

**Hammer triumph!
Europe beckons for
West Ham Utd**

Page 16

**After Covid, an
urgent plea for
foster carers**

Page 13

**Art of the
imagination on
display this summer**

Page 15

Homelessness and jobs crisis looms as Newham opens up

AIDAN WHITE

Newham is launching plans to tackle rough sleeping as vulnerable people in the Borough face a wave of job losses, household evictions and homelessness in the coming months.

As the country emerges from lockdown a report by London Councils, a cross-party group representing local authorities in London, warns of “a fast-approaching summer wave of homelessness in the capital” due to rising unemployment, the end of the eviction ban and inadequate homelessness funding.

Newham is already a national jobless hotspot with an unemployment rate higher than the average for the rest of the country and that of London.

It has one of the highest levels of homelessness and has seen a dramatic spike in benefit claims. There are around 27,000 people on the council home waiting list.

In May Newham council leaders earmarked urgent cash to tackle homelessness and announced a new housing strategy.

The council also says it is on track to beat its previously set target of starting 1,000 new council homes by next year, with the expectation that it will have started 1,782 homes by next year, of which 1,056 will be for social rent.

The strategy, which includes a £96 million programme to repair and improve council homes, also aims to reduce the need for temporary accommodation with the launch of a new Integrated Rough Sleeper Support Service and more than £3 million invested in a new Homeless Assessment and Shelter facility.

“The homelessness crisis is a massive nut to crack,” said Amanda



Amanda Dubarry

“The homelessness crisis is a massive nut to crack...”

Dubarry, Chief Executive of Caritas Anchor House, the Canning Town-based homeless charity.

Commenting on the new support service, she said, “This hasn’t been done before, and includes provision for a new flagship assessment centre which will provide significant extra capacity.”

But for a longer-term solution she says “a wider systemic change nationally” is needed to help Newham overcome the crisis.

She says the council has done good work over the past two years but warns the situation is likely to get worse.

“We’ve started to see a slow and steady rise in the number of people sleeping rough in Newham,” she said, “and with around two thirds of rough sleepers having no recourse to public funds we are particularly concerned that the Borough may struggle to end rough sleeping.”

Recent research from the London School of Economics (LSE) has also found that 400,000 Londoners,

including many families in Newham, are in significant rent arrears as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

Commenting on the prospect of a post-lockdown social crisis, Darren Rodwell, deputy chair and executive member for housing and planning at London Councils, said: “We need the government to rethink its welfare policies and to boost long-term funding for local services if we’re to reverse these disastrous trends.” ●



www.caritasanchorhouse.org.uk
info@caritasanchorhouse.org.uk

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Success! But EU citizens face deadline

June 30 is deadline day for applications for European Union citizens living in the UK to apply for settled status. **Charlotte Hall**, reports on one success story

Veronika Alblova from the Czech Republic has been living in London for nearly 8 years, first as a student then as a waitress. She applied to the EUSS and has now received Settled Status.

“I don’t think there’s been enough awareness by the government about the scheme. I was notified



Veronika Alblova

by my university and my employer about the EUSS, but I can imagine that people who aren’t told by their employers, who don’t speak fluent English or who lack access to the internet might not know about the deadline. I found the process easy and straight forward - I scanned my passport

in the app and the application was complete within 30 minutes. I just saw it as a formality that needed to be done. When the UK voted to leave the EU, I was surprised. London is a very multicultural city and I’ve never felt unwelcome, but I have friends living in other parts of the country who have experienced hostility after Brexit.” ●

The clock is ticking
See page 5 >



By local people, for local people

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

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Help us to give Newham an independent voice

Democracy is breaking out across Newham – we have voted for the Mayoral system in a referendum and this month a permanent citizens assembly (England's first) will meet. It's a crucial moment in the Borough's history and we at *Newham Voices*, are proud to be part of it. We launched in the teeth of the pandemic and after almost a year we are now your established community voice – highlighting the humanity, solidarity and powerful energy of people who make Newham Britain's most diverse and vibrant community.

But we need your support to survive. We have no corporate backers and we don't aim to make a profit, and we have bills of around £3,000 a month to meet, so every penny you can give, no matter how small, is important. Become a supporter today – just £5 a month from individuals, or £15 a month from organisations will go a long way to strengthening the voice of our community and we will deliver a copy to you every month. Above all, get involved. Contact us at info@newhamvoices.co.uk. – Aidan White, Publisher

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Stronger local communities must be our lockdown legacy

JEAN GRAY

People in Newham long to belong to a strong community. That is the legacy of lockdown, according to a new report by Bonny Downs Community Association (BDCA).

The wide-ranging report, *Voices for Change*, looked at people's lockdown experiences, the fear and anxiety created by factors such as job loss, food insecurity and the need to turn their homes into both an office and a school. But researchers also asked what they had been grateful for. Answers have revealed a desire for strong local connections to combat loneliness and support mental health as we emerge from the pandemic.

Based on research involving face to face peer interviews, online questionnaires, free flowing narratives and creative input, the report looks at eight areas: loneliness and isolation; mental health and wellbeing; physical health; employment; food insecurity; money; children and young people; the environment.

Steve Bynon, *Voices for Change* consultation co-ordinator at BDCA, said he had been struck by how, within Newham, so many people had experienced "falling off the edge, with sup-

port mechanisms under strain. The level of need was amazing".

The BDCA Food Hub assisted over 3889 people between April and June 2020, up from 622 for January to March, an increase of 625 per cent. Many of those attending were in desperate need with no recourse to public funds as job losses hit. Some turned to food banks for the first time and the service became a lifeline.



Photo Courtesy: Bonny Downs

One person who took part in the research wrote: "We found ourselves needing food bank help. I decided to donate my time and volunteer here, so I don't feel ashamed of getting food for free. Yes, I stopped shielding and risked my partner's health, however, I healed my mental health. I found support and a motivation to get up every morning and help feeding families like ours."

Among the wish list for future services are:

- More local community activities that bring people together
- Mental health support groups, counselling and wellness sessions
- Sports, fitness and dance activities for all ages with some for specific groups such as women and girls
- More support to get people into work
- Schemes to provide budgetary and financial literacy, advocacy and help accessing available support
- More culturally appropriate food at food banks

The findings will help develop BDCA's next 5-year plan. Steve Bynon added: "We want to keep the conversation going as things change and people's needs change. We will



Photo Courtesy: Bonny Downs

"We found ourselves needing food bank help. I decided to donate my time and volunteer here, so I don't feel ashamed of getting food for free."

create an exhibition online and at various venues so that we can keep adapting and learning. We also want to make this work available to other community groups in the area." ●

Visit: www.bonnydowns.org/news/

School uniforms, a computer or work experience: how a new charity aims to support deprived children

A new charity providing support for Newham's most deprived children is looking for volunteers who can help boost their chances of a good start in life.

Start Young UK is in the process of being registered with the Charities Commission. It is the brainchild of local residents Angela Caroo, Marilyn Matthews and Ricky O'Garro.

Angela said: "Many people just don't realise how many deprived children there are in our Borough. We want to bring that to people's attention and rally as many volunteers as possible to do what we can to give them the things they need. They just don't have the basics like school uniforms and computers. But it is more than that, we want to give people the opportunity to sponsor a child and we are looking for volunteers who can mentor them or provide work experience opportunities."

