

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

### **NEW 4-WEEK ENGLAND WIDE LOCKDOWN FROM 5TH NOVEMBER ANNOUNCED AS COVID-19 CASES IN THE UK NOW TOPS ONE MILLION**

**FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ**

**SATURDAY 31st OCTOBER 2020**

Dear Newham Resident,

This evening, at an emergency Downing Street briefing, the Prime Minister announced that from Thursday 5th November 2020, subject to approval by Parliament on Wednesday, all of England will be placed in a new level of restrictions – in effect a second national lockdown till early December. He said: ‘You must stay at home, you may only leave home for specific reasons, including education and work. I’m afraid non-essential shops, leisure and entertainment venues will all be closed, though click and collect services will continue and essential shops will remain open. Pubs, bars, restaurants must close, except for takeaway and delivery services’.

This means that a new 4-week lockdown will kick into play starting from Thursday, including:

- Bars and restaurants will close, but takeaways can continue to operate - as in the spring lockdown
- Shielding measures will not be re-introduced, but vulnerable people or those aged over 70 are told to be especially careful
- Schools and universities will be kept open throughout this period, unlike in the lockdown earlier this year

More detail will be published on Monday, but you can read the Prime Minister’s statement [here](#) - and I’ll update as soon as I am able. At the press conference earlier this evening, the Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Chris Whitty, said that the prevalence of Covid-19 has been increasing ‘extremely rapidly’ in recent weeks, with 51,900 Covid-19 cases a day and rising; with an ‘accelerating’ number of older people being hospitalised, and that some hospitals now have ‘more Covid-19 patients’ than at the previous peak.

The Chief Scientific Advisor for England, Sir Patrick Vallance, added that expert modelling pointed to a number of scenarios facing us – but all show ‘the potential for this to be twice as bad or more compared to the first wave’. He said that the consensus view (across all the modelling) is that over the next 6 weeks, hospital admissions will be higher than the first wave, and inevitably as hospitalisations increase, deaths will too if nothing is done – and the prediction is that deaths will match the first wave peak.

In addition, Public Health England (PHE) published its latest data earlier this afternoon, showing that in the last 24 hours alone, another 21,915 people have tested positive with Covid-19 in the UK – meaning that now a total of 1,011,660 people in the UK have contracted the virus since the start of the pandemic earlier this year. Tragically, another 326 people have also died within 28 days of a positive test in the past 24 hours - bringing the total to 58,925 people so far where Covid-19 has been listed on the death certificate.

In London, there's been another 1,568 Covid-19 cases recorded in the last 24 hours, bringing the total to 97,430 infected in the Capital since the start of the pandemic. That includes 4,055 residents in Newham, of which 85 residents tested positive following a lab confirmed test in the last 24 hours. Tragically, so far, 320 residents have died as a result of Covid-19 in Newham and my heartfelt sorrow goes to their loved ones and all families affected across the country.

You'll know that the government's own Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) has repeatedly warned that the localised approach to restrictions doesn't go far enough, calling for a national 'circuit break' lockdown urgently to halt its spread over recent weeks. Last night, they published the latest 'reproduction' rate (known as the 'R-rate') as being between 1.1 and 1.3, meaning that on average, every 10 people infected will infect between 11 and 13 other people. They also warned that the number of daily deaths in England is in line with its 'reasonable worst-case' scenario used by officials and the NHS to plan for the months ahead when infections and hospital admissions increase; saying that it 'is almost certain to exceed this within the next two weeks'.

However, official minutes from a SAGE Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M-O) meeting, held back on the 14th October but published Friday, reveal we are in a worse position than expected. Scientists crunching the numbers estimated that, by mid-October, there were between 43,000 and 74,000 people being infected with coronavirus every day in England. Their report said: 'In England, we are breaching the number of infections and hospital admissions in the Reasonable Worst Case planning scenario that is based on COVID's winter planning strategy. The number of daily deaths is now in line with the levels in the Reasonable Worst Case and is almost certain to exceed this within the next two weeks'. They added: 'There is complete consensus in SPI-M-O that the current outlook for the epidemic's trajectory is concerning, if there are no widespread decisive interventions or behavioural changes in the near term'. [You can read the full report here.](#)

Yesterday, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), also published the latest position on the growth of coronavirus cases in the UK from its Covid-19 Infection survey. Announced back in April, the 12 month study (which is published weekly) aims to track the spread of Covid-19 in the population to try to understand the current rate of infection and how many people have developed antibodies to the virus. The results are based on swab tests performed on a representative sample of the UK population from the ages of 2-years old to 70-years old +. The report yesterday highlighted that the number of infections continues to increase: with an estimated 568,100 people in the community in England had COVID-19 during the most recent week studied (17th to 23rd October 2020), equating to around 1 in 100 people.

