



**OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER FOR THAMES VALLEY**

**PCC REPORT TO POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**

**19<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

**Report Title: PCC RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report presents a summary of how the Police and Crime Commissioner and Thames Valley Police have responded to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic since the national emergency measures were introduced by the Government in March 2020.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Following the introduction of a national 'lockdown' on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force on 26<sup>th</sup> March.
- 2.2 The instrument included provision that a person who contravenes this regulation commits an offence, punishable by a fine. Environmental Health, Trading Standards and police officers are required to monitor compliance with these regulations. Businesses that breach them will be subject to prohibition notices and potentially unlimited fines. It also provides that a fixed penalty notice may be issued by authorised persons (e.g. police constable, local authority or person designated by a local authority).
- 2.3 Changes to the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force on 1st June 2020. National guidance to police forces is to use the approach of the '4 E's' – Engage, Explain and Encourage, with Enforcement only as a last resort. Enforcement should be focused on larger gatherings and/or repeat locations.

### 3. OPCC RESPONSE TO COVID-19

#### 3.1 OPCC BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

3.1.1 The OPCC implemented its Business Continuity Plans for dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak on 13 March 2020.

3.1.2 In the policing context, OPCC staff undertake no business critical roles in dealing with the emergency response to COVID-19. However, there are some statutory public-facing services that the OPCC is required to carry out itself and there are other finance-related business functions that the OPCC undertakes which are critical to delivering other corporate statutory requirements. Accordingly, the OPCC's own business critical functions are:

- Victims First services to victims and witnesses
- Independent Custody Visitors Scheme
- Production of the annual Statement of Accounts.

3.1.3 The initial **OPCC Business Continuity Plan** launched on 13 March was as follows:

- Information was collated on which OPCC staff had laptops and mobile telephones and who was able to work from home if required.
- Some laptops were reallocated amongst staff to ensure that those in the most business critical roles had access to them.
- Victims First counsellors were expected to follow the advice of their own professional bodies but it was expected that they would move away from face-to-face contact with victims.
- Attendance at external conferences was cancelled.
- All non-essential public-facing events such as conferences were postponed.
- Normal 'business as usual' internal meetings were to continue.
- Increased working from home was anticipated.

3.1.4 Further steps that were to be considered if the COVID-19 outbreak progressed included the following measures:

- Mandatory home working for some/all staff.
- Implementation of the Victims First "fall back" plan to prioritise contacts.
- Cease making new Victims First referrals to counsellors.
- Reallocate appropriately trained OPCC HQ staff to support Victims First.
- Split the location of Victims First staff so that not everyone is working from the same office.
- Turn off the Victims First telephone service.

- 3.1.5 On 16<sup>th</sup> March, the Government recommended that staff should work from home, where possible and appropriate. Accordingly, all OPCC staff were advised that, where possible (e.g. subject to the availability, prioritisation and allocation of laptops), they should follow Government advice and work from home and thereby minimise contact with other people where possible.
- 3.1.6 The reallocation of available laptops enabled the OPCC to continue undertaking all business critical activity despite not all staff having access to a laptop. In some cases it was possible for affected staff to use their own personal resources, such as their home computer, to do OPCC work. However, all staff were encouraged to stay at home and to be as productive as possible within the limitations of their role and the equipment they were provided with. Nevertheless, staff who were not in a position to work from home due to lack of equipment (e.g. laptops, etc) have continued to receive full pay.

## **3.2 OPCC STAFF MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

- 3.2.1 The OPCC Strategic Management Group (SMG), which includes the PCC and Deputy PCC, now have a conference call on a daily basis. Any key messages are shared with OPCC staff by email/WhatsApp (see below).

### **OPCC Staff Health and Wellbeing**

#### Sickness & self-isolation absences

- 3.2.2 It was acknowledged that the reason for some staff absences from the workplace may not be limited to 'working from home'. Government advice is that if an individual, or anyone else in their household, displays COVID-19 symptoms, they should self-isolate the entire household as far as possible for 14 days. A new reporting process was set up by TVP to log the details of any members of staff who are absent from work as a result of self-isolation, diagnosis of COVID-19 or needing to take off time to look after dependents. This reporting process has also been adopted by the OPCC.

