

## UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):

### **FURTHER EASING OF RESTRICTIONS PAUSED, SHIELDING FOR MOST VULNERABLE ENDS, ONS DATA SHOWS PREVALENCE OF COVID-19 IN THE COMMUNITY INCREASED, AND FEARS OF SECOND WAVE**

**FROM MAYOR FIAZ  
SUNDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> AUGUST 2020**

Dear Newham Resident,

I hope you are well and enjoying the last hours of weekend sunshine. It's been quite a Covid-19 week since I posted an update last Friday (24 July) about mandatory face coverings, which had to be worn from that day in any supermarket, shop or café you went into - as is already the case when you are using public transport.

But on Friday 31 July, the Prime Minister announced that face coverings or masks would be more strictly enforced, and would become mandatory from 8 August in more indoor venues, including museums, galleries, cinemas and places of worship. Other restrictions that were due to be lifted yesterday will also remain in place for another two weeks, and you can read the full guidance [here](#), meaning that:

- *Wedding receptions can only take place outdoors where there are only six people from multiple households, or can be indoors with up to six people from two households (wedding ceremonies with up to 30 people are still permissible);*
- *Pilot testing of crowds at events will not go ahead;*
- *Leisure settings, such as bowling, skating rinks and casinos, will remain closed;*
- *Indoor performances aren't permitted;*
- *Services deemed 'high risk' close contact, such as facial and beauty treatments, are not permitted.*

However the shielding measures that were in place for the most extremely clinical vulnerable have now been lifted as of yesterday. That means some 2.2 million people who have been self-isolating in England during the pandemic can return to work, if they cannot work from home, so long as their workplace is 'Covid-19 secure'. You can read the full guidance on shielding and protecting the extremely vulnerable (it includes the different categories of people affected) which was issued on Friday [here](#).

All of this comes on the back of the announcement by the Government on late Thursday night that people in Greater Manchester, including Blackburn, Burnley and Bradford, are now banned from gathering indoors or in the garden with people from other households from midnight. At Friday's Downing Street briefing, even the Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Chris Whitty, said that 'we have probably reached near the limit or the limits of what we can do in terms of opening up society', stating that the hope of opening up 'everything' and keeping the virus under control 'is clearly wrong', adding 'so what that means potentially is that if we wish to do more things in the future, we may have to do less of some other things'.

So what's led to the Government putting the 'brakes on' to 'keep people safe', as only two weeks ago the Prime Minister was setting out plans for some normality by Christmas, albeit saying that the plan 'remains conditional' on continued progress in controlling the virus and preventing a second wave of infections that could overwhelm the NHS? Well, latest data this week has been showing that in some areas, Covid-19 infections are on the rise and it's unclear what's causing this uptick, as hospital admissions are falling as well pointing to rises in the community. The Government's announcement to pause the further easing also came after the Office for National Statistics (ONS) released the latest data from its 'Coronavirus (Covid-19) infection Survey pilot' on Friday morning, which reports on the prevalence of Covid-19 in England.

I reported about the ONS survey previously, which you can read again [here](#). The survey is important because its findings of the prevalence of Covid-19 in the community informs the Government whether it's safe enough to ease restrictions. On Friday, the ONS published its latest data, which you can read [here](#). This showed:

- *An estimated 35,700 people within the community population in England had Covid-19 during the most recent week, from 20 to 26 July 2020, equating to around 1 in 1,500 individuals;*
- *There is not enough evidence to say with confidence whether Covid-19 infection rates differ by region in England, nor whether infection rates have increased in different regions over the past six weeks – but there is some limited evidence that rates in London may have increased in recent weeks;*
- *During the most recent week (20 to 26 July 2020), ONS estimate there were around 0.78 new Covid-19 infections for every 10,000 people in the community population in England, equating to around 4,200 new cases per day (compared to 2,800 per day a week ago).*

