

Anger over “shameful closure” sparks campaign to save popular centre

Crisis talks in bid to save Stratford Market Village

JEAN GRAY

The sudden closure of the walk-through Market Village in Stratford town centre and the devastating impact it has on around 60 local small businesses has led to united protest and demands for it to reopen from shocked political and community leaders in the Borough.

For more than 30 years, the Market Village, formerly known as Inshops, has been a cornerstone of the community. It's a place where local businesses have thrived and where residents have found affordable products that cater to their unique needs.

But that came to an abrupt end on Wednesday 10 January when, just after closing time, visitors from Stratford Market Properties Limited arrived to hand out letters from Director Ambroise Auguste, telling traders their shops were closing with immediate effect because the company was going into administration. All of the traders were up to date with their rent.

“It was shocking and shameful,” said Farzana Rasheed, Manager of Fantas Tattoo and Piercing, who has been working in the Market Village for 19 years.

“We were given just a day or two to clear out our shop. Some businesses who had already closed for the day and gone home didn't even receive the letter and turned up the next day to find themselves locked out,” she said.

A handful of traders, including Farzana Rasheed, found temporary space in the nearby Stratford Mall, a small cluster of businesses in another independent space inside the Stratford centre. Farzana was one of three traders who found space there.

“But all of us want to go



Traders (above) caught up in “a nightmare” over closure of market. Main image via groupegeraud.co.uk, inset image via change.org

back to the Market Village,” she said. “Normally we would have a long queue all day for our shop, but it's now going very slowly.”



Farzana Rasheed: “shocked” by closure after 19 years in the Market Village

An online petition to save the market was launched by one of the traders, GT Spice Caribbean Takeaway. As *Newham Voices* went to press, it had attracted more than 5,000 signatures.

At the same time Newham Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz and Stratford Ward Councillor Sabia Kamali were in crisis talks with the company Unex, who own the leasehold, to try to get the Village re-opened, although the Council has no jurisdiction over the site.

Earlier, Ms Fiaz in a letter

to the administrators Cowgill asking for an urgent meeting to discuss the ‘ongoing operation’ of the Market Village, stressed the importance of supporting traders who are caught up in ‘a nightmare not of their own making’.

She argued that the market is an important provider of local jobs and is essential for thousands of local people who rely on the market for everyday goods, as well as a range of services for Newham's diverse communities.

She said many traders stand to lose out on investments they made to improve their premises.

Local resident and *Newham Voices* columnist Mickey Ambrose has also written to the market's owners calling for action to keep it open. He writes:

“Many of these small businesses have been located at Market Village for over 30 years selling a wide range of items, and of course there are multicultural cafes. I can remember walking through Market Village to get my

mobile phone repaired or to have a good old full English British fry up.

“The closure of Wilko and now Market Village has had a significant effect on the local community as they are now unable to get certain items you cannot buy from main retailers.

“Market Village was a family community where everyone knew each other. It's such a shame, a real shame, and I hope something can be done.”

The site's landlord, Unex Group Holdings Limited, told the BBC it was “as shocked as the stallholders to hear of Stratford Market Village's closure”.

Managing director Adrian Morris said that the lease with Stratford Market Properties Limited remained in place. He said he was working with the company to try to resolve issues with a view to “hopefully enabling the stallholders back into occupation”.

You can view and sign the petition online at: www.change.org/p/urge-unex-to-reopen-stratford-market-village

Mayor's plea to mother of abandoned baby: “Let's make sure you get all the help you need”

Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz has appealed to the mother of a newborn baby who was found abandoned last month to come forward so that she can receive care.

In her weekly newsletter, Ms Fiaz described it as ‘a miracle’ that the baby had been found so soon after being left in a shopping bag at the junction of Greenway and High Street South in East Ham. She said: “Thankfully she was found by a local resident who was out walking their dog on a very cold night; and what an absolute hero that resident is. Simply put, it is a miracle that this precious baby girl was found as soon as she was.”

Named Elsa by hospital staff, a reference to the musical *Frozen* and the freezing conditions in which she was found, Ms Fiaz said the baby “is doing well”.

She added: “Now our worries turn to mum who will also be needing care. So if you are her and reading this, please know that your little baby girl is in safe hands and we want to provide the same for you. We want to support your wellbeing and health and are ready to help you. Please call 999, and if you believe you know her please call 999 too because we need to help mum as soon as we can.”



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For more information, go to www.newhamvoices.co.uk/complaints-policy

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Landmark victory in case against 'rogue' landlord

Newham Council has won a landmark case against a convicted rogue landlord a court dismissed his appeal against a Banning Order following breaches of the Council's landlord licensing scheme by renting an unlicensed property in Newham. The ban means that he is banned from renting any properties in Newham and the rest of England for three years.

Convicted of seven offences under the Housing Act 2004, private landlord Jahangir Hussain had originally failed to licence his property in Forest Gate in October 2021, which he used as a house in multiple occupancy (HMO). As well as breaching six other HMO Management Regulations, he received a fine of £10,000 plus the Council's legal costs.

In February 2023, the Council successfully applied for a Banning Order against the landlord. Despite an appeal by Hussain the Council won the case on 6 December 2023 and the Banning Order preventing Hussain from renting any properties



in England is now in place for three years until August 2026.

Councillor Shaban Mohammed, Cabinet Member for Housing Services said: "This Banning Order is a first for Newham and a landmark case in our campaign against rogue landlords and to protect the rights of Newham residents living in the private rented sector. We mean what we say, when tackling the scourge of rogue landlords who think they are above the law.

"We have very clear guidelines, information and support available for private landlords in Newham so that they can operate their businesses while also supporting the welfare of their tenants."

Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz said, "This major milestone sends a message loud and clear that rogue landlords have no place in Newham. It's all part of our campaign to protect renters' rights, including calling for an end to no-fault evictions and introducing rent caps."

As well as obtaining the Banning Order, Newham's Planning Enforcement Team secured two convictions in the Magistrates Court against Hussain for breaching planning enforcement notices at both his properties in Newham. The notices related to the construction of extensions at those properties without the required planning permission. The cases have now been committed to the Crown Court under section 70 of the Proceeds of Crime Act, for consideration of confiscation and appropriate sentencing.

Advertisement

LICENSING ACT 2003

APPLICATION FOR A PREMISES LICENSE

I **Beka Kereselidze** have applied to NEWHAM COUNCIL for a premises licences for:

Sad Meli Gallions LTD, 4 Silley Weir Promenade, Unit4, E16 2AJ so that the following licensable activities may be provided on the following days and hours:

Coffee, wine shop and bar (sale of alcohol) on the following days and times:

- Monday – Sunday 07:00AM – 11:00PM

Newham Council's Licensing Register is kept at the office of the Licensing Team, Town Hall, 328 Barking Road, East Ham, E6 2RT (open from 10.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday), 020 3373 1925, where details of the application may be inspected. Any representations against the application must be made in writing and received by the Licensing Team at the above address, by no later than **16/02/2024**.

Individuals, businesses and other bodies may make representations in relation to the application. Representations must be relevant and can only be on the licensing objectives of the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance, and the protection of children from harm. Copies of all representations will be sent to the applicant. Persons making representations will have to appear at the Councils' Licensing Sub-Committee.

Note: It is an offence, liable on conviction to a fine up to £5,000 for a person to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with the application.

Learning in recovery

PETER LANDMAN

East London NHS Foundation Trust has opened a Recovery College in Newham. The Recovery College aims to help to people with mental health issues to avoid and recover from mental health trauma.

The courses operate through tuition and offer the opportunity to meet together, share live experiences, discuss issues and join in self expression activities. They are facilitated by specially trained in-house tutors who themselves have suffered from mental illness.

On some courses outside experts are invited, but the emphasis on participation remains.

The Spring course catalogue lists more than 30 short courses covering:

- assessing treatments: "making your medication work for you" and "whose therapy is it anyway";
- "channelising" basic emotions, including excessive stress, anger, fear, sadness; and building up confidence to say NO;



- activities including origami, drumming, growing plants and writing for self expression;
- money advice;
- addictions and the conditions ADHD and dyslexia. These include how to stop smoking.

The courses are free and there is no assessment procedure to enrol and encourages Individual student learning plans.

For more information go to www.newhamrecoverycollege.org.uk or ring 07823 900600

The changing face of Newham

Aidan White looks at some of the findings from the recently-released 2021 Census report which outlines a profile of Newham and its people



Image: Fabian Centeno/Unsplash

There are more of us and it's getting crowded...

Over the past ten years the population of Newham has been increasing rapidly and now it is one of the most densely populated boroughs in Britain.

The results of the 2021 Census show a 14 percent increase in the population to around 351,000 since 2011, with the latest estimate around 355,000 at the start of 2024.

