

Who is your choice for Mayor?



Election special
See Page 8-9

Blood tests victory!

New clinic to open after complaints over delays

AIDAN WHITE

Demands to improve the failing blood test system in Newham reported in *Newham Voices* last month have prompted urgent action from Borough health chiefs.

In a victory for community action NHS leaders have agreed to open a new test centre at the Westfield shopping complex in Stratford.

This will ease pressure on the existing four centres after complaints that a new online appointment system to replace the former walk-in blood tests had dramatically increased waiting times and caused confusion.

The new system also raised fears that delays in providing tests could mean some people – particularly elderly and vulnerable groups – are missing out on urgent and vital health support.

More than 300,000 people a year need blood tests in Newham and in the wake of the Covid crisis a new

appointment service was introduced with people forced to book online after receiving a paper order from their GP.

But following the *Newham Voices* story and detailed complaints from users that they have had to wait ten days or more to be seen, the issue was taken up by public governors at the East London NHS Foundation Trust.

The Trust runs existing test centres at the Appleby Health Centre in Canning Town, the Shrewsbury Road Health Centre in East Ham, The Centre in Manor Park, and Vicarage Lane Health Centre in Stratford.

After a special meeting with Newham governors the Trust management carried out an urgent review.

The decision to create a fifth option for people using part of the Westfield Vaccination centre will make hundreds of slots available and reduce the wait to get a booking.

Special signs and a separate entrance and pathway will be set up in the building and the centre should



In a victory for community action NHS leaders have agreed to open a new test centre at the Westfield shopping complex in Stratford.

be open by the middle of April.

The blood testing – or phlebotomy – service is a vital part of the health monitoring and diagnosis process needed by doctors and although the

new system may be confusing for some people health leaders are acting to ease the pressure on existing sites and they are reassuring patients that doctors can still fast-track urgent appointments.

The shift to paperless organisation of blood tests through the Swiftqueue digital online booking system became more urgent during the Covid crisis which saw the blood test service struggling to cope as social-distancing measures forced patients to queue in the streets around the clinics.

Many people have found the online system difficult to use – particularly people aged over 60 and 70. Some patients used to getting same-day or next-day tests by queuing up at a local clinic now have to wait days – even weeks – before their appointment.●

Newham Voices Readers respond – See Page Two ▶

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5 MAY



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HAVE YOUR SAY – LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@newhamvoices.co.uk

Our readers respond with anger and frustration over NHS changes to the appointment system for blood tests

Online system must get faster

I went through your article Concern over access to Blood tests (*Newham Voices*, March). I happened to see this article on the day I had been denied entry to the Shrewsbury Road health centre.

I am pre-diabetic, was unwell over the past four weeks with a severe cough, and literally I had to wait for a doctor's appointment for nearly a month. Being very weak and fragile with the infection, I badly needed a blood test to check all my levels and start some medication.

On the morning, I continued fasting from the night before. I was unaware that I had to book through the online system. Even my GP did not advise me of this.

I rushed into Shrewsbury health centre, despite the rain, where I was denied entry by security who asked if I had an appointment. I was startled and asked when did this system change? He told me it was since last September and gave me a pamphlet asking me to get through online from the website address.

Assuming the slots will be there for later hours, I desperately stood outside and tried to book a slot. The website did not turn up proper search results for the centre despite multiple attempts. With some help I got through, but I was shocked to see the appointment dates being three weeks away, and I returned home disappointed.

I am a software professional, but even I was struggling with the website booking, looking out for slots, and with virtually no search results. I wonder how elderly people could even try.

– Meera Venkatachalam

“GPs always make forms urgent”

Following major surgery for my wife and having suffered from sepsis, on discharge the hospital asked the GP to do a blood test for liver failure function.

Her GP marked the blood test form as “urgent” but the blood test staff at Shrewsbury Road Centre said: “GPs always make forms urgent” so they refused to carry out the test and said they didn't have any slots. I explained that she had a major surgery and was not even in a state to walk and NHS staff are

putting a patient at risk by overriding a GP urgent request. Staff said: “We don't have slots” and I was told: “You are being rude” I even said we can wait but was still refused. I showed them the NHS Trust website where it says people can walk in but the staff member said: “I don't know about the NHS Website” and refused to do a blood test.

I went back and forth to the GP and the blood service four times where the GP had stamped and personally signed the blood request form but blood test staff still refused. In the end I had to request a GP manager to come along to the blood test service where staff still refused to carry out the blood test and the staff said to the GP man-

Poor communications – I heard about it from word of mouth

Aidan White (March) said he'd like more feedback about the new appointments system for blood tests recently introduced in Newham. I have a few comments based on my experience so far.

The introduction of the new online Swiftqueue booking system was not well publicised. Usually I might have received a text message about a change like this but I did not. I only found out by word of mouth.

As you reported, often the earliest available appointment is 2-3 weeks away. This is OK so long as people can plan ahead and get an appoint-

A GREAT PAPER – KEEP IT UP!

Yesterday I picked up the latest copy of *Newham Voices* at Morrisons in Stratford. I picked up one also for someone else who has lived here more than 35 years.

I have spent this morning so far just reading halfway through still to be excited and informed.

What a brilliant paper – balanced, informative and a joy to read. Aidan White must be a very talented man. And to give US such a heritage.

You've got such a brilliant team with you at the helm.

Please keep on. I so much enjoy and learn from your paper. You are a credit to the human race. What dedication.

From a newly-state pensioner this week at Maryland. You are a breath of fresh air. Well done. I hope you get funding.

– Elaine Rowe, Maryland

ager the same thing: “GPs always make forms urgent”. Finally the GP manager spoke to someone in the office who then agreed to do the test.

There was no “receptionist” available to book the blood test and I witnessed many patients including elderly people with urgent blood test requests being turned away. My wife was not in a position to even talk as she was in a lot of pain from the surgery. If I was not there she would have been turned away. We are totally shocked by the service which has no regard for patient care and the risk they are putting on patients by overriding a GP's decision.

I have made a complaint and the manager has told me that this should have not have happened and the staff should have taken the blood test. She also accepted the NHS Barts Trust website was not fully accurate. The manager is yet to interview the blood test staff and get back to me.

– Zubair Bawa

ment at the right time. Most of the blood tests I have are requested by hospital consultants, and ideally have to be done shortly before I am next seen in the clinic.

I am sure there will be cases where people haven't managed to get blood tests done before they are next seen at a hospital clinic. This scenario is different to the one where a GP asks for blood tests to be done but there is no specific deadline.

I am on insulin and sometimes have to have fasting blood tests. In theory the Swiftqueue system should work better in that I can book an early morning appointment and be seen on time, and so don't have to delay having my morning insulin for too long.