The ONS confirmed that their modelling of the rate of new infections over time suggests that there is now some evidence that the incidence of new Covid-19 infections has increased in recent weeks. This follows a low point of 0.34 new infections per 10,000 people during the week from 15 to 21 June 2020, and prior to that a decrease in the incidence rate of Covid-19 between May 2020 - when the study began - and June 2020. Additionally, this week the University of Cambridge's MRC Biostatistics Unit (BSU) – which feeds directly to the Government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and to regional Public Health England teams - published its latest modelling estimate of Covid-19 transmission, known as the Reproduction rate or the 'R'. You can read more [here](#). Its analysis for the period to 24 July shows that:

- *The current estimate of the number of infections arising each day across England is 3,000;*
- *Predicts that the number of deaths each day is likely to be between 43 and 84 by mid-August;*
- *The Reproduction rate estimate is close to 1 in most regions of England, with the South West and the South East above 1;*

All of this highlights the challenges of how much we can reopen without increases in Covid-19 infections as all countries grapple between staving off fresh outbreaks and reopening economies. Already the UK Government has announced that any one returning from Spain will have to self-isolate for 14 days following a spike of new cases, with more countries likely to be added to the quarantine list including Belgium, Luxembourg and Croatia; and transmissions are rising once more in France and Germany as new cases are detected. Even the Prime

Minister fears that the spikes currently being experienced in Europe could be replicated here in the UK in the coming weeks.

So as we progress through the summer, and with the real possibility of a second spike coming sooner than expected here in the UK, the uncertainty is bound to have a real impact on future planning for all of us, especially with schools expected to fully re-open in September. Already teaching unions and scientific experts are once again raising concerns about Government requirements for all pupils to return to schools in September, with calls for further clarity, guidance and reassurance, in light of the recent uptick in Covid-19 infections and what that will mean for reopening of schools in the autumn. Here in Newham, we'll continue working closely with all our schools and governing bodies about the plans they have in place to make sure they are robust and prioritise the safety of pupils and teachers in line with the guidance; as well as liaise with parents and pupils to reassure them about what we are doing in the interests of the Covid-19 public health priorities in our borough.

Events this week, once again, put the spotlight on the Government's Covid-19 approach in England compared to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - as infection rates rise. As of this afternoon, there has been a total of 304,695 Covid-19 lab-confirmed cases in the UK, with 46,201 Covid-19 associated UK deaths, an increase of 744 and 8 respectively. In Wales, that's an increase of 37 confirmed cases and 3 deaths since yesterday. In Scotland, that's an increase in 31 confirmed cases since yesterday and no deaths for 19 days in a row. In Northern Ireland, that's an increase of ten cases but no deaths reported since Friday. In London, so far 35,609 people have been tested positive for Covid-19 with 1,336 from Newham. Sadly 307 people in Newham have lost their lives to Covid-19 so far and my deepest condolences to all families affected by these tragedies.

On 24 July, the ONS published its most recent ONS Covid-19 mortality and Covid-19 data based on local area and socio-economic deprivation, which you can read [here](#). The report provides an update on mortality rates for the period 1 March to 30 June (using mortality records up to 11 July 2020). During this period, the ONS report shows that:

- *50,574 deaths were registered involving Covid-19, representing 22.9 per cent of all deaths occurring (220,636 deaths);*
- *The median age-standardised Covid-19 mortality rate was 88.0 deaths per 100,000 people in England and Wales (88.7 per 100,000 people in England and 73.7 per 100,000 people in Wales);*
- *London had the highest age-standardised mortality rate with 141.8 deaths involving Covid-19 per 100,000 people: higher than any other region in England and nearly one-third higher than the North West of England, at 30.2 per cent;*
- *Of the ten local authorities with the highest age-standardised mortality rates for Covid-19 deaths in England and Wales, nine were London boroughs;*
- *Brent had an overall age-standardised rate of 216.6 deaths per 100,000 people, followed by Newham at 201.6 deaths per 100,000 people and Haringey at 185.1 deaths per 100,000 people.*

On top of all this, according to a Covid-19 Social Study published by the Behavioural Science and Health Research Department at University College London (UCL) this week (which you can read [here](#)), there appears to be quite stark variations in understanding Covid-19 rules in different parts of the country:

- *It's highest in Scotland, with 75% of people participating saying they 'understood them' and 27% understood them 'very much so';*

