



Newham Voices

Community News and Views

Pilot | Sept 2020

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A fresh start for Newham

Welcome to the pilot issue of *Newham Voices* – news with a difference for people who live and work in London's most vibrant and diverse community.

Our news service will provide the information you need to become better informed, more engaged and more active in making Newham a better place for all.

And we need your support.

Whether you run a local business, charity or voluntary organisation; have an interest in current affairs, arts, culture and sport; or you want to join the debate about issues that concern you and your neighbours, *Newham Voices* is for you.

We are an independent non-profit social enterprise. We are community-owned. We will tell the story of Newham in a positive, transformative way. We will be campaigning, but not party political. We will give opportunities for all to write and have their say. Above all, we will stand up for our community.

Our website – www.newhamvoices.co.uk – goes live this week, providing news, community information and a detailed briefing on the project – *A Fresh Start for Newham*.

The solidarity, resilience and energy unleashed in response to the recent pandemic has inspired the *Newham Voices* vision of a platform connecting people to debate and share opinions on what matters to them.

Newham Voices is winning support within the community. We have a working partnership with the University of East London and in July the Newham Independent Democracy Commission proposed a local independent news service for the Borough. Newham Council backed that call.

Everyone agrees: it's time for change, time for a fresh start.

Peter Laing, chief executive of the Renewal Programme, sums it up: "*Newham Voices* will help the community get to know itself as well as holding authority to account. It's time to tell a positive story of Newham. We need to showcase what's great in the Borough, what works and what succeeds."

It's a bold ambition, but with your support, we can do it. ●

#Solidarity See page 7 >



By local people, for local people

Newham Voices is your new newspaper and website.

Our aim is to provide a voice for all of Newham's people. We are committed to helping you share your news, views and experiences with each other.

Local news keeps communities connected, strengthens local democracy, drawing people together over the issues that matter most to them. By doing this we strengthen local democracy and help you hold authority to account.

We aim to be transparent, accountable and responsive to your needs. To achieve this, *Newham Voices* provides all our readers with the opportunity to influence and guide our work, through our membership scheme, training programme and regular reader forums.

We are a non-profit Community Interest Company (number 12790786). Our journalism is based on core values of accuracy, fairness, independence, humanity, accountability and transparency with a strong commitment to citizen journalism. If you have any complaints or comments about our content send them to

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Support Newham Voices

Newham Voices is news with a difference.

We focus on community issues, combining the best of professional journalism with voluntary written contributions from people who live and work in Newham.

Our journalism speaks up for Newham and its people. Our non-profit, community-supporting model is a new approach to news-making. We are inclusive, accountable and transparent.

We look to our supporters and readers to help us create a safe and reliable space for news and information that is truthful, honest and independent.

You can do this by becoming a member of *Newham Voices* either as an individual or as an organisation.

JOIN AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Support us with £3 a month and we will put your name in print. Support us with £5 a month and you will have the newspaper delivered to your door every month as well.

JOIN AS AN ORGANISATION

- **Small Newham-based organisations** – 20 employees or less – can join for £15 a month, with name in print and online and a 10% discount on advertising.
- **Larger organisations** – more than 20 employees – can join for £20 a month with the name and logo in print and online and 20% discount on advertising.
- **Major organisations** can join for £50 a month with name and logo in print and online, a 40% discount on advertising rates and six free small advertisements every year.

Want to advertise in this space?

We have a print circulation of 10,000 with an estimated readership of 30,000 in Newham, plus active members and subscribers. Our website is already up and running with daily news and a regular newsletter.

From 2021 the newspaper will be available free across the Borough from cafes, libraries, pubs, shops and health centres, as well as on subscription. It can also be downloaded from our website.

For more information about advertising opportunities across our platforms contact advertising@newhamvoices.co.uk or go to our website: www.newhamvoices.co.uk/advertising

Black Lives Matter: help us get it right

Newham Voices stands against racism in any form. That means ensuring that we not only seek out and challenge bias, prejudice and discrimination, but that we also make sure our newspaper and website truly reflect all cultures and interests in this vibrant community.

But how do we do that? Like many organisations, we are looking at our practices in light of the Black Lives Matter campaign and the shocking events in the US this summer that exposed, as never before, the reality of racism for people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Between publication of this pilot issue and the launch of our monthly newspaper in 2021, we will be drawing together groups of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds to tell us what they would like from *Newham Voices*.

We would love you to join us. If you have views about what we should be covering and how we can avoid repeating media mistakes of the past, then please get in touch.

Email: info@newhamvoices.co.uk

Newham Voices founder member Winston Vaughan has written a background article on Black Lives Matter and why it is relevant to the UK. It is available on our website at: <https://www.newhamvoices.co.uk>

Police chief admits mistakes, seeks diversity in recruitment

AIDAN WHITE

Born locally and a former student at Newham College, police chief Richard Tucker is acutely aware of the problems facing the borough as people emerge from the Covid-19 emergency.

"I want to be open and honest and I'm in favour of complete transparency," he told *Newham Voices* in an exclusive interview in which he discussed the crisis of gang violence, stop and search, and the sometimes difficult relationship between police and the community.

But with just 16 per cent of his 1,350 police officers of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) origin, Detective Chief Superintendent Tucker faces a major task in building public confidence.

The Black Lives Matter movement and demonstrations on the streets of Newham are having an impact, he said. With the Independent Office for Police Conduct set to investigate discrimination across the force, Tucker is aware of a major shift in what is considered acceptable following the death of George Floyd in the United States.

Challenging our thinking

"It's challenging our thinking, and this is a good thing. I say to young cops I don't want you thinking this year the same way you were thinking last year. Things have changed."

To improve representation of people from BAME origins in the force he is targeting recruitment and awareness-raising at colleges and schools.

"Newham police do not represent the cultural mix of the borough," he said, "but we aim to change that." He points to the last batch of 32 recruits, including 13 women, and a third of them Black, Asian and ethnic minority origin.

"We are doing everything we can to encourage people from minority groups to join," he said, but barriers remain in an area where, historically, people have shown reluctance.

For many young Black people that uncertainty is reinforced by the frustration and anger they feel at the stop and search policy which appears to be targeting them unfairly.

"This work is about keeping people alive," Tucker responds. "We have had three shotguns taken off the streets in the last seven days as a result of stop and search."

Stop and search is focused on are-

as with high levels of gang activity. "We stop a lot of black children and young black men," he said, "because this is the high risk group."

Around 75 per cent of young people under 25 in Newham are Black or ethnic minority in origin, a community that includes victims of violent crime as well as perpetrators. He points to the high number of violent deaths of Black youngsters.

"We have to identify which groups are most at risk and often these are people from similar social conditions," he said, "with poor housing, chaotic family circumstances, sib-



Met recruits now, but Tucker (above) seeks more diversity

lings in prison, drug dealing, and often a mother not present."