However, in practice, I wonder if it may be more difficult to get an early morning slot than previously, when it was just drop-in? It would have been nice to have some information on how fasting blood tests fit into the new appointments system.

– Daphne Stedman, Stratford

A safe haven in Canning Town as Newham organises to help Ukraine

**AIDAN WHITE AND
KAROLINA KROLICZEK**

Newham is providing a safe haven for refugees from the war in Ukraine and it is also part of a solidarity campaign that has seen a regular flow of lorries taking urgent supplies from East London to Ukrainian refugees in Poland.

the capital of Latvia, they ran into more delays as their application for visas to the UK could only be processed in Berlin.

“It was such a relief when they finally arrived at Stansted airport,” Tanya told *Newham Voices*.

Tanya works with Tetiana Pasichnyk, who manages a Ukraine accountancy company based in

Newham is already home to more than 2,000 Ukrainians and there are plans to provide refuge to more families fleeing the war.

On 21 March, Newham Council together with the migrants and refugee charity Praxis, the Renewal Programme, RAMFEL, and the NHS, organised a Ukrainian community event at Stratford Library.

More than 50 people attended. The event discussed the Ukraine Family Scheme to allow Ukrainians to bring families over for up to three years.

Newham residents will be able to sponsor family members to flee to the UK. Proof of the UK residence of the UK sponsor, proof of family relationship and proof of their residence in Ukraine will be needed. Refugees will have free access to the NHS, benefits and the right to work.

Households that offer the refugee a spare room will receive £350 a month for the first six months.

Some Ukrainians raised the need for temporary housing and pushed for reducing skyrocketing hotel prices across the borough.



Tanya Oleksenko

The Council says it is ready to help and Iryna Pereginyak, from the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (AUGB), said:

“This event shows that Newham Council is ready to assist Ukrainian refugees in all their needs. It would be useful to inform all potential British sponsors (via official websites) that the Council can be the point of reference for any enquiries that might arise.” ●



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On 25 March, Tanya Oleksenko, who has lived in Newham for ten years, cried with relief when she welcomed to Canning Town her brother Sergey, his wife Ina, and their children Mykyta, aged 18, and Nina, aged three, following their dramatic escape from war-torn Kharkiv.

The family are now safe in Canning Town after a month-long journey to safety, which involved sleeping in basements under the threat of Russian rocket attacks and a desperate 800-mile car journey from Ukraine, through Russia to Latvia.

The family realised they had to escape when their neighbourhood came under attack. After calls from people trying to contact one of their neighbours, they went to investigate and found the parents dead and three children alone in the house.

The family abandoned their home and small business as a glazing and window manufacturer and fled.

When they crossed to Russia, they were sent back to the war zone to get exit stamps on their passports. When they finally arrived in Riga,

West Ham Lane, which has recently obtained a licence to process visa applications.

“Many of our clients have been asking for help for their families in Ukraine,” she said, “but my parents have decided to stay at present. They are in their 70s and the nearest route to safety in Poland is a 20-hours journey.”

Tetiana has lived in the UK for 21 years. Most of the company’s clients are from Ukraine or have strong links with the country. She also has Russian friends.

“Some of them want to give up their Russian citizenship,” she said. “It’s not possible to be neutral in this conflict. People need to speak out, if they don’t they support the war by their silence.”

Meanwhile, next door to her business is the popular café Sawmill, whose proprietor Lana Zoubata is helping to organise solidarity assistance, raising funds for the Red Cross and collecting urgently-needed materials as part of a huge relief effort.

MSG Sphere go-ahead despite local protests

Plans to build the Madison Square Garden (MSG) Sphere in Stratford have been given a green light despite strong local opposition.

A slight majority of members of the London Legacy Development Corporation Planning Committee voted through the proposals on March 22.

By a vote of six to four, the committee decision means that the

Sphere will be built on land outside Stratford station unless the mayor of London Sadiq Khan decides to veto the proposal.

The American entertainment firm MSG submitted plans for the 21,000-capacity arena three years ago and the idea has been strongly opposed by West Ham MP Lyn Brown, Newham Council and local residents as well as Transport for London. ●



Photo via london.msg.com



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**People at the Heart
of Everything We Do**

Greens and City Farm campaigners form election pact to challenge Labour

NOAH ENAHORO

Save Newham City Farm and Newham Green Party have formed an alliance which will see them stand as joint candidates in Beckton at the local elections on 5 May.

Sol Bourgeon, Karen Webb-Green and Alison McLucas will represent the Green Party in Beckton on a platform of saving Newham City Farm.

Rob Callender, the Green Party candidate for Mayor of Newham and candidate for Royal Victoria ward, will stand on the same platform.

During a council cabinet meeting in September last year, it was decided that the farm would be closed, with residents promised that the area would remain a green space accessible to the public.

Despite a petition reaching nearly 50,000 signatures and several organised peaceful protests, the farm remains closed.

The farm's future has been included under the Beckton Parks Masterplan, a project set up by the Council to engage with local communities on the future of the green



Sol Bourgeon, Karen Webb-Green and Alison McLucas at Newham City Farm gates

spaces in the wards of Beckton and Custom House.

Newham's Green Party have been supporters of the Save Newham City Farm campaign and have criticised the council's decision.

Rob Callender said: "We are delighted to be standing joint candidates with Save Newham City Farm.

We have supported the campaign from the beginning and are proud of the work already done to save such an important local amenity.

"We think it's the perfect next step to increase the pressure on Newham Labour over their terrible decision to deprive so many current and future generations of the opportunities to learn and volunteer which the farm provided. Together, alongside my campaign for Mayor, we will fight to ensure Newham Labour can no longer ignore residents' views in the Council Chamber."

Save Newham City Farm campaigner and Beckton resident Alison McLucas said: "Numerous requests for the local Labour Council to hold fair dialogue have been rebuffed or completely ignored. Through our campaign, we have learnt that the

closure by stealth of Newham City Farm and the disorganised Beckton Parks Masterplan consultation are just examples among many of how the Council is dealing with residents' concerns."

She added: "I am standing as a Green, not only because I want to see our 45-year-old farm reinstated to benefit the community again but also because the Green Party permits me to be an independent voice on the Council to represent my community, to hold the Mayor and Council to account and to ensure that my fellow residents are included properly in consultation and the decision-making processes on all issues."

Local government and Mayoral elections will be held on Thursday 5 May to elect the Mayor and councillors representing 24 Borough wards. ●

Become a buddy to help young people

ANGELA CAROO

Start Young UK is looking for sponsors to mentor children from disadvantaged backgrounds in London schools from this month.

