

We need to invest to combat violent crime

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Future of NHS at risk after sale of Newham GP practices to US



AIDAN WHITE

Newham is at the centre of a growing storm over NHS privatisation fears following the transfer of GP care for thousands of local patients into the hands of an organisation controlled by a giant American health corporation.

A top-level meeting with health care regulators has been organised this month to find out how this takeover was “nodded through” earlier in the year, without any public consultation.

Local doctors, councillors and campaigners are calling for a thorough investigation into the move that affects thousands of patients in Stratford, Manor Park, Canning Town and North Woolwich and up to half a million patients receiving GP services in London and around the UK.

The Newham GP practices were part of the highly-respected London-wide AT Medics group which was taken over by Operose Health, a UK subsidiary of Centene Corp based in Missouri, creating the largest private supplier of GP services in the UK with 58 GP practices across the country.

Already a coalition of doctors, campaigners and academics have written to the health secretary Matt Hancock requesting a national investigation by the Care Quality Commission. They say this latest move is “privatisation of the NHS by stealth”.

In Newham campaigners echo this concern and worry that the takeover was not subject to proper scrutiny or any form of public consultation. “This will have an impact on patient care,” warned one local doctor.

“This is a takeover by the back-door, without discussion with patients, and nodded through without proper meetings, all under the cover of the pandemic,”

said Phil Edwards a leader of the Newham Save Our NHS group.

He said the loophole opening the door to transfers of this kind came in 2004 with the launch of the Alternative Provider of Medical Services (APMS) contracts for GPs that introduced the possibility of their practices being sold on to other companies.

Stephen Timms, Labour MP for East Ham, told *Newham Voices*: “We have to be clear about what is the basis for this decision, and if there are grounds for blocking such a transfer.”

He will take part in a meeting between the responsible oversight body, the Newham Clinical Commissioning Group, and councillors and the campaign group Newham Save Our NHS which will ask searching questions over the level of scrutiny of the transfer of ownership and the wider implications of selling GP care to a profit-led American corporation.

Members of the Inner North East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which oversees

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Pandemic highlights: The year of the nurse
See pages 7-11



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YOUTH VOICES OF NEWHAM

Newham Youth Voices panel meets regularly on Zoom to discuss issues relevant to young people in the Borough and to inform our coverage. The panel is the result of collaboration between *Newham Voices* and the charity Ashok's Vision. If you are interested in getting involved or joining one of the meetings, please email info@newhamvoices.co.uk

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Investment in community is key to ending violent crime wave

NOAH ENAHORO

“Year after year I find myself burying young people who’ve been shot or stabbed in our communities,” says anti-knife crime campaigner Nims Obunge. “I see the trauma that families go through having lost their loved ones. I am tired of this government failing to effectively address the issues that result in young people carrying knives to schools and on the streets.”

The 2021 London Mayoral Election takes place on 6 May, and all the candidates are eager to resume campaigning after Covid-19 forced cancellation in March 2020.

Obunge MBE is chief executive of the anti-crime and anti-violence charity The Peace Alliance, and he is running as an independent mayoral candidate.

He spoke with *Newham Voices* and explained how he hopes to help Newham and London combat rising violent crime levels.

Research makes it clear that there is a direct link between poverty and violence, he said: “Wherever we find high levels of socio-economic deprivation, we find levels of criminality. What I want to do is make sure that we are working in those communities where people are most vulnera-

ble and create inward investment to address poverty. One child stabbed is one child too many. We have got to do better in London.”

Research also confirms that Newham has the highest number of children living in poverty in the capital, with more than half of them, 52 per cent, judged to be in households under the poverty line, compared to 38 per cent in the typical London borough.

A report by the City Intelligence Unit of the Greater London Authority Strategic Crime Analysis Team states that out of the 32 London boroughs, Newham is in the top five for violent crime offending and top nine for serious youth violence victims.

Nims believes that direct reinvestment into vulnerable communities and vulnerable people is the best way forward to help solve these problems. He said: “I intend to make sure that we have more effective and affordable homes. I also plan to implement a Community Coaches Scheme to help vulnerable families and members of the community. By investing in communities and ensuring that we are empowering our young people and families, we can help them get off the pathway of poverty.”

“What has happened is people, specifically young people, have been

left on their own to try and struggle to get through their issues, and what we want to do is make sure that those who are in that fight against poverty receive a helping hand.”

He also wants to introduce Mayoral HOPE schools aimed at addressing school exclusion. Since 2013 Newham school exclusions have risen by 81 per cent, with many linking this to increased crime rates.

Nims said: “I want the schools to help people excel, bringing in professionals heavily invested in the community so that the schools become places where aspirations and opportunities are built”.

He said it is worth remembering that people are not born criminals.

Circumstances change people into criminals, and that is why “we need to empower and invest in our youth.”

The London Mayoral election is being held on May 6th. For information on the candidates (Shaun Bailey, Con; Kevin Balayev, Renew; Sian Berry, Green; Count Boniface; Valerie Brown, Burning Pink; Piers Corbyn, Let London Live; Max Fosh, Ind; Peter Gammons, UKIP; Richard Hewison, Rejoin EU; Heinous Hudson, Animal Welfare; Sadiq Khan, Lab; Farah London, Ind; Nims Obunge, Ind; Niko Omilana, Ind; Luisa Porritt, Lib Dem; Mandu Reid, Women’s Equality Party; Brian Rose, London Real.) go to www.londonelects.org.uk/im-voter/information-booklet ●

Newham GP practices *continued from page 1*

health service management in the area, were told last month that the transfer had been agreed, without discussion, through “chair’s action” by local Primary Care Commissioning Committees – including Newham – “due to the focus on managing the pandemic”.

An explanatory email seen by *Newham Voices* and sent to the scrutiny committee members said that there was “no legal or contractual basis... to reject the transfer of control...”

The email warns that to have rejected the transfer of AT Medics “would have posed a risk to continuity of high quality of care for local residents.”

However, at no point does the email refer to the fact that Centene Corporation, a health insurer and one of the America’s richest 50 companies, will be the ultimate owner. This company has annual income of around £80bn, and is itself controversial with 100s of legal battles being fought over its business practices and quality of care in states such as California, Iowa, Washington State and Texas.

A report in the *Guardian* (February 26) said the change of control for eight practices in the London boroughs of Camden, Islington and Haringey was confirmed in a virtual meeting on 17 December that lasted less than nine minutes, during which no mention was made of Centene and not a single question was asked.

According to a briefing paper submitted to Camden Council in April, leading UK and American experts said there was a lack of openness and transparency, and even misrepresentation, under cover of the pandemic, in the way the transfer was handled. allysonpollock.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AP_2021_Pollock_CenteneGPSurgeries_BriefingNote.pdf

Newham GP surgeries affected by the change are:

- Albert Road Practice, North Woolwich
- Pontoon Dock Practice, North Woolwich
- Carpenters Practice, High Street, Stratford
- Church Road Practice, Manor Park
- St Luke’s Practice, Canning Town
- Lucas Avenue Practice, Plaistow



Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz joined a March for Fares ending at the scene of the attack. © Sylvie Belbouab

Second knife killing follows murder of schoolboy Fares

A 14-year-old boy has been charged with the murder of Fares Maatou, who was stabbed outside a Canning Town pizza restaurant.

