

COMMUNITY UPDATE

COVID-19



29/01/2021



Yesterday, the National Police Chief's Council published monthly data returns on COVID-19 enforcement notices. In the last few weeks, police forces across the country have issued more than 8,000 fixed penalty notices for breaches of the Health Protection Regulations. These numbers are higher than penalties issued in previous lockdowns and reflect a shift in our collective policing approach to these rules.

It's a trend we've seen locally too and one which I suspect will continue over the next few weeks.

Between Friday and Sunday last weekend, we issued 55 fixed penalty notices. These included six people from different households found at a house party celebrating a birthday as well six people from four different households who had gathered for a BBQ to celebrate a child's birthday. Other fines were for a man who travelled from Bristol to Norwich because he liked walking his dogs in Norfolk, a man from Cardiff who travelled to Norwich to visit friends, and three people who had travelled from Coventry to visit friends in the county. Fines were also issued to people gathered outside a property, some of whom had travelled from Bury St Edmunds and people from different households found sitting in a car together at Gorleston. These are all clear breaches – a blatant disregard of the regulations which are there and in place to protect us.

Since the announcement of a third lockdown we've been open about our approach becoming more robust. I am confident that our approaches have been and still remain at the right level. It is important our communities continue to have confidence in us. We police by consent in this country so it's important we strike the right balance – we should be educating the public about the rules and the risks to their health but stepping in to enforce when people knowingly put others at risk. Put simply, the time for endless encouragement is over.

Officers will continue to follow the 4Es approach and will always try to resolve situations through voluntary compliance by engaging, explaining and encouraging people to adhere to the rules. However, as I have said before, COVID-19 has been with us for nearly a year. The risks are well known and people know the rules. We have to take this into account and reflect it in our policing approach. We all have a part to play in this pandemic. In policing, our aim at any time, pandemic or not, is to keep the public safe and prevent harm so we will continue to enforce the rules when we need to.



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