

Council meets in emergency session over parking permits row

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Newham vaccine plea: come together to save our people



Marie Gabriel health champion. Born in Canning Town she has lived and raised her family in Newham.

MARIE GABRIEL, CHAIR OF NORTH EAST LONDON INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM AND THE NHS RACE AND HEALTH OBSERVATORY

I write this article with much sadness. Yesterday a friend died after contracting Covid-19. He was a lovely, kind and gentle man but more than this he was a local dentist who dedicated his working life to Newham.

This was more than providing a dental service, he devised and delivered a scheme so that local unemployed people could become dental nurses, he liaised with schools to encourage good dental health - Newham has some of the worse dental health outcomes, he contributed to the development of his profession, locally, regionally and nationally and he worked with national colleagues to ensure Newham got its fair share including successfully campaigning for a dentist south of the borough. Newham has lost a foot soldier.

The truth is by now, most, if not all of us will have lost someone they love due to Covid-19. Newham continues to have some of the highest rates and as of today, in the last 7 days 2,562 of our neighbours have tested positive and 59 lost their lives. The vaccine holds out much hope but the truth is that it does not hold out hope equally.

“Something had shifted... a lack of trust has built over decades and has been exploded by the recognition that we are two to three times more likely to die from Covid-19 “

A local GP told me in November that he and his colleagues were finding that African, Caribbean and Asian patients were not coming forward for their flu vaccination. It was working out as three times less likely and included patients who would usually turn up in the surgery without concern. This he said bodes ill for take

up of the Covid-19 vaccine. Something had shifted. Subsequently, national research is supporting this local anecdotal evidence.

My conversations with local African, Caribbean and Asian staff, and reading of the national research, points to a lack of trust that has built over decades and which has been exploded by the recognition that we are two to three times more likely to die from Covid-19 than the general population.

My dentist friend added to the number of Asian people who have lost their lives. These facts justify suspicions that this is the result of structural race inequalities that lead to a poorer experience in accessing services, experiencing care and in health outcomes. This lack of trust requires a sustained and long-term response but our immediate concern must be to encourage the Covid-19 vaccine take up.

Newham Council has developed a diverse band of Covid-19 Champions, Newham residents who are proactively using their networks to persuade others. Local health workers are joining with community and

and be encouraging of our neighbours. A practical handbook can be found at The COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Handbook - HackMD, which includes information that is regularly updated. Let's join together to save as many lives as we can. ●

Facts, not myths about the pandemic

A new website (www.covid-faq.co) has been launched this month challenging the avalanche of misinformation about the Covid-19 pandemic. The site gives accurate, sourced information busting many myths put out by a few journalists, academics and others who persist with suggestions that Covid isn't particularly dangerous, or that governments shouldn't try to contain the virus. Check it out. Facts speak louder than eccentric bias. [See page 9](#)

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religious leaders to debunk myths and encourage take up, and tailored information and campaigns have been produced.

We all have a role however, we need to ensure that we also deal in vaccination facts, do not pass on inaccurate conspiracy theories via social media and, if we can, challenge these



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Crunch meeting over fuming residents' parking protest



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AIDAN WHITE AND REBEKAH SAMUEL

Newham Council will hold an emergency meeting in February to discuss delaying the new parking emissions-based permits parking system following an outcry from residents and an internal rebellion.

Residents are furious, say many councillors, who have signed a pro-

test letter over the new permits system which came into force on 6 January and introduces charges on vehicles based on levels of carbon emission, which contribute to air pollution.

They say it's a punitive action in the middle of the latest Covid lockdown and hits the poorest in the area

the hardest.

The council insists that the system will improve Newham's poor air quality which contributes to the highest death rate in England. They say air pollution is to blame for 96 deaths in the borough a year.

Following a backlash from many residents some 30 councillors have

The council insists that the system will improve Newham's poor air quality which contributes to the highest death rate in England.

signed a letter to the Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz asking her to delay the scheme.

They say the council should not be imposing "regressive and unfair taxes" on residents and that the scheme itself "will not resolve air quality issues in the Borough."

An emergency meeting of the council will be held on 2 February to consider a demand for the scheme to

be put on hold during the pandemic and then for a further review to take place.

Supporters of the new system claim it will encourage 'residents to switch towards less polluting vehicles and encourage more local trips to be made by sustainable modes of transport, like walking and cycling.'

In the roll out of the scheme, there are 13 different permit types available – Residents; Disabled; Visitor; Free parking allocation; Business; Industrial; Charity business; Healthy School Streets Access; Browning Road Bridge Access; Trade; Courtesy; Carer; and Care Home permits.

The council says that 'the largest group of vehicles (almost 23,000) registered in the Borough will be liable for a modest residential permit charge of £60 per year'.

The council also insists that income from the permits scheme will be reinvested "ONLY into the roads and transport". This will include "funding initiatives like Healthy School Streets, electric vehicle charging points, cycle hire, cycle lanes, road resurfacing, fixing potholes, air quality monitoring, road safety schemes, new pedestrian crossings, and traffic calming measures." ●

Make hateful targeting of women a crime says Newham

NOAH ENAHORO

Newham Council has voted to recommend adding misogyny to the list of hate crimes recognised under the law.

All 54 councillors agreed to ask the Law Commission to recognise misogyny as a hate crime during an online Zoom meeting on November 16.

This means that alongside protected characteristics such as race, religion, and sexual orientation, the commission, that reviews the law and recommends reforms, has been asked to include sex and gender.

Councillor Mumtaz Khan, who proposed the motion, hopes that vote will apply further pressure on the Law Commission and believes other councils should do the same.

"Misogyny is not currently recorded as a hate crime by the vast majority of police forces in the UK," said Councillor Khan on Newham Council's website. "By making this small change we can ensure the courts can take this kind of behaviour into account when sentencing. It would also help to change not only the prosecution and detection of such crimes, but the culture of acceptance of this abuse too."

During the council meeting, Councillor Khan used her five minutes of allocated time to make her case against misogyny and violence inflicted upon women and girls. Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz said during the meeting that she was 'both happy and proud' to support Councillor Khan's motion.

Councillor Ayesha Chowdhury congratulated Councillor Khan on bringing the motion forward but reminded the council that 'men need to identify the issue within themselves' instead of placing the responsibility on women.

According to a report published by Citizens UK, a community organising group, almost 34 per cent of existing hate crimes had gender as a motivating factor and concluded that women were almost three times more likely to experience sexual violence than men.

Newham Council is not the only local authority to do this. In April 2016 Nottinghamshire Police introduced the Misogyny Hate Crime policy, becoming the first police force in the country to recognise misogyny as a hate crime.



According to the report commissioned by Nottingham Women's Centre, it found that there had been an increase in support of the policy to 87 per cent since the two years of its passing.

The motion's passing joins a wider movement championed by Citizen's UK, who since 2015's victory in Nottingham, have been campaigning for misogyny to be regarded as a hate crime in national law.

The Law Commission is expected to report back on their hate crime consultations in 2021. ●

Council abandons plan to charge for primary school meals

Newham's pioneering Eat for Free programme which provides free school meals to all primary school-aged pupils, regardless of their family income, will continue says the Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz after a plan to force parents to pay announced last month was abandoned.

The scheme guarantees that all children in the Borough, including those not eligible for the government's free school meals programme, get a healthy daily meal and saves Newham families around £500 per child in annual food costs.

The Council's U-turn on plans to charge for the scheme comes after a Borough-wide consultation launched in December. Over the past two years Newham has invested £33 million in children and youth services and the Council has designated 2021 Newham's first ever 'Year of Young People' – a 12-month celebration of the children and young people in the Borough.

In December Newham Council had said the scheme, which costs around £6 million a year and sees every primary school-aged child in the Borough offered a free school meal, was unaffordable as a result of government cuts.

Around 12,500 pupils in years 3-6 (90 per cent of those eligible) take up the offer, helping local families to make ends meet and ensuring thousands of children can enjoy a healthy school lunch.

