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Speak up! Call for Newham Youth Voices to be heard

Plans to make 2021 a special year for young people are taking shape with the launch of two major initiatives aimed at giving young people a voice and the support they need to overcome barriers caused by hardship and social inequality.

A £100,000 youth empowerment fund will support Newham residents younger than 25 (See Page 12) and in a year that the Council has defined as the Year of the Young Person, young people are being invited to get involved in Newham Youth Voices, a new communications network.

This initiative, supported by Newham Voices, will provide unprecedented opportunities for them to have their say on issues that will shape their future.

This initiative, supported and led by young people, aims to:

- Provide training in journalism and media skills;
- Promote collaboration in programme-making and creative media projects;
- Celebrate the achievements of young creators; and
- Create a platform to give the Borough's youngest residents a voice.

"This is an exciting opportunity, and recognises that in order for the Year of Young People to have any impact, it must deliver on promises that young voices will be heard and acted upon," said Shofa Miah, founder of Ashok's Vision, a Forest Gate-based charity that helps young people.



© Sylvie Belbouab

As part of the campaign Newham's Youth Empowerment Service are working with Newham Voices to create opportunities for young people to develop journalism skills and get involved in writing, documenting and discussing what matters to them.

Launching the new activities, Ellen Havard, Senior Youth Worker at Newham Council, said: "If you would like to get involved to shape this new campaign, sign up to join an online session in the holidays, to learn more and tell us what you'd like to see from Newham Youth Voices!"

To young people with opinions to share, who want to write about issues that matter and who are inspired by what they're reading and want to get involved, she says: "This is your chance!"

To secure a place or to express an interest contact Ellen.Havard@newham.gov.uk and join us at the launch meeting on April 9 at 3pm.

[See our youth special, pages 8-12 >](#)

Newham Voices needs your support. To make a donation please scan this code with the PayPal app.



Lockdown Art
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www.newhamvoices.co.uk

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“I'm delighted to see that Issue 2 has now come out, with excellent coverage of some important local issues. Overall I think *Newham Voices* is doing a great job of covering the bigger social and political issues that aren't discussed in other local papers. I'll look forward to further issues in 2021!”

- Mike Shallcross

Newham Labour in crisis as parties head for crucial London elections

With crucial elections taking place in May, the Labour Party in Newham is in turmoil following a decision by the party head office to suspend the constituency parties in West Ham and East Ham.

Amy Fode, Director of the London Labour Party, wrote to local Labour leaders on March 12 announcing the suspension of both constituency parties “due to wide ranging allegations regarding the conduct of members and membership recruitment practices as well as electoral fraud.”

The Metropolitan Police have already investigated one claim of “electoral malpractice” but decided not to take further action.

The move by Labour means no party meetings or business can take place and, while the party refused to divulge the nature of the investigation, it is understood to be “serious.” Nevertheless, there will still be campaigning ahead of the May elections.

Local political opponents, including the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats, were quick to point an accusing finger at the way Labour dominates Newham Council where it controls all 60 seats. Both groups issued statements saying that the root of the problems are the “one-party state” nature of the political landscape in Newham.



Stephen Timms

The party is right to take these complaints seriously and investigate them thoroughly, to avoid compromising the integrity of Party decision-making, and to undertake a full audit of party membership.

In a message to members, West Ham Constituency Labour Party secretary John Saunders expressed frustration at the failure to reveal the detail of the allegations. He told members: “I wish you all to know that I was not consulted about this, as CLP Secretary. I have done my best to avoid this situation and to persuade the CLP to abide by Labour Party Rules, Standing Orders and Guidance.”

He urged members to continue canvassing in support of Labour candidates for the London Mayor and London Assembly candidates election campaigns.

There is a genuine fear that if the inquiry is not dealt with quickly, it could disrupt Labour’s local preparations for council elections due in 2022.

If the issues are not resolved in time to allow the local parties to choose candidates for the new Council – which has been enlarged following the recent boundary review – candidates for election next year may be imposed by the Labour Party centrally.

Although the exact details of the allegations under investigation have not yet been disclosed – even to the local party leaders – one incident thought to be at the heart of the

inquiry is the massive surge in membership which took place last year.

In West Ham alone party membership increased by between 400 and 500 from May to July 2020. Similar surges in membership have taken place in East Ham.

This astonishing rise surprised many members in constituencies where monthly membership changes tend to be counted in tens rather than hundreds.

At the same time the suspension has cast a shadow over the party’s selection of its candidate for the election of a councillor for the vacant seat in East Ham Central ward.

A women-only shortlist has been already agreed, but now it is likely that the final choice will be taken out of the hands of the local party membership and a candidate will be imposed by Labour head office.

Speaking to *Newham Voices* East Ham MP Stephen Timms said that he hopes the investigation can be dealt with in good time, but in a statement he underlined the seriousness of the situation.

“The party is right to take these complaints seriously and investigate them thoroughly, to avoid compromising the integrity of Party decision-making, and to undertake a full audit of party membership,” he said.

May 6th: A day to shape Newham’s future

JOHN WHITWORTH

May 6 is the date, not only for the election of the London Mayor and Greater London Assembly Member, but also for the important Newham Governance Referendum.

Twenty 20 years ago the Borough voted to have one of the country’s first directly-elected mayors (DEM) in a referendum which was perhaps not widely nor fully understood. Now the decision is to be reviewed.

Newham was one of only 11 authorities which voted to adopt the mayor model and there are currently just 15, with many more referendums proposing a mayor being lost than won. Since 2002, the voters of Stoke-on-Trent, Hartlepool and Torbay have opted to abandon the mayor model they had previously adopted, two choosing to have a leader and cabinet

model of governance and one for the committee model.

Sir Robin Wales, elected Mayor of Newham in 2002, was defeated by Rokhsana Fiaz in the selection for the Labour Party’s mayoral candidate in 2018. Of those who believed this model would work better with Cllr Fiaz in the post, many also felt that the DEM model was in any case flawed. She said that this model had not worked well for Newham and pledged, if elected, to hold a referendum on its future by May 2021.

How the full powers of the Mayor are used depends greatly on the incumbent’s character but, according to the Local Government Act 2000, the Mayor – elected separately from the councillors and therefore of higher status – appoints and dismisses Cabinet members. Stemming from this authority, the Mayor is able to ensure the Cabinet’s assent



and exercise considerable influence over the councillors belonging to the dominant party.

In contrast, under the committee model the council gives decision-making powers to committees corresponding to council directorates, covering, for example, issues such as health, housing and the local economy. The full council elects the chairs of these committees as well

as the Council Leader, and has direct responsibility for overall policy and the budget.

The campaign group, Newham Voting for Change, believes that the committee system is more democratic, equal and inclusive than the DEM system because all councillors participate in making policy. Working in committees encourages co-operation rather than division, talent is nurtured and expertise developed more productively, and all councillors are more accessible and accountable for the council’s actions.

Residents will hopefully participate in the referendum in large numbers to play a role in shaping Newham’s future.

John Whitworth is Chair of the council’s Regeneration Housing and Environment Scrutiny Commission

More on the menu for park regulars

Regular visitors to West Ham Park will know that summer can't be far off when the café, Snack Shack, opens on April 16.

And it's going to be a busy season in the park for Angela Caroo and Marilyn Matthews, the two local women who have been running the much-loved outdoor venue for the last four years.

As well as the old favourites, there will be a lot more on the menu this summer, including afternoon tea in the park with a vegan and non vegan menu, mother and toddler breakfasts and special occasion events, initially of up to six people under Covid restrictions. Pre-Covid, the café attracted much bigger groups, including 40 wedding guests.

People who use the park regularly know Snack Shack is every bit a community hub, which makes it a labour of love for Angela and Marilyn who came up with the idea of running the café while making sandwiches together at a charity run.

"We both said how much we would love to have our own café," said Angela, "and then we saw that the

City of London were advertising this concession."

Both women have other careers, but they look forward to summer in the park where they feel at the heart of the community.

"People talk to us," said Marilyn. "And that's great, it's good to feel that we can bring people together in such lovely surroundings."

Snack Shack will be open Thursdays to Sundays, from 11am-6pm. For information about booking afternoon tea and other events, call 07946 369885.



Regulars give Snack Shack the thumbs up.

Eight year old Brooke hopes her book will help others express their grief

JULIA OMARI

When Brooke Turpin from Canning Town learnt of her grandad's terminal illness she was encouraged to turn to her love of reading and writing as a way to stay connected with her emotions and to have an outlet for her grief. Eliana Gouveia, Brooke's mum, said: "She has always loved reading and often writes for fun and as an alternative to devices."

Brooke has been able to use her writing talents alongside her experience of illness and bereavement to publish her first book, titled *Grandad Wasn't Well* as a way to help herself and other children who are also facing these issues. Publishing her book has helped Brooke deal with the passing of her grandad and helped remove the fear she had of speaking about it. At this time when more children are facing bereavement, Brooke's book has given a voice, where children often



remain silent.

Brooke always told Eliana she would become an author, but Eliana didn't dream it would be at eight years old!

Brooke is thrilled to publish her first book. She said: "I hope my book has encouraged many children and even adults to write about their feelings."

www.brooketurpin.com

Before I go... Have faith in Forest Gate



REVEREND BRUCE STOKES

2005 was a big year. It was the year that London secured the 2012 Olympics, and it was also the year that I and my family came to work in Forest Gate. I think there was only one tower block in Stratford back then, and the Council would subsequently use it for tours so that people could view the Westfield and Olympic Park sites being constructed. How the landscape has changed since then!

