

COVID-19  
HEALTH  
CHAMPIONS



# IT TAKES A VILLAGE

An external review of the London Borough of  
Newham's COVID-19 Health Champions programme

[www.newham.gov.uk/communityChampions](http://www.newham.gov.uk/communityChampions)



The programme is incredibly inclusive and works as an equaliser.

It gives us the opportunity to contribute to our community, leaving us with a sense of self worth and purpose during this. difficult and isolating time.



The virus might be spreading, but thanks to the information, we are spreading too.



I feel like a pebble that the public health team has dropped in a pond. I send out the ripples and responses come back.

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# FOREWORD

**Anne Pordes Bowers**

Community Public Health  
Newham Public Health Team

**Jason Strelitz**

Director of Public Health

Newham's health and care system is on a journey to transform how we work with communities, tackling long-standing inequalities in health across our borough. COVID-19 brought the need for us to do this into stark relief. Newham's residents became sicker, there were more deaths and lives were more disrupted than in much of the rest of the country. We know that the response from central Government was not going to meet the needs of the residents in the borough.

One of the most important ways of helping people during the pandemic was to ensure they had the information they needed to stay healthy and safe, to get help as and when they needed it and to live their day to day lives with as low risk as possible (including how to celebrate, how to mourn and how to gather – or not). And we knew that to do this we needed to engage people in a radically different way than we had before.

The COVID-19 Health Champions was born out of this necessity, and

it was inspired by the way that communities had helped each other in previous times of crisis like Hurricane Katrina, the Grenfell tragedy and others. It started with two simple aims: to keep people in Newham informed about COVID-19; and second, to improve, as quickly as possible, how we, as health leaders, helped people stay safe.

## **Some of what has happened since we launched has been expected, for example:**

- We've shared information about a wide range of topics such as the basics of reducing transmission, how to access support when isolating, how to use the NHS Test and Trace app, and most recently, how and why to get a COVID-19 vaccine.
- We've heard back from the community about the need to make some processes easier and smoother, including making it easy to get to PCR testing sites (introducing the first walk-to testing site in London), getting vaccines (introducing community clinics and walk-in clinics before these were national policy), and supporting people who are isolating (with an enhanced grant and support offer).

## We have also had some surprises:

- The amazing connection between individual Champions, as people from all across Newham came together on WhatsApp and / or Zoom, to answer each other's questions, support each other when things were hard and to celebrate when things were joyous.
- The power of visuals alongside words; we've been told that our infographics have made the information we share easier to access and therefore more likely to be passed on.
- How much people want to talk to each other, not just read things. Although translations may be useful, in many communities word of mouth seemed much more powerful.
- That technology can be a force for inclusion and connection, making it easier for people from all over the (large) borough to come together, in a flexible way at times that work for them.



## And there's still a lot we can improve including:

- Making sure that we reach all communities in Newham, including people in their 20s and 30s and younger, and some of the most marginalised and disconnected groups.
- Being able to determine what is and isn't resonating with the wider group, while retaining a really light touch oversight and feedback process.
- Learning what will and won't work when focusing on issues that (seem) less pressing than a pandemic – e.g. reducing smoking, supporting mental well-being or reducing air pollution.
- Making Champions programmes sustainable, allowing for flexibility of engagement and dialogue, while also respecting work-life balance of council staff.

When we set off on this journey we had high ambitions for what we could do in Newham. We feel we have done really well locally, very much thanks to our amazing network of Champions. We are also proud of the impact this programme is having on national policy and in other boroughs, including Ministry of Health, Communities and Local Government investing nearly £24 million into a national programme. Newham hosts the National Champions Co-ordinators Network, and our Champions Lead, Anne, runs London's Champions Co-ordinators programme. The strength of our community connections has contributed to Newham being one of two pilot places for the NHS Test and Trace App, as well as our sector leading work on isolation support and vaccination roll-out.

We are continuously looking to learn and have commissioned this review to help us reflect, tell our story, grow and build a better, healthier more sustainable future for Newham and beyond. We are very proud of the work we have done together as a community and excited to build on the learnings from this evaluation.

**This is a story about the community Champions in Newham. It is about what we learned about that programme and about a new way of working together. COVID-19 was (and is) an unprecedented experience. It affected everyone. It happened very fast. We were not prepared. So future Champions models may look different. But the lessons about how we come together, how local authorities and our partners empower and learn from residents and communities remain relevant. The potential to address some of our most pressing inequalities is inspiring and demands we learn from COVID-19 and move forward together.**



Our efforts to engage residents of all ages, ethnic background and the extent of regular engagement and the innovative communication channels, such as infographics, have worked extremely well. We have managed to engage our diverse community through this initiative as well as our voluntary and faith sector. This led to greater success in terms of reducing transmission of COVID-19 as well as increase in vaccinations.

**Zulfiqar Ali**

Newham Councillor  
Plaistow North

Cabinet Member - Health and Adult Social  
Care (Statutory Lead member)

# THE STORY OF NEWHAM'S COVID-19 CHAMPIONS PROGRAMME

Newham, East London, is a highly dense and diverse borough. It is rich in cultural life, with 75 per cent of the population from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. At the same time, many residents experience significant economic, health and life challenges, such as living on some of the lowest London wages, having high levels of overcrowding and high levels of long term and life limiting health conditions.

Newham Council is committed to a closer, more equal relationship with residents. When Newham's Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz was elected in 2018, she pledged to change the culture, structure and governance of the Council.

Her vision is to make Newham a beacon for participatory democracy and civic participation. She believes residents need to feel part of where they live and have a right to contribute to how decisions are made.

**Newham was hit particularly badly by COVID-19. Engagement with the community was a critical part of the response.**

The conditions in Newham meant COVID-19 was particularly devastating. By May 2020, Newham had one of the highest per-capita death rates from COVID-19 in the UK. As part of the response, leaders in Newham knew they needed to make sure everyone in the community knew how to stay safe and what support was available. The Council also needed to hear from residents about what they were experiencing, in order to put best possible responses in place. The Council needed to reach deeper into communities with complex, ever-changing advice and guidance, not just on COVID-19 safety, but mental health, money advice and anything else that mattered.



One part of the solution was **Newham's COVID-19 Health Champions programme**. The programme aims to have open and honest conversations with communities about the latest COVID-19 advice, the situation in Newham and to hear what people are experiencing and what they need so that policies can be made in response. It aims to gather and share information quickly, responsively, on channels that are simple to use. And officials wanted to do this with a conscious commitment to a shared approach with their residents rather than top-down.

**Newham's COVID-19 Champions programme is a community shaped response to COVID-19 which promotes shared power and collective action.**

There are 500+ COVID-19 Champions. They are connected to thousands of Newham residents. Through zoom, email and WhatsApp, they all remain up to date on the latest COVID-19 guidance and information. They also ask questions and get responses to individual questions.

The value the team has seen from the programme has been considerable, with Champions regularly feeding back that the information they receive is making a difference, and is helping to reduce feelings of isolation and despair.

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

**COVID-19 HEALTH CHAMPIONS**

## BECOME A CHAMPION

stopping the spread of COVID-19

- Do you want to help your community?**  
Anyone living or working in Newham can get involved.
- Become a COVID-19 Health Champion**  
Join our network of local people to help during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Get live updates on COVID-19**  
Receive the latest information and government guidelines on how to stay safe and healthy.
- Spread the word**  
Share this information with your family, friends, work colleagues and the wider community.
- Help us to stop the virus**  
Keeping our communities well informed will help minimise the risk of the virus spreading.

✉ CovidHealthChampions@newham.gov.uk ☎ 020 3373 2777  
🌐 [www.newham.gov.uk/CovidHealthChampions](http://www.newham.gov.uk/CovidHealthChampions)

# SARIFA

Sarifa is active in her community, as a Newham Health Champion and in a number of places that support people with disabilities. She's also a very generous and connected neighbour. She has a range of her own health conditions and her husband and son have acute complex health needs.



## What Sarifa said

Being part of the Champions is inspirational. So many volunteers have been involved, it has been amazing to see how everyone worked as a team, valuing each other's strengths and abilities.

I feel like my knowledge of the disabled community, language and cultural barriers has been valued. I felt I was listened to and our issues were being supported and taken into account. The team, including Jason [Director of Public Health] has been an advocate for me and I am grateful for that.

Because of my disabilities, I was made to feel like a problem in the community for years. The champion's programme hasn't made me feel like a problem, they have listened to me and asked me for advice on how to make the programme more accessible and inclusive.

Even though I have not been able to take part as much as I would have liked, due to my disabilities, the programme has welcomed me and been flexible to my availability. I've been able to drop in and out. And the flexible ways of communicating, from WhatsApp, to email to zoom meetings, have been very accommodating too.

I would like to see more representation. For example I don't feel like the British Sign Language (BSL) community is well represented in the programme. We must seek to represent everyone, no matter how hard it is to accommodate everyone's needs.

# ABOUT THIS REVIEW

This review tells the story of the COVID-19 Champions programme, its successes and lessons for the future, offering reflections and insights at two levels:

## 1. Insights from Champions

A number of findings have been identified from the Champion's perspective. These look at why people became Champions, what they did as Champions, what they felt worked and what could have been or could be improved. It's important to note that these reflections are based on a programme that was developed during the height of the crisis. They reflect how the delivery model developed in response to feedback and what was needed at the time. They offer insights for future programmes that look to engage communities around other public health challenges. However, delivering outside of a crisis may require changes to the response.