The Council proposed asking parents of children not entitled to free school meals to pay a contribution of between 60p and £1.42 towards the £2.42 daily cost of a school lunch, with the Council



meeting the remaining cost and children from outside the Borough being excluded from the scheme.

Announcing the plan to keep the scheme, the Mayor said: "We have listened to local families and know how important Eat for Free is. Despite central government cuts and the economic costs of Covid-19, I am delighted to confirm that Eat for Free will remain and Newham Council will continue to put people at the heart of everything we do as we celebrate the first ever Newham Year of Young People."●

Mission accomplished as Jimi's plaque is set to return



Jimi Hendrix fan Neandra Etienne (left) was dismayed to discover that a plaque commemorating where he wrote the lyrics to Purple Haze in Forest Gate had been taken down. So she launched a personal mission to recover and renovate the plaque. With the new Newham Heritage plaque in hand she said: "I felt strongly because I want people to know the story behind one of his most famous and iconic songs. I was so happy I was able to make a contribution to his legacy, which is also a part of Forest Gate history." The plaque will be put up in a special ceremony when Covid allows.



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Vision of hope to combat isolation and despair



JEAN GRAY

Every Saturday Shofa Miah sets up a stall at Woodgrange Market in Forest Gate to give away free toiletries to teenagers who can't afford them.

A professional working in children's services with Westminster City Council, Shofa, who lives in Newham, believes that young people in the community need support. Since her stall opened in June last year, it has become a hub for local teenagers, some of whom now volunteer.

Shofa's dedication to supporting young people comes from her own life.

Behind the stall is a poster featuring a photograph of her brother Ashok who died 17 years ago aged 29 after suffering from schizophrenia. This family tragedy drives Shofa to this day. She has set up Ashok's Vision International, an organisation dedicated to helping families and friends cope better when a young person suffers mental illness. Self-funded so far, she is hoping it will become a registered charity.

She said: "People don't know what to do when this happens in a family. It can be challenging and frightening and so often people just leave the person alone leading to isolation and despair. But it needn't be like that.

There are things we can do, and I want to share this knowledge. Evidence suggests that small improvements in wellbeing can help to decrease some mental health problems, and help that person to flourish."

Ashok was found drowned in the lake at Regent's Park, near the family home. It is not clear exactly what

"A supporter's role should not be to 'fix' the person, but to be there to let them know that they are valued, loved and most importantly not alone at a most difficult time.."

happened to him and an open verdict was recorded at the inquest.

"He had become increasingly isolated," Shofa explained "It was terribly sad. I want Ashok's Vision to reflect my brother's essence, which was his love for Nature, Play and Spirituality.

"They say you die twice, once when your heart stops and the second time when you are no longer mentioned in the world. I feel Ashok died while he was alive and that is the cruelty and reality of mental illness."

Shofa, herself a mother of three, already has connections in Nepal, Italy, Egypt and Bangladesh to expand the project internationally.

Her latest piece of work is a 25-point schedule of practical tips for families and friends, based on the idea of a support network as the most effective way to encourage wellbeing.

She said: "A supporter's role should not be to 'fix' the person, but to be there to let them know that they are valued, loved and most importantly

not alone at a most difficult time."

Shofa's work is well respected by the young people who join her on Saturdays. Regular Ashton Buchanan, 16, said: "This is a good place for young people to get hygiene products during the pandemic, and is a safe place to discuss mental health issues."

Moving into 2021, Ashok's Vision has started collaboration with the Forest Gate Womens Institute who have kindly offered to sew face masks to give out for free to local teenagers.

[@ashok_vision](#)
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Ashok's Checklist

Practical tips for families and friends to support young people with mental health problems.

- Make sure they always have the means to contact you
- Have a designated person to check they have gone home at night
- Check to see if they have food in their home
- Make sure they have a warm, secure home they can go back to
- They have access to electricity and hot water
- They are clothed appropriately, including footwear for all weather conditions
- Their birthdays are remembered, celebrated with them however simple it may be
- They have access to an album of pictures they like looking at
- Check they are taking prescribed medication
- They are helped and supported to groom themselves (haircut, nails, toothbrush, soap)
- Help them attend the dentist/opticians/chiroprapist
- Make them their favourite food
- Help them access music they like to listen to
- Encourage hobbies they may have liked to do in the past
- Supporting them to visit their place of worship or spiritual place
- Revisit childhood/happy memories through stories – listen to them
- Support them to make graveyard visits, pay respects to past loved ones
- Support them to visit people they like who may be in hospital
- Help them clean their home, adding plants and natural light
- Give tokens of appreciation
- Stop people from calling them derogatory names, give them respect
- Include them as much as possible in family gatherings and events
- Support them to go on nature walks in parks, gardens, water features and farms
- Offer to sit with them, let them know they are loved and important to you.



VIEW FROM MY WARD

West Ham

Councillor John Gray

There was a settlement here in the Saxon times and it used to have one of the largest Cistercian abbeys in England. There is a wide mix



John Gray

of social housing, privately rented and home owners. Two of the best parks in East London, the Greenway path, 4 primary schools, a 6th form college and 4 railway stations (in or nearby). There are a number of active community minded individuals and organisations, who have rallied together to help vulnerable residents during the Covid pandemic, with delivery of food parcels, shopping, picking up medication or offering other forms of support.

I have been privileged to be a Newham Councillor for the ward for the last past 10 years. There are currently 20 wards in Newham. I am a Labour and Co-operative Party Councillor. In normal times we hold 6 face to face local surgeries for residents to meet us every month. We are now available online or on the phone.

While many residents think the ward is a great place to live and bring up their families there are problems. The chief concern is one that dominates my Councillor case work – housing. Not only homelessness, overcrowding or disrepair but especially poverty brought about by very high rents. Some 66 per cent of children in Newham live in poverty after their parents housing costs are taken into account.

Therefore a big issue in the ward is the proposal to build a school by the Government on the site of the former Ford's motor show rooms in Plaistow Road. Great to have a new school but it is proposed only a tiny number of truly affordable socially homes will be built on this site while many for sale on the open market. Local councillors and residents are firmly opposed to such plans. Watch this space.

Forest Gate woman's Windrush scandal ordeal

REBEKAH SAMUEL

The controversy known as the Windrush scandal made headlines in 2018 as many people of Caribbean descent were faced with deportation, actually deported or not allowed to re-enter the country after returning from overseas.

Grace Michel was one of those people. She came to the UK with her parents in 1960, aged six. As a minor she had travelled on her father's British passport that described his and her status as 'British Subject Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies'. She lived most of her life in Stratford, attending St. Anthony's primary school then St. Angela's Secondary School for girls. Her family moved to Forest Gate, where she lived for many years.

In 1984, Ms Michel had to return to St. Lucia to help her parents who were not well. She had her own British passport at this point, attended the passport office but could not get it renewed. Due to time restraints, she obtained a St. Lucian passport from the High Commission, in which a stamp was placed stating she was a citizen and holder of a British passport. She travelled to St. Lucia with her children on that passport.

After her mother passed Ms Michel wanted to return to the place she called home. She tried returning to the UK on two separate occasions between 2013–2018 but was not allowed to remain, despite providing her original UK passport and her St. Lucian passport with the stamp confirming her status as a UK citizen. The Passport Office told her they were unable to read her British passport and that she had no right of residency. Her children were allowed to remain as they were born in the UK. So she had to leave without them. While in St. Lucia Ms Michel challenged the case and eventually succeeded after providing her father's passport as further evidence of her UK citizenship. Last year, she finally returned to the UK and is reunited with her children and back living in Forest Gate.

Caribbean people came to England as "Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies", as prescribed under The British Nationality Act 1948. However, the law later changed under the 1971 Immigration Act, placing the burden of proof on the person claiming the right of abode.