Nevertheless, it is hard to deny accusations of profiling when looking at the numbers – of every 100 people stopped, only 9 per cent are arrested, usually for possession of a weapon or drugs; a further 11 per cent may receive warnings about their behaviour, leaving some 80 per cent "who feel aggrieved", in Tucker's words.

"We have to explain it better. Sometimes we are too robust, but now police have body cameras, numbers on uniforms and there is CCTV everywhere. We are accountable.

"We have got our faults, and we have made some real howlers over the years. But we are focused on where the problems are and the best way to solve them."

While acknowledging the importance of issues including institutionalised racism highlighted in the Macpherson Report into the case of murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence, he complains of a combative public narrative over policing.

He wants to see an end to the 'us and them' mentality. "We are perceived by some in the community as oppressors rather than guardians of the people and some of our people are accused of racism, something that is abhorrent to them," he said.

Going forward, Tucker will emphasise work with schools, local youth groups, charities, and colleges, including the University of East London, to promote police work as a career. He encourages officers to talk about their work in schools. "Shouldn't the first interaction with police be a positive one?" he asks.

Tucker has high hopes for what can be achieved by bringing the police and the community together, but unless there is a swift turn around in those stop and search figures, accusations of profiling and bias will be hard to rebuff.

"My biggest goal is to get our story over to everyone in the community," he says. "We need cops to have empathy, and we need people to understand how we work." ●

Fact File Policing

► According to Metropolitan Police figures, Newham was the second most-searched borough in London in 2019.

► The police have power to stop and search under the 1989 Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

► Some 91% of people searched in Newham were male and 6,044 of them were described by police as Black; 5,386 White; 5,304 Asian; and 280 as 'Other'.

► Despite disproportionate levels of stop and search of Black men, they were less likely than white people to be found carrying anything incriminating.

► Many who defend stop and search claim it prevents crime, specifically knife crime. In 2019, 76% of all searches led to no further action, compared to 71% in 2018.

► Black people make up 15.6% of London's population while white people make up 59.8%. (The Guardian, July 2020)

► In 2018, 43% of searches involved Black people, compared to 35.5% of white people, according to the London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC).

► The likelihood of Black people being stopped was 4.3 times higher than white people in 2018, compared with 2.6 times more likely in 2014, according to MOPAC.

► Around 16% of searches led to arrests. Arrest rates were lower for Black people. Where the reason for stopping was suspicion of carrying weapons, 21% of white people stopped led to an arrest against 16% for black people.

► Overall "positive outcomes" where an offence is detected after a stop, were higher for white people than Black.

► In the year to March 2018, Black people in England and Wales, excluding London, were 26 times more likely to be stopped. In the previous year they were six times more likely to be stopped.

► In London, Black people were 12 times more likely to be stopped, compared with four times the previous year. Combined figures for England and Wales show Black people were 40 times more likely to be stopped, up from 14 times in 2017.

► Police use of Taser rose by 30 per cent to 22,000 in England and Wales in 2018-19. One in five Taser incidents involved Black people, despite only making 3.3% of the total UK population.

Let's build back better

POLITICAL OUTLOOK: STEPHEN TIMMS, MP FOR EAST HAM, PREDICTS BETTER TIMES AHEAD

I've lived in Newham for forty years. No period has been as grim as the last few months, when the pandemic has hit us so hard.

But it's a good time to start looking forward again. We should plan to "build back better". We need improvements for all, not least for young people growing up in Newham today.

In the early 1980s, I remember Stratford's Railway Locomotive Works held an open day. It was a reminder of past industries which provided jobs on a huge scale. The Works closed soon after. By the mid-1980s, with

the docks already gone and countless factories lost in the Thatcher recession, unemployment was sky-high.

In 1987, I became Newham's Chair of Planning. British Rail short-listed Stratford as a possible terminus on the "Channel Tunnel Rail Link" – now High Speed 1. It seemed unlikely to be chosen. The line was being planned south of the Thames, not north. We launched a campaign for Stratford anyway. After over a decade, in 1998, Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott committed the Government to supporting Stratford International Station.

When building work began, hosting the 2012 Olympics at Stratford became plausible. In 2005, in Singapore, the International Olympic Committee – impressed by young

people from East London who represented us – chose London over the favourite, Paris. Westfield Stratford opened. The 2012 Games were a massive success. Visitors from every country felt at home.

London 2012 shifted London east. That shift is still under way. We need to make the most of the changes, and, again, seize the agenda with a fresh vision for East London over the next forty years. London's key development site for the next decade is the Royal Docks. That makes Newham the focus for London's development in the period ahead.

It opens up opportunities to re-new Newham's housing. Government neglect of the housing crisis has been a disgrace. But Newham Council is pioneering new solutions for building social housing. We need it to succeed, and support national policies to help provide, finally, a decent home for all those who don't have one at the moment.

Ethnically diverse communities like ours have borne the brunt of the pandemic. But diversity equips us to trade, with fast growing economies including India and Bangladesh. Newham's youthfulness makes us a place for new ideas, attractive for high-growth businesses to set up and thrive. We can attract the jobs we need, and build on success since 2012 in supporting local residents into employment.

We have had a dreadful few months. But we can turn things round, and our future potential looks brighter than ever. We need to plan now to deliver the future that we all want. ●



Stephen Timms MP on a street clean with supporters

Domestic abuse: resource pack highlights sources of help

LAURA HACKSHAW

When the government imposed a national lockdown, fears quickly mounted for those at risk of being trapped at home with their abuser.

Those fears soon proved real when, at the end of April, the House of Commons home affairs select committee called for emergency measures to tackle the issue, having heard evidence from organisations and helplines showing a dramatic surge nationally in the number of people seeking help.

In Newham, as part of the response, a Domestic Abuse Covid-19 Resource Pack was launched by the Borough's adult social care service. As well as

raising awareness among frontline workers and service users, the pack provides vital contact details so that help can be reached quickly. It also offers practical advice and guidance for both professionals and people at risk.

Newham's domestic and sexual violence support services are provided by the charity Hestia. The number for Newham callers is 0808 196 1482, although Hestia stress that where there is an immediate and life threatening risk you should call 999. Anyone calling 999 in a situation where they cannot speak safely can simply make a noise such as a cough and then dial 55 when prompted to alert the police silently.



A copy of the guidance is available at: <https://adultsocialcare.newham.gov.uk/Documents/Provider%20area/Covid/19%2005%2020/COVID-19%20Domestic%20Abuse%20Practitioner%20Resource%20Pack.pdf>



Remembering Dr. Yusuf Patel 1958-2020

My father was from Indian Gujarati Muslim heritage and was born in Malawi in Africa in 1958. He came to England with his parents and family seeking a better life when he was seven-years-old. They settled down in Ilford and my father went to the local comprehensive. He overcame great adversity and studied very hard to get into University of Sheffield Medical School, which was unheard of for someone from his background in those days. Once qualified he went on to become a pillar of the NHS community in Newham for over 30 years, which is where he founded Woodgrange Medical Practice in Forest Gate.