Newham is one of the most densely populated boroughs in Britain.

The population has increased by a higher percentage than any other area in London or nationally and, to show the scale of how crowded life is, the census notes that in 2021, Newham was home to around 69.2 people per football pitch-sized piece of land, compared with 60.8 ten years earlier, putting the Borough among the top three percent of England's most densely populated areas.

Changing faces...

In 2021, more people in Newham – 30.8 percent of residents – identified themselves as ethnically “white” (up by almost two percent since 2011) while across London and England the percentage of people from the “white” ethnic group dropped six points to 53.8 percent and to 81.0 percent respectively.

At the same time 42.2 percent of people in Newham identified their ethnic group within the “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh” category, a slight fall since 2011, with a similar fall to 17.5 percent who identified their ethnic group as either “Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African.”

We have fewer children...

Newham saw England's second-largest percentage-point rise in the proportion of households including a couple but no children rising to almost 12 percent in 2021. Despite the increase, Newham was in the lowest four percent of English boroughs for the share of households including a couple but no children in 2021.

More people in work...

Newham saw England's largest percentage-point rise in the proportion of people aged 16 years and over who were employed, rising by five points over the last ten years to 56 percent in 2021.

But there's a note of caution over the reliability of the figures here because the 2021 Census took place during the turmoil of the COVID-19 pandemic when the national lockdown and furlough measures affected the labour market.

Our people are working longer hours...

The percentage of employed people aged 16 years who said they usually worked over 49 hours per week increased in Newham to 10 percent while the numbers fell across Lon-

don. At the same time the percentage of employed adults who worked 31 to 48 hours increased from by a percentage point to 57.7 percent.

Fewer affected by disability...

Newham saw England's largest percentage-point fall in the proportion of residents who were identified as being disabled, down more than four percent to 9.1 percent. Similar falls were seen across London with the regional proportion of residents who identified as being disabled down to 7.1 percent.

We're feeling better...

In 2021, the number of residents who described their health as “very good” rose by more than five percent to almost 43 percent, while the proportion of Newham residents describing their health as “very bad” dropped by almost a third to two percent. Again, the numbers may have been influenced by the pandemic that was raging at the time, but the data reflects people's own opinions in describing their overall health.

Newham saw England's largest percentage-point fall in the proportion of residents who were identified as being disabled

For the record it's worth noting that according to figures from the Office of National Statistics on the Newham Council website, the life expectancy at birth for men in Newham is currently 80.2 years and for women 83.3 years. In London as a whole it is 81.6 for men and 85.4 for women.



Image via Facebook

Turning away from God...

In 2021, there has been a five point rise to 14.5 percent of Newham people reporting that they have “no religion” – the largest increase of all broad religious groups in Newham. This was less than the percentage rise across London and across England where some 36.7 percent of people say they have no religion.

In 2021, there has been a five point rise to 14.5 percent of Newham people reporting that they have “no religion”

In 2021, the major drop was in people describing themselves as Christian, while those describing themselves as Muslim rose by almost three percentage points to 34.8 percent. Religious affiliation is the religion with which someone connects or identifies, rather than their beliefs or religious practice.

We have fewer homeowners...

Of Newham households, fewer live in home ownership – 30.8 percent, a three percent fall since 2011. More people rent their homes privately and there has been a fall in the percentage of Newham households in a socially rented property, down to 28 percent.

Figures from Newham Council show there are almost 117,000 dwellings in Newham, of which 15,400 are owned by local authorities, another 13,900 owned by housing associations and 87,400 in the private sector, including owner occupied properties and those rented from private landlords.



Image: Nick Fewings/Unsplash

FactFile

We're below average when it comes to privilege

Newham scores well below the national average when it comes to the percentage of households which qualify as privileged in terms of wealth and status.

Only around 17 percent of Newham homes make the grade as AB, defined as households that earn the most money, have the best jobs and are the best educated. The national average is around 23 percent and in London the average is 28 percent.

According to the Office for National Statistics figures, based on the 2021 Census returns, one in six households in Newham are classed as AB, the top social grade classification which rates homes according to a range of social-economic data including income, economic activity, qualifications, the type and tenure of the household, and other factors.

The four classifications range from AB to C1, C2 and DE, with AB – people with higher and intermediate managerial, administrative and professional jobs – the highest and DE – including unskilled manual labour and the unemployed – the lowest. The Office for National Statistics data shows 52,905 of applicable households in Newham were ranked in the highest band.

All the information here is from the report on *How Life has Changed in Newham*, the official analysis of the results of the 2021 Census. For more information see: www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E09000025

Flying the flag for LGBT+ History

Neandra Etienne on the events in store for a month of celebration

The mayor of Newham Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz will join councillors to raise an official LGBT+ flag and to launch **Newham's LGBT+ History Month** on Thursday 1 February, 3-5pm, at East Ham Town Hall

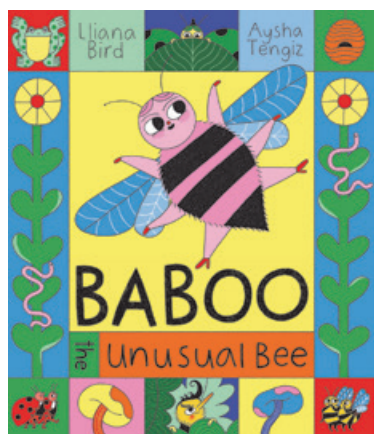
The history month this year will focus on the theme of medicine and the contributions LGBT+ people make to health-care and medical science. Newham's programme includes Queer Life drawing class, photography, crafting workshop, an evening of storytelling, cabaret and holistic workshops which offer connection and empowerment. The programme will close with a celebratory party, produced by Social Convention.

Award-winning human rights activist, author, performer and educator Dan Glass will be discussing his latest book, *Queer Footprints* during a Newham LGBT+ History Month event on Wednesday 28 February, 6.30-9pm Old Town Hall Stratford.

newhamlgbthistory.org
theglassishalffull.co.uk



Discover Children's Story Centre is hosting Baboo Drag Story Time and Crafts with author Lliana Bird, illustrator Aysha Tengiz and drag artist Glitzy Von Jagger during half-term for families with children aged two and over. An interactive storytelling of Lliana and Aysha's picture book *Baboo and*



the Usual Bee will be followed by a craft activity, where children have the opportunity to decorate a wooden flower to give to your best friend. The event is at 11.30am on 12 February and is free to book in addition to Discover Entry tickets.

discover.org.uk



Bender Defenders

Bender Defenders are hosting a Martial Arts Workshop with Muay Thai and self-defence training. Bender Defenders is a queer and trans martial arts community empowerment movement. *Saturday 17 February, 10-12.30pm East Ham Town Hall, 328 Barking Road, East Ham, E6 2RP*

benderdefenders.com

TAGS, a community initiative created to promote swimming in the Trans community, are hosting an open swimming session in the Aquatics Centre at the Olympic Park. A ticket also provides a third off the price of a first drink at local venue Tina We Salute You! This is open to those aged 18 and over who have a competent level of swimming. This event is free to Newham residents, and there is a small

charge to non-Newham residents. Please bring proof of address to secure a free ticket.

Friday 3 February, 7-5pm, Aquatics Centre, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, E20 2ZQ

www.transunite.co.uk

London Otters Rowing Club, London's LGBTQI-friendly rowing club, is based at the Royal Docks. They welcome all abilities, from complete beginner to experienced rowers.

www.londonotters.org



London Otters

Pride of Irons is the official West Ham United LGBTQIA+ supporters group. They are a committee of volunteers that aims to ensure that West Ham United remains an environment free of hate.

prideofirons.com

Queeros.East is a social meet-up group for LGBTQIA+ people in Newham. The aim is to bring people from all backgrounds and sexual orientations together to foster a sense of community in the area. They meet every first Sunday of the month for a Sunday roast in one of their local pubs in either East Ham, Forest Gate or Stratford. They visit local markets, community projects or attend cultural events in Central London.

This year they will be hosting the first instalment of the Social Convention Reading Group, starting in February, where queer books across the queer spectrum will be discussed.

Queeros.East told *Newham Voices*: "Queeros.East is very pleased to see that the London Borough of Newham actively gives visibility to its

LGBTQAI+ citizens and fosters a culture where everybody feels welcome, finds a home and is celebrated."