The charity, which was formed in Newham from a Christmas Gifting initiative, is looking to secure sponsors for young children from the age of five upwards, to join their buddy scheme.

The scheme will provide basic needs such as school uniform, PE kit, support towards school trips and other educational costs. The child will attend a community club one evening per week which will give respite for parents and build valuable skills for the child.

The buddy will support through letter writing a minimum of once a month to their sponsored child. They can also support with work experience, apprenticeships and opportunities of securing employment.

Due to safeguarding issues, meetings with sponsored children take place in a safe setting. Your organisation may arrange a team day supporting the school in their various volunteer activities such as painting, gardening, or clean-



ing the chicken coup. All contact will be via the charity and you will receive a quarterly update on your child and a small passport photo.

You can register an interest on startyounguk.com or email me and I will forward your details.

Start Young UK is now a registered charity which will act as a resource for young people from the age of 5-18 who live in underprivileged areas of London.

Start Young UK is looking for the following support:

- Volunteers
- Donations
- Premises
- Mentors
- Part time Administrator to be based in the school.

You can contact me at: AngelaCaroo@hotmail.co.uk

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'No Oyster' plan aims to keep young people safe

YOUTH VOICES OF NEWHAM

NOAH ENAHORO

Community group Newham Citizens is calling on Transport for London to allow school students to return home from school even if they forget their Oyster cards.

The move, part of the organisation's Manifesto for Newham, is believed to be a step towards tackling knife crime, and is based on evidence that the risk of violence for young people is highest in the afterschool period. Allowing children to take transport home from school, with or without an Oyster card, would ensure they get home quickly and safely.

Joshua, a student at St Bonaven-

ture's, said: "Sometimes I have to walk home from school at about 5 o'clock. At this time, it gets very dark, especially in winter, so I prefer taking the bus. At times I don't have my Zip card as I left it in my other school bag, and the driver sometimes doesn't let me on. I have to walk across the Borough by myself in the cold and dark."

Alongside research that indicated 71 per cent of young people travel to and from school or college with no adult supervision, Newham Citizens and research partners at the University of East London found that 65 per cent of young people who came to the schools take a bus as part of their commute to school or college. Their research also demonstrates the challenges female students face in being harassed on public transport.

Andy Lewis, a staff member at St

Bonaventure's said: "We want to ensure our young people get home as safely as possible. Students should have their Oyster to travel, but we all

forget things occasionally. We want TFL to think about some discretion for young people to make sure our students remain as safe as possible."

As part of the Manifesto, Newham Citizens also have campaign demands on the Living Wage, housing and health inequalities. The group wants more support for those on mental health waiting lists and is recommending that the council hire "lived experienced" consultants to improve Newham's housing system. ●

Young People's Charter launched

NOAH ENAHORO

Newham Council has launched a Young People's Charter.

The charter outlines key areas of commitment to children and young people and encourages local businesses, organisations and individuals to sign up.

Alongside the charter, a draft of the Children and Young People's Plan was approved by the Cabinet in March, with the full plan set to be released later in the year.

Both the charter and the plan were co-created by young people following a 'Next Gen Newham' meeting, an initiative that allows young people to shape the future of the Borough.

The Borough has one of the highest populations of children and young people in the country with some 34 per cent of Newham residents aged 24 and under.

For more information go to www.newham.gov.uk/news/article/803/newham-council-launches-young-people-s-charter

Advertorial

Colleges near to where I live do not offer the same level of support, being at NewVlc I know that I will have the chance to get to where I want to be for my career.

NewVlc student Joseph is an aspiring athlete and budding professional basketball player with NewVlc Knights Basketball Team. He is currently in his first year of studying Level 3 Sports Diploma. He was a former St Martin's School student. We caught up with Joseph to find out a little more about his journey so far.

What made you choose NewVlc?

"I chose to come and study at NewVlc mainly because of NewVlc Knights Basketball and basketball coach Will, who I have known for a long time. Will suggested NewVlc to me, I did some research and found out that I would have the opportunity to play a lot of basketball (I usually play point guard or shooting guard) and increase my chance to go to America and play professionally. I also discovered that a former NewVlc student went to America to play professionally."

How have you found Sixth Form College so far?

"I have found college really good so far. I have made loads of friends from all around the world, built good relationships with my teachers and overall enjoying life at NewVlc. The college is excellent in the inclusion of everyone when it comes to



Joseph

their sport offering for beginners to elite level students, we are all welcomed and encouraged to participate."

Is there anything you wish you had known that you do now?

"I didn't hear about NewVlc until I got to know Will as a basketball coach. I live far from the college and travel in from Essex. The Sports Academy and the course offered is the perfect fit for me so I am happy to make that journey from home for it. Colleges near to where I live do not offer the same level of support, being at NewVlc I know that I will have the chance to get to where I want to be for my career."

Who is the most inspiring person you have ever met?

"The most inspiring person I have ever met is Tom Ward. He is a British Basketballer who plays in the division 1 men's league for Worthing Thunder. He is also the Director of Basketball for an organisation called BTM that is involved with taking basketball clubs to tournaments in different countries and selecting squads for different age groups to go out to different countries to play basketball.

I have been extremely lucky to be selected for the BTM U19 squad to go to Los Angeles next year for a week to play basketball. Tom Ward is putting me through a mentorship program with him for the last 6 months where he has helped me organise my weekly schedule for basketball and fitness training, helped me out with my diet, helped me out with my mental problems and also has taught me a lot about basketball and life, and shares with me his journey to achieving great success."

What is your advice for students considering NewVlc?

"My advice would be - come to study at NewVlc! The teachers and staff are supportive and help you with any problems you might have. There are so many opportunities to join different types of sports and teams under The Sports Academy. If you're an athlete like me, NewVlc is the one for you."

What are your future plans?

"After I finish my studies at NewVlc I want to go to a university or college in America so I can have the opportunity to play professional basketball for my career. Watch this space!"

The race to be Mayor: Candidates

We asked the main party candidates for Mayor at the election on 5 May to put their case to our readers. Here's what they told us...

Dr Saleyha Ahsan: Lib Dems

"I know the issues – I lost my father to Covid and I understand the issues because I face them too."

Newham Liberal Democrats have chosen Dr Saleyha Ahsan as their candidate for the Newham Mayor because of her background, experience, leadership skills and the strength of her voice as a campaigner.

She was the first British Muslim woman to attend the integrated male and female Royal Military Academy Sandhurst's officer commissioning course where she achieved the rank of Captain in the British Army, and served in Bosnia as part of the NATO stabilisation force, completing three years in the Royal Army Medical Corps as a Medical Support Officer.

