



## Sir Kenneth Olisa OBE

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Dear Lesley (if I may)

When historians look back on this period in our lives, they will have to answer one really testing question: "how did a country so deeply divided by the Brexit question manage to pivot in a matter of days to become one of the world's most unified communities?"

For the answer we need look no further than Her Majesty's March 19<sup>th</sup> message to the nation:

*"At times such as these, I am reminded that our nation's history has been forged by people and communities coming together to work as one, concentrating our combined efforts with a focus on the common goal."*

'Coming together' has been most evident in our capital. The NHS has been the most visible example with thousands of Londoners celebrating the hard work and sacrifice of doctors, nurses, auxiliary staff and others who risked their own health for us. Joining NHS Volunteer Responders or participating in #clapforcarers showed 'a focus on the common goal' like never before in peacetime.

However, as you know, the headlines hide many worrying issues. Londoners have lost loved ones, or have been struck down by Covid-19; Lockdown has left vulnerable people housebound and dependent on others for life's basics; children in cramped accommodation have little to satisfy agile minds and growing bodies; adults struggle to feed their families as they cope with furlough or unemployment.

Fortunately, London is blessed by having many wonderful organisations like the Diamond Club who are striving tirelessly to improve the lives of those facing tough realities. My Representative Deputy Lieutenant Sir Steve Bullock DL – has been in touch to tell me of how you have been able to react to the crisis and so continue to help the older citizens of the borough.

As The Queen's representative in this great city I am hugely impressed by your switch to using the telephone and internet to check in on your members. The "Bring me Sunshine" activity packs are a wonderful way of reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness amongst your service users and I found your piece in the Tablet especially inspirational.

The Diamond Club provides a poignant reminder of the power of our Christian values in times of trouble.

The historians to whom I referred in my opening lines will do well to study Lewisham for clues on how those positive forces were unleashed so quickly. To close, I would like to help those chroniclers with a quote from The Queen's VE Day broadcast:

*"our streets are not empty; they are filled with the love and the care that we have for each other. And when I look at our country today, and see what we are willing to do to protect and support one another, I say with pride that we are still a nation those brave soldiers, sailors and airmen would recognise and admire."*

At last, Londoners are beginning to fill our streets again as a result of the love and care which you and so many others have generously dispensed. Thank you, I am very proud to share London with you.

With very best wishes

Ken Olisa

Lesley Allen