Through his sheer determination and relentless commitment to patient care the practice went from strength to strength and expanded from serving 0 patients to over 15,000 patients as of today. My father loved Newham and the community he served, and I recall him saying to me that he wanted his practice to be the best practice in Newham. This dream of his came true and went even further, when in 2017, his practice achieved an 'outstanding rating' from the Care Quality Commission making it only 1 out of 10 practices across the whole of London at the time, to achieve such a feat.

He was a beloved family man to all of his many relatives, a respected member of the community, a trustworthy friend, and a brilliant mentor to so many. A fundraiser was created by the family to continue his legacy by honouring charitable causes dear to him and over £30,000 was raised.

– Ahmed Patel

Pandemic opens door to online medical care

CATARINA JOELE

Dr Farzana Hussain, who runs the Project Surgery in Plaistow and is GP of the year, worked closely with Dr Yusuf Patel as both were board directors at the GP federation which represents all GP practices in Newham. Dr Patel, who worked at Woodgrange Medical Practice, in Forest Gate, was the fifth doctor to die of Covid-19 in the UK.

For Dr Hussain, his death was a reminder that practitioners need to think not only about protecting their patients but also their staff. Personal Protective Equipment plays an important role in keeping them both safe. Although patients are required to wear masks in hospital, that has not been extended to primary care. "We are asking our patients to cover their faces with their own scarves but

who are over 65-years-old, and are considered higher risk, vulnerable people. They can contact their GP over the phone and will be able to get through quicker than before lockdown.

The same applies to those who suffer from dementia or learning disabilities. The remaining patients can have the peace of mind of booking an appointment at any time online rather than queueing on the phone at 8am. Although the online model was created to tackle Covid-19, it has made booking appointments considerably more flexible for those who have access to the internet and quicker for those who really need to do it over the phone.

On the debate on whether patients have to right to see their GP face-to-face, Dr Hussain said: "Coronavirus is very much here and we are very



Dr Farzana Hussain

"We need to remember we are dealing with a disease that has no cure and no vaccine. Our first duty is to keep us all alive."

the NHS is not supplying face masks for them", said Dr Hussain.

The Project Surgery, which has more than 5,000 patients, has now gone completely online for triages and appointment bookings, except for those who don't have access to the internet. These include patients

nervous of a second wave hitting Newham in September." As health professionals are at higher risk of infection, Dr Hussain considers that the traditional appointments would put patients at unnecessary risk. "We need to remember we are dealing with a disease that has no cure and

no vaccine. Our first duty is to keep us all alive."

However, some services can't be delivered online or on the phone, including smear tests – which detect cervical cancer – and childhood immunisations. The Project Surgery has been using an alternative approach: a drive-through where babies are given injections in the car or, if the parents don't have a car, babies can stay in the buggy but wait in the front garden. This has reduced face-to-face contact time, which is where the risk of Covid-19 transmission is greatest, from ten to two minutes. ●

NHS staff: How has Covid affected you?

The East London NHS Foundation Trust and City University are carrying out an anonymous survey to find out the Covid-19 pandemic has affected people working in the health service in both positive and negative ways. Frontline health staff have faced major challenges and the survey aims to highlight how adversity could assist future developments in health care.

For NHS staff interested, there's more information at https://cit-yunilondon.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3JVEjtwvOS44BBb?dm_i=1TXQ,6Z4SI,QFLSPD,S33QN,1

NHS concerns Public governors are your voice

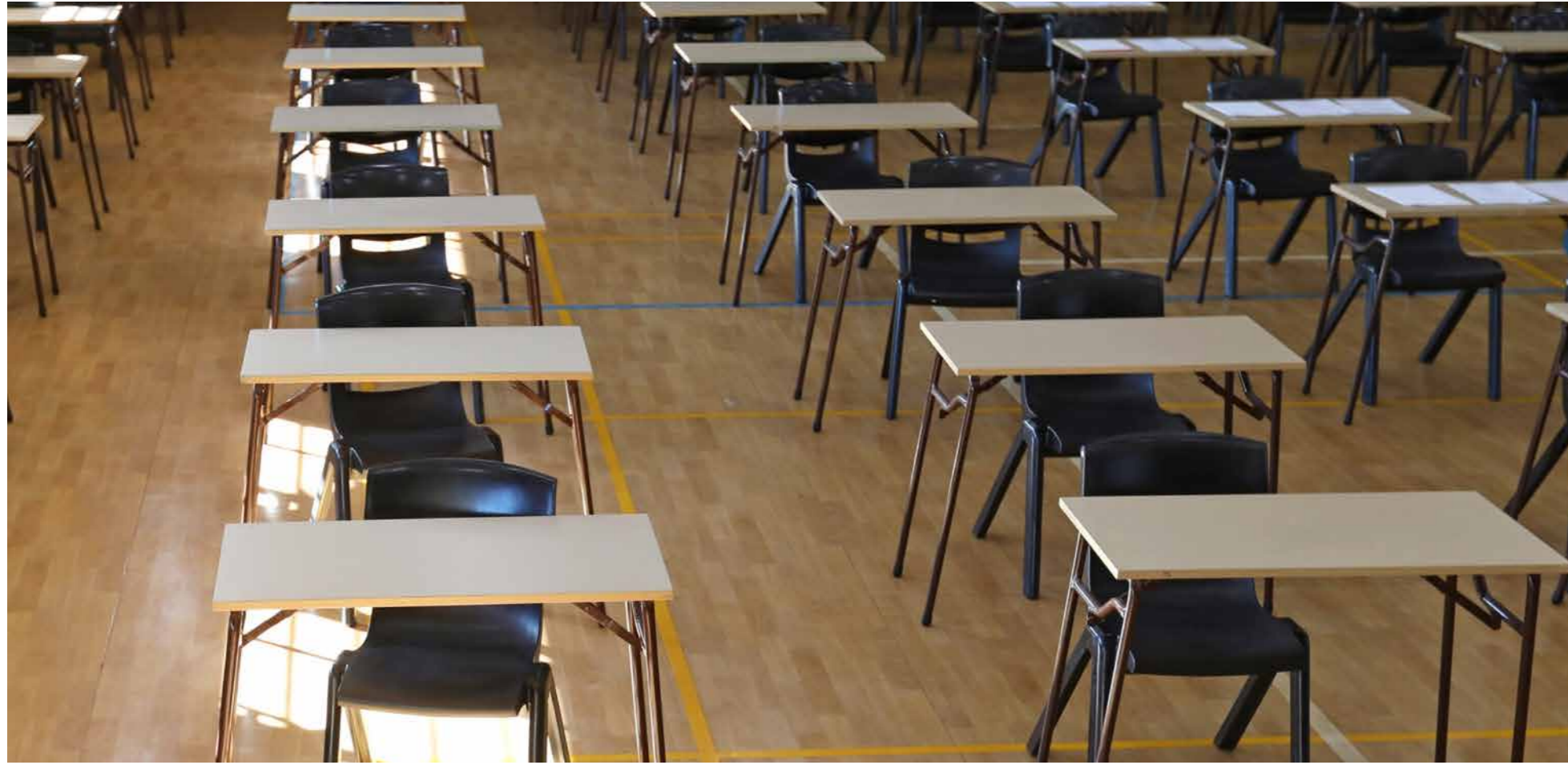
Newham has four public governors at the East London NHS Foundation Trust. They are elected to represent the public. If you have any concerns you can contact them to have your say on the Trust's work. They are:

- Shirley Biro shirleybiro@aol.com
- Tee Fabikun teefabikun@gmail.com
- Carol-Ann Leatherby dumgenie69@outlook.com
- Aidan White aidanpatrickwhite@gmail.com

THANK YOU NHS

To the dedicated front line staff and key workers protecting the people of Newham!

#ThankYouNHS



The impact of Covid-19 on Newham's Class of 2020

Noah Enahoro, a student at Newham Sixth Form College, was among the hundreds of thousands of young people caught up in the turmoil that followed when exams were cancelled due to the lockdown. Here, he shares his experience and talks to a local teacher about the future of the exam system.

Initially, thousands of Year 13 students, including myself, were surprised, even relieved, at the announcement. Many students dislike exams and the stress that comes with them. But we knew that an inescapable part of doing A-Levels were the final exams, and getting the grade that gives you a ticket to your dream university.

However, as results day crept closer, it became clear that the cancellation of exams would have an unexpected impact. In particular, as a result of the government decision to apply a computer algorithm to work out final grades, which in many cases gave students grades lower than those predicted by their teachers.

Thousands of students like Sraya Islam, a Year 13 student who studied English Literature, Politics and History who performed well in her AS mock exams, felt that their future was suddenly taken out of their hands. It was a feeling also felt among young-

sters awaiting GCSE results.

But an angry alliance of students, teachers and parents, many complaining that social bias in the algorithm favoured young people from better off independent schools, forced the government to think again. They dropped the algorithm and, to widespread relief, agreed to apply the grades predicted by teachers for all students.

The chaos and uncertainty caused by the crisis has now provoked a discussion about the future of the examination system itself.

Rethinking the Role of Exams

Simon Shaw, a teacher who lives in Newham and works in a Comprehensive School in Reading, believes that the cancellation of exams this year provides an opportunity for rethinking the role of exams in the UK's education system.

He says exams are a 'ridiculous' method of assessing students' abilities. "It is nonsense to assess someone's ability on a few hours of exams," he says. "The stakes are too high, and the student is then labelled for life with a grade depending on their performance."

He also believes exams take the pleasure out of teaching. "It is an absolute privilege to work with

young people, however, due to exams teachers have to teach the content to help the student pass the exam, which shows no reflection of passion or curiosity for the subject."

When exams were cancelled, the Government introduced a temporary

The cancellation of GCSE and A-Level exams have given us a window of opportunity to reflect on the state of the current UK education system and what needs changing.

grading system in which teachers would use student work, from mock exams to coursework, and their performance during their A-Levels to produce a grade which they believed the student would have achieved had exams taken place. Many students thought this was unfair, but Shaw believes it allowed teachers to accurately reflect students' achievements.

He says the education system should stop putting numbers on children and giving them a label. He thinks we should look at other countries for new and efficient models. In Finland, for example, there is no standardised testing, bar a voluntary National Matriculation Exam, and all

children are measured on an individualised basis and grading system set by their teacher.

"Covid-19 and the cancellation of GCSE and A-Level exams have given us a window of opportunity to reflect on the state of the current UK educa-

tion system and what needs changing," said Shaw. He believes teachers themselves must lead the demand for reform. "If change is to come," he adds, "it must be through the teaching Unions pushing for change." ●

Top marks for students at Brampton Manor Academy.

No less than 51 students from the academy will be heading off to study at Oxford and Cambridge after this year's A level results were revealed. Not even the pandemic could touch their achievements. Well done to them all.



#Solidarity

In Newham, which has been particularly hard hit by the pandemic, volunteers, charities and faith groups have demonstrated solidarity, resilience and humanity and supported those in most need. >



10,000 “vulnerable” people supported by #HelpNewham

Aidan White

The humanitarian campaign to feed, clothe and support Newham’s most vulnerable residents during the Covid-19 emergency targeted thousands of people facing isolation and poverty.

More than 10,000 people in Newham received direct support in the critical months of March–July thanks to the work by an army of volunteers mobilised by community support groups and Newham Council. The exact numbers are not clear because some organisations did not record everyone who received support.

While much solidarity was rooted in the neighbourhood networks organised by social media activists using WhatsApp and Facebook groups, #HelpNewham, an unprecedented council alliance with voluntary organisations, food banks and social support groups, played a major role.

This working partnership rapidly agreed a humanitarian selection process to identify Newham’s most vulnerable people – the homeless, the elderly and infirm living alone,

people shielding from coronavirus and low income families at risk.

Darius Baird, 27, manager of main support hub at Stratford Town Hall, said: “This has been an incredibly rewarding experience. There’s a great sense of community spirit, of putting our arms around the community.”

Hubs based at Stratford, St Marks Community Centre, in Beckton, and East Ham Library sent urgent food parcels to around 8,000 borough residents. From Stratford alone, Darius and his colleagues organised, packed and dispatched around 750 parcels every day.

In a military-style operation, food arrived in bulk from the Deptford-based warehouse of the charity Fair Share which collects surplus supermarket goods. It was then sorted and packed into individual parcels by volunteers for delivery by taxi or minibus to households in need.

Darius, whose day job is working as a Community Neighbourhood Officer for East Ham, was one of around 60 Council staff redeployed to support the #HelpNewham project. Some of

them, such as traffic wardens, who joined the operation while their work was suspended, found it particularly enjoyable. Darius said: “They tell me – Wow! To get a smile from a resident’s face is just great.” But they are not alone. For everyone it has been a terrific experience.” ●



The riches of Newham

Anne Cross

One of Newham’s greatest riches is the voluntary and community sector. Most residents have benefitted from the network at some time whether from homelessness projects, campaign groups, cafes, community spaces for dance classes, toddler groups or taekwondo, to name just a few.