She left the army to retrain as a doctor and is now a practising emergency medical doctor. During the COVID pandemic she worked in intensive care. She is a broadcast journalist and documentary filmmaker, and has created documentary programmes such as *Dispatches: Covid Critical* and also *Can our NHS Cope?*

She lives in Newham and wants to



Dr Saleyha Ahsan

"I know the issues – I lost my father to Covid and I understand the issues because I face them too."

make a difference both nationally and locally. At her campaign launch she said: "I am your neighbour, I live in the Prospect East development in Stratford Olympic Park. I understand the issues you face because I face them too. I am appalled at this incompetent Tory government and the way they have handled the pandemic."

"I have been bereaved myself, losing my father to COVID and know the

hardships many people have felt. I have represented bereaved families in interviews on Sky and BBC news. I see the way Newham isn't dealing with anti-social behaviour, crime, noise, litter, fly-tipping, recycling or parking properly. I know I can use my experience to represent your views, my neighbours, to get this lazy Labour council to listen to you too."

She is also standing as a councillor for Stratford Olympic Park.

Rob Callender: Green Party

Green Party candidate for Mayor is Rob Callender, who is also standing as a councillor in the Royal Docks ward. He too lives in Newham.

He told *Newham Voices*: "I live in North Woolwich, and work as a technical building manager."

"For the last year I've been a volunteer member of the Working Group for the Beckton and Royal Docks Community Assembly, helping to prioritise and mentor local projects."

"I support the Save Newham City Farm campaign so local children can keep a link to farming and nature. I strongly oppose the Silvertown Tunnel for its toxic air pollution and traffic congestion. I want a carbon neutral Newham, including making homes warmer, and heating bills cheaper."

He says millions of pounds of infrastructure funding that the council receives from developers is

unspent each year. This should be used for improvements to our public spaces and more affordable housing, community, mental health, sports and youth facilities.

He said: "We need safe protected walking, wheeling and cycle routes, more bus lanes, more trees and non-pavement EV charging points. Better recycling for flats, street litter bins, food and free bookable bulky waste collections,

"Our borough suffers some of the highest air pollution, worst poverty and worst recycling rates in the country, while the council seems unaccountable and opaque."



Rob Callender

"I want a carbon neutral Newham, including making homes warmer, and heating bills cheaper."

Get ready to vote on 5 May

PETER LANDMAN

5 May is a big day for local democracy – we get to vote for the Mayor and for councillors across the Borough.

By law all the candidates have to have their nominations submitted by 5 April, but the key date for residents is 14 April. That's the deadline for getting your right to vote by putting your name and address on the electoral register – if you don't sign up you can't vote.

People can register on line at www.gov.uk/registertovote. It is easy to do and is supposed to be a five minute process.

If you have registered and have voted before, it might be best to check up where you go to vote, as there have

been boundary changes, particularly in areas like Canning Town.

The number of electoral wards has been increased from 21 to 24. You can check up on: www.newham.gov.uk/pollingstationfinder.

If you would prefer a postal vote, the deadline date to apply is 19 April. Again, you can apply on line at postal.vote@newham.gov.uk. You will receive your ballot paper by post, about 11 days before polling day.

If you are interested to know about all the candidates who will be standing, lists will be displayed at East Ham and Stratford Libraries and, of course, online on the Newham website from 7 April.

You will receive an official poll card addressed to you, if you are eligible to vote.



This will give details of your polling station. The main batch will be delivered on 1 April. People registering in April will receive their poll card later.

But it's not an obligation to bring your card along to the polling station.

The Council officer will simply look up your name on the register, cross off your entry, and hand you your ballot slip. The names and political party details of the candidates will be on the ballot slip.

es make their appeals to voters

Inequality is stark. As a private renter in a shared flat,

"I know that tenants and leaseholders are having a tough time. A decent, transparent council - and mayor who is open to scrutiny - should be supportive to all residents.

"Newham can be, and has, so much more than this. I have ambition for Newham and will work tirelessly to ensure that Newham becomes the greener, cleaner, fairer, safer - BETTER place that residents deserve." @RoyalDocksRob

Attic Rahman: Conservative

I feel our Borough can be run better than it has been for the last few decades of single-party rule.

We have many new homes being built but far too many are snapped up by buy-to-let investors, so Conservatives will prioritise Newham residents and give more people the opportunity to own their own homes. Conservatives will ensure the standard of privately rented housing is the best in London.

We held the Olympics here but many residents haven't felt the benefit of that, so Conservatives will support a massive increase in school sport in our schools - both for primary and secondary school children. I want this to be the most physically active borough in London.

We need to take pride in our community again. Conservatives will employ a new Community Patrol Officers team, all equipped with body cameras, to fine people who drop litter and cause damage. We will build stronger relationships between com-



"Conservatives will prioritise Newham residents and give more people the opportunity to own their own homes."

munities and the police to tackle our crime epidemic. We need to abolish the mattress tax which has led to a huge increase in fly-tipping and we need to support and promote cycling

with proficiency courses for all children and introduce "Boris Bikes" across the Borough.

If you elect me as your Mayor, I will never forget that every penny

the Council spends is taken from residents as taxpayers so I will not waste money and I will keep council tax low. I will be accountable, inclusive and transparent. Thank you.

Rokhsana Fiaz: Labour

Incumbent Mayor of Newham **Rokhsana Fiaz** is different from other candidates in that she has been in the role since 2018 and so must defend her record in actually doing the job, as well as setting out her hopes for the future.

But as campaigning gets underway, she is looking forward to being judged on the 'much needed' changes the council has made.

"I hope people are experiencing improvement and that they will recognise the council as bringing improvements in spite of the challenges we face together," she told *Newham Voices*.

Labour currently holds all Newham Council's seats, a situation Ms Fiaz claims she has worked to address, setting up the participatory democracy commission that was in her 2018 manifesto and introducing the UK's first Citizens Assembly. She has been 'lifted' by the involvement of residents in the neighbourhood assemblies, "the largest participatory programme in the country" providing up to £100,000 in funding for improvement projects voted on by local residents in each of eight areas.

By involving a cross section of Newham residents, Ms Fiaz says she is trying to create synergy between "what residents want and what my administration and I think we have".

Her priorities on the doorstep will be: energy costs; opportunities for young people; rubbish and fly tipping; housing - the ongoing provision of homes at social rent levels; the health and wellbeing of residents - "Covid is still with us"; ending the scourge of rogue landlords; and protecting children, particularly in an area where 4,500 children are hospitalised every year because of pollution.

Ms Fiaz has also been very vocal about inclusivity. "Social integration, racism and equality are key to what we do.

"As a woman of colour I have experienced misogyny and racism.

These issues are fundamental to me. I celebrate our diversity, I am so proud of being a Newhamite."

