

MAYOR OF NEWHAM
ROKHSANA FIAZ OBE



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The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
10 Downing Street
London
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16th November 2022

By email only

The Cost of Living Crisis in Newham

Dear Prime Minister

I am writing to raise my concern that this week's Autumn Statement is insufficient for the fiscal crisis that grips our county and specifically for the challenges facing the residents of Newham.

The cost of living emergency is most extremely felt in my borough where thousands of residents face catastrophic financial instability due to inflation, soaring energy bills and high housing costs that follows more than 12 years of austerity. Recent Census findings show that over a third of our residents are living in poverty; and when housing costs are included this rises to almost half of all households. Newham also has the second highest fuel poverty rate in London. In Newham, 54 percent of all households and 59 percent of children under the age of nine live in the private rented sector. The current shortage of supply and lack of rent controls in this sector allows landlords to impose unlimited rent hikes and means that a majority of children in the borough are at an increased risk of homelessness as a result.

We are responding to the emergency facing our people with a comprehensive package of measures including warm havens; the biggest mobilisation of food distribution of any local authority in the country delivering some 50 tonnes of free food weekly to the most vulnerable families. This is alongside our £6 million universal

WE ARE NEWHAM.



Eat for Free programme that provides a nutritious meal to every single primary school pupil. It saves parents and carers £500 per child per year.

Yet this is not enough. That is why I am calling on you to take urgent action in response to the scale of the crisis facing our residents. We need a significant increase in government support and certainty around ongoing funding for Councils like Newham. When you were Chancellor, we called for Newham to receive a Covid-19 Deprivation Premium; I ask you again to take action to help our residents.

I ask that your Government:

1. Provide certainty through a two-year Local Government settlement with a funding formula that recognises the real scale of need in areas like Newham and does not redistribute funding to more affluent areas.
2. Increase the value of the Household Support Fund (HSF) from £421 million to £1 billion between October and March to enable Councils to support individuals not eligible for the existing Cost of Living payment or other forms of support.
3. Fund universal Free School Meals across England for all primary aged pupils. This would free up £6m for Newham to reinvest in our residents.
4. Re-instate the temporary rise in Universal Credit brought in during the pandemic to give all recipients an additional £25 their weekly income. Remove the benefit cap, Bedroom Tax and review all regressive welfare measures - such as the two-child limit – which are especially harming low-income families.
5. Increase the Local Housing Allowance rates to cover the scale of rent increases in London, as too many properties are simply unaffordable.

6. Respond to the Mayor of London's call to freeze private sector rents for 2 years which have risen on average in London by 15% in the last year.
7. Provide urgent clarity on what targeted support will be available from April 2023 to replace the Energy Price Guarantee; and introduce a social tariff for low-income residents. Clarify what support will be provided to residents using district heating networks given the lack of clarity by Government on this issue.

At this time, we need leadership that meets the scale of crisis we face and urgent action.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rokhsana Fiaz', with a horizontal line underneath.

Rokhsana Fiaz OBE
Mayor of Newham