid-9 recovery strategy.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister announced that from next Monday (1st June), people can meet up to six friends or relatives, in parks, gardens or any other outdoor space; but the 2 meter social distance requirement will still apply. From the 8th June, dentists will be able to open, but a whole series of safety precautions will be required – including the use of personal protective equipment.

Further easing of the lockdown restrictions in place, has been based on whether the government is confident that it's 'five tests' have been met (making sure that the NHS can cope; a sustained and consistent reduction in Covid-19 deaths; a decrease in the infection rate of the virus; rates; confidence that personal protective equipment and testing is in place; and reducing the risk of a second wave by ensuring the 'reproduction rate' of the virus is below 1). The Prime Minister says he is confident, but many others aren't, including me – which is why I have been saying that we need to remain cautious.

A day after the government's national test and trace programme went live, we find out that there have been problems for staff employed to operate it, problems getting tests booked, and delays in getting results back. Also today, a member of the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) has voiced unease about the government's decision to loosen lockdown. Professor John Edmunds, from the London School of Tropical Hygiene and Medicine, has said that with 8,000 new infections a day in England, 'we cannot relax our guard by very much at all', and that 'incidence' levels of Covid-19 infections should be at lower levels before lockdown is eased.

Public Health England (PHE) figures released today also show that so far a total of 38,161 people have died, including the 324 who have tragically passed away in the last 24 hours; and as of this week we know that 291 people have died in Newham. Also, so far, 271,222 people have been tested positive with Covid-19 in the UK, and 26,981 are from London. Of these, 1001 are in Newham.

It's why, despite the government's requirement that schools should open to more pupils on the 1st June, at the Council we've made it absolutely clear this shouldn't happen as we need a more cautious approach in Newham. No school should be forced or coerced to re-open until risk assessments are conducted and confirm that each school is safe for children, families and staff; especially given the risks of Covid-19 transmission in Newham because of deprivation, health inequalities and multi-generational households. On Wednesday, our Health and Wellbeing Board agreed to also establish an Advisory Group of clinical experts who will offer additional advice and guidance, and step in if they don't believe a school's risk assessment is adequate.

We are also concerned about the potential risks facing Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities in the borough, in light of the emerging evidence pointing to issues of disproportionate impact of Covid-19 facing these residents in our borough. Early next week we expect the publication of Public Health England's report on its inquiry into the disproportionate mortality rates affecting ethnic minority communities. I will share these findings with you, and any recommendations that arise, and already we have been focusing on the disproportionate impact on Newham's ethnic minority communities.

On Wednesday night's meeting of the Newham Health and Wellbeing Board, we agreed to establish a working group to take forward this work with the urgency it deserves. More details will be published soon and its terms of reference, plus work programme will be discussed at the meeting of the Board when it meets on the 10th June.

As we head to another sunshine weekend, please continue to do all you can to help control the spread of the virus by staying home as much as possible, work from home if you can, limit your contact with other people, keep your distance from others if you do go out, and wash your hands regularly. And remember the rules about meeting people from other households do not come into effect until Monday.

Let's all work together to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Newham and stop a second wave, as well as risks to you, your family, friends and loved ones.

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**