During the current Covid-19 pandemic almost 100 voluntary and community groups provided food support and surplus food distribution.

From the end of March to the end of June, 108,000 food parcels were delivered, 60,000 hot meals were provided, supporting 26,000 residents.

Unlike statutory organisations, the voluntary and community sector is agile. Thousands of eager volunteers keep core costs low, making the sector more than good value for money.

Historically, Newham Council has favoured taking in-house much of the work around provision of advice, managing volunteering and support for the most vulnerable. The Covid-19 crisis has demonstrated the agility and speed with which the vol-

untary sector, especially the smaller community groups, can move. Recognising this, Newham Council invited sector leaders into dialogue resulting in funding to assist coordination during the lockdown period. This enabled One Newham to appoint a ‘Covid-19 coordinator’ who acted as a central point of contact.

One Newham, incorporated in 2019, is a partnership network for the voluntary and community sector. It was, at inception, a way of attracting funding into the Borough through the partnership of the larger voluntary groups to support local vulnerable people.

Since the massive volunteer response to the pandemic One Newham has become a platform for collaboration between voluntary organisations, community groups, faith groups, and the local authority. Local authority funding attracts other funders, the wealth of the sector comes through the experience, enthusiasm and engagement of local people.

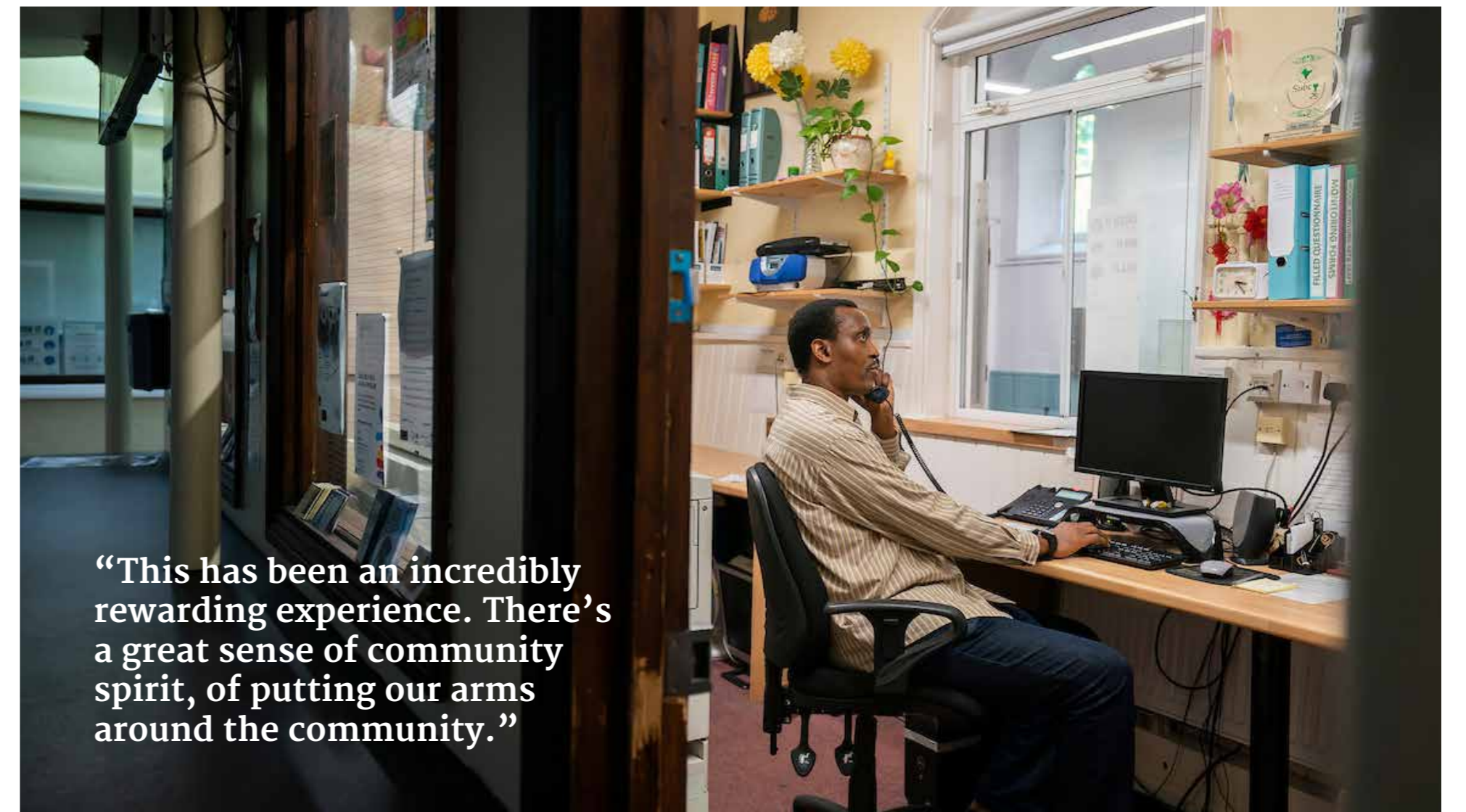
Susanne Rauprich OBE, Independent Chair of One Newham, is hopeful about future support from Newham Council. She said: “Newham has a

rich history of voluntary engagement; it is such an asset for the borough. One Newham’s key role is to support those people who want to change the world. We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to build on the good relationships that we’ve built

with the local authority, we want to look back in a year’s time and recognise how devastating Covid-19 was for Newham but that we’ve been able to build something out of it that will strengthen our communities for years to come.” ●



From the end of March to the end of June, **108,000 food parcels** were delivered, **60,000 hot meals** were provided, supporting **26,000 residents**.



“This has been an incredibly rewarding experience. There’s a great sense of community spirit, of putting our arms around the community.”



© Newham Council

Food bank exposes social crisis

Lockdown has revealed that many people have been hit hard but there are some who have been much more severely affected.

CATARINA JOELE

The Bonny Downs Community Association found itself supporting as many as 140 households a week at the height of the lockdown. It normally helps around 20 households a week but saw this figure increase to 85 at the beginning of July.

Angie Allgood, who is part of the senior leadership team based at The Well Community Centre, in Vicarage Lane, East Ham, is in charge of the poverty response and has been running the food bank for seven years. She says that the challenges they had to cope with as a small charity were “unbelievable”.

Among the people who were asking for help during the pandemic were international students (who make up around a quarter of household supported), European citi-

zens without settled status and South Indian families.

The reason behind this is a complex one. There are people living in the UK with the right to stay granted by the Home Office, but under the condition of No Recourse to Public Funds some of them are not allowed to work.

The solution, for many, is to work in pizza and chicken shops, hospitality, construction and cleaning, in insecure employment. When Coronavirus hit, the jobs suddenly ceased and the workers weren’t eligible to furlough.