## 2. System level lessons

These reflections offer insight at a more strategic level and invite leaders and decision makers to reflect on considerations and questions they might need to explore, if they would like to

develop a Champions model as part of a response to a given public health challenge. Many of these strategic reflections set out the trade-offs and balances that colleagues inside councils, the NHS and other large organisations need to make when choosing how best to partner with communities.

They draw in particular on discussions with members of the Public Health Team in Newham, as well as their partners.

## The Review Process

Newham Council partnered with an external reviewer to support objective, honest and authentic input.

### Over a four month period the reviewer conducted:

- Three interactive focus group style workshops through Zoom (attended by 32 Champions)
- Two online surveys (total sample size 79).
- Six one to one interviews with Champions (The invitation went to all Champions by email and WhatsApp and 6 Champions put themselves forward)



- Interviews and input from the programme lead and Director of Public Health.
- A series of observations, including a two month period on the WhatsApp Broadcast Channel and attending a number of the Champions Drop-in Zoom meetings.
- Data extraction and analytics from WhatsApp groups and Broadcast.

### Demographic data

The Champions programme was set up quickly. In order to engage a diverse network of people during a crisis, only essential gathering of data or monitoring of activity takes place. This was

an intentional and integral part of the programme design, deemed essential for building and fostering trust amongst the community by keeping barriers to entry low.

This open access approach was important to take into consideration at the start of the review process and the reviewer was made aware that this would not be a quantitative evidence based evaluation. There had not been a feasibility study, long-standing fixed model or framework to draw on. The team purposefully did not count actions or register outputs. There were to be no expectations or pressure on Champions to participate in the review, or to disclose information.

As the review progressed it was clear that many of the core Champions and partners wanted to talk about their involvement. However, these core members represent only a fraction of the 500+ Champions in the network, there were many people who continued to stay anonymous. It was hoped that more of the peripheral Champions would come forward to help paint a picture of all the activity taking place across the borough.

As you read this, we ask that you keep in mind that this was a qualitative learning journey and that the intention has been to reflect and learn from experiences. If, for any reason, you feel it does not reflect your experience, or you would like to share your experience, please do get in touch by email [covidhealthChampions@newham.gov.uk](mailto:covidhealthChampions@newham.gov.uk) or call / message 07929792873



**This review has given us time to pause and reflect on the journey so far, to help us see if the Champions programme achieved its goals and to identify lessons for future Champions programmes**

**Anne Pordes Bowers  
Programme Lead**



I have been well informed by the discussion which I disseminate to others. I have become a point of contact on vaccination and the Champions in local campaign groups as well as other groups and the Labour Party groups. I feel part of the community and it has been useful to hear from the public health teams.

I have become a point of contact between the local mayor and our campaign group as well as working with our MP's including East Ham MP Stephen Timms.

### **Champion feedback (survey)**



# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

## Recommendations:

- Listen to and act on issues when the community wants things to happen, not just when the system wants things to happen.
- Manage expectations, create clear boundaries, grow capacity and resource within your team, if you want to sustain this programme going forward.
- Engage the Champions effectively in your recent learning; consider ways of making this review accessible and acknowledge and act on people's input, (wherever possible). This will help foster their ongoing trust and engagement.
- Invite your most engaged Champions to help you explore what other issues of concern exist and how the Community Champions model can continue to work together with the Local Authority to build back better, without taking advantage of their good will.





COVID-19 Health Champions out talking to residents

- Engage with local groups and individuals whose voices have also come to the forefront through this programme. They will help you understand and be responsive to new experiences, vulnerabilities, changing expectations, interests and issues that are emerging now and after COVID-19.
- Acknowledge and recognise the skills that your programme lead brings to the project and consider how they can help you transfer these across your team to build capacity and offer support. Consider asking Champions to help you formulate a 'future job description', to avoid a vacuum if and when she moves on.

## Considerations for the future

- Communities and individuals can mobilise and become effective agents of communication and dialogue. It remains to be seen how this translates into times when the crisis is less visible, universal or immediate.
- Using technologies, like Zoom and WhatsApp alongside infographics, offers a powerful way of connecting with and between communities and a way of enabling the spread of information. However, care needs to be paid to ensure that they don't become narrow and exclusive, and that expectations around responsiveness are realistic and sustainable.
- It is important to consider whether you are wanting deep and narrow engagement or broad and wide, it is hard to achieve both or strike the right balance between the two.
- The support role and requirement to be continuously available became a significant responsibility and is not sustainable for a single programme lead. A system approach is needed.



# JOANNE

Joanne was born and went to school in Newham. She has worked in Further Education for most of her career, as a College Director of Human Resources & Legal Services and Clerk to the Corporation. She then started her own Further Education Sector Governance and Human Resources Consultancy business and is currently Vice Chair of Corporation at Newham Sixth Form College (NewVic).



## What Joanne said

When the pandemic started, I felt very frightened and vulnerable, I feared the virus but felt the more I understood it, the better I would cope. I also wanted to be useful. The online channel was perfect for me, I could contribute to the community and stay safe.

I share the WhatsApp messages, emails and distribute posters when I get them. When I'm out I engage people in conversation. I have also supported the older and more vulnerable in the community.

I'm involved nationally with Further Education governors, so am well positioned to make sure the local education providers are connected to the programme, and that they spread the word to their students. I organised for Anne to present to the Association of Colleges, London Region Chairs & Vice Chairs on what Newham has been doing in order to inspire their action in their locality. I also facilitated a session between a member of the Public Health Team and my education network. Seventy-two questions were fired at the speaker and she answered every one!

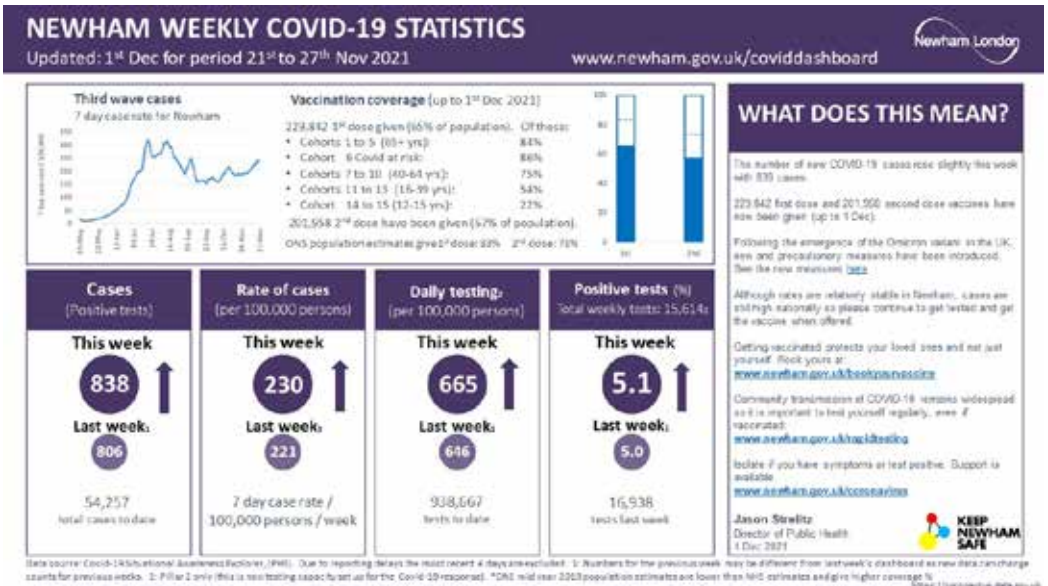
My time and knowledge has been genuinely valued - the team wanted to know what we are hearing, what our concerns are and seek our advice on how to respond. For example, I asked for a weekly dashboard, they listened and acted.

# NEWHAM'S COVID-19 HEALTH CHAMPIONS

The relationship between the Champions and the Public Health Team became something else over time that was unexpected - it became a genuine caring and supportive space. If someone is not feeling great we come together to support them. We share our fears, worries and triumphs, the trust has built up.

There are things to improve: because we are close, when guests attend Zoom sessions without identifying their objective or organisation someone other than Anne leads, without warning, the group feels exposed. The programme also needs to get better at including older people, particularly people who cannot or get on line.

This would not have been a success if it were not for Anne and Jason. Newham owes them a significant debt, they have saved lives and we are incredibly grateful for their support.





From top left across to bottom right: (1) Zubair Bawa, COVID-19 Health Champion (2) Newham Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz, COVID-19 Health Champion (3) COVID-19 information table (4) COVID-19 Health Champions sharing the programme with Cabinet Office officials (5) Members of The Redeemed Christian Church of God giving out Champions infographics (6) Newham residents talking to COVID-19 Champions



# INSIGHTS FROM CHAMPIONS



I have access to a wide network of individuals from my community, and wanted to see if I could make a difference by knowledge sharing and making individuals whose first language isn't English aware of critical information related to the virus.

