

## **UPDATE ON CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

### **COVID-19 CASES RISE TO HIGHEST NUMBER IN FOUR MONTHS, RATE OF COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION INCREASING. AS IS PROSPECT OF SECOND LOCKDOWN.**

**FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ**

**19<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020**

Dear Newham Resident,

It's been another concerning week as cases of Covid-19 continue to rise and rise, exposing the reality that we are entering the early phase of the second wave. This afternoon, Public Health England published its daily tally of Covid-19 lab confirmed cases. In the last 24 hours, 4,422 people have been tested positive with Covid-19, that's a 100 more than yesterday's figure and the highest daily figure since May.

Overall, the total number of confirmed cases in the UK stands at 390,358 though this is likely to be an underestimate because over the past two weeks people across the country haven't been able to easily access testing, because the national testing system is at full capacity. In London, 44,872 people so far have been tested positive for Covid-19; and of those 1,757 are from Newham. Sadly 310 people in Newham have lost their lives to Covid-19 since the pandemic started, and my deepest condolences to all families affected by the loss of their loved ones.

Earlier this week, the health secretary admitted that it will take at least until the end of October to expand it, due to the country not having enough laboratories to process samples. You'd have thought the government would have planned for that at the start of the pandemic. The surge in coronavirus cases, follows the easing of lockdown restrictions in June; and the push to get people back at work and pupils returning to schools. The health secretary also announced new guidance for testing, which means that only people with acute clinical need, those in social care settings, NHS staff and teachers will be prioritised.

On Friday, Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, convened an urgent meeting with Council leaders, Public Health England and government officials, prompted by the escalation of Covid-19 cases in the capital over a relatively short period of time. The rate of cases per 100,000 over the past seven days has increased from 18.8 to 25 cases, and that's why the Mayor of London has said that further lockdown measures in the capital is likely.

In Newham, the rate of cases has gone up to 28.8 per 100,000 of the population and again this is likely to be an underestimate because there because of the lack of testing capacity locally. You can read more information about the level of Covid-19 in Newham via our dashboard, updated every Thursday with the latest data, on the Council's website via this link here: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-dashboard/1>. As you can see, in Newham there were 105 new positive cases recorded this week – but remember the results are likely to be underestimating the situation due to the crisis is the national testing programme, which is stopping people from accessing a test.

I am clear that a range of additional restriction measures must be considered because we must drastically slow down the spread of community transmission in Newham and in the capital. Early next week, there'll be another urgent meeting of London leaders and Council Chief Executives, following which I'll provide an update to local residents. In the meantime, I'm closely monitoring the Newham situation very carefully, along with Newham Council's

Chief Executive and Director of Public Health who'll be advising me on what local lockdown measures may be required in Newham.

Over the past week, many scientific and medical experts have also been raising alarm about the increases in Covid-19 cases and community transmission rates, calling on the government to act urgently. The latest has been Professor Neil Ferguson, whose modelling led the Government to order the nationwide lockdown in March, who this morning urged the prime minister to 'act sooner rather than later' to tighten up restrictions. He's basically said that the UK is facing a 'perfect storm' and it's all because of the easing of social distancing measures over the summer.

The British Medical Association (BMA) is also calling on the government to scrap the 'Rule of 6', which bans social gatherings of more than six people, because it allows too many people from too many different households mixing – and hence increasing the risk of Covid-19 transmission. The BMA has also urged the government to revert back to encouraging workers to work from home to reduce virus transmission on public transport.

Here in Newham, we can't afford increases in community transmission, and that's why all of us must take personal responsibility with precautions like washing hands frequently, keeping a distance when we are out and about as well as wearing our masks and using the NHS app, which you can easily download. We really have to stay vigilant. We are doing all we can to avert such a second spike in infection rates, and the need for more damaging restrictions, but without a function testing programme, we are fighting with one hand tied behind our back.

That's why, for the sake of all of us here in Newham, please follow the rules - including the 'rule of six' – avoiding gatherings of more than six people. Continue to maintain social distancing, wear face coverings where necessary and wash your hands. There is a great deal we can all do to keep ourselves, our families and our communities safe.

If we all work together we can help reduce the transmission of Covid-19 in our community, and avert more cases and deaths.

Please stay safe and stay protected.

**Best wishes,**

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

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