To get in touch, visit www.instagram.com/queeros.east on Instagram or send an e-mail to queeros.east@gmail.com

Clapton Community Football Club announced that their open access training sessions, 5-a-side and 11-a-side teams have got hundreds of women and non-binary people playing football – many of whom had been denied access or marginalised. Some are even progressing through to the



Clapton CFC ©Nick Davidson

development and first teams. The club says they have run football tournaments with many organisations, including IWW, Queerspace and Outside Project.

www.claptoncfc.co.uk

All events subject to change

Advertisement

LICENSING ACT 2003

APPLICATION FOR VARIATION OF A PREMISES LICENCE

Focobon Ltd have applied to NEWHAM COUNCIL for a premises licences for: **Giovanna's Deli & Wine, 58 Woodgrange Road, E7 0QH** so that the following licensable activities may be provided on the following days and hours:

Supply of alcohol on and off the premises on the following days and times:

- Monday – Sunday 10:00 – 00:00

Supply of late night refreshment on the following days and hours

- Monday – Sunday 10:00 – 00:00

Amendment of certain licencing conditions to allow the playing of live music, performance and alteration to other conditions.

Newham Council's Licensing Register is kept at the office of the Licensing Team, East Ham Town Hall, Barking Road, East Ham, E6 2RP. (open 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday), 020 3373 1925, where details of the application may be inspected.

Any representations against the application must be made in writing and received by the Licensing Team at the above address, by no later than the **25/02/2024**.

Individuals, businesses and other bodies may make representations in relation to the application. Representations must be relevant and can only be on the licensing objectives of the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance, and the protection of children from harm. Copies of all representations will be sent to the applicant. Persons making representations will have to appear at the Councils' Licensing Sub-Committee.

Note: It is an offence, liable on conviction to a fine up to £5,000 for an applicant to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with the application

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Learning through fear

In this personal reflection **Shofa Miah** reflects on a childhood learning experience and, below, explains why more must be done to end discrimination against people who do not fit rigid ideas of what is normal behaviour.

She says: “I was diagnosed as an adult and my experience outlined here is that of a child almost 40 years ago. It reflects a time when perhaps there was less sensitivity but, even today, all of us have to take special care to avoid actions that isolate or exclude potentially vulnerable people.”

A lesson remembered

It was almost 6pm, the faith teacher will arrive soon. She rushed to the bathroom, to perform the ritualistic wash. Ablution – the act of washing oneself to cleanse and purify. It is compulsory to do, before you read any sacred passages.

The water was soothing, fresh and clean – It felt great. But it also brought a degree of anxiety and fear. She didn't do her homework; she knew there would be consequences.

Deep inside she felt scared, but she kept a still face. “If I stay quiet, maybe no one will notice?” she thought to herself.

She walked into the makeshift living room come classroom, where colourful mats lay on the floor, full of students sitting crossed legged chanting loudly, all reciting different pages of the sacred books, All saying different verses. Loud, louder and even LOUDER!

She tried to stay focused on her page, trying to regulate her Metronome, but it was almost impossible.

There was sensory overload. It's now called Heightened Sensory Sensitivity!

Some children were rocking backwards and forwards, mesmerised and reading passionately. Some were having a giggle and gossip between themselves, others were making paper origami secretly away from the teacher's gaze.

She scanned the room ... looking at all the children ... and figuring out the best way to concentrate and read a foreign language that was not even her mother tongue or English literature which she



Shofa Miah ©Isabelle Rose Povey

was very good at! There was so much noise and activity, the room was alive!

But with this Heightened Sensory Sensitivity comes blinding pain and emotional meltdown.

Silently and unannounced, a sharp hand landed across her face. Hot tears streamed down her soft face. Silent tears, like hot lava. She looked down at the book at the same time, using both her hands to protect the back of her head and ears from the next blow.

She tried to read, but nothing came out from her mouth. Only muffled sounds. Her tears tasted bittersweet.

An authoritarian male voice yelled: “Go and do ablution again you stupid girl – the devil has possessed you again”. The little girl goes back to the bathroom and repeats the ablution. She looks up at her reflection, one side of her soft eight-year-old cheek, bright red and stinging.

Maybe, she thinks to herself, maybe I am stupid and I am possessed by the devil. The teacher can't be wrong, can they? Because, after all, they are normal ...

©Anne Koeleman/shutterstock



Changing attitudes on neurodiversity

The experience outlined on this page is my own, but many of us carry the trauma from childhood if we have witnessed or been on the receiving end of physical punishment, perhaps at the hand of our parents, family members or carers or from adults in faith and teaching institutions.

The reasons to be beaten were because you are academically weak, you cannot spell, you have disappointing grades, inadequate handwriting, or can't memorise or pronounce words well. Or just not conforming to cultural expectations.

Many of us learnt through fear, we were and are still led to believe that the academic child is the more intelligent child. Emotional intelligence was rarely celebrated.

I understand well now that being neurodivergent is not something to be ashamed of. It can enhance your personal and professional career and life – giving you opportunities to explore, embrace, accept, challenge, adapt and show your brilliance – in

ways that reflect the person you are.

As mentioned in *The Pocket Guide to Neurodiversity* by Daniel Aherne, there are many forms of communication, including – verbal, non-verbal, visual, written and listening.

The young girl's voice reproduced on this page is from me, a neurodivergent child caught up in a conventional teaching system. This is part of my learning journey throughout my childhood and adolescent years. And it is also the journey of many other children in Newham, London and around the world.

We learn from Daniel's book that “Girls are socialised to hide their difficulties and to conform to social expectations as much as possible, so they mask hiding their true selves and try to blend in”.

Whether our role in daily life is as parents, carers, employees or employers, it is important to remember that education and employment are often organised

around what is called a Neurotypical Framework, which doesn't work for all of us.

As a woman who has had the lived experience of trauma induced teaching, it brings hope to know that these days conditions like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Autism, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia can be diagnosed, particularly for women and girls, a group once overlooked.

In the past, it took courage to speak out on this almost taboo topic. But I made a conscious decision to do so, with the hope that it might change attitudes. Anyone who listens to the stories of people from the neurodivergent community, can shift attitudes and empower and educate others.

As we prepare for Neurodiversity Celebration Week, which takes place from 18–24 March, it's worth remembering the advice of Daniel Aherne, “Let's start to make the world more inclusive by simply paying attention to people around you ...”

Winter blues? We're getting ready for a hot, hot summer

CHARLOTTE COOK, FRIENDS OF WEST HAM PARK

Those who have been defying the chill and drizzle of winter and having fun in the West Ham Park playground may have spotted some activity in the flower beds. The trusty park rangers have been hard at work, adding some new and exciting plants to the beds and borders for hot summer days ahead.

And these are no ordinary plants!

So that they can withstand the climate changes we have all been noticing, the selected plants are originally from places in the globe which have historically had warmer weather. As such the plants are more tolerant of drought, need less watering, and so should be more likely to survive the warmer summers that we have been experiencing of late.

And, cunningly, they are also well suited to the playground as they are more tolerant of non-weather related bad behaviour, so curious



Orangi Harvey, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

fingers and misdirected footballs should have minimal adverse impact on them! Although please do still treat them with some care.

People can spot any of these new inhabitants: from places as far away as New Zealand (Phormium, Pittosporum, Eucalyptus and Cordyline), from Asia (Camellia, Fatsia Japonica, Rhododendron, Aucuba, Phyllostachys, and Fargesia [Bamboo]) and closer to home in

the Mediterranean (Trachycarpus, Lavender, Rosemary, Phlomis, and Cystisus).

And those who have ventured further afield into the park will know that these link into the Fothergill heritage, showcasing plants from "across the seas". The New Zealand planting in the playground is a replacement for the New Zealand bed that was originally situated in the ornamental gardens.

Forest Gate's own Gardeners' Question Time

With winter in full swing, Forest Gate Women's Institute are preparing for the joys of spring and summer with their own Gardeners' Question time in February providing tips and advice for green-fingered locals.

The session will be held from 7pm-9pm at Woodgrange Infant School in Sebert Road E7 on Tuesday, 6 February. And the meeting is free to members and first time visitors

The expert panel includes Janet Daniels, Lisa Eller and Elaine Fieldhouse.



Image: Markus Spiske/Unsplash

Advertorial

Inspiring stories: Visually impaired NewVlc alumni graduates with a first-class honours degree

Visually impaired NewVlc alumni **Irshad** recently graduated with a first-class honours BSc Cyber Security and Networks degree from University of East London.

Irshad completed his GCSEs at Kingsford School before joining NewVlc to study a Level 3 Extended Diploma IT Practitioners course and he achieved exceptional grades before progressing to university.

His limited vision presented him with many challenges throughout his education. He started at NewVlc in September 2018 and wanted to do an IT course. At the time, it was felt that the course would not suit him due to his visual impairment. However, due to Irshad's love of IT, his perseverance and the learning support he received whilst at NewVlc, he did not let his disability hold him back.

Irshad is registered as severely sight impaired. He is unable to see objects at a distance and has trouble reading and participating in class as fully as any able student. He is able to count fingers at a distance of 50cm and can see at six metres what a fully sighted person can see at 151 metres.