I wanted to get involved and do something to help turn the tide on the pandemic and this was something I could do while working from home

**Champion feedback (survey)**

# WHY DID YOU BECOME A CHAMPION?

To be better informed and to help others

Most people said they joined the programme to become better informed and to share information with their community, including family, friends and colleagues. Many also said that they wanted to 'do something to help' and/or felt it was their duty. Some Champions said they had detailed knowledge of COVID-19 and wanted to contribute and shape the services, as well as challenge and query decisions that were being made.



I joined the programme as I had been doing volunteering in the community since 2012. I knew lots of people in the community who are elderly and I wanted to help those who would find it difficult to get about and get information.

I wanted to stay up to date with information - both nationally and locally so that I can assist my clients. I also wanted an opportunity to challenge and query decisions so that I could shape the services.

Because I had detailed knowledge of COVID legislation and thought I might be able to use that knowledge to help others.

I felt it was my duty as a councillor.

Being on furlough at home I wanted to help the community and my church congregation be better informed and survive the pandemic.

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COVID-19  
HEALTH  
CHAMPIONS

Help stop the spread of COVID-19

Live or work in Newham?  
Want to help stop the spread of coronavirus?  
Become a COVID-19 Health Champion

REGISTER TO BECOME A CHAMPION

www.newham.gov.uk/CovidHealthChampions  
CovidHealthChampions@newham.gov.uk  
020 3373 2777



# Infographics were used in public as well as with Champions





# WHAT DO YOU DO AS A CHAMPION?

## Share information in ways that work for my community

**94% of people said they share the information on WhatsApp, 85% said they use it in conversation. 52% said they send information on by email.**

The review demonstrated that Champions are sharing the information they receive far and wide, including via their own digital platforms; such as WhatsApp, email, Facebook and Twitter. Some Champions also shared the information via traditional communication methods, including word of mouth, adding to local notice boards and printing out and passing on. Feedback highlighted the value of easy to share digital formats like JPEGs, as well as an ongoing need for more printed materials to be supplied by the delivery partner.



**I share some information with my school WhatsApp group. I share information with my co-workers and friends and family. I have used the information myself. I convinced three people to take the vaccine using the information I took from the Zoom sessions.**

**I share the information with my local food bank.**

**I print all the info and post it in my local church, supermarket and front of my house for anybody to stop and ask. I also talked to neighbours, family and friends.**

**I share information on the residents' Facebook group for my building.**

**I make contributions to the WhatsApp discussions, have been interviewed on local radio about the Champions, have referred to them in articles I have written. I helped on the test kit dissemination stalls.**

# OLUWASEGUN & KRYSTIAN

Oluwasegun teaches boxing at one of Forest Gate's longest running Kickboxing clubs. He teaches people of all ages to box. He is also a personal trainer and tailors boxing coaching sessions for people in the community. He joined the Champions with his son Krystian.



## What Olu said

The Champions programme has galvanised us to be a common voice in the community whereby we fight back against COVID-19 and the divide of opinion that comes with that.

The infographics work really well, they are the silent salesperson, spreading the word in an inclusive and accessible way.

The information must always be scientifically proven, accurate and provided quickly and reactively (like Usain Bolt) if we are to beat conspiracy and false information. But if you get it wrong then apologize quickly and move on, transparency is key.

## Star Learner and Vaccine Peer Support

As well as attending the zoom meetings, taking part in the WhatsApp group and sharing the COVID-19 information that comes through, myself and my young son put forward an idea of set up a Star Learner Quiz which includes 10 key questions for young people to answer. As reward they can receive a Star Learner Certificate. By doing this they become better educated around COVID-19.


I'm also part of the Vaccine Peer Support Programme, which involves Champions being paired up with people in the community to answer questions about the vaccine.

The Star Learner Certificate and the Vaccine Peer Supporters are results of the Champions programme. They start out as ideas during our meetings, they are then activated by the Champions with the support and endorsement of the Public Health Team.

We need to stay focused on COVID-19. COVID-19 isn't over, there are variants, even if the risk is reduced. We should stay focused and be ready to assemble when we are needed again. If there are other missions, then start a new group and invite people to join.

COVID-19 HEALTH CHAMPIONS


YOUNG HEALTH CHAMPIONS





## STAR LEARNER QUIZ


Test your knowledge about staying safe in COVID-19


- Which one of these is **NOT** helping you to keep safe from COVID-19?
 


A  
  
 Washing your hands


B  
  
 Wearing a face covering


C  
  
 Not sharing food or drinks


D  
  
 Eating healthy


E  
  
 Getting exercise


F  
  
 Having a donut
- How long should you wash your hands for?
 


A  
  
 5 seconds


B  
  
 10 seconds


C  
  
 10 minutes

D  
  
 20 seconds
- To limit the spread of the virus, how far away should we stay from people we don't live with or people we live with who are vulnerable?
 

A  
  
 1 metre

B  
  
 2 metres

C  
  
 10 metres

D  
  
 15 metres
- Why do we wear face coverings, wash our hands and keep our distance?
 

A Because COVID is spread through small droplets from one person to another and these things help stop them from spreading


B Because everyone looks better with their mouth and nose covered

C Because hugging is so 2019

D Because we need to give more money to people who make soap
- You don't have to follow social distancing rules if you're in a shop or a place of worship.
 

A  
 True

B  
 False



People at the Heart of Everything We Do


- Why do we open windows and doors in our homes during COVID-19 (even if it's cold)?
 


A To hear our neighbours singing


B To test out our best hats and scarves


C To suck the virus out of the room


D To bring fresh air and make the COVID-19 droplets spread out and move away
- What do you do if you have symptoms of COVID-19?
 


A  
  
 Stay at home


B  
  
 Stay away from anyone you live with who is over 60


C  
  
 Stay away from anyone you live with who is not very well


D  
  
 Get tested as soon as possible


E  
  
 Tell the people you have been near


F  
  
 All of the above
- If you or someone you live with test positive for COVID-19, how many days should you stay at home for?
 


A  
  
 10 days


B  
  
 17 days


C  
  
 12 days


D  
  
 20 days
- How many jabs does someone need to be fully vaccinated?
 


A  
  
 whatever you want


B  
  
 2


C  
  
 4

D  
  
 1
- Why is it good to have the vaccine?
 

A  
  
 People get less ill from COVID-19

B  
  
 COVID-19 is passed around less


C  
  
 It means there will be fewer mutations

D  
  
 All of the above

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_



If you or anyone in your family has questions about COVID-19 call the Newham helpline on 020 7473 8711 or email covidhelp@community-links.org. The helpline is open between 9am – 7pm, Monday to Sunday.



**COVID-19  
STAR  
LEARNER**

AWARDED TO:

*Jason Stralitz*  
Jason Stralitz  
Director of Public Health, London Borough of Newham

*K15-0*  
Kyrillan Suliaga-Oyeniba  
COVID-19 Health Champion

for successfully completing the COVID-19 Star Learner test.

011



I know that the COVID-19 Champions Group has saved lives - even if it has saved one life (by encouraging someone to take the vaccine / by encouraging an elderly member of the community to self-isolate / by giving out numbers where help can be obtained for accommodation) - lives have been saved. No matter what the social status, hand on my heart I can say 'help was there'.

**Champion feedback (survey)**

# WHAT WORKED WELL?

## Simple messaging from a trusted source

**92% said the programme is good or excellent in providing a space for open and honest conversations between the public health service and the community.**

The review demonstrated that the programme enabled open and honest conversations with local communities, sharing the latest COVID-19 advice, the situation in Newham, what people were experiencing and what they needed.

Communicating with people in the same way as they communicate in their everyday lives was also evidently very powerful.



**It's been a useful filter, with so much information out there, the simple messaging took away that complexity for a lot of people, a trusted source of clear and up-to-date information.**

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**The programme has become a widely recognised source of reliable information, and a space for asking questions, signposting, and allaying fears/uncertainties of people.**

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**The dynamic between residents and the Council, recognising and being sensitive to what Champions feel is in or outside their remit – mutually beneficial.**

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## DEAN

Dean grew up in Newham and is involved in a number of community initiatives, including being a member of the Neighbourhood Assembly, Local Police Ward Panel and the host on Revive FM, one of Newham's community radio stations.



### What Dean said

We have one of the most challenging communication environments in the world here in Newham, with the highest diversity index in the UK (over 200 languages and dialects spoken). Diverse cultural differences also exist, including a real fear of the authorities, shame around health issues and access to internet. The Champions programme is innovatively breaking down barriers to communication though building up the social fabric of our borough and creating a truly inter-dependent model of support between the community and Public Health service.

This is the latest step in a long history of innovation in public health in Newham.

During this COVID-19 time people have felt very isolated and lonely, particularly those who are vulnerable and shielding, traditional meeting places and meeting rituals have not been available. Beyond just information sharing, this programme has offered the community a support network and real sense of connection.

The Newham Champions Programme has worked really hard to build up the trust in the community though, in just one year this programme has gone from zero to an incredibly powerful engagement programme.

We need to make the information even more accessible to those not on the internet. We could be making better use of council notice boards and offering more printed materials for shops, schools etc.



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of Everything We Do



# ન્યૂહૅમ તમારા ચહેરા પર આવરણ પહેરો



જ્યારે તમે જાહેર સ્થળો પર આંતરિક ભાગમાં હોવ ત્યારે ચહેરાનું આવરણ પહેરવું ફરજિયાત છે.

