

COVID-19 WEEKLY UPDATE

Update: 27 March 2020. Covid19@asco.police.uk

Breaking news

Volunteer police officers will soon be eligible for payment if they give up their time to help keep Gloucestershire safe throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Police and Crime Commissioner Martin Surl was informed that members of the Special Constabulary could be paid 'for their hard work, dedication and pivotal work alongside police forces across the country' in a Skype call with Crime and Policing Minister Kit Malthouse today (26 March).

The PCC welcomed the opportunity to pay members of Gloucestershire's Special Constabulary, but asked for more clarity on the amount they should receive; who would fund their payments; and that their rate would be consistent across the country.

The Minister promised he would get answers to all those questions from the Home Office within 24 hours.

Mr. Surl said, "I am hugely grateful to our Special Constabulary, especially those who have been giving up their time to support front line officers at this difficult time.

"I am pleased that the Crime and Policing Minister agrees that members of the Special Constabulary should be financially recognised for their contribution to keeping Gloucestershire safe, and I look forward to more clarity from Mr Malthouse on how their payments will be funded.

"Until we have clear guidance on this, I have made it clear to the Chief Constable that he has access to a £1 million fund from policing reserves in order to help manage operations during the Covid-19 pandemic."

It is also hoped that members of the Special Constabulary who are furloughed and receiving pay from their permanent jobs will also be able to provide full-time support to the Special Constabulary.

The news followed another big announcement from the Home Office today (26 March 2020) outlining new powers for police officers for dealing with members of the public who break coronavirus lockdown rules.

Mr Surl said, "Although my job is to represent the public in holding the Chief Constable to account and ensuring these new powers are used proportionately, I am concerned by the

number of enquiries to both my office and the Constabulary from people wanting to know how they can get round the very clear restrictions set by Government.

“My plea to the public is not to ask the police for loopholes that will allow you take an extra walk or drive in the car, but try and change the way you are living in order to comply with the guidelines. It is for the good of us all and, hopefully, will only be temporary.

“These are testing times for all of us, but with limited resources I know the Gloucestershire Constabulary is working flat-out to ensure the county is kept safe. So, I urge the public to adhere to the rules, stay home and help the police to protect us and the NHS.”

The new powers granted by the Home Office state that after a person is initially asked to return home, refusal could lead to a £60 fine. This fine drops to £30 if paid within 14 days. If this fails, police also have further powers to arrest members of the public if they still refuse to comply.

Government announcements

The Government has made new public health regulations, 26 March 2020 strengthening police enforcement powers in England, to reduce the spread of coronavirus, protect the NHS and save lives.

To ensure people stay at home and avoid non-essential travel, from today, if members of the public do not comply the police may:

- instruct them to go home, leave an area or disperse
- ensure parents are taking necessary steps to stop their children breaking these rules
- issue a fixed penalty notice of £60, which will be lowered to £30 if paid within 14 days
- issue a fixed penalty notice of £120 for second time offenders, doubling on each further repeat offence

Individuals who do not pay a fixed penalty notice under the regulations could be taken to court, with magistrates able to impose unlimited fines.

If an individual continues to refuse to comply, they will be acting unlawfully, and the police may arrest them where deemed proportionate and necessary.

However, in the first instance the police will always apply their common sense and discretion.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said: The Prime Minister has been clear on what we need to do: stay at home to protect our NHS and save lives. All our frontline services really are the best of us and are doing an incredible job to stop this terrible virus from spreading. That’s why I’m giving the police these new enforcement powers, to protect the public and keep people safe.

In addition to the new powers, a package of support has been unveiled to boost police resources.

Around 1,500 additional police officers have already joined forces across England and Wales since September 2019 as a result of the police recruitment campaign.

Today, the government is leading by example and will ensure that existing Civil Servants who are already volunteering as Special Constables are able to assist in the national effort to the greatest extent possible.

Additionally, in recognition of their value and expertise and in order to increase capacity and resilience, the government has committed to relaxing tax and pensions rules which could deter officers nearing retirement and those recently retired from returning to serve.