#### WhatsApp

- 3.2.3 An OPCC-wide WhatsApp group was set up on 17<sup>th</sup> March to allow all staff to communicate with each other more easily, especially for those without laptops/phones who wouldn't necessarily be able to pick up emails regularly, and help keep morale up.

### **3.3 OPCC COMMISSIONED SERVICES**

#### **Victims Services - MoJ Coronavirus (COVID-19) Contingency Planning**

- 3.3.1 The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) advised PCCs that when developing their contingency plans in response to COVID-19, PCCs should follow the latest advice from Public Health England on proportionate measures to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus for both clients and staff.
- 3.3.2 The MoJ victims grant agreement requires PCCs to offer some people face-to-face support as part of the services. However, the MoJ acknowledge that in order to comply with advice issued by Public Health England, Government and the World Health Organisation in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic ('Advice'), PCCs may decide that face-to-face contact is not appropriate.
- 3.3.3 The MoJ confirmed that, as long as it is necessary in order to comply with Advice and notwithstanding the requirements of our grant agreement, where you offer more remote forms of contact instead of face-to-face support, they will not treat provision of services in this way as being in breach of their grant agreement.

Specific MoJ concerns are:

- Flexibility of approach – the MOJ recognises that, in the present circumstances, there needs to be a more flexible approach taken in respect of how services are delivered as the COVID-19 virus will change both how services to victims are provided and the capacity of service providers to support victims, especially in the case of smaller service providers.
- Access to support for victims - the MoJ advised that it is acceptable for service provision to move from face to face to more remote forms of support.
- Fraud & risk to elderly & vulnerable victims - there is an increased risk of fraud, with the elderly and most vulnerable being targeted.
- Increase in Domestic Abuse cases – there are also concerns that measures to tackle COVID-19 such as self-isolation might lead to an increase in domestic abuse cases.

#### **TV OPCC Victims First Service**

- 3.3.4 The Victims First team operates out of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service HQ near Reading. However, with effect from 17<sup>th</sup> March and in accordance with the above MoJ advice, Victims First staff

were also encouraged to work from home using laptops issued to them by the OPCC as a deliverer of a 'business critical' service.

### **COVID-19 Extraordinary MoJ Funding for Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Support Services: 24 March 2020 – 31 October 2020**

- 3.3.5 On 2nd May 2020 the Government announced a package of £76m extra funding to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, vulnerable children and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3.3.6 Of this £76m extra funding, £20m will be administered by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) through police and crime commissioners (PCCs) across England and Wales.
- 3.3.7 The £20m funding will be ring-fenced for COVID-19 related emergency funding, and then ring-fenced again for spend on each of the three areas of need listed below. These funds will be distributed by PCCs as follows:
- Domestic abuse services that are already commissioned by PCCs: £10m
  - Sexual violence services that are already commissioned by PCCs and those that are not currently funded by PCCs: £5m
  - Domestic abuse services that are not currently commissioned by PCCs: £5m
- 3.3.8 The COVID-19 extraordinary funding is to meet the additional costs registered charities or social enterprise have incurred or will incur from 24 March (the first day of 'lockdown') to 31 October 2020 whilst adapting their services during the pandemic, and to cope with demand increases resulting from it, during this time period.
- 3.3.9 The extraordinary MoJ funding made available to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley is £814,000, broken down as follows:
- Domestic abuse services that are already commissioned by PCCs: £407,000
  - Sexual violence services that are already commissioned by PCCs and those that are not currently funded by PCCs: £203,500
  - Domestic abuse services that are not currently commissioned by PCCs: £203,500
- TOTAL £814,000
- 3.3.10 The deadline for organisations to submit their applications to PCCs was Friday 5 June. PCCs have until Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June to review applications and finalise their decisions before submitting the assurance documentation to the MoJ.