According to Angie Allgood, Coronavirus has revealed a housing crisis in the borough that she didn’t know existed. Most of the families who came to the charity for the first time in lockdown tried to spread the cost of the rent with other families and ended up living in overcrowded accommodation.

Allgood recalls a family of five who shared a three-bedroom house with another two families and four international students. At first, she thought it was exceptional, but found out later that most families she talks to at the food bank are living in the same conditions. The big question for her is: “Now we know it. What are we going to do about it?” ●



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From Colombia to Stratford, it's poetry in motion

MICHELLE HARRIS

Tucked away in Stratford Park you'll find the Old Pavilion which is now home to the Newham Poetry Group. Running every Saturday since 2016, the Group was founded by University of East London student Soni Quintero.

Soni started the group soon after moving to Newham. She says, "I grew up in Colombia and I'll always remember the Poetry House there for it played a big part in our com-

munity. I was surprised to find there wasn't an active poetry group here in Newham, so I wanted to create a similar space here where residents would feel welcome to share their love for not only poetry, but also community."

Newham is rich in diversity with ethnic minorities making up over half of its population which Soni saw more as an opportunity rather than a challenge.

"This is why I felt so strongly about re-creating the Poetry House here," she says. "Newham is home to so much talent, talent belonging to many differing backgrounds and cultures. This places so much more emphasis on our need to communicate and learn from one another. You see, that's the great thing about poetry, it has its own language."

Speaking on what poetry means to the people who live and work in Newham, Soni says, "For some poetry is therapy, an academia or even a cognitive process, but for me the best thing about poetry is that it acts as a bridge. A bridge that brings our community together to celebrate our differences and remind us of our common humanity."

The poetry group continued to run throughout lockdown, finding their new normal via Zoom. This presented some accessibility challenges for some members.



Newham is...

By Charlyne Bryan

Newham is... a melting pot of opportunity
A fusion of cultures
Blending in a mixer.
Sometimes things get stuck
The mixer goes off
But a shake stirs thing up,
Creating a juice
That is sweet to taste!



Six things you (probably) didn't know about Newham

Newham as we know it became one of the London boroughs in 1965, but there are many things we don't know about the place we call home. So Jordan Jones decided to find some.

1. The origins of the name Newham.

Most of us already know that the name Newham derives from the merging of East and West Ham. However, the 'ham' part of Newham originates from the Old English 'ham' meaning 'a dry area of lands between rivers or marshland'. This refers to the location of the settlement within the boundaries created by the rivers Lea, Thames and Roding.

2. The West Ham Hammers.

West Ham United are known as the "hammers" thanks to their association with Thames ironworks, but it's not so well known that from 1929 to 1972, Custom House was home to the West Ham Hammers speedway team at West Ham Stadium. The team were the first winners of the British League in 1965 and were the London Cup Winners for three consecutive years from 1965-1967. The 1972 season saw the Romford Bombers move into the stadium, racing under the name West Ham Bombers.

3. Far From Home - more like close to home.

Newham may consider itself a movie star, as West Silvertown DLR Station was used as a filming location for the 2019 film Spider-Man: Far From Home. The

station stood in as an understudy of sorts for a station in Berlin. Scenes from the film were also filmed at the Millennium Mills.

4. Rock Against Racism.

The first Rock Against Racism (RAR) gig took place at the Princess Alice pub in Forest Gate in November 1976 and featured Carol Grimes and Matumbi as the headline acts. RAR was founded as a response to many well-known rock musicians, such as Eric Clapton and David Bowie, making inflammatory and racist statements amid rising support for the National Front in the UK.

5. Progressio cum Populo.

The Borough's coat of arms was derived from that of the County Borough of West Ham, while the

"I was determined to keep our group going to provide a much-needed outlet," says Soni. Even when people didn't have access computer links, the group kept in touch. "We have tried to maintain contact through calls and social media in order to check in and extend our kindness any way we can."

Soni focused her studies on the role of poetry in the community and although Newham is one of London's poorest areas she hopes in future people will connect Newham with the creative talent in the Borough.

"Three poets in the group have went on to publish their work including myself," she says. "The Borough is rich in new literature and talent so it's important that we support and acknowledge those people to help combat the statistics."

It's no surprise poetry has found its place in the borough once again, for Newham has a history of poetry dating back as far as the 18th century. The famous poet Gerald Manley Hopkins who once lived at 87 Grove Road, and more recently was home to the Dub Poet Benjamin Zephaniah.

To join the Newham Poetry Group contact Soni via Newhampoeetrygroup@gmail.com to access their ZOOMing Poetry now running every Tuesday online 6-7:30 until further easing of government guidelines. ●

motto is a direct translation of the County Borough of East Ham's Latin "Progressio cum Populo" meaning "Progress with the People".

6. Talking diversity.

We are living in the most diverse place in the country, according to Newham's Sustainable Community Strategy for 2010-30, with over 200 languages and dialects spoken.

Feel free to use these in your next socially distanced zoom quiz night for a Newham based round!

Jordan is a student journalist studying at University of East London. In 2019 she was shortlisted for the British Journalism Review's 30 Under 30 Competition in celebration of their 30th Anniversary.



On your bike to a happy place

BY LACKY AHMED

Lockdown life has encouraged me to start cycling after many years away from it.

I wanted to keep upbeat and positive during the Covid-19 outbreak. Being outside is important to me, but meeting with my running club would require public transport. I can walk or run in my neighbourhood but that wasn't enough.

I decided that I wanted to buy a bicycle as now was the perfect time to start cycling. It was difficult to find a bike online, as bike sales were soaring during the pandemic. Stores around the country saw a massive increase in demand and new stock was selling out immediately.

After eight weeks I finally managed to purchase a new bike. I started cycling around my neighbourhood with an old friend, who has been giving me tips and helping me build my confidence.

I've been enjoying bike rides on Wanstead Flats and the Olympic Park, large areas of open grassland and perfect for sports, picnics and enjoying nature. What could be nicer

in a very built-up area of London?

Probably one of the most bizarre places I've ever cycled in is the City of London Cemetery. Once through the arched entrance, the vastness of this space hits you. It has beautiful gardens and monumental statuary. It's been a great, peaceful place to

I go from strong to challenged, focused to free in a matter of minutes.

Whenever I accomplish a tough, breathless climb and reach the top, I turn around to look back at the hill with a smile. I've made my best decision getting back on a bike.

What's more badass than help-

I've been enjoying rides on Wanstead Flats and Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, large areas of open grassland and perfect for sports, picnics and enjoying nature.

help me prepare for cycling on the road and practise some basic technique.