The venture is still in its early stages with a registered charity num-

ber imminent. The team has already been working to get support from local organisations like the Scouts, churches and companies. Children will be referred through schools and other educational settings.

The idea came after Christmas when they decided to 30 gift parcels to two nearby schools, but were inundated with requests for help from 100 families. In the end they provided 400 parcels.

According to the charity Trust for London, more than half of Newham's children live in poverty, 52 per cent compared with 38 per cent in typical London boroughs.

If you would like to get involved in Start Young UK or can offer basic items and services, please contact: startyounguk21@gmail.com

They particularly keen for support in the following areas:

- Tech & Web Design
- Sponsor Buddies

"We want to give people the opportunity to sponsor a child and we are looking for volunteers who can mentor them or provide work experience."

- Companies that would like to support/sponsor
- Admin Staff
- Accountants who would like to support
- Local Businesses
- Uniform suppliers
- Parents that have second hand uniform
- Funding opportunities



Angela Caroo



Marilyn Matthews



Photo of Raheel Butt ©Andrew Baker

Street-wise campaigner aims to keep youngsters safe

AIDAN WHITE

Two horrifying murders on the streets of Canning Town in the last weeks have reignited fears that despite evidence of a fall in violent crime figures, parts of Newham where gangs operate remain high-risk areas for young men.

One man aiming to reduce the risks is Raheel Butt, aged 36, a street-wise campaigner who in 2020 opened up a gym in Plaistow to provide a refuge for school-age youngsters under pressure to join gangs or to take drugs.

He warns that recent declines in street violence may be temporary. “There is a narrative that less violence is happening,” he says, “but the reality is different. I’m sure that levels of violence will rise sharply in the period after the pandemic.”

His fears were reinforced by the killing of Fares Maatou, aged 14, and 18-year-old Abubakkar (Junior) Jah, within three days of each other in Canning Town at the end of April.

Raheel has deep insider knowledge of this crisis. As a pre-teen child in Newham coming from a home with a violent father and a mother struggling to provide for her family, he knows only too well the dangers that youngsters face.

As a young boy he went off the rails, found himself caught up with gangs, and was sent to prison in his 20s for violent crime.

In 2013 he made his break with the past and decided to focus on charitable work and to confront personal challenges he faced on leaving prison. Raheel invested in converting a garage in Plaistow close to nearby Lister School into a gym for young people and sold his house to pay for it.

Now he describes himself as “a pracademic,” combining an academic life – he’s doing a master’s degree in criminology at Middlesex University – with a passionate desire to help young people.

“The gym has become my retreat. It’s my place of refuge.”

One 14-year-old at the gym told *Newham Voices*: “I used to weigh 120 kilos and because I’m so big I was always being asked to join gangs. I’ve been asked to do drugs,” he said. “I know that if you’re by yourself on the streets you can become a target.

“The gym has become my retreat. It’s my place of refuge. I definitely

feel more comfortable here than being in school.”

Another young man, also 14, who has dreams of becoming a teenage entrepreneur, agreed: “This place really helps. I want to also help people if I can.” He is already working on plans to become an investment trader and is “making a little bit of profit”.

Raheel believes his gym can make a difference, but he is frustrated by a perceived lack of support from the local community. “We expect local politicians to be queuing up outside our door to help,” he says, “but they’re nowhere to be seen, why is that?”

His frustration is further reinforced by the unpleasant news of a £1000 fine for breaching Covid restrictions, even though he says he has created a socially-distanced and safe environment and is not opening the gym to general use.

But undaunted, his gym will be re-opened in June. “I’m prepared to work with community groups and the council to give our young people the support they need, but we need also to see a willingness from council services to work with us,” he said. “I hope it will come soon.” ●

Compound Gym, Eastern Road, Plaistow 0745 49 12345



VIEW FROM MY WARD

Forest Gate North
Councillor Rachel Tripp

Forest Gate North sits right at the top of the borough. To the west is the bustle and the development of Stratford, to the north the peaceful wide open spaces of Wanstead Flats with assorted dog walkers, football players, and skylarks.



Rachel Tripp

But it’s the people of Forest Gate who make this such a special place.

It’s the residents of Forest Gate who run our Saturday market, with stalls selling food, books, crafts and more. Residents run the yearly Forest Gate Festival. Although Forest Gate Community Garden is outside the ward, many of our residents help to run this quirky green spot, and are also involved in planting up community flowerbeds (*See page 6!*). Forest Gate Arts is testament to how many Forest Gaters are creative, whilst Forest Gate WI demonstrates the voice and diverse interests of our female residents. We have a whole series of small businesses, mainly but not entirely food-based, springing up in the railway arches. We are all particularly proud of Forest Gaye Pride, a yearly celebration of our LGBTQ+ friends and neighbours which also educates us about equal rights and how these are fought for.

Forest Gate is full of families with small children, of multi-generational households, of people moving from elsewhere in East London, but also large numbers of people who are East End born and bred.

Forest Gate North faces many of the challenges of the rest of Newham: poverty, the high cost of housing, the economic impact of Covid. But Forest Gaters are notable for their community-mindedness, their kindness, their concern for the environment, their scepticism of being told what to do, a certain off-beat humour, and a pleasantly anarchic sense of independence. Please do come and visit our market on Sebert Road on a Saturday to see all of this for yourself.

Clock is ticking for 30,000 on EU settlement scheme

After 30 June, EU nationals who haven't applied for status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) face losing their rights to live and work in the UK. Local charities estimate that 30,000 vulnerable and isolated EU citizens in Newham are at risk if they don't apply in time. **Charlotte Hall** reports.

There is less than a month before the government's controversial application scheme, which was introduced in response to the UK leaving the EU, closes.

Once an EU citizen has applied to the EUSS, they will be granted Settled Status provided they have lived in the UK for five years. Those who have not will be granted Pre-Settled Status and will need to apply again to claim Settled Status once they reach five years.

The date of 30 June will mean that from one day to the next, thousands of EU nationals could, unbeknown to them, become illegal immigrants and potentially could lose their rights to live, work, rent and access benefits and services, including healthcare, in the UK.

Critics of the scheme have said that the most marginalised, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in society face the greatest risk of slipping through the cracks. With the application process purely digital and with government awareness campaigns run only on mainstream media, charities have warned that these factors could alienate and exclude residents who consume news elsewhere and those who have low digital and literacy skills.

One major group likely to be affected are elderly residents who are long-established in the UK. Children are another at-risk group as many parents are unaware that they need to make a separate application. As for children in care, they are dependent on the Council to be applying on their behalf. If an adult doesn't register a child through negligence, then that child could lose their legal rights through no fault of their own.

Stephen Timms, MP for East Ham, said: "I encourage all Newham residents from the EU to urgently apply to the EUSS before the 30th of June if they wish to stay in the UK. The deadline is strict and I don't want to see my constituents lose their right to live and work in Newham due to a lack of awareness of the scheme."