### **3.4 POLICE PROPERTY ACT FUND (PPAF) EMERGENCY FUND**

- 3.4.1 The PCC and the Chief Constable awarded voluntary and community organisations £103,740 in May 2020 after opening an emergency round of the Police Property Act Fund (PPAF).
- 3.4.2 The Fund, jointly managed by the PCC and Chief Constable, is created from money recovered by the police and the proceeds from the sale of items that cannot be returned to owners, including seizures from criminals. In response to the impact of COVID-19, an emergency funding round was launched in April.
- 3.4.3 There were 209 applications to this bidding round, seeking funding in excess of £1 million, and 32 organisations were successful in receiving funding of amounts ranging between £692 and £8,000.
- 3.4.4 The PCC and the Chief Constable were keen to open this emergency funding round to provide vital grant funds to support the efforts of community and voluntary organisations that play a vital role in supporting Thames Valley Police with the emergency response to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- 3.4.5 This funding will support projects that have been supporting TVP's response to the outbreak and will help people across our communities.
- 3.4.6 This is the first bidding round of the PPAF for 2020/21 and there is set to be another round later in the year.

### **3.5 OPCC INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME (ICVS)**

- 3.5.1 We made the decision to suspend all face-to-face custody visiting and began this new temporary measure on 26 March 2020 in order to reduce the risk to custody visitors, detention officers and detainees.
- 3.5.2 Given the increased spread of COVID-19 and the raised level of risk to the public, a number of our independent custody visitors (ICVs) had already expressed their reluctance in continuing to visit Custody Suites. Accordingly, following consultation with the Force, custody visitors were contacted and instructed to suspend visits during the pandemic.
- 3.5.3 In line with national advice to try and identify alternative methods of monitoring custody arrangements, and in order to maintain a satisfactory level of custody visiting and monitoring whilst ensuring there is no risk to the ICVs, we have implemented a telephone visiting service, which seems to be successful. The ICVs now telephone Custody Suites to speak with detainees and custody staff, and then submit a report electronically to our ICV Manager that is followed up where necessary, as would any other Custody Visiting report.

## 4. THAMES VALLEY POLICE RESPONSE TO COVID-19

### 4.1 STAFF PROTECTION

4.1.1 In relation to the government direction, that people should consider working from home where possible, this does not apply to the vast majority of TVP staff. TVP is an emergency service and not in the same position as most organisations. Equipment such as laptops has been re-distributed in line with priority functions and the force business continuity plans.

4.1.2 Revised operational guidance was issued as dealing with persons actually and potentially infected with COVID-19 is now business as usual for the Force.

4.1.3 A daily resourcing and resilience meeting oversees the situation concerning staff who are self-isolating or displaying symptoms of COVID-19.

4.1.4 Protecting the health and resilience of staff remains the Force's top priority as hygiene supplies and face masks became increasingly difficult to purchase in bulk.

4.1.5 To help protect officers and staff against the transmission of COVID-19, a new [Health and Safety guide](#) for line managers has been made available to support staff as the Force prepares for the controlled transition into the recovery phase of its response. The guidance also provides advice for managing those considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable.

4.1.6 In particular, staff risk assessments must consider those from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) background.

4.1.7 On 23<sup>rd</sup> March TVP issued the following statement to partners:

'Key messages for partners:

- As an emergency service, our priority is protecting our frontline to respond to those in need and safeguard the most vulnerable in our communities.
- Whilst we are planning for a reasonable worst case scenario, as it is expected that we would, we are used to responding to significant incidents and our tried and tested business continuity procedures include plans to maintain a level of service that fulfils critical functions.
- Thames Valley Police is taking all necessary steps to ensure we can continue to deliver our core emergency service during this extraordinary time.

- We are carefully monitoring the Coronavirus situation and following the advice coming out from the Government and Public Health England to ensure we make the most appropriate decisions at the right time for the protection of our people and the public.
- We have a range of resourcing options available that will ensure we can maintain operational effectiveness. These will be deployed in a measured way and at the right time to reduce the impact on officers and staff, the organisation and our core service delivery.
- We are working closely with our partners within the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum, which is helping the local authorities, healthcare providers and emergency services to stay in contact and share ideas, knowledge and support across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire.

We are committed to working together to make our communities safer and we thank you for your continued support at this challenging time.'

## **4.2 COVID-19 IMPACT ON DEMAND FOR TVP SERVICES**

4.2.1 While TVP continues to face a changing demand picture during the COVID-19 pandemic, certain trends have become evident and sustained.

### **Headline Impact Analysis**

4.2.2 The overall decreases in both 999 and 101 calls for service in TVP remain more significant than the national average and the Force is making greater use of online reporting.