According to the World Blind Union, "more than 90% of all published material is not

accessible to the blind or partially sighted" and print was not a practical medium for Irshad. NewVlc helped Irshad to overcome this barrier by providing an iPad with a voiceover facility. Amazingly, he created websites on his iPad whilst he was doing his course! He was also given sighted guide training and was quickly moving around the college independently.

Rosemary O'Sullivan, Vision Impaired Lead at NewVlc started her role at the same time as Irshad joined the college. She put in place the right technology and support so Irshad could fully access the curriculum. In addition, other learning support practitioners were trained on how best to support Irshad during his lessons, alongside Rosemary and help Irshad to gain his confidence to succeed.

Irshad said:

"I am extremely grateful for the exceptional support I received from NewVlc during my time there, as it played a crucial role in my successful completion of the BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma. The assistance



Irshad with Rosemary O'Sullivan

provided by Rosemary O'Sullivan and the Inclusive Learning Support Team was truly outstanding. They went above and beyond to ensure that all my coursework was adapted into a format that was accessible to me, converting it into a readable work document.

Additionally, they promptly addressed any challenges I faced, such as inaccessible software, by finding alternative approaches and effectively communicating with my teachers. I firmly believe that without the unwavering support I received, I would not

have been able to successfully complete my extended diploma and be where I am today."

NewVlc Vision Impaired Lead, Rosemary O'Sullivan, added:

"Whilst working with Vision Impaired (VI) learners over the past 20 years (5 years spent at NewVlc), I know how hard young people have to work to achieve any part of their studies.

There are barriers in the curriculum, which I try my best to break down for my visually impaired learners and gain great pride and happiness when I see what they have achieved over the years.

I support all of our visually impaired students to achieve to the best of their ability and realise their potential, regardless of their disability. I am here to help all of NewVlc's amazing visually impaired students to achieve their dreams. I am so proud of Irshad and all that he has achieved so far. Well done Irshad."

For more information about NewVlc's Inclusive Learning Support, please visit www.newvic.ac.uk/learning-support

Get to know us at our Open Day on Saturday 3 February 2024, 10am – 12.30pm www.newvic.ac.uk/open-days

The Stratford theatre pioneer who put diversity centre stage

Neandra Etienne pays tribute to Philip Hedley who died in January and who is credited with opening the door to Black actors and writers for the first time in Britain

Philip Hedley's career at Theatre Royal Stratford East started back in the 1960s when he was a founding student of their East 15 Acting School. He went on to become a teacher at East 15 for three years in order to give himself some experience directing plays.

In 1973 and 1974 Philip was asked by Gerry Raffles, the administrator and owner of the theatre, to take on a dual role of being both assistant to him and assistant in rehearsal to Joan Littlewood. In the 1990s the theatre had a strong reputation for providing Black and Asian creatives space to develop their ideas.

The theatre commissioned more Black and Asian plays and employed more Black and Asian actors than any other

theatre. It held three short courses for Black and Asian would-be directors to challenge the lack of opportunities offered to them.

Clint Dyer, Deputy Artistic Director at National Theatre, joined the Theatre Royal's Youth Theatre. Clint, from Newham, told *Newham Voices*: "Philip Hedley is for me without any doubt one of, if not the, pioneer of diversity in British Theatre.

"He ran what was at one time the only major theatre that regularly commissioned/programmed new works written, starring and directed by British black artists about black British lives. His mighty influence is immeasurable. I, like so many, owe my career completely to him."



Phillip Hedley. Image via philiphedley.com

As Artistic Director Philip championed the work from Black and Asian Creatives, this included being instrumental in giving the BiBi Crew a platform for their ideas.

The BiBi Crew were a collective of seven creative women - Joanne Campbell, Judith Jacob, Janet Kay, Suzette Llewellyn,

Josephine Melville, Beverley Michaels and Suzanne Packer.

"Philip Hedley was rooting for BiBi Crew from the beginning," said Judith Jacob. "He gave us freedom, flexibility and trust. Having free rein and not being micromanaged was a rare thing at the time. He gave us really sound advice about budget

too. Go for your ideal because they're always going to knock you down. So don't already knock yourself down beforehand! This is so important because many times we want to make all the compromises. Phillip was always warm with us and made us feel important and that our work mattered."

When the BiBi Crew were honoured with a Newham Heritage Blue plaque at the theatre in June 2023 Philip was invited to attend the unveiling. He also gave an impromptu speech and shared his memories of the BiBi Crew.

Theatre Royal Stratford East placed a book of condolences in their box office and paid tribute to Philip on their social media platforms.

They said: "We are devastated to learn of the death of Philip Hedley. Philip was our Artistic Director from 1979 for 25 years. His legacy and work here, and in the wider theatre industry, was immeasurable. He will be much missed."

Philip David Hedley CBE, Theatre Director, April 10, 1938 - January 5, 2024

philiphedley.com
www.stratfordeast.com

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Would you consider bringing your skills, knowledge, and experience to the Management Committee of Community Transport Waltham Forest?

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For application information please contact:
Helen Tredoux, Director, Community Transport Waltham Forest,
Low Hall Business Park, Leyton, E10 7AS.
Email: helen@ctwf.co.uk • Tel: 020 8521 0665

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www.newhamvoices.co.uk

OUT AND ABOUT WITH NEANDRA

Our Chief reporter on events that reflect culture, history and heritage in Newham



A touch of spice for arts and culture in February



Spice Girls stamp, Royal Mail

Royal Mail is celebrating the chart-topping hits and iconic live performances of the legendary girl group the **Spice Girls** with a new set of ten special stamps and collectables.

Included in the stamp collection is the Spice Girls' performance during the closing ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games, held at the London Stadium, Queen Elizabeth Park, Stratford.

Royal Mail previously featured stamps of the heavy metal band Iron Maiden. The Cart and Horses pub in Stratford is recognised as the birthplace of Iron Maiden. The band also performed their early gigs in the now closed Ruskin Arms. shop.royalmail.com

Voices of East Bank, an online archive of stories about East London's communities, heritage and languages, was launched to mark Heritage Treasures Day in January.

The collection, which includes more than 100 audio recordings made in 2023, explores migration, heritage, languages, dialects and stories of East London's diverse history from the second half of the 20th century to the present day. The project also includes personal childhood memories, culture, food experiences of racism and discrimination.



Voices of East Bank – Oral History Research Suresh Cockney Sikh + interviewees

The project, led by Community History Project Freelancer Lydia Powell, is supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Lyn Garner, Chief Executive of LLDC, said:

“This is such a wonderful project preserving deeply personal memories to help us to make sense of a rapidly changing world. Whether it’s someone’s memories of working life in Canning Town, finding community in Spitalfields after the partition of India, or celebrating UK Black Pride on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, the recordings provide a fascinating insight into East London life from the past to present.”

www.eastbankvoices.co.uk



In Out exhibition

Justine Hounam, Anne Isaksson and Jacqueline Rana are all studying for doctorates in fine art at the University of East London. They will be showing work by a range of UEL PhD and MA students for the **In Out exhibition**.

The exhibition will examine the interplay between internal contemplation and external manifestation. They are inviting visitors to explore the dual nature of obscured, overlooked, and concealed aspects of the human experience, unearthing narratives often sidelined or buried within conventional historical accounts.

The exhibition is co-curated with Hive Curates as a part of the Alice Billings Connects Cultural Programme. It will be open Friday-Sunday 1-7pm and is free to attend.

The *In Out* exhibition, Gerry Raffles Square, Stratford from 27 January to 25 February



Mindful Crafternoons with Momtaz Begum-Hossain

Local Crafts Expert and Museum of Happiness Facilitator Momtaz Begum-Hossain hosts monthly **Mindful Crafternoons for Adults** on the last Sunday of the month.

Tickets are donation-based and all money is donated to mental health charity CALM

Sunday 25 February, 4-6pm at Well Bean Co café, 1-2 Upper Dock Walk, E16 2GU

<https://shorturl.at/ce005>

Eastside Community Heritage has launched their new exhibition *A Home Fit to Live In* at Custom House and Canning Town Community Neighbourhood Centre and Library. (See opposite page)

The exhibition focuses on home and housing in Canning Town during the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

Eastside interviewed Canning Town residents about what life was like living in Canning Town using these oral histories to create a pop-up exhibition. *A Home Fit to Live In* can be lent out to groups, libraries and/or community venues.

www.hidden-histories.org



A Home Fit To Live In exhibition

Rainbow Community Garden aims to embed a family culture

Local residents Natasha, Hannah and gardener Penny got together to start the Rainbow Community Garden in 2020. The name came about because a community building called Rainbow Hut was once located on the land now used by their community garden. Rainbow Hut offered pre-school childcare, breakfast club, after school care and changing rooms for sport. The building was taken down many years ago and the space was left unused and abandoned,

Hannah Duthie told *Newham Voices*: “It was obvious right from the start that it was the Rainbow Garden.”