The Renewal Programme, a charity in East Ham, is part of the consortium of 10 Newham organisations and charities who have launched the 'Stay Settled in Newham' campaign, to raise awareness and to provide advice and support. With the deadline looming and awareness still low



amongst vulnerable groups, they are urging EU residents to get in touch for support in their applications. After the 30th June, those who have not

applied will become undocumented. Visit renewalprogramme.org.uk or call the helpline on 0808 196 3510 for advice and support. ●

What you need to know to apply

Who should apply?

You need to apply if:

- You are an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen
- You are not an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen but your family member is.

You need to apply even if you:

- were born in the UK but are not a British citizen
- have a UK 'permanent residence document'
- are a family member of an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen who does not need to apply – including if they're from Ireland
- are an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen with a British citizen family member

Please note, if you have children, you still need to apply for them separately. Each child will need their own application.

When to apply?

Applications must be made before 30th June 2021.

How to apply?

Apply for free on the Government website:

<http://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families>

How to get free support?

Newham charity Renewal Programme can assist you in your application:

- EUSS Bilingual Helpline: **0808 196 3510**
- EUSS Support E-mail: staysettledinnewham@gmail.com

There is help to Stay Settled

Newham Council has commissioned a consortium of partners to provide FREE support to vulnerable residents through their EU Settled Status application.

The Renewal Programme, a registered Newham-based charity, is leading the consortium, drawing on 50 years' experience supporting marginalised people. They will be working with partners, including HEALTOGETHER CIC, Roma Support Group, Work Rights Centre, New Europeans, Skills Enterprise, Shpresa Programme, East End CAB and One Newham to provide free help, digital and technical support, guidance and immigration advice.

The consortium is asking local people to consider those around them and ask the following:

- Do you need to complete the application process?
- Have you applied for either pre or settled status?

If there's even the slightest hint of confusion or uncertainty, help is available from the 'Stay Settled in Newham' Support Team.

Multilingual Helpline: **0808 196 3510**; Email: staysettledinnewham@gmail.com; Web: www.renewalprogramme.org.uk

Fact File

EU residents in Newham

- ▶ Approx population of Newham: 364,346*
- ▶ Approx 62,000 residents in Newham are from the EU, which accounts for over 17 per cent of the Borough's total population.

In Newham, up to December 2020:

- ▶ 117,360 applications have been made to the Home Office for Newham, the local authority with the most applications in the country.
- ▶ Highest proportions of applications by nationality in Newham:
 - 30 per cent from Romania
 - 14 per cent Italy
 - 8.5 per cent Non-EEA
 - 8 per cent Lithuania
 - 7 per cent Portugal
 - 6 per cent Bulgaria
 - 5.8 per cent Spain
 - 5 per cent Poland

- ▶ 48,930 (45 per cent of total concluded applications) people have been granted Settled Status

- ▶ 55,670 (52 per cent of total concluded applications) people granted Pre-Settled Status and will need to apply again over next 5 years

*Stats are dated from 2019 taken from www.newham.info/population/



GARDEN TALK

It's not too late to ensure a burst of colour that will take you through to autumn, says Cecilia Cran

What to grow

This month, I am planting cosmos – hands down, one of my all-time favourite flowers. It is late to start growing things from scratch, but after such an arctic spring, I was worried seedlings wouldn't survive and decided to wait a little longer than usual to get planting.

Cosmos come in a whole host of vibrant and pastel shades of pinks and whites, brighten up any outdoor space, whether in a pot or as part of your garden border or flower bed design and they are fabulous pollinators, so bees and butterflies love them. Getting them started now will mean you have flowers from mid-late August and as long as you feed the plants every couple of weeks with a liquid tomato fertiliser, pick and deadhead the flowers, you'll be furnished with beautiful blooms right through until the first frost comes November time.



How to grow

I start by growing the seeds in small seed trays, indoors. I sow them in peat free, multi-purpose compost, placing them 2cm below the soil, putting them in a sunny spot ensuring they are well – but not over – watered. The seeds should start to germinate in around 2 weeks and you should get your first flower within the first 8 weeks.

When the plants reach 10cm in height, 'pinch out' the plants – this means carefully, using your fingers or a pair of sharp scissors to cut off the top 3–5cm tips of the plant down to a leaf. When you first do it, it feels totally alien, but trust me on this one, you'll reap the rewards! Pinching out encourages bushy growth and most importantly, more fabulous flowers.

Next, choose where you want to plant them out – they like sunny spots, with good drainage. 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 20cm apart from each other.

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.

Green escape

While on one of my many walks in the Borough since we have been in lockdown, I discovered the Forest Gate Community Garden. It was a joy to come across this wonderful green oasis, full of beautiful plants, hugely friendly local volunteers and garden experts.

Years ago, the space was originally the site of a Victorian villa, before it fell into disrepair, grew massively overgrown and became a hot spot for fly-tipping. But with the passion and commitment of a small group of locals, the Forest Gate Community Garden was born, opening to the public in 2016.

The gardens are reasonably small, but perfectly formed and very well maintained. They have a fabulous range of plants to see and it's a little haven for wildlife too. They have also been brilliantly creative with designing the gardens which feature amongst other things, a huge snail mosaic and a wall of colourful, old doors. It's the perfect slice of tranquillity in the hustle and bustle of Newham.

They run a series of events from workshops designed to encourage wildlife into your garden and how to compost to growing rhubarb and plant sales. The gardens are cared for by volunteers and are open to anyone and everyone. I guarantee you will be met with the warmest welcome. All info on their fabulous sessions can be found on their website: www.fgcommunitygarden.org

Photos courtesy Cecilia Cran



SOMETHING'S BREWING



It's great to be back in the pub, but we all need to do our part to keep them open, says Phil Mellows

Whether or not you're a regular pub-goer, the resumption of indoor drinking on May 17 was a major milestone on the government's roadmap out of lockdown. Most of our pubs are now open again and that tells us a lot about the progress we've made in suppressing the pandemic.

The mood of celebration, though, is mingling uncomfortably with concerns about a resurgence of the

ature of customers at the door. The new cleaning regimes will hopefully become a good habit.

The government's guidance on safe reopening is, in fact, 64 pages long. But it's important to remember these are not just a set of boring rules. Behind them are people trying to do the best job they can.

Pub staff have come through more than a year of uncertainty about their jobs as Covid-19 policies have

This is a dangerous moment, and both pubs and their customers have a big part to play in trying to make sure we negotiate reopening as safely as possible.

virus, thanks to the spread of the variant that was first identified in India and the many people who have yet to be vaccinated.

This is a dangerous moment, and both pubs and their customers have a big part to play in trying to make sure we negotiate reopening as safely as possible.

At least we have the experience of last summer's unlocking and the then strange experience for pub regulars of being required to register their details, order at table and follow social distancing rules.

Most pubs rose admirably to the challenge, many adding protective screens and one-way systems. On the tables, pints mingled with bottles of hand sanitiser and some went so far as to check the temper-

twisted and turned. They have been trained in unfamiliar ways of working and taken on the difficult responsibility for making sure customers behave safely.

Unite, the union which represents hospitality staff, has issued a plea for pub-goers to respect the people behind the bar and waiting tables, but perhaps we can go further than that.

