



Chief Constable Andy Marsh QPM

Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Police and Fire HQ,
PO Box 37, Valley Road, Portishead, Bristol BS20 8QJ
Telephone: 01278 646321 Facsimile: 01278 646216

Our ref: AM/ZH

Your Ref:

Date: 3rd April 2020

Dear Colleague

Coronavirus update from Avon and Somerset Police

Please find the most recent update on how we are continuing to police the Avon and Somerset area during this global health crisis.

Resourcing

Demand for our services has remained manageable with the vast majority of people abiding by the restrictions. In fact, we've seen a significant reduction in many crime types, some of which have fallen by as much as 40%.

As you know, we've got robust plans in place to deal with reduced staffing levels but thankfully, as it stands, sickness rates force wide continue to be below 10%.

I'm confident that the public will see a very visible police presence when they are out and about with 59 new PCs and 32 PCSOs graduating several weeks early from their respective training course to join their colleagues in response and neighbourhood teams.

All officers and staff who had been seconded to other roles have also returned to force while I'm grateful to many members of the Special Constabulary who have given up even more of their time than normal to provide reassurance to our communities.

The Coronavirus Act

We've started to implement the new legislation giving police power to fine adults breaching the restrictions on movement imposed by the Government.

I've been very clear we're not going to enforce our way out of this situation and we need the public by our side.

I've placed huge emphasis on the need for officers to **engage** with the people they come across during their patrols, **explain** to them the restrictions and how they are in place to protect the NHS and save lives and **encourage** them to do the right thing and stay home.

Officers are taking a common sense approach and are using their judgement, only issuing fixed penalty notices as a last resort.

Our statistics reflect our approach – as of Thursday, we've:

- Received 923 reports from members of the public relating to breaches of the restrictions
- Officers have attended 41% of these reports

- Only 37 fixed penalty notices (FPN) have been issued across the entire force area (28 in Bristol; seven in Somerset; two in Bath and North East Somerset, and none in South Gloucestershire) – that's less than 3% of all reports

Several of these FPNs have been issued to those breaching the regulations and also committing other criminal activity. For instance, a suspected county lines dealer from London was stopped in Taunton and issued with a ticket. It's cases like this where I'm pleased to see enforcement taken as it's important we send a clear message to criminals that should they seek to exploit this crisis to commit crime, we now have another tool at our disposal to disrupt them.

New online reporting form

An [online form](#) has been set up for people to report concerns over breaches of the new legislation relating to COVID-19 where the incident has already happened and is in the past.

This is because we want to keep our 999 and 101 lines free for ongoing incidents and there's been a rise in the volume of calls we've been receiving relating to breaches.

We'll use these reports to help build a picture of where breaches are occurring to inform our policing patrols.

As always, we'll be proportionate in how we deal with reported breaches and will deploy our resources to incidents which pose the highest threat, harm and risk.

Media coverage

The focus of the media switched to how police are enforcing the new legislation put in place by the Government to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

We've given journalists and news crews the chance to follow teams out on patrol in our communities – including Bath, Weston-super-Mare, South Gloucestershire and Bristol – and on Monday I was a guest on BBC Newsnight. If you didn't see it, you can watch the interview at 22 minutes on BBC iPlayer.

High-profile examples of how different forces across the UK are interpreting and enforcing the social distancing measures have captured the headlines, with a sharp focus on the tactics used by some forces to monitor the public.

The response to Coronavirus continues to evolve and like everyone else, police are learning as this rapidly changing situation develops. The National Police Chiefs' Council sent out a communication to all forces this week calling for greater consistency but I'd like to reassure you that Avon and Somerset Police is in a very good place in respect of this guidance.

We continue to look for opportunities to highlight all the excellent work being done across the force and would welcome any endorsement from you about what we're doing to protect the NHS and ensure continued public compliance with the measures put in place by the Government.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Marsh QPM
Chief Constable
Avon and Somerset Constabulary