I've been a Baptist pastor for almost 40 years, and before coming to Newham we were situated in Southwark for nearly 18 of those. Back then the Inner City was where poorer people lived, but then a strange inversion started to happen, and gentrification became the new word on everyone's lips. Property prices in previously down-at-heel areas began to soar, and houses that cost my Caribbean church members £6,000 back in the 1960s are now worth £700,000!

As I retire from full-time ministry and leave Newham, social attitude surveys are telling me that people no longer buy into organised religion. Access to information is so much easier now, and people don't like to be told what to believe. Newham bucks the national trend, of course, not least because we're a multi-faith borough, but social attitude surveys are not to be dismissed lightly. And if they're right, does the Christian Church have

anything to offer future generations?

So here are two very positive reflections from me:

1 Crossing boundaries

Outside of school and work, we all have a tendency to socialise with our own kind, but churches often deliver on diversity. I have had members from all over the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, the Philippines, and these days a constant trickle of people seeking sanctuary. I have learned so much about the world and its history, about food and customs, and I have great friends whom I might never have met were it not for the church community.

2 Serving the community

Before lockdown came, we had a vibrant toddler group, elders' lunch club, football academy and a food bank. Most activities remain closed, save for the food bank which currently helps 80-90 individuals and families every week. Our motto has always been following Christ, serving people, but in the last year I have been humbled by the hordes of people who have generously donated to our food bank. I shall miss all you lovely people.

I retire at the end of April. I'm told the word is spelt re-tyre, because I'm about to put on new tyres and start the next adventure. I look forward to it! ●

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Stratford school on Royal schedule facing food bank crisis

Newham schools are among the key providers of support for families in need during the pandemic, but some are running short of basic foodstuffs for their food-banks.

School 21 in Stratford, for example, set up the School 21 Food Store during the first lockdown, giving students and their families access to essential food and supplies free of charge.

The school was in the headlines when Prince William and the Duchess of Cambridge paid a surprise visit on March 11 to show their support for teachers and students after Covid-19 lockdown measures were eased allowing schools to reopen.

The Royal couple talked with teachers about their work in coping with children's mental health and wellbeing within the school community.

The stress and difficulties facing students and parents is also high-

lighted by the increasing use of the school's Food Store which was set up a year ago.

"We have been running it ever since, with demand increasing daily," said Cassie Cramer, in an appeal letter to supporters in March. She says the School 21 Food Store is an inclusive initiative, open to anyone in the school community where families can come without having to 'prove' their need and without judgement.

"Unfortunately we are now running very low on food and some families are having to go without," she wrote. There is now an appeal to the wider School 21 community to donate to the Food Store.

People who wish to donate can do so online by going to <https://lnkd.in/dviviGNY>

To donate quote **S21FOODBANK** when it asks for a reference or invoice number and where it asks for the names of your children, enter N/A.



The stress and difficulties facing students and parents is also highlighted by the increasing use of the School's Food Store.

Newham's refugees hit hardest by the pandemic

AIDAN WHITE

Among the hardest hit victims of the Covid health crisis are around 600 refugees from all over the world living in Newham and awaiting the results of their asylum claims.

Because of the pandemic many of them have been isolated in hostels and small hotels, and they are all, to a lesser or greater extent, suffering from depression or post-traumatic stress disorder says Simon Shaw, a teacher in West Ham who is also a campaigner for refugee rights.

"This morning I met a man from Iran who can't get the trauma of crossing the channel out of his head and cannot sleep," he said. "His 18 month old daughter has a tantrum when she sees water, his wife is suicidal. And yesterday I met a woman from Pakistan who has two young children and is fleeing from domestic abuse and when I said she was brave, she said: when a lion chases you, you have to run."

Another story concerns a young man from Sierra Leone who lives in a house with four other refugees. His final appeal to stay in the UK is this month; he lost his whole family in a mudslide. He is recovering from a stroke, he has lost toes, and he has very difficult days.

According to the Refugee Council refugees and asylum seekers are five times more likely to receive mental health support than other people in the UK and more than 60 percent of them experience severe mental distress.

They receive paltry official support – receiving just £5 a day from the government to cover the basic necessities – and they are banned from working. According to the Refugee Council there were almost 30,000 asylum applications in the UK last year, down by 18 percent on the previous year, mainly due to the impact of Covid-19.

In camps on the outskirts of major cities, or in safe houses, or on the pavements of capital cities across Europe up to a million people are seeking asylum, many of them suffering from depression, PTSD, anxiety, self-harming, insomnia and panic attacks and all of them trapped in fear and uncertainty.

The charity group Care4Calais in east London has provided clothes, hygiene products and toys to around 120 refugees staying in hotels in Newham. Their nationalities were representative of the trouble spots in the world today: Honduras, El Salvador, Sudan, Palestine, Afghanistan, Syria and Gambia.

For more information on Care4Calais, visit www.care4calais.org/

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VIEW FROM MY WARD

Canning Town North Councillor Ann Easter

I was absolutely delighted when I was chosen to represent Canning Town North ward in 2014 as I was already very familiar with parts of it.

My sister and I travelled by bus from East Ham to Poplar and onto the Isle of Dogs to go to George Green's School and it was our great treat, on a Friday afternoon, to stop off at Canning Town and have a little trawl around 'Raffy' – Rathbone Street market – we loved it.

Then, one day, a Franciscan Friar came to talk to us at school; we got on the same bus home, he got off at the Abbey Arms and said: 'We have a great youth club at St Philip's Church on a Sunday night – why don't you come?' And of course, I did... and, a few years later, was ordained!!

How strange that, in 1987, I gave the blessing at the Rathbone Street *Songs of Praise* on BBC1 television – the Bishop received a number of complaints, of course (because I'm not a man), but we had a wonderful day.

So, Canning Town North for me is usually a happy place to be with some truly lovely people.

There's a real mix with folk who've lived there for generations and others who've just arrived, whether seeking a new life in a new country, or finding our housing and our excellent travel connections exactly what they needed for the next phase of their life.

There's lots of new building in Canning Town which can be dirty and irritating but at least some of the newcomers come and join our community events, like the parties at Cody Dock – what a gem that is – do go and visit when we are able. Codydock.org.uk

Inevitably, there are bad bits. People in Canning Town North sometimes feel left behind and forgotten in some of the more exciting and futuristic developments in Newham; Rathbone Street is still not bustling and the level of air pollution is shamefully high – but we work together to put those things right.

We know that the best things in life aren't things, the best things in life are people – and the people in Canning Town are the best!

Students to partner with Oxford on history project

NOAH ENAHORO

Students from Newham Sixth Form College (NewVic) have been chosen to work with Oxford University and the Marx Memorial Library on a new research project.

The Charlie Hutchinson Project, named after the only Black British volunteer in the Spanish Civil War, will not only explore his life and contributions but also evaluate wider themes regarding Black History and its broader significance for modern Britain.

"His life is a microcosm of the wider issues in 20th century British history; the story of Black British experiences, connections between Britain and the wider world, the fight against fascism and dictatorship, and the significant role played by the working classes in shaping the modern world", said Carina Ancell, a History lecturer at NewVic College and co-founder of the Charlie Hutchinson Project.

All sessions on the project will be led by Oxford University lecturers and PhD students discussing Charlie Hutchinson while linking his story to the development of the relationship between Britain and Africa.

The project is in its second year and NewVic is working jointly with Oxford University on the programme with access to historical archival records thanks to their partnership with the Marx Memorial Library in Farringdon.



Charlie Hutchinson, the only Black British volunteer in the Spanish Civil War

Dr Hugh Munro, a tutor at Oxford University's Wadham College, also involved in the project, said: "From Oxford's point of view, we're looking for students who are passionate about their subject, have explored it beyond the school curriculum and are showing the skills they'd need at university.

"The project is a great chance for us to work with school pupils we have relationships with and show what the university is like by meeting people who work here and current students. There are common misunderstandings about universities like Oxford, so the project gives us a great chance to 'show' what the university is really like rather than just 'telling' them."

The project comes at a crucial time amid calls that the education system in the UK needs to highlight the stories and histories of people in Britain from the Caribbean and African diaspora.

A 2020 report by Dr Jason Arday of Durham University, found that the national curriculum in England "systematically omits the contribution of Black British history in favour of a dominant white, Eurocentric curriculum" failing to reflect the UK's multi-ethnic society.

"I think we have reached a particular point in time and history", said Alan Kunna, a History lecturer at NewVic College and co-founder of the Charlie Hutchinson Project. "We know that there has been a black presence in Britain for hundreds of years. Rather than allow the argument that its presence is a problem we need to seriously study how it came to be, the opposition it faced, and the way it organised to defeat this opposition.

"Ultimately, we need to study its history and show that people are not here as visitors and strangers but are part of the fabric of Britain's history."

The project will be run by the NewVic African Studies Centre, which opened in October 2020 during Black History Month. Its goal is to broaden the scope of Black history that students are exposed to and do away with a tradition of learning about this diverse continent through the lens of European colonialism. ●

Food bank: shock at thefts from collection boxes as demand increases

ALY DUNCAN

Donations to a Forest Gate food bank have been taken from collection boxes outside people's homes – adding to the pressure on the service caused by Covid-19.