As pub customers we have our part to play in making sure our trip to the local is safe, as well as fun. And in the end we are on the same side as pub staff. The survival of our pubs is by no means secured. While social distancing lasts, most will find it hard to turn a profit. Getting through the next few weeks will be crucial.

Along with that pint, the future of the pub is in your hands. ●



Photo by Amie Johnson/Unsplash

NHS privatisation: when it becomes about profit not people

Last month's report on the sale of GP practices to a profit-seeking US corporation raised fears of further privatisation of the NHS. Here **Phil Edwards**, joint secretary of Newham Save Our NHS, outlines the threats to our health service.

Following a recent successful protest outside of Operose Headquarters in Cavendish Street recently we have detected a lot of media interest in the takeover of 58 GP practices by Operose, which is a subsidiary of the US company Centene.

As a member of Newham Save Our NHS I was interviewed three times and filmed on video networks alongside other speakers including Jackie Applebee, GP activist from Tower Hamlets, and Jeremy Corbyn. The message we were presenting was common: this Tory Government has for a long time had close relations with Operose and this involvement at the highest levels opened the way for the selling of AT Medics, as described in *Newham Voices*, and to the wholesale privatisation and restructuring of the NHS, under the cover of the pandemic.

We are now concerned that the current Government White paper, which pretends to rationalise and dismantle the 2012 Health and Social Care Act for the benefit of the NHS will in fact act as a statutory



instrument for further restructuring the NHS with a view to wholesale privatisation.

At the heart of this is the necessity to give statutory backing to the setting up of ICS's (Integrated Care Systems) and the centralisation of health and social care delivery which will bring GPs into this sys-

tem under a common contract.

The complexity of some of these issues frightens many people who are rightly concerned that what is happening is not just confusing but involves decisions being made without consultation. Nobody asked patients or even local Government about the takeover of 11 GP prac-

sold to Operose, had facilitated a takeover. These contracts effectively allowed, since 2004, for GP hubs to transform themselves into private companies. The rest was simple. They just sold the company to another corporation (Operose) and then changed the directors. At the heart of all this, as the BMA has pointed out, is the commercialisation of PCNs (Primary Care networks) which will merge local health services including GPs, under a single contract and a single budget.

We have to resist the White Paper. If it goes through then huge integrated care systems under a single budget will transform our local health services into corporate profit making partnerships involving more and more private companies.

The end result will be something resembling an American Health Insurance system. It is no accident that Samantha Jones, who held directorships under Centene, is now advising Boris Johnson as an NHS consultant. She and he both agree on pursuing a relentless drive to privatising whole swathes of the NHS. To support this effort write to your councillors and MPs. Follow our Facebook page and become involved in our protests and discussions. This is your NHS. ●

NHS Newham Sell-off: 'A quality service will remain'

AIDAN WHITE

A meeting of councillors, local activists, doctors and Newham Clinical Commissioning group to examine how ownership of some Newham GP practices was transferred to an American health corporation has been told that there were no legal grounds to block the sell-off.

East Ham MP Stephen Timms, who attended the meeting, said: "The transaction itself doesn't give rise to any cause for concerns, but there are questions in the long-term about where this is heading."

As reported last month, 49 GP surgeries and over 370,000 patients in the Greater London area, including six GP practices in Stratford, Canning Town, Manor Park and North Woolwich have been transferred into the hands of Operose Health, a firm owned by US health insurance giant Centene.

The transfer was "nodded through" by Clinical Commissioning Groups

responsible for management and oversight of GP practices with NHS contracts.

Campaigners say the transfer was agreed by 13 CCGs across London, including Newham, under the cover of the pandemic without proper scrutiny and no public meetings.

Also present at the meeting were the council's cabinet lead on health, councillor Zulfiqar Ali and councillors Salim Patel and Susan Masters, as well as Newham Save Our NHS and doctors from the AT Medics group who previously owned the GPs network.

Timms said that AT Medics had "done a good job" helping to build a viable network of GP practices. The meeting was told high quality health care will be maintained. The arrangements will be reviewed when existing time-limited contracts with the NHS come up for renewal.

"Nevertheless, there is a question of why an American corporation with its own chequered reputation

in the US would want to own East London GP practices," said Timms. "It's clear that another UK govern-

ment with a different perspective will be the only way of protecting the future of the NHS."



5 STEPS FOR COVID-19 WELLBEING

STAY SAFE



- Wear your face covering
- Wash your hands regularly
- Stay 2m apart
- Open windows
- Meet people outside

BE KIND



- Stay active and eat a healthy diet
- Ask for help if you're feeling down, anxious or stressed
- Go to your health and care appointments
- Look after each other

STAY HOME



If you or someone you live with has symptoms or tests positive, we can help with:

- Shopping & food
- Financial advice
- Keeping you safe
- Isolation accommodation
- Befriending

GET TESTED



- Always if you have symptoms; stay home while you wait for results
- Twice a week with rapid tests if you have no symptoms

www.newham.gov.uk/testing

GET VACCINATED



- Book when you're eligible
- Contact our Vaccine Peer Supporters
- Book a Q&A session for your community group

www.newham.gov.uk/bookyourvaccine

www.newham.gov.uk/coronavirus

Windrush Day: cold weather and dull skies are sweet memories for nurse Mary

NOAH ENAHORO

June 22nd this year marks 73 years since the troopship *Empire Windrush* docked at Tilbury in Essex. It arrived in 1948 carrying nearly 500 history-making passengers from the West Indies, all Commonwealth citizens arriving to live, work, and raise families in post-war Britain.

Caribbeans who came to the UK between 1948 to 1971 are known as the 'Windrush Generation.' Their legacy and contribution are firmly entrenched in the fabric of Britain's history.

Mary Richards, her sister, and several other children came to Newham to join their families in 1969.

She's lived in Newham for over 50 years, and *Newham Voices* had the privilege of speaking with her.

"When I came to England it was freezing! My first impression was that this place was dark and dingy. Coming from Jamaica, I imagined England would be the same, with bright colours, mango trees and warm weather. I didn't imagine how cold it would be! I've gotten used to the weather here," she said. "I actually like the snow, but I do miss the Jamaican sunshine."

At 13, Mary went to Deanery High School for Girls in Stratford (now known as Sarah Bonnell) where she forged life-long friendships.

She qualified as a nurse, training



Mary Richards

in Chadwell Heath and Newbury Park in the '70s, and worked in hospitals in Essex and East London, including King George's and Whipps Cross.

"At first I didn't want to be a nurse;

it wasn't something I imagined myself doing. However, after taking the course, it turned out to be really fun and I'm glad that I went into nursing. I was able to achieve the

goal I had set out to accomplish.

"I lived in the nurse's home and enjoyed the company of the other nurses. There was a strong sense of community".

Today, with the pandemic altering so many lives, Mary's caring nature is at the forefront again.

"Windrush Day is every day. They were here, we are here. Black history should be taught throughout the year".

She is a trustee of the Hibiscus Elderly Association, opened in 1994 in response to the lack of social and leisure facilities for elderly African and Caribbean Newham residents. She does it "to give back to the community".

"I volunteer twice a week, helping and caring for the elderly. During the first lockdown we delivered food to our clients, and we meet up on Zoom for Zumba as well as chair-based exercises".