4.2.3 The fall in crime levels caused by COVID-19 has not been as significant in the Thames Valley as the reduction seen across all forces.

### **Standing Trends**

1. Call demand has fallen, with TVP messaging encouraging a significant shift to online reporting.

2. Reduced public mobility at the start of the lockdown resulted in a significant fall in crime. However crime levels are now beginning to rise again.

3. Initially the COVID-19 lockdown led to lower levels of domestic abuse between ex-partners in the Thames Valley. However, the relaxation of restrictions has coincided with an increase in ex-partner offending.

4. The reduction in public mobility has made identifying vulnerable children more challenging.



5. Filing at point of call and triaging are reducing demand on frontline officers and the impact on victim satisfaction continues to be monitored.

6. TVP initially issued more Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) than any other force before reducing their use significantly following the easing of lockdown rules.

4.2.4 Crime and its associated demand has continued to increase following the partial lifting of lockdown this month, as previously predicted. This is against a correlated decrease in FPNs. There is an important reputational aspect for the Force to consider if the public perceive this reduction, in addition to an increase in public non-compliance, as the Force not responding due to the prioritisation of other demand.

### **4.3 OPERATIONAL POLICING AND CRIME IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

#### **Domestic Abuse**

4.3.1 Domestic Abuse levels have now reached pre-lockdown levels for the first time. The potential time lapse between incidents of domestic abuse taking place and the time they are reported could result in incidents being more difficult to investigate.

#### **Drug Related Offences**

4.3.2 Since the relaxation of lockdown restrictions, there has been an increase in drug related offences. As lockdown measures are relaxed, organised crime groups can travel more freely. Therefore, it is likely that the number of drug related offences will increase.

#### **Child Protection**

4.3.3 There is a significant likelihood that there will be an increase in child protection issues being raised once schools reopen.

#### **Assault on Police**

4.3.4 The powers given to police to help tackle the spread of COVID-19 and the subsequent use of the powers by officers have mostly been met with support by the public. However, officers are facing heightened levels of criticism from some members of the public who think the powers are too heavy handed.

## 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND ISSUES

### 5.1 Financial Position (as at 2 April 2020)

5.1.1 The Home Office wrote to all chief constables and asked them to provide their best estimates of additional costs arising from policing COVID-19 over the following 12, 16 and 20 weeks. The Thames Valley Police figures reported at that time were:

12 weeks	£6.2m
16 weeks	£7.1m
20 weeks	£7.8m

The working assumption is that these costs will be reimbursed by the Home Office. Actual costs continue to be monitored.

### 5.2 COVID-19: Policing Costs and Procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) -

#### 5.2.1 Letter from Chief Constable Dave Thompson to Chief Constables and PCCs (16<sup>th</sup> April)

*"I wanted to write to you regarding a series of financial issues concerning the current emergency to assist your planning and to seek and offer assistance.*

#### **A. PPE Procurement**

*A huge amount of work has been undertaken by the team at NPOC to ensure PPE can be secured and supplied to forces. This has required a significant effort as commodities are hard to source and competition is international. ... Accordingly, we are dependent upon Forces, through their Police and Crime Commissioners, agreeing to contract on behalf of the service.*

*I am very grateful to Police and Crime Commissioners from **Thames Valley**, South Yorkshire, Kent, Sussex and West Midlands for agreeing to undertake these orders on behalf of all forces."*

## 6. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 A command structure was established within Thames Valley Police (TVP) to co-ordinate efforts across the Force and with partner agencies. Much of the focus is on internal resilience.

6.2 In addition to the resilience of the police workforce, significant scenario planning took place, not just within Thames Valley Police but partner

agencies including PHE, NHS, local councils as well as with the military.