Three days later in a separate incident less than a mile away another teenager was stabbed to death.

Fares, aged 15, and a pupil at Cumberland School, died at the scene of the attack on Barking Road, Newham, on April 23 in the afternoon. Despite the efforts of London Ambulance paramedics, Fares was pronounced dead shortly after 16:30.

Witnesses said he was wearing his school uniform when he was stabbed. He was reportedly trying to support a friend during a row at the time of the attack.

A 14-year-old was formally charged with murder at Stratford Youth Court on April 26. He was also accused of possession of an offensive weapon. Two other 15-year-old boys have been arrested in connection with the incident.

In the second incident 18-year-old Junior Jah was stabbed to death only a mile away in Custom House, close to the scene where his brother Ahmed was knifed to death four years ago. Junior was murdered in Coolfin Road near the junction with Freemasons Road.

Tributes have poured in from friends and family members of Fares Maatou. Many people gathered at the scene to leave flowers and messages of support for the family. ●

Why Newham needs to keep a directly elected Mayor

Dear Editor,

In response to your article about the forthcoming referendum on the governance model in Newham (*May 6th: A day to shape Newham's future*, Newham Voices, issue 4), the People of Newham currently have a **right** to vote for the Leader of the Council. When people vote for the Mayor of London on 6 May; many will be surprised to learn that they are being asked to abolish their right to vote for their own Mayor in Newham.

Our vote is our voice and voting is the best way to make sure our voice is heard.

Locally we elect a Mayor to be the voice of all of us when the decisions



are made that affect our lives. They are directly accountable to all the voters and we can vote for someone else if they let us down.

The *Newham Right To Vote* group are campaigning to keep people's right to vote for the Mayor, which is how the Council is run now, thereby keeping power in the hands of voters.

While there are some aspects of the committee system that seem appealing, the handful of areas that have adopted the system also have different political parties in the Council who play a part in decision making to reflect political balance. I am struggling to see how the committee system in Newham will work

when you have a single party running the Council.

In an ideal world all councillors would come together collegiately to make decisions but in reality the committee system will give rise to infighting and will only cause more division while councillors jockey for positions.

Potentially, as has happened in the past, councillors could be busy constantly playing musical chairs rather than getting the job done. The claim that the committee system will make councillors more accessi-

ble and accountable for the Council's actions, is surprising as they already are under the current system.

In all local governance systems, there is a Leader, so why should the people of Newham not get to choose theirs directly as opposed to a small group of councillors?

Yours,

Charlene McLean
NewhamRightToVote.org

* Charlene McLean is currently Statutory Deputy Mayor of Newham

Community consultation and democracy – the missing links

Peter Landman poses a three-point challenge to Andy Paice who shared his views on participatory democracy in our January issue

We should think of democracy as extending further than representative democracy, that is elections every four years for our local councillors as Andy Paice suggests, but if my own experience is anything to go by, it's not that simple.

I have involved myself in Citizens Assemblies, Citizens Assembly Working Groups and other London Borough of Newham consultations. Until recently I was Chair of a tenants and residents association. I was a local councillor, in a previous life, years ago.

My first question is that we have to be clearer about the concept. Our Mayor proclaims that she wants to make Newham a beacon of participatory democracy but I am not sure how far this can be realised. It could be possible in a small cohesive village community, but will it work in a more diffuse urban area such as ours?

I also ask, shouldn't we recognise the emergence of a new class divide

in our midst – a meritocratic class from the largely professional, university educated section of the population.

I think any analysis of the background of members of the public who involve themselves in public consultations, would find the majority would be from one socio economic group – professionals mostly living in the more residential corners of the Borough.

I do not want to suggest anyone is inferior. But research has borne out that residents from certain backgrounds find meetings bread and butter, though sometimes stale bread and butter, whereas many residents from other backgrounds don't.

My third question is should we remind ourselves that there are residents who do not have access to a computer? They may be shut off from much public communication. So here is another divide.

We won't have participatory democracy as allegedly happened in ancient Athens anytime soon, but let's keep on getting residents' views in as many ways and in as many situations as possible! ●



Candidates announced in East Ham Central by-election

COCO GARCIA ACEVEDO

Thursday 6 May is a big date for Newham. In addition to the Newham Governance Referendum, and of course, the Mayor of London elections, East Ham residents will also have the opportunity to elect their new councillor, to represent them at Newham Council.

There are six candidates, listed here in alphabetical order. They are:

- **Lois Austin** – Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition
- **Ed Comaromi** – Liberal Democrats
- **Sk Zakit Hossain** – Conservative Party
- **Paul Martin Jobson** – Christian Peoples Alliance
- **Danny Keeling** – The Green Party
- **Farah Nazeer** – Labour and Co-operative Party

Polling stations will be open from 7am to 10pm on Thursday, 6 May 2021.

Youngest DJ's birthday fundraising appeal for £11,000

BY JULIA OMARI

When Zelda Mantewa turned 11 this year, she knew exactly what she wanted for her birthday... to end child poverty and educational disadvantage!

Instead of blowing out her birthday candles and hoping for her wish to come true, she came up with her own fundraising idea. The 11 for 11 Campaign to raise £11,000 for poor communities in Newham and Ghana.

Zelda, who is a British born Ghanaian living in Newham, is known internationally as DJ Zel, the multi-award winning youngest radio DJ in the country. She currently hosts the Non-Stop Saturday morning radio show, 10am-12pm on GN Radio.

DJ Zel launched her campaign in February and has already raised more than £4,500.

She said: "Please donate to my 11 for 11 Fundraising Campaign at www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/djzel11for11campaign and help me make life better for children and families who live in unimaginable poverty in our community." The campaign is run by the Heartfelt Philanthropy Network. ●



Zelda Mantewa



Central Park Café's Sophie Downer. © Charlotte Hall

Central Park's café culture on the rise

CHARLOTTE HALL

A mother of two, more accustomed to working at Michelin star restaurants and Buckingham Palace, has become the driving force behind a café in East Ham's Central Park.

In 2017 top chef Sophie Downer found herself compelled to do something to benefit the community. Although she was baking nearly 50 sourdough bread loaves from her home in East Ham every week, delivering them to friends and family via a WhatsApp group called Bread Club, she wanted to do more. When she saw the vacant café in Central Park, she decided to run Bread Club from there for one winter.

Four years on, Sophie has expanded her menu to far more than bread and is a London Living Wage employer for a team of ten. Her mostly female team are from the local area and many are mothers themselves. "We've got a really amazing workforce here – very flexible, reliable and talented," said Sophie.