Food and household supplies have gone missing from a box in Plaistow and another in Forest Gate, with items taken including nappies, lentils, tinned food and rice.

The collection in Plaistow was organised by Holly Race, who co-ordinated donations from neighbours via a box outside her front door. She said: "When I found out the food was gone, I was shocked and sad that the state of poverty in Newham is such that people need to steal food or take any opportunity they can get to feed themselves."

Rev. Bruce Stokes organises the food bank at Woodgrange Baptist Church on Romford Road, where he is minister. He said it was a shame that people were taking food intended for those in dire need.

Many more people are using food banks since the Covid-19 health crisis began last year, according to Rev. Stokes. "The pandemic came and the numbers shot up," he said, adding that the number of people at Woodgrange every week had risen from 20 to around 80 in less than a year.

"The increased numbers include those who have lost their jobs, homeless people and refugees who have been housed in nearby hotels, and overseas students struggling to make ends meet," Rev Stokes added.

His food bank struggles to maintain a balanced stock. One week they

received 1,800 tins of chicken curry from the FareShare scheme (much of which they passed on to other food banks), but many things like flour, lentils, cooking oil and washing-up liquid are routinely in short supply. Financial donations are particularly welcome as such shortages necessitate regular visits to the cash&carry stores.

He added that food banks make a real difference to people who have fallen on hard times. "It keeps people going. It may not be solving all their problems, but it's keeping them afloat," he said.

People who want to support Woodgrange Baptist Church food bank can donate food, toiletries or household items by email to minister@woodgrangebaptist.org.uk or they can make a Just Giving donation via woodgrangebaptist.org.uk/giving/

All change as Stratford gets a youth zone and arts centre reaches out to local talent

CATARINA JOELE

A new youth zone will open in Stratford later this year replacing the Stratford Circus Arts Centre next to the Theatre Royal.

In partnership with local voluntary organisations, Newham Council has already launched four dedicated youth hubs – East Ham, North Woolwich, Silvertown and Plaistow – and Stratford is next on the list.

Alongside an increased programme for young people with special educational needs and disabilities across the whole Borough, Stratford Youth Zone will offer support with school work, career advice and health and wellbeing.

To allow young people to develop their creative skills, it will also offer activities in art, music, dancing and drama and will provide a space for

emerging young artists, from 18 to 30.

Applications will open in the summer. Follow on Instagram @stratfordyouthzone1bn.

Former occupants of the building for the past nine years, Stratford Circus Arts Centre, is reinventing itself.

Lucy Atkinson, CEO, said: “We are not looking for a new home. I love theatres but there are people in the Borough who never visited Stratford Circus. This new phase is an opportunity to reach out to these people.”

The centre is making an artist call out for a project sponsored by Arts Council England, part of a £5 million fund announced by the government in December to tackle loneliness.

This project might result in a show or an activity where older people learn a new skill. A space might be



It's no longer about people coming to our building. Now we are in a matchmaking process. Are there any artists that we don't know about and would like to meet us?

rented if needed.

Atkinson said: “It's too early to reveal details, but we are planning outdoors activities for the summer. We will platform the work of local artists and connect with our community.”

The Centre is aiming to make its return official later this spring and will release a statement to announce future plans. “We are rebuilding our organisation and refining what our mission is”, said Atkinson.

In the meantime, they want to hear from local artists and creatives about their plans, and how they can work with local communities.

Atkinson said: “It's no longer about people coming to our building. Now we are in a matchmaking process. Are there any artists that we don't know about and would like to meet us? Contact: email@stratford-circus.com”

Red faces over Plaistow Hub promotion



ALY DUNCAN

A £62m Plaistow regeneration project has come under fire on social media over a computer generated image (CGI) that shows only white faces inside a residential area.

The Plaistow Hub project will include 182 flats, a library, supermarket, gym and café at two sites in London Road and Valetta Grove and has been feted as providing “fantastic new community facilities and

much needed housing.”

But Instagram comments under images of the residential foyer area pointed out there was “not a single person of colour in sight”, adding that “whoever drew this knew what they were doing.” Another asked “Where's the black people?” Other comments below the Newham Street Blogs post raised concerns about “gentrification” in the area.

Newham is one of the most diverse areas in the UK according to data from the 2011 census, with around

17percent of the population describing themselves as “White British.”

In the CGI image of the foyer area, all eight visible faces that appear to represent guests or visitors are white. The receptionist appears to

Pitman Tozer Architects apologise unreservedly for our unconscious oversight in not making the interior image more reflective of Plaistow's diverse communities.

diverse communities.

“The image was not made under any instructions from the client or to project a particular narrative. We have subsequently updated the image and will ensure the old version is deleted from our website and all social media.”

Pitman Tozer added that since producing the image in 2016, it had reviewed its CGI production processes to “ensure that new images are culturally sensitive and truly reflective of local diversity.”

Stratford-based Vistry Partnerships was last year appointed by Populo Living, Newham Council's wholly owned housing company, to deliver Plaistow Hub.

Populo chief executive Deborah Heenan said at the time: “We are delighted to be starting work on this exciting new project which will benefit the whole of Plaistow. The Plaistow Hub project will provide fantastic new community facilities and much needed housing.”

Populo said Plaistow Hub would help to fund the construction of 77 affordable homes on Grange Road E13, 15 affordable homes on Baxter Road E16, 12 affordable homes on Chargeable Lane E13 and eight Shared Ownership intermediate affordable homes on Manor Road E15.

Work on Plaistow Hub is expected to be completed in 2023.

be of Asian origin. Separate pictures that depict scenes outside the flats, including the entrance to Plaistow station, include non-white faces.

Pitman Tozer Architects were behind the CGI images. After they were contacted by *Newham Voices*, the firm apologised and removed the picture of the foyer from their website.

A spokesperson said: “Pitman Tozer Architects apologise unreservedly for our unconscious oversight in not making the interior image more reflective of Plaistow's



Say YES to Young People



Newham's Youth Empowerment team with the Mayor, Rokhsana Fiaz

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FUND ANNOUNCEMENT

ANNETTE QUINN, YEAR OF THE YOUNG PERSON, NEWHAM COUNCIL

Newham Council's Youth Empowerment Services (YES) is backing young people by creating real opportunities for them to learn and work and achieve their ambitions, within their community.

In the past two years, Newham Council has invested in its young people by doubling its youth zones and increasing the quantity of youth workers. Behind these plans has been

in-depth research with young people, a clear strategy and a committed team.

Jas Hothi, Services Manager, Youth Empowerment, Newham Council and local resident, said: "Ambition for all of Newham's young people is at the heart of everything we do, and I want everyone in Newham to know that those that have shaped and work in youth services are aiming high: we want Newham to have the best youth

empowering services in the country."

Heading up Youth Empowerment Services including Newham's eight Youth Zones is Lynne Crank, who grew up in East London and has been working in the borough, with and for young people, for more than 30 years.

In fact, Lynne opened her first youth club in 1990, in a shipping container in Canning Town. Lynne said: "I want to provide the opportunities in Newham that I didn't have when I was young. For instance I come from

a family working in the docks and following the demise of that industry, the redevelopment of Canary Wharf, in eyeshot of where I was raised, seemed an inaccessible place to me. This is the narrative and culture we are advocating to change for Newham's young people. Newham's Youth Empowerment Services are all about ensuring every young person knows that they not only have access to work anywhere, but they can aim to become the CEO."

In light of the year, this commitment to young people has not stopped or been deterred by Covid. In the first lockdown, Newham's youth workers led the way to achieving key worker status in order to continue their face to face frontline support for young people.

Now, as lockdown looks to lift, YES are ready to act in line with Newham's Covid Recovery & Reorientation Strategy and the Year of the Young Person. In order to build HOPE in young people, March brings the launch of the Youth Empowerment Fund to provide support to and create opportunities for young people living in and growing up in low-income households.

Lynne said: "This fund is our commitment to supporting every resident under 25 participate in positive activities which supports their long-term prosperity. It's unique because young people apply on their own behalf, and we are here to help them think broadly about and shape their future, to raise their hopes, aspirations and remove barriers."



As Newham Council metaphorically cuts the red ribbon to the Youth Empowerment Fund, the message to young people is that their ambitions are

attainable. The Youth Empowerment Fund will be available from Friday 26 March, 2021. For more information email: YOYP@newham.gov.uk

Go for it! Don't let a hard start hold back your dreams of success

MIR TASIN

Interacting with the adult corporate world to learn about what is beyond the confines of Newham can be a difficult endeavour for our young people.

The narrative perpetuated among the amazingly diverse young people of this borough is one of despair, of how disadvantaged they are to be born here rather than how they can use a sometimes difficult start in life as a motivational advantage to propel them to success.

The road ahead appears to be littered with obstacles, trials and tribulations. Many teenagers may not even consider working as a lawyer, a banker or joining leading corporations. But how can they aspire to something without knowing what is out there?

The problem is that exposure to the world of business for young people in Newham is minimal. There is a failure to teach that accessing the mystical world of Canary Wharf and the City of London is possible for anyone whatever their financial and social background.

Much is left to the initiative of individuals to create a network and to get work experiences and internships. As a result, only those with high aspirations and the ability to effectively communicate succeed in building up meaningful relationships with these firms.

YOUTH VOICES
OF NEWHAM



Mir Tasin is a student at Brampton Manor Academy

This should not be the case.