- *It's lower in Wales, with 61% of people participating saying they 'understood them' and 18% 'very much so'*
- *It's lowest in England with 45 per cent of people participating saying they 'understood them' and 14 per cent understood them 'very much so'*

The UCL study highlights how lower levels of understanding of the Covid-19 rules in England, has led to lower levels of compliance by the public compared to Scotland and Wales. Overall, levels of 'complete' compliance remains just 20% to 30% in adults under the age of 30; 40% to 45% in adults aged 30 to 50; and 50% to 55% in adults over the age of 60. However, levels of 'majority' compliance remains at around 90% overall, but is lowest amongst adults under 30, at 70% to 80%.

The Government has already been criticised for its Covid-19 public messages as it lurches one week to the next in its Covid-19 response, most recently unveiling its new slogan of 'Hands, Face, Space' so that the public are reminded to 'wash your hands, cover your face and make space' to prevent spread of Covid-19. There's also been criticisms that the Government is blaming the public, when it hasn't been clear and lifted restrictions too soon. All of this raises serious questions about the level of preparedness as we approach autumn and the winter months. The Government has announced the largest Flu vaccine programme ever to be rolled out will take place this winter to deal with the dangerous combination of flu and Covid-19 - with about 30 million people to be offered a free flu jab. There's also the news that progress towards finding a Covid-19 vaccine being developed by Oxford University has achieved positive results in early-stage trials and the news that the Government has secured early access to 90 million doses of promising coronavirus vaccine being developed – read more [here](#).

However, there remain concerns about the national test and trace programme, specifically the tracing app which is about to be re-launched later this month (read more [here](#)); alongside, experts warning that even with a vaccine, Covid-19 is unlikely to be eliminated for good and we'll need to live with it for many years to come. I'll provide further thoughts on this soon, as there are also concerns being raised about the differences in testing policies being pursued and the efficacy of the national testing programme including the role of 'false positives' and how much of the test results are real or anti-factual. There are some interesting questions being asked by experts about whether Covid-19 data has become skewed.

This weekend also sees the point at which the Treasury starts to gradually end its 'job support scheme', which has so far kept over nine million people from losing their incomes. Newham has the highest number of furloughed residents in London, which is why I welcomed the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, backing our calls on the Government to extend its furlough scheme for struggling sectors which could lead to a surge in unemployment.

With a survey published this week showing that over 60 per cent of London firms plan to lay off staff, we know that the impact on Newham will be great. Our own modelling shows that over 100,000 people in Newham alone could end up unemployed. That's why we launched the 'Towards a Better Newham Covid-19 Recovery Strategy' last week, which you can read [here](#). The significance of this strategy cannot be underestimated, in light of the scale of challenges facing us and the economic impact of Covid-19 which will be felt hard in Newham.

It's also why the health and wellbeing of residents alongside race equality remain absolutely fundamental to our Covid-19 Recovery Strategy, as part of our aspirations of inclusive growth, quality jobs and fairness in Newham. This strategy will mean that Newham will become the first borough in London to use health, wellbeing and happiness as the measure of our economic

success instead of the traditional measures of growth. We've been inspired by New Zealand who are the first country in the world to use these measures of economic growth.

As well as the strategy, I've also launched the £13m Royal Docks' Good Growth Fund with the Mayor of London which is one of the first steps to achieving our recovery ambitions and allows local organisations to apply for funding to support this strategy. You can read more [here](#).

As we prepare for next week, recent developments are an important reminder to ourselves that the virus has not gone away. It is very much still out there, infecting and tragically still causing deaths. Wear a mask in shops and places of worship, on public transport or in any indoor environment where social distancing is difficult. Keep two metres apart where possible, carry or use hand sanitizer frequently when out and about, and wash your hands thoroughly where you are able.

Please remember these measures are designed to safeguard you and those around you, including your loved ones. Covid-19 can't spread if you don't give it a chance to transmit. Let's work together to keep it as low as possible in Newham for the safety of all members of our amazing community.

Stay well and stay well.

**Best wishes,**

**Rokhsana Fiaz OBE  
Mayor of Newham**