

UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

**14,576 PEOPLE HAVE DIED IN THE UK AS GLOBAL SHORTAGE OF HOSPITAL GOWNS
CONFIRMED, BRITONS STILL TRAPPED ABROAD (INCLUDING MY MUM)
AND PLEASE #STAYATHOME THIS WEEKEND**

**FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ
17 APRIL 2020**

Dear Newham Resident,

As we come to the end of week 4 of living in lock-down, a further 847 people have lost their lives to the coronavirus in hospitals in the UK, meaning the total death toll in hospitals now stands at 14,576. In London, the number of people infected with Covid-19 stands at 20,215 and 834 of those are from Newham.

We know these figures underestimate the actual numbers; and this was asserted by experts speaking at today's Commons Health Select Committee. Professor Anthony Costello, director of University College London's global health team and a former senior official at the World Health Organisation, warned we could expect to see 40,000 coronavirus deaths in the first wave of the outbreak. That would mean the UK suffering the worst death rate in Europe.

It is a terrifying prospect, especially for those working at the front line of the crisis, the NHS workers, key workers, and care workers who daily put themselves in harm's way to protect the rest of us. That's why it was shocking to hear that because of an imminent global shortage of hospital gowns; the government is now issuing guidance that single-use gowns can be re-used by NHS staff.

No health care worker should be put in the position where they are working in highly infectious work settings and face the real risk to their lives. We need to increase our capacity to manufacture the required equipment and improve the supply chain system to get personal protective equipment out to the frontline.

That's why we must keep scrutinising the decisions being made by the government at this time of national emergency, because ultimately they must be held accountable. If Professor Costello is right, we may face several more waves of this virus, so it is crucial we learn from mistakes made during this first phase.

Today we also heard that the government's Covid-19 'wage subsidy job retention scheme', announced last month, will be extended by one month until the end of June. The government's also established a taskforce to find a coronavirus vaccine, but admitted it would take many months with no guarantee of success.

As we tackle the virus at home, there are also serious issues for Britons who remain trapped abroad, after the pandemic effectively shut down the aviation industry. Estimates suggest that 65,000 British nationals are currently unable to return home to their families. Among them are the elderly, and people with underlying health conditions – and my mum.

The UK's response has been woeful. While 2,800 Britons have been brought back home, Germany has flown back 60,000 of its citizens. That's why today, I'm calling on the government to urgently address this issue, which is causing enormous anxiety and heartbreak for families who have been separated from loved ones at this most difficult of times.

Yesterday, I also told you of my concerns that the government is beginning to back track on its pledge to reimburse councils like Newham, for the extra expenditure we have incurred because of the coronavirus. That's why I'll be joining Labour council leaders in writing to Boris Johnson to demand his government does not betray our hard working staff and vulnerable residents by failing to compensate councils for the significant costs and lost income we are experiencing as a result of our efforts to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Finally, as we approach the weekend, please keep up with the #StayAtHome requirements, including making sure that you keep practising social distancing, minimising essential travel; and washing your hands regularly.

Stay safe.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rokhsana Fiaz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rokhsana Fiaz
Mayor of Newham

People at the Heart
of Everything We Do