Ending the interview Mary said: "Windrush Day is every day. They were here, we are here. Black history should be taught throughout the year". ●

Winston Vaughan is "the face of Newham"

Forest Gate councillor Winston Vaughan has been elected Chair of Newham Council – a new ceremonial role that will see him representing the Borough in numerous community events and activities over the coming months.

Winston, who has been a councillor for 23 years, will represent the Council at civic events while the executive leadership of the Borough remains the responsibility of Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz.

He came to London as a teenager after being recruited into the armed forces in Barbados in 1962.

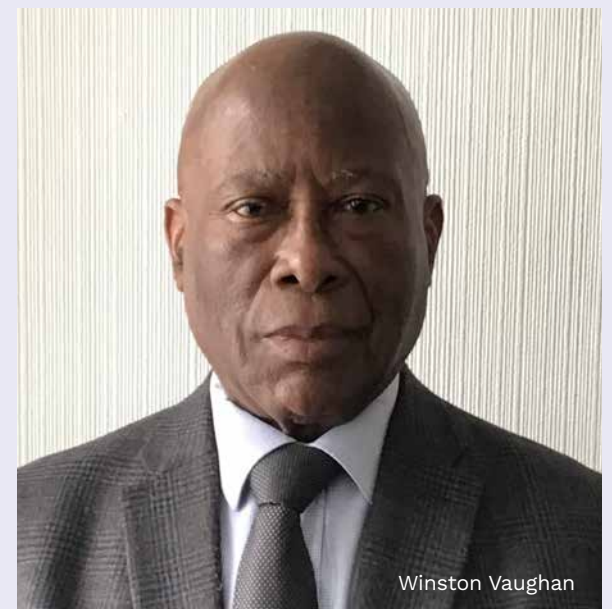
Although he has represented the Council in many policy areas – including health care in recent years – he now assumes the role of "first citizen" and will focus on the Council's engagement with the community.

"It's a great privilege to represent the Council and I'm really looking forward to

busy times ahead," he said after his election at the Council meeting this week.

"It's a great privilege to represent the Council and I'm really looking forward to busy times ahead"

Winston is currently Chair of the *Newham Voices* Board of Directors. Aidan White, *Newham Voices* publisher, said: "We are delighted that Winston has been elected. His dedication to the people of Newham is inspiring and he's an ideal figure to represent the council. His experience, dedicated knowledge and love of the community will be a tremendous asset. He wish him well."



Winston Vaughan

Moving on Up for jobs

Moving on Up (MoU) is a unique employability programme founded by the Black Training and Enterprise Group, and funded by Trust for London & City Bridge Trust. There are two strands; one for Brent and one for Newham. The Newham side is delivered by London Works/East London Business Association, West Ham United Foundation, Create Jobs & Eagle London, alongside other Newham-based community organisations.

The programme is working to target black men aged 16-24 who live in Newham, and provide them with support to bring them out of unemployment. Young black men and Newham residents face disadvantages, and organisers are doubling down to get as many of them involved as possible.

Input from the beneficiaries helps design the programme work. It aims through personal contact to achieve success in career aspirations. There is one-to-one career support and advice, personal development workshops, CV reviews and practice inter-



views, career-based professional mentors, and access to live jobs and paid opportunities.

Whether people are out of work and claiming universal credit, studying at college/university, or work-

ing part/full time – then there is support and options available to help them. People can reach out with questions, or can register for the programme online at: www.cutt.ly/mou-event-registration

There are insight events planned over the summer; featuring some high-achieving and inspirational young black professionals who work in corporate roles. In June sessions are planned for those interested in careers in both Insurance and Journalism respectively.

Check out activities through the MoU Newham social media pages below:

- 🐦 @Newham_MoU
- 📷 @MoU_Newham
- 📘 @Moving On Up Newham

As the full relaxation of lockdown approaches, there's never been a better time to get involved.

Read more on the MoU Newham webpage: elba-1.org.uk/what-we-do/employment-works/moving-on-up/

Please contact mou@elba-1.org.uk or on **07908 042 100**.



Pay staff more to prevent NHS exodus say unions

REBEKAH SAMUEL

With government finances under immense pressure due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson stating that a 1 per cent pay rise is all the government can afford, NHS workers are calling for more substantial rises to secure the future workforce.

Alan Ridley, Senior Royal College of Nursing Officer for North East London, said: "The pandemic has shone a light on the complex, skilled and safety critical role of nursing. Nursing through the pandemic has shown nursing at its best, but at the same time it has been incredibly tough for staff who have had to work under unimaginable pressure for an extended period."

"Even before the pandemic, London had over 8,500 nurse vacancies in the NHS alone, not including shortages in social care."

The RCN has set up a £35 million industrial action fund, following the government's 1 per cent announcement.

Research commissioned through London Economics suggests a £4.25bn NHS investment would support a 12.5 per cent pay rise and be highly beneficial to the economy in the long term. It would have a positive impact on staff recruitment and retention, meaning reduced spending on, for example, bank and agency staff.

UNISON represents health workers across the pay grades. UNISON's Greater London head of health Jamie Brown said: "NHS staff in London have made tremendous sacrifices in the fight against Covid. There's a real danger many employees may feel they can no longer face such demanding roles and leave the NHS for somewhere they feel more appreciated."

Buddy scheme aims to get the elderly online and Zooming



PETER LANDMAN

A charity is hoping to help older residents go online with a digital inclusion project.

The Age UK East London project aims to bring more older residents online through a scheme that will eventually offer volunteer buddies.

Larissa Howells, Director of Services at Age UK, East London, says there are still elderly people who do not have access to a computer, with poverty, lack of basic skills and anxiety about scamming being the three main reasons.

As part of the digital inclusion scheme, tablets can be loaned to

elderly people who do not have a device. Start up and set up will be carried out by IT trained digital inclusion officers. They will set up the elderly person's device, give one-to-one basic tuition, and in particular make sure they know how to access Zoom.

If someone is borrowing a tablet, it will be dropped off at their address ready for set up and basic tuition the following day.

Then they will be matched with a volunteer buddy who will regularly conduct Zoom sessions with the elderly person, and give any necessary guidance. They will visit websites related to their shared interest such as gardening.

To allay fears of scams, the volunteer buddy will show the elderly person how to keep the input secure.

Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer, please email info@ageuk-eastlondon.org.uk or phone **0208 981 7124**

Sophie Ibotson Co-Ordinator of the Older People's Reference Group wants to hear of any issue affecting elderly people – Sophie.ibotson@ageuk-eastlondon.org.uk or **0208 981 7124**.

Biking business Little Biker Boyz: 'struggling but getting by'

“Speed Junkie” Richard Betts tells Nicole Blythe how his family-run biking business has been coping during lockdown.

Over the last few years, cycling has begun to dominate daily commutes and everyday treks. This increase in pedalling has only gone up with lockdown restrictions. Richard Betts, the owner of Little Biker Boyz in Barking Road, Plaistow, however, explains that bike shops are not thriving as much as people may think.