She believes more needs to be done to make the streets safer for women, including police visibility, better street lighting, and design that takes safety into account.



We mustn't get caught up in a false narrative at national level that inequality only exists in the north ... There are high levels of deprivation in parts of London, including Newham.

"We are a Borough that is evolving. Ten years ago, these issues were not sufficiently recognised in approaches to planning and design."

Part of the solution is education. "We have to have conversations in which we keep calling out bad behaviour - wolf whistling for example is not acceptable, it makes women feel very uncomfortable.

"Women who occupy leadership positions are often subjected to unacceptable behaviour. I have experienced this myself. Narratives are projected onto me about who people - usually men - think I am.

"There needs to be education about women in power being part

of normal life. If people are discomforted by it, they should reflect on what they need to do to change themselves."

Ward boundaries have changed since 2018 so there is no guarantee that Labour will sweep the board again. But Ms Fiaz has advice for her challengers.

"Put forward credible propositions that take into account the level of restraint we work under."

Newham spends £1.5bn, the ninth highest in the country. Of that, she says, only £360m is available for use flexibly. Out of every £1, 69p goes on adult and children's services. Only 31p per person is available for everything else, which she claims is the result of austerity policies introduced by the government in 2010.

"Do not make promises in this post truth world without taking into account what 31p in the £ can do when we have vulnerable older people who we want to live happy lives and children living in households where they struggle to put food on the table.

"It is important that parties have an honest, open, transparent and truthful conversation about all these things. We have been clear, honest and truthful about the constraints we are under, and the public have been appreciative of that honesty.

"We mustn't get caught up in a false narrative at national level that inequality only exists in the north of England. There are high levels of deprivation in parts of London, including Newham. We are constantly making the case for high levels of support to deal with this. "

She believes the decision to give Newham £40m of the £65m set aside for London under the government's 'levelling up' scheme shows that the Borough's leadership is 'credible and trusted'.

"I will always be the champion for the for the area I grew up in," she said. "All of us have a stake in it."

Talking to Jean Gray

Don't take us for granted! Voters' warning to politicians

As part of our campaign to increase voter turnout in Canning Town South ward's May elections, Jean Gray, editor of *Newham Voices*, spoke to regulars at the Custom House and Canning Town Community Renewal Project over 50s club about whether they will be voting and what the key issues are for them.

Their message to the politicians – we believe in voting but don't take us for granted.

Joyce Johnston, a retired accountant, has lived in Canning Town for 30 years.

"I always vote, I've already organised my postal vote, but who I vote for depends on what they are saying. One thing I would really like to see is more information available telling us exactly what we are entitled to, but that doesn't happen in one place. It's too difficult to find out all the benefits that are there for us to claim."

Betty O'Connell is a former council worker who has lived in the area for 43 years. She is very active locally and takes part in the community assembly.

"There is no question that I have seen money being squandered. Some of what the council does is very good,

other things not so good. I am looking for better communication, more responsible use of money and I want to see promises being kept. It has taken 22 years for the redevelopment of the area and so people have felt very let down over the years."

As chair of the ward panel for Custom House, Betty is also concerned about safety on the streets, particularly for young people.

She says isolation has been a major issue in the area during lockdown and it can be hard for people with mental health problems to access the help they need. She praised the Custom House and Canning Town Community Renewal Project, **Alison Skeat** and her team, who have provided help to many people during these times. 'Alison is really caring and much appreciated'.

Rosario Lobo came to Canning Town from Nairobi, Kenya in 1972. A former sales assistant, his family are originally from Goa in India.

"My father told me that if you don't vote, you have no rights. It is important to vote. I have been living in a care home for six years and would like more information about how to vote if you are in my circumstances."

Marie Ann Taylor has lived in the area all her life. She is quite clear



about what matters to her – clean streets!

"There are not enough road sweeps," she said. "Some parts of the area are filthy, so that's what I'm looking for – a real plan to clean up the area."

Godhawari Sarkar, known as Gita, usually votes but says people need transport to polling stations and back to make it easy for those who are less mobile. She is concerned about housing repairs.

"There are people much worse off than me, I know" she said. "We used to have an independent older people's reference group so that we could raise issues, but I believe it has been taken over by the council". ●

Electric change Charging points and a digital future

PETER LANDMAN

Newham Council Cabinet has set a course to transform Newham into a data driven economy and society.

The Sparks Programme, agreed in March, envisages a dramatic technology-driven future.

The Council has been collaborating with the University College London Institute of Global Prosperity. They estimate that through more extensive use of computer data, there could be 980,000 new employees in the UK and 5,000 new employees in Newham by 2035.

They presented a Call for Action:

- Developing further Digital Education;
- Setting up Sparks Centres to be located within 15-minute walking distances from residents;
- Data project exchanges with other local authorities;
- The concepts of Data Citizenship and a Sparks ID, which would enable residents to access London-wide systems.

The Cabinet also agreed a "blueprint for action" including:

- Develop a Borough-wide digital investment strategy;
- A digital corridor of organisations in the Lower Lea area;
- Train young digital ambassadors;
- Use software to measure success at reducing emissions;

The Cabinet also supported an agreement with Uber to install 400 electric vehicle charging points.

A Bookshop for All

A new collection of oral history, *A Bookshop for All*, has been launched to celebrate Newham Bookshop.

The bookshop began in 1978 as part of Newham Parents' Centre providing access to educational materials. But it quickly expanded and went on to win the 2019 The Bookseller's award for London's Independent Bookshop of the Year.

Copies are available from Newham Bookshop in Barking Road for £6. It is free to libraries, schools and community groups.

The shop is deeply involved in the community, raising money good causes, most recently for humanitarian aid for Ukraine. It distributed 1,000 books to disadvantaged children last Christmas and has raised money to support refugees, the homeless and victims of the Grenfell Tower disaster.



Top left: Joyce Johnston and Gita Sarkar; Top center: Alison Skeat; Top right: Betty O'Connell; Bottom left: Rosario Lobo; and Bottom right: Marie Ann Taylor

Jack Leslie – Making the Point in Canning Town



Mayor Fiaz and Councillors with Jack Leslie's Family. © Andrew Baker

NEANDRA ETIENNE

A local footballer who was infamously dropped from the England team after officials discovered he was of Black Jamaican heritage will be remembered in a new housing development in Canning Town.

The Mayor of Newham, Rokhsana Fiaz, Cllr Shaban Mohammed, Cabinet Member for Housing Services, and officials from Roof Construction Company joined Jack Leslie's family in the Topping Out Ceremony for the new block of 15 council flats in Canning Town named after local footballer Jack Leslie (1901-1988).

