

Mayor's message: Coronavirus update Friday 20 March 2020

This unprecedented health crisis that we find ourselves in as a result of the coronavirus pandemic shows no signs of abating. Tragically five people in Newham have already died of this horrific virus, and more are confirmed to be suffering from it. To be frank we expect the figures to rise.

It breaks my heart to have to send out messages of condolence to grieving families – but I assure you this Council and all the health partners in Newham are doing all we can to minimise the spread.

Schools have now closed and leisure centres will close this evening. We have identified the most vulnerable and needy in our community so we can support them. Today the government has ordered pubs, clubs, cafes, theatres, cinemas and bars to close.

I cannot state strongly enough how serious this outbreak, and the situation we face, is.

We cannot tackle this without your help. I need every one of you to do your bit. You must follow the expert health advice. Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly. Isolate yourself and those close to you if you have symptoms like a new cough or high temperature. Stop all but essential travel. Do not attend social gatherings. Work from home where possible. Keep a distance between you and other people.

Please do not panic buy and strip supermarket shelves – leaving the poorest and most vulnerable at genuine risk.

On Sunday, it is Mother's Day. Many of you face a dilemma – to visit your loved ones or not. Honestly, the best way to show your love is to do the right thing - stay away. Just for this year, a phone call or a video call may be the best gift – safety. If we don't adapt our behaviour, we run the risk of losing more of our mothers, and fathers, and grandparents.

If we work together we can beat this thing and I've been encouraged to see so many residents and groups coming forward who have recognised how important it is to join together to support others who are most vulnerable and in need.

We have to make sure that support is directed to where it is most needed, whether that is delivering food parcels, providing information or sharing tasks like shopping or picking up medications.

Volunteering tasks can also be done remotely as well for those who are not able to meet people. It's just as important to offer a friendly voice to someone from the end of a telephone.

There will be more information on our website for those of you wishing to offer your support and we will be providing regular updates about what the Council is doing.

We want to particularly support our most vulnerable residents in Newham - those who are over 70, those with underlying health conditions and needs. The information we want you to share with others is here:

[https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/ServiceChild/Coronavirus-\(Covid-19\).aspx](https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/ServiceChild/Coronavirus-(Covid-19).aspx)

Please help us by communicating this advice across your social networks. You can help us to spread the word and support our communities. In the meantime our eight community neighbourhood teams are there to provide you with all the help you need to support your local neighbourhood. Contact them on community.neighbourhoods@newham.gov.uk

Like every other organisation, Newham Council and its staff are being affected by Coronavirus, with staff practising self-isolation or forced off work due to illness. This in turn is having an impact on Council services. You can keep up with the latest service updates by following this link: www.newham.gov.uk/servicestatus

Thank you and stay well

Rokhsana Fiaz
Mayor of Newham