



UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):

LOOSENED LOCKDOWN RISKS AS 1005 RESIDENTS IN NEWHAM NOW WITH COVID-19 & DESPITE GLOBAL PANDEMIC, #BLACKLIVESMATTER FOR GEORGE FLOYD

**From Mayor Fiaz
1st June 2020**

Dear Newham Resident,

It's week 11 of Covid-19 lockdown, but not lockdown as we've known it, because from today a raft of restrictions have been further loosened, amidst on-going concern and caution from scientific experts and many council leaders like me.

Even care home operators are concerned about the easing of restrictions for those who are on the NHS 'Shield' group of 'extremely clinical vulnerable', saying that it risks a second wave; and the government's own Scientific Group of Experts for Emergencies (SAGE) weren't asked to review the pre-existing restrictions for this group of elderly residents.

To recap, from today:

- People can meet up to six friends or relatives, in parks, gardens or any other outdoor space; but the two meter social distance requirement will still apply.
- They'll also be able to exercise with up to five others from different households from Monday, but again the two metres apart applies.
- Competitive sport will resume behind closed doors, including football, horse racing and tennis.
- Car showrooms and indoor markets will re-open (with some other 'non-essential' shops can re-open from 15th June), but only if they put in place the required 'social distancing' measures for the benefit of customers and employees.

Also today, schools were able to open up to more pupils in nurseries, reception and years 1 and 6. Over recent weeks, I have made it clear that schools in Newham shouldn't open as it could lead to increased transmission and a second wave in the borough. That's why I'm pleased that all our maintained schools in the borough haven't opened to more pupils, with governing bodies and head teachers listening to calls for caution to be adopted.

What hasn't helped is the constant updating of guidance that the government has been issuing – for instance, in one week alone the National Education Union (NEU) reported that there were 41 changes in the government guidance leaving teachers and parents frustrated, confused and anxious, with the need for repeated revisions of school risk assessment plans.

If you are a parent or carer, don't feel under pressure to send your child back to school, as the council won't take any action in this current period. The safety of your child, household, school staff and the wider community is too important.

Watch a brilliant video by 5-year old Samuel from West Silvertown (and dad Julio!), who's galvanising a movement of youngsters in Newham to be part of the #TheStayAtHomeKrew so that they can keep safe, along with their families and teachers: <https://youtu.be/-5YtwXO2kK4>. You can also follow 'Little Sam' on Facebook here: <https://m.facebook.com/OfficialLittleSam/>.

Today, Public Health England (PHE) published its daily figures, showing that a total of 39,045 people have died, including the 111 people who have tragically passed away in the last 24 hours. So far 276,332 people have been tested positive with Covid-19 in the UK, and 26,989 are from London. Of these, 1005 are from Newham. Tomorrow, we'll find out from the Office of National Statistics how many residents from Newham have died from the 291 I reported last week.

While the coronavirus emergency has completely dominated our front pages for the last few months, this past week I have watched in pain and outrage the video of the death of the unarmed Black American man, George Floyd by police officers in the US state of Minneapolis, after he was arrested outside a shop last Monday. The video recording has been widely circulated showing George Floyd pinned to the floor saying he was in pain and couldn't breathe, begging for his life as a police officer (now charged with murder) continued to kneel on the back of his neck.

The unspeakable horror has sparked large-scale civil unrest in America, despite the Covid-19 pandemic gripping the country, symptomatic of decades of police brutality against African-Americans in the US. It prompted me to re-read the acclaimed story of the #BlackLivesMatter movement over the weekend, by journalist Wesley Lowery from the Washington Post titled '*They Can't Kill Us All*'; documenting the emergence of a new generation movement in response to police brutality and inequality in America.

Demanding dignity, human rights and justice for all citizens, the #BlackLivesMatter movement started with death of Michael Brown, the 18-year old teenager from Ferguson back in 2014, with numerous incidents in the intervening period, and now George Floyd. With his brutal killing, the words of Wesley Lowery remain prophetic, as do the hundreds and thousands of voices that preceded him:

'I am a Black man in America who is often tasked with telling the story of black men and women killed on American streets by those sworn to protect them, but who historically have seen and treated those men, women and children as anything but American. The story didn't start or end on the streets of Ferguson'.

George Floyd's killing has unleashed unprecedented protest in America, being labelled an 'uprising' as his family urge peaceful protest, and solidarity is being displayed this side of the Atlantic.

In Newham, which as one of the highest ethnic minority communities in the UK, we stand in solidarity with George Floyd's family and friends, the people of Minneapolis, and everyone who continues to challenge racism, discrimination and inequality. As a mark of our solidarity, and to underline our commitment, tomorrow our Town Halls at East Ham and Stratford will be

lit up in purple; the colour which has been become synonymous with the struggle against oppression.

In the meantime, please keep up with the social distancing requirements and personal hygiene with washing your hands frequently. Even with the loosening of lockdown restrictions, help us stop a second wave of Covid-19 in the borough for the sake of you, your friends, your loved ones and our whole community.

Stay safe.

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**