Starting out as a motorcycle mechanic, Richard was inspired by motorbikes from the '80s and had a particular passion for mini motorbikes. Little Biker Boys began as a motorbike shop but due to increasing expenses, it became harder and harder to sustain. “I was selling stuff at a car boot sale and I saw people selling old second-hand bikes and just thought to myself ‘that might work’ – so it was luck, really.”

On an educated impulse, Richard started repairing and selling bikes after attending online mechanic classes to transfer his skills – and has never looked back.

Even though the pandemic has led to a high demand for bikes, parts to make and repair have been hard to come by due to shipment issues caused by Covid 19. As a result, the company has been unable to sell bikes and repairs to keep up with increasing demand. With the help of other independent biking businesses, Richard has been exchanging parts and bulk buying to stay afloat.

In terms of government support, Richard described a feeling of hopelessness. While Newham Council did give them the initial Small Business Support Grant Scheme fund of £10,000, that was given to the owner of the building rather than to each individual shop owner. Therefore, that fund was divided up between the shops.

Richard has also been having problems expanding his shop to cope with the new customers, even though he owns the land he wishes to expand on, as the council refuses to remove a



Richard Betts of Biker Boyz

tree that is blocking the path.

Bike enthusiasts can help small businesses like Richard's by making sure they go to reputable mechanics and shops. Richard dreams of eventually living on a boat in Devon

and expanding his shop to a larger mega-store, but Little Biker Boyz is still a fundamental part of his life – “if you wanted me out of this shop, you'd have to drag me out and shoot me.” ●

Jimi Hendrix's new Purple Haze plaque to be unveiled at online event

NEANDRA ETIENNE

Jimi Hendrix wrote the lyrics to *Purple Haze* before he performed at the Upper Cut Club in Woodgrange Road, Forest Gate, on Boxing Day 1966.

A Newham plaque had been placed on the gates at the location where the club was previously located but unfortunately it was removed during renovation of the area.

I felt strongly that the connection between *Purple Haze* and Forest Gate needed to be acknowledged. After making some inquiries, I discovered Jimi Hendrix was eligible to receive a Newham Heritage plaque.

Jimi Hendrix's brother, Leon Hendrix, is very happy about that. He said: “I think the plaque is brilliant.”

Leon explained the meaning behind the song:

“It's about emotions, feelings and being connected. Jimi was very spiritual, but not in a religious way. I can remember when we were younger he would talk about Venus and Mars. He included the lyrics, ‘Excuse me while I kiss the sky’, because he was reaching out to the sky for guidance.”



Lloyd Jeans, Neandra Etienne and Paul Romane. Photo © Andrew Baker

Leon, who's latest album *If you need a friend* is out now, will be among the guests who will be taking part in the unveiling event.

Local guest speakers include:

- John Walker, publisher of Forest Gate local history blog *E7 Now & Then* which offers a detailed history of the Upper Cut Club and its performers, including Jimi
- Paul Romane, local musician and artist who put on an exhibition about the Upper Cut Club with Forest Gate Arts. Paul also runs a local open-mic showcasing the talents of locals. He is a member of The Scumbags who put on a show of Bob Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks*.
- Lloyd Jeans, Forest Gate historian, musician and collaborative artist.

Date: Friday, 28 May, 8 pm – 9 pm

Good reads in Newham

The Newham Bookshop in Barking Road tells us these are the top sellers this month:

- **This Other London** by John Rogers (signed)
- **Many Different Kinds of Love** by Michael Rosen (signed)
- **What White People can do next** by Emma Dabiri (signed)
- **The Boy at the Back of the Class** by Onjali Rauf (signed)
- **Nature Trail** by Benjamin Zephaniah (signed)



newhambooks.co.uk

@NewhamBookshop

Grim reminder of fire that killed 26 schoolboys and spurred law change

DAPHNE STEDMAN

On a recent walk around West Ham Cemetery, I discovered an obelisk – a monument to the memory of 26 schoolboys who died in a fire on New Year’s Day 1890. The story of this tragic incident gives us an insight into the lives of children from poor families in London during the late Victorian era.

The fire at the Forest Gate Industrial School in Forest Lane occurred at night. The schoolboys lived on site and were asleep in locked dormitories on the floors above the room where the fire started. Fifty-eight of the 84 boys in the dormitories escaped from the building or were rescued, but tragically, 26 boys, aged from 7 to 12 years, died. Most suffocated due to dense smoke.

The cause of the fire was traced to a defective stovepipe in the sewing/wardrobe room on the ground floor.

Clothes and blankets stored in the room provided fuel for the fire.

The story of the fire, including rescue attempts and the aftermath, are well documented. As with any event



like this, some of the details are upsetting to read. News reports at the time perhaps lacked the dramatic slant often seen in present-day reporting, though to my mind they still succeed in getting across the terrible tragedy of the event.

Finding the monument prompted me to look at the history of the Forest Gate Industrial School. It was located in the building that later became Newham Maternity Hospital, closed in 1985 and now is converted into flats.

The school was established in the 1850s by the Whitechapel Board of Guardians for children whose parents were so poor that they lived in the workhouses of East London. Industrial schools were intended to provide destitute children with bed and board, basic education, and practical training to enable them to take up employment in the future.

Significantly, there were a number of fires in industrial schools from the



Photos from www.e7-nowandthen.org

1850s to 1880s, and in 1882 the Local Government Board had urged Poor Law Guardians to put in place proper fire escape arrangements in these schools. The fire of 1 January 1890 resulted in the government taking steps to enforce fire safety protocols including leaving dormitories unlocked at night. ●

Source material can be found at:

- e7-nowandthen.org/2014/05/the-forest-gate-industrial-school-story.html
- e7-nowandthen.org/2017/01/forest-gate-industrial-school-1890.html



Pro-Palestine demonstration at East Ham Town Hall

Hundreds of people protesting over continuing violence in Israel and Palestine gathered at East Ham Town Hall on May 18th to show their solidarity with the victims of violence in Palestine. The demonstration, organised by the Muslim Safety Forum, came after a week of fighting that left more than 200 people dead in the region, the vast majority of them Palestinians killed by Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip. A ceasefire came into effect on May 21st. Mehmood Mirza from the Newham Muslim Safety Forum said protesters were demanding the UK government to play its role to protect innocent lives. “The Newham Muslim community stands with Palestinian people in their struggle for justice,” he said.

Advertisements

Increased thoughts about life not worth living? **NHS**

Call the Newham Mental Health Crisis Line

0800 073 0066

Trained staff can help you. Telephone 0800 073 0066.

#THANKYOU TO ALL KEY WORKERS

LONDON.UNISON.ORG.UK

UNISON Greater London

Urgent need for good foster carers as lockdown ends



REBEKAH SAMUEL

Lockdown led to an increase in looked after vulnerable children, and while the sector struggles to meet the rising demand for foster carers, fostering agencies are concerned about the impact this will have on children and young people.

Pre Covid-19, the sector had its challenges. Carer suitability and adequate space have always been issues but health threats posed by Covid-19 presented an additional risk, especially for the 65 per cent of foster carers aged over 50.

Newham resident, Prity Patel, recruitment strategist at SHINE Fostering, an independent South Woodford-based fostering agency contracted to provide placements for children and young people through Newham Council, explained: "We

receive hundreds of referrals weekly. However, at around 70,000, there are too many children in care; and with a national shortage in excess of 8,000, not enough foster carers."