The site of Jack Leslie Point was previously occupied by under used garages. The homes are being built to ambitious sustainability standards.



Malmesbury Terrace CGI courtesy of Newham Council

The development will be car free, in accordance with council policy, but there will be disabled parking spaces.

Jack Leslie, who featured in an exhibition I curated for Newham Black History Month 2021, was picked to play for England in 1925. However, his name was dropped from the final

line up after officials discovered his Black Jamaican heritage.

Jack's grand-daughter Gillian told *Newham Voices* how it feels to have him remembered in Newham: "I'm so very happy that my grandad is now getting his story out there. He'd probably say "what's all the fuss about."

The flats are located near Gerald Road in Canning Town, where there is now a blue Heritage plaque.

I joined Mayor Fiaz and Jack Leslie's family to sign parts of the beams in the building.

Rokhsana Fiaz said: "I'm proud and privileged to be here with members of Jack's family as a woman of colour who has been trying to do some pioneering things by being disruptive. I hope we have done as best as we can in Jack's memory and that he will forever be immortalised in this building of exceptional design and quality."

Jack's grand-daughter Lyn asked her mother, Eve, how Jack would have reacted to the news of the naming of the new flats, "Mum said he would have been embarrassed by it all. I am so proud and thankful that his name and story will now be mentioned forever, he will never be forgotten."

Jack played for Barking Town and Plymouth Argyle. After retiring, he joined West Ham United FC's backroom staff, managed by Ron Greenwood, as the club's boot-boy for over 15 years at Chadwell Heath and the Boleyn Ground. ●

jackleslie.co.uk

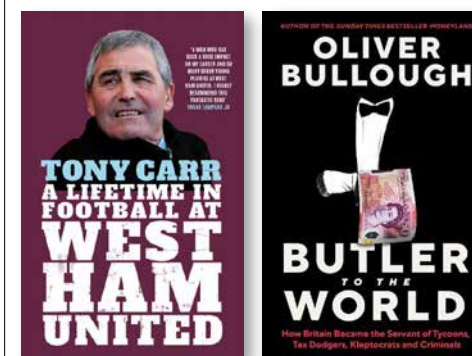


Good reads in Newham

The Newham Bookshop in Bark-ing Road tells us these are the top sellers this month:

- **A Lifetime in Football at West Ham United**
By Tony Carr
- **Butler to the World**
By Oliver Bullough
- **The Dying Day** (now in paperback)
By Vaseem Khan
- **Grimwood**
By Nadia Shireen
- **Julia and the Shark**
By Karen Millwood Hargrave
- **My Must-Have Mum** (Illustrated by Jen Khatun)
By Maudie Smith

Newham Bookshop will be hosting a signing with **Tony Carr** on Saturday 2 April at 2pm.



Swimming in light – how the shoal brightened up Stratford

In our regular focus on local monuments, **Julia Omari** explains the history behind Stratford shopping centre's now famous 'Stratford Shoal'.

The 2012 Olympics bought a much needed facelift to Stratford. Some called the area ugly, but maybe old was a better description. The name Stratford was first recorded in 1067 as an area that started life as a small space in the northwest part of West Ham. Over time, as spaces were built upon, the peaceful green hamlet grew slowly into the busy concrete town we see today.

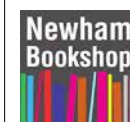
Stratford shopping centre opened in 1974 with a refurbishment in 1998, while looking good for its day the attractiveness waned, and in 2009, with the Olympics just around the corner, a competition was launched to find a way to improve the appearance of the original mall entrance, opposite Stratford station.

The winning design called the Stratford Shoal, created by Studio Egret West was unveiled in 2013 revealing 73 naturally coloured titanium leaves that sit on tree-like trunks and change colour in response to the amount of light hitting them. The 250 meter long sculp-

ture, which also moves in the wind, instantly improved the appearance of the centre and once again gave Stratford a modern glow. ●



The 'Stratford Shoal'. © Julia Omari



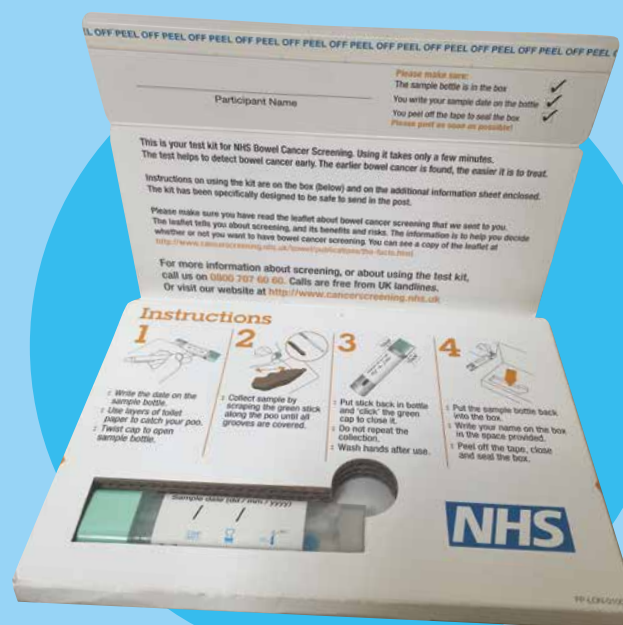
newhambooks.co.uk
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Bowel Cancer Screening Programme

Bowel screening saves lives - do the test at home!

- Did you know that bowel cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the UK?
- Remember to complete your free test kit when you receive it - it helps detect bowel cancer early
- If you are 75 or over you can call to request your free kit



**Aged 75 or over?
call 0800 707 6060
to request
a free test kit**

For more information or advice, contact your local Health Improvement Specialist - Leena Khagram on leena.khagram@nhs.net or go to the national programme website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-cancer-screening





SOMETHING'S BREWING



Phil Mellows recalls his heavy metal experiences of the 1970s as one of Stratford's oldest pubs comes back to life

When I started working – and drinking – in Stratford in the mid-1970s, little did I realise that rock history was being made at the pub on the corner.

That noise blasting out from the Cart & Horses by Maryland Point was, likely as not, Leyton's soon-to-be legendary heavy-metal combo Iron Maiden, playing their very first gigs.

closed for the work in the summer of 2019 but delays and then Covid meant the scheme didn't come to fruition until now.

Live dates in the basement are filling up with bands booked for the weekends and an open mic night on Thursdays. The pub is looking for entertainment ideas for the rest of the week.



Kastro with Iron Maiden pictured during their residency at the Cart & Horses in 1975-76

“At last it's somewhere they can call home. People are saying it's a 21st Century pub with the feels of the 19th Century, and that's exactly what we wanted.”