The high-quality ingredients, home-made dishes and fresh local

produce transformed a park café into a gourmet but affordable lunch spot. During lockdown, the café benefitted from a new customer base; commuters-turned-remote workers who have been discovering the take-away dishes in their lunch-breaks. Mauricio Cruz, a regular at the café, said: "This café has the best – and only – fresh sourdough bread in the whole area. I love the sourdough toasties for lunch."

Sophie's intention is to collaborate with local businesses to reinvest in the area – she uses honey from local beehives on Plashet Road, sells Plaistow-based Mr Singh's crisps and produce from the community garden at Bonny Downs Community Association.

What can we expect from Sophie and her team in the future? Residents can look forward to a new summer menu including charcuterie plates and seasonal salads, while the cheesecakes and overnight oats will be back by popular demand. A local in-house coffee roaster will be taking up residence, the monthly supper clubs will be making a comeback and all the while Sophie will

be keeping an eye out for any other dormant cafés in the Borough that she can revive.

The Central Park Café has become so much more than just a café. It is a buzzing community hub where social groups meet, health and wellbeing classes are taught, and cultural events are held. Sophie said: "It wasn't what I originally intended but I think this café may likely become a social enterprise."

Central Park Café is open every day from 9am to 3pm and is a distributor of *Newham Voices*.



Central Park Café

Stratford's Martyrs Memorial to victims of religious intolerance

In the first of a regular feature on monuments in the Borough, **Julia Omari** retells the story of Stratford Martyrs Memorial.

With reality TV still drawing such a huge audience it's not too hard to imagine the 20,000 strong crowd that showed up to witness the execution of 13 Protestants at Stratford Le Bow in 1556.

In June of that year, 16 people from what was then Essex and its surrounding area were arrested and charged with heresy, a belief con-

trary to orthodox religious doctrine.

England was under the reign of Queen Mary who saw it as her duty to return the country once more to Catholicism. While only reigning for five years, she managed to have some 300 Protestants burned at the stake, earning her the nickname Bloody Mary.

The accused were given the opportunity to recant their faith with three of them doing so, thus regaining their freedom. On 27 June 1556 the remaining 13, that is 11 men and two

women, one of whom was pregnant, were taken to an area that is today believed to be north of Bow Church DLR station, (then called Stratford Le Bow), and burnt alive at the stake for their religious beliefs.

In 1879, Reverend William Jay Bolton of St. John's Church raised money from the public to erect the Stratford Martyrs Memorial, commemorating the 13, plus others who were executed or tortured for the same offence at later dates, including Rev. Thomas Rose, then vicar of All Saints Church, West Ham.

The memorial, which has the names of the Martyrs inscribed and is grade 2 listed, stands as a reminder of the previous religious intolerance we hope never to see again.

It is definitely worth a visit next time you're out shopping in Stratford.

Would you like to write about a local statue or memorial? Let us know at editor@newhamvoices.co.uk



Remembering Kevin Jenkins A true great



a real difference to the quality of life for so many underprivileged and disabled youngsters in more than 44 years of dedication to doing good.

A few years ago I took part in a feature in the Newham Recorder. One of the questions was to name a person I admired living or dead. It took me only a second to name Kevin.

When he came into the Recorder's East Ham office to talk about launching a Christmas Toy Appeal for underprivileged youngsters 44 years ago, I was lucky enough to be chosen by my then Editor Tom Duncan to co-ordinate it. Little did I realise just how much that appeal would change the lives of so many generations of youngsters. It still does so today.

So many people have a better chance in life because of Kevin and his devoted partner Paula and their family. Through his work as co-founder with Community Links, his long service as a councillor in Newham, as founder for Ambition, Aspire, Achieve and the founder of Heritage Newham - People, Places, Progress, Kevin has been an inspiration for generations of people.

There was never any desire for praise. The glow in his cheeks came from witnessing a creation come to life, a youngster achieving a dream, an idea becoming a reality. He believed young people can achieve anything despite their background.

Everyone who knew him will be grateful for any time spent in his company. We will miss him dreadfully. He was a true great.

Co-founder of Community Links, Kevin Jenkins, 62, died on 7 April. **Colin Grainger**, former editor of the *Newham Recorder*, pays tribute to a man he describes as a "truly great person".


Much is made of the term hero and too often today it is a label given to those who have not achieved true greatness.

But Kevin Jenkins was a hero to thousands, and it was an honour for me to have been part of his life since the day we first met to discuss the chance of creating a toy appeal to bring joy into the existence of young people and their families who would otherwise have gone without. And he deserves that honour as well as the warranted OBE bestowed on him.

There is no doubt that he touched the lives of many thousands of people in Newham and other parts of east London. Many hold him dear in their hearts for the good that he did...and with very good reason.


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It's time to show your support for nurses' pay campaign

LISA ELLIOTT

I was born and bred in east London, and before becoming Regional Director of RCN London in February 2020, I was a director of nursing working in primary care in Newham.

Having been a nurse for more than 20 years, and in that time working across many settings throughout London, from intensive care, to out in the community, to being a director of nursing, I know there are so many opportunities in the profession. Nursing is a demanding and very rewarding profession.

There is no question that last year truly was the Year of the Nurse and Midwife. The pandemic has really highlighted the vital role nurses play. Nurses rose to the challenge and put their patients first, and they continue to do so. It makes me extremely proud to be a nurse and part of London's nursing community.

I think it is only right that the World Health Organization decided to extend the Year of the Nurse to 2021 to celebrate the contribution that nurses make.



Lisa Elliott, RCN London

And while it is a time to celebrate nurses, we must remember that it's also been incredibly tough. Nursing staff have had to work through unimaginable situations during the pandemic, and we need to make sure they are supported and given time for recovery.

This will not be helped by the fact there aren't enough nurses in the capital. Even before the pandemic, London was already missing over 8,400 nurses, and that was in the NHS alone. Many of my members have also told me that the cost of living is pushing them out of the capital.

Nursing staff have had to work through unimaginable situations during the pandemic, and we need to make sure they are supported and given time for recovery.

Members have been telling me that they don't feel valued, and this is especially hard after such a challenging year. Part of this relates to fair pay and that's why the RCN is running the #FairPayForNursing campaign, calling for a 12.5 per cent pay rise for NHS nursing staff.

So as part of celebrating nurses this year, please show your support and help make them feel valued for the vital work they do. ●

Thanks for the memories 51 years on

Tina Etienne, Beulah Stewart and Elizabeth Hamilton first met in 1970 when they trained as nurses at East Ham Memorial Hospital. Just like in the BBC drama *Call The Midwife* Tina, Beulah and Elizabeth lived in a nursing residence. They share their memories and photos.

Tina Etienne

I first heard about the hospital when my friend Maneulla sent me a magazine featuring the job advert. Even though I didn't have any previous nursing experience I decided to apply because I already helped to look after the elderly.

