

# A MESSAGE FROM BCU COMMANDER, CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT HELEN HARPER



Dear all,

## **Message Friday 27 March 2020**

The vast majority of people are complying with the coronavirus restrictions brought in by Government earlier in the week and we will continue to talk to people, engage with them, and explain the guidance and rules.

Yesterday (Thursday, 26 March), the Government announced the new policing powers available to us. I would like to tell you about what these powers now mean about how we police under the current climate:

### **Policing**

The Met welcomes the change in legislation announced yesterday by the Government.

The additional powers announced by the government yesterday will make it an offence for non-essential premises to remain open, and for people to gather in groups. We will continue to work with local authorities so we are supporting each other in our enforcement roles.

We continue to ask our officers to engage with people, and explain the guidance and rules to them. The vast majority of people are being positive and are complying with the restrictions, however should it become necessary, we will be able to issue penalty notices (PND) to those aged 18+ only, starting at £60 (reduced to £30 if paid within 14 days) or £120 for second time offenders, doubling on each further repeat offence.

Whilst we will only use enforcement where we absolutely have to, the new legislation will give officers more options for dealing with people who are intent on breaching the law.

Further information can on the new policing powers and support to respond to Coronavirus is available on the Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/police-given-new-powers-and-support-to-respond-to-coronavirus>

Under the new rules, individuals should not leave home unless strictly necessary for one of the following purposes:

- Shopping for basic household necessities
- Taking exercise - ideally once a day - alone or with members of their household
- For a medical need, or to help a vulnerable person
- Travelling to and from work where essential, where not reasonably possible to work from home
- Avoid or escape risk of injury or harm

Other exceptions include:

- Attending a funeral of a member of their household or a close family member
- Meeting a legal obligation
- Accessing critical public services, such as childcare or educational facilities (where still available), social services, or victims' services
- Facilitating access to children where parents or carers live in separate households
- Participating in gatherings of more than two people in public spaces is also not permitted except in very limited circumstances, for example, where it is in response to an emergency, or for essential work purposes.

I hope that my officers will not need to speak to everyone they see on the streets or in public places. They will continue to use common sense and experience and will perform their duties as professionally as always.

Maintaining the best service to the public, protecting each other and supporting the nationwide response to COVID-19 are our top priorities. Officers are working extremely hard to do that, under very difficult circumstances, both at work and at home.

### **Retired/retiring officers**

You may have seen that a few hours ago, Commissioner Cressida Dick called on retired officers to consider returning to serve London once more, as well as asking those nearing retirement to stay on.

The return and retention of officers with valuable skills and experience will help to increase the Met's resilience and allow us to be even more flexible in providing the best service we can to London during this unprecedented time, as the country – and the Capital – responds to the ongoing coronavirus outbreak.

We hope to welcome back some former colleagues soon and thank those who will be staying with us for a while longer.

Should you wish, you can read the Commissioner's full statement here:

<http://news.met.police.uk/news/call-to-retired-officers-to-return-to-the-met-398385>

We thank you for your continued support and wish you well. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further questions.

Wishing you all a safe weekend

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Helen

BCU Commander Central West BCU and Royal Parks