Ms Michel said: "People in the Caribbean fought for this country during the war. After the war, they were invited to come to the UK to help rebuild the



nation. Everyone had to have a profession or skill, coming to work as nurses, engineers, machinists, but many ended up in jobs below their skill level working in organisations like the NHS as porters or conductors with London Transport. West Indians believed in this country, yet laws were intentionally put in place to discriminate against us. Records were destroyed to facilitate deporting people out of their own coun-

try. Anyone who already had status as a UK citizen before the Act should never have had their status disputed in the first place."

Ms Michel is still waiting to receive her British Passport but does have a card stating her right to remain.

If you or someone you know are still affected by the Windrush scandal, we would like to hear from you. Please get in touch.

Song for my Dad

WINSTON VAUGHAN

Newham recording artist Crystxl King tells of her Windrush Scandal experience in a song.

Her mother was born in London, her father came to the UK from St. Lucia when he was 14, established a living and raised his family.

After 40 years in the country he received a letter from the Home Office informing him that his citizenship had come into question and he had to prove that he had the right to remain here.

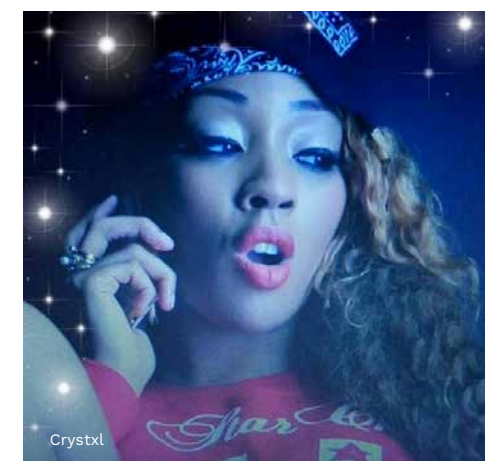
Like most people of his generation he had discarded all the documents that would have been of help to him and so he was unable to produce what was required. This began a very stressful period for the family, which Crystxl captures in her song Tried to Take My Daddy Away.

The family were forced to engage a solicitor and Crystxl talks about a desperate, sometimes tearful, time trolling through old photographs

and other documents. They eventually succeeded and he was given the right of stay.

You can find the song on Newham Council's Songs for Windrush page.

- newham.gov.uk/libraries-arts-culture/windrush-day-2020/4?documentId=416&categoryId=20015
- [instagram.com/CrystalTheKing](https://www.instagram.com/CrystalTheKing)



Crystxl

Just Champion! We're turning the tide against Covid says health chief



East London NHS Foundation Trust

CATARINA JOELE AND REBEKAH SAMUEL

Lockdown and self-sacrifice by the people of Newham are working to turn the tide in the fight against coronavirus and the Covid-19 outbreak, says the Borough's health chief.

From 10 to 16 January, the number of new Coronavirus cases in Newham fell by 37 percent, Newham Council's Director of Public Health, Jason Strelitz told a Borough-wide online consultation on the health crisis on 20 January.

He said: "The results of lockdown and all the efforts and sacrifices that everyone is making to stay socially distant from each other is starting to have a quite significant and positive effect."

However, Strelitz stressed that the number of infections was still "way too high" and people in Newham need to keep following Government guidelines. More than 30,000 people in the Borough have tested positive for Covid-19, according to the Mayor, Rokhsana Fiaz.

The special online session was hosted by the council's Covid-19 Health Champions Programme Director, Anne Bowers, and dealt with residents' questions and concerns about the Covid-19 vaccine which were answered by a panel of experts.

Strelitz told the 90-strong audience, including members of local community groups such as Newham

Save Our NHS and Fight for Peace: "We are not here to convince you to take the vaccine, but we strongly believe that it is really important. I don't want to hide that bit of it."

It is estimated that are around 8,000 people across the Borough have already received Covid-19 vaccinations. Data suggests nearly 50 percent of all people aged 80 and 75 per cent of all people in care homes have been vaccinated.

People on the shielding list, those who are considered extremely clinically vulnerable (patients with cancer, those who have received organ transplants, people with severe respiratory conditions, amongst others), have already begun to receive vaccinations.

The organisers allayed fears over any risk posed by the vaccination programme.

"After clean water, vaccines are the most effective public health intervention in the world", said Bowers. "Unlike tonsillitis or an infection in the lungs, a vaccine is something that each of us does to contribute to the health, safety and wellness of the whole community.

"Can we trust a vaccine that was produced so rapidly?" she asked, "Yes, we are not starting from scratch. We are just building upon a history of everything we know about viruses.

"With Covid-19 affecting everyone around the globe there have been unprecedented numbers of volunteers for human trials, diverse enough

across all groups, ages and ethnicities - to allow the Covid-19 vaccines to be developed and tested so quickly."

Although there are legitimate concerns about the higher threat posed by Covid-19 to people in the black and Asian communities, Dr Winston Morgan, Reader in Toxicology and Clinical Biochemistry at the Medicines Research Group of the University of East London, said the "virus cannot determine difference between races;

it sees everyone's immune system the same way." Another panel member commented: "we are biologically all the same, genetically it makes no difference"

Covid-19 Health Champions are Newham residents, tasked with sharing key Covid-19 information across the community. The goal of this initiative, set up, by Newham's public health team, is to share answers to questions such as: What are the key symptoms? How do I get a test? What is NHS Test and Trace? Questions are asked and answered via Zoom briefings, WhatsApp messages and email. Jason Strelitz, Director of Public health for Newham, expressed the importance of Covid-19 Health Champions, saying "this is how we share information with each other" and encouraged people to get involved and become Covid-19 Champions.

The Newham Covid-19 Health Champions Q&A sessions are being held every other Wednesday at 7pm on Zoom. Information about Health Champions is currently offered in 15 languages: Bengali, Cantonese, English, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Lithuanian, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Somali, Tamil and Urdu. British Sign Language is available in the Q&A sessions.

For more information or to become a Newham Covid-19 Champion, email CovidHealthChampions@newham.gov.uk, ring 02033 732777 or visit www.newham.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-health-champions.



Doubling up for a shot in the arm

Shirley Biro and her husband Andrew (above) from East Ham celebrate after their jabs at the Excel Mass Vaccination Centre. "I'd heard about some problems, but it was amazing," said Shirley. She praised the efficiency of the system - a large car park and no great queues. She got her invitation letter and decided to take her husband with her. He had not been called but he's over 70 and also eligible and was also given a vaccination. "It's a tip, if you have a carer or spouse who is also eligible, take them with you," she said. This "two for one" option may not always work, but it could prove useful for many couples.

Good food for thought

FAWN BESS-LEITH

Over the course of 2020, the mental health of men, women and children in the face of the pandemic has been constant in the national headlines. Increased cases of depression, anxiety and suicide have been reported in the last year.

Despite the hope of most for a better New Year, January 2021 has followed the tradition of being known as the most depressing month of the year due to limited finances, gloomy weather and short days, combined this year with Covid-19 and its restrictions. This leaves many with little hope and several questions. What impact will such long absence from the class room have on our children's health and wellbeing? How will working from home and prolonged social isolation affect our mental health? How do we cope with the loss of friends and loved ones without being able to see them during their last moments?

Though we may not have the answers to all the questions, there is some practical action that can be taken to combat the January blues and to ensure long-term optimal physical and mental wellbeing. Eating well not only helps us to look and feel our best physically, but what we eat also has significant impact on our mental health. There is vast evidence that shows a healthy, balanced diet (rich in all the essential nutrients from the 5 food groups) can help us improve mood, think clearly, feel more alert, as well as, improve attention and concentration span. Conversely, research confirms that a poor diet (processed foods – high in fat and sugar as well as carbonated beverages) can lead to stress and depression. Anecdotal evidence from service users I've been involved with over the years also supports this.