It's been one of the best things I've done during the pandemic. Cycling has made me happy and it's been liberating. Returning to cycling has also helped me conquer one of my fears. To jump in and relearn cycling successfully and confidently has been very rewarding on a personal level. I feel like a badass on my bike because

ing to save the planet? More people on bikes means cleaner air, cleaner water, and a healthier environment. Come on Newham!

Newham Cyclists is a local branch of the London Cycling Campaign, looking after cyclists' interests by organising and advertising regular rides and campaigning on cycling issues in the Borough. More information from www.newhamcyclists.org.uk

"Oh, no it isn't": Stratford East panto cancelled

Stratford East has had to postpone this year's pantomime, Red Riding Hood, due to the pandemic.

The theatre, which has been closed for five months, is avoiding any risks, for the safety of the community and its own future.

In order to follow social distancing guidelines, the theatre would only be able to seat 25 per cent of the audience, which would cause further financial problems.

The theatre is asking the community to make donations, large or small, to help them during their financial crisis.

To donate £5, please text TRSE 5 to 70085. (Texts cost your donation amount plus one standard rate message.)

Diverse talents

Covid-19 hasn't thwarted Newham's artists. Sidra Faridi and Cyda Uzun discovered people who are showcasing our Borough during challenging times. You can find out about these extraordinary talents and their work at our website www.newhamvoices.co.uk

Here is a taster...

Blogger Yasmin has a website where she showcases her amazing artwork as free wallpaper downloads and phone covers to purchase. Her site's content ranges from hair, beauty, travel and food. She said: "I'm from Uganda, raised in East London. I originally created my blog because, growing up, I was conditioned not to love my hair and that led to severe heat damage. I decided to embrace my natural hair and let it flourish, documenting my journey. After creating this platform, I also wanted to share my love for all forms of art which led to the creation of my blog "Curly and Coffee!"



From Yasmin's blog "Curly and Coffee"

Farewell to Dame Vera, East Ham's sweetheart

NEANDRA ETIENNE

Dame Vera Lynn was born Vera Margaret Welch on 20 March 1917 in East Ham.

She began performing at the East Ham Working Men's Social Club at the age of seven and later adopted her grandmother's maiden name Lynn. According to a 1929 flyer she was listed as being their Juvenile Chorus Vocalist.

She eventually went on to perform in West End theatres, restaurants and clubs. It was all very glamorous performing to all the posh ladies and gentlemen in their full evening dress.

However, at the end of her performance she would leave it all behind and return home to East Ham.

During a 1991 interview for The South Bank Show she spoke about this:

"When it was finished, the glamour finished. I'd put

on my coat, go outside and stand at the bus stop for the Number 15 and go home to East Ham."

She had fond memories of the Number 15 Routemaster bus.

Dame Vera enjoyed a very successful career and had sold more than a million records by the time she was 22. However, it was when she entertained the troops during World War Two that she became famous. In 1939, one of her best known songs, *We'll Meet Again*, was released, putting her firmly in the nation's hearts. To them it wasn't just a performance, it was a piece of home. That's why she became known as the Forces Sweetheart.

When Dame Vera turned 100 in 2017, she watched via live video link as pupils from Brampton School, in East Ham, performed some of her songs. Speaking to the choir after their performance,

Dame Vera recounted that she had very happy memories of her time at Brampton School.

Even this year, she continued to make headlines. Dame Vera's influence was apparent when the Queen quoted a line from her song, *We'll Meet Again*, at the end of her lockdown speech in April.

On the 18 June 2020 Dame Vera Lynn passed away peacefully, surrounded by her close family.

Her daughter Virginia Lewis-Jones shared with me some memories of her Ma. "She often sang to me when I was little and in bed," she said. "Also of course she always sang when all her family were together for a celebration, or even just a get together - it was a very musical family. I think she was about four when she began."

Dame Vera is fondly remembered in Newham. Her image features on the Ne-



Dame Vera and Virginia

wham Through the Ages wall, in Pilgrim's Way, East Ham (formerly Wakefield

Street). Ladysmith Avenue, where she lived from 1921 - 1938 features her name on the sign and Vera Lynn Close, in Forest Gate, is named after her.

Dame Vera set up her own charity in 2001. The organisation helps families from across the South East, who have children with cerebral palsy and other motor learning difficulties. <https://dvicc.org.uk/>

Newham celebrates a matchless Matchgirl

The remarkable story of Sarah Chapman, a pioneering trade unionist and strike leader in a historic struggle for workers' rights in East London, has sparked a campaign in Newham to celebrate her life.

Sarah died a pauper's death and was buried in an unmarked grave in Forest Gate's Manor Park cemetery in 1945 with no recognition of her leading role in the Matchgirls Strike of 1888 that helped launch the modern British labour movement.

Four years ago her great grand-daughter Samantha Johnston was researching

family history when she uncovered Sarah's heroic role in the strike.

In July 1888 around 1,400 workers, mainly women and girls, walked out of the Bryant & May factory in Bow. They were protesting over victimisation and inhumane working conditions, including exposure to a notorious medical condition known as "fossy jaw", a bone degeneration caused by working with dangerous white phosphorous. This practice was later outlawed.

Sarah, one of the strike leaders, took part in crucial meetings with MPs and in talks with management that secured a complete victory for the strikers, bringing radical improvements in working practices on their return to work.

Sarah went on to help form a trade union and in 1891 was a speaker calling for labour law reform at the congress of the fledgling TUC in Liverpool.

Samantha is working with the University of East London's Dr Anna Robinson, who tracked down Sarah's unmarked grave, to commemorate her legacy and that of other Matchgirl strikers. A key objective is to erect a public statue in Bow.

A memorial headstone to Sarah was due to be put on her grave this year, but the installation has been delayed. The spot remains unmarked except for a temporary cross because of cemetery plans to mound over the area.

On June 21 around 40 residents in Newham joined a local celebration of Sarah's life and the Matchgirls strike at her graveside in an event supported by the Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz and her deputy John Gray.

Once the Covid-19 crisis eases there are plans for further actions to highlight the Matchgirls' story. Further information on the campaign and the story of Sarah Chapman can be found at <https://www.matchgirls1888.org/>

Memorial for black player denied a place in the England squad



Image by Mayflower D7

A campaign is underway for a statue of Canning Town-born footballer John Francis Leslie, who many believe was denied a place in the England's 1925 international squad because he was black.

Leslie, who began his career with Barking Town, was a highly successful player with Plymouth Argyle when he was listed as a member of the national team to face Ireland. However, after selectors saw him for the first time, Leslie was quietly dropped from the team and supporters of the campaign believe they were looking at the colour of his skin rather than his incredible record on the field.

It wasn't until 53 years later that Viv Anderson MBE would become the first Black footballer to play for England in an international game.

Now Leslie's family, Plymouth Argyle's management and Viv Anderson are supporting a £100,000 appeal to place a statue in Plymouth. The FA is also backing the campaign.