એકમાત્ર અપવાદો આ મુજબ છે:

- આવરણ ન પહેરવું તે તમારે માટે તબીબી રીતે જરૂરી હોય
- હોઠના હલનચલન દ્વારા વાંચીને સમજાવવામાં મદદ મળે તે માટે
- 11 વર્ષથી નાના બાળકો
- શાળામાં
- જ્યારે રેસ્ટોરન્ટમાં બેઠા હોવ અને ભોજન લેતા હોવ ત્યારે
- સંભાળ અથવા તબીબી સારવાર મેળવતી વખતે



ચહેરાનું આવરણ નહિ પહેરવા માટેના દંડ

ચહેરાનું આવરણ પહેરવું તે કાનૂની જરૂરિયાત છે. જો તમે ન પહેરો તો તમને £200 નો દંડ થઈ શકે છે.



તમારે ચહેરાનું આવરણ પહેરવું જોઈએ

- જ્યારે ઘરની બહાર સામાજિક અંતર જાળવી શકતા ન હોવ
- સંવેદનશીલ અથવા સુરક્ષિત બનાવવામાં આવેલ વ્યક્તિની આસપાસ હોવ ત્યારે



ચહેરાના આવરણ તરીકે કઈ વસ્તુઓ કામ કરી શકે છે?

ચહેરાનાં આવરણો:

- તમારા મોં અને નાકને આવરી લેતું હોય તે આવશ્યક છે
- કપડાંના ઓછામાં ઓછા 2 સ્તરો ધરાવતું હોવું જોઈએ (આદર્શ રીતે 3)
- કાનમાં ભરાવવાની અથવા માથાની પાછળ બાંધવાની વ્યવસ્થા ધરાવતું હોવું જોઈએ
- સ્કાર્ફ અને તેના જેવી જ કપડાંની બીજી વસ્તુઓને પણ ચહેરાના આવરણ તરીકે પણ ઉપયોગમાં લઈ શકાય છે
- તમે તમારી જાતે બનાવી શકો છો: અહીં જુઓ

[www.bigcommunitysew.co.uk](http://www.bigcommunitysew.co.uk)

002 (09-20)





Infographics have proved an absolute lifesaver, in particular to those that don't speak English.

They are excellent, put together succinctly and one doesn't have to carry out endless searches on Google to obtain information.

The weekly sessions are extremely useful - safe platform to voice concerns without feeling judged.

### **Champion feedback (survey)**

I felt listened to when I asked and I got lots of material to share. The infographics were great for sharing with people who don't have access to computers.

### **Champion feedback (survey)**

# WHAT WORKED WELL?

## Effective communication channels and use of technology

**98% said the programme is good or excellent in sharing on channels that are simple and easy to use.**

**92% said the programme is good or excellent in gathering and sharing fact based information quickly and responsively.**

The methods of communication were both efficient and effective.

The team were able to gather and share information quickly, responsively, and on channels that were simple to access and use.

The Champions that attended the zoom drop-in sessions expressed that they liked Zoom – even people who had never used it before.

The messages had a direct impact – Champions received, then acted upon them.



COVID-19 Health Champions regular zoom calls



**The WhatsApp messaging broadcast service is brilliant – what more can you ask for than up-to-date messages as and when news breaks.**

**The Zoom meetings are always worthwhile. The quality of contributors at focussed sessions (e.g. on vaccination) has been amazing.**

# WHAT WORKED WELL?

## Use of visuals and infographics



COVID-19 Health Champion sharing poster about one to one conversations about COVID-19 vaccine

Infographics are very well received. Even if there is still quite a lot of text, people fed back that the pictures and clean design make the information accessible, calmer and easier to engage with.

“

The infographics have been utterly superb – me and my community networks rely on them weekly. My sources have stopped going to BBC and other major news sources and literally rely on the infographics for weekly doses of important information they need to be aware of.

The infographics are very good and the communication networks are very informative.

Infographics have been tremendously helpful for understanding messaging at a glance rather than waving through or scrolling down on folios of information/data. The extension of using other forms of online facilities and functions including audio/visual, virtual, social media, websites, has enabled far greater

infographics were great for sharing with people who don't have access to computers.

I felt listened to when I asked and I got lots of material to share. The infographics were great for sharing with people who don't have access to computers.

I felt listened to when I asked and I got lots of material to share. The infographics were great for sharing with people who don't have access to computers. reach combined with hard copy material to get to people less techy or prefer more tactile printed material.

Newham London  
People of the Heart  
at Everything We Do

KEEP NEWHAM SAFE

COVID-19 HEALTH CHAMPIONS

## RATES ARE HIGH IF YOU GO OUT

- Stay 2 metres apart.
- Avoid crowded spaces.
- Wear your face covering.
- Sanitise your hands after you touch things.
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home.

2 METRES

Protect the people you love

COVID-19 HEALTH CHAMPIONS

KEEP NEWHAM SAFE

Newham London

## THE VACCINE IS WORKING

COVID-19 infections fell by **65%**  
after a first dose of either  
the Oxford-AstraZeneca  
or Pfizer-BioNTech  
vaccines

[www.newham.gov.uk/bookyourvaccine](http://www.newham.gov.uk/bookyourvaccine)

People of the Heart  
at Everything We Do



Being part of the COVID Champions experience has empowered me in incredible ways. It's enabled me to become the 'go to' person for comms around COVID and I've been able to get my questions answered quickly and promptly without any judgement being made.

It's also allowed me to share community concerns, particularly those affecting the ethnic minority communities and not feel 'embarrassed' by voicing such concerns.

**Champion feedback (survey)**

# WHAT WORKED WELL?

## Ownership of the programme and resident empowerment



The review suggested that the programme empowers residents to be the communication hubs for their own communities.

That it provided a structure through which residents could relay messages and information from public health professionals.

It also enabled residents to own the messages, in the most part trusting they had scientific credibility.



Many of the Champions have been the ears and eyes of Newham, updating Public Health with the key updates from their areas and feeding relevant priorities to the main body which could work for many other issues (in future).

It has made me feel informed and ready to answer any questions asked come whether that's friends, family or colleagues. It has also made me feel part of the community and the drive to help make things better.

The Champions have become a widely recognised source of reliability for asking questions, signposting, and allaying fears/uncertainties of people around what they should or should not do.

It made me feel proud of myself for doing my part in the most uncertain and difficult time for my community.

It has made me feel part of a group that tries to help the community.



The opportunity should not pass without extend esteem gratitude to the Champions lead Officers, Newham Council, and the Director of Public Health and his staff which has been deeply appreciated and not taken for granted.

Anne was amazing. In the last year we have all laughed and cried together in our drop-ins.

**Champion feedback (interview)**

# WHAT WORKED WELL?

## A visible, consistent and supportive co-ordinator and team



COVID-19 Health Champion lead Anne Pordes Bowers

Champions suggested that having a reliable and motivated team with one consistent visible co-ordinator across all the channels was really important.

Authenticity and openness mattered to people.

Honesty, being up front and accepting when mistakes had been made, encouraged Champions to trust the process and work in the way they wanted or needed to.



Anne has been absolutely tremendous - I put my hats off to her commitment, professionalism and candid openness. Anne is 'one of us'. She is neutral, has a wonderful infectious personality and understands the issues which all communities are going through.

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The weekly sessions are extremely useful – safe platform to voice concerns without feeling judged.

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For most participants, the psychological 'group' support and access to the correct information to share.

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I am constantly amazed by the energy, innovation, knowledge and creativity of the Public Health team. So personable and so incredibly good at their jobs. Bravo.

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These programmes have made a real difference and there is a need to maximise involvement and engagement of such groups as part of our wider community engagement and partnership and as part of our ongoing innovative policies.

These groups can play a vital role in working with the Council to address wider health determinants.

### **Zulfiqar Ali**

Newham Councillor  
Plaistow North

Cabinet Member - Health and Adult Social  
Care (Statutory Lead member)

# WHY DID NEWHAM NEED CHAMPIONS?

## Diversity and lack of trust in systems

**Strong communities, with trust in each other, and at the same time less trust in the system, makes a community oriented response really powerful**

Champions said Newham needed the programme in part because of the very diverse and transient community. This type of partnership meant important information was getting to everyone, including people who potentially might not access information due to language or cultural barriers, relationships to 'the system' or limited access to technology.

Those involved also felt that, in an economically challenged place like Newham, building on the skills and knowledge of local people helped bring the community and services together, to reduce inequalities and build back community structure.



**It's very important in a more deprived area like Newham where community transmission is crucial...You can't rely on 'experts' to spread information in a place like Newham - this programme allows people like me to spread the message more broadly.**

**Newham has dismantled its community structures over decades. Underfunded community centres, sold off for housing. The Champions programme is building this community network back up.**

**Some people in Newham don't have IT access and this provided a route for everybody, irrespective of level of understanding of IT, so people didn't get left out of the system.**

**This is a population who do not engage with the system. This reaches out in all kinds of ways that fit with the community.**



Being a COVID-19 Champion made me feel proud of myself for doing my part in the most uncertain and difficult time for my community.

**Champion feedback (Survey)**



It has made me feel like I am helping my friend, family members of my local community.