Processed foods/drinks are seriously addictive and act as stimulants. They affect/stimulate the dopamine centres of our brain, which are associated

with pleasure and reward. Our brain's physiology will actually alter when we cut down and remove processed foods from our diet. Sugar and processed food cause the environment inside our body to become acidic which leads to inflammation throughout the body and brain, which may give rise to mood disorders, including anxiety and depression. It's a vicious cycle – when we are stressed or depressed we crave processed foods, we may also eat too much or too little, leaving us feeling sluggish and gaining weight or exhausted, only making matters worse. The old adage 'you are what you eat' drives home the strong connection between our gut and brain. Our intestines and brain are physically linked via the vagus nerve and the two send and receive messages from one another.

Fawn Bess-Leith is a specialist health visitor in perinatal and infant mental health working in Newham.

Local support

Newham Food Alliance
07790 975 086
Frontdoor@newhamfoodalliance.org

Newham Perinatal Mental Health Team
(For pregnant women or with a child under one)
0207 363 8801/8258
www.elft.nhs.uk

Newhamtalkingtherapies.nhs.uk
0208 475 8080

Newham KidsTime workshop
(Fun group workshop for your people age 10-18 and their parents/carers)
Fawn.bess-leith@ourtime.gov.uk

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
0208 430 9000

If you feel your mental health is deteriorating or if you are in distress call the out of hours crisis service on **0207 771 5888**. During service hours contact your GP and in an emergency call **999**.



Eating to support mental health

Nutritionists suggest that eating a balanced diet provides vital nutrients to improve mental wellbeing. Here are some foods we can incorporate in our diet to support optimal mental health:

- **Dopamine-rich foods.** For focus and motivation: foods rich in omega 3 (salmon, nuts, healthy plant oils), blueberries and strawberries, foods rich in sulphur (collards, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale and chard) and folate foods (leafy greens, broccoli, chickpeas, black beans, papaya).
- **Serotonin-rich foods.** For mood, sleep, pain and craving control: chickpeas, nuts and seed, healthy carbohydrates, such as sweet potatoes and quinoa.
- **Gaba-rich foods.** For anti-anxiety: almonds, walnuts, lentils, bananas, brown rice, halibut, gluten-free whole oats, oranges, rice bran, spinach.
- **Fruits and vegetables.** A variety of 8 different types per day is recommended.
- **Water.** 8 glasses a day is recommended.

The above is not in silo of the support and treatment from your health profession/mental health specialist.

It's not all about Covid

CATARINA JOELE

The fact that hospitals are overloaded mustn't discourage people from calling the doctor when non-Covid emergencies arise, say Newham health officials.

Dr Farzana Hussain, a GP at The Project Surgery, in Plaistow, said: "Don't be afraid to seek help. Use GPs and community pharmacists too. Use all modes of communication. Online consultations are quick and easy access to your GP practice."

Macmillan Cancer Support Centre at Newham University Hospital is currently closed, but people can call Colsum Akanjee-Khan, Macmillan infor-

mation manager on 0207 363 8758.

Donal Gallagher, Macmillan Strategic Partnerships Manager for London, said: "Access to breast screening appointments, for example, are classed as 'essential activity' and have been made easier for people to attend as they can now choose the date and time of these appointments. People should feel assured that all the necessary measures have been put in place to reduce the risk of Covid-19 to keep them safe."

The Macmillan Support Line provides help for all those affected by cancer. Call **0808 808 0000** (7 days a week, 8am-8pm) or visit **www.macmillan.org.uk**

How can you help someone who is suffering mental health issues such as anxiety and depression? Pathmanathan Prabhananda describes a First Aid plan that works for him. Visit our website **www.newhamvoices.co.uk**

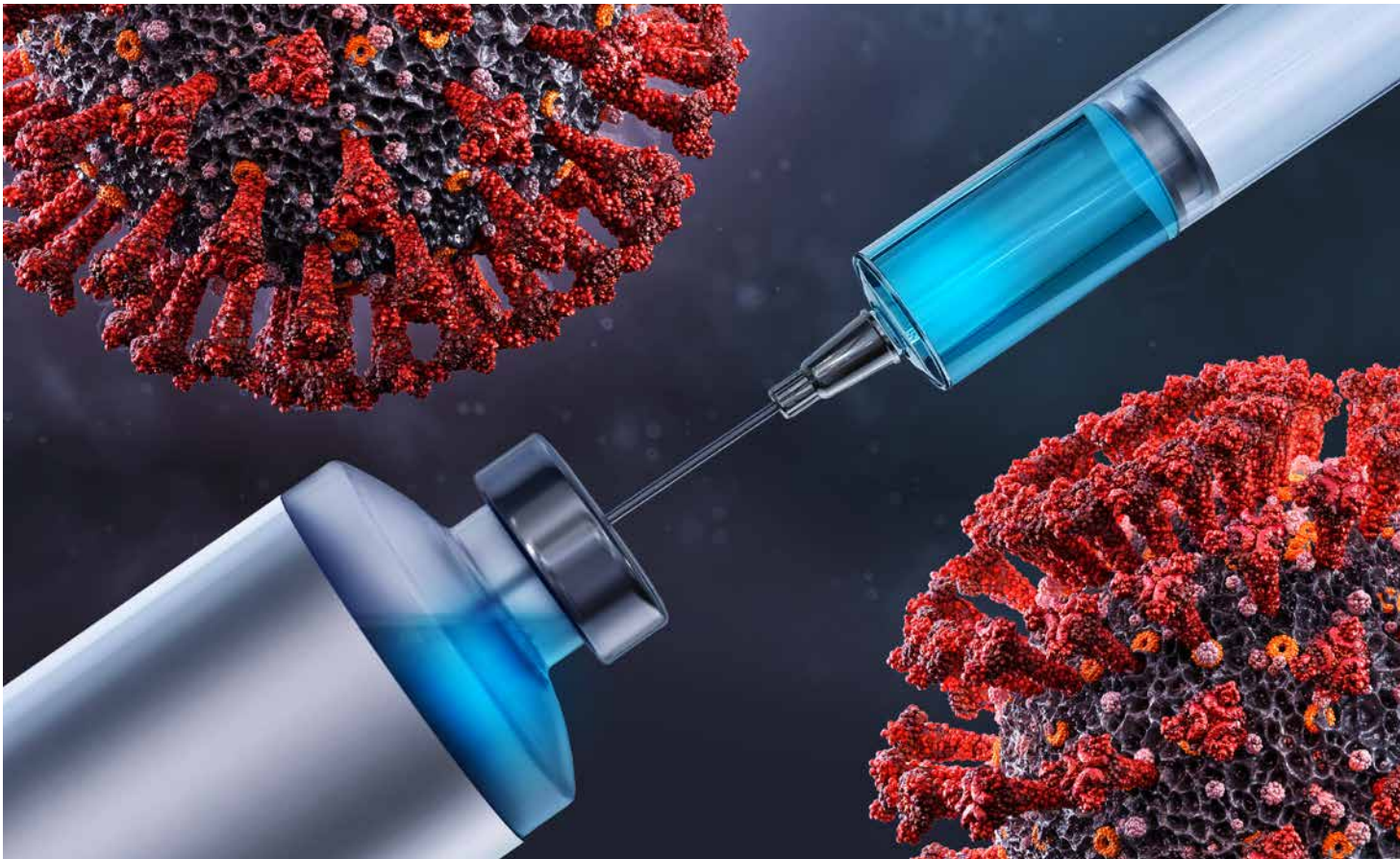
Are you worrying excessively?
Unable to cope?



Call the Newham
Mental Health
Crisis Line

Trained staff will listen and support every day of the year.
Telephone 0800 073 0066 to book an appointment now.

Vaccination: Answers to some of the key questions



Is there evidence that the vaccine actually works given it has been developed so quickly?

Yes. Evidence shows Pfizer vaccine is 95 per cent effective. The Astra Zeneca (Oxford) vaccine is 70 per cent effective and the Moderna vaccine provides 95 per cent protection. (Dr Giovanna Satta, ELFT NHS webinar)

Yes, we are not starting from scratch. With Covid affecting everyone around the globe there has been unprecedented numbers of volunteers for human trials, diverse enough – across all groups, ages and ethnicities – to allow the Covid vaccines to be developed and tested so quickly. (Anne Bowers, Covid Champions consultation January 20)

How long does it take the vaccine to work and is it safe?