I travelled from Dominica to London in December 1969, eventually becoming a State Enrolled Nurse at East Ham Memorial Hospital. My favourite department was working with the elderly. They were lovely and kind to me. I can remember standing at a bus stop when I was approached by one of my previous patients. He bought me a box of tea as a thank you for looking after him.

Cecilia Fontaine and I shared a double room with two single beds

and a sink area. There was a shared bathroom, communal TV/dining area and canteen.

After I left in 1976 I remained good friends with Cecilia, Elizabeth Hamilton, Beulah Stewart and Grace Alexander, we worked nights together. I am now the godmother to

Graces's son Brian and Elizabeth is godmother to my daughter Neandra.

Beulah Stewart

I worked at East Ham Memorial Hospital from 1970 – 1972 and moved to Canada in 1977. I shared a room with Elizabeth Hamilton. We were

new to London so during our time off we would go sight-seeing. During the evening a group of us would go out to parties. We had a curfew so we had to make sure we got back to the nursing residence before Matron locked the door.

I remember we used to drag our mattresses and sleep on the floor in the other nurse's rooms.

Even though we all came from different parts of the Caribbean we became one family. I still remain good friends with Tina Etienne and Elizabeth Hamilton.

Elizabeth Hamilton

I met my husband Karl Hamilton at one of the parties I attended with Beulah. Karl always made sure that we arrived back to our nurses residence before the curfew. We have a boy, Michael, and remained married until Karl's death.

A full version of this interview by Neandra Etienne appears on our website.



Clockwise from top left: Elizabeth Hamilton outside East Ham Memorial Hospital; Beulah outside Langthorne Hospital; and Tina outside East Ham Memorial Hospital.

What kept us going? Teamwork,

Words by Jean Gray | Pictures by Sylvie Belbouab

To celebrate the Year of the Nurse and Midwife, we spoke to nurses at Newham Hospital about what life has been like for them during the past year, and what has kept them going during the worst pandemic in 100 years.

Petra Francis, *Matron for Specialist Medicine, manages a team of 150 staff*

She recalled what it was like when Covid-19 hit: "It was completely surreal. I just can't describe it. I would go home exhausted and get straight into what I called my "Covid pyjamas". My husband would say "It's only 4pm and you're in your pyjamas, what's going on?" But that was all I was fit for outside of work.

"We worked flat out, seven days a week. I usually work five days, but I couldn't leave staff, I had to be there.

"People were deteriorating and dying very quickly, and when the patient was receiving end of life care we worked really hard to make sure we could get loved ones up to the hospital to say their goodbyes.

"We suddenly went from four patients on the CPAP non-invasive ventilators to 20 so of course there was a shortage of staff. The team were incredibly hard working, I just couldn't have asked for more.

"As a leader, I knew I had to be positive. And I had to make sure I was there, doing the things that I expected them to do. I made sure my team could always get hold of me.

"The nature of the virus meant we were all covered, we could only see each other's eyes. It was distressing for us and the patients. There was one young man I remember, his eyes were so scared, and I was scared for him, that was awful not being able to see him properly.

"Throughout, we managed to keep human contact by writing greetings and positive messages on our aprons, displaying pictures of ourselves and our names prominently.

"One thing that helped was the donation of gift boxes from Barts charity for relatives of patients who died. They contained hearts and a poem but were also personalised with a handprint and a lock of the patient's hair. It meant relatives at least had something of their loved one."

So, what kept Petra and her team going?

"A lot of adrenalin. I felt low for a couple of months, but that period showed me how people are supporting each other, one day at a time. Patients have been amazing, too, and the donations from the community helped so much."

All staff mentioned their appreciation for the support the hospital gave them through its Employee Wellbeing service. "We were given free hot food, recognition that we were doing a job where we had no time for shopping or to look after ourselves. We were given an extra day off – that's what we need, time, it's the most valuable thing.

"At first community nurses were switched to hospital, but that was not sustainable. So agency staff came in to fill the gaps and they have been brilliant.

"We want to thank the community in Newham. They have supported us



Fiona Sarpong

"We want to thank the community in Newham. They have supported us at a time when they are losing their jobs, not seeing their loved ones, but they have still thought about us and supported us."



Petra Francis



Shiblu Khan

at a time when they are losing their jobs, not seeing their loved ones, but they have still thought about us and supported us."

Fiona Sarpong, *Manager, Stratford Ward*

"Life changed a lot. We had to adjust quickly, working closely with intensive care. We have our guidelines in the respiratory specialty, but treating patients with Covid was totally different.

"We just tried our best and got on with it. It was especially hard for

families, patients couldn't have visitors, but eventually we were able to connect them using iPads, it was a real challenge.

"Support came from my team and senior management. And I didn't watch the news when I got home.

"Seeing the difference you make for patients is what keeps us going, being able to ensure that they have someone with them in their last minutes. That makes it worthwhile.

"I remember one elderly woman. She was not responding to CPAP and so we could not carry on that

hot food and 'Covid pyjamas'



treatment.

"Decisions had to be taken about who would benefit most from the available equipment. That woman wanted younger people to be given a chance because she said she'd had a full life. I'm so glad we managed to get her together with her husband before she died. He died a few days later.

"Our team bond is stronger and we are more careful about appreciating family and friends. "

Shiblu Khan, Nursing Assistant, Stratford Ward

"As a father of three, I was aware of the risks. I went home and had to be socially distanced from my family. But there was no choice, you are doing something for yourself and also for your country.

"I am a Muslim and from my religious perspective, it's a question of once you are in something you are fully committed, you stay there. I

think staff should be given a souvenir or a special medal that their children can be proud of, something to say, 'we were in it!' "

Kuldip Kang, Sister, Heather Ward

"It started so suddenly, we were all on a very steep learning curve. The hardest part was patients not being able to say goodbye to loved ones. By the second wave we were better prepared. Throughout the whole time we worked as a team and shared everything - that will stay with us. It is what has kept us going. Life is calmer now, but I still have a fear that we are not out of this completely. We are still learning, and we still need to be vigilant."

Prem Baboo, Stroke Information and Research Officer

"As well as worrying about the patients we had to worry about ourselves, our families and colleagues. One positive experience was being

redeployed to other parts of the Trust, learning new skills, getting to know different people, we gelled over time with staff outside of our own teams and that will benefit the Trust in the future. The wellbeing service provided by the hospital has helped, and team spirit kept us going. There is some degree of normality now, but we have learned lessons for the future, a major challenge is ensuring that patients have access to their loved ones."

Gina Sidhu, Healthcare Assistant, Heather ward

Gina said: "At first, everyone was in shock, trying to help as much as we could. The worst part was losing people, not just patients but also colleagues, it was devastating. We gave each other a lot of support, started calling each other outside of work to check that we were all OK. And we were scared about passing it onto our families, we had to isolate at home.

We gave each other a lot of support, started calling each other outside of work to check that we were all OK.

But the reward is when someone looks at you and says: 'Thanks for saving my life'.

"We were teaching each other, working with other teams beyond our own wards. At first, the worst thing was patients who were frightened but not able to see family. At times we used our own phones to make sure they could stay in touch.

