

## **Community Statement – COVID-19**

Our community response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has been nothing short of inspiring. Waltham Forest has kept going through the lockdown, followed social distancing rules, helped their neighbours, and brought kindness during difficult times for us all. From the army of volunteers, mutual aid and community organisations ensuring the shielding and vulnerable don't go without, to the tens of thousands of pieces of Personal Protection Equipment donated and nearly £40,000 raised, we truly are a borough that stands together in the face of a crisis.

Thanks to long-standing relationships between all our communities working together to follow the public health advice we are slowly bringing back the life we once had. As national lockdown measures begin to move into the next stage of the pandemic we will all have an even greater role to prevent the spread of the virus coming back and the inevitable loss of lives, suspension of freedoms and the economic devastation that a second national wave would cause.

Ensuring everyone in Waltham Forest keeps healthy and safe is our common goal and everyone has a part to play. Waltham Forest is a thriving place because we care about each other, and we want to protect our loved ones and neighbours.

We know that if we work together, we can also protect those among us who are most vulnerable including our elderly, shielding and black and minority ethnic communities who have been disproportionately affected by this disease.

Everyone in Waltham Forest wants to banish COVID 19 from our lives. We understand that some people are concerned about the testing and tracing system or feel the virus has gone away but for now, we all still have a duty to prevent the spread of the virus. Together we can allay fears and help everyone follow the rules, access tests if symptoms occur, take part in contact tracing and isolate when it is necessary to rid the borough of COVID.

Local public services will turn their considerable resources and expertise to support the national test and trace scheme in Waltham Forest, working with our community openly and transparently to ensure that no one is left behind or put at unnecessary risk. Information will be shared clearly and efficiently to meet the needs of our diverse communities. We will use the strong community networks that we have to engage with all pockets of the borough, making sure that we understand and can put in place extra support and guidance for those who need it.

As a community of partners, organisations and individuals are united in our shared endeavour and commitment to support each other and rid Waltham Forest of the virus.

All Together Waltham Forest, we can and will beat this pandemic.