Yes. The Pfizer vaccine and Astra Zeneca have already been given to tens of thousands of people safely without any problems. Remember the body needs time to develop antibodies, it may take up to two weeks to provide protection after vaccination. (Dr Giovanna Satta, ELFT NHS webinar)

How does the vaccine work?

Vaccines work by making the body think it has been ill with a particular virus, encouraging the body to create the fighter cells, to enable the immune response necessary to fight the infection. It achieves this with-

out actually making you ill.

Pfizer/BioTech (and also the Moderna vaccine), create a spike protein using bits of harmless code to prompt the body into creating an immune response. Moderna works by using an altered virus (i.e. known not to be harmful to humans) to carry the spike protein to start the immune response.” (Anne Bowers, Covid Champions consultation January 20)

Can I choose which vaccine to have?

People cannot choose which vaccine they would like to have – whether Pfizer, AstraZeneca/Oxford or Moderna vaccine. Different vaccination hubs are supplying different vaccines. (Covid Champions consultation January 20)

Is there a threat to fertility?

There is no evidence that the Covid immunisation jab reduces fertility or interferes with our DNA. (Covid Champions consultation January 20)

Should people suffering from existing conditions get vaccinated?

People with hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular problems and generally underlying health conditions, should take the vaccine. In rare exceptions your GP will discuss with you. These patients are “more vulnerable because their immune system is not as efficient and they should be vaccinated as soon as possible.” Regardless of having underlying health conditions or not, you will not be given a jab before

immunity to the disease. You do not need a Covid test before taking the vaccine, but if you tested positive you should wait 28 days before taking your jab. (Covid Champions consultation January 20)

Do I have to pay?

The vaccine is free and you can only get it through the NHS. Do not pay for the vaccine hoping that you will skip the queue. In some boroughs there are rumours of people queuing outside vaccination centres for left-over vaccines, that is not happening in Newham. Beware of people selling vaccinations. You must also not contact your GP to get the jab, they will contact you. (Covid Champions consultation January 20)

How long is protection after vaccination?

No-one knows for sure yet, but the latest studies suggest at least 6 months protection. Other studies on similar viruses show immunity can last one to two years. but that’s not certain. Six months is a safe bet. (Professor Frank Rohricht, ELFT NHS staff webinar)

What is “herd immunity” and how is it achieved?

This is when most of the population is immune to Covid-19 infection. At least 82 percent of the population needs protection (through vaccination or to have been infected by Covid-19) in order to achieve herd immunity. (Professor Frank Rohricht, ELFT NHS staff webinar)

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Playing your part to #KeepNewhamSafe

With Newham one of the hardest hit areas in the Covid-19 pandemic, we all have a part to play in keeping our communities safe. The steps you take could literally save lives.

1. Remember the basics

- ▶ **Stay at home** – national lockdown rules mean you may only leave your home for specific reasons, including essential shopping; medical appointments including Covid-19 tests and vaccines; for exercise, or for work where it is not possible to work from home
- ▶ **Hands** – wash your hands regularly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitiser
- ▶ **Face** – wear a face covering in public, and at all times in enclosed spaces such as supermarkets
- ▶ **Space** – keep a distance of at least two metres between yourself and people you don't live with

2. Get tested

If you have any symptoms of Covid-19 – a high temperature, new continuous cough or change to, or loss of, your sense of taste or smell – you must self-isolate and seek a test.

Rapid and free community testing is also available at a number of sites for people who are asymptomatic (not experiencing any symptoms) but who need a test to ensure they are not unwittingly carrying – and passing on – the virus.

If you need to leave home regularly for work or caring responsibilities, getting a Covid-19 test twice weekly can help to protect you and the people you live with, work with or care for.

3. Get help to self-isolate

If you have Covid-19 symptoms or test positive for the virus, you must self-isolate. That means you must stay at home and avoid contact with others for 10 days from the date your symptoms started, or the date of your positive test.

If you have to self-isolate and are unable to work or earn an income during that time, you may be eligible for financial help. If you cannot easily isolate from others at home, you may be able to get help finding somewhere to stay. We can also give you help with things like ordering online shopping.

Visit www.newham.gov.uk/coronavirus or call the Covid-19

helpline on 020 7473 9711 for more info.

4. Get vaccinated

The vaccination programme offers the best hope of defeating the pandemic. You do not need to contact the NHS, you will be invited to a vaccination appointment when it is your turn. If you are invited, please take up the offer of a vaccination.

To find out more about the vaccine, attend one of the Covid-19 Community Champion vaccine webinars where you can question our health experts about the vaccine.

For more info visit www.newham.gov.uk/covidvaccine



Be a vaccine peer supporter

Vaccine peer supporters talk to people who have questions or concerns about the vaccine. There is no minimum time commitment, and training takes just two hours.

Sign up to help your community. Email covidhealthchampions@newham.gov.uk or message/call 07929 792873 or 020 3373 2777 for information.

Further information on Covid-19, including restrictions, support, vaccines and info in different community languages is available at www.newham.gov.uk/coronavirus

Bridging our digital divide

BY REBEKAH SAMUEL

The arrival of Covid 19 has forced most of us to adopt technology overnight, just in order to manage our affairs like work and education. But with around 37 per cent of people in Newham living in poverty, how are they coping?

In April 2020, social change charity GoodThings Foundation called for urgent action to address the impact of Covid-19 on the 1.9 million households in Britain left isolated without access to the internet because they cannot afford it. Based on past trends and adjusted for population, that figure is likely to be around 11,000 people in Newham.

Newham Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz wrote to Prime Minister Boris Johnson

last year asking for support to “level up” the residents of Newham. In her letter, she drew attention to the “digital divide impeding learning”, “flexibility in the timing of re-opening schools”, and essential “government support to ensure they have access to wifi and IT.”

Digital exclusion puts people at risk. This may mean choosing between food or data; or for those dependent on physically meeting friends and family to manage, being unable to connect online could have a major impact on mental health.

For schools, exclusion is a key concern. Maryland Primary School, Stratford has worked hard to ensure their students are not disadvantaged by learning from home. Throughout lockdown they have distributed lap-

tops provided by the Department for Education and loaned their own classroom Chromebooks to students. Through government and network provider schemes, they assist families to get access to the internet. A school admin team manages calls from parents with difficulties and remote learning guidance is also provided on the school’s website.

Maryland Deputy Head, Darren Lock, said: “Prior to the lockdown we carried out a device and connectivity survey with our families. Devices were initially allocated to those families who did not own at least one suitable device to use at home. We have since received additional requests for devices from parents who have only one device but have multiple siblings who need to use the device each day. Circumstances such as these are now also being used to assess education vulnerability.”

Maryland Primary has 62 families using loaned devices (38 from the DfE, 24 from the School); and one family receiving extra data allowance through the government scheme.

Access to online services is a particular issue when it comes to the elderly. Apart from being disproportionately under exposed to devices, they are also disadvantaged in terms of the necessary skills. Under lockdown, lack of access or knowledge means they must rely on trusted family or friends, or face greater risk of isolation and susceptibility to fraud.

Custom House and Canning Town community neighbourhood centre was running computer skills classes, but these stopped with lockdown. Mr. Joseph Charles, 84, from Plaistow said: “I was really enjoying learning about the computer. I was get-



ting used to the mouse, opening files and started learning to use the internet. Newham does some really good things for the community. I am very grateful to Newham for these services.” Mr Charles said he was keen for things to get back to normal so he can re-join his computing class. ●

ACCESS TO THE INTERNET IN NEWHAM



49%

of people in Newham aged 75 years and over have never used the internet

8%

of people living in Newham had no access to the internet via broadband or mobile

5%

of people in Newham have never used the internet

- 8 per cent of people living in Newham had no access to the internet via broadband or mobile (*Mori Poll, commissioned by Newham Mayor, Rokhsana Fiaz in 2017*)
- 37 per cent of people live in poverty in Newham (*Trust for London April 2020*)
- 5 per cent of people in Newham have never used the internet (*Office of National Statistics 2018*)
- 49 per cent of people in Newham aged 75 years and over have never used the internet (*Office of National Statistics 2018*)
- 35.2 per cent (approximately 3.2 million people) of people in London are ‘limited or non-users’ of the internet

Old Spotted Dog due for facelift as football fans reach £19,000 goal

Clapton Community Football Club will soon get a new roof over its head thanks to the generosity of supporters who have chipped in £19,000 to repair the clubhouse at the club’s new home in Forest Gate.