"We feel more recognised now by the public, patients appreciate nurses more than ever. We have been well supported by the hospital management. The extra day of annual leave is very welcome. "

Saleema Iqbal, Nurse, Stratford Ward

Saleema said: "I qualified early last year and had decided to take some time off then start work in June. But I was sitting on the sofa watching what was happening with Covid on TV and decided that I had to start straight away, I wanted to help in any way I could. It has been a tough start to my career. There have been times when I have cried because a patient died, you get attached, it is the hardest part. But the wellbeing support provided by the hospital has been very helpful."

On a mission of care and compassion

In celebration of International Year of the Nurse and The Midwife, **Fawn Bess-Leith** interviewed **Modupe Atiba**, a nursery nurse in Newham and a student mental health nurse at Middlesex University.

Modupe, please tell us about you and your roles?

I currently work as a community nursery nurse (NN) within a health visiting team in Newham. This involves visiting mothers and their infants in their own homes or other premises such as Children's Centres (CC) across the borough. I assist the health visitors (HV) in meeting the needs of children and their families by undertaking delegated duties that support and enable family centred care i.e. support bonding, attachment, and growth and development.

Additionally, I work as an integral part of the multidisciplinary team ensuring that there is appropriate communication with other professionals involved in the care of the child and mother/family.

I am currently doing my Post Graduate Diploma (PG Dip) in Mental Health Nursing which is due to be completed later this year.

My background in management, early years, public health and health promotion gives me an advantage in these roles.

What led you into a nursing career? Who has been your hero/who has inspired you?

My primary motivation to go into the nursing profession was because of my working experience/relationship



Nurses are passionate and caring. More often than not, they think about others before themselves which conforms with my philosophy about life.

ship with nurses within clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and in community NHS Services.

I have so many heroes. However, permit me to share a private conversation here. There was a day I picked up a call when I was working as a health visiting support worker and the person mentioned her name. I re-echoed the name and introduced myself and she said: "What are you

doing there, Modupe, and in what capacity?" I told her I was working as a support worker. She said next time she had contact with me, she wanted to hear that I was a nurse. That day, I had a deep thought, over and over. Thank you for that word of encouragement Rosalina Frazer.

Tell us about your journey, how did you get to where you are?

It has not been an easy journey. There is an adage that says, 'rough road leads to a beautiful destination'. After a variety of different roles across the NHS in north east London, I moved back to Barking, Havering and Redbridge CCGs as legacy claims administrator. After my foundation degree in early years, I worked as a nursery nurse before I finally moved to Newham Children and Young People Services as a community nursery nurse.

What do you love about nursing?

Nurses are passionate and caring. More often than not, they think about others before themselves which conforms with my philosophy about life. Needless to say, I also want to be involved in taking care of mothers who are experiencing pre-natal and post-natal depression.

What's your greatest achievement?

When I was singled out as a nursery nurse and appreciated alongside three health visitors in North East London NHS Foundation Trust to carry out a research on Healthy Start, initiated by Imperial College/NELFT.

As a student mental health nurse, my placements have been excellent.

What is your biggest hope/wish for Nurses Day?

My hope is for nurses to be paid well to motivate them to do more for an appreciative society. I also wish for nurses to continue with the professional values, and nursing's six Cs - care, compassion, courage, communication, commitment and competence.

What would you say to inspire any student nurse reading your story?

To all my fellow students, you will get there one day. Take one step at a time. When you are out there, do your best. The sky is your limit. I wish you well.

Interested in a career in nursing?

Go to <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/studying-nursing>

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Tribute to 'Nachi'

FAWN BESS-LEITH

I must pay tribute to colleagues who tragically lost their lives in the last year due to complications around Covid-19.

My friend and co-worker Nurse Oyenachi Obasi, known as Nachi, was a dedicated and reliable team member who often went the extra mile for children and families in Newham.

She died aged 51 on 6 May 2020 at Queen's Hospital, Romford. Her family said Onyenachi "felt she had a duty to work and help during the pandemic" and that "she gave her life doing a job she loved."

Using her name as an acronym further describes her personality: Noble, Approachable, Caring, Hardworking, Irreplaceable.

As the recipient of the Nachi legacy award last December at the Children's Health 0-19 and Head-Start Team annual 'Away Day', I feel moved to write this tribute. The Nachi Legacy Award is a special award in recognition of staff who always demonstrate the key values of the service.

I remember vividly the last moments we spent together. It was at



a manager's farewell get together. She was dressed in beautiful traditional wear, in full swing, jovial, taking over the dance floor and making merry with food and drinks and her culinary skills added spice and flavour to the party.

Remembering Nachi, Health visitor and colleague Jasmine Cudjoe said:

"Her gentle nature was infectious making it easy to always turn to her for support."

Professor Debra Salmon, Dean of the School of Health Sciences said:

"Onyenachi is remembered as a wonderful and reliable member of the team, with a friendly and welcoming personality."

The challenge of care for end of life and long term illness

CATARINA JOELE

On a typical day, June Kibuthu starts working around 8 o'clock, catching up on her emails and reading the notes for the patients she will see that day. The services open at 9 am. As she walks through the corridors of Newham Hospital, colleagues from different departments reach out to her for advice with patients. June is the team leader for palliative care.

Besides herself, two clinical nurse specialists (CNS), a social worker and two consultants who work part time between Newham Hospital, Barts Health NHS Trust and Royal London Hospital, visit the different wards to provide symptom control and psycho-social support for patients, as well as empowering nurses who work close to patients with long term illnesses.

Despite her passion and commitment, being a nurse wasn't always her aspiration. Before coming to England from Kenya, June considered careers in fashion or human rights law. In the end it was during a visit to family in the UK and a hunt for university courses that she set her sights on nursing.

One year later, she moved to England and enrolled on an access to nursing course at Newham College while waiting to take up a place at City University the following year.

She said: "Within the first moments, as I was getting to know the ethics of nursing, I felt that was it. It fitted like a glove. As much as people call it a vocation, for me it was a career."

Four and a half years experience as a community district nurse in Tower Hamlets changed her life. "I met



June Kibuthu

patients with cancer in joint visits and I was inspired by one of my colleagues. I loved how she spoke to them, with respect, concern, empathy. I walked away saying 'I want to be her'.

In September 2012 June started working in Newham Hospital where she became a Macmillan nurse, and a team leader five years later. Her goal is to break the taboo of end of life care. June said: "I educate all nurses that our patients are not a person who has cancer. It's an individual who had dreams and aspirations before getting cancer. We must do what is best for the person. What can make it a little better for them?"

Active and empathetic listening is crucial. "Patients share their wishes with us, because we are not part of the family, we won't judge them. And then we must encourage the patient to open up to the family about those wishes and we facilitate these conversations.

"You must make an assessment of where the patient is at, where they were before and how the family sees

them. It's a complex dynamic. Children stop sharing concerns with the dad, for example, so the mom has to deal with everything, because dad is not well".