- 6.3 The work of all partner agencies is coordinated through the tried and tested network of the Local Resilience Forum and is vital to successfully protecting the public from the worst impacts of the pandemic.
- 6.4 The PCC and the Deputy PCC have both attended meetings of the Chief Constable's Management Team (CCMT) to be briefed on the Force's preparations for and operational response to COVID-19.
- 6.5 The PCC and the Deputy PCC also continue to participate in the Operation Restore 'Gold' group established by the Force in order to monitor COVID-19 related strategic planning and preparations.
- 6.6 Furthermore, the PCC engages with the Chief Constable in regular scheduled one-to-one teleconference calls in order to be kept updated on all COVID-19 related policing and crime matters.
- 6.7 The combination of these one-to-one discussions together with the PCC and Deputy PCC's regular participation in CCMT and Gold group meetings ensures the PCC is able to monitor and scrutinise the nature and effectiveness of the Force's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **7. PUBLIC MESSAGING**

- 7.1 The PCC and Chief Constable have both communicated clearly and directly with the public through issuing Statements (see below) and via their dedicated website pages providing information about COVID-19 related issues (see Appendix A for the PCC's website page and Appendix B for the Thames Valley Police website page).

### **a) Statement from the Police and Crime Commissioner (11<sup>th</sup> March 2020)**

Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, Anthony Stansfeld, said: "I, and the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, attended the Chief Constable's Management Team to look at planning for the COVID-19 epidemic.

"I am satisfied that all possible contingencies are being planned for within the constraints of police numbers.

"Plans will be reviewed constantly as the situation develops."

**b) Statement from the Police and Crime Commissioner (24<sup>th</sup> March)**

Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, Anthony Stansfeld, said: "The Government, with the support of Opposition parties, and on the basis of the best scientific advice, has imposed severe restrictions on everyday life. These restrictions will be difficult for everyone, but are necessary if coronavirus is to be brought under control and the NHS protected. The powers likely to be given to the police to enforce these new rules are wide ranging, but the vast majority of the public will do their best to obey them.

"The police do their jobs with the consent of the public, and should only in a few instances have to enforce these new powers. It is with the support of the public that the police will be able to continue to provide safety to the people of the Thames Valley. It is up to all of us to make sure we do our best to prevent the further spread of coronavirus.

"These will be difficult times for all public services, police officers and our staff are not immune to the effects of the virus. As well as supporting the NHS by enforcing the Government's restrictions, the police must still continue to prevent crime and protect the public. Whilst some crime, such as burglary and violence, is reducing due to the changes, we are vigilant for an increase in domestic abuse and criminals who will sadly seek to exploit these new circumstances.

"The Chief Constable and I are confident that Thames Valley Police will continue to offer the public the protection and support they deserve, but we do need the public to abide by the Government's restrictions, and support public safety and the NHS. I am confident that the people of the Thames Valley have the common sense to do so. Remember the simple advice, stay home, save lives."

**c) Joint Statement from the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner (15<sup>th</sup> April)**

Today (15 April) the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) released figures of the total number of fines that have been given out by police forces across the country for breaches of the Coronavirus restrictions.

The figures released are for the period between 27 March to 13 April. During this time Thames Valley Police handed out 219 Fixed Penalty Notices.

In response to today's announcement, Thames Valley Police Chief Constable John Campbell said: "This is an unprecedented public

health emergency and an extraordinary national effort is needed to fight this virus.

“Since the new measures were introduced we have had thousands of positive interactions with the public and the overwhelming majority of people have had either a legitimate purpose for being out, or have listened to the advice given by our officers.

“However, on some occasions we have had to enforce the legislation. In the last three weeks we have fined a total of 219 people of the 2.3 million population in the Thames Valley.

“Most of the fines we have issued have been to groups, inappropriately gathering together in public places, or driving together in a car, for example ten fines were given to one group alone.

“We have also made a number of arrests which have led to people being jailed for breaching Coronavirus restrictions or coughing at officers or members of the public.

“Some of these breaches have been identified by patrol officers but a significant number have been reported by the public. In particular this Easter Weekend, as with many Forces, we had a significant increase in these types of calls.

“We will continue to engage with the public, explain the restrictions and encourage people to stay indoors. However, when necessary, we will take enforcement action if people are not listening to the advice and are putting others at risk.

“The restrictions are in place to protect the public and protect the NHS.

“The great majority of the public have been staying in and stopping the spread of the pandemic, and I want to thank them for their ongoing cooperation and support.”

Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley, Anthony Stansfeld, said: “We entirely support the approach of Thames Valley Police in engaging with the public, explaining why the new rules are so important, encouraging people to follow the rules and, as a last resort, enforcing.

“Some of those issued with Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) were also charged with other serious offences not related to Coronavirus. As one of the largest forces in the country covering one of the largest populations, and also the force with the largest roads network, I would expect Thames Valley Police to issue more FPNs than most other forces.