The Old Spotted Dog ground is London’s oldest senior football venue and the new community-driven Clapton CFC became the new owners in July last year.

The club’s first task is to clean up and repair a leaking roof and carry

out urgent work on old wiring and insulation of the dilapidated clubhouse to reverse what the club says is “two decades of neglect.”

An online appeal launched in December asking for donations towards replacing the clubhouse roof set a target of £15,000. Within two weeks the target was almost reached as fans rushed to give their support, so the target was raised to £19,000 allowing other urgent repairs to be made.

Even the new target was reached with ten days to spare thanks to

the donations of almost 600 people, confirming the fan base for the club which aims to revamp the ground and facilities so that both the men’s and women’s teams can bring football back to the Old Spotted Dog ground next season.

As the club promises on its website “In addition to being passed as ready for matchdays, we aim for the clubhouse to become a warm and welcoming community hub for the people of Newham, with the emphasis on warm!” ●



Clapton Community Football Club

Theatre company gets creative to survive the pandemic

SAMANTHA WATSON

Upton Park theatre company Applecart Arts is getting even more creative in response to the effects of the corona virus on the cultural sector.

Based at the Harold Road Community Centre, Applecart closed the doors of its well known 'creative hub' in spring 2020 and has since looked for new ways to connect with audiences and support artists.

Live streaming of events and performances are proving popular. Their first live stream *The Flying Seagull Spectacular* was watched by nearly 6,000 people worldwide from Seattle and Melbourne to Cape Town.

Applecart has received funding from the Arts Council as part of emergency relief funds and have proposals for a number of community projects in the pipeline. They also want to develop partnerships with the local council,



schools, charities and businesses.

Marketing officer Saskia Osterloff said: "As a grassroots arts organisation we're used to living hand to mouth, but we have the bonus of the creativity and resourcefulness of our local community to draw on as we navigate the months ahead."

Last year, the Government's Culture Recovery Fund awarded funding to 13 organisations in Newham, including Applecart Arts, and Pioneer Theatres which is located in Theatre Royal Stratford East, and immersive music arts company, Block9.

https://applecartarts.com/whats_on.php

Film review African Apocalypse

One of the films promoted by the Stratford-based New Black Film Collective as part of its Black Films Matter season was *African Apocalypse*.

You can read Daphne Stedman's review of this powerful 'road movie' on our website. The film follows one man's epic journey from Oxford to Niger in the footsteps of a 19th century French colonial killer called Captain Paul Voulet.

A taster of the review: "Nylander stops at key locations on the route to interview descendants of those whose lives were brutally destroyed or affected by what might be termed a military expedition gone rogue. The signs of transgenerational trauma are apparent in nearly every interview. The interview with schoolgirls at Birni N'Konni has stayed in my mind."

Go to www.newhamvoices.co.uk

Family history search reveals a raunchy past

Forest Gate journalist Robert Nurden discovered there was more to his grandfather than met the eye when he began research on a biography about the extraordinary life of Stanley James, an East London minister who died before Robert was born.

What is your book about?

It is a biography of my unorthodox grandfather, Stanley James, who as a young man in the Canadian West was by turns a cowboy, shepherd, navvy, hobo and newspaper reporter, soldier in the Spanish-American war, poet, playwright and actor. Returning to his native England, he married and became a Non-conformist minister who both charmed and alienated his East End congregation with his socialism and pacifism. In 1923 he converted and reinvented himself as one of the best-known Catholic writ-

ers of the English-speaking world, with nine books to his name. Widely respected for his knowledge, passion and insight, he worked alongside Bertrand Russell and counted G.K. Chesterton among his friends.

Yet the chance discovery of hundreds of secret letters and the diaries of three young women from Leyton, Walthamstow and Manor Park revealed a hidden side of his personality. These documents show in intriguing and often explicit detail that, as a husband and father of seven, he had an affair and liaisons with female members of his congregation.

What gave you the idea to write it?

I had always been fascinated by my grandfather, yet none of my relatives was able to give me the whole truth. It

was a labour of love. More specifically, I had more or less retired as a journalist so for the first time I had the time to research and write the book.

It's a very personal story; did you ever consider not publishing it?

What I found out about his intriguing life along the way completely changed the book and gave it universal appeal. I hope I have been able to put a controversial life under the psychological, cultural and political microscopes.

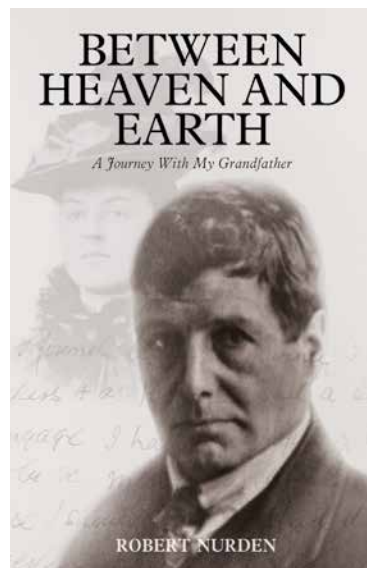
How long did it take to research and write?

About three years. I made two visits to Canada where Stanley lived for six years in the 1890s and was able to speak to my mother before she died. I wrote and researched simultaneously. Fascinating facts were coming to light

and added, even at the eleventh hour.

What was your family's reaction?

On the whole, positive – to varying degrees. My sister and cousins were for the most part very supportive.



If my mother or any of my uncles and aunts had been alive, there might have been problems. Meeting new relatives has been wonderful.

Has writing the book affected how you will now talk about your Grandfather?

I now have facts about the real man. I feel closer to him even though some things I found out don't put him in a good light. But he is as interesting as I thought he might be, full of contradictions.

Do you have any plans to write another book?

I would be interested in writing an account of the James family from my grandmother's perspective. She was the long-suffering one who held a family of seven children together against all the odds and without much emotional or material support.

Local support means the world to us says Newham's "Pretty Decent" brewer

It has been a tough time for the leisure industry but with a little help from the government and local support, one of Newham's few independent breweries is managing to keep its head above water.

NICOLE BLYTHE

James Casey started brewing beers in his kitchen until encouragement from friends and family persuaded him to make it official. Along with wife Sarah, James launched the Pretty Decent beer company back in 2017.

As he works in the charity sector, James decided to incorporate this into the company. A portion of each sale is given to charity.

He said: "We were never going to be able to compete with massive businesses, but we wanted an inclusive, social space that allows us to talk to local people."

They officially opened their doors on Sheridan Road, Forest Gate in April of 2017 and have worked with charities and independent businesses ever since, including *Pup Aid*, local food banks and *Eat or Heat*.

When the first lockdown began, they applied and were granted a Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grant fund and a Bounce Back loan [BBLS] which allowed them to access necessities for the company, enabling them to continue to give back to local people.

"It allowed us that breathing space. Our main goal was to keep ourselves open so we could continue to give to charity and give local people jobs."

A huge factor in their survival was creating an online platform where people could purchase their beers without going to their taproom or shop, a feature they plan on keeping post-pandemic. The team of five have all been working tirelessly to ensure the company's survival over the last



few months and their smart thinking has led to the creation of virtual beer tasting and new beer flavours.

Quarantine has seemingly made people more local conscience with new-found customer interest in small businesses. James believes this needs to continue post pandemic if independents are to survive.