With Covid-19, their work routines changed overnight. June and her team were seeing fewer patients. Instead, they were providing support and chasing them over the phone.

The worst aspect was breaking bad news over the phone. "When we have to tell someone that a loved one has died, in a face-to-face conversation usually the person will be silent for a while and the nurse will share that silence. They need a moment to take in what they have heard. Over the phone the tendency is to keep talking and giving information about the next steps. This is something we had to learn. How to give them that silence and time over the phone."

The greatest takeaway of the pandemic, for June, is the humanity and

feeling of togetherness among the staff. She said: "Seeing each other in the corridors and asking: how are you today? Are you well? We were supporting each other; we were there for each other." Because there is no manual to deal with a pandemic, nurses shared ideas across departments.

The most rewarding thing about June's job is to know she can actually make the difference. Even after leaving care, patients often still get in touch. Even in the worst cases, when the battle against cancer is not won, families sometimes call on the anniversaries of their late loved ones to check in on her and say they are slowly but surely getting back.

Anyone in need of cancer support can call the free Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00**, open 7 days a week, 8am-8pm, or visit **www.macmillan.org.uk**. If you are experiencing cancer symptoms you should contact your GP as a matter of urgency. ●

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GARDEN TALK

Cecilia Cran helps you discover the delights of the sweet pea – and some of Newham’s favourite green escapes

What to grow this month

This month I am planting sweet pea seeds. It is a little later than I would normally like to plant them, but we’ve had such a chilly start to spring, I didn’t want to start them off only to risk the frost getting to them.

Sweet peas are well accustomed to growing in pots, containers, directly in the ground or even from a hanging basket – so they’re a great choice whatever your available growing space.

Relatively low maintenance and simple to grow, get sweet peas right and you’ll be rewarded with an abundance of great smelling, pretty flowers from around mid-June right up until September, and the good news is, the more you pick the flowers, the more they produce!

How to grow

I start by growing the seeds in small seed trays, indoors. I sow them in peat-free compost, placing them 2cm below the soil. Place them in a sunny spot and keep them well – but not over – watered. The seeds should start to germinate in around 2 weeks.

When the plants reach 10cm in height ‘pinch out’ the plants – this means using your fingers to pinch off the top 3–5cm tips of the sweet pea plant down to a leaf. The reason we do this is that it encourages bushy growth and more flowers.

Next, choose where you want to plant them out. Prepare the ground/container with compost and create enough space for the roots of the plant to sit – you don’t need to dig too deep, aim to keep the stem with leaves above soil.

I recommend growing them around 15–20cm apart from each other, as the plants spread and put out suck-

ers, which quickly result in them getting intertwined and can be tough to untangle.

Carefully remove the plants from the seed tray/original container, place your fingers either side of the plant stem to support it and turn upside down, tap the bottom of the container and the plant should come out easily. Avoid pulling the plant out, as you may snap or damage the stem.

Sweet peas will need to be trained up a pole, as they can grow up to 2m high, they produce suckers that will cling to the poles, but sometimes it is good to tie them to the pole to stop the stem drooping and snapping. Feed them with a fertiliser high in potash, this will encourage healthy growth.



Green escape

I really enjoy getting out and about in all the parks and green spaces Newham has to offer. This month, my go to green escape is Central Park. Situated in the East of the borough, it’s been cherished by locals for decades. Originally opened in 1898, it still proves as popular today as it did then.

There are heaps of activities to enjoy – an impressive kids adventure playground, three tennis courts and a couple of ping pong tables, a basketball hoop and a bowls club. If you fancy a more relaxed visit, the park also has a pretty sycamore tree-lined walkway running through the centre and a host of beautiful trees to admire, including silver birch, red oak, pyramidal hornbeam and blossom. Take a wander around the well maintained gardens and admire the pretty flower beds. The park also has a brilliant history trail, documenting (slightly random!) past events – from a spot where people watched a windmill burn down to the place where a miniature railway ran.



Photos courtesy Cecilia Cran



Dr Tom Thurnell-Read



SOMETHING’S BREWING



Going to the pub? It’s not just about the booze, says Phil Mellows

As the pubs slowly open again, what have we missed? There’s fresh draught beer, of course, but more than that we’re coming to realise that the pub has a bigger part to play in our well-being.

Even before successive lockdowns brought an unwanted experiment in life without pubs, one researcher was uncovering their role in tackling loneliness, a growing problem in the modern world that can have an adverse effect on our mental and physical health.

Loughborough University sociologist Dr Tom Thurnell-Read was charged with the job by the Campaign to End Loneliness and his report, sponsored by Pub is the Hub and brewer Heineken UK, came out earlier this year.

Open Arms pulls together evidence from pub-goers and staff to reveal the host of ways pubs bring people together, providing opportunities for those casual brief encounters that make life meaningful, as well as organised events and activities.

It certainly isn’t just about the booze.

“It’s easy to dismiss brief encounters in the pub as unimportant, but we can’t say what a quick chat can do for someone because people feel loneliness in different ways,” says Tom.

“People who are on their own can easily retreat into themselves and become fearful of social contact and it can become a downward spiral. Any close encounter can be meaningful for them and help keep them socially active and confident.”

While older people living alone were a big focus of the research, carers and mothers too found value in a

visit to the pub.

“It gives them something to report, something to talk about to others. These are the small things that keep people feeling positive.”

Tom particularly enjoyed his conversations with people with learning difficulties. “For them, going to the

It’s easy to dismiss brief encounters in the pub as unimportant, but we can’t say what a quick chat can do for someone because people feel loneliness in different ways.

pub made them feel like independent adults.”

Yet he also found groups that felt excluded, “especially in London where you have pubs that have fallen out of synch with their communities. Afro-Caribbean people, for instance, may lose a place to play dominoes when a pub is gentrified.

“You’ll have others who say that the pub isn’t the pub, the way they remember it, but you could also say a lot of pubs have improved in a lot of ways. They’ve become more welcoming to families and people who aren’t drinking.”

Lockdown has been an opportunity for us to reflect on what we value about pubs as social spaces, Tom believes, and it could mean we no longer take them for granted. ●

The story of a girl: *It's my life, let me live it*

YOUTH VOICES OF NEWHAM

I am 24 now. Growing up was never easy, endless worries about the future, overthinking decisions that may affect the future and feeling like I had to be an adult before even becoming an adult. Age is just a number but when do we recognise ourselves as independent adults?

I come from a rather typical South Asian family – eldest of seven siblings with a huge family and social circle. Typically, being female brought certain restrictions. From a young age I realised that being female restricted you in all manners. Every step of your existence had a barrier, from the way you dress to the way you speak, to the extra responsibility you have to keep honour in the family.

