



**Ms Sue Mountstevens**  
**AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER**

Police & Fire Headquarters,  
Valley Road, Portishead, BS20 8QJ  
Telephone: 01278 646555

e-mail: [sue.mountstevens@avonandsomerset.police.uk](mailto:sue.mountstevens@avonandsomerset.police.uk)



**Chief Constable Andy Marsh QPM**  
**AVON AND SOMERSET CONSTABULARY**

Police & Fire Headquarters,  
Valley Road, Portishead, BS20 8QJ  
Telephone: 01278 646321

e-mail: [andy.marsh@avonandsomerset.police.uk](mailto:andy.marsh@avonandsomerset.police.uk)

24<sup>th</sup> April 2020

*BY EMAIL ONLY*

Dear Colleagues,

As a result of last week's anticipated extension of restrictions we wanted to take the opportunity to update you on our ongoing approach to policing our communities

It's vital we recognise these restrictions will affect some people more acutely than others. People living in fear of domestic abuse or sexual abuse, those with mental health issues, people living in deprivation and those who live in homes without outdoor space will undoubtedly be feeling increasing uncertainty and isolation as time goes by. We're ensuring our officers and staff show empathy and understanding of these issues at all times - this is at the very heart of our 'engage, explain and encourage' approach.

Once again, we'd like to thank each and every one of our partners for your continued efforts to work together to reassure and support our residents. Agencies across Avon and Somerset are working successfully through the Local Resilience Forum, and in many other ways, and are demonstrating impressive levels of innovation and flexibility in dealing with this crisis.

Yesterday marked the beginning of the Holy month of Ramadan. Traditionally a time when families and friends come together to celebrate and pray, this year will be very different and we're grateful to our Muslim communities who are working supportively with us to encourage prayers and celebrations are observed at home.

Officer and staff health and wellbeing is extremely important to us and we'll ensure those observing Ramadan can do so safely. Booked annual leave will be honoured and we're encouraging regular contact between staff and line managers to discuss individual support.

We'll also be increasing access to information so every member of our organisation has a greater understanding of how to support our Muslim colleagues. Our Outreach team is offering a twice-weekly Skype discussion and chat over the four weeks of Ramadan for all members of staff who would like to know more. Faith and Reflection rooms within our police estate will be open and available to all our colleagues.

With many planned activities to celebrate Ramadan either suspended or cancelled, we know this will be a time of great struggle for our Muslim communities, especially as a result of the reduction in family and community contact. We'll be using our social media channels to highlight the great work of mental health charities and will promote avenues of support available during these difficult times.

We took time out this week to mark Stephen Lawrence Day. We reflected on the legacy of his senseless murder – undoubtedly a watershed moment in British policing – and recognised the vital importance of building positive and strong relationships between police and BAME communities.

Despite the challenges of remote working and social distancing we got this message across both internally to our workforce and externally through the power of social media and through the community radio station Ujima. We focused on what we've learned since Stephen's murder and reflected on the progress we've made in creating a more representative workforce, improving our

community engagement, and investigating hate crime – which was at the core of the unprovoked and despicable attack on Stephen in 1993.

We'd like to highlight a survey published this week, commissioned by crime and justice consultancy Crest Advisory, which showed that public support for the police approach to enforcing the COVID-19 lockdown "remains strong" with 36 per cent of those questioned stating they fully support the approach taken by the police, while a further 33 per cent also support the approach, but think in some cases officers are going too far.

Since restrictions began, we have issued 211 fixed penalty notices (as of yesterday) - a small number in proportion to our population of 1.8million residents.

We have had 13,850 reports of Covid19 restriction breaches, of those 5,150 reported online and we have attended over 44% of all of these reports.

We continue to direct officers that our strategy of engage, explain and encourage is our primary focus with enforcement as a last resort.

The online reporting form, which is helping to identify breach hotspots and inform our patrol plans, continues to be popular and we've had more than 5,100 reports via this method since it was introduced.

We'd like your support in re-iterating the message to the public that our preference is that people report any past breaches through the online form, and not 101, as we need to ensure we maximise our resources and have call handlers available to respond to ongoing requests for policing services at this critical time.

It is important for us all to remember why we are being asked to comply with these significant restrictions, to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

We know that the South West region, including the Avon and Somerset policing area, is thankfully experiencing lower levels of Covid19 infection.

The positive levels of public support we are witnessing can only help give the policy makers more options, sooner.

Officers and staff continue to work round-the-clock on the frontline in our communities and we want to be sure that, should we face staffing issues because of illness, we have resilient structures in place to provide the public with the service that they expect and deserve.

Thank you again for your support

Yours sincerely,



Sue Mountstevens  
Police & Crime Commissioner



Andy Marsh QPM  
Chief Constable