However, there were multiple times when they felt they could go out of business. With a small, local team they are able to keep everyone employed, further benefitting the community, but James acknowledges that firms who rely entirely on direct customer contact might not be so lucky.

The company has had to be flexible, as pubs have been mass purchasing when open and not purchasing during lockdowns, but James says he refuses to hold anyone to an agreement they made before the pandemic.

The new customer interest in *Pretty Decent* may not remain after the pandemic, as people's drinking habits

will change depending on whether they are confined to the house or can go out to drink at local pubs.

"People can help by keeping it local. If we can help with that, then it means the world to us. Local support has been the reason we have been able to survive right now, no other reason than that."

So, while the pandemic has had a negative impact, there is still hope for a stable and comfortable future.

As shopping and going out continues to be impeded, the government has been encouraging spending on local businesses while in lockdown, in order to help them survive through this trying time.

New data from the *Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy* is

helping to shine some light on how independent businesses coped during 2020, and the results speak to a cautiously hopeful future.

Newham in 2020 granted a total of 4,040 Small Business Grants [SBGF] and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants [RHLGF] with a total of £56,090,000. While Newham and Havering have been slower to give Local Authority Discretionary Grant Funds to those they have approved, Newham was the third-highest granting Borough in London, giving a total of 635 of these funds.

The *Pretty Decent Beer Company's* next move is to "increase local impact" and with the arrival of a daughter *Effie* last year, the hope continues to grow. ●



SOMETHING'S BREWING



Phil Mellows, a global expert in the crafty pint, joins us in a new column

A revolution has poured around the globe. A revolution in beer. Craft brewers have sprung up everywhere, using novel ingredients and ingenious techniques.

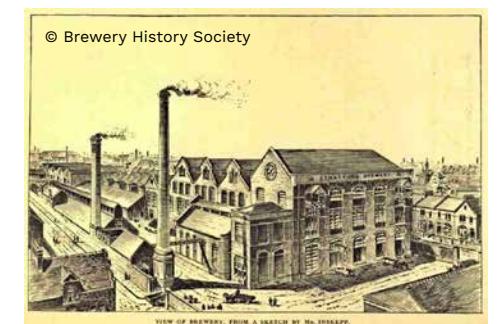
There are more than 120 in London alone. But while neighbouring Hackney and Waltham Forest have enough of them to become, before the virus bit, unlikely beer tourism destinations, the trend has barely touched Newham.

We do have three new breweries, though, so far surviving the pandemic. Tap East, a microbrewery and bar in Westfield came first in 2011, Husk Brewing in Docklands in 2016 and Pretty Decent Beer, Forest Gate in 2018.

For Newham, that's a brewing boom! You have to go back a century to find the last commercial brewery. Savill Brothers, founded in Maryland Road, Stratford in 1856 was taken over, along with its 111 pubs, and closed in 1925 by Mile End's Charrington, which would go on to dominate East London.

Its merger with Bass in 1976 created one of the country's 'Big Six' brewers, eventually broken up by the 1989 Beer Orders.

Today, only about 20 per cent of pubs are owned by breweries, compared to around 80 per cent before the Beer Orders. One local example is the Golden Fleece in Manor Park, part of Suffolk's Greene King, which now has more pubs than any other



brewer in the country.

Most, though, are owned by large non-brewing firms leasing to tenants who are usually contracted to buy their beer through the company, plus a plethora of groups that directly manage their pubs and often have a policy of selling locally-brewed beers.

J D Wetherspoon is the most famous and operates the Golden Grove in Stratford and the Miller's Well on Barking Road, while a couple of East Ham's landmark hostellers have recently been taken on by smaller firms.

Antic was in the middle of refurbishing the Denmark Arms when lockdown stalled reopening, and Remarkable Pubs has similar plans for the Boleyn Tavern.

Newham is also home to one of the capital's rare independent freehouses, Plaistow's Black Lion.

Add the on-site tap rooms at Tap East, Husk and Pretty Decent, surely just the beginning of an exciting new wave of brewing in the Borough. ●



Participatory Democracy: why it matters

ANDY PAICE, PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY CONVENER AND FACILITATOR

Since 2018 Newham Council has been holding community assemblies and forums on different topics and has been stating its intention to become a “beacon of participatory democracy.” Great! You may say. That sounds good, but what exactly does participatory democracy mean?

When we talk about democracy, we usually think of political parties and voting in elections to decide who gets to be our Prime Minister, local mayor or councillors. This is known as Representative democracy where every adult can vote for their choice of government. This system definitely has its pluses but one of its downsides is that once we’ve voted we no longer feel able to make an impact on our everyday lives.

Participatory democracy on the other hand is about people getting directly involved in decision making. It’s about different kinds of forums where people can share opinions, have their voice heard and contribute to discussions that result in actions and policies. It’s about participating in the life of one’s nation, area or community at a much deeper level than voting every now and again.

This helps citizens gain a sense of

responsibility and stewardship for their locality and world, People get a sense of bringing their aspirations to life, they learn from each other and start to feel more deeply rooted in their communities. Feeling heard makes people happy! Perhaps even more importantly the policies that come out of this are so much better because a diversity of viewpoints have been taken into account.

Participatory democracy is about leaders ‘doing with’ rather than ‘doing for’ or ‘doing to.’ Take for example Participatory Budgeting where an agency allocates a sum of money to local people to make collective decisions on exactly how that money is spent. People come together to discuss and decide on local projects and services they want and need rather than have officials decide for them.

In a Community or People’s Assembly (like the Community Neighbourhood Citizens Assemblies in Newham) people meet in person in their localities to set out priorities and recommendations. Local authorities then either implement these or respond to them in detail. These kinds of forums usually take place in person and can also be social events where neighbourhoods can get to know each other and work on local projects.

So does participatory democracy

exist outside the sponsorship of institutions like local or national government? The answer is yes. Mutual aid groups sprang up to help the vulnerable affected by Covid, working on the sound principle that people know what’s best for their own communities. This can and does

Participatory democracy is about leaders ‘doing with’ rather than ‘doing for’ or ‘doing to.’

happen in other contexts. Housing associations, local businesses and voluntary services can get organised and hold their own forums, assemblies, neighbourhood planning groups and take action.

At some level we’re all participating all the time. Our daily actions create the borough, the city and the world we live in. Both with and without the support of local authorities there’s a wealth of opportunity to make Newham a beacon of participatory democracy.

Where would you like to start to make an impact? ●



Charity targets the post-lockdown era

An East Ham charity has launched a new research project to support Newham’s recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and shape the future of its services for the community.

Through a series of online and face-to-face activities and conversations, Bonny Downs Community Association (BDCA) is partnering with local people as part of its Voices for Change project, to help share experiences from the pandemic, set out their hopes and priorities, and help shape plans for future activities that respond to their needs.

The association also wants people of all ages and backgrounds, who live or work in Newham, to get involved by completing a short



online questionnaire, which will take approximately 10 minutes and can be accessed on its website at www.bonnydowns.org/voicesforchange

In addition, BDCA is offering people who live and work in Newham the opportunity to take part in an in-depth interview, join a focus group online and to share their stories. All activities will take place in

“Voices for Change will capitalise on our borough’s great community spirit, helping local residents to reconnect with each other ...empowering them to build a brighter future together.”

English and personal information will be kept confidential.

When completed, BDCA will share a summary report of the research findings with the community and with local partner organisations. The project is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Chelle Coulton, Chief Executive of Bonny Downs Community

Association, said: “Voices for Change will capitalise on our borough’s great community spirit, helping local residents to reconnect with each other through positive health-boosting activities and empowering them to build a brighter future together.”

To find out more, visit www.bonnydowns.org

Nurses and midwives among local staff recognised in New Year Honours

At Barts Health NHS Trust, the UK's first black Director of Midwifery, Dr Gloria Rowland was awarded an MBE. She trained as a nurse and midwife in Nigeria before coming to the UK.