It's a memory that's been preserved as the pub reopened in March after being closed for nearly three years. Maiden memorabilia decorate the walls and a new live music venue has opened in the basement.

There is even a range of Iron Maiden's own bottled beers behind the bar – in recent years lead singer Bruce Dickinson has pursued his other passion, creating ale recipes with Stockport brewer Frederic Robinson.

For the owner of the Cart & Horses, Kastro Pergjoni, this is about “securing the history of the pub. It's not a big money-making venture. It's important for local people to have this”.

Kastro has held the lease on the pub since 2016, always intending to refurbish it and restore its heritage as ‘the birthplace of Iron Maiden’. It

Food will be available soon, with pizzas, burgers and a Sunday roast on the menu.

Since the reopening, Kastro has been “amazed” at the support the revived Cart & Horses has had from the locals.

“They've waited so long for this, and they love it. At last it's somewhere they can call home. People are saying it's a 21st Century pub with the feel of the 19th Century, and that's exactly what we wanted.”

Indeed, the history of the Cart & Horses goes much further back than heavy rock. From 1765, the original pub of that name was on the site of what is now Wetherspoon's Goldengrove, before moving to Maryland Point in 1880.

The earliest recorded licensee was called James Brown – but, no, probably not that one. ●



GARDEN TALK

With summer around the corner **Cecilia Cran** celebrates by planting her cornflower seeds



Photo courtesy Cecilia Cran

What to grow:

As the clocks have gone forward, it feels like we've won an extra hour of sunlight. For the green fingered, this means an extra 60 whole minutes planning, pottering and planting in the garden.

I've spent the last few months prepping, drafting my garden plans and scouring seed catalogues for this very moment. Now we can see summer just around the corner, I'm beyond excited and I'm celebrating in the most appropriate way – by planting Cornflower seeds!

How to grow:

Cornflower seeds can be grown outdoors from March and April, before coming in to flower in early June through to August.

First off, choose the spot where you would them to grow, they can be grown in large pots, or directly in the ground. For the purpose of this piece, I will be sowing directly into the ground, but the same rules apply.



Photo courtesy Cecilia Cran

Cornflowers like well-drained soil, a sheltered spot and lots of sunshine, so choose a space that gets lots of natural light and warmth from the sun and where plants won't have to battle wind.

Seeds can be sown around 1cm deep and 8cm apart – as the plants grow, they spread, so need space. When you sow too close together, plants will have to compete for nutrients, water and light and you can end up with smaller plants and less vibrant flowers. They don't like to be over watered, so water them in well at the start, then after this water them around once a week if there's been no rainfall.

There are a huge number of varieties to choose from, I tend to go for *Centaurea Cyanus* 'Polka Dot Mix', which produces a wonderful mix of white, pink and blue flowers.



Photo courtesy Cecilia Cran

Green escape:

You may have heard the slightly uncomfortable statistic that when you're in London, you're never more than three metres away from a rodent. I'm not sure if that is true or who even took the time to work it out...but what I do know to be true is that at the moment, it feels like everywhere I go; I am never more than a few steps away from beautiful, bright, sunshiney daffodils. Tall, small, yellow, orange, white even! They are out in full bloom and I can't get enough of them. So this month, rather than suggest one good green spot, I encourage you to go daff hunting. Some of my favourite green spaces in the borough that have particularly good crops this year include: The Olympic Park Stratford, West Ham Park, Central Park, Stratford Park and Memorial Recreation Ground. They're beautiful, little beacons of light, beckoning in summer. ●

The Woodcraft Folk go wild!

Stuart Walker reports on how young people in our urban landscape are getting a taste of the countryside

Running through woodland, cooking on a campfire, sleeping under the stars: for many of us these are our strongest childhood memories.

Getting away from the mundane experiences of home and school life even for short periods provide opportunities to look at the world afresh, make new friends and grow that little bit more.

For young people growing up in Newham these chances are all the more crucial. Many of our children are confined by the urban landscape and have no independent access to the outdoors. Poverty is a huge additional restriction. Many families do not have the opportunity for extended holidays.

School residential trips, Duke of Edinburgh Awards and uniformed and faith groups have historically enabled young people to get out and



Newham Woodcraft folk

into the countryside albeit for few and short occasions.

A year six trip to Gorsefield might be the only chance some of our youngsters have had to challenge themselves outside the comfort of their immediate family.

The pandemic and its lockdowns have hit these youngsters hard. Many trips have been cancelled. Some will have missed their only opportunity for residential excursions.

The value in terms of mental well-being of these breaks is proven: what we don't know is the detrimental impact of their loss. Without actions to address this situation we will have a generation of youngsters growing up who have not stayed outside their family home.

Woodcraft Folk has been working in Newham for nearly a hundred years – providing group night meetings and residential experiences for young people of all ages.

Over the last decade groups of local young people have been camping locally, hiking in Wales, meeting other groups in Europe and even visiting youth providers in occupied Palestine.

Alongside this Woodcraft Folk enables young people to use their voices in support of campaigns for social justice whether this be getting military recruitment out of schools

Many of our children are confined by the urban landscape and have no independent access to the outdoors. Poverty is a huge additional restriction.

or stopping the arms fair from coming to the Excel Centre.

In 2022 the focus is to get young people out of the city and into the wild. There is a programme of bushcraft workshops, a medium sized camp at Newham's excellent Debden Green Campsite and local young people will attend an international camp in the midlands in August.

The group is looking for young people to join and also for adults who can become committed volunteer youth workers. There will be training and appropriate support.

Anyone interested should contact newham@woodcraft.org.uk

Advertisements

WELCOME TO THE 100 STORY HOTEL

Discover Children's Story Centre Rob Biddulph

An immersive world of play and storytelling... with a mysterious mystery to solve.

Opens 2 April 2022. Book now: Discover.org.uk
383-387 High Street, Stratford, London, E15 4QZ

Songs & Props

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'Open'

LEARN BABY SIGNING THE FUN WAY!

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NEWBORN TO 2 YEARS

A multi-sensory, musical class to stimulate your baby's speech and language development

CLASSES ACROSS NEWHAM FOREST GATE, EAST VILLAGE AND UPTON PARK!

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singandsign.co.uk

SPORTS SHORTS

Compiled by Neandra Etienne

West Ham United Foundation has announced that trials for their Post 16 education and football programme will take place this month at the WHU Foundation Beckton Pitch.

Wednesday 6 and 13 April, 3pm – 5pm,
WHU Foundation, Beckton, E6 5NX

To book your space email **STaylor@westhamunited.co.uk**

Active Newham is organising free Baseball sessions for people aged 14-19 in partnership with Baseball Softball UK and Newham London.