Khush Green, Director at SHINE Fostering, said: "While shortages in fostering are nothing new, increased numbers of children left in a system awaiting placement is a concern, especially in terms of mental health."

SHINE has a diverse range of foster carers (including single people and couples); carers positionally based to serve Newham, Waltham Forest and Redbridge, allowing children to get to school while remaining close enough to visit family; community based onsite staff including an advocate, a former foster child representing the young voice; educational co-ordinator; mental health nurse and supervising social worker.

All engage heavily with the children through education, events and trips.

SHINE have been contributing to The Fostering Network's - Foster Care Fortnight 2021 theme - #WhyWeCare, which ran from 10-23 May. The annual event showcases

valuable work undertaken by foster carers and those involved in the fostering community. Prity added: "SHINE Voices continues to raise awareness of #WhyWeCare as the urgent need for quality foster care is more paramount now than ever." ●

Fact File Fostering in Newham

Source: ONS as at 31 March 2020

Caution: A small number of agencies did not submit their data so figure may be a little below what they should be.

NEWHAM STATS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC).

- Number of looked after children aged 10 to 15 years, 145 (35 per cent of total LAC)
- Number of looked after children aged 16 years and over, 157 (38 per cent of total LAC)

More males than females are looked after in Newham

- Number of males looked after children 251 (61 per cent of total LAC)
- Number of females looked after children 160 (39 per cent of total LAC)

Black/Black British children in Newham are the most looked after children

- 113 Black or Black British children were looked after (27 per cent of total LAC)
- 95 White children were looked after (23 per cent of total LAC)
- 77 Asian or Asian British children were looked after (19 per cent of total LAC)
- 64 Other ethnic groups of children were looked after (16 per cent of total LAC)
- 62 White and Asian, Black African or Black Caribbean children were looked after (15 per cent of total LAC)

More children are placed in foster care than any other form of sector provision.

- 280 children were provided foster placements (68 per cent of total LAC).
- 95 children were placed in secure units, children homes and semi-independent living accommodation (22 per cent of LAC)
- 25 children were placed in other residential settings (6 per cent of LAC)

Local actor Elliot and his dream role – working with director Sir Steve McQueen

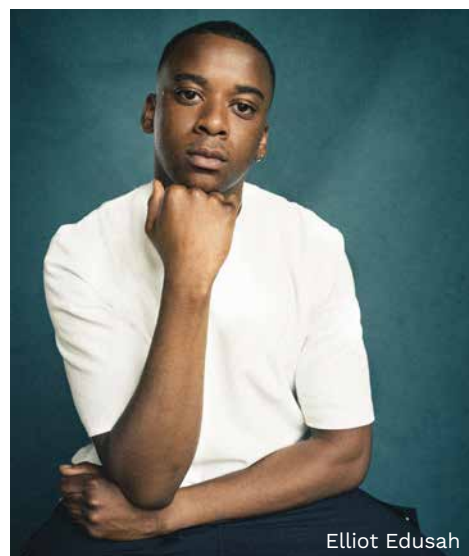
NEANDRA ETIENNE

When Elliot Edusah was cast in the TV mini-series *Small Axe* he was excited by the opportunity to work with a cast full of talented actors who had inspired him.

"Playing Valentine Golding and working on *Small Axe* was a blessing. When I auditioned I poured my blood, sweat and tears into the process and it was a blessing to be cast in such a powerful project, highlighting the stories of our community which have been untold."

Working alongside director Sir Steve McQueen was not only a dream come true but proved to be a huge learning experience too.

"His attention to detail and specificity is next to none and working with him really helped me sharpen my tools and skills while educating



Elliot Edusah

myself on many historic events which shaped the Black British community."

The six-part part series has already won acclaim at the Golden Globes,

Critics' Choice and New York Film Critics Circle Awards. It has received 15 nominations at this year's Bafta Television Awards.

Elliot spent all of his childhood in Newham, attending St Anthony's Primary School and St Bonaventure's Secondary School. As a young teenager, Elliot acted in a show called *Heartfelt* at Stratford Theatre Royal East directed by Rikki Beadle-Blair.

He also attended improvisation classes at Stratford Theatre Royal East, called *Wingin' it* run by Karlos Coleman.

"Going to that drama club really built my confidence and enthusiasm for the craft, while offering me a safe space to create and grow with other talented young people in and around East London," he said.

He studied Theatre and Media at The Brit School for college, and obtained

a first class degree in Professional Acting at London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, graduating in 2018. Training will help but Elliot believes confidence is key.

"It's important to believe in yourself and have an unwavering determination and resilience. Never give up because your time will eventually come when someone sees your talent," he said.

For his next role Elliot plays a character called Cippo in the film *Pirates* which is set in 1999.

It is written and directed by Reggie Yates, developed with BBC Films and financed by BBC Films, BFI and Hillbilly Films. ●

Pirates will be in cinemas this year – @PiratesFilm

The 2021 British Academy Television Awards will be held on Sunday 6 June.

Wingin' it... Youth Theatre – for 13 to 17 year olds – Theatre Royal Stratford East – www.nayt.org.uk/youth_theatres/theatre_royal_stratford_east_youth_theatre

As re-opening continues, our coffee shops, cafés and restaurants are looking forward to seeing you. Please continue to support them. 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

- 5 **The Cali Candy Shop**
538a Barking Road, Plaistow E13 8QE

- 6 **The Greengate Café**
538b Barking Road, Plaistow E13 8QE

Stratford

- 7 **Olive and Lemon Mediterranean Café**
30 Broadway, Stratford E15 4QS

- 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 eat and drink while seated. Scan the code to learn more.



Spotlight on Charities: Our monthly focus on community groups



Ashok's Vision International

Registered charity number 1193446
Youth mental wellbeing and engagement project based in Newham.

This project was set up in 2019 in memory of a young man, Ashok, who sadly passed away due to mental illness. Aims and outcomes:

- Preventing Isolation and ensuring safety of a person with mental illness
- Youth Engagement and Empowerment through resources, activities and events

We are based in Woodgrange Market Place, Forest Gate, E7 every Saturday between 10am - 3pm.

Ashok's Vision's volunteers are part of the Newham Youth Voices panel.
www.ashoksvision.org

Find us on social media:



Bonny Downs Community Association

Bonny Downs Community Association (BDCA) has been serving people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds in Newham since 1998. We make a positive impact on local lives through a wide range of services and activities designed to provide opportunities for people to connect with neighbours; improve their health and wellbeing; access the support they need; learn new skills; and celebrate life together!

bonnydowns.org

@bonnydowns

@bdca247

@bdca247



Community Links

Community Links is a social action charity in East London. We have been transforming lives for over 40 years and are founded on two principles: to find new solutions to old problems and to deliver them with the whole community.

