

**STATEMENT ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)
FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ**

16 March 2020

Dear Newham Resident,

On Friday I wrote to let you know Newham had experienced its first confirmed case of coronavirus (or Covid-19). Unfortunately, that number has now risen to three confirmed cases.

One of the new cases is a teacher at one of our schools, Central Park Primary in East Ham. The teacher had been absent from work for the week before she became ill, for unrelated reasons. Staff at the school's Early Learning Unit, who did have social contact with their colleague during her absence, are now self-isolating and the unit has been closed. The school is due to undergo a deep clean tomorrow (Tuesday 17th March 2020). The School Leadership Team have decided to keep the main school open after taking extensive advice from health officials at national and regional levels.

The teacher is being treated in hospital, and we wish her a speedy and complete recovery, and send our thoughts to her family, friends and colleagues. There is no immediate explanation for how the teacher became infected, as she has not visited any high risk areas, or had contact with any known coronavirus sufferers.

Newham Council, like all local authorities in England, has been advised by central government to keep schools open, but we will continue to monitor the situation as the virus spreads. Until then, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our teachers, teaching assistants and school staff for continuing their vital work during this challenging time.

Earlier today the Prime Minister held his first daily public Coronavirus briefing at Downing Street, and a range of additional measures have been announced. More testing will commence, but this will be prioritised for those in hospital and health workers. There's a request that people avoid all non-essential contact, gatherings and crowded places; such as pubs, clubs, restaurants, theatres. The Government has also said people should work from home where possible and avoid all non-essential travel. While schools are going to remain open for now, this position will be revisited at a future point.

The Government is also now advising people who have a cough or high temperature - or live with someone who does - to stay at home for 14 days. Significantly, from this weekend vulnerable people, such as those with prior health conditions, are being asked to withdraw from social contact for around 12 weeks.

We are clearly now entering an escalating phase of this pandemic here in the UK. At the Council, we are adapting our response in light of this evolving situation and based on the latest national guidance. We are also carefully monitoring the local situation as the health and safety of our residents remains paramount. We have already ensured enhanced cleaning regimes across all our community centres, public offices and libraries; and will be increasing our public awareness about Coronavirus and the steps you can take to stay safe.

I know that this is going to be an unprecedented time of challenge for us all; which is why, now more than ever, we must all work together to support our most vulnerable members in Newham, including the elderly and those who are at particularly risk. It has been heartening to see the community spirit emerging from you all over the weekend.

This coming week, I'll be stepping up our activities to support the effective coordination of volunteering efforts across the borough with a series of meetings with community and voluntary sector representatives, resident groups and faith organisations; and local businesses. I also plan to hold a series of online video conference calls across our Community Neighbourhood areas, where local residents can hear directly from me and council officers about the actions we are undertaking in the borough in response to Coronavirus.

In the meantime please keep up the personal hygiene routines, listen to the advice from the public health experts, and above all be kind to one another during what will be a challenging time. Above all, please do keep an eye out for any of your neighbours who you feel might be in need of support. At times like this, we need come together as one Newham community to do what we can for those more vulnerable than ourselves.

This is an incredibly fast moving and developing situation, so for all the latest and best advice please visit our website www.newham.gov.uk. It will be kept up to date - so keep checking back for any changes.

In the meantime, stay well and 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