The council and schools should play an active role in expanding the horizons of young people through networking programmes and workshops to teach and guide them in reaching out to people in the corporate world.

I came to the UK in 2009 at the age of seven, speaking no English and with no knowledge of the com-

mercial world. However, at Rokeby School, I was able to attend events where I was exposed to large corporations, such as HSBC, and I started to build up a network of contacts.

I first became exposed to the law when we had to fight the Home Office's decision to deny our stay in the UK in court. To find out more about the field, I had to reach out to law firms, which was an incredibly daunting process.

However, after reaching out numerous times, I realised how willing to help they are at the top if we can show our potential and willingness to work hard.

Through an email, I was able to meet with Richard Foley, the global senior partner at Pinsent Masons, a leading legal services firm. He sat down with me and taught me how to be fearless in my pursuit of the law and provided me with an extraordinary work experience opportunity.

From there I have built up a network with firms such as Clifford Chance where Orin Begum, an associate from a similar background to mine taught me how to tell my story in a way which proves advantageous in my application processes and Stephenson Harwood where I have now been offered a scholarship worth £45,000 to cover my cost of university as well as mentorship and work experiences after completing my A-levels at Brampton Manor Academy.

To young people reading this, please do not believe that your background limits your ability to succeed, instead, let it be an inspiration.

To young people reading this, please do not believe that your background limits your ability to succeed, instead, let it be an inspiration.

Reach out without fearing rejection. The risk of disappointment is far inferior compared to what we have to gain by reaching out. And never underestimate the importance of a mentor. You are not oppressed, and you will not become a victim of your circumstances.

Help is available for free through organisations such as Uptree, Social Mobility Foundation, Arrival Education, Access Aspirations, The Diana Award, Migrant Leaders and IntoUniversity.

Snatch every opportunity that you are given to interact with people because you never know which one has the potential to change your life forever. ●

Plaistow's budding ten-year-old entrepreneur

REBEKAH SAMUEL

Amazing ten-year-old, Zara Nayeem, is a budding entrepreneur of the Plaistow Youth Market. Home-educated Zara heard about a 'Fiver challenge' on an online home education group. Children were being given £5 to invest, then tasked to make as much money as they could. Zara, who had already been making hammer bead jewellery was excited to take the challenge and wanted to make jewellery to sell.

Zara attended horse riding lessons at a stable and really wanted her own horse. Her parents promised her a horse one day, but Zara had other plans. After asking her mother if she could sell her beads to earn money to buy her own horse much sooner, she approached the stables to get consent to sell her products there.

Mum Nina approached Plaistow

Youth Market after seeing a Facebook post and thought it would be a great place for Zara to sell her wares too. On acceptance, young Zara went into full production mode, working over a few days to prepare her goods for sale at the Plaistow market. Mum explained: "My husband and I were so worried about her disappointment

"It is a great feeling to earn your own money. Think about your hobby and turn it into your business."

in case she didn't sell anything, we had a backup plan to pay someone to buy her stuff." But there was no need. Zara sold her fridge magnets, jewellery and other trinkets. Within 2-3 hours she had completely sold out.

Zara continued to work hard creating her own products for each market and developing her own business

plan. Explaining how she managed her money, she said: "I was putting it into groups, one group was 50percent of the sales towards buying a horse, 25percent was for investment so I could buy new beads and make more, 12.5percent went to charity, I would put this in the charity boxes in shops and the other 12.5percent was

for other things. I wanted to buy like books or anything for myself."

Zara actively searched and found another market to sell her products from. Although she raised enough money to buy an older horse, she said: "I wouldn't want to lose it, so want to save up for a younger one."

Currently unable to run her market



stalls due to Covid, Zara is considering creating easter egg and easter bunnies designs to sell online from her Facebook page ZarasBeadsCreations. She has inspired other friends and worked with her best friend to make and sell stuff together. Speaking to young people like herself Zara said: "It is a great feeling to earn your own money. Think about your hobby and turn it into your business." ●

Less prejudice in policing is key to building trust

Karolina Króliczek talks to Unmesh Desai, London Assembly member for City and East London and chair of the Police and Crime Committee, about what can be done to reduce crime and end police discrimination against young Black and Asian boys.



© Daniel Samray

Many young people feel they are targeted by the police, particularly in the use of stop and search. What more do the police need to do to build trust with young people?

Sadly, in certain boroughs young people from BAME and Black backgrounds are disproportionately affected by violent crime, and the police will often state that this is the reason for a corresponding disproportionality in the number of young BAME, particularly Black, Londoners stopped and searched each month.

Stop and search is vital if used effectively with the trust of the communities it is being used in, and I welcome the introduction of body-worn video cameras that protect the interests of both police and those being stopped and searched. Recent statistics do show, however, that Black Londoners are less supportive of the Met than white Londoners and this is something the Met must improve on if tools like stop and search can continue to be used.

To build trust, the Mayor of London is implementing an action plan for the Met, which includes increasing the number of BAME officers to 40 percent of the overall workforce and investing in training for officers.

I think in addition to the Mayor's plan, the Met's leadership needs to

better acknowledge the work that must be done to gain the trust of London's black communities, and that this should be reflected in public statements.

In Newham, the number of young victims of knife crime has declined. What policies are working here and what more needs to be done to continue this trend?

Through continued investment from City Hall into the Metropolitan Police Service, and into the wider ecosystem of groups working to prevent violence, we have begun to see some positive indications of reductions in violence and the terrible harm it causes. In 2019, before crime rates dropped across the board due to the pandemic, there was notably a 15 percent reduction in the number of knife crimes with injury against under-25s.

City Hall has invested £70million into the 'Young Londoners Fund', to provide positive places and projects where London's young people can relax, learn and develop outside of school and avoid being drawn into criminal activity or violence.

Actions such as this, and investment in other programmes such as mentoring for disadvantaged students in Pupil Referral Units, are what are needed, alongside investment in the police.

Young people affected by or involved in violence in Newham come from a range of backgrounds. However, children and young people from certain backgrounds such as BAME are disproportionately affected. Why does this happen and how we can avoid stereotyping young BAME communities because of the actions of a tiny minority?

Research has shown evidence of a link between area-level poverty and violence in London. Three-quarters of the boroughs in London with the highest levels of violent offending are also in the top ten most deprived. Many of the poorest areas in London are also those areas with large BAME populations.

You are right to point out that it is a tiny minority of young BAME communities caught up in violence and nobody should be stereotyped based on their ethnicity. Prejudice and stereotyping must be called out whenever it occurs as well as institutional racism. Through my work on the police committee I have continued to scrutinise the Met's relationship with London's BAME and particularly Black communities, to put pressure on the Met to ensure that any prejudices that still exist among our police, and institutional racism, are rooted out.

It is a tiny minority of young BAME communities caught up in violence and nobody should be stereotyped based on their ethnicity.

Young people also feel they are not listened to by the adult world. How can that be changed in the Borough's Year of Young People?

It is sadly too often the case that young people do not feel they can make themselves heard. It's an endemic problem in politics, of course, because under a certain age you can't vote and too many politicians focus only on those who can vote for them.

I do feel it's getting easier to ensure we hear their voices – in the last few years, the council in particular has come a long way in ensuring that it does look to hear the opinions of young people on a wide range of issues, because all issues in society affect young people, either now or soon.

But I do think we can go further still and look at better ways to engage young people – using the power of not just schools and colleges, but also youth services and the internet to make sure we keep increasing the ways in which they can engage with services in the Borough and tell us what they know.

According to Trust for London, Newham has more than 37 percent of people living in poverty. This poses enormous social challenges. What needs to be done to improve public safety and security and reduce levels of crime in areas of social dislocation?

Poverty is a huge issue in Newham, one which has a serious impact on crime, and more must be done to ensure that people are not being left destitute as a result of the pandemic.

Ten years of austerity cuts have left Londoners worse off, and with councils such as Newham having fewer resources to deal with issues such as anti-social behaviour and substance abuse. This is alongside reduced budgets for providing mental health support and other services which contribute towards reducing the crime rates.

In addition to reducing the budgets for support services, the Government has also introduced cuts of £886 million pounds to the Met Police, meaning that they have had fewer resources to deal with non-urgent crimes, such as theft, anti-social behaviour and drug abuse. The Government are now re-investing in the police, but it will take a long time to repair the damage caused.

We recognise the damage that crime has on communities, and particularly on young people who are often wrongly held responsible for it.

Only by properly funding a public health approach and tackling the root causes of crime – as well as enforcement action where necessary – will we begin to see sustained drops in the levels of crime in London, and less blame being apportioned to young people as a result.



Unmesh Desai

Follow Unmesh on Twitter @unmeshdesai

The truth about violent crime: it's not a race issue

YOUTH VOICES OF NEWHAM

NOAH ENAHORO

In 1997, while condemning violence against women and children, Nelson Mandela said: "Our children are our greatest treasure. They are our future." The same should be said about young people in Newham.

I'm a 19 year old Newham resident. Nelson Mandela's words resonate with me. Newham has one of the highest populations of young people in the country, and it has a very diverse population. We're at the epicentre of the national debate about young people.

'Knife crime', 'violence' and 'gang culture' are words that trigger stereotypical thoughts about hooded young black and Asian men. The nation believes violent crime in inner cities is a 'black problem'. To believe this is to buy into a lie and disregard context.