The sessions are starting from Sunday 3 April, 12pm – 1pm

Keir Hardie Recreation Ground, Tarring Road, Canning Town, E16 1LQ

Sports@activeNewham.org.uk

Beckton Cats Youth FC based in Beckton provides Saturday football training for any young people interested in football, exercise, and making friends, regardless of experience and ability.

First session is FREE (subs are low and re-invested in the kids). Saturdays 10:00 am, Beckton Park, E6 5QJ.

www.becktoncatsfc.com

info@becktoncatsfc.com



Beckton Cats Youth FC

Congratulations to the Year 3 and 4 girls who represented **Upton Cross Primary School**, Plaistow, in the girls football competition on a glorious day at West Ham United Foundation in Beckton. They reached the quarterfinals beating St. Francis and Hallsville along the way.

The u15 **St Bons Handball team** followed in the footsteps of the u13 team, by becoming London Champions in a competition event at Leyton Score. The team will now join the u13 team in the regional tournament later this year, to determine the best team in the South East of England.

StBonsPe

stbonspe



St Bons u15 Handball Team

West Ham United Women have reached the semi-finals of the Vitality Women's FA Cup.

They are scheduled to play Manchester City, Sunday 17 April 2022 at the Chigwell Construction Stadium. Manchester City previously beat the Irons 3-0 in the 2019 final.

whufc.com/teams/women

West Ham United Women are also recruiting players for their Academy Programme for the 2022/23 season. Wednesday 6 April, 5.30-8.30pm at the West Ham United Foundation, Beckton and also

Wednesday 13 April, 5.30-8.30pm. This full-time programme is for players who are aged 16 or over from 1 September 2022 and are heading into schooling Year 12 in the next academic year.

www.whufc.com/news/registration-women-academy-trials-now-open

University of East London scholar and Tennis coach Arum Akom features in the video, 'Causing a Racket - Exploring Britain's Black tennis scene'. In the video Arum and two other females highlight the lack of visibility afforded to Black tennis players due to racism and misogyny in the sport.

www.projectaa.co.uk

East London's Rugby League team Newham Dockers is looking for new players ahead of the 2022 season which starts mid-April. They train on Wednesday evenings (7pm) and Saturday mornings (10am) at Memorial Park (E15 3BP) by West Ham Station.

Message them on Instagram for more information



Newham Dockers

Newham Dockers are also keen to support causes in the Newham community. If you would like to work with the team please contact them via Instagram.

newhamdockers

University of East London scholar and Boxing Champion Lawrence Okolie's new book 'Dare to Change Your Life' is being released in paperback on 7 April.

lawrenceokolie

lawrence_tko



Newham Swords Fencing Club

Newham Swords Fencing Club is run by two British fencing Olympians, Linda Strachan and Pierre Harper. Georgia Silk, who first joined the club at 13, will be competing for GB in the Junior World Championships in Dubai in April. Kristjan Archer and Holly Thompson will compete for GB in the Belgrade Senior World Cup in April

newhamswords.org.uk

Clapton CFC's Women's team are through to the Intermediate Capital Final, and their Men's team will play Kensington Dragons in the final of the Alec Smith Premier Cup, 30 April

Clapton CFC's 5s teams CCFC Belters and CCFC Massive both won their league titles.

www.claptoncfc.co.uk/



Clapton CFC @Nick Davidson

The '**Tessa Sanderson West Ham Park Running Group**' is a free, all-inclusive group that welcomes all ages, genders and abilities, to run, jog or walk 2 or 5 kilometres around West Ham Park. Just turn up just in front of the playground with the right running gear, lots of enthusiasm and a big smile!

The 1984 Olympic Javelin Gold medallist Tessa Sanderson CBE, who is their mentor and inspiration, regularly attends the sessions. The group is also supported by the City of London Corporation and park keepers.

www.tsfa.co.uk



Tessa Sanderson West Ham Park Running Group

A free service to help you lose weight

ZHENREENAH MUHXINGA

Nutrition Kitchen is a free 12-week cooking and physical activity programme to help you get fitter, healthier and happier.

The programme uses simple and effective behaviour changing messages delivered by practical cooking and activity.

The aim is to achieve behaviour change within 12 weeks which leads to weight loss. This service offers:

- Cooking and physical activity to promote better eating, get people moving and support weight loss.
- 1 session per week for 12 weeks
- Female and male only groups available
- Hands on cooking with tips including practical and cultural recipes e.g. Curry in a Hurry
- Fun physical activities such as bhangra, dancing, yoga and chair based activities
- Advice and support to shop for healthy food on a budget in Newham
- WhatsApp groups and conversations to limit any barriers that people may face
- Signposting financial support, mental health services etc.

Sessions will take place at East Ham Leisure Centre and Katherine Community Centre. You are eligible if you are a Newham resident aged 18 or over and fall into the category classed as overweight or obese according to the Body Mass Index (help is available if you are unable to calculate your BMI). For information email: **Sandeep@nutrition-kitchen.co.uk**



© Sara Scarpa/Unsplash

Local hero Andriy digs deep on and off the pitch



Football may seem irrelevant given events in Ukraine, but Mickey Ambrose is filled with admiration for one of West Ham's star players



As supporters stayed to celebrate, West Ham had rarely felt more united as a club, and the result should fundamentally change perceptions of what is possible.



©Vitalii Vitaleo_shutterstock

West Ham and Ukrainian star Andriy Yarmolenko we salute you. And our hearts go out to you, your family and the Ukrainian people during these dreadful times.

The Ukraine ace scored his second match winning goal against Sevilla in the Europa League 2nd Leg to send the Hammers into the quarter finals in an emotional night at the London Stadium following his return from compassionate leave.

As supporters stayed to celebrate, West Ham had rarely felt more united as a club, and the result should fundamentally change perceptions of what is possible. It can act as an

inspiration to overcome adversity and a springboard for hope in the future.

With important Premiership games against Everton, Brentford, Burnley and Chelsea on the horizon, every game for the East London side will be a Cup Final as the Hammers chase a 4th Champions League spot under stiff competition from Arsenal, Manchester United and Tottenham.

Meanwhile, on a separate note my old club Chelsea has been hit by the fall out from sanctions against Russian owner Roman Abramovich imposed by the government. The club has to be sold and is unable to trade freely. I was invited as a guest on the award winning ITN News special programme on Ukraine, presented by Julie Ethchingham. You can view that interview at: <https://tinyurl.com/5n7xa25y>

The final word however must go to Andriy Yarmolenko who is somehow digging deep and finding the strength to run out on a football

pitch while his country is under siege. At times like this football is irrelevant but I hope it's helping Andriy in some way.

Well done Andriy.

Mickey Ambrose is a former Chelsea and Charlton player who lives in Stratford

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