“We have found that compliance within the Thames Valley is extremely good and I’d like to personally thank members of the public who are doing their bit and staying home. We will continue to monitor the situation closely as the pandemic progresses and have every confidence in Chief Constable John Campbell and his team.”

**d) Statement from the Police and Crime Commissioner (11<sup>th</sup> May)**

Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, Anthony Stansfeld, said: “Last night our Prime Minister announced the first tentative steps to release the country from the lockdown. This should enable many of us to get back to work. However, the phased release is conditional on the infection rate of coronavirus continuing to drop. It is up to all of us to continue to use our common sense and obey the rules. Likewise, it is up to the police to ensure the rules are obeyed. This, Thames Valley Police will continue to do with good humour and judgement. If the rules are flouted then the infection rate will escalate, more will die, and the nation’s economy will be further damaged. None of us can afford that. The public, the police, and the NHS working together can make sure that does not happen.”

**Anthony Stansfeld  
Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley  
June 2020**

### PUBLIC MESSAGING - OPCC WEBSITE

#### Coronavirus (COVID-19)

In response to the ongoing Coronavirus outbreak, here are some useful updates which may help signpost you to the best contacts and sources of further information. This page will be updated regularly with news including statements from Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Thames Valley, Anthony Stansfeld.

#### Getting in touch:

##### Thames Valley Police (TVP)

Thames Valley Police is asking you to please only call 999 if it is an emergency and 101 if it is urgent. If you can, use their online services on the [Thames Valley Police website](#).

For more information on coronavirus and policing, head to the [TVP dedicated webpage](#) (see Appendix \*\*\* below). In addition, you can tell the police about a [possible breach of coronavirus measures](#) online where you can also find out about the [new police powers](#).

##### Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) is currently operating during normal working hours (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

Please use the following contact details to get in touch with us:

- If you have a **general enquiry** for the Police and Crime Commissioner, email [pcc@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk](mailto:pcc@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk). *(Please note, our general contact phoneline is not currently being answered due to staff working remotely)*
- If you have a **media enquiry**, email [OPCC.Comms@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk](mailto:OPCC.Comms@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk) *(Please note, the media enquiry inbox is currently being monitored 9am – 5pm Monday to Wednesday, 9am – 3pm on Thursdays)*
- **Victims First** - as we are currently working with limited capacity due to Covid-19 we are asking that anyone needing support from Victims First please make a referral using our online form: <https://www.victims-first.org.uk/>. Please

provide the email address and contact number for the person needing support and a Victims First Officer will contact them.

- For information on the proper procedure for **making a complaint**, please visit our [Reporting Concerns webpage](#).

You can also keep up-to-date with news from our office on social media:

- OPCC Twitter - [@TV\\_PCC](#)
- Victims First Twitter - [@VictimsFirstTV](#)
- Victims First Facebook - [@victimsfirstTV](#)

## Latest updates from the Police and Crime Commissioner

Read the latest updates from Anthony Stansfeld, Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley on our response to the coronavirus outbreak.

- 22nd May 2020 - [£814,000 announced to support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence across the Thames Valley](#)
- 14th May 2020 - [Thames Valley ICV scheme using telephone service to support detainee welfare](#)
- 11th May 2020 - [Voluntary and community organisations awarded more than £103,000 to support policing response to COVID-19](#)
- 11th May 2020 - [Latest update on COVID-19](#)
- 15th April 2020 - [Statement \(Coronavirus update\)](#)
- 30th March 2020 - [£100,000 available to community and voluntary groups following the outbreak](#)
- 24th March 2020 – [Update on COVID-19](#)
- 16th March 2020 – [Postponement of PCC elections](#)
- 11th March 2020 – [Statement about COVID-19](#)

You can keep up-to-date with the work of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner by visiting our [News and Events page](#).

## Latest updates from Thames Valley Police

Read the latest updates from John Campbell, Chief Constable for Thames Valley Police, on the policing response to the coronavirus outbreak.

