

UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):

SOCIAL DISTANCING STILL IN PLACE AS IS #STAYAT HOME TO AVOID RISK OF SECOND WAVE IN NEWHAM AS PM OUTLINES 'ROAD MAP' OUT OF LOCKDOWN

FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ

10TH MAY 2020

Dear Newham Resident,

At 7pm this evening, the Prime Minister announced details of new government plans in response to the Covid-19 pandemic affecting the country as we come to the end of Lockdown Britain week 7, and following the prime minister saying last week that 'we've passed the peak'.

Heavily trailed in the media this weekend, and confirmed by the Prime Minister tonight, there's a new slogan which is urging us to '**stay alert**'. Rightly there's concern that this risks confusing the British public, a majority of whom are worried about lifting restrictions too early. You can read more about the public's strength of feeling in a recent poll by Opinium here: <https://tinyurl.com/ycx5r7xd>.

There's also alarm by the leaders of the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland devolved administrations who have said that they will continue with the '**stay at home**' message for the foreseeable future; with the first Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, saying that to replace it with 'stay alert' is 'potentially catastrophic' and that in Scotland the restriction in the main stay in place (except for allowing people to exercise more frequently).

This evening, the Prime Minister clarified that 'stay alert' means:

- Staying at home as much as possible, working from home if you can
- Limiting contact with other people
- Keeping 2 meters apart if you out
- Washing your hands regularly
- Self-isolating if anyone in your household has symptoms.

Why that warrants a change in the long-standing slogan is confusing at this delicate time. We can't risk a second wave especially in Newham; nor in the capital which has been the UK epicentre of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

The Prime Minister announced a 'five-tier' alert system to rank the threat from Covid-19, where the current threat level will be categorised on a scale of 1 to 5 in different parts of the country, based on assessments by a new 'joint biosecurity centre', the number of cases and the reproduction rate number (or transmission rate) of the virus. Significantly, the Prime stated: '*when I look at where we are tonight, we have the R below 1, between 0.5 and 0.9 – but potentially only just below 1. And though we have made progress in satisfying at least some of the conditions I have given, we have by no means fulfilled all of them. And so no, this is not the time simply to end the lockdown this week*'.

So while he's said it's not the time 'to end the lockdown this week', the other measures he has announced from this week has potential risk for us here in Newham: we mustn't allow the projected ONS death rate published last week for our borough to become a reality for us here.

As part of the measures he announced this evening, those working in construction and manufacturing should be 'actively encouraged' to go to work; but those who can work at home should continue doing. If you can't work at home, you'll need to avoid public transport by travelling in your car [air quality and climate emergency alert for Newham], walking or using your bike instead.

From this Wednesday, people will be allowed unlimited hours of outdoor exercise, sunbathe in parks, drive to other destinations (who knows how far yet); and play sports with others – but only if they are members of your own household (which sports, who's going to check that you're playing 'sport' with a member of your household and how?). With all of this, everyone is still going to need to maintain social distancing; and for those who don't follow the rules, fines will be increased (but we need more police to enforce them?).

By 1st June 'at the earliest', the Prime Minister said that the country might be in position to begin the phased re-opening of shops and primary schools 'in stages', with students facing exams next year getting 'some time' with their teachers. I know that parents and teachers in Newham are anxious about this. By July, there may be scope to open 'some' of the hospitality industry, and other public places, but safety and social distancing will apply. All of this will be subject to the reproduction (the 'R') rate of the virus – and we'll be waiting for more details and guidance, a 50-page document will be published and debated in Parliament tomorrow.

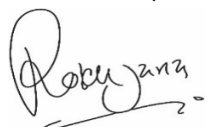
It's clear that we are still in this for the long haul, and we have a tricky road ahead of us. Early next week, I'll be announcing the approach that the Council will be adopting in this new phase, so watch out for my statement.

In the meantime, tragically the numbers of those that died from Covid-19 across all settings rose by 269 since yesterday, with a total of 31,855 deaths so far confirmed. But we need to be cautious about the figures because of delays in reporting and the usual low numbers over weekends. Those infected in the UK stands at 219,183; and in London the figure is 25,829, of which 981 are Newham residents. The government also confirmed that it's missed it's 100,000 daily testing target for eight days in a row now.

So despite the confusion you may feel from the Prime Minister's statement please stay at home, practise social distance, and if you think you need to go to work – check in with your employer to make sure that they have all the safety and social distancing measures in place to safeguard you from Covid-19. Until they give you that assurance, please don't risk it.

Stay safe.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rokhsana Fiaz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath.

Rokhsana Fiaz
Mayor of Newham

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of Everything We Do**