It was going at a bearable pace until my teens. I always saw the importance of culture and religion so I complied – despite seeing the often blatant biased rules. Sadly, this same culture and religion (the ugly and darker form) was also the cause of my mother's ill health and mental wellbeing. This over time caused a rupture between my parents and we continued seeing the breakdown of a happy, tight and fun household. When I was 16 my father was forced to leave the family home, which left me and my siblings devastated. We all stayed quiet and had no voice. There seemed to be no intervention by the wider family or society, who my mother was so keen to please. We lost our dear father and we stayed quiet, as we loved our mother equally and wanted to protect her.

While all of this was going on – I continued being patient and internalising my own feelings, wants and needs – I was holding the fort, the family. I became a warrior for my family and gave my all to make sure they were okay. But I was also a kid then. I made mistakes – naturally. When one is young you naturally make mistakes, mistakes are a fact of life, it's the response to that error that matters. At this point in life, everything I did or tried to do felt like a mistake, it was just never



At this point in life, everything I did or tried to do felt like a mistake, it was just never enough for the family.

enough for the family. Trying to be a good daughter, good sister and a good niece but nothing seemed to be working. The external family and society did not come to my aid. There was no light.

At the age of 18, my whole childhood was stuffed into black bin bags and left outside the front door. I had nowhere to go.

I was out in the real world facing real life decisions. Once protected and cotton woolled and hidden from society now, I had to survive sofa surfing, pot noodles and relying on my secondary school friends.

The silver lining is – four years on, I work for an organisation that protects and looks after the most vulnerable children and young people

in our society.

I saw first hand how difficult it is to stand on your own feet as a homeless young person. Local councils turned me away as I didn't fit their categories or criteria. Searching for rooms to rent on different websites was difficult.

I grew up in central London, however it was very expensive. I made the bold decision to move to Newham. It has been the best start to my life and independence.

I have made Newham my home in the last two years. I am proud to say, I have my own home now. At the age of 23, I felt like an adult. Independent. I did it alone. I feel safe now. My journey so far has taught me to stay motivated, to always

seek better in every bad situation. Through my job, I AM the person helping families and children feel safe and work on the best solutions for their family.

I have since reconnected with my father and his side of the family – we were always kept away from them. The re-union was emotive but worth it. Seven years of separation seemed like a lifetime. He did not hesitate to accept me and I will forever respect and love my father for that. He did not question me about my past and what I may have gone through. He said it would be too painful to listen – no child should end up outside the door of a family home with their belongings in bin bags.

It is a blessing that after so many years, fending for myself and feeling alone, I have now got someone who calls me to ask if I've eaten, how I am. And that is precious.

Having my father back in my life was definitely the biggest blessing as he respects the woman I have become. He is a man of honour. As a duo we are stronger and building a much brighter future for us. I now see the beautiful and kinder side of our culture and religion.

The most important lesson I've learnt about life is to never miss an opportunity to grow. Mistakes are a fact of life. It's the response to that error which counts. When you feel alone or isolated from loved ones, seek help or do something that makes you happy. Life is a challenge and we all face challenges at some point – it can only make you stronger. I have worked hard and I did it on my own, but you never have to feel alone, it's good to talk. Some people will not listen but there are people who will and when they do, talking helps clear your mind. Some people are given the opportunity and some people have to work harder for the opportunity but at the end of the day we are all seeking only to better our life. I have learnt to survive in a cruel world, I have gained independence and I have learnt to be hopeful, that there is always light at the end of a dark lonely tunnel. Your hard work will pay off, don't give up just yet.

The author of this article has asked us to withhold her name.

Our coffee shops, cafés and restaurants are looking forward to seeing you now that rules are beginning to relax. Why not pop in, say hi, grab a coffee or a bite to eat.



Scan to access the interactive map online.

Here are a few venues that would welcome your support. Whilst you're there, don't forget to mention 'Newham Voices'.

East Ham

1 Central Park Café

Bartle Avenue, East Ham, London E6 3AJ

Forest Gate

2 Giovanna's Deli & Wine

58 Woodgrange Rd, Forest Gate, London E7 0QH

Manor Park

3 Kaldi Coffee

345 High St North, Manor Park, London E12 6PQ

Plaistow

4 Cornerstone Café

408 Barking Road, Plaistow, London E13 8HJ

Stratford

5 Calabash restaurant

22 Vicarage Lane, Stratford, London E15 4ES

6 Olive and Lemon Mediterranean Café

30 Broadway, Stratford E15 4QS

7 Sawmill Café

51-53 West Ham Lane, Stratford E15 4PH

8 Jollof Hut

65a North Mall, Shopping Centre, Stratford, E15 1XF

9 The Refreshment Room

25 Broadway, Stratford, E15 4BQ

You can order indoors at hospitality venues but must eat outdoors only. Where alcohol is served, customers must be seated. Scan the code to learn more.



Spotlight on Charities: Our monthly focus on community groups

BPCA

Bangladeshi Parents and Carers Association (BPCA)

Our mission is to promote the well-being and independence of adults with multiple disabilities living in east London. We do this by providing tailored support and care in our day centres. Our services are for people of all backgrounds. We like to dance, create, make new friends, support independence, and empower community involvement.

info@bpcaonline.org.uk

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Dockland Settlements

The Carpenters & Docklands Community Centre

The Carpenters & Docklands Community Centre offers a variety of activities for people of all ages including: pre and after-school playcare where we drop off and collect your children from school; free activities for the elderly including ballroom dancing and art classes; adult disability football; baby

sensory groups; a food and clothes bank and much more. We also have a sports hall, dojo and halls for hire.

samantha.white@docklandsettlements.org.uk

0208 534 4121



Our time

Our Time supports young people whose parents have a mental health issue. Working in communities and schools, we help young people and their families to better understand mental illness, and to feel positive about their relationships and the future. Go to our website for more information about our Newham project.

www.ourtime.org.uk

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Healthwatch Newham

We are here to help local people get the best out of their health and social care services. Our vision is that Newham residents can contribute to

the development of quality health and social care services in Newham.

We run, co-ordinate and support events, projects and activities. We gather information and feedback from patients and use this to influence decision makers.

info@healthwatchnewham.co.uk

020 3866 2969

www.healthwatchnewham.co.uk



Hope 4 Humanity

Hope 4 Humanity has been serving the people in Newham who need support with food as well as prescription collection and delivery service for those who are isolating. Our support is targeted at No Right to Public Funds families and individuals, international students, asylum seekers, the homeless, unemployed, low income and others. CIC no: 13165283

hopeforhumanity@gmail.com

@HopeForHumanity16

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For volunteering and donations

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The Renewal Programme

Renewal Programme

Newham Community Renewal Programme, also known as the Renewal Programme, is a charity based in Newham. Founded in 1971, we have worked with the community, council, local businesses and other local charities for 50 years to transform and empower individuals for a stronger borough.

digital@renewalprogramme.org.uk

Trinity Centre

The Trinity Centre

Trinity helps residents to create better lives for themselves. We provide services people turn to when they need help: tackling loneliness by bringing people together, educating those with little education, providing a safe place for the vulnerable, and supporting people to settle into a new life in a new country.

paul@thetrinitycentre.org

Shops, docks and factories: It's our urban heritage

TANYA MEHMET

Following its success last year, Newham Heritage Month is returning in May. The theme this year is *Shops, Docks and Factories - Newham's Urban Heritage*. The month-long celebration will showcase the rich and diverse heritage of Newham and will take place between 1-31 May.