**Champion feedback (Survey)**

# ANY UNEXPECTED BENEFITS?

## Building cohesion – and shaping national policy

When the team launched the programme they say they hoped for good relationships between the Council and individual residents.

Feedback suggests that the programme went even further and became an important, supportive and meaningful network for many local residents, helping to reduce their sense of isolation and loneliness and providing an opportunity to connect during an otherwise extremely difficult time.

This was particularly true for the Champions who were regular participants in the Zoom meetings and / or in the WhatsApp Groups.

Champions have also set up a number of ways to communicate with each other on different topics, facilitated but not instigated by the delivery team. For example, 100+ Champions are now part of a new WhatsApp group where people are answering each other's questions, exchanging stories and sharing in each other's sadness and joy over the past year.

These spin off groups have raised an important question for the

Council in terms of how they might facilitate resident's appetite for involvement going forward.



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**During this COVID time people have felt very isolated and lonely, particularly those who are vulnerable and shielding. This programme has offered the community a support network and real sense of connection.**

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**Being part of the Champions Group has also made me feel inclusive, part of a movement to bring positive outcomes and overall been an excellent opportunity to make a difference.**

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**It's been worthwhile being a Health champion in Newham and helping to save as many lives through communication and people working together to support the community and cope with the lockdown and keeping ourselves and others safe.**

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Although we did well to engage such a wide section of the community, some groups are under-represented, due to language, digital, cultural or mobility barriers.

We could address this with things like: face to face contact in community facilities, videos / translating things in video format; zoom sessions at multiple times including times that suit key groups i.e. parents / working hours and always take into consideration who you are missing, not who you are including.

### **Champion feedback (Survey)**

# WHAT COULD BE BETTER?

## Learning and improving

There were of course things that could be better in the programme and the links between the Council team and the Champions.

### **It could be even more inclusive**

While demographic data was not collected, the review suggests there were some under-represented groups in the network. For the Deaf Community for example, efforts were made to transcribe on zoom and a BSL interpreter did join on a couple of occasions but it was still challenging. Translated services were also difficult to secure.

### **More acknowledgement**

Champions suggested that at times there was a need for more recognition of the value of Champions. More effort could be made to open up training for different roles. There was appetite for better identification and use of the skills and knowledge of Champions.

### **Set clear ground rules**

Both the team and the Champions said at times there was a need to be more directive about what was and wasn't allowed particularly on WhatsApp. A Code of Conduct was developed and deployed.

### **Make sure information is always right**

Champions also noted that at times there were mistakes in the information. They acknowledged that this was often due to the team working very responsively, but they said mistakes led to less confidence in the programme.

### **Going beyond COVID-19**

Champions also fed back that they did not appreciate it when guests were invited to the zoom calls unannounced or when unrelated services or initiatives were promoted to them. They also said they did not want the Council to assume the Champions would continue to offer their time to other topics post-COVID-19.



The pandemic brought out such generosity of spirit from people across the country and this was heavily evident in Newham. There was a blitz spirit across the borough (and the country). But this ebbs and flows.

During the programme we have seen people less able to participate as they go back to their usual routines. Communities seem less worried and less interested in information about how to stay safe. Champions also tell us that many in their community are fed up of hearing about COVID-19. This may extend to Champions themselves eventually.

We need to ask ourselves if this type of programme will work when not in a crisis.

**Anne Pordes Bowers**  
**Programme Co-ordinator**

# EVOLUTION OF THE MODEL

## Informing other models of engagement

The programme has already branched out into new activity, including:

- Vaccine peer supporters who are members of the community, trained to have individual conversations with people.
- Question and answer sessions for staff, community groups, faith organisations and the public.
- Community grant giving, providing investment into small and medium size community organisations that have reach where our other work doesn't.
- Telling individual stories publicly, making visible the journeys people take to their vaccine decisions.
- A commitment to working in this way with our communities – and excitement around continuing the journey together.

Newham London  
People of the Heart  
of Everything We Do

KEEP NEWHAM SAFE

COVID-19 HEALTH CHAMPIONS

## BE A VACCINE PEER SUPPORTER

**How it works:**

- Talk to people who have questions or concerns about the vaccine
- Give the time you can – no minimum requirement
- 2 hours of training on peer support & information about the vaccine
- Regular support after training

Training sessions from 27 January

Contact  
covidhealthchampions@newham.gov.uk  
or msg / call 07929 792873



# NEWHAM'S COVID-19 HEALTH CHAMPIONS



From top left across to bottom right: (1) COVID-19 Vaccine Champion Lanre Odunlami having his COVID-19 vaccine (2) COVID-19 Vaccine Champion Nicole Morris and her daughter holding up their champion badges (3) COVID-19 Health Champion Hillary Briffa (4) COVID-19 Health Champion Ronke Okonkwo (5) COVID-19 Health Champion Adyaan Khan (6) Vaccine Poster Competition winner 12-18 year group, Nawailah Makardam, Plashet School



# SYSTEM LEVEL LESSONS

# SYSTEM LEVEL LESSONS

## Champions programmes as public health intervention

The previous section set out the feedback and lessons from Champions themselves. It highlighted some of the operational insights useful to anyone seeking to develop or implement a similar type of programme. There are also some strategic lessons that Newham has learned and that have emerged from this programme.

### Meet people where they are not where the system wants them to be

The feedback from Champions shows that there is real value in meeting people where they are at and in the ways that work best for them, over doing what works for the system – and doing this with flexibility, authenticity and openness.



COVID-19 Health Champions Katie Blake and Newham Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz

### Connection into senior decision making is crucial

From the outset senior leaders involved in the programme, particularly the Director of Public Health, aimed for feedback from Champions to inform local COVID-19 policy. The Co-ordinator, Anne Pordes Bowers was chosen in part for her experience and capacity to listen and translate what was coming from the community into policy and practice implications. Opportunities were put into the pandemic management infrastructure to allow for these themes to be



Covid-19 outreach table handing out test kits for residents

shared – e.g. Champions Feedback was a standing item on the public health team's regular Outbreak Management Group meetings. This was critical for creating the two-way dialogue and impact that evidenced the Council's commitment to listen and respond. In other Champions programmes, this direct line to senior leaders was absent and the capacity of communities to influence policy was subsequently reduced.

**As Newham considers the future of Champions models, it should look carefully at the balance between Champions as mouthpieces of the system versus Champions as enablers of their community's knowledge and agency.**

## **The line between community as mouthpiece and community as enabled is thin – and sometimes hard to see**

It was made clear from the outset that the role of the Champions is to share information that has been produced by Newham Council (usually the Public Health team). It's not a free-for-all programme where Champions – as Champions – can share whatever they want. There is an expectation that Champions are spreading information endorsed by the Public Health Team. But this is where the team says the control stops; the way in which Champions share the information is up to them. As the feedback shows, people have used all sorts of mechanisms to share the information. How often they share, who they share with is all up to them. If something comes through on email or WhatsApp or in a Zoom call that an individual Champion doesn't think is relevant or important to his or her community, then there is no requirement or expectation to share. And the narrative they put around the information is also left to the Champions.

In one instance an outside partner was given permission to invite Champions to make scripted videos about a particular part of the health system. This was rejected by the 20 or so Champions at the zoom call for two reasons: one was that a script put words into people's mouths. This is different than giving people infographics or videos of other people's words' but leaving them with the agency on how to use these and how to describe them to those they share with. Two, this felt like a part of the health system the Champions didn't trust. They felt they were being asked to say someone else's words about someone else's priority.

Language reflects power and responsibility and so should be examined: this became particularly apparent when communications started to shift into discussions around the COVID-19 vaccine. Phrases like 'vaccine hesitant' and 'low take-up' were felt to be allocating responsibility and in some cases, blame for not having the vaccine onto the communities. Engagement with Champions (and others) quickly showed how much vaccine take-up was predicated on trust of science, of the UK health system and of the political leaders advocating the vaccine – and that where trust was low there were very legitimate and understandable reasons for this.

The public health team quickly and consciously shifted to language of question and query, emphasising that any question was legitimate and deserving of a full and honest answer. The team was transparent about what was not known about vaccines, particularly in the early days. This was noticed by Champions and by others who joined special vaccine question and answer sessions. The team reported back that Champions said they felt listened to and that their concerns respected and legitimated.

**The issue of language and respect will come up again and again, and is one that officials should continue to pay attention to, question and seek to challenge.**

## **Digital can be a tool for inclusion**

For a long time, the use of digital tools for engagement has come with big warnings around exclusion and concerns about leaving people out or behind who have no access to digital. But what Newham found was that digital can also be a tool for people who might not otherwise have engaged in something to be able to participate. The social distancing rules forced activities to go on line, particularly pushing for the use of Zoom as a way for people to meet. What the Champions programme showed was that this can be a way for people who find it hard to get out (even in non-COVID-19 times) or for people who are very busy and juggling multiple demands (e.g. child care) to participate in conversations and community meetings, while balancing those other demands and requirements.

The power of WhatsApp to support pace and responsiveness has been discussed earlier; the point here is that digital also allowed for people who otherwise may not have participated to engage.

As life returns to 'normal' and face-to-face becomes possible, Newham Council should consider when and how to retain some of the benefits of digital tools – while also incorporating face-to-face activities.