The link between poverty and violence is proven beyond doubt. Poverty is a breeding ground for violent crime and gang culture. Wherever you find lack of resources, amenities and educational facilities, you find crime and violent crime. We also know the systemic biases that exist have the result of stranding more black and Asian young people in reduced economic circumstances than their white counterparts. The consequences of this can be counted in lives lost to violence.

In London, where many black people live in comparative poverty, we see that although young black people are only 17 percent of the youth population, they are over-represented as both victims and perpetrators of knife crime.

However, a 2020 Institute of Race Relations report found that overall young white boys and men are more likely to be both the victims and perpetrators of serious youth violence in London.

What about away from London? Tragically, knife crime is a national issue, affecting areas with virtually no black population. Here, the perpetrators and victims are almost exclusively white, but the national media do not report it as a 'white issue'.

In reality, knife crime is a poverty issue and an education issue. Poorer young people are attracted to gang



© Celiafoto

A 2020 Institute of Race Relations report found that overall young white boys and men are more likely to be both the victims and perpetrators of serious youth violence in London.

culture and knife culture. Poorer young people of all skin tones. This means that we can only tackle knife crime and gang violence by tackling poverty, educational opportunity and systemic racism.

The callous murder of George Floyd on May 25 2020 by a US police officer forced Britain to confront a racist past and present. 'Stop and Search' was placed firmly in the spotlight.

According to Metropolitan Police figures, Newham was the second most searched borough in London in 2019. Some 6,044 of people searched were described by police as Black; 5,386 White; 5,304 Asian; and 280 as 'Other'. Despite this disproportionate search of young black men, they were less likely than young white men to be found carrying anything incriminating. Arrest rates were lower for black people = 21 percent for white people compared to just 16 percent for black

people. Despite this trend, a far higher percentage of black people are stopped and searched.

The problem is not Stop and Search, it's with how the practice is applied. Mistrust of police is growing as a result.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan recently announced plans to increase the number of ethnic minority police officers to 40 percent. This will help only as long as it's not an exercise in putting 'faces in spaces.' It must go hand in hand with targeted policies to educate about and eradicate bias and racism.

Newham is a wonderful, vibrant and welcoming borough, with thousands of young people who have untapped potential and talent. Local and national policy must be amended to combat the economic factors that lead to the senseless and tragic crimes we hear about on such a depressingly regular basis. ●

FactFile

Facts on the young people of Newham

- The population of Newham last year was around 364,000. It is London's third most populous borough. (*Greater London Authority*)
- Almost a quarter of Newham's population – 24 percent – is between the age of 0 and 17 and the median age of the population is just 32. (*London Borough of Newham*)
- More than half of children (52 percent) in Newham are judged to be in households in poverty, compared to 38 percent in the typical London borough. Around 22 percent of all children in the Borough live in low-income families. (*Trust for London*)
- Newham is among the 10 percent of Britain's most deprived and poorest Boroughs (2019). (*Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion*)
- More than three-quarters of all children in Newham achieve a good level of development in their early years. Around 76percent of children in primary schools achieved the expected standard in all of reading, writing and mathematics in 2019. The national result is 65 per cent and Newham continues to perform well above national average. Newham is ranked fifth nationally on this measure. (*London Borough of Newham*)
- Newham school pupils performed above the national average for success in GCSE examinations in 2019. Newham was ahead of the attainment benchmark national average of 44.7 for all schools and 46.7 for state-funded schools only. (*London Borough of Newham*)
- Of the 92 schools and colleges rated by the education regulator Ofsted in recent years 86 of Newham's primary and secondary schools and colleges, have received performance ratings of outstanding or good. (*Gov.uk*)
- The crime rate in Newham has declined in recent years. There were 32,500 recorded crimes in the year up to January 2021, a rate of 92 per thousand persons. (*London Borough of Newham*)

Cash for dreams: making ends meet for the young

CATARINA JOELE

Young people aged under 25 who live in low-income households can now access a fund that will help them achieve their full potential.

Every young person who needs help to buy sports equipment, or clothing for an interview, digital devices or software to support their online learning, for example, can apply for a small grant from £100 to £2,500.

Newham's Youth Empowerment Fund aims to tackle inequalities among young people, encouraging them to pursue their dreams and aspirations in the year that Newham Council has defined as the Year of the Young Person.

Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney is the first person to fill the post of Children and Young People's Commissioner at Newham Council. She describes the post, announced in October 2019, as "a huge opportunity but a huge responsibility."

In an interview with three members



YOUTH VOICES OF NEWHAM

of the *Newham Voices* youth panel, she said: "I can't do this job from an adult's perspective. I've been listening to and hearing young people's voices and trying to understand what the world is like from their perspective."

One of the key tools to ensure that young people are heard is developing the roles of "trusted adults" within the community. These people, often

teachers, will help young people navigate through what they find difficult in their journey or obstacles they are struggling with.

The Commissioner admits that "all adults must listen." But how the Council will get adults to listen to young people is one of the main challenges of the Year of the Young Person.

"Those who are working on the frontline and directly with young people get it and are doing it," said Geeta, but how can that happen at a senior level? The Council is trying to answer that with a strategy called Next Gen Newham, which aims to get those in leadership and influential roles, transferable to all areas, to listen to young people and trusted adults to ensure that their needs and perspectives are taken on board in all decision making.

Mental health and wellbeing, especially during the pandemic, is a topic of great concern for the Council, mainly due to the stigma

that is attached to it. Solutions such as the online platform Kooth or the HeadStart services were already in place before Covid-19, but the Commissioner was challenged to promote preventative as well as crisis approaches.

Surely it is important to ensure that school and health care staff, for example, receive appropriate training? Geeta mentioned "a culture competent response", admitting that everybody has biases and only by acknowledging them can they be challenged and that's the only way to diminish the impact they can have in listening to and supporting young people.

This report is based on an online interview with Newham Children and Young People's Commissioner, Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney, by Newham resident Mufeeda Chowdhury, 22, recent graduate in Psychology, Daniel Harry, 18, and Mir Tasin, 18, both students at Brampton Manor Academy in East Ham.

Record studio offering a musical alternative to life on the street

REBEKAH SAMUEL

Stratford based music production company, J.O.A.T. Music creates opportunities for young men in Newham by using music as a vehicle to drive their energies away from a potential life of gangs and crime.

From their Studio at St. John's Church in Stratford they have fostered the talents of local names like Jae5, J Hus, and NSG; provided experience of producers like Morfius and Dwayne Patrick via peermusic group; enabled distribution opportunities via Fuga and their subsidiary company Junior Jack Distribution. Their efforts led to Randy Valentine getting signed by Swiss company Hemptire. Other accolades include working with Newham talents Monk Star, Plan B and names from beyond the borough which include Afrisound; Stormzy, MalvOnTheTrack, Notes, Skob Original, Confz, Loickessien, Wretch32 and Don Jazzy.

Kevin Ababio, founder of J.O.A.T. explained: "The concept started in



Kevin Ababio, founder of J.O.A.T.

2010 while I was living in Thornton Heath. Many young guys were getting in trouble with the law, and I worried about my young cousin Jae5, who lived in Newham. I did not want this for him. I created a studio hub for him to come and create music in

his free time. He was always there and had great production skills. After a couple of years, I pooled together my talent as a song writer alongside my cousin's production skills and talented friend Randy Valentine. We would be the 'Jack Of All Trades' in all aspects of music production, and so J.O.A.T. was born." In 2012 Kevin moved the business to Stratford.

"Newham has so much talent," Kevin added. "We packaged and branded the work of our artistes. As an incentive to some paying clients, we offered free studio time to those who demonstrated commitment, talent and drive, in return for staying off the street and away from gang life. Instead, they could express their experiences through their music. Newham teen, J Hus, accepted the no street life, free studio time offer. J Hus is huge now.

J.O.A.T. is a business that thrives on the dynamics of live engagement—engineers, producers and artists coming into the studio to use the space. Covid-19 meant they had

to adapt the way they worked, providing support via zoom and spacing out studio time with fewer attendees to comply with guidelines.

We offered free studio time to those who demonstrated commitment, talent and drive, in return for staying off the street.

J.O.A.T. remains committed to diverting youngsters away from the streets and continues to look for young producers and writers to come onboard. They are in working discussions with the Detached Youth Work Team at Newham Council, part of Youth Empowerment Services, to create music-based opportunities for young people and explore the music industry in general. ●

It's Brave to talk about mental health

NEANDRA ETIENNE

Donelle Grant keeps herself very busy. As well as being a community development worker for an advocacy charity, holistic coach and mother, Donelle is also the founder of the Brave Project, a suicide prevention and wellbeing service for BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) boys and young men.

Donelle set up the Brave Project in October 2020 because she wanted to give back to the Newham community that she grew up in. She especially wanted to target BAME boys and young men.

She said: "After extensive research I discovered that due to disparities and inequalities BAME boys and young men found openly talking about their mental health/wellbeing difficult and are at higher risk of suicide."

The Brave Project is very personal to Donelle because she is a mother to two young black boys. She understands the importance of normalising discussion about mental health and being open about dealing with your emotional wellbeing.

"It is very important for my sons to be able to express themselves freely, without any fear of judgement, and



Asharn aged 17

I was very disappointed when I discovered that there is a lack of culturally appropriate accessible services to enable this. The Brave Project creates and promotes culturally appropriate mental health awareness campaigns that influence change."

Donelle's mission for the Brave Project is to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues and empower BAME boys and young men to reach out and ask for help when they need it. She aims to ensure generations of BAME boys and young men are equipped with the necessary skills so that their voices are heard, and they don't go unnoticed.