For a full report by Neandra Etienne on Jack Leslie and the statue appeal, go to our website: www.newhamvoices.co.uk

For more information visit: <https://jackleslie.co.uk/> And there's even a campaign song which you can find at: <https://matt-tiller.bandcamp.com/album/the-ballad-of-jack-leslie>

Trinity Centre is back and it's all about staying safe

Paul Chelliah, director of the Trinity Centre in Manor Park, discusses the steps he and his staff have taken to ensure it is safe for residents before re-opening its doors.

The Trinity Centre, in East Avenue, which has been a lifeline for many people in Newham over the years, is delighted to open its doors again after the Covid-19 pandemic closure.

Before re-opening we looked at how best to keep all our centre users safe. We provided additional training for staff in Covid-19 related hygiene, adapted the space to meet social distancing requirements, and installed hand sanitisers. We also introduced entrance and exit markers to reduce contact between people entering and leaving the building. If you need masks or gloves, they are now available.

The first service we re-opened was our day care nursery for children aged six months to five years. Initially take-up was slow with parents struggling to manage their work commitments and need for childcare against their anxieties about safety.

We are now seeing a more confident mood. Parents feel happy with the safety measures that have been put

in place and children, once again, are pleased to see their friends and enjoy the activities delivered by our nursery team. We have also started our annual summer holiday programme for children up to eight years, in addition to the regular day care provision. For parents or carers needing either service, please call 020 8552 3992 or email nurserymanager@thetrinitycentre.org

Trinity is also a base for independent groups who want to deliver their own activities. We are a home for faith groups, training programmes, sport and various educational and social activities. Our large and small halls, worship area, classrooms, meeting space and offices provide long and short term facilities to a wide cross-section of people who want a meeting space. We are proud to work with all the different communities in Newham so if you need a space to meet or run an activity, call me on 020 8472 8947 or email me at paul@thetrinitycentre.org

It's really heartening to see people getting on with their lives and meeting each other after being in isolation for so long. Our pensioner groups have also begun meeting again, exercise programmes are



Paul Chelliah, a keen gardener

again offering much needed opportunities for improving health, and vulnerable groups have a community base to access support.

We look forward to seeing you, so feel free to pop in the next time you pass by. ●

Newham jobs crisis looms

Workers in Newham face a worsening jobs crisis as the government's furlough scheme encouraging firms to keep people in work comes to an end on October 31.

West Ham alone has 29,300 furloughed jobs according to the government, the highest in London. In all, around 53,200 Newham workers benefit from the job retention scheme which gives employers cash support of up to 80 per cent of wage costs up to a maximum of £2,500 per worker.

The impact of ending the scheme is uncertain, but union leader Sam Gurney, Regional Secretary of the Trades Union Congress covering East London says local workers are already under pressure. "Newham is at the sharpest end of insecure working in the country," he said.

A survey last year by the Employment Rights Service revealed widespread denial of worker rights. As many as 36,000 Newham residents were paid under the minimum wage in the year 2018-2019; more than 8,000 were denied holiday pay; and more than 22,000 didn't receive a payslip.

Newham Voices will follow these developments closely. Keep in touch with our coverage at www.newhamvoices.co.uk

Durning Hall: feedback on Forest Gate development

Ashton-Mansfield, one of Newham's oldest community organisations, is planning a multi-million pound redevelopment of its Durning Hall site in Forest Gate and is asking businesses, residents

and community groups to have their say about the plan.

Durning Hall, which is used by the Forest Gate community for a wide range of activities, recently completed the first stage of consultation on

early plans for the site. More than 250 responses to the survey were received and the planning team held over 15 meetings with people in the area.

The first impressions are positive. Local people welcomed key parts of the project:

- 90 new homes with a target of 35 percent as affordable;
- a youth enterprise 'pop-up' space;
- a creative play space focused on children with special needs and disabilities.

The emphasis on children and young people - a key element in the Ashton-Mansfield 130-year history of working in the area - was identified as the important priority for the community.

There was some concern among local people about plans to build a 12-storey block and its impact on this part of Forest Gate.

Once responses have been analysed more detailed plans will be prepared and a further round of consultation



...and how it may look in future?"

will be organised. Full details of the planned development are available on the project website (www.durninghall.co.uk) and more information is available from durninghall@kandaconsulting.co.uk or by calling 020 3900 3676.



Sarah in later years



Durning Hall today...

West Ham United: A strike force in the community



West Ham stars Mark Noble and Aaron Cresswell pictured at a community event organised by the Foundation

sion platform on all of these issues. The club is continuing to lead the conversation on equality, and doing what is needed to really tackle some of the systemic discrimination faced by communities in east London.

To combat racial discrimination the Foundation runs a programme called Stop the Hate for schools across East London, encouraging pupils to think critically about the information that they receive and understand the harm caused by division and hatred.

This is a small window into some of West Ham's ongoing work to tackle some of the biggest issues we are facing right now. However, the Foundation has supported local charities, good causes and social support programmes for 30 years. There will always be more to be done and we remain committed to making a difference in our community; adapting our approach so that we have maximum impact while meeting any new restrictions imposed to stay as safe as possible in the face of Covid-19.

JOE LYONS, CEO WEST HAM UNITED FOUNDATION

The combination of a global pandemic and existing equality issues in society have created real challenges in 2020, including for those people who live in Newham. West Ham United Football Club, and its Foundation, believe that tackling these issues has to continue to be at the heart of everything we do in the future.

I'm extremely proud of the club's community work, which extends across East London, Essex and locations internationally, and fundamentally supports a range of areas, including programmes to reduce inequality, encourage social mobility, get people healthy and reduce poverty.

I'm particularly proud of the immediate response to Covid-19, which saw the club make a pledge of support for local NHS trusts, providing vital support for patients and staff. Agreed in conjunction with NHS experts, and based on how the club could best support our activities have directly benefitted Barts Charity – the dedicated charity for Barts Health NHS Trust, and King George and Queen's Hospitals Charity, who support the Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust.

The pandemic comes at a time when we are dealing with more than just health issues within our society. In Newham, our Mayor Rokhsa-

na Fiaz has said that the pandemic has put over 40,000 jobs at risk with more than 100,000 people either on furlough, self-employment support or benefits.

As a club, we work to improve employability and social mobility; providing an array of guidance, insight, opportunities and schemes to prepare people for work and support their career pathways.

I'm particularly proud of the immediate response to Covid-19, which saw the club make a pledge of support for local NHS trusts, providing vital support for patients and staff.

The jobs crisis comes at a time when the Borough is already tackling other issues around inequality and social mobility. At the same time as dealing with the pandemic, for example, many have been deeply affected by the murder of George Floyd and the resulting Black Lives Matter movement.

West Ham United has set up a staff Equality Forum, to provide a discus-

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