



Ms Sue Mountstevens
AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

Police & Fire Headquarters,
Valley Road, Portishead, BS20 8QJ
Telephone: 01278 646555

e-mail: sue.mountstevens@avonandsomerset.police.uk



Chief Constable Andy Marsh QPM
AVON AND SOMERSET CONSTABULARY

Police & Fire Headquarters,
Valley Road, Portishead, BS20 8QJ
Telephone: 01278 646321

e-mail: andy.marsh@avonandsomerset.police.uk

By email only

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Dear Colleagues,

The outbreak of COVID-19 is presenting all of us with unique and unprecedented challenges especially when it comes to reassuring and supporting our communities and keeping our emergency service workers safe.

While the response to COVID-19 is being led by Public Health England and the Government, we are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our partner agencies and emergency services colleagues to respond to this ever-evolving situation.

I want to outline how Avon and Somerset Police is responding to the outbreak to reassure you and the public that we're taking all necessary steps to maintain our critical functions.

Avon and Somerset Police changes:

- We need to focus on the crimes which matter most to the public and the crimes that pose the most threat, harm and risk to our society. This will see us changing the way we deal with non-urgent and lower level offences. The public can be absolutely assured they will still see police on patrol and we will still be responding to emergencies and high priority incidents in the same way.
- We've expanded our Incident Assessment Unit by increasing the number of supervisors and staff. They will be reviewing and assessing lower priority incidents, both crime and non-crime, to reduce the number of incidents being attended by our patrol officers. We're also putting in place a new triage process to identify incidents which could be dealt with over the phone or led by desktop investigators.
- Our neighbourhood policing teams remain in place and will be safeguarded to reassure local communities and to maintain a visible presence but community engagement events, including our Ride Along scheme, as well as attendance at community meetings have been postponed or cancelled.
- Our enquiry offices and public-facing police posts remain open to the public but this is under constant review. Measures have been taken to make sure we are following the very latest health advice. We will update our website with details of any closures, planned or unplanned.
- All non-essential training has been cancelled but we're continuing to deliver essential training to people joining our organisation to further boost our resilience.

- All officers and staff who are able to work from home have been told to do so with immediate effect and we have cancelled all face-to-face meetings and moved them onto Skype.
- Our public messaging will focus on encouraging people to report non-urgent offences online instead of through 101. We're operating our control centre over two sites instead of one to improve staff resilience.
- Officers and staff are being given daily updates with the latest advice and guidance from Public Health England and the Government. We have a discussion board in operation so officers and staff can raise issues and concerns.
- The Local Resilience Forum chaired by ACC Nikki Watson have declared a major incident in order to make sure all agencies are able to work together more effectively in the event of reduced staffing levels and an increase in demand. The Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) convene via tele-conference every Thursday at 1.15pm.

Public communication updates:

- ACC Nikki Watson has done an interview with BBC Points West as part of a news item which ran earlier this week focussing on the emergency services response to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- We will be publishing an external reassurance message on our website and social media channels outlining the policing response, reassuring the public around police attendance at incidents and signposting to key information around social distancing, health/mental health advice and community resilience.
- Our neighbourhood teams and social media ambassadors have been given guidance on our key messaging and the appropriate places to signpost people for information about health, social distancing and community support.

It's at times like this that we see the very best of community spirit and partnership working and I can assure you that our officers and staff are rising to the challenge and going above and beyond the call of duty to help the public.

We'll keep you updated as things change.

Yours Sincerely,



Andy Marsh QPM
Chief Constable



Sue Mountstevens
Police and Crime Commissioner