"I wanted to change the narrative, reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues and empower BAME boys and young men to speak up and reach out for help when they need it."

Through their wellbeing workshops, the Brave Project community has been offering support to BAME boys and young men who have been struggling with their mental health during lockdown.

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SOMETHING'S BREWING



Phil Mellows, a global expert in the crafty pint, shares some bar talk

At their best, pubs are a theatre of humanity, a stage where people can feel a little freer to express themselves, away from the pressures of everyday life. Such a pub was the Kent Arms on Albert Road in North Woolwich, the setting for a new drama by publican, writer and drag queen Jonny Wooster.

Demolished in the mid-1970s, the Kent Arms was a famous venue in the early 1960s. In the days before certain sexual practices were decriminalised, it was a 'safe space' for gay merchant seamen from the nearby Royal Docks, who mingled with local transvestites, drag queens and anyone, really, who enjoyed a taste of liberation and excess.

That included the monarch's late sister Princess Margaret who, accord-

ing to one dock worker, ventured there to experience a 'bit of rough'.

"It was a wild pub, all noise and flashing lights," says Jonny. "It had a kind of annex full of sailors, dock workers, drag queens and gay mods, all dancing. It was a space outside the law.

"We have the notion today of a safe space, but this was also a dangerous space. These guys were tough and could use their fists to put a stop to any abuse. You get the impression it was an area that looked after its own business.

"It's a forgotten history where there seemed to be gays everywhere - and they weren't getting beaten up!"

Jonny is co-owner of drag venue The Glory in Haggerston. When it was forced to close last March he turned



Jonny Wooster | Photo by Charles Moriarty

to an idea for a play based on Hubert Selby's novel Last Exit to Brooklyn.

In the course of researching a possible location in docklands he met Stuart Feather, a member of the 1970s radical drag theatre group Bloopips and a regular at the Kent Arms.

"He gave me such an exciting description of what it was like that it overtook my research. I realised I'd

found an amazing place that's not mentioned in queer history."

With funding from the Royal Docks, and help from community engagement coordinator Emma Crace, Jonny has so far tracked down and interviewed 18 people who remember the Kent Arms. Based on them, he has filmed six character monologues that he is now working up into a play, titled Silvertown.

He hopes to bring it to stage before the end of the year, recreating the Kent Arms at a site in the area.

"The big storyline of the play is fictitious - four straight couples walk into a gay bar and all hell breaks loose," Jonny explains. "But all the details will be taken from memories. I want to bring to life an exciting environment with some great characters."

Places like the Kent Arms, and his own pub, The Glory, provide important spaces for LGBT+ people, he believes.

"I have my own memories of finding my identity in pubs. Without them, in lockdown, the community is isolated. But we'll bounce back." ●

People power goes digital at ELFT

MATTHEW PRESTON

The overwhelming mental health crisis brought on by Covid-19, lockdown and social isolation means East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT) has had to keep service users at the core of improving the care delivered to individuals suffering from mental health issues.

ELFT has been adapting its approach to mental health in Newham and other boroughs under its care, recognising and taking into account all aspects of a service user's life that affect mental health, including work, accommodation, family and overall physical health. Rather than waiting for an individual to reach a point of crisis, these social factors can be highlighted and tackled early to prevent a situation which could result in further distress and a longer recovery time.

This project is one of many initiated by the People Participation (PP) team at ELFT. Its goal is to empower service users to help shape the way their care is delivered. Through PP, service users are actively encouraged to take part in staff interview panels and numerous service improvement projects within the trust.

PP Lead for Newham Rose Muchoki is a champion of service user and carer involvement. She said: "Service users and carers are not just used as a tick box or to simply receive feedback, they make vital and important changes to our service." As the PP lead it is Rose's responsibility to identify and address the Borough's priorities and to represent service user and carer involvement in developing the services required to meet those needs.



"It may take some time for people to comfortably interact with each other ... but this is normal and to be expected."

As a response to the government restriction guidelines, Rose has moved all activity online. After an initially challenging adjustment period, being online has meant that a number of service users and carers can remain connected and continue to shape the service. PP also provides a number of online groups to combat loneliness, including poetry, art, cooking and even online exercise classes. Unfortunately, not everyone has online access for a host of reasons but ELFT are working hard to address this with projects such as the Telephone Befriending Service for individuals who cannot access services online.

Looking forward to the end of lockdown, Rose shared her concerns for Newham as we slowly reconnect with each other in a physical world. "It may take some time for people to comfortably interact with each other, there may still be some fear around Covid-19 but this is normal and to

be expected." An important aspect of People Participation is the way it normalises service users raising their fears and discussing them in a constructive way. ELFT and PP recognise that recovery takes time and keeping service users at the heart of

the conversation is the key to their success.

If you currently access ELFT services in Newham and would like to know more about People Participation, please speak to your clinician about a referral. ●

NHS

**Are you worrying excessively?
Unable to cope?**



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

It's your round – at long last!

PHIL MELLOWS

Newham's pub-goers are looking forward to a cautious reopening as beer gardens are allowed welcome customers from April 12.

Among those set to take the earliest opportunity to start pouring beer again are the Holly Tree in Forest Gate. Owner Remarkable Pubs installed new umbrellas and heaters in the pub's extensive outdoor space last year and promises a full service.

East Ham's Red Lion, by Central Park, part of the Dirty Liquor chain, will also open its garden from April 12, closing earlier than usual at



The Holly Tree Pub, Forest Gate. Photo from Facebook

10pm. People need to book a table, though, as there's limited space.

Two of the three J D Wetherspoon pubs in the Borough are reopening their outdoor areas, too. The Goldengrove in Stratford and the Hudson Bay in Forest Gate will have a reduced food menu and earlier closing.

Although it has a large beer garden, Plaistow's Black Lion is among those waiting until indoor opening is possible from Saturday, May 17.

The owners of two other notable al fresco spots, the Golden Fleece in Manor Park and the Sportsman in Stratford, Greene King and Stonegate

Pub Company, were unable to confirm their plans as *Newham Voices* went to press.

Meanwhile, the new owners of Upton Park's landmark Boleyn Tavern, which has been closed since January 2020, revealed that it's finally scheduled to reopen at the end of May.

Remarkable Pubs, which acquired the freehold in 2018, is completing restoration and refurbishment of the Grade II listed site in collaboration with English Heritage, and promises 30 beer lines on the bar and, for the first time in its history, an extensive food menu. ●

Newham artist weaves together history and culture for 'designs that travel'



Ellie is holding Shofa Miah's family khetha which uses geometric and floral motifs.

ELLIE BURKETT

Largely overlooked inscription underneath a stained glass window at All Saints Church, Forest Gate, is an unlikely springboard for a scheme involving Newham residents in an embroidery project during Newham Heritage Month in May – but “Designs That Travel” is aiming to do just that.

The stained glass window and inscription are a memorial to Victor Gordon Berry, 22, of East Ham, assistant engineer on the ill-fated SS Persia which sunk on its voyage to India in December 1915. As I started to research this event, I discovered that a number of crew members came from East London while many other sailors and stewards were from South Asia. Above deck, military officers, missionaries, and family members were returning to India. There were Indian nursemaids and members of the entourage, as well as treasures belonging to Maharaja Jagatjit Singh.

While the historical context is captivating, the germ of this project came from the material cultural items that travelled with passengers, crew or as cargo to and from South Asia.

Textiles passed down through families, designs which trigger personal or collective memories, are central to my work in paper and textiles. In this anniversary year of the independence of Bangladesh, the project will focus on the textile industry as influenced by South Asia, and on the rich textile traditions of the Bangladeshi community in particular.

Fellow textile enthusiast, Shofa Miah, and I have been examining hand embroidered textiles for the stories they contain, for the techniques and life styles they represent, many of which have all but disappeared. The quilting traditions of South Asia, often referred to as kantha or khetha use recycled cloth and simple running stitches to create vibrant embroidered patterns which traditionally gave new life to old saris and dhotis.

If this interests you there are various ways to be part of this exciting project:

Stitch your own story using recycled materials

- Sign up for a free resource pack and a practical digital workshop – all you will need to create a

small embroidery to be exhibited with others in Newham Libraries. (*suitable for all ages and levels of ability*)

Tell your story

- Speak about your family involvement in the textile industry in Newham
- Tell us about your hand embroidered textile treasures with a ‘story’

Become a co-researcher

- Research how material culture came from South Asia to Newham
- Discover more about the stained glass window in Forest Gate, a tragic story of an ocean liner en route to India, the lost treasures of Maharaja Jagatjit Singh and life below deck.

Discover the power of simple running stitches to capture personal and shared connections.

For further information contact me at ellie@burkett.me.uk or visit www.eleanorburkett.com

Find out more about Newham Heritage Month at the website www.newhamheritagemonth.org

This year's programme will be revealed on the site in April – sign up to the free newsletter to be the first to hear.

Newham Heritage Month is a community-led celebration of local heritage, featuring live performances, workshops and activities

from Newham residents, inspired by this year's theme Shops, Docks & Factories – Newham's Urban Heritage. Taking place online throughout May, all the activities are free and there's something for everyone. Newham Heritage Month is organised by Newham Council as part of Newham Unlocked and supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund and The Royal Docks Team.

