

(Week Commencing 27th April 2020)

In response to questions posed by members of the public to the Police & Crime Commissioner, the Chief Constable provided a broad overview to the policing approach to dealing with the current Pandemic.

In addition, there are some specific 'local based' issues, which will be addressed separately, with an update provided to the Commissioner.

Legislation & the 'Policing Approach'

The government introduced the Health Protection Regulations 2020 on 26/03/2020.

The legislation is clear and stipulates that during the emergency period, no person may leave their place where they are living without reasonable excuse. It then provides examples of, 'reasonable excuses', which include:

- Shopping
- Take Exercise
- Travel

As a Constabulary, we have delivered extensive training materials to our staff and the approach that I have instructed that our officers take in accordance with the national direction, is known as the 4 E's approach, i.e.

1. Do everything possible to **Engage** with our communities, in person & on-line.
2. **Explain** the legislation and why it has been introduced i.e. protect the NHS and save lives!
3. **Encourage** compliance, we will do everything we possibly can, having explained the legislation, to encourage people to comply and clearly stating the reason why it is necessary.
4. If and only if people fail to comply and are particularly unreasonable, then we can and will take **Enforcement** action.

Enforcement action is usually in the form informing the individual will be summonsed to court or a Fixed Penalty Notice (£60). There was some initial confusion, on the part of the police and the public, in relation to a number of specific aspects of the legislation, which mainly related travelling to / from locations for the purposes of exercise that have been addressed and clarified.

I must emphasise that the vast majority of the public in Cheshire are fully compliant with the legislation and the need to resort to enforcement action is minimal.

Policing Priorities

We will continue to deliver the best possible service to our communities and work with our partners to 'Keep Cheshire Safe'. Our priorities will be;

- Answering calls for service.
- Remaining visible, engaging with and being accessible to the public.
- Investigating crime and bringing offenders to justice.
- Protecting vulnerable people.
- Dealing with local issue and concerns, which may include crime, traffic related matters and anti-social behaviour.

Reporting to the Police

We have and will maintain the same reporting procedures.

If it is an emergency or risk to life, and appropriate to do so, please use '999'.

For all other enquiries we have the Police Non-Emergency (PNE) national number (101) and we also have the availability to contact Cheshire Constabulary via the Intranet (Single On-Line Home), which was introduced a few weeks ago, and has been used extensively.

Each of our communities across Cheshire have a dedicated PCSO, their contact details are available on the internet.

Our Approach to Dealing with Domestic Abuse

Overall crime has shown a significant decrease across the Constabulary but domestic abuse has shown a marginal increase. Domestic Abuse (DA) is, and will continue to be, a priority for the Constabulary and I'm pleased to say that we have excellent working relationships with partner agencies and work together to protect victims and witnesses of Domestic Abuse, whilst taking proportionate and appropriate action against perpetrators.

In summary, our partnership approach includes the following;

- Pan-Cheshire media campaign incorporating 'Open the Door Cheshire' website and the 'alone at last' supermarket strategy.
- Partnership approach to supporting victims, family members and witnesses, which includes working closely with Cheshire Cares and Victim Support.
- Development of online support groups - supported by the Constabulary.

The Constabulary has a local policing focus on Domestic Abuse, ensuring that victims are safeguarded and action is taken against perpetrators. A summary of our response includes;

- Force Control Centre (FCC) staff, who are often the first point of contact for victims, ensure that the call is graded in accordance with Constabulary policy.
- Local policing focus on suspects, ensuring that prompt action is taken to protect victims and witnesses, secure evidence and, where appropriate, arrest suspects.
- All front line officers have received guidance around building effective evidence led prosecutions when the victim does not support prosecution owing to fear.

Protecting & Supporting Our Staff

It is necessary that we, Cheshire Constabulary, continue to deliver a police service which inevitably will mean in some circumstances, police officers and members of police staff will come into direct contact with members of the public.

We are doing our utmost to conduct enquiries and investigations by the telephone, without the need to meet face to face. However our staff will remain visible and will continue to engage with communities, strictly adhering to social distancing guidelines and we have also ensured that sufficient PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) is available, in the form of

- Eye Covering Goggles
- Face Masks
- Non Latex gloves
- Aprons

We have also issued clear guidance to our staff in relation to when PPE should be deployed and used and in which circumstances. For more serious cases we also have specialist equipment which will be issued to dedicated officers as and when required.

We will not tolerate any abuse of our staff and, in a small number of occasions when individuals have deliberately coughed / spat at officers and staff, enforcement action.

I would like to highlight the excellent work of the Constabulary and recognise the continued support that we have received from our communities during, what is a challenging time.

Darren Martland

Cheshire Constabulary