The team successfully applied for funding from the People, Powered, Places East Ham programme. Hannah found the application process “accessible and well supported. It was clearly explained and many additional clinics were put on to offer time to help residents if needed. A big thank you for making the process so easy to access for sure!”

The funding will enable the team to renew the crumbling

concrete surface allowing for the space to be used for events and activities. They include more workshops, youth meet up sessions, sports and mini festivals throughout the year.



The Rainbow Garden offers drop in family gardening on Sundays from 10-2pm and they have their own WhatsApp group.

Hannah said: “The community focus to our garden means we are much more than a garden. We are hoping to root a strong culture of families and residents who want to spend time together in a space that was abandoned and full of broken glass and rubbish. Something beautiful is growing in this area and I can’t wait to see the future of Rainbow Community Garden.”

[@rainbowgardene6](https://www.instagram.com/rainbowgardene6)

Advertisement

LICENSING ACT 2003

APPLICATION FOR VARIATION OF A PREMISES LICENCE

I Madhubabu Gatta have applied to NEWHAM COUNCIL to vary the premises licence for:

Central Park Shop, 86A High Street South, Eastham E6 3RL so as the following licensable activities may be provided on the following days and hours:

To vary the hours for supply of alcohol to Monday-Sunday 08:00 - 23:00 and to amend conditions on the licence

Newham Council's Licensing Register is kept at the office of the Licensing Team, East Ham Town Hall, Barking Road, East Ham, E6 2RP. (open 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday), 020 3373 1925, where details of the application may be inspected.

Any representations against the application must be made in writing and received by the Licensing Team at the above address, by no later than the **09/02/2024**

Individuals, businesses and other bodies may make representations in relation to the application. Representations must be relevant and can only be on the licensing objectives of the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance, and the protection of children from harm. Copies of all representations will be sent to the applicant. Persons making representations will have to appear at the Councils' Licensing Sub-Committee.

Note: It is an offence, liable on conviction to a fine up to £5,000 for an applicant to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with the application.

Locals join Idris in campaign against knives

NEANDRA ETIENNE

Actor Idris Elba, who went to school in Newham, has launched an anti-knife campaign *Don't Stop Your Future* to inspire local groups working for change. Launching his campaign he explained why: "I was incensed about the lack of care and attention that people were showing about knife crime".

His initiative has won support from local groups. One of them, SCK Fitness Team, told *Newham Voices* that the campaign "is shedding light on the crises afflicting our communities, through supporting grassroots organisations, while Idris is also using his voice and platform to initiate positive change from within the system."

In 2024 SCK Fitness Team is committing to making more noise through its own anti-knife crime campaign. "We will harness our growing platform and community trust. We



Sunday Boxing SCK Fitness Team CIC

aim to offer: more awareness and education on the harsh realities of carrying knives, providing long-term diversionary activities (such as free BJJ/Boxing classes) and mentoring young people who carry knives or previously had.

"We believe 'knife crime' is a public health problem, demanding a public health solution. And

that's why we open our doors to under 21s in Newham, to give them somewhere to be, ultimately improving their mental and physical health. Through sports-based mentoring by our senior coaches, some have turned their lives around completely. As they grow braver, the desire to carry knives dissipates."

Another group backing the Idris Elba campaign is Ayesha Youth Project who say the campaign aligns with their own mission to empower

"I was incensed about the lack of care and attention that people were showing about knife crime"

-Idris Elba

young people. In a statement Ayesha Youth Project said:

"We wholeheartedly support Idris Elba's knife crime campaign. We are dedicated to deterring young people from crime by empowering them with essential life skills.

"Through a range of programmes, including employability workshops, drug awareness initiatives, and our forthcoming anti-knife crime

and conflict resolution workshops, we aim to address the root causes of crime.

"The enthusiasm and interest displayed by young people are indicative of a collective commitment to building a safer community. As we embark on our first anti-knife crime workshop, we are optimistic about the positive impact it will have on equipping young individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed and responsible choices."

@sckfitnesssteam
www.ayeshayouthproject.org
www.dsyf.com



Canning Town's hidden history: pioneering good homes for all

Eastside Community Heritage, the Newham-based charity on a mission to tell the hidden histories of the East End, launched a new exhibition in January shining a spotlight on the ground-breaking story of Canning Town's role in building a new vision of housing in Britain.

The exhibition at the Custom House and Canning Town Community Neighbourhood Centre and Library in Rathbone Road on 18 January, shared interviews with Canning Town residents as well as a display of paintings and dig-

ital art of Canning Town in the 1950s and 60s by artist Terence Claydon.

The exhibition, *A Home Fit To Live In*, focuses on home and housing in Canning Town in the 1950s, 60s and 70s and was made possible by a grant of £10,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The exhibition in particular shines a light on the pioneering role Canning Town played in Britain's housing development policies. In 1964 39 homes were built in Kildare Road to test out the Parker Morris standards, an innova-

tive new housing policy centred on improving space and living standards.

This experiment led to changes in housing policy and design – the standards became mandatory for all the new town builds in 1967 and all council houses in 1969.

Eastside Community Heritage's Hidden Histories archive, open to the public, now contains more than 4,000 oral histories and 40,000 photos of East Londoners, dating from the Nineteenth Century to the present day. Each item provides local people with a connection to the rich heritage of East London.

Canning Town, is a historical riverside landmark in the movement for social housing and today is in the process of being reborn as a thriving urban centre, but the aim of Eastside is to keep in focus its proud history as a centre of housing standards innovation, and in the process to continue open conversations about home and quality of living.

For further information, please contact Freya at Eastside Community Heritage at freya@ech.org.uk and 07411 536339.



A Home Fit To Live In exhibition



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Nourishment for body and soul

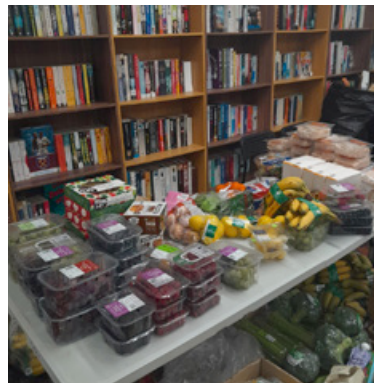
THELMA ODOI

There were queues outside the Custom House Community Bookshop this Christmas as Denise Evans-Barr and her team fed the community, literally.

This time of year is a time when friends and family come together around the dinner table to celebrate. However it was no news that for many who celebrated, Christmas was hard this year. With the cost of living crisis and weekly bills going up, hardships have been visible.

Denise accepted donations from the Felix Project on days which are usually spent as holiday. The food included

milk, yogurts, rice pudding, bread, chicken, roast beef, cheese, potatoes, eggs, pineapples, crispy potato slices, tomatoes in packs and on the vine, parsnips, grapes, mush-



Nourishing both body and soul: books and foodbank supplies at the Custom House bookshop

rooms, bananas, oranges, oat milk, tomato and mozzarella pasta meals, sausage pasta meals and lots of fresh vegetables.

The Custom House Community Bookshop became a food bank that fed 74 families on 24 December and more than 100 families on 27 December. Whatever was left over was distributed to neighbours in the local area as well as through a local church.

People were able to come in and pick whatever food they wanted at no cost. Denise and her team also ran an incredible Santa's grotto, where she dressed up as Mrs Clause, giving out more than 90 presents.

In the last third of the year

the bookshop organised and carried out 55 activities providing support for around 740 people. It's a programme of support they plan to continue throughout the coming year.

Looking to 2024 and beyond, the Custom House Community Bookshop runs various community activities:

- **Tuesday** mornings 10 am -11.30 am Childminders stop and play activities.
- **Wednesday** 10 am - 12 pm Cuppa and Chat open to all.
- **Thursday** 10 am -11.30am Family stay and play activities.
- **Alternative Saturdays** 11am -1pm Family arts & crafts activities.

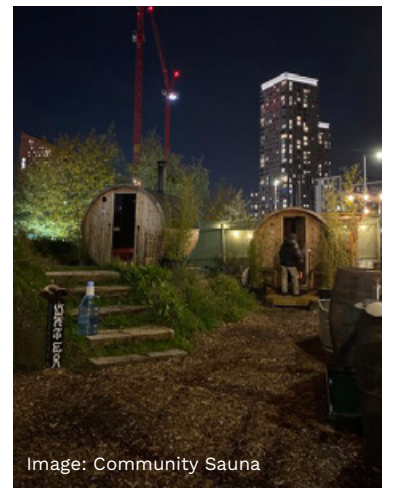


Image: Community Sauna

Feeling the heat for good health

A community sauna project has opened a site in the heart of Stratford. The not-for-profit Community Sauna Baths has become a hot ticket since first opening in 2021 in Hackney Wick, with glowing write-ups in national newspapers and hosting 50,000 visitors, most of them who've never tried a sauna.

