

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

### **IT'S OFFICIAL: NEWHAM PART OF NEW TESTING AND CONTACT TRACING PILOT TO BENEFIT OUR RESIDENTS**

**FROM MAYOR FIAZ**

**22<sup>ND</sup> MAY 2020**

Dear Newham Resident,

Yesterday I wrote about the urgent need for Councils to be driving community testing and contact tracing at local level, not least because the government's 'test, track and trace' programme risks being delayed. That's because its vital 'tracking app' component won't be ready by the 1<sup>st</sup> June.

I've long been arguing for a more localised approach in dealing with the spread of Covid-19 with councils and their public health teams at the helm. So today, I'm pleased to announce that we're one step closer to that reality, as the government confirmed that Newham, along with three other London boroughs have been selected to add our expertise, knowledge and insight, to bring to life community testing and contact tracing for the benefit of all our local communities.

Along with Hackney, Camden and Barnet, we'll be working to trial the best way to identify future Covid-19 outbreaks and take action to stop the virus spreading and save lives. With plans to develop and share best practice with council's across London, I'm clear that Newham's role in this programme will be to ensure that it works for the benefit of those communities especially vulnerable to the risks of Covid-19, because of deprivation and health inequalities. We also know that this virus has a disproportionate impact on ethnic minorities, so our input will focus on the specific vulnerabilities in our community and ensure no-one gets left behind.

In Newham we are best placed to react to any local outbreaks; rather than waiting for national pandemic analysis and a cumbersome top-down response. Saving lives should not be based on national systems and processes which slows down rapid responses and adds fatal time.

That's why under this pilot, we'll be using our public health expertise to work with our communities locally to tackle this virus head on. More details will be published next week, as the immediate task will be finalising arrangements and protocols with Hackney, Camden and Barnet so that we can:

- Respond to and manage any outbreaks in care homes, schools and other residential and community settings, working very closely with our colleagues in Public Health England.
- Ensure ongoing support to those residents who will need to isolate if they test positive for Covid-19, or are in contact with someone infected, with practical help with food and medicines.

- Access all the required data swiftly, so we can understand the presence of Covid-19 in our communities and respond rapidly.
- Communicate with our communities, businesses and organisations across Newham, so they know how to access testing, contact tracing and are able to access key public health advice during this current (and any future) Covid-19 phase.

You can read more about the 'test and trace' programme we are now part of here: <https://tinyurl.com/yc6g69uh>.

I am really proud of our Public Health team, who have been working diligently behind the scenes to develop our local contact tracing action plan, since the start of this month when I announced that our on-going focus at the Council would be developing an approach for effective community testing and contact tracing of Covid-19 cases in Newham. If you knew the hours they've put in over the past three weeks, driven by their commitment to all the residents in our borough, I know you'd be proud of them as well.

During this period, they have reviewed our local 'outbreak control readiness' plans and systems to make sure that they are robust, undertaken loads of scenario planning tests, developed protocol for tracing contact histories, and made sure that an effective and easy to access 'data hub' has been established so we can communicate local information direct to our residents.

I'm looking forward to sharing more details with local residents at a series of Community Neighbourhoods zoom chats next week, and we'll be outlining the plans at a meeting of the Newham Health and Well-Being Board taking place at 6pm on Wednesday 27 May. The board, which I co-chair with local GP Dr Mohammed Naqvi, will be scrutinising the work of our health partners but also offering residents the opportunity to have their Covid-19 questions answered by health experts. If you have a question about Covid-19 or the response by Newham Council and its health, including the NHS, you can submit a question to [publicquestions@newham.gov.uk](mailto:publicquestions@newham.gov.uk), but please do that by 6pm on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> May. It's a public meeting which will be broadcast live via Newham's Facebook Live page here: <https://www.facebook.com/newhamcouncil/>.

Finally, I wish all Newham residents celebrating Eid this weekend, a peaceful and safe time with loved ones, families and friends despite the social distance measures in place. I know that there are many exciting plans to spend the day connect with each other virtually, which is so different to what is ordinarily a day spent with each other. So on behalf of all councillors and staff at the Council – I wish you a wonderful virtual Eid Mubarak.

As we head into another Bank Holiday weekend, please remember: lockdown is still in place. So please keep up with the guidance such as washing your hands regularly and keeping social distance from others when you are out for exercise, shopping or essential work.

Stay safe.

Best wishes,



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

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