The report also highlighted that there's been growth in all age groups over the past two weeks; with older teenagers and young adults continuing to have the highest current rates, while rates appear to be steeply increasing among secondary school children. You can read more about the recent [ONS Covid-19 Infection Survey here](#).

All of this follows another week where Covid-19 cases and community transmission continues to rise across the country, well over 20,000 cases a day. Earlier this week, the latest report from the 'Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission' (REACT) programme was published, highlighting how the reproduction rate (known as the 'R' rate) of Covid-19 was increasing sharply. The REACT study is the largest research programme of its kind in the UK, led by experts from Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI, and produces weekly reports about how the virus is spreading across the country. Based on swab tests taken from 86,000 people (including between 16th and 25th October), its interim report showed that the prevalence of infection has now doubled with an estimated 128 people per 10,000 of England's population having COVID-19, compared to 60 per 10,000 population as of the 5th October. This translates to 96,000 new infections each day and you can read more in the [REACT report here](#).

Here in Newham, we've been anticipating that this would happen, given the alarming rate of community transmission in the borough despite being in Covid-19 Tier 2 restrictions. Our latest weekly Covid-19 dashboard, which was published on Thursday, also showed that in the preceding week (covering the 18th and 24th October), there have been 586 new confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Newham; alongside a slight decrease in people getting tested but an increase in positive tests outcomes. This means that there is active transmission in our community, as there is elsewhere in London, so the risk of catching the virus is real – which is very worrying as we currently have an infection rate of 164 infections per 100,000 population. [You can read more here](#).

That's why I have consistently backed calls for a Covid-19 circuit break. But if greater restrictions are introduced, there must also be greater funding to support those people and sectors directly affected by lockdown. With Newham having London's highest numbers of people placed on furlough, the government must step in to ensure support continues. I cannot overstate the devastating impact of the pandemic on Newham's residents – it is amongst the worst in the country. More than 27,000 extra people have had to claim benefits; while almost 17,000 have been placed on furlough – which is the highest in London and until today, they were facing the prospects of that safety net torn away. But they've been given a short reprieve, as the Prime Minister announced tonight that the furlough scheme will be extended further until December.

In the first wave of the pandemic, we suffered the highest death rate due to Covid-19. A new report by Baroness Lawrence has found that "Black, Asian and minority ethnic people have been over-exposed, under-protected, stigmatised and overlooked during this pandemic". In a borough where 73 percent of residents are from BAME communities, Newham has again been disproportionately harmed. This is why I've also continually called on the Government to match funding to need, and have demanded a deprivation-linked Covid-19 premium to cover the costs of protecting our residents from the worst impacts of the pandemic.

As a result of this campaigning, Newham was last week given an additional £12.6m in funding. Of course we welcome this, but at a time when our funding gap is more than £60m – and we are heading into a winter where the economic recession is biting, infection rates are spiralling, and residents will require continued support to feed themselves and their families – it is not enough. Residents, local authorities, the voluntary, charity and faith sectors are doing everything in their power to support those in need and at risk. Their tremendous efforts are not being matched by this Government.

In the coming days, I'll be providing further updates, and for all the latest news about how the new national lockdown will impact Council services from next Thursday 5th November, please visit the website via: [www.newham.gov.uk](http://www.newham.gov.uk).

More detail will be published on Monday, but you can [read the Prime Minister's statement here](#)- and I'll update as soon as I am able.

In the meantime please stay safe and follow all the public health guidance and current restrictions, so that we can slow down the spread of the virus in our Borough and protect all members of our community.

Best wishes,  
Rokhsana Fiaz OBE  
Mayor of Newham