

UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):

**ONS FIGURES REPORT 49,353 EXCESS DEATHS WITH 37,000 DUE TO COVID-19
AND YOUNG PEOPLE HARDEST HIT FROM ECONOMIC IMPACT**

**FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ
19TH MAY 2020**

Dear Newham Resident,

We know that the human cost of Covid-19 so far in the UK has been devastating; and the economic impact on livelihoods will be catastrophic – likely worse than the financial crisis back in 2009. According to new figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) today, the number of people claiming unemployment benefits in the UK has soared by 69 percent in April alone and bringing the unemployment figure to over 2 million people.

We also found out, that the government's plans to bring the coronavirus job retention scheme to an eventual close in October, doesn't include an exemption for vulnerable workers; and that under 25-year old workers have been badly hit by the Covid-19 crisis by either losing their jobs or being furloughed more significantly than older workers.

In Newham where 48 per cent of our residents are already living in poverty when rent and housing costs and taken into account, these figures will have a devastating impact. The housing and homelessness charity, Shelter, is warning the huge jump in unemployment benefit claims in April will be followed by a spike in evictions, fearing for many of the 857,000 people now unemployed who are already struggling to pay their rent.

This will be especially the case in London. Under the government's emergency legislation, tenants who fall into rent arrears are only protected from eviction until late June – it is absolutely clear now that this protection will need to be extended and considerably strengthened as the scale of the Coronavirus recession unfolds. That's why we agree with the calls by Shelter that there must be an increase in housing benefit, with the current benefit cap lifted.

In Newham, two thirds of households live in the rented sector (including 34 per cent in the private rent sector), and the scale of evictions that we might see would be unbearable. I have already written to the Prime Minister to insist that for local authorities, like Newham, which have been disproportionately hit by the first phase of the pandemic, he makes good the promise to fully reimburse the money we have had to spend to support our growing number of most vulnerable residents, and top that up with a 'Covid-19 premium' to help us in the 'recovery' phase and the resulting recession.

Our borough also has the largest youth population in the country (38 percent of our residents are 24-years old or younger and almost 50,000 between the ages of 15-24) – meaning that our young people will also suffer disproportionately as a result of the recession.

These statistics warn of real hardship for households in Newham and that's why we will continue to lobby the government to recognise the plight of our residents who will pay a high price because of this pandemic.

According to latest government figures another 545 people have died from Covid-19 in the last 24 hours across all settings in the UK – which means 35,341 individuals have now lost their lives from the virus. And according to weekly ONS data on excess deaths published today, 49,353 people have died between 13th March and 8th May. Of these, 37,000 were deaths registered where with Covid-19 is on the death certificate and just under 10,000 occurred in care homes.

What the ONS figures highlight is that there have been 22,000 excess deaths (deaths above the seasonal average) in care homes over that period given a better sense of the overall impact of both Covid-19 and the impact of lockdown. The figures are clear that the care home sector and its vulnerable residents have been worst affected by this crisis and its handling by the government.

In London, 26,529 people are Covid-19 positive, of which 995 are Newham residents.

As we end the day absorbing these sobering statistics, I want to share the work of another wonderful group of young people from the Britannia Village School in West Silvertown. Despite the impact of the pandemic on their own lives, they wanted to say a big thank you to the staff and workers in the NHS: <https://vimeo.com/415680343?ref=tw-share>.

These young people, and the thousands like them in our borough, are a reason for hope and optimism. We need to do all that we can to do to provide them a secure future.

Stay safe with your loved ones.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rokhsana Fiaz". The signature is stylized and includes a flourish at the end.

Rokhsana Fiaz
Mayor of Newham

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