



AN OPEN LETTER

26 March 2020

Dear all,

We are sure that many of you will have felt overwhelmed with information in recent days about the national effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, or Coronavirus, and the unprecedented measures that have been put in place by the Government.

We certainly do not want to add to this, but we feel it is very important to outline how your local police force here in Wiltshire is responding to this national health emergency, the steps we are taking to support you, and the steps you can take to support us.

Wiltshire Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) stand shoulder to shoulder with all our partner agencies and colleagues from across all emergency services. We do this through a joined up partnership approach called the Local Resilience Forum, which is chaired by the Chief Constable.

Our practices through this forum have been tested well over the challenging last couple of years we have had in the county and our relationships, as partner agencies, have never been stronger. The aim of the Local Resilience Forum is to 'plan an effective and efficient coordinated multi-agency response within Wiltshire and Swindon to an emergency or major incident' - with the key aim of minimising the impact and disruption on people, their property and the environment.

Every piece of advice, guidance or decision made by the Government and Public Health England as we move through the Coronavirus pandemic serves to do the same to minimise impact – to slow the spread of the virus, protect those most vulnerable, protect our National Health Service and save lives.

Policing in this country is based on the simple concept of 'policing by consent' – the consent of the very people in our communities whom we are here to protect.

We engage with our communities here in Wiltshire and Swindon every single day – whether that's face to face, online, on the phone, through community groups - and this will continue as we move through this challenging time for us all.

We are confident that our local communities will continue to listen to the advice from our Government, and advice from our frontline officers and staff, and therefore we are not anticipating the need for widespread use of any new powers which may be granted to us. But we **will** use them if we need to.

Please follow the Government's advice, to remind you what that is at this present time:
You should stay at home, only leaving the house for one of four reasons:

- Shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, which must be as infrequent a possible
- One form of exercise a day, for example a run, walk, or cycle - alone or with members of your household
- Any medical need, or to provide care or help to a vulnerable person

- Travelling to and from work, but only where this absolutely cannot be done from home.

These four reasons are exceptions - even when doing these activities, you should be minimising time spent outside of the home and ensuring you are 2 metres apart from anyone outside of your household.

Please follow this advice to slow the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and save lives.

During this time, our focus is on ensuring that our critical, essential services remain unaffected. These are:

- Responding to emergency 999 calls and high priority incidents 24-hours a day, seven days a week
- Visibly patrolling within our communities (adhering to the latest social distancing rules)
- Detecting and solving crime
- Arresting offenders
- Ensuring that victims continue to remain at the very heart of all that we do
- Ensuring our essential non-policing services continue to deliver support to victims of crime and vulnerable people
- Ensuring we support the businesses we use by processing payments as quickly as possible.

Due to an expected rise in demand and the potential for significant staff shortages due to COVID-19, we have had to make some crucial decisions now in order to ensure we maintain the core, crucial services outlined above. These decisions include:

- Moving all of our uniformed officers out of any role which is not supporting urgent operational policing matters and returning them to the frontline
- Closing all of our enquiry offices. You can still report crime and get information on the [Wiltshire Police website](#), call us for non-urgent matters on 101 and for emergencies on 999
- Cancelling of all non-essential training to ensure the optimum number of officers and staff are free to support frontline policing
- Introducing 37 of our most newly qualified officers out into our neighbourhoods to support community policing
- Cancelling or postponing any non-urgent community police events
- Suspending all public facing volunteer schemes for a minimum of three months
- All police staff who are able to work from home are now doing so, so they can continue to provide their essential support to our frontline officers and staff.

We know this is an unsettling and confusing time for everyone – us, our officers and staff and partner agencies included. However, it is more important than ever that we come together, support each other and those who are vulnerable and, most crucially, listen to and act on the latest measures from Government in order to save lives.

Wiltshire Police remains here for you. We know you will rise to meet these challenging times and help us continue to keep you all safe.

Thank you,



KIER PRITCHARD
Wiltshire Police Chief Constable



ANGUS MACPHERSON
Police and Crime Commissioner