

UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):

REFLECTIONS ON EASTER SUNDAY DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS AS THOSE INFECTED WITH THE VIRUS IN NEWHAM RISES TO 698 CASES

FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ

11th April 2020

Dear Newham Resident.

Tomorrow, Easter Sunday, is the most important time in the Christian year. It is a time of new life, hope and renewal. Whatever your faith, or no faith, this four-day long weekend, is a time when many of us would normally be getting together with our families and friends to enjoy each other's company, relax and recharge, or eat too much chocolate.

But the current coronavirus crisis is unprecedented. The weather is beautiful, and as much as we want to be with those close to us, please follow the Government advice to stay home and save lives. Our loved ones would rather welcome us at a later date, than not at all.

Today we hear that 78,991 people have tested positive for Covid-19 across the UK so far, excluding Northern Ireland. This includes 698 confirmed cases in Newham. Across the country, 9,875 people have now died, an increase of 917 on yesterday's figures; and we are still waiting for an update on Newham figures from the 59 deaths which I reported earlier this week.

These include the 19 NHS staff who have died, on the day that the Health Secretary Matt Hancock was criticised for suggesting that frontline staff working are wasting personal protective equipment (PPE) and the Home Secretary has said sorry 'if people feel there have been failings', when pressed on his comments and after announcing a public awareness campaign for domestic abuse victims and an additional £2m to bolster domestic abuse helplines and online support.

Providing supplies which are quickly delivered has to be an ongoing priority, alongside increasing testing in our communities, because emerging evidence is pointing to some worrying disparities - as a disproportionate number of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minorities appear to be contracting the virus. Earlier today, the Government announced that Turkey has supplied the UK with 250,000 items of protective equipment, which will be taken to a regional NHS distribution hub to be delivered to medical centres across the country.

This shows how the world and different countries are coming together. More of that needs to happen to deal with the health and economic impact of this deadly global pandemic.

This year more than ever, Easter is a good time to reflect on the diversity of the planet, and in Newham we are a microcosm of a global community. A place where mutual respect and kindness to each other at times of adversity brings us together. We are enriched, not divided by our diversity of faiths, cultures and races.

It's a subject I spoke about with Revd Dave Chesney, vicar of Ascension Church, Custom House, and Area Dean of Newham; in a specially recorded video message which you can see [here](#).

We reflect on how the traditional message of Easter as a journey through pain and suffering into a time of new life and hope is the same as it ever was, but it really means more this year.

Seeing how people across the borough are coming together regardless of faith, loving each other, and helping each other with small acts of random kindness, is a reminder that we will get through this terrible crisis together.

I know we won't forget the heroic work being done by all those who are not getting a break over Easter, especially NHS staff and care workers whose service knows no public holiday. I know that like me, many of you will take a moment this Easter Sunday to mourn for all those that have died so far during this crisis.

On behalf of Newham councillors and staff, I wish everyone in the borough who is marking Easter Sunday - a day of hope that it engenders.

Please continue to stay safe and #StayAtHome for the safety of all of us.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rokhsana Fiaz" with a flourish underneath.

Rokhsana Fiaz
Mayor of Newham

People at the Heart
of Everything We Do