



Mayor's Office of
International Affairs

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, ENGLAND

ATLANTA'S SISTER CITY

NEWCASTLE: FOCUSING ON THE MOST VULNERABLE TO OVERCOME COVID-19

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ATLANTA - As Newcastle navigates through the Coronavirus pandemic, the city has focused on ensuring priority services to protect the most vulnerable people as well as supporting national measures to control the outbreak. Most notably, the municipality has established strategies against COVID-19 that account for the routines and basic needs of its residents including, special measures for children, women, and individuals in need of food and supplies.

Atlanta and Newcastle became sister cities in 1977 - exactly ten years after Newcastle University awarded Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. an Honorary Doctorate. Dr. King's acceptance speech in Newcastle was his last public speaking engagement outside of the United States before his assassination. His visit to the English city laid the foundation for a historical relationship rooted in the ideals of equity, peace, and the contemporary movement of human rights between Atlanta and Newcastle.

Recently, Newcastle was one of more than ten cities that joined the virtual summit “Sister City Diplomacy & COVID-19: Looking Ahead to the New Normal”, an event organized by the City of Atlanta Mayor’s Office of International Affairs in May. The goal was to come together to share one another’s strategies to combat the spread of the virus, and discuss the unique vulnerabilities that affect the health and safety of our residents.

For those inquiring about jobs, the city directs people to the Skills Hub partnership website for help, advice, and guidance to find work. “We have been using social, local, printed and broadcast media to share this information. Also, we produced booklets for every household on how people can protect themselves and find additional support”, Councillor Forbes added.



“The ultimate priority is to get people safe and make sure that all get a sense of what we can do to take care of each other”, Councillor Nick Forbes, leader of Newcastle City Council, explains. Newcastle founded the initiative, Citylife Line, which is set up as a service for people in the community to acquire resources and essential items, and register as a volunteer. Additionally, residents who need access to low-cost food or other essential items can find information on the virtual platform Information Now.

Children eligible for free school meals receive meals or vouchers if they can not attend school due to coronavirus measures. They have also been given free toothbrushes and toothpaste, with dental supplies distributed to those most vulnerable through Newcastle’s Community Family Hubs.

The city also provides information for domestic abuse victims via the Safe Newcastle webpage. In the United Kingdom, domestic abuse organizations reported a 25% increase in the number of requests for help since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak. When it is not safe to use the telephone, the municipality encourages the use of instant messaging services provided by the Women's Aid Federation of England, one of a group of domestic abuse charities across the U.K. The local police also provides information on how to erase data regarding internet history.

“Even with social distancing and all of its precautions, we will continue to reach out to our citizens and share information about what is going on and how we can help. By doing so, we can prevent fear, misinformation, mistrust, and continue to hold our communities together in the sense of mutual cooperation”, Mr. Forbes concluded. ♦