Events taking place across the borough include live performances, creative workshops and history sessions. Families can catch a free family show at two Newham libraries at the end of May.

Pākiki Theatre, which has teamed up with Discover Children's Story Centre, will host a free family event called "The Knowing Newham Hero Hunt" on 22 and 23 May at East Ham and Stratford libraries. On both days, young children and their families can enjoy a free performance followed by an optional free workshop/activity to hunt for Newham's hidden heroes.

For more details and to book, visit: www.pakikitheatre.co.uk/copy-of-



Image from the Shops, Docks and Factories – A Musical Celebration event

the-big-herts-hero-hunt

For those who are passionate about poetry, Newham Poetry Group will be hosting a free creative writing

session at Stratford Park Pavilion on Friday 21 May. Join Newham Poetry Group for a creative writing/poem session followed by a reading ses-

sion which will be inspired by both Queens and Stratford Market/s. The event will begin at 4.30pm and will be BSL interpreted.

If you are a budding photographer, ActiveNewham are also looking for Community Volunteer Photographers for Newham Heritage Month to photograph shops, docks and factories. To sign up for this opportunity visit https://volunteers.activenewham.org.uk/vk/volunteers/my_opportunities_info_ur.htm?pid=10170600

If you aren't ready to venture outside just yet, don't worry because events will also take place online to celebrate the occasion. On Saturday 8 May, Darning Newham will be hosting a free creative workshop which will take place online. Adults and children will have the opportunity to learn a new skill and explore different drawing techniques which can then be transferred onto fabrics.

For more information about Newham Heritage Month and for more information about events taking place including those mentioned above, visit: www.newhamheritagemonth.org. Alternatively, you can also visit: eventbrite.co.uk/o/newham-heritage-month-29615917329

If you would like to write a short review of any Newham Heritage Month events, please contact: info@newhamvoices.co.uk

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Ex-player urges young people to sign up for Duke of Edinburgh Awards

JEAN GRAY

Former Chelsea footballer Mickey Ambrose has urged Newham's young people to sign up for the Duke of Edinburgh Awards as part of a tribute he paid to Prince Philip before the recent royal funeral.

Mickey, who grew up in Canning Town and Poplar but now lives in Stratford, is an Ambassador for the awards and is pictured here with his mum Mona and the Duke of Edinburgh at St James's Palace in November 2010, just a month before she died.

Speaking to Victoria Derbyshire on BBC News, Mickey said the visit had meant the world to his Dominica-born mum, a great fan of the royal family.

He told *Newham Voices*: "She was my rock and my soulmate, an amazing woman, and I am so glad she got



Micky Ambrose meets Prince Philip

to meet HRH the Duke of Edinburgh at the palace.'

Of the Duke's work with the awards, Mickey said he witnessed the fantastic rapport the Duke had with 14-24 year olds taking part in the scheme. "He was really engaged with them and used his own experience of standing shoulder to shoulder with others fighting a war for democracy to inspire young people today.

"I would urge all young people to go to the Duke of Edinburgh Awards website and get the information they need to sign up. It will give you resilience and skills that will stay with you for the rest of your life. Young people from 140 countries and all cultures have benefitted and it can do the same for you."

<https://www.dofe.org>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YiSThQ-j8jI>

A knockout Royal: The Prince and West Ham's boxing club

George Minney, former Secretary of West Ham Boxing Club, now aged 80, has fond memories of when he showed Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, and then Patron of the National Association of Boys Clubs, around the club which was based at the Black Lion pub in Plaistow, in 1982. George was club secretary until 1983 when he moved to Cambridgeshire.



George Minney welcoming Prince Phillip to the club. Also pictured is Captain Myers MBE, JP standing in front of the window in the black suit. Captain Myers was a founder member of the club.

Clapton CFC to honour first black British army officer with 'lost' plaque

NEANDRA ETIENNE

An unofficial plaque commissioned by Forest Gate residents to honour Walter Tull will be restored to the Old Spotted Dog football ground more than six years after it was taken down.

Before he was called up to fight during World War One, Walter Tull, (28 April 1888 - 25 March 1918) the first Black officer to serve in the British army, was a professional footballer.

Walter was signed to Clapton, also known as 'The Tons', for one season from 1908-09. He played at their Old Spotted Dog Ground in Forest Gate and during this time, Walter, known as Clapton's catch of the season, helped the club to achieve great success. The club won the FA Amateur Cup, London County Amateur Cup and London Senior Cup. Walter also went on to play for Tottenham Hotspur and Northampton Town. He was tragically killed in action in 1918.

In March 2015 local Forest Gate residents decided to acknowledge Walter's contribution to the club by commissioning an unofficial blue plaque, which was placed on a wooden frame outside the Old Spotted Dog Ground. Unfortunately the plaque was taken down by



© waltertull.org

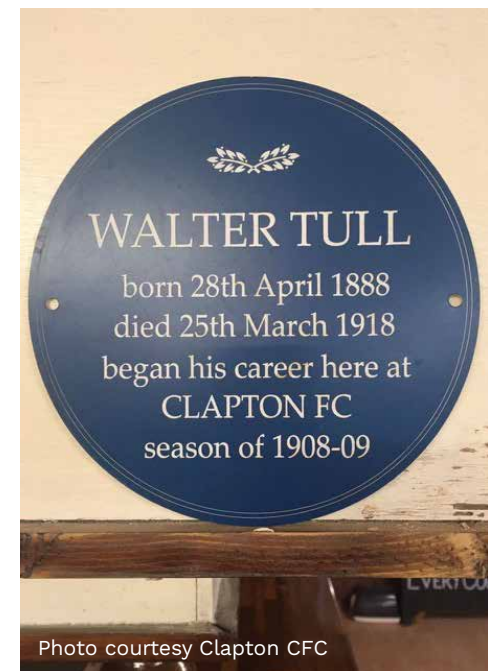


Photo courtesy Clapton CFC

Clapton FC chief executive Vince McBean. On the Clapton CFC History blog they explain the reason why Mr McBean removed it:

"The Walter Tull signage placed on the gate at the Old Spotted Dog, was without our approval or any discussion with us. It was therefore removed."

Nothing was known of the plaque and it was presumed lost for good. That was until it was discovered

behind the bar in the Old Spotted Dog Clubhouse by Clapton CFC members in July 2020.

Along with the plaque, Clapton History group also commissioned local painter Ian McNulty and trade union banner maker Ed Hall to make a Walter Tull banner.

Clapton CFC plan to debut the plaque and banners at the Old Spotted Dog Ground when it is safe to do so.

www.claptoncfc.co.uk