[f](#) Newham Heritage

[t](#) @NewhamHeritage

[i](#) @newhamheritagemonth



© Rob Harris | robharrisphotographer.com



Are you a nurse or other healthcare worker? Are you a patient who would like to thank someone for the care you have been given?

To celebrate Europe's International Year of the Nurse, *Newham Voices* will be running a special focus on nursing in our May edition. If you are a nurse who would like to tell us about your experience over the past year, or a patient who would like to tell your story, please get in touch.

Contact: jean.gray@newhamvoices.co.uk

An open window on

A local initiative to engage people with art has proved so popular that it is now running until April 12th. Newham Lockdown window art is an exhibition organised by local artists who are showcasing their work in their front gardens and windows, creating a trail around the Borough. Encouraging people to be active as well as enjoying art, the map (www.nlwa.co.uk/illustrated-map-drawn-by-rachel-tri) shows where you can see the art work and some information about the artists.

Words and pictures by Sylvie Belbouab



Sculptor and installation artist Michael Nash, pictured here, set up the project. "I have been showing work in my window since the first lockdown and so people who wouldn't usually go to a gallery have become interested."



Artist Jan Holloway: "I've lived in Newham since 1988, I like the mixture of people, different cultures, different ideas."



International artist Antonietta Torsiello's work as been influenced by "Green Street, Queens Market, local parks, fabric shops, food stores, patterns and identity all around us." <http://torsiellolondon.com>

art in lockdown



Cecilia Cran launches our regular garden feature – tips and ideas to meet your growing concerns.

What to grow this month: whether you have a windowsill, a balcony, or even a spot of outdoor space, no area is too small for gardening.

This week I will be sowing dahlias in my plant pots, to decorate our thumbnail outdoor space. Dahlias are so versatile, they come in all colours, shapes and sizes and are guaranteed to brighten up any area – big or small.

Dahlias are so easy to grow and low maintenance. Just be sure to dead head them and they will keep producing flowers continuously throughout the summer.

How to grow: Dahlias are what's known as 'tender tubers' and need to be started off under cover, or indoors, so they don't get caught by frosty mornings and chilly evenings.

They like well-drained soil (so I recommend adding some small pebbles to the bottom of a pot to aid drainage) and rich manure or compost. Plant them no less than 10cm deep and if you're planting a number together, space them around 45cm apart from one another.

Dahlias love the sun, so put them in a south facing spot that will get maximum light. Keep them well watered, but the soil should not be soggy to touch, if the plants are waterlogged then the tubers will rot. Consider adding a liquid plant feed to the plants in the early weeks, you'll set them up for a great flowering season.

It will take about 5 weeks for the tubers to sprout and you can expect flowers in early summer.

Green escape: West Ham Park in the west of the Borough is a firm favourite of mine. The crocuses have been impressive this month – with their vibrant purple, yellow and white flowers scattered around the park. As they start to come to an end, we can still enjoy the camellia bushes and daffodils, which bring beautiful colour to the area. We can start to look forward to the magnolia trees, which are set to come into bloom in the next few weeks, along with the beautiful blackthorn blossom.

It's the perfect spot to get some air and have a wander around the gardens. There's an excellent playground for kids, an urban gym and tennis courts too.

Manor Park artist Annette Fry is driven by the plight of the earth. She said: "Sky and Sea, clean air, clean water, clean earth. Justice globally, for all, and for the earth itself ensuring all voices are heard. I live in hope."



Work by multimedia artist Prince Terralox can also be seen at the Hot Pot Caribbean restaurant in Forest Gate. The piece on display here is a tribute to reggae musician Garnet Silk who died young in 1994.

Compelling tales of family life

FAWN BESS-LEITH

Living, working and schooling children during the Covid-19 lockdown has brought many sudden changes to family life over the past year. For some, spending months with their children at home has strengthened bonds and brought families closer together. For others, the experience has been a daunting one; they have suffered the trauma of bereavement with the loss of a loved one from Covid-19, loss of financial security/furlough, unemployment or the stress of balancing working from home and meeting work commitments while dealing with home schooling and child care.

These changes have had an adverse impact on family lives and relationships, reflected in a 122 per cent increase in divorce enquiries in 2020 when compared to 2019 according to leading British law firm Stewart.

In addition, there has been an increase in suicide rates among adults and young people in 2020. National and local statistics also indicate an increase in domestic abuse cases of 7 per cent and 3 per cent respectively between March and June 2020. Parents and carers have reported an increase in their child's emotional, behavioural, and restless/attentional difficulties in a survey led by experts at Oxford University.

Research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) shows that an



Fawn is a specialist health visitor in perinatal and infant mental health

unhealthy or dysfunctional family life puts children at risk of developing emotional and behavioural difficulties which in some cases leads to delinquency and severe physical and mental health problems in later life.

Studies have also shown that adults in dysfunctional families are more likely to suffer from stress, anxiety and other mental health concerns. On the other hand, healthy families are a source of emotional support, love, security and protection. They also benefit each family member in important ways and help provide a

unique sense of belonging, value and a secure base that can't be found in other relationships. A healthy family life encourages the formation of strong moral character, promotes good mental and physical health, and in addition, nurtures an independent

and self-sufficient individual.

Although the lockdown has brought a host of new pressures and challenges to our everyday lives, there are practical things we can all do to maintain strong relationships and reap the benefits of a healthy family life.

Here are some suggestions for lockdown:

Manage and communicate your feelings. Communicating your feelings effectively is important in avoiding a pressure cooker situation. Learn to identify trigger points and check on each other's feelings to ensure that things don't fester. Try to pick up on unusual behaviours in your loved ones that may be signs of an inability to cope with what is happening, and have open, non-judgmental dialogue about your observations.

Faith -Based Communities. Faith based communities offer considerable support throughout life. Religious faith and practice appear to have a sizeable and consistent relationship with improved health and longevity, including less depression, hypertension and a lower risk of suicide.

Hobbies. Find time for your hobby or start a new one. Dancing is a great way for the whole family not just to have fun but to also get everyone active.

Maintain Self-care. It can be mindfulness apps i.e. yoga, self-care bingo, gardening or whatever you find relaxing. Children can also join in. By incorporating self-care activities into your day, you give your body and mind time to rest, reset and rejuvenate to avoid the symptoms of stress and anxiety.

Maintain Connections. There is plenty of research to convince us that surrounding ourselves with people who genuinely care about us can have a positive effect on our mental well-being. So, connect with extended family and friends using the available technology to achieve this.

Focus on emotional well-being. If you are feeling low, reach out for support in your social network or professionally. Exercise can be positive for mental health.

Tips to help make the back-to-school transition easier

Recreate/create a Routine

A routine is a good way of forming useful habits and training yourself to be more organised for a transition. Let the children be involved in planning the routine, which will give them a better understanding of what to expect. Having a routine can also help to minimise family conflict. Moreover, a routine can help us keep on top of daily tasks, as well as having a positive impact on our body's biological rhythm. If your child has a disability, they may not fully grasp the seriousness of the current climate but they most likely are sensing the change. Communicate to them the importance of handwashing.

Manage and communicate feelings

Cabin fever may cause children to display challenging behaviours. Encourage them to talk about their worries so they are not bottling things up. Avoid saying it's nothing to worry about. Empathise and show them you understand their fears by listening actively. Think things

through with them age appropriately and encourage them to come up with their own solutions.

Positive Affirmation

Using positive affirmations daily will help children to adjust and prepare for the transition. This will strengthen their self-belief. 'I am brave, I am strong and I can learn' will eventually become their inner voice.

Maintain Connections

Daily 'check ins' are a really effective way of re-establishing a child's sense of security, and a chance for family members to unite in a spirit of togetherness. Have special family time to allow everyone to express anything that may be bothering them and to discuss plans and expectations about returning to school. Planning ahead in this way makes the transition so much easier for children as they feel more prepared and will be better able to deal with the challenges ahead.

Family support or having a reliable, consistent adult is the most

important factor in the lives of children and adolescents

Children and young people have high expectations of parents and carers, and they can become dis-

appointed and confused when the anticipated help and positive reinforcement from parents are missing. Support from friends is also of crucial importance.

SUPPORT

Newham Children's Health Service 0-19 | 020 3373 9983/9984
healthvisiting@newham.gov.uk | www.newham.gov.uk/childrenshealth

Kooth Online counselling support for ages 11-25 yrs | www.kooth.com

Your Time | 020 3373 9983

The Who Cares? Programme

In some schools across Newham | 020 3373 9983

Newham Family Information Service | 020 3373 0980

www.happyconfident.com

Co-parenting through lockdown - see **Cafcass** guidance on effective co-parenting and childcare arrangements - www.familylives.org.uk

If you are in an abusive relationship contact

HESTIA - LBN Domestic Abuse Service provider | 080 8196 1482
www.hestia.org/newham | www.hestia.org/domestic-abuse

Or Contact **Refuge** on 080 8200 0247

The sweet smell of Stratford's past

Freelance journalist and author Kate Thompson has written a series of novels set in wartime East London. Her latest, *Secrets of the Lavender Girls*, meant having to learn about the history of Stratford and the Yardley factory where the book is set. As part of her research she met former Yardley employees Ann Roper, 86, and Eileen McKay, 90.

What is your book about?

The book is set in Yardley's cosmetic factory in Stratford during the World War II, or Stinky Stratford as it was affectionately known back then. It's a big old slice of social history based around the girls who worked their way through the war and were known locally as, 'The Lavender Girls'. Through my characters' eyes I try to show that for some women, war acted as springboard out of drudgery, giving them freedom, autonomy and agency.