- 1st June 2020 - [Community hub volunteers celebrated during Volunteers' Week](#)
- 18th May 2020 - [Figures show level of assaults on officers](#)
- 29th April 2020 - [Warning following an increase in reports of online child sexual offences](#)
- 17th April 2020 - [Message from Chief Superintendent Christian Bunt](#)



- 15th April 2020 - [Message from Thames Valley Police's Chief Constable John Campbell](#)
- 9th April 2020 - [Message from Thames Valley Police's Chief Constable John Campbell](#)
- 7th April 2020 - [Thames Valley Police continues fight against domestic abuse during the coronavirus pandemic](#)
- 3rd April 2020 – [Message from Thames Valley Police's Chief Constable John Campbell](#)
- 25th March 2020 – [Message from the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police](#)
- 24th March 2020 – [Thames Valley Police Media Office working remotely](#)

## Useful links

Here are some links to further information, guidance and advice for the pandemic:

- [Latest Government advice and information](#)
- [Latest health advice from the NHS](#)
- [Wellbeing support available from Mind](#)
- [Talking to your child about coronavirus](#)
- [National Police Wellbeing Service \(Oscar Kilo\) Coronavirus Hub](#)
- [Advice on home working from Oscar Kilo](#)
- [Article from The Mental Health Foundation on looking after your mental health](#)
- [Responding to Coronavirus \(British Psychological Society\)](#)
- [Report cyber-crime, fraud and scams \(Action Fraud\)](#)
- [Free support and advice for victims of crime \(Victims First\)](#)
- [If you're worried about your mental health \(Samaritans\)](#)
- [Looking after your mental health \(Every Mind Matters\)](#)
- [Let's Talk Loneliness website](#)

*Last updated: 4th June 2020*

### PUBLIC MESSAGING - THAMES VALLEY POLICE WEBSITE

## Coronavirus

This is an unprecedented public health emergency and an unprecedented national effort to fight this virus. Maintaining the best service to the public, protecting officers and staff, and supporting the nationwide response are Thames Valley Police's top priorities. We're in this together and each and every one of us has a role to play by following the government advice.

Please see below the latest on our response and a list of answers to the most frequently asked questions to help the residents of Thames Valley to stay up to date with the latest Government guidance.

The Government has issued [guidance](#) around returning to work and exercise.

## Our response

- We are patrolling and talking to members of our communities in order to explain the government restrictions and the importance of abiding by them to stop the spread of Coronavirus and save lives.
- Our officers will use common sense and discretion and we will be engaging, explaining and encouraging people to do the right thing.
- We are grateful to the vast majority of our communities who are playing their part.
- If people don't take notice of the government restrictions:
- We may ask people to disperse,
- We may ask parents to make sure their children are abiding by the restrictions
- We may enforce and issue a fine
- If someone continues to ignore the instructions, our officers can arrest them if they think it is proportionate and necessary.

## Frequently asked questions:

### Where do I report large groups of people gathering?

A person may now leave and remain outside of the place where they live for any reason. However it is still prohibited to:

- Gather outdoors with more than six people
- Gather indoors

Exceptions apply for:

- members of the same household
- a person attending a funeral
- an elite athlete and their coach or parent
- work purposes or the provision of voluntary or charitable services
- facilitating house moves
- providing care or assistance to a vulnerable person
- providing emergency assistance
- providing registered early years childcare
- avoiding injury, illness or to escape a risk of harm
- facilitating access between parents and children
- fulfilling legal obligations or participating in legal proceedings
- the purposes of education

**If you see a mass gathering in progress:**

- Call 101 - if you see a mass gathering and the incident is happening now.
- Anything else related to Covid-19 please use our [online tool](#).
- Call 999 - if a life is threatened or a crime is in progress (as usual).

**How much is the fine now?**

- The fine has increased to £100. Individuals will be informed about why they've received a fine, how they can pay it, and what the consequences of non-payment are. They should immediately go home if they have received a fine.
- For those who continue to not follow the guidance, the fine can be doubled each time and summary prosecution can be sought for those who refuse to pay or comply. The £100 fine can fall to £50 if paid within 14 days.
- Receiving a fine isn't a criminal offence and won't require a court appearance if paid.

**What is classed as a reasonable excuse to leave the home?**

A person may now leave and remain outside of the place where they live **for any reason**, subject to restrictions on gatherings and overnight stays.

**Can I stay anywhere else overnight?**

No person may, without reasonable excuse, stay overnight at any place other than the place where they are living.

