

UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):

**STATEMENT ON SCHOOLS REOPENING ON THE 1ST JUNE IN NEWHAM:
IT SHOULDN'T HAPPEN**

**FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ
20TH MAY 2020**

Dear Newham Resident,

I know that many parents, teachers and schools are worried about the government's proposals to open schools for certain year groups of pupils on the 1st June. I am worried too.

That's why I believe our schools should only open for more pupils when it is safe to do so for our children, staff and community.

It's becoming increasingly clear to me that's unlikely to be the 1st June, because when the government announced the planned re-opening of schools; it was on the basis of a number of 'big ifs' being met such as their own five tests that will determine further easing of lockdown measures. For me, the government's five tests also have to be met at a local level; because that will support our own public health priorities we are driving for the safety of our residents in Newham.

Today, the Prime Minister declared that the national 'test, track and trace' system will be firmly in place by the 1st June as well to instil further public confidence. But it's another 'big if', because all the other high promises made by the government over recent months that has led to many lives lost, especially in our care homes.

I'm also concerned about the impact schools opening may have on Covid-19 infection rates in the borough, because Newham suffers disproportionately from the virus, as the evidence recently published by the Office for National Statistics on deprivation. Newham is marked by long-standing poverty and inequality that exists in our borough.

Newham is the most ethnically diverse borough in the country, where 73 percent of our residents are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic. So I am concerned, as is the Council, about the particularly high risks emerging for these members of our community. Our borough also has many families living in multi-generational households, where young and elderly residents live

together in enriching home environments. But many of these families may be living in homes that don't allow for social distancing, so there are risks of Covid-19 infection to elderly members of a household where a young family member is coming home from school, potentially with the virus.

At the Council, we want to see Newham's children and young people return to school, because education improves their life chances and supports their well-being; but we are really clear that can only happen when it is safe for them to do so. And safe for our teachers and school staff.

That's why, we've also reassured parents and carers that as the Local Education Authority, we won't take action against any who take the decision not to send their child or children to school if they are open.

We've been so proud of our teachers, school staff and parents who have worked together during the Covid-19 lockdown to keep our schools open for those vulnerable children, those learning at home, and those whose parents are key workers.

I know that the impact of the virus has been challenging for Newham, and the human cost devastating for those families affected. The economic cost on the livelihoods of many of our residents also has the potential to be catastrophic. That's why we need to be cautious when considering any further easing of the lockdown to avoid a second wave in our borough.

It's for all these reasons, and many more, that I, the Cabinet member for Education and the Council will continue to stand side-by-side with our schools, teachers and parents; and the whole Newham community especially today which were we celebrate our educators on #ThankATeacherDay.

As we face the ongoing challenges of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic affecting all our lives at the moment, we stand united because we are Newham.

Please stay safe and my regards to all your loved ones.

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**