

COMMUNITY UPDATE

COVID-19



25/03/2021



After living in lockdown for almost three months, the easing of further restrictions on Monday will bring optimism and relief for many of us. The last 12 months have been extremely challenging for our communities. The coronavirus pandemic has touched everyone us in all aspects of our life and I think we can all agree that this third lockdown has been the toughest yet.

Earlier this week, on the Day of Reflection, we heard many stories about people's experiences with Covid-19, tributes to those lost and the sacrifices people continue to make. In all cases, at the heart of these sacrifices is social contact - being unable to see family, friends, loved ones and colleagues has put a strain on us all.

Rules around social contact will ease from Monday, meaning gatherings of either six people or two households can take place outside, including in private gardens. The 'stay at home' rule also ends on Monday.

While this will be the most significant easing of lockdown restrictions since they were introduced in January, we all need to be sensible and responsible in our approach to these changes. The government advice states that people should continue to work from home where they can while also minimising the number of journeys they make, avoiding busy travel times and routes wherever possible.

The continued roll out of vaccinations combined with the impending easing of restrictions offers hope that we are well on the road out of lockdown. However, we must equally acknowledge there will be people who remain fearful about areas of our county being swamped with visitors at a time when social distancing continues to be vital in helping to prevent the spread of this virus.

The best way of protecting ourselves and others is to be sensible and cautious. If we all continue to adhere to social distancing guidelines then as a county we will have the best chance of keeping infection rates and deaths low, factors which will be considered at every stage of the implementation of the government's roadmap plan.

It's fair to say our policing approach in this third lockdown stepped up a notch, becoming more robust in dealing with blatant and persistent breaches of the rules. As I've always said, our approach to enforcement of the Health Protection Regulations has been a balancing act – making sure we maintain public confidence by dealing with offenders while maintaining our legitimacy, remembering we police with the consent of our communities.

Naturally, as restrictions begin to ease our policing approach to enforcement will adapt to reflect this. We will continue to follow the well-established 4Es process of engage, explain and encourage with enforcement used as a last resort but wherever necessary.

Please enjoy your greater freedoms and the chance to meet people outside, but as our journey continues, let's keep working together to make sure we stay on track.

Assistant Chief Constable Julie Wwendth



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