

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

### **HIGHEST COVID-19 DEATHS SINCE THE START OF THE PANDEMIC, VACCINES ROLL OUT NEWS, FOOD POVERTY AND 'THE HILL WE CLIMB' INSPIRATION**

**FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ**

**THURSDAY 21<sup>st</sup> JANUARY 2021**

Dear Newham Resident

As we come to the end of another week in this New Year, Covid-19 continues to dominate our lives with more news on vaccines, increased hospital admissions, cases and deaths. Today the UK recorded another 1, 290 deaths within 28 days of a positive test and 37, 892 cases.

Yesterday, the UK reached another grim milestone with the highest number of Covid-19 deaths recorded in a single day since the start of the pandemic last year, representing 1,802 people no longer with their families who are now devastated and grieving.

In Newham, 413 people have tested positive in the last 24 hours, bringing the total so far to 30,224; and in the past week a further 60 residents have lost their lives to this ravaging virus. My thoughts are with all of their loved ones.

With the risks still so high, it remains absolutely vital that we all continue to stick to the lockdown rules and stay at home. You can read the latest Newham statistics on our Covid-19 dashboard here: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-dashboard/1>

Hope continues to break through in the form of the vaccine, with over-70s now being invited to attend vaccination appointments. With the NHS so busy, it is important that you wait until you are invited to book a vaccination, please don't contact the NHS until you are asked. It is also so, so important that those who are offered a vaccine take it. It is only through mass vaccination that we will be able to return to normality and focus on a brighter future. There is more information about the Covid-19 vaccine on our website here: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-vaccination>; and our public health team are holding fortnightly vaccine webinars on Zoom, where you can find out more and ask any questions. Full details are included in the link above.

I'm also pleased that we are offering community testing for Covid-19 at a number of sites in the borough, meaning people who are asymptomatic can get a test. We're especially keen for people in high-risk groups – including those in multi-generational households, those living with someone who is shielding, carers and those who have to go out to work to get tested. You can find out more about all the test sites in Newham,

including advice on support you can access if you need to self-isolate, in the news section below.

This week, I made two big announcements which underlines my unstinting commitment to support all our youngsters in the borough. As part of our 2021 Newham Year of Young Person plans, I announced that we will keep the full investment of £6 million in our Eat for Free programme, which offers a nutritious and healthy lunchtime meal to all primary school children in the borough, regardless of background. The programme is part of our ongoing commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of all young people – and our longstanding plans to address poverty and inequality in Newham. You can read more here: [\*\*https://www.newham.gov.uk/news/article/577/newham-s-flagship-eat-for-free-scheme-guaranteed-by-the-mayor\*\*](https://www.newham.gov.uk/news/article/577/newham-s-flagship-eat-for-free-scheme-guaranteed-by-the-mayor)

Earlier today, I also announced the launch of an expert-led food security initiative to stamp out food poverty facing children and young people in the borough, which has been compounded by the economic impact of Covid-19. Building on the raft of measures put in place to support Newham children and families during the pandemic, investing over £6 million to date; and part of our 'Towards a Better Newham' recovery action plan; we will be addressing the impact of poverty facing more and more young people across all age groups in the Borough, including holiday hunger. Read more here: [\*\*https://www.newham.gov.uk/news/article/578/mayor-of-newham-launches-expert-led-young-people-and-food-security-initiative-as-next-step-in-the-fight-to-stamp-out-food-poverty-in-newham\*\*](https://www.newham.gov.uk/news/article/578/mayor-of-newham-launches-expert-led-young-people-and-food-security-initiative-as-next-step-in-the-fight-to-stamp-out-food-poverty-in-newham)

With input from world-renowned experts and £20,000 initial funding from the Health Foundation, the UK's leading health promotion charity, the 'Young People and Food Security' initiative will work with children, young people and their families to map the scale of food security challenges facing households in Newham. The work of the experts will shape a new strategy and programme of interventions to tackle holiday hunger facing young people which will be launched in summer 2021.

Experts from the Association for Young People's Health will work alongside health inequality specialist, Professor Natalie Savona from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; as well as Steven Allender, Professor of Public Health and founding Director of the Global Obesity Centre (GLOBE) at Deakin University in Melbourne. Their work will feed into policy proposals and interventions being developed by a working group of Cabinet members, Councillors and Council officers that I established last year to develop an action plan to support families at risk, or facing, food insecurity in Newham.

Having talked about hope for the future, I couldn't finish without reflecting on the tremendous scenes from the United States yesterday, as Joe Biden and Kamala Harris were finally sworn in as President and Vice-President. Watching Kamala Harris being sworn into office as the first woman, and the first woman of colour, to take the office of Vice President was emotional and inspiring. I hope their inauguration gives us all reason to feel more positive about our international future, and already there have been a raft of Presidential actions that are cause for celebration: addressing the COVID-19 crisis, including re-joining the World Health Organisation; signing up again to the Paris Climate Accord as part of actions to tackle the climate emergency; removing the travel ban affecting Muslim-majority countries; and halting further

funding or construction to the wall along the U.S. southern border with Mexico. All reasons to be hopeful.

I want to end my message tonight, by encouraging you to watch the powerful inauguration poem by 22-year old Amanda Gorman. She made history as the youngest inaugural poet ever, with her evocative 'The Hill We Climb' poem, which you can view here: <https://www.npr.org/sections/inauguration-day-live-updates/2021/01/20/958743170/poet-amanda-gorman-reads-the-hill-we-climb?t=1611264150292>. The following words of her poem especially resonated with me, as I reflected on what we are doing and achieving for all our residents in Newham:

*'We will not march back to what was, but move to what shall be a country that is bruised, but whole, benevolent, but bold, fierce, and free. We will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation. Our blunders become their burdens. But one thing is certain, if we merge mercy with might and might with right, then love becomes our legacy and change our children's birthright'*

In the meantime, as always, please stay at home and stay safe. Let's keep working together to protect everyone in this wonderful community of ours enriched by the diversity of its people.

Best wishes

Rokhsana Fiaz OBE  
Mayor of Newham