We support people in coming together, overcoming barriers, building purpose and making the most of the place they live in. From our base in Canning Town we apply the learning from our local work to influence and achieve positive national change.

www.community-links.org

info@community-links.org

@Comm_Links

@commlinks



Indians in London Group

We are a not-for-profit organisation (Company No 09929754) that organises various community related events in London for the Indian community. Looking at the situation in India, and being a group of 32K first generation Indians, we have made changes to our policy and for the first time initiated a fundraising campaign to send O2 Concentrators with MEA and some to NGOs directly to smaller towns in India.

www.indiansinlondon.org.uk

info.iil2004@gmail.com

@IndiansInLondonOrkut

@DesiLondoners/

iil2004

Schoolchildren's sculptures set to light up Newham

SAMANTHA WATSON

A new arts organisation will help children celebrate their creativity with the installation of eight sculptures across Newham.

The Institute of Imagination (iOi) will bring together thousands of primary school children, from 14 different schools, to celebrate and explore their creativity through The Big Build.

The installation, led by Newham resident and Danish artist Anne Harild, uses modular cardboard designs from the Netherlands-based Collective Paper Aesthetics. Children will use these cardboard designs to build shapes to explore their vision of Newham.

Harild said: "My favourite part of this project is that it's so collaborative; just as lots of small individual cardboard pieces will come together to create some big spectacular sculptures, as will all the children's ideas from the 14 different schools. The final works will hopefully be a representation of the imagination of Newham's young people."

The Big Build forms part of Newham's 2021 Year of the Young Person, celebrating the achievements and contributions made by young people across the borough.

The large scale public art pieces will be seen in Westfield Stratford City, Queen's Market, Thames Barrier Park, Beckton Globe Library and East Ham Library.

Co-directors of iOi, Tom Doust and Stephanie Dittmer, believe that The



Photo © Mark Mercer

"My favourite part of this project is that it's so collaborative; just as lots of small individual cardboard pieces will come together to create some big spectacular sculptures."

Big Build is an opportunity for children and families to reconnect with their imaginations.

They added: "We are delighted to be working with the Mayor of Newham on the Borough's Year of the Young Person and to be contributing towards her vision to make Newham the best place for children and young people to thrive as they grow up."

The charity runs a range of projects for children, from creating experimental future cities to aero dynamics. They also offer a digital lending service in libraries, providing families digital equipment to learn and create from home.

For more information about The Big Build and the Institute of Imagination visit www.ioi.london

Government pledges more cash for Newham Covid campaign

Newham will get special help in the fight against coronavirus says the government which names the Borough as one of nine trailblazing actions it has launched across England.

The government is setting aside £12 million to help councils in the highest risk areas.

The money will support a range of initiatives including providing alternative accommodation for people in overcrowded households, and increasing existing social care support for vulnerable communities.

The actions will provide extra services for people whose mental health has been affected by lockdown and will also support language communication in areas where many people don't have English as their first language.

Crucially, the support aims to encourage people most at risk of catching and transmitting COVID-19 to come forward for testing and to self-isolate successfully if they test positive.

The government support comes amid increasing concerns about new coronavirus variants, particularly the spread of a variant first identified in India.

The aim is to help local councils to strengthen their coronavirus testing and support for people affected and to promote early interventions that will control the spread of variants wherever they are detected.

Memorial opens with promise to Help Newham

Wind and rain didn't spoil the solemn celebrations in Stratford's Olympic Park on May 24th as London Mayor Sadiq Khan and other civic and community leaders formally opened London's Blossom Garden.

The garden, created in partnership with the National Trust, pays tribute to 19,000 Londoners, including 784 from Newham, who have lost their lives in the pandemic, and honours the ongoing efforts of key workers.

Sited in the north of the Olympic Park near the Timber Lodge Cafe, the garden has 33 trees, one for each London borough and the City of London.

Khan was joined by Newham's Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz and National Trust Director-General Hilary McGrady. He said the garden would be a permanent reminder of the lives that have been lost, a tribute to every single key worker, and a symbol of how Londoners have stood together to help one another.

One of the reasons Newham had been chosen to host the garden is the huge impact the pandemic has had on the Borough.

He also took the opportunity to focus on the social crisis looming after the lockdown ends and pledged to support Newham's recovery plans.



Photo © Sylvie Belbouab

As reported on Page One, Newham faces the prospect of job losses and a spike in homelessness as the pandemic ban on evictions and the government furlough scheme ends later this year.

NHS concerns Public governors are your voice

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

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

Go green! Residents vote to make parks and open spaces top priority

People in Newham have voted to improve the Borough's parks and open spaces as a major issue for the first meeting of the ground-breaking Citizens' Assembly to discuss this month.

The event will be England's first permanent Citizens' Assembly according to Newham Council and will provide an important opportunity for the community to influence policy in the Borough.

In recent weeks residents have been meeting in local assemblies to define priorities and to propose plans for using cash from a special £100,000 fund to support local neighbourhood actions.

At the same time, the Council announced the results of a survey of the most important local issues from a shortlist of themes on its website. Thirty one per cent chose 'greening the borough', closely followed with 30 per cent selecting 'the 15 minute neighbourhood', which will be debated at the second Citizens' Assembly in the autumn.



“So many residents have told me how important parks and green spaces have been to their mental and physical wellbeing during lockdown.”

Rokhsana Fiaz, Newham Mayor, said: “So many residents have told me how important parks and green spaces have been to their mental and physical wellbeing during lockdown and it is no surprise that they have decided they want the first Citizens' Assembly to examine how we can make the borough's green spaces more attractive and enjoyable.”

Other issues given priority by residents include health inequalities, a new deal for young people and good work, and taking advantage of new technology, all of them issues, says the Council, which are also being addressed. ●

Community solidarity raises £40k for Covid crisis in India



CATARINA JOELE

As India surpasses the 300,000 deaths linked to Covid-19, the country with the highest death toll just behind the US and Brazil, the organisation Indians in London (a not-for-profit company) has raised £40,514 in three weeks.

So far, they have sent 20 units of oxygen concentrator to Red Cross in Deli and 20 to NGOs in rural areas of different states of India, such as Karnataka, Goa, Manipur, Rajasthan and Maharashtra.

Before the pandemic, the aim of the group was to connect and support Indian migrants in the British capital. Their community group

on Facebook has more than 32,000 members, first generation Indians living in the UK.

Minal Jaiswal, co-founder and director of Indians in London, said:

“We use to do a lot of social cultural events to keep our country's culture alive, organising our cultural festivals. We supported each other with immigration issues and a policy, finances, where to do to find good schools or good food... it's an expert forum.

“But in the second wave of Covid in India, most of us have lost loved ones, either friends or distant relatives. Others have lost multiple family members. There are a lot of Covid-19 widows and orphans. We are still sourcing more medicines and supplies.

“Last year we stood with the UK, opening food banks via Gurudwaras, temples and mosques to support the most vulnerable and those in need. We appeal now to the UK to stand in India in this time of crisis in our motherland. You can scan this QR code to donate.” ●



CONGRATULATIONS WEST HAM!

West Ham United manager David Moyes told 10,000 supporters at the London Stadium on May 23: “Make sure you're vaccinated and get your passports out, because we're going to Europe!”

The club finished sixth in the Premier League, their best performance in 22 years, winning them a place in the Europa League group stage next season.

Welcoming fans back to the stadium, which will also greet supporters from European clubs to Stratford in 2021-22, Moyes said he wanted to thank all the NHS workers who were there 'and who have helped the people of East London in difficult times'.