Why did you set it in the Yardley cosmetics factory in Stratford?

Yardley's is part of the industrial heritage of Stratford and after hearing about the Lavender Girls I wanted to find out more.

In the 1940s, the House of Yardley was already an established brand, famous for its lavender water, soaps, talcum powders and complexion creams, sold in Bond Street and all the best department stores. The factory was somewhat less glamorous.

Situated downwind of the West End, in an East London backwater known as 'Stink Bomb Alley', it was a huge employer of local women. Their fragrant name masked

the unsavoury reality of work in the canal-side factory, sandwiched between a paint firm, a fishmeal factory and an abattoir.

The rivalry between surrounding firms was as potent as the atmosphere. Within a half mile of each other in Stinky Stratford there was the Oxo factory, Clarnicos sweet factory, Spratt's the dog food firm, Berk Spencer Acids and on the other side of the bridge in Bow, the Bryant & May match girls. When the clocking off hooter blasted over the canal, or as it's known to many, 'the Cut', the doors to all the factories were flung open and out came a stream of apron and turban clad factory girls.

Yardley had the best staff welfare around, perhaps only rivalled by East End sugar manufacturer Tate & Lyle in neighbouring Silvertown, offering great wages, bonuses and perks-a-plenty.

The family firm took a paternalist approach to staff welfare, encouraging the girls to save by helping to set them up with saving accounts. If you had the sniffles or the 'curse', you were ushered in to see the Welfare Officer for a gargle or a lie down with a hot water bottle. For more serious afflictions, Yardley's sent their girls to a convalescent home in Bexhill by the Sussex coast for a fortnight's paid leave. Yardley's even paid for all workers to have an annual chest x-ray, with a machine that was wheeled into the factory.

As an extra incentive, girls in the various different departments got the chance to win the shield for best housekeeping and most productive/tidy belt. The lucky winners would be sent to the deliciously named, Bond Street Beauty School for a makeover.

What made you want to organise a reunion?

When I found two ex-Yardley workers from Stratford to interview, I thought I'd take a punt and interview them together. Archives are all well and good, but what about speaking to the women who lived through the war and listening to their first-hand memories?

I'm passionate about documenting the lives of working-class women born into brutal poverty, but also steeped in rich and vibrant communities, women whose social histories we can learn so much from. Women such as these leave no paper trail, so it's important to shine a light on the richness and complexity of their lives. Women like Ann Roper, 86 and Eileen McKay, 90, who both worked at the Yardley factory, along with over one thousand other young women.

'I don't mind,' Ann told me, as she parked her shopping trolley next to the table in the café in Morrison's in Stratford. 'I'm an East Ender, I'll chat with anyone.'

In walks ebullient Eileen - 91 years old but with sparkling brown eyes and soft skin that make her look a good decade younger.

'It's you isn't it!' gasped Ann. Turns out, not only did they work together, but they were close pals who both worked on the same conveyor belt. They lost touch after Ann left the factory to get married in 1950 and hadn't seen each other for 68 years.

Stranger still, Ann even pulled out a photograph she'd brought with her by sheer coincidence of the two of them aged 15 and 18, two ravishingly beautiful, spirited young girls, enjoying a moment of fun on a tea break.



Above: Eileen McKay (top) and Ann Roper (bottom) reunited. ©Kate Thompson; To left: Outside Yardley in 1948 Ann Roper (top left) and Eileen McKay (bottom left).



that working class factory women and housewives are always overlooked and marginalised in the story of the Second World War.

Today, Yardley, Stink Bomb Alley and Angel Lane market are sadly long gone, buried beneath the sprawling Olympic Park and a landslide of gentrification. I only hope my fictional characters do justice to the real-life Yardley girls.

Was it difficult finding the former employees?

Thanks to social media it's so much easier to connect with the past. I also put appeals in the local paper, and spent time at Eastside Community Heritage, who hold some powerful oral histories which they collected for their project - Only a Yard to Yardley's. It was listening to these vivid stories, (held at the University of East London) that really helped me to understand the place this factory held in the social fabric of Stratford. www.hidden-histories.org

What was their reaction when you told them about the book you were writing?

Relief, I think that finally their hidden histories were being told. For so many of these women there is frus-

I think the Homefront series has the potential to be made into a TV drama; just like Call the Midwife, is this something that you would consider doing?

Yes! It's every writer's dream to see one of their books adapted into a tv drama. I think The Stepney Doorstep Society would lend itself particularly well to a TV series as it chronicles some remarkable women and their hidden histories and the powerful contribution they made to the social, economic and political history of wartime East London.

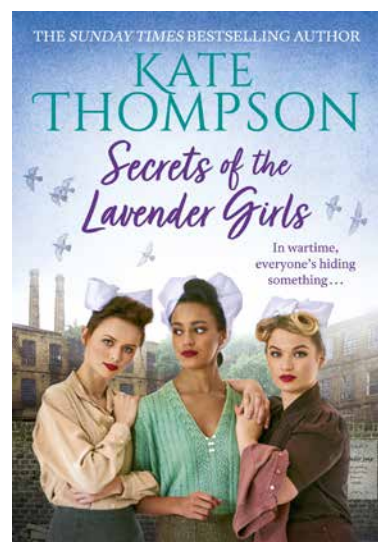
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Interview by Neandra Etienne



Boleyn memorial to Wally, West Ham's legendary scout

BRIAN WILLIAMS

Stroll through the housing development springing up on the old Boleyn Ground and you can't miss the soon-to-be completed St Pier Court.

The man who gives his name to the building may be unfamiliar to most residents of Upton Gardens. But without him West Ham United would not be the football club it is today. Some supporters will even tell you England won the 1966 World Cup because of his remarkable ability to spot budding talent.

Stanley Walter St Pier – better known as Wally – unearthed some of the greatest players ever to wear claret and blue. Bobby Moore, Geoff Hurst and Martin Peters were all

football,” Jim says. “He had newspapers sent from up and down the country – I particularly remember the Green ‘Un from Sheffield and the Pink ‘Un from Norwich – which he would pore over in the eternal quest for information.”

But most of Wally's work was done in East London and Essex, where he and his team of scouts would watch countless games in search of promising young players – with the very best being offered trials by West Ham.

“One of dad's secret weapons was his huge network of PE teachers,” Jim says. “Who better to spot potential talent at an early age, particularly in the days when most schools had at least one team.”

One of these teachers was a Mr Joe

for a one-bed flat.

Destined to stand next to St Pier Court is the John Charles Tower – a combination that would have undoubtedly delighted the genial genius who discovered West Ham's first black footballer. Wally was especially proud of his achievements. “Dad used to really nurture his young players. He went to dinner once a week at John's house before training,” Jim says.

Wally's 47-year association with West Ham began in 1929, when he joined the club as a no-nonsense defender. “He didn't play too often for the first team,” Jim says. “He was captain of the reserves and should probably have moved on but such was his love for West Ham he stuck it out.”

That love was reciprocated by thousands of grateful supporters when, in 1975, the club organised a testimonial for Wally featuring four teams made up of West Ham players. More than 25,000 fans turned up to salute his incredible career.

Wally died in 1989 aged 84. His ashes were scattered on the Upton Park pitch. Now, thanks to St Pier Court, the site of the Boleyn Ground



Wally St Pier

will finally have a lasting memorial to a true West Ham great. ●

Brian Williams is the author of two books about West Ham: *Nearly Reach The Sky – A Farewell To Upton Park*, and *Home From Home – A West Ham Supporter's Struggle To Reach The Next Level*.



Most of Wally's work was done in East London and Essex, where he and his team of scouts would watch countless games in search of promising young players – with the very best being offered trials by West Ham.

discovered and mentored by him. As were John Lyall and Trevor Brooking. In truth, it would be quicker to name the West Ham legends who did not emerge from his scouting greenhouse.

Wally's son Jim recalls a time when his dad brought home a West Ham programme in which every Hammer listed in the starting XI had been introduced to the club by him. And it didn't happen by accident.

“His life really did revolve around

Jagger, but his son was not destined to have a career at West Ham. The boy's name was Mick. It seems he preferred music to football.

St Pier Court was named following a process that involved developers Barratt, Newham council, the football club and supporters. It is one of several apartment blocks within the Upton Gardens development, which will eventually boast 842 new homes and amenities for residents, including a gym. Prices start at £350,000

Speak up about your health!

Healthwatch Newham, the organisation representing patients and social care services users, is setting up a special group to empower young people. Young Healthwatch will offer new opportunities to young people, aged 16 - 21, who are living, working and studying in the Borough.

Healthwatch is looking for ten young people to join Young Healthwatch Newham and help them get it started.

You will be able to work on a range of issues that are most important to you, from mental health to GP services, and there will be opportunities to develop your skills and share your ideas. If you're interested, go to www.healthwatchnewham.co.uk/young-healthwatch for more information

Meanwhile, Healthwatch is also looking at disabled residents' experiences during the pandemic as part of a survey being run across North East London.

All responses are completely anonymous and all completed survey entries go in the draw to win an Amazon voucher. If you would like to do the survey over the phone, they will arrange a phone call. You can also complete the survey on behalf of someone you care for, or a loved one.

For more information, please visit <https://www.healthwatchnewham.co.uk/NEL-disabled>