The new site in Stratford, close to Stratford International station, has three saunas and is part of the LightHouse & Gardens, a community garden and well-being space.

Community Sauna Baths launched in 2021 to make saunas and their benefits accessible to all. It does this by offering low entry fees as well as concessionary rates for those who can't afford it. The sauna also hosts community-specific events, including a monthly trans night and sessions for pregnant women, parents and children who are facing tough times.

community-sauna.co.uk



Image: Newham Council

Nine in race to become a Borough of Culture

Newham will find out in March whether it has been successful in bidding to become London Borough of Culture for 2025,

The Borough is up against competition from eight other councils, They are: Barnet, Ealing, Greenwich, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Havering, Merton and Wandsworth.

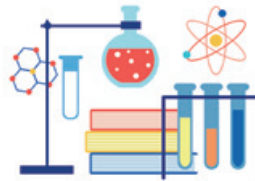
Eureka! It's Citizen Science Day

On Saturday 17 February creative and inventive residents of Newham have an opportunity to show off their skills during Citizen Science Day which will showcase inventions, discoveries, and technology.

The fair will be held from 10-4pm at the University of East London Water Lane campus in Stratford where volunteers have prepared an exciting line-up of hands-on displays, talks, creative arts, serious subjects and playfulness.

There's something for everyone including younger children. Topics will range from sustainable tech, environmental sensors, talks about artificial intelligence (the good and the bad!), digital privacy, information quality and source-checking, and virtual reality.

People are invited to bring along their projects and give 5-minute lightning talks. Scan the bar code here for more information and see you there! More information at newham-citizen-science-fair.uk



Black Luv UK TV Producers Negotiate US Distribution Deal

REBEKAH SAMUEL

Newham producers, Sam Addo and Ben Moss combined their talents and experience to create *Black Luv UK* an online TV series focusing on black relationships in the UK.

Sam explained: "I am a firm believer in inspiring through positivity. Having worked in TV for over 25 years, I have not seen enough positive representation of the black community that is free from the 'b' word, 'n' word and gangs. I

felt there was too much toxicity depicted in black relationships in programmes."

Inspired by a couple of US programmes, Sam teamed up with long term friend and co-producer Ben to create



©Shaddow Group

a show that would "equally reflect a positive representation of the UK black community through a 'British lens'. Combining 15 years of experience in education, cinematography, photography, sound, and a shared vision in the value of 'positive representation' Ben used his skills to create a sleek insight into the lives of the couples who openly share intimate stories around their love throughout the series.

The series, available on YouTube, proved popular with audiences at home and abroad,

so much so, it caught the attention of a US distributor, and is set to be aired across America, as well as Australia, Austria and Canada via Apple TV.

Ben said: "The love and attention that followed the first series was just so wonderful to receive. As a white male with a black partner, and the father of children who the world will see as black, the value of alternative representation to what the mainstream media puts out there is so important, and hopefully *Black Luv UK*, will lead to more to come from us."

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Newham alliance calls for action on race equality

Aidan White, publisher and editor of *Newham Voices*, is also a member of *Newham's Race Equality Alliance*. Here he outlines the importance of this work in preparation for *Race Equality Week* in February.

It may be one of the most diverse boroughs in the country, but the people who live and work in Newham still suffer discrimination because of their race or ethnicity.

Now a refreshed campaign aims to put the Borough in the vanguard of work to create a more equal society.

The Newham Race Equality Alliance (NREA) is an independent community-led group working with Newham Council to fight the discrimination, bias and stereotypes that affect residents and people who work in Newham because of their race or ethnicity.

Now the alliance plans a relaunch of its work on 9 February to raise awareness of its work and to encourage residents, local community leaders and



inequalities. But change has been painfully slow.

The week of action aims to address the challenges that ethnically diverse employees face in their working lives.

This year the theme will be #ListenActChange, with an emphasis on less talk and more action.

Councillor Dr Rohit K Dasgupta, the Newham Council deputy Cabinet Member for Equalities, Social Justice and Culture said: "We take great pride in the diversity of our Borough, but unfortunately the truth is that far too many of our residents deal with the same basic problems of inequality.

"This alliance is part of our wider, dedicated approach to making Newham a better, fairer place where everyone is respected, has equal opportunities in life, is in good health and feels safe in the community."

For more information about the 9 February event and the NREA contact info@rein.uk.com



This alliance is part of our wider, dedicated approach to making Newham a better, fairer place.

activists to join together in the fight for racial equality.

The NREA will be relaunched at a special event being organised during Race Equality Week, a nationwide movement of events and actions organised from 5-11 February.

This week of action comes at a time when race hatred is once more on the march, with fresh controversies raging over the rise of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia surrounding the war in Gaza and the continuing racist abuse in football.

The Newham event, which is open to everyone, will be held on Friday 9 February from 4pm to 7pm, at 1a The Mix Cumberland Road, E13 in cooperation with the charity REIN, Rights and Equality in Newham.

Newham's Race Equality Alliance has so far been working on principles for a borough-wide charter to challenge racial discrimination, advising Borough leaders on its policy work, Tackling Racism, Inequality and Disproportionality (TRID) and discussing initiatives reaching out to the community. Its work and plans for the future will be the focus of the meeting on 9 February.

The objective is to ensure that the voices of residents are heard and that local people can influence decisions at all levels, including through the delivery of local council services. The alliance, while acting as a contact point and reference group, also plans to make itself accountable.

Race Equality Week has been growing strongly since it was first launched in 2021 with more than 4,500 organisations involved last year.

According to the organisers of Race Equality Week, the non-profit organisation Race Equality Matters, the problem of tackling race inequality has shown little and slow progress for decades.

The importance of a new way forward was never more evident than in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd and during the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted significant

Newham Voices Easter Community Listings

To be considered for inclusion in the *Newham Voices* Easter listings page in our March edition your event must be submitted on or before the 19th of February.

We cannot guarantee inclusion. Free inclusion for local, low-cost events.

Scan this code here and submit your listing on our form for inclusion:



You can also book advert placements in our Easter Listings, for advert bookings email maia@socialspider.com or klaudia@socialspider.com

SOMETHING'S BREWING

Drinkers are spoilt for choice these days, so Phil Mellows suggests introducing a little variety and a little less of "the usual"

One phrase you hear less of in pubs is "a pint of the usual". Beer drinkers have so much to choose from these days the old habits are breaking down.

I visited a brewery recently that, in the space of a year, has gone from four core beers plus a few seasonal specials to producing 100 different brews in 2023. And customers have been lapping them up... well, most of them.

Locally, you've only to glance at the bars of pubs such as the Boleyn Tavern in Upton Park, the Denmark Arms in East Ham, the Black Lion in Plaistow or the Borough's surviving Wetherspoon, the Goldengrove in Stratford, to get a sense of what's available.

Of course, some pubs have always had a wide choice on the pumps but is used to be mainly bitters brewed in different parts of the country. Now we have a much greater variety of styles, thanks to the growth of microbrewers and craft beers, and their willingness to experiment over the past 20 years.

So we're seeing pale hoppy ales made with new world hops that can conjure all sorts of surprising flavours, 'pastry' stouts that mimic cakes and desserts and even British-brewed lagers that deliver a something more interesting than the big brands.

This winter I've noticed a surge of red ales with a warm fruity tang. And if you venture into craft specialists such as Mother Kelly's or Tap East in

Stratford, or the Husk Brewing taproom in Canning Town you'll find even more wild and wacky concoctions on the taps. Sour beer, anyone?

Not all these beers are for everyone, and many will stick with their trusted 'usual'. At least most of the time. But it would be a shame not to give them a try now and then. Variety plays an important part in a healthy beer scene. It gets people talking. And it gets people out of their comfort zone. Which is never a bad thing.



Photo: amie-johnson/Unsplash



Good reads in Newham

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

- **A Century of Labour** (Newham Bookshop event on 7 March at The Wanstead Tap — see website for details) By Jon Cruddas

- **The New Life** By Tom Crewe

- **Empireworld — How British Imperialism Has Shaped the Globe** By Sathnam Sanghera

- **Time Travellers — Adventure Calling** (request a signed copy with a personal dedication — see website for details) By Sufiya Ahmed (illustrated by Alessia Trunfio)

- **Time Travelling with a Tortoise** By Ross Welford

I Wonder Where I Am? By Shinsuke Yoshitake

— Compiled by David Ceen, Newham Bookshop

Energy and transport tips for older people

PETER LANDMAN

Older people looking for support with their heating and energy bills and help in making sense of transport opportunities should take their place at the next meeting of the Older Persons Reference Group, the open public forum for older people, on Thursday 8 February, 12.30pm at St John's Church Stratford.