The Government is also speaking to the Security Industry Authority about what more they can do to encourage the private security sector to support the national response.

The Home Office has been working with police and fire services to understand their requirements for **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** over the coming months. The National Police Chiefs' Council has confirmed that police currently have a good supply and they are overseeing distribution to forces but the government will continue to work with them to ensure that emergency service workers can get the equipment they need, when they need it, in order to carry out their jobs safely.

Individuals will only be allowed to leave their home for the following very limited purposes:

- shopping for basic necessities, as infrequently as possible
- one form of exercise a day - for example, a run, walk or cycle - alone or with members of their household
- any medical need, to provide care or to help a vulnerable person
- travelling to and from work, but only where they cannot work from home

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 for essential work purposes.

NPCC ANNOUNCEMENTS

The National Police Chiefs' Council are asking employers to consider providing paid leave to Special Constables so they can support the police service in managing the impact of the Coronavirus.

In the wake of the national crisis created by Covid-19, it is expected that police forces across the UK will come under increasing strain as they try to maintain business-as-usual policing while managing rising levels of sickness and self-isolation of officers and staff.

There are currently more than 10,000 Special Constables in the UK - warranted officers with all the powers of a regular police officer who volunteer their services. They are deployed in their local communities to support the day-to-day operations of their forces and, crucially, provide resilience at critical times.

The appeal is to primarily to businesses which are already part of the national Employer Supported Policing Scheme (ESP), an agreement where Special Constable employees are provided with additional paid leave to allow them to undertake policing duties.

But even employers who are not currently part of the ESP are being asked to show their support by joining the scheme and helping to meet this unique call to action from police and government.



Chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council, Martin Hewitt, said

"Our Special Constables play a vital role in the police service, a service which will be placed under great strain over the coming months.

"We appreciate that this would be placing a further burden on businesses who are already suffering the economic impact of this virus, and we do not make this appeal lightly.

"Businesses who are able to release their staff to undertake these important roles will be supporting the national effort against Covid-19 by helping us to maintain services and keep people safe.

"This is part of our contingency planning for the coming weeks and months.

"If you represent an ESP business willing to extend your existing commitment, or wish to join the scheme, please contact the ESP National Team on esp@dutysheet.com and somebody will be in touch with you to discuss how you can help us to meet this challenge."

PHE GUIDANCE

The advice for anyone in any setting is to follow these main guidelines.

1. The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of a new continuous cough and/or high temperature. If you have these symptoms, however mild,

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stay at home and do not leave your house for 7 days from when your symptoms started (if you live alone), or 14 days (if you live with someone who has symptoms). You do not need to call NHS 111 to go into self-isolation. If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days, contact [NHS 111 online](#). If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

2. Wash your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and hot water, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose, or after being in public areas where other people are doing so. Use hand sanitiser if that's all you have access to.
3. To reduce the spread of germs when you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or your sleeve (not your hands) if you don't have a tissue, and throw the tissue in a bin immediately. Then wash your hands or use a hand sanitising gel.
4. Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces using your regular cleaning products to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

At the current time and based on our understanding of what is known of COVID-19 and other similar respiratory viruses, it is likely that older people and those with chronic medical conditions may be vulnerable to severe disease. As more information emerges, recommendations may change.

Personal Protective Equipment

Forces will have access to supplies of COVID-19 personal protective equipment and Special Constables should have access to this in the same way as any other officer or police staff member. It has been suggested that all officers should make themselves aware of the locations of PPE, ensuring that any police vehicle is carrying appropriate PPE at the start of the duty and that on conclusion of a duty the supplies are replenished, if used. Where hand gel etc is not available this should be taken up within your own Force line management.

COVID 19 Mailbox

This is now monitored between 0800 and 2200 for any queries in relation to any COVID-19 related query. We will endeavour to offer relevant signposting and advice to support you during this really difficult period.

Thank you

Finally a very **BIG** thank you for the surge in hours being delivered to support our regular colleagues on the frontline. Over the coming weeks the demand for the Special Constabulary will significantly increase. Please take the greatest of care out there and remember to look after one another.