Investment is also needed to help rebuild hard copy processes: the programme showed that digital is not enough; that there are times when it is important for information to be provided in hard copy resources to people. In fact, Newham Public Health team has now invested heavily in Outreach Tables, with hard copy leaflets and posters with QR codes around things like testing, vaccine appointments, support for isolating etc. The resources to do this including practical things like designers, printers and distribution mechanisms have needed to be sourced to support the activity. These types of outreach tools have been cut from most local authority and NHS organisations. But as resources become increasingly constrained in Local Authorities, public providers are likely to have to make difficult decisions about if, how and where to resource hard copy materials. The resources to do this including practical things like



designers, printers and distribution mechanisms have needed to be sourced to support the activity. These types of outreach tools have been cut from most local authority and NHS organisations. But as resources become increasingly constrained in Local Authorities, public providers are likely to have to make difficult decisions about if, how and where to resource hard copy materials.

### Balancing different priorities

**The COVID-19 Champions programme evolved organically since the start of the pandemic, with the model remaining relatively consistent. This chance to reflect has identified some areas where future programmes might want to make choices or consider the balance between various parts of the design. This is not about providing the 'right' answers but more to offer considerations that may support decisions going forward.**

### Attention to a few at a deep level vs. many at a shallow level

During the course of the programme a 'core' group of Champions emerged in two places: a group of 15-20 people who regularly attend the zoom sessions, and; around 10 Champions who primarily contribute to the WhatsApp Group (of 100 members). Only one or two core Champions are frequently on both zoom and WhatsApp, the remaining 350-380 Champions are considered 'active' by the team, as they do occasionally send in questions / respond to messages, but they do not have so much input.

This questions how much of what 'the Champions' are saying is representative of what is going on more widely, and it means that a lot of time is being offered to the few instead of focusing on the many. The Co-ordinator has fed back that working closely with these core members has created some deep and personal relationships and they have offered rich input, but that they may have disproportionate influence on the insight into the needs across Newham.

The Zoom group in particular could feel 'cliquey' and unwelcoming to new people, which would be a shame.



**New programmes will need to consider how to strike the right balance between deep and narrow engagement versus broad and wide.**

### **Setting and sustaining a pace of engagement while managing resources and capacity**

COVID-19 was, we hope, a unique moment in time. The pace information was needed and how quickly it was changing was unprecedented. The impact of that information on people's lives was immediate and the sense of crises palpable. The public health team and their partners worked continuously and tirelessly. The Co-ordinator recalls multiple out of hour conversations with the infographic designer, public health colleagues and NHS colleagues on everything from new national policy (e.g. when Christmas was 'cancelled') or responding to individual questions and needs (e.g. when someone wanted to get a 2nd dose vaccine early to visit their gravely ill child). The use of a WhatsApp Broadcast also added to the constant and singular dependence on the co-ordinator, as the technology only allowed for one person to send and receive messages, which is not sustainable.

About half-way into the programme a Code of Conduct was developed for the WhatsApp groups, setting boundaries around the time people could post and expectations on the pace of response. This helped with bounding the work into more 'normal' work hours. The Co-ordinator, colleagues and champions do emphasise, however, that responsiveness has helped to build trust.

**New programmes will need to consider how to set boundaries and expectations around engagement processes, with attention to work-life balance and to the responsiveness that builds trust.**

### **Creating new pathways for access while not creating a new form of privilege**

As the vaccine programme rolled out, the Co-ordinator noticed a new aspect to the programme; individual Champions would get in touch about individuals in their networks, who were having trouble accessing the vaccine for various reasons. The Co-ordinator would share these, particularly with local NHS colleagues, who would then provide personalised

intervention to address the issue. Examples including a few people who needed vaccines early / without appointments to visit very ill relatives (once travel was allowed), people who were, for various reasons, having trouble booking into a vaccine clinic, people who were unsure how to book an appointment etc. Newham Council, in partnership with local NHS colleagues, had set up a dedicated vaccine support line, but these individual questions were also fielded to the NHS directly. Someone stepped in and helped out.

For the individuals who benefited it was fantastic, the feedback was incredibly positive and grateful. It was also evident that this level of support helped to build trust between the individual and the public system and it felt nice for the NHS and Council staff who had limited contact with the public, so it offered a sense of reward that they had personally helped someone. However, it also meant that those with access to the Champions communication routes (mainly WhatsApp) were getting personalised service and privileges not available to all. There are therefore questions about what this means about equity of service, access and response.



COVID-19 Health Champion  
Elizabeth Osei

**In future programmes, Newham may want to think about boundaries around providing individualised support and responses and / or acknowledge the benefits of this type of involvement but also the risks.**

### **Balancing authenticity with professionalism and capacity**

As the feedback from Champions shows, the personal connection particularly between the Co-ordinator, the Director of Public Health and the most involved Champions was important. There is a sense that everyone is 'on the same team.' And this has been carefully cultivated with some

personal information being shared by officials with Champions and vice versa. But there are challenges with this way of engaging; some people actively do not want to share themselves in their workplace and want to keep a – legitimate – strong line between who they are at work and who they are at home. And as the Co-ordinator in particular reflected, becoming personally connected to a wide community group created a significant demand on her time outside of work hours. So, while this type of personal connection does underpin trust and connection, it should be balanced with how sustainable it is for staff and colleagues.

**In future programmes, Newham may want to think about boundaries around relationships, who is visible and connecting to the community balanced with the power of consistent voice and presence to build trust.**



The last 14 months have taught us a lot and the pandemic is not yet over, so maintaining what has been done to-date by the Champions and those responsible for initiating the programme should continue.

Unanticipated issues will arise and the learning progress will continue – it will always be ‘work-in-progress’ so building on the experience, expertise and skills sets that have come together and tweaking to meet future needs from a Public Health perspective is the best way forward for the Champions on a sustainable basis for the future.

### **Champion feedback (survey)**

# QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMES

## What to consider

Champions programmes have become part of Newham Public Health team's toolkit. They are one of the interventions available to address health inequalities. Other areas of work, like smoking cessation, mental health support, air quality and healthy diet are all considering how this model of engagement and dialogue could help achieve outcomes and reduce inequalities.

Future Champions models may however need to be quite different from the COVID-19 Champions. The nature of the challenges are different – longer standing, less visibly pressing and in some cases (e.g. smoking) less universal in their application and need to respond. There are also new actors and infrastructures now in Newham, particularly around relationships between the public health team and the voluntary sector, which has become stronger and more collaborative as a result of COVID-19.

## The questions that programmes are starting to ask include

- What problems are you trying to solve: e.g. is the need around reach of information and information gaps for particular communities, or is it about hearing from communities and working together more?
- How do community members want to receive information: do they want direct engagement with experts or to talk to friends / neighbours, or family?
- How specific or technical is the information – and how often does it change: is this information really detailed and specific or is it easy to explain, and does it change frequently, as policy did in the early days of COVID-19, or is it relatively static?
- How important is community or connection? In some cases bringing people together who are passionate about a topic is a core priority, while in others the engagement needs to be more individualised and one to one.

# ANNEX A: ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

## What is the The COVID-19 Health Champions programme?

The COVID-19 Health Champions programme network of 500+ residents who receive up to date on the latest advice about COVID-19. Through this network the Council is able to keep thousands of people in the community informed of the latest advice and guidance.

A champion can be anyone who lives or works in Newham. They might be that person who everyone knows and trusts, someone who just wants to receive information for themselves and their family, other services in Newham (e.g. libraries) and other public services teams, such as the COVID-19 Response Service, who want to share the information with the people who use their services.

## Why was the programme set up?

Newham was heavily hit by COVID-19 with one of the highest rates of infection, hospitalisation and death across the country. The factors that brought this about include overcrowded housing, high levels of front-line workers, insecure employment and lack of trust or access to health services.

Newham Council found itself dealing with increasingly difficult challenges and choices, issues they knew would profoundly affect the health and well-being of their local residents, exacerbating existing inequalities and potentially creating new ones.

To counter this, the Council recognised they would need to strengthen their community connections, reaching deep and wide to help people navigate the complex, ever-changing advice and guidance. They also knew they would need the support of their local residents; to offer first hand ideas and experiences, help to share information and take action.

The Champions programme was just one of a number of initiatives that the Council put into place to support its residents, protect its communities and enable people to take measures to protect themselves.

## How does someone become a Champion?

People find out about the programme through word of mouth, via the Council website or by seeing information around the borough.

They sign up through a web form, email or by calling a dedicated number. All they are asked to share is their name, email address and mobile number and their home address so they can receive information and a joining pack with a badge, sticker and magnet. No other demographic or background information is asked for. Once someone has signed up they receive the latest information about COVID-19 by email and WhatsApp.

## What are Champions invited to do?

- Champions are invited to share the information they receive with anyone in their community, however they want.
- They also are invited to let the Council know what is and isn't working through various information channels and engagement opportunities.

## How the Champions network works

The COVID-19 Champions network is relatively straightforward. Anyone who lives or works in Newham can sign up through a web form, via email or by calling a dedicated number. All they are asked to share is their name, their email address and mobile number (to receive the information) and their home address so they can receive a joining pack with a badge, sticker and magnet. No other demographic or background information is asked for.