Diabetes nurse consultant Anne Claydon was awarded an Order of the British Empire medal (BEM), and Becky Platt, advanced clinical practitioner, became a Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM)

in the Overseas and International List for services to Humanitarian Response. Wendy Olayiwola, Senior Midwifery Manager and site lead of the BME Network at Newham Hospital also received a BEM.

Barts Group Chief Executive Alwen Williams became a Dame in recognition of her work since taking up the post five years ago.

At East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT) Debbie Buck, Clinical

Practice Lead, received a BEM for services to mental health nursing, particularly during the COVID-19 response.

Has a nurse or other healthcare worker made a difference to you?

The World Health Organization in Europe has extended the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife from 2020 into 2021, recognising that the Covid pandemic meant many nurses were too busy to join in the celebrations last year.

To mark the event, *Newham Voices* will be running a special supplement in May and we would like you, our readers, to help us celebrate. If you would like to say a special thank you to someone who was there when you needed them, please let us know and we will publish your tributes.

Please contact us at:

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Left to right: Dame Alwen Williams; top Dr Gloria Rowland and Anne Claydon, bottom Becky Platt and Wendy Olayiwola

How personal loss inspired the spirit of solidarity for teachers

MICHELLE HARRIS

Aisha Sheikh and her husband Naheem Sheikh each lost a parent to Covid-19 just 12 days apart and it these shocking events and sense of deep loss prompted a dramatic change in their lives.

They are both key workers and teachers in Newham and their personal loss in the health emergency not only highlighted the levels of social inequalities in Newham, but it ignited a spark of goodwill and like many others they became involved in the charitable sector.

Aisha and Naheem teamed up with Morrison's Champion Lufta Begum via a Covid WhatsApp group where they volunteered countless hours throughout the year to deliver food parcels to vulnerable families.

With the run up to Christmas and with many vulnerable families living through tier 4 restrictions, Mr and Mrs Sheikh were concerned about how the elderly and disadvantaged families would cope.

Aisha, a senior manager at Ranelagh Primary school and Naheem Sheikh

head of year 10 at Forest Gate Community School, decided to draw on their connections to deliver weekly food parcels to vulnerable children and families.

"Some families often go without through fear of embarrassment and

"Although it was a very hard time for us both we desperately wanted to continue our parent's legacy by showing compassion to our community."

reluctance to use food banks. I know another family had children with asthma and couldn't get to the shops. Thanks to the school's database we could identify those most vulnerable and get parcels to the families that needed them most," says Mrs Sheikh.

As teachers the couple wanted to do something extra special for Christmas and through collaboration managed to ensure every child at Brampton Primary received a Christmas present.

"Through virtual raffles and generous donations from Arriva International in Canary Wharf we were able to make this possible. Children have had such a hard year, with their education and social activities disrupted, we felt it was impor-

tant that each and every child have a present," says Mrs Sheikh.

Naheem said he also learned the importance of solidarity in his family life. "My father Abdul Karim Sheikh devoted his life to the community," he said. "He was councillor, ceremonial mayor from 1998-99 and he started the first mosque here in Newham. I will never forget how he was acknowledged for his service to the community when he was awarded a British Empire Medal."



"Although it was a very hard time for us both we desperately wanted to continue our parents' legacy by showing compassion to our community. Giving back has helped us immensely," said Mr Sheikh.

Mrs Sheikh added, "When you see the smiles on their faces and the tears of gratitude it makes it all worthwhile. We really want to give children a special Christmas, and in our parents' memory do whatever we can to help. My mother Parveen Fayyaz was 76 when she died but did so much for her community throughout her years. Now it's our turn." ●

Women's football making strides in Newham

AIDAN WHITE

The end of lockdown will be welcomed everywhere, but particularly by fans of women's football in Newham.

The recent success of the English national women's team has helped raise the profile of the women's game but overcoming the legacy of entrenched gender bias



This year marks the 100th anniversary of the FA's infamous ban on women's football – a prohibition that was only lifted 50 years ago and most girls remained barred from playing football at school for decades. Now women's football fans in Newham are preparing to kick to kick off a new phase in the revival of the beautiful game for women in the Borough.

remains a problem, says Jessie Brett one of the campaigners seeking to promote women's football in the borough.

"Football in the UK remains incredibly sexist," she says. "There are heaps of matches for men, but not for women. I've had to travel outside the borough to get match time."

Jessie is one of the people behind Upton Sparks, a new women's football project launched in December. "I started off without ever having kicked a football in my life, but I fell in love with it," she says.

By day Jessie works at the Central Park Café in East Ham as well as studying for a qualification in ante-natal care and breastfeeding counselling, supported by the National Childbirth Trust. Now she has teamed up with the West Ham Walking Women's Football team to launch a team that will compete in the Super 5s five-a-side football league in Hackney.

This partnership builds upon growing support for the women's game in the borough. Jessie started off with Upton Park Ladies, which with Forest Gate Crusaders, is one of the grassroots teams playing in the lowest division on the Greater London Wom-

en's Football Association.

There's also powerful support for the women's game from the grassroots work of Clapton Community FC and in the big league from West Ham United.

Joining Jessie in her effort to encourage more women into the game through Upton Sparks is Katherine Muts-vangwa (pictured below) who promotes West Ham's Women's Walking Football which meets weekly at Flanders Field with the support of the Bonny Downs Association.

She says walking football is an ideal sport for beginners and women who are nervous about getting involved.

Although walking football is normally only taken up by the over 50s, Katherine, who is Quality and Safety Lead in Infection Prevention and Safety Nurse with the Newham Clinical Commissioning Group, says they've relaxed the rules so that anyone over 18 can join.

"It's an opportunity for mothers and daughters to play together," she says, "It's also important in helping people to stay healthy and to confront other problems like depression."

The importance of health is highlighted in the link up



that walking footballers and Upton Sparks have forged with West Ham United. They will be getting funding support from West Ham through the 150Club scheme, a health initiative providing funding for fitness support for people on community prescription.

The Newham Community Prescription Scheme, first piloted in a number of Newham GP practices seven years ago, is now a Borough-wide action to help reduce the risk of long-term health complications associated with diabetes, such as heart disease or kidney disease. The scheme provides support for fitness actions, like walking foot-

ball, to help people develop a healthier lifestyle.

Jessie believes support for women's football, particularly through five-a-side, will also help. "It's a great opportunity. This is 5-a-side for the community – it's fun and casual and can still be competitive," she says.

Already planned is a joint team from Upton Sparks and Upton Park Ladies to play a football v homophobia fund-raising game against the Pride of Irons, a team from the official West Ham United LGBT supporters group. The game is planned for February, but is likely to be postponed due to Covid restrictions. ●

West Ham targets poverty in 2021 pledging £28 million for the community

West Ham United has pledged to spend around £28 million on community support programmes by the end of this year despite the impact of Covid-19 on the club's budget.

The club will invest in a range of projects and activities in Newham and the surrounding boroughs with a focus on improving health, combating poverty and support for Newham food bank.

The players and club management players have pledged to give over 1,000 hours of time on actions to combat poverty which is a priority given that Newham is among the most

deprived areas in the country.

Support includes a delivery van for Newham Food Bank and a £25,000 donation to FareShare UK towards free meals through the Child Food Poverty Taskforce, founded by Manchester United's school meal campaigner Marcus Rashford.

West Ham United Club captain Mark Noble, pictured right, said: "As players, we were more than happy to throw our support behind these vitally important campaigns."

"Now we need to focus on tackling poverty which is a big issue locally, so that



there is more equality out there for everyone, and I think the Club's increasing focus in that area will help us to do that."

John Ratomski from the supporters group Irons Supporting Foodbanks said the support provided over the Christmas period made a difference to the lives of around 8,000 Newham children.

"We are looking forward to the time when crowds return to the London Stadium," he said, "and we can continue the friendships made with the fans who have supported us since we began working with the local community to fight food poverty a year ago." ●