



## **UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):**

### **CONFIRMED: COVID-19 IMPACTS ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN NEWHAM MORE & WHY COMMUNITY TESTING AND CONTACT TRACING IS KEY**

**FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ**

**MAY 1<sup>ST</sup> 2020**

Dear Newham Resident,

So now we have the evidence, which I reported three weeks ago and since: ethnic minorities are disproportionately impacted by Covid-19 in both infections and deaths; as are those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

Today the Office for National Statistics (ONS) released figures which highlight the uneven impact of Coronavirus across different communities and areas of the country. Examining the impact of deprivation on the Covid-19 mortality rates, the ONS found that in England, the rate in the most deprived areas was 118% higher than in the least deprived areas.

Specifically, London has suffered more than any other region, more than 50 per cent more than the rest of the country, and the local authorities with the highest Covid-19 mortality rates were all in the capital. Newham has been particularly hard hit, with deaths involving Covid-19 recorded between March 1 and April 17, the mortality rate was 144.3 deaths per 100,000 population, followed by Brent (141.5) and then Hackney (127.4). By contrast, the rate was 25.3 deaths per 100,000 in the least deprived areas of England and Wales.

The analysis, which you can read here <https://tinyurl.com/y8qvczxy>, also shows the Covid-19 mortality rate in the most deprived areas of England has been higher among men (76.7 deaths per 100,000 population) than women (39.6). Overall, the ONS makes clear that while general mortality rates are normally higher in more deprived areas, Covid-19 appears to be taking them higher still.

That's why I've called for health funding to be prioritised for deprived areas, because the figures are extremely alarming. It's also why we took action three weeks ago to boost our outreach to ethnic minority communities through our #HelpNewham local hub (which has a multi-lingual outreach team and phone service) because Newham is one of the most diverse boroughs in the country, as well as among the most deprived.

We also know that in Newham, we have high levels of health inequalities in cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other underlying issues, which greatly affect mortality rates. We also know that the health inequalities are not uniform across ethnic groups, and the same applies to Covid-19, so grouping all minorities together misses important differences. That's why our approach to addressing health inequalities in Newham, including the impact of Covid-19, is driven by understanding why these differences exist so that we can take the necessary action required.

In January we published our '50 steps to a healthier Newham' strategy and launched our 'health champions' network of residents last year to boost our outreach to drive better health outcomes for all sections of our communities. We've also been working on a local Covid-19 public health campaign targeting our BAME communities, as well as all vulnerable groups,

which will be launched soon because we want to eradicate health inequalities in our borough caused by many factors such as housing and income inequality.

For example we've done research that shows that up to 36,000 of our residents are not being paid even the basic minimum wage, much less the London Living Wage, pointing to exploitation of our most vulnerable residents and a sign of modern day slavery in Newham. There is a danger that this group, and other low paid and front line workers, have faced greater exposure to the virus, because of the financial pressure to keep working which will make it difficult to socially isolate. We also have challenges around overcrowded and inter-generational housing all of which contribute to health inequalities and risks.

We have also pressed Public Health England, and our local health partners, to issue clearer guidance in different languages and through ethnic media; because they need to improve how they communicate effectively to hard-to-reach groups.

So while the Prime Minister has said we have "passed the peak" in terms of the virus, I am not convinced as this refers specifically to hospital admissions and deaths. The death toll in domestic, care home and other community settings maybe telling another story. That's why I say we are not out of this yet, and have a long way to go.

Today, we heard that the number of people who have died across all settings in the UK in the last 24 hours has gone up by 739, which is 65 more than yesterday. In London, Covid-19 infections have increased by 180 to 24,477 in the last 24 hours, and 948 of those infected are from Newham.

So, despite the speculation that we have reached "peak" I would urge great caution as the Government considers the potential easing of restrictions. They have to take into account the heightened vulnerability of communities like ours in Newham, otherwise it could lead to second wave and more deaths.

While the Government has now passed its promised '100,000 a day tests' pledge, I've been calling for community testing and contact tracing of Covid-19 cases - and in the coming weeks this will be our focus in Newham. At the moment tests are only available for care home workers, other key workers and the people they live with. Social care workers and care home residents with or without symptoms can now be tested as well, and earlier today a mobile site for testing opened in Rick Roberts Way in Stratford. You find out if you are eligible for a test and how to book by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test>.

As we come to end of Lockdown Britain week 6, please continue to follow the restrictions in place this weekend. Otherwise we could face a devastating impact in Newham – amongst many of our friends, co-workers, neighbours and families.

Stay safe.

**Best wishes,**



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

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