

Key Messaging for Partners

Issue:

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) remains a huge concern to the country and is expected to last for a number of weeks/months.

New policing powers came into effect on Thursday, 26 March. The additional powers announced by the government will make it an offence for non-essential premises to remain open, and for people to gather in groups.

Key points to make:

- New policing powers were provided to police forces on Thursday, 26 March. The MPS position is to Engage, Explain, Encourage and only if necessary Enforce.
- The additional powers make it an offence for non-essential premises to remain open, and for people to gather in groups.
- We are adopting a graduated response, with enforcement action only taking place where other less intrusive options have failed or are likely to do so in the circumstances.
- Since the Government has introduced stringent conditions the MPS policing style to help enforce these conditions should be graduated as follows:
 - Enhanced visibility in our communities
 - Engagement and encouragement to adhere to Government direction
 - Support to Local Authorities in enforcing premises closure
 - Issue of Fixed Penalty Notices where a power exists and is appropriate
 - Use of powers when necessary and as a last resort.
- We will continue to apply our common sense and experience, taking a sensible and graduated approach to the situation.
- We will continue to work around the clock to help keep Londoners safe and they can have confidence that we are planning to ensure we maintain critical services as the virus continues to spread.
- The Met, and London is extremely resilient. Our officers are, and will continue to be out on the streets and supporting communities.
- We are here to support people and to continue to perform our primary function - to protect lives and prevent crime wherever we can.
- The public can help us by familiarising themselves with the many different ways they can contact us in non-emergency situations, such as using our website. This will help free officers and call handlers to attend to those who need us the most.

Message Thursday, 09 April 2020

Dear all,

As you know from my previous messages, during the lockdown we continue to work across London to keep people safe. Despite the coronavirus pandemic, we are still responding to emergency calls, dealing with community concerns and arresting offenders.

Domestic Abuse

As you will know, the Met takes a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse. With people socially distancing and self-isolating due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that this brings the possibility of putting potential victims at greater risk.

Domestic abuse is historically an under-reported crime and victims may now feel even more isolated with less opportunity to access help and support. With this in mind, we are ensuring that we, alongside our partners, are publicising information that will help and support our communities. You may see some of this information, including posters, in our local area, for example in supermarkets.

Officers are continuing to prioritise and respond to domestic abuse calls, and we continue to work closely with a range of partners to ensure victims receive the support and service they need.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, or you know a friend, relative or neighbour who you think is at risk, call police right away. In an emergency, always call 999 – high harm domestic abuse calls will continue to be prioritised. The 24/7 National Domestic Abuse helpline, which offers support to victims and people affected by domestic abuse, is free to call on 0808 2000 247.

Another source of help is the Respect Phone line, which provides confidential advice and support to help perpetrators stop being violent and abusive, and is free to call 0808 8024040.

Many thanks for your support on this important issue.

We thank you for your continued support and wish you well.
Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further questions.

Kind regards,

BCU Commander

Below from

Jason Stewart | Inspector | Barnet Safer Neighbourhoods
Address Colindale Police Station, Grahame Park Way, NW9 5TW



The specific legislation is The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020:

Restrictions on movement

- 6.—(1) During the emergency period, no person may leave the place where they are living without reasonable excuse.
(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1), a reasonable excuse includes the need:

- (a) to obtain basic necessities, including food and medical supplies for those in the same household (including any pets or animals in the household) or for vulnerable persons and supplies for the essential upkeep, maintenance and functioning of the household, or the household of a vulnerable person, or to obtain money
- (b) to take exercise either alone or with other members of their household
- (c) to seek medical assistance
- (d) to provide care or assistance, including relevant personal care
- (e) to (m) covers some other very specific circumstances such as attending court

Restrictions on gatherings

7. During the emergency period, no person may participate in a gathering in a public place of more than two people except—

- (a) where all the persons in the gathering are members of the same household,
- (b) where the gathering is essential for work purposes,
- (c) to attend a funeral,
- (d) where reasonably necessary—
 - (i) to facilitate a house move,
 - (ii) to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person, including relevant personal care
 - (iii) to provide emergency assistance, or
 - (iv) to participate in legal proceedings or fulfil a legal obligation.

[Click here for full legislation](#)

‘Guidance’ and ‘legislation’ are two different things, this is where we have seen some confusion nationally. For example, government guidance states that exercise should only be for 60 minutes per day, but as you can see the legislation just states ‘to take exercise’, this initially lead to some anecdotal accounts of officers challenging those exercising in public to find out how long they had been out for, but this seems to have ceased after some clearer national guidance was published, also I can confirm that we have never adopted such an approach in our BCU.

Before reaching the enforcement stage an officer will need to consider whether an excuse being put forward is ‘reasonable’ in the circumstances, the government guidance could in theory form part of this process but it would not be solely relied on as clearly it is not legislation in its own right.

The MPS position is very much still focusing on engagement, with enforcement as a last resort. We are seeing very few FPNs issued across London as most people are happy to listen to the advice of officers.

Kind regards,

Jason

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