

COMMUNITY UPDATE

COVID-19



08/01/2021



The coronavirus pandemic has brought about the biggest challenge of our lifetime, affecting us all in one way or another in every aspect of life. We now once again find ourselves living under tougher restrictions in a third national lockdown announced by the Prime Minister on Monday night.

The 'stay at home' rule is back and you should only leave your house for a valid reason. This includes food shopping, for yourself or a vulnerable person, getting medicines, seeking medical treatment or providing care to a vulnerable person. You can also leave your home for one form of exercise a day, travel to work if you can't do so from home and meet with your support or childcare bubble where necessary. If you do need to leave home for any of these reasons, you should stay local. The government have outlined that staying local means staying in the village, town or part of the city where you live. It's our responsibility to adhere to this no matter how tempting it is to travel for a change of scene.

We know these measures can take their toll on wellbeing and your mental health, particularly now that 10 months have passed since the start of this pandemic and the first national lockdown. We know it's challenging and difficult and that people are making great sacrifices in order to adhere to the rules. However, it's important to remember why these measures are in place. The record levels of infections and death rates seen this week serve as a sombre reminder of why we are in this position. The virus is as strong as ever and is still there – we must do all we can to protect ourselves and others from contracting this disease.

Some months back it was common to hear people say they didn't know anyone who'd had the virus, with the spread of infection feeling somewhat remote, especially within our county. This isn't the case now. Within the constabulary, in the last month we've seen increases in sickness related to coronavirus, including people testing positive and those needing to self-isolate. Some of us have also experienced close family members being struck with the disease and some of us, sadly, losing a relative to the virus.

COVID-19 is more widespread in our communities than ever before with a new, more infectious strain prompting a rise in cases. This is why it is so important we work together to protect ourselves, our friends, family and loved ones and the wider community, many of whom perform roles in our public services which we all rely on.

Throughout this pandemic, we've always sought to strike the right balance with enforcement of the Public Health Regulations, by being fair and proportionate but firm when our interventions have failed. We've engaged extensively since the outbreak of COVID-19 and people are well-aware of the risks, the rules, and what is expected of them. So, our policing approach in this third national lockdown will continue to follow the 4Es. We will engage, explain and encourage, always seeking voluntary compliance in the first instance. However, where this fails, officers will be encouraged to use the powers available to them as and when required and when it is proportionate to do so.

We cannot waste time with endless encouragement for people who are knowingly and blatantly breaking the rules. These people can expect a fine and, working with our partners, we will be targeting our resources towards those who commit the most serious breaches and put others at risk through their behaviour.

Many thanks - **Temporary Assistant Chief Constable , Julie Wwendth**



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