Once someone has signed up they receive regular information by email and WhatsApp. They are also invited to join the weekly Zoom drop in sessions which are hosted by the Champions Co-ordinator, with guest appearances from members of the public health team including the Director of Public Health.

Champions are also encouraged to share any feedback through the same channels, WhatsApp, email and Zoom.

And that's it. The programme is purposefully simple in its design so that people from across the community could participate and engage in a way that worked best for them.

### How was the programme set up?

The May 2020 the Director of Public Health for Newham, Jason Strelitz, set up the programme with programme lead Anne Bowers. They began by inviting a multi-agency design and critical friend group to give regular and robust feedback on the design. Key points from the group included:

- Champions must decide how they would participate and what actions and activities they would take – rather than the Council setting out 'asks' or 'opportunities.'
- A strong steer not to call Champions volunteers. The word volunteers carries a legacy of the system setting out what it wants done and the citizen / resident carrying out these tasks. This was not the relationship that the Council wanted to foster.
- Include a friendly visual identity, informed by existing council

branding and the collective, open and accessible nature of the programme.

The programme was then launched a month later. This quick turn around was enabled through the Council's prior commitment to testing and trialling initiatives without too much bureaucracy or red tape.

### What are the main features of the programme?

1. **A Network of individuals**  
A network of 500+ Champions, who live and / or work in Newham.
2. Active visible presence of public health colleagues, NHS colleagues and academic experts from across Newham
3. **Sharing of accurate and accessible information**  
The Council produces and shares well designed visuals and infographics, making complex information simple and calmer to access.
4. **Use of everyday social media to convene, communicate and cascade information**  
Including the use of WhatsApp, Zoom and Instagram.



# ANNEX B: COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The programme provided different channels for communication, offering different tones and approaches:

## WhatsApp

Initially just a WhatsApp broadcast was set up, similar to a WhatsApp group but only the Broadcast list creator can post to the whole group and see contact details and receive responses. More than 500 Champions signed up for the broadcast and a second group had to be set up (as broadcasts are limited to 256 members). Over 8,200 messages have been sent via Broadcast over the past year, providing updates and information, via infographics and relatively informal text, for example recently the WhatsApp broadcast has been used to share last minute opportunities for vaccination when no-shows mean vaccine is available. Champions are asked to share these messages on their networks, via WhatsApp or in whatever other way they choose.

A number of WhatsApp groups were subsequently created as a result of the success of the broadcast - with invitations to join the group shared through the broadcast. This included groups focused on:

- asking each other questions (Most active group).
- national policy to allow for discussion and avoid crowding main group with political debate.
- the COVID-19 App, when Newham piloted the App.
- vaccinations, when they were released.
- those very active on social media offering materials for instagram and facebook.

## Zoom

- Zoom calls were held 2x a week - Tuesday evenings 7-8pm and Friday mornings 9.30-10.30 am. They were primarily hosted by the programme lead, with special guests around specific topics (e.g. rules around using leisure centres, support for isolating, the role and work of trading standards during COVID-19.) Down the line, members of the public health team were invited to host

some of the calls, spreading the engagement and opportunity to listen across the team.

- A consistent group of about 10-15 Champions attended Tuesday sessions and about 7-10 attend Friday mornings. Some Champions attended both sessions. For regular attendees, the groups become a real source of support and community with people sharing their news, sadnesses and joys.

### Email

Email was the first form of written communication with Champions before the WhatsApp system was in place. Emails are now reflections of the materials sent on WhatsApp, but with a more formal and less chatty tone. The programme co-ordinator reflected that WhatsApp “feels much easier and quicker to use than email, particularly when there are urgent messages to get out - e.g. new rules announced at short notice.

### Infographics and visuals

More than 110 infographics have been produced so far, with about 50 of these offering information about staying safe in COVID-19, rules and changing rules, reducing the risk of infection etc. About 15 of the infographics were about vaccination and 15 focused on testing. Each infographic had a ‘sub brand’ indicating which particular aspect of COVID-19 they informed on. Infographics were also produced to support people to celebrate their holidays. This included Eid, Christmas, Easter, Holi, Diwali. Alongside these posters, the team produced simple messages wishing community members well on these and other significant days, including International Women’s Day, Gay Pride Month, Volunteer Week and other celebrations. The infographics were produced in Jpeg for screen and PDF format for email and print.

More recently infographics have been printed in hard copy with some Champions sharing them through doors, in shops, with customers / clients and given to passers-by via information stands. There was an ask to do more of this

# ANNEX C: DETAIL OF OUTPUTS

**100+**

Zoom drop in sessions held

**300+**

WhatsApp messages sent

**300+**

Email messages sent

Shared weekly dashboards on COVID-19 in Newham for more than 20 weeks and, more recently, more than 10 weeks of vaccine schedules

Sent video messages of thanks and information from more than 20 leaders and colleagues including many from the Director of Public Health

**10+**

Holiday messages sent

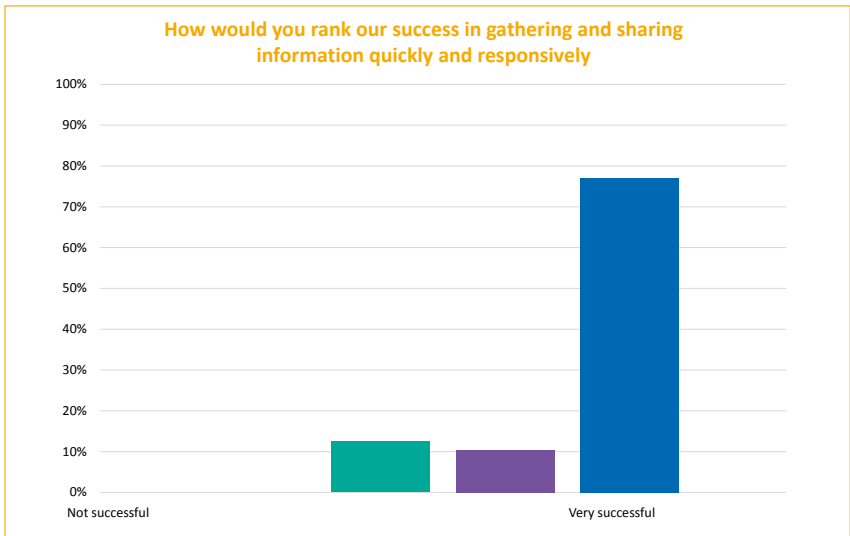
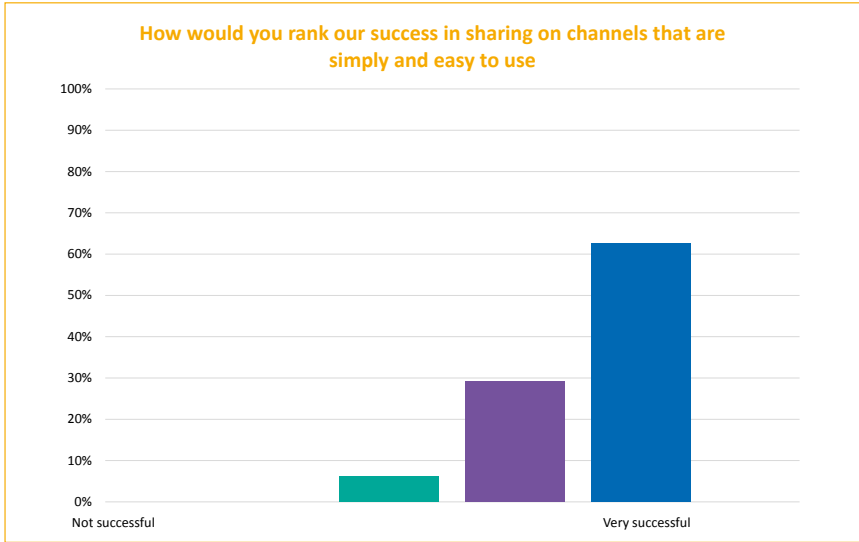
**50+**