In her January Newsletter, Grace Patient, Age UK's East London Reference Group Coordinator, reminds readers about the Age UK home energy checks for people coming out of hospital, and their priority services register.

She goes on to advise of help with form filling available at local libraries and at Community Links, Ascension Community Trust and the Stratford Advice Arcade.

For more information contact Grace Patient 0737 505 1243 or grace.patient@ageukeastlondon.org.uk



©Artem Labunsky/Unsplash

Refuge and reflection as Nomad tent comes to Docklands

SHOFA MIAH

The Royal Docks have invited world-renowned street-artist Mohammed Ali MBE to bring his art installation *Nomad* to the Factory Project in the Docklands for February. He is known for creating art that celebrates themes of immigrant narratives as well as reflections of faith in a modern society.

Mohammed has painted murals, created installations, and delivered live performances in New York, Johannesburg, and other major cities. He and his team at Soul City Arts — an arts organisation he founded — have created an immersive experience he describes as a 'nomadic reflection booth' for the public to step inside, to write and record cherished thoughts and prayers.

Mohammed said: "We have created this intimate tent structure and brought it into a London warehouse for a weekend. It is a space for refuge and an escape from the daily grind. People's prayers are a very personal and sacred thing, but we bring them into a very visual and public form, providing a fascinating insight into the minds of our communities. When do we ever see what others pray for? Is it a taboo to even ask such a thing?"

During *Nomad* reflections are not just to be written but there is also an option to speak to camera for those



who wish to contribute towards the gathering of recorded prayers.

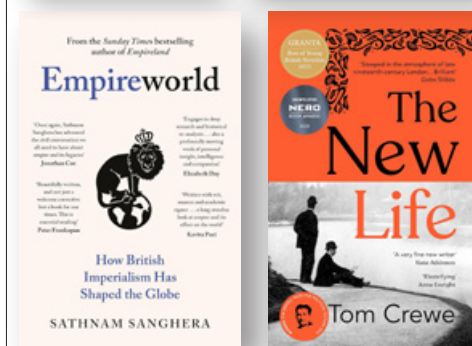
Upon entering a calming and peaceful space within the tent, people are greeted by a host dressed in traditional Bedouin garments who guides participants through a series of thought-provoking questions about 'faith'.

Those recordings will be edited and shared on-the-fly through visual projections around the space. The installation comes to Docklands and London for the first time with Newham residents able to enjoy a unique opportunity to share their prayers and hopes, as well as to see the intimate prayers of others.

The *Nomad* tent is on display at the Factory Project on:

- Saturday 24 February between 1–6pm
- Sunday 25 February between 12–5pm

www.soulcityarts.com/nomad



For full details or to request a copy, visit: www.newhambooks.co.uk

Low pay anger as welfare claims spike in Newham

AIDAN WHITE

The number of people claiming welfare benefit in Newham is reaching record levels provoking calls for government action to combat the scourge of low pay and poverty.

London Assembly Member Unmesh Desai AM says the Government needs to act over low pay following new figures showing that there are now 54,425 Universal Credit claimants in the Borough – including a rise of 1316 in a month, the third biggest increase in London.

Almost 39 percent of people on Universal Credit in Newham are in work, according to Government figures and people are often forced to claim benefit in order to make ends meet because of low



Image: Sarah Agnew/Unsplash

wages and insecure hours.

Desai, the Labour London Assembly Member for City and East London, said:

“It is a travesty that so many Londoners are forced to claim Universal Credit by low pay and Government mismanagement of the economy.

“Instead of finding work that pays, many of these people have been cheated out of

good jobs by a Government intent on doing nothing to raise wages.”

He said the Government must take action over low pay, and end the prevalence of insecure work and poor workers’ rights. He criticised the failure to address zero-hour contracts and for engaging in protracted industrial disputes rather than paying public

sector workers properly.

Across London as a whole he says low pay has contributed to around a million Londoners relying on Universal Credit with more than a half (51 percent) of working-age Londoners living in poverty already in work.

Universal Credit has also failed to keep up with rising costs, meaning that thousands of people in Newham have not been able to buy basic goods.

Around 90 percent of low-income households on Universal Credit are currently going without essentials, according to data from the Russell Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Claimants are going without food, hygiene products or basic utilities because Universal Credit does not cover all the basic costs of living.

He said that London Mayor Sadiq Khan and the Greater London Assembly has been leading the way to lift people out of poverty, extending the free school meals scheme for a second year to save families more than £1000 for each child.

“Now the Government must play their part by improving workers’ conditions,” he said.



Unmesh Desai

Advertisement

Take control of your health



ONLINE

We have launched an online portal that gives you secure access to your health record.

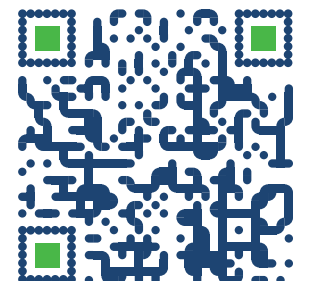
Once you sign up, you'll be able to see your personal information and check your hospital appointments.

It's free and easy to use for all Barts Health NHS Trust patients.

For more information and to sign up to **Patients Know Best**, please scan the QR code.



Or visit: bartshealth.nhs.uk/patients-know-best



SPORTS SHORTS

Compiled by **Neandra Etienne**

Tai Chi session for adults with Parkinson's enables participants to learn new skills and explore Tai Chi in a supportive environment. Book in advance. Starting Sunday 28 January, 10.30-11.30am, Newham Leisure Centre. To register <https://forms.office.com/e/vGoka4fzA6>

[@AN_sport_team](https://twitter.com/AN_sport_team)

Stratford based Basketball team **London Lions** has partnered with Greenhouse Sports, a charity that uses sports as a vehicle to develop young lives, to provide up to 3000 children in London with an unprecedented pathway to a career in professional basketball.

The London Lions will grant free access for groups of children within the programme to attend world-class men's and women's EuroCup basketball games at their home arena of the Copperbox in Stratford.

www.thelondonlions.com



London Lions



West Ham United Players AFCON

Taking the field at the **Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON)** tournament are West Ham United players Mohammed Kudus of Ghana and Morocco's Nayef Aguerd. Former West Ham United player Chris Hughton, from Newham, has been the head coach of the Ghana national team. To follow the tournament there is a YouTube channel for free and on Sky Sports via subscription. The month-long tournaments ends with the final scheduled for 11 February.

www.cafonline.com

West Ham Foundation is recruiting for the 2024/25 season Post 16 Football and Education trials

Boys aged 15-18. Free WHUF training and playing kit. Play football and study full time. Represent WHUF in weekly fixtures. 13 February, 10.30am-1pm, West Ham, Parsloes Park

foundation.whufc.com

Hope 4 Humanity have announced the start of their People Powered Places Project for women, youth, and children (aged five and over to be accompanied by a Female family member). Their activities includes kick boxing, dancing and zumba.

From 20 January - 20 July, every Saturday, 12pm to 3pm, Katherine Rd Community Centre, 254 Katherine Rd, E7 8PN

hope4humanity.org.uk



Active Newham is offering young people aged 11-17 years who live or go to school in Newham, the opportunity to represent the Borough at the London Mini Marathon. Newham Mini Marathon Team trials 2024 will be held on 13 and 15 February on the track at Newham Leisure Centre.

The London Mini Marathon takes place on 20 April.

[@activeNewham](https://twitter.com/activeNewham)



Manor Youth Project

Manor Youth Project is a gateway project of Ayesha Youth Project. Both have received funding from Newham Council People Powered Places to run projects as part of their health and well-being programme. Available activities include:

- **Newham Youth Football League**, a free youth football league making football accessible for grassroots teams in the Borough. Tuesday 6 February, Little Ilford School 5.45pm - 6.45pm
- **Centre of football excellence**, a new football development centre for young people delivered by UEFA qualified coaches with opportunities to play against academy teams as well as going to national tournaments.
- **Basketball club** opening for young people in Newham. Friday 9 February, Little Ilford School 6pm - 7pm
- **Boxing club**, a boxing club opening for young people, adults as well as a female only club, to keep fit and active as well as distracted from crime and anti-social behaviour. (female only adults and youth to begin in March): Wednesday 7 February, Church Road Studios

www.ayeshayouthproject.org

West Ham United Women's Barclays WSL fixture at home to Arsenal has been selected for TV broadcast! The match on Sunday 4 February will now kick off at the earlier time of 12.30pm and will be shown live on the BBC.

www.whufc.com

Walking Basketball is open to all levels of fitness and adults age 35+ and is led by an experienced teacher, who reveals the skills in playing basketball but at a walking pace.