Reasonable excuses include, but are not limited to:

- attending a funeral
- an elite athlete and their coach or parent
- moving house
- work purposes or the provision of voluntary or charitable services
- providing care or assistance to a vulnerable person
- providing emergency assistance
- avoiding injury, illness or to escape a risk of harm
- obtaining medical assistance
- fulfilling legal obligations or participating in legal proceedings
- facilitating access between parents and children
- it is not safe for a person to live there
- it being unlawful to travel or there is some legal requirement to stay elsewhere
- the place where they are living is not available for any other reason

### **What can I do that I couldn't do before?**

You can now leave and remain outside of the place where you live for any reason, as long as you are not in a gathering of more than six people and not staying away from your home overnight.

### **Am I allowed to re-open my business?**

There have been changes to the businesses that may open.

Please refer directly to the [government website](#) for details.

Local authorities and Trading Standards will lead on enforcing and monitoring the closure of businesses.

### **My MOT has run out, what should I do?**

From 30 March 2020, MOT due dates for cars, motorcycles and light vans will be extended by 6 months. This is being done to help prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Your vehicle will be automatically given a 6-month MOT exemption. This will extend your current MOT expiry date by 6 months.

Further detailed guidance on MOTs and vehicle tax can be found on the [GOV.UK website](#).

### **Can I still go to a place of worship during lockdown?**

- On the 23rd March, the Government had the difficult decision to close all places of worship to help protect the NHS and save lives. This is an unprecedented public health emergency and an unprecedented national effort to fight this virus.

- National leaders for all faiths in the UK are supporting the Government's decision and have provided guidance to worshipers of practical ways they can support their communities and demonstrate their faith whilst the places of worship remain closed.
- Local faith leaders are working in their communities to support those who are most vulnerable alongside many other partners.
- We are actively engaging with local faith leaders across our communities, we understand the distress not being able to come to their place of worship. However, we know our communities of all faiths recognise that the best way of saving lives and to protect the NHS is to stay home.

### **Can I attend a family member's funeral?**

The government has advised that funerals, burials or cremations are to proceed as normal, however only immediate family members may attend.

Further guidance has been issued by the [Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management](#).

### **What will happen to those who are using the virus as a weapon i.e. deliberately coughing and spitting on people?**

- This is appalling behaviour and it will not be tolerated. People who deliberately spit and cough on emergency workers as well as members of the public will be dealt with robustly. This is an offence and it will be treated as assault.
- We have already taken action with regards to individuals coughing at our officers

### **Can I still call 101 to report a crime?**

We're asking you please to only call 999 if it is an emergency and 101 if it is urgent. If you can, use our online services.

If you're looking for information about the government instruction to stay home and how that may affect you, you'll find guidance on [Gov.uk](#).

We'll be updating information on our services over the coming days, please check online for those updates.

### **Are police stations still open?**

Please be aware that we have closed a majority of front counter locations to the public for the safety of both the public and our officers.

The following remain open to manage Bail and Registered Offenders signing on:

- Milton Keynes
- Oxford
- Reading
- Slough
- Aylesbury

These front counters have an officer present but the doors will be closed.

Anyone required to sign on will phone from outside and the officer at the front counter will sight them. Social distancing will be maintained.

### **I'm concerned about frauds and cyber-crimes relating to Coronavirus. What should I do?**

Fraudsters are using the current public health emergency to defraud people looking to buy medical supplies online, sending emails offering fake medical support and targeting people who may be vulnerable or increasingly isolated at home.

We're advising you to think very carefully before you hand over your money, and don't give out your personal details unless you are sure who you are dealing with.

If you believe you have fallen victim to a fraud or cyber-crime, please report it to [Action Fraud](#). For the latest information on fraud and cyber-crime, please follow Action Fraud on Twitter and Facebook.

### **Further information, support and advice about Coronavirus:**

- [NHS advice](#) - How to avoid catching or spreading germs and when to seek medical help
- [GOV.UK](#) - Daily updates on the outbreak, information and advice
- [PHE England](#) - Daily updates, signs and symptoms, current risk level
- [Mind](#) - Mental health support and advice
- [Victims First](#) – free support and advice for victims of crime
- [Action Fraud](#) – report cyber-crime, fraud and scams