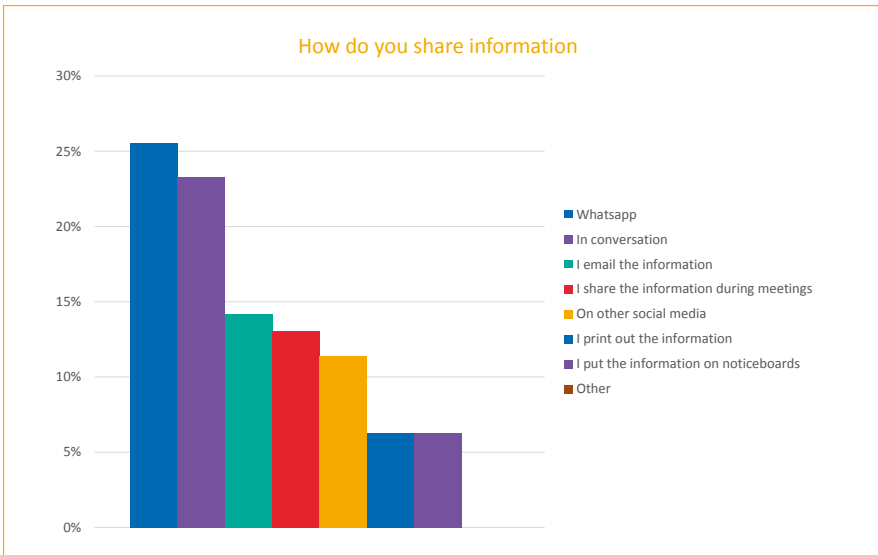
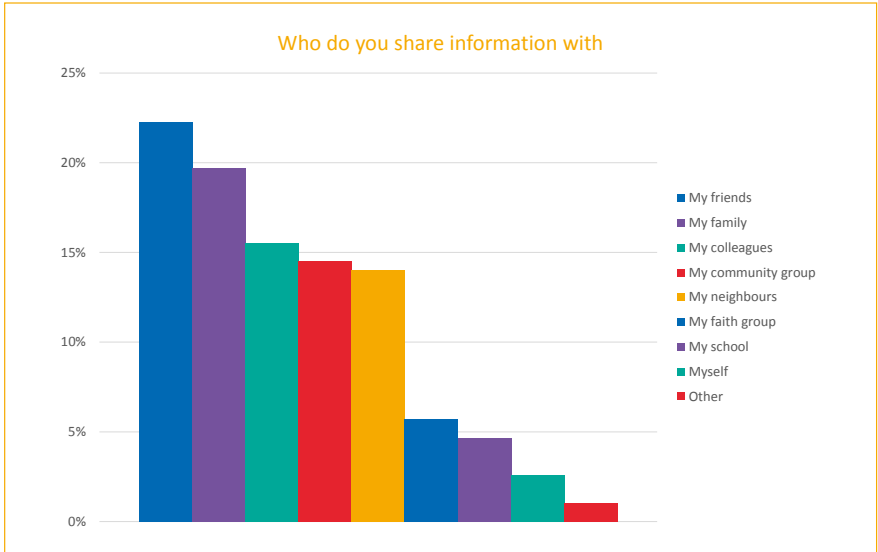
Infographics sent

**200+**

Instagram posts shared

# ANNEX D: CHAMPIONS SURVEY





## ANNEX E: FURTHER READING

- A democratic response to COVID-19 | Involve and the Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster [www.involve.org.uk/our-work/our-projects/guidance/what-role-should-public-play-covid-19-recovery](http://www.involve.org.uk/our-work/our-projects/guidance/what-role-should-public-play-covid-19-recovery)
- Beyond the crisis: How might local government build a positive legacy after Covid? | Eddie Copeland  
<https://medium.com/loti/beyond-the-crisis-how-local-government-can-build-a-positive-legacy-after-covid-3ac6e3d32a24>
- COVID-19 and the basics of democratic governance | Nuffield Council on Bioethics  
[www.nuffieldbioethics.org/news/statement-covid-19-and-the-basics-of-democratic-governance](http://www.nuffieldbioethics.org/news/statement-covid-19-and-the-basics-of-democratic-governance)
- How can local authorities step into a Citizen future? | Jon Alexander, New Citizenship Project  
<https://medium.com/new-citizenship-project/how-can-local-authorities-step-into-a-citizen-future-ed4670bfd84>
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed why we urgently need to re-imagine democracy | Clodagh Harris and Ian Hughes, Democratic Audit  
[www.democraticaudit.com/2020/06/18/the-covid-19-pandemic-has-exposed-why-we-urgently-need-to-re-imagine-democracy](http://www.democraticaudit.com/2020/06/18/the-covid-19-pandemic-has-exposed-why-we-urgently-need-to-re-imagine-democracy)
- COVID-19 – a social phenomenon requiring diverse expertise | MacGregor et al, Institute for Development Studies  
[www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/covid-19-a-social-phenomenon-requiring-diverse-expertise](http://www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/covid-19-a-social-phenomenon-requiring-diverse-expertise)



People at the Heart  
of Everything We Do



# KEEP NEWHAM SAFE

Help stop the spread of COVID-19

**National Lockdown (from 5 November 2020)**



**Wear a  
face covering**



**Keep your distance  
(2 metres)**



**Wash your  
hands**



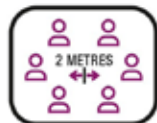
## Isolate

- If you or anyone in your bubble has symptoms.
- If anyone you've been in close contact with tests positive.
- If told to by NHS Test and Trace/NHS Test and Trace app.



## Get tested

Get tested if you have symptoms: a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; a loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste.



## Meeting up with others

- You can meet 1 person you don't live with, if you meet in a public place outside and keep 2 metres apart.
- You cannot spend time inside with people you don't live with.



## Reduce travel

Reduce travel as much as possible and avoid rush hour on public transport; don't share rides with anyone else.

COVID-19 HELPLINE: 020 7473 9711 (1-7pm, 7 days a week)  
covidhelp@community-links.org

004 (11-20)



People at the Heart of Everything We Do

COVID-19  
HEALTH  
CHAMPIONS



# KEEP NEWHAM SAFE

## Help stop the spread of COVID-19



### Wear a face covering

Wear a face covering in any indoor public space. Children under 11, people who need to lip read, and people with other disabilities are exempt.



### Keep your distance

Stay 2 metres apart. When you can't, make sure you wear a face covering.



### Wash your hands

Wash your hands regularly, with soap, for 20 seconds.



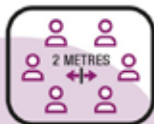
### Get tested

Get tested if you have symptoms: a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; a loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste.



### Isolate

If you or anyone in your bubble has symptoms, isolate until they receive a negative test result.



### Social gatherings

You can meet up to 5 other people, maximum of 6 including yourself, as long as everyone stays 2 metres apart.

BECOME A COVID-19 HEALTH CHAMPION  
[www.newham.gov.uk/CovidHealthChampions](http://www.newham.gov.uk/CovidHealthChampions)

002 (08-20)



COVID-19  
HEALTH  
CHAMPIONS



# KEEP NEWHAM SAFE

Living with COVID-19 after 19 July 2021



## COVID-19 is still a risk

- Cases and hospitalisations are going up particularly for people who have not been vaccinated
- We still need to be careful to protect ourselves and our loved ones



## What we must do

- Isolate when positive, or asked to NHS Test and Trace, or the NHS Covid-19 app
- Have a PCR test if you have symptoms
- Do rapid tests 2x a week if you don't have symptoms. 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 don't have symptoms
- Wear a face covering on public transport, in healthcare settings and in some shops and venues
- Follow the quarantine rules when you come into England, even if you're fully vaccinated ([www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-to-england-from-another-country-during-coronavirus-covid-19](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-to-england-from-another-country-during-coronavirus-covid-19))



## Going out

- Consider the risks to you and those you love if you go to indoor or crowded places
- Wear face coverings particularly in crowded places
- Keep your distance from people you don't live with and make sure there is good air flow if inside
- Have both doses of your vaccine
- Use the NHS Test & Trace app and scan QR codes in shops and venues

## Covid rates are rising

**Do everything you can to keep yourself and others safe**

001 (07-21)

People at the Heart  
of Everything We Do

# NEWHAM'S COVID-19 HEALTH CHAMPIONS

**HAPPY PRIDE**

**CLINICALLY EXTREMELY VULNERABLE PEOPLE CAN STOP SHIELDING FROM 1 APRIL. THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU HAVE DONE**

Wishing you a **DIWALI AND BANDI CHHOR DIVAS** that brings happiness, prosperity and joy  
4 NOVEMBER 2021

**HAPPY HALLOWEEN**  
31 OCTOBER 2021

**EID MUBARAK**

**HAPPY EASTER**

**WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY**  
10 OCTOBER 2021

**CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH**  
OCTOBER 2021

**HAPPY HOLI**

**HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**  
#CHOOSETOCHALLENGE

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**  
3 DECEMBER 2021

Dhan Dhan Guru Nanak Dev's Ji Parkash Gurburab Birthday Greetings Wahuguru Ji's blessing always  
19 NOVEMBER 2021

**HAPPY INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL**  
11 OCTOBER 2021

**REMEMBERING all who serve and sacrifice and WISHING FOR PEACE**  
11 NOVEMBER 2021

**WISHING YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS**

**COMMEMORATING WORLD AIDS DAY**  
1 DECEMBER 2021

**GET YOUR 1ST JOB**  
IT STARTS YOUR PROTECTION FROM COVID-19  
Book at [www.hcam.gov.uk/book-1st-job](https://www.hcam.gov.uk/book-1st-job)  
020 853 4407 (Mon-Fri, 10am - 5pm)

**GET YOUR 1ST JOB**  
IT STARTS YOUR PROTECTION FROM COVID-19  
ANYONE UNDER 40 WILL ONLY BE BOOKED TO GET PFIZER  
Book at [www.hcam.gov.uk/book-1st-job](https://www.hcam.gov.uk/book-1st-job)  
020 853 4407 (Mon-Fri, 10am - 5pm)

**GET YOUR 2ND JOB**  
YOU NEED IT FOR FULL PROTECTION FROM COVID-19  
Book at [www.hcam.gov.uk/book-2nd-job](https://www.hcam.gov.uk/book-2nd-job)  
020 853 4407 (Mon-Fri, 10am - 5pm)

**CONGRATULATIONS ON HAVING YOUR VACCINE**  
THIS WILL HELP KEEP YOU, YOUR FRIENDS AND YOUR FAMILY SAFE