It's free to attend. Participants should wear sensible footwear and bring a water bottle. No booking is required. Report to the Library staff counter on arrival. and register with the teacher at start of the session. Saturdays, 11:00am - 12:00pm, Beckton Globe Library, 1 Kingsford Way

Central Park FC are league 5-a-side tournament champions! The team were unbeaten in all their fixtures on the day, drawing only two games and winning the final on penalties

[@centralparkfc](https://twitter.com/centralparkfc)

Clapton Community FC's women's first team have appointed Jason Murray as head coach. Their full fixture list can be found online at:

www.claptoncfc.co.uk

During half-term the London Borough of Newham in partnership with **Active Newham** will be delivering FREE Sport activities for children and young people in their leisure centres.

Sports include mini tennis, multi-sports and mini kickers. 12 February - 16 February

www.eventbrite.com/cc/newham-february-half-term-youth-activity-2928919
[@AN_sport_team](https://twitter.com/AN_sport_team)

Athletic Newham FC have named Francesco Zabotti as their new first team manager.

www.athleticnewhamfc.com



Francesco Zabotti, via Instagram

Creative Re Work + is offering free professional development workshops for Dance creatives.

All participants who meet the course eligibility will receive a non-accredited qualification In Level 1 or 2: Performing Arts.

This Creative ReWork + programme is funded by the Mayor of London and delivered via an East London Dance and Rinova partnership

Friday 2 February: Intro to Your Artistic Identity and Friday 9 February: Intro to Community Dance Practice, 9:30am-5pm on both days. The Talent House, 3 Sugar House Lane, E15 2QS

www.eastlondondance.org

Dates and times of all games and events are subject to change. Please email your news game fixtures to neandra.etienne@newhamvoices.co.uk

Sports leaders – and helping to beat cancer

Leading the way in sports and fighting breast cancer are NewVic students Chloe, Nelma, Kierston, Camecia and Nefeli who competed with other Sixth Form and FE Colleges around the country to see who could have the biggest impact in raising awareness about breast cancer through onsite events, presentations and social media.

The students, who are members of the Sports Academy within the sports of basketball, football and netball, came first. With the support of CoppaFeel! NewVic students organised a sporting event with a netball team Vs basketball team match at the end of last year in the college's Sports Hall.

Kierston, Level 3 Business student, said: "There has



NewVic students Winners

always been a big emphasis on women and girls checking themselves for breast cancer and not so much for men so I really wanted to raise awareness within the male community and educate myself and my peers on the signs and symptoms, as well as how to check yourself properly. Getting involved in this

project has been fun and educational at the same time!"

The CoppaFeel! Challenge was established in 2009 to help spread their life-saving message and help students to gain valuable skills. For more information about NewVic's Sport Academy, please visit newvic.ac.uk/elite-sport-academies

Danny Ings Stars for West Ham in 2-2 Thriller at Bramall Lane



Mickey Ambrose on the mixed feelings over an early bath in the match at Sheffield

Out of favour striker Danny Ings played his heart out in this thrilling 2-2 draw. I believe he put in his best performance playing the number 10 role. It's not easy when things are going wrong for you but Ings was involved in both West Ham goals so let's hope he can continue to win over the West Ham faithful.

This was on a day when we saw not the fastest Premier League goal but the latest – a goal scored in the 103rd minute by Sheffield United's Ollie McBurnie to break West Ham hearts. Manager David Moyes should have had his feet up in the away dressing room, feeling happy about securing three valuable points, in his quest to close the gap on fifth-placed Tottenham Hotspurs. But instead of dunking his jammie dodger in a large mug of

tea, the decision by the referee to play an extra 13 minutes, yes 13 minutes, really took the biscuit and the Hammers Manager's biscuit sunk to the bottom of his mug.

A heart breaker for travelling West Ham fans. Moyes was absolutely furious, and he had every right to be, who has ever heard of a team scoring in the 103rd minute?

But, incredibly, there was more late drama to come in this pulsating encounter as West Ham were trying to do the double against their opponents, Sheffield United, having beaten them 2-0 at the London stadium last September.

Sheffield United's Anel Ahmedhodzic seemed to pull Jarrod Bowen to the ground in the United area just before the final whistle, but the deci-

sion went against West Ham to the utter disbelief of the Hammers boss.

Although West Ham were without several key players – Mohammed Kudus, Paqueta, Michail Antonio and Nayif Aguerd – and struggled to get going against a team rooted at the bottom of the Premier League. James Ward-Prowse's 78th minute spot-kick had fired the Irons into a 2-1 lead after Ben Brereton Diaz cancelled out Maxwel Cornet's opener.

Now if you were a betting person it looked for all the money in the world that the Hammers would close out the win and move to within three points of Tottenham as the six minutes of injury time ticked on.

But West Ham then lost their heads as Vladimir Coufal was handed a second yellow card and sent off. Moyes refused to look at Coufal as he walked past him heading for the dressing room and an early bath. Yes that's right if you took your time coming off the pitch back in the day by the time you got to the

dressing room the lads would already be in there and you would bathe in muddy water! Of course times have changed now with state of the art showers, but believe me, it felt like Coufal was already in hot water as he walked off.

Mickey Ambrose is a former Chelsea and Charlton player who lives in Stratford



“Mini” is a mega addition to West Ham United Women

The short but dynamic Australia international Katrina Gorry – known by her nickname “Mini” – is one of three new players to join West Ham United Women.

She quit Swedish side Vitvitsjö GIK in November 2023. Gorry has already earned an impressive 105 caps for her country and recently formed part of the Matildas, semi-finalists in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, alongside fellow Australian Mackenzie Arnold.

Kristie Mewis has also joined from the United States after a successful season with NJ/NY Gotham FC who were crowned the winners of the National Women's Soccer League. She has already been capped 53 times for the United States Women national soccer team and brings experience, leadership and a well-established reputation that will strengthen the Hammers.

Finally, arriving on loan until the end of the season is Canada international Shelina Zadorsky who joins from north London rivals Tottenham Hotspur.

Zadorsky, has made 56 appearances in the Barclays Women's Super League for Spurs.

Although she is only just over five feet tall, Gorry more than makes up for her lack of height in the tenacity she brings to the game. At the world cup, according to the West Ham United website, she made the highest number of tackles at the tournament, as well as covering the most ground of any player.

About her nickname “Mini”, she said: “I've had the nickname since I was about 12 because I just never grew. Everyone talks about having a growth spurt, and I never had my own! It's something that has stuck with me since then. My parents call me ‘Mini’ and so does the rest of my family, so the West Ham fans can call me that too!”

Her compatriot Hammers captain Mackenzie Arnold is one of the longest serving players in the squad. The duo have played together previously at Brisbane Roar, and Gorry says that Arnold's support helped convince her to join West Ham.

WEST HAM FOCUS

Player Profile: Ben Johnson

By Edward Otto



Ben Johnson is a professional footballer who plays as a fullback for West Ham United. Johnson has represented England U21 internationally but is yet to make an appearance for the senior national team.

Youth Career

At seven, Johnson joined the Hammers academy. He played with the academy for 11 seasons spanning from 2007 to 2018. In the youth team he was originally an

attacking winger before being converted to a fullback. The former England U21 international was determined to make his dream come true by becoming a professional football player.

West Ham

Johnson's professional career took off when he was promoted to West Ham's first team in 2018; he has made 55 appearances so far and scored two goals. This is not surprising as he is not an offensive minded fullback.

Strengths

He has tremendous technical ability and can use both feet. Johnson is also a clean striker of the ball. Another one of Johnson's strengths, according to player analysts, is that he has got an impeccable reading of the game. This is

shown by the fact he is in the 95th percentile for players of his position for interceptions. Given the quality of players who play in his position, this is remarkable.

Weaknesses

One weakness is that he leaves a lot to be desired offensively and as a result is ineffective in the final third. Another weakness is his passing as his pass success rate is alarmingly low. With a completion rate of 71.2%, the fullback falls in the 12th percentile for players in his position.

Individual Honours

- West Ham Young Player of the Year: 2020-21
- West Ham Young Player of the Year: 2021-22
- Moyes wanted him to stay in the summer



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- Every penny of income from Newham Voices helps us deliver more journalism in Newham
- Currently, we are just about able to cover the paper's costs (design, printing and distribution).
- Our editorial team is entirely voluntary and in future, we would like to create paid jobs for aspiring local journalists.
- We currently have 30 supporters who contribute regularly, but we need more!

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