

## COVID-19 WEEKLY UPDATE

Update: 3 APRIL 2020. [Covid19@asco.police.uk](mailto:Covid19@asco.police.uk)

### In this edition.....

With increasing isolation and social contact we have attached a link to Every Mind Matters. Mental wellbeing is really important for us all including our families. Please take a moment to click on the link below.

With the impact of businesses closing and employees on sick leave we have provided a link to your entitlement to self employment income support scheme and to statutory sick pay.

West Midland Police is to recruit 200 Special constables on regular police officer salary to fight the coronavirus.

Tesco colleagues in the UK who volunteer as police Special Constables will be given an extra five days paid leave each year to fulfil their policing duties.

### Breaking news

West Midlands Police recruit 'specials' as full officers on standard pay, to fight coronavirus staff shortage

West Midlands Police is to recruit up to 200 special constables as full police officers on standard pay, as part of an emergency plan to cope with the coronavirus outbreak. Specials are volunteers who usually give up their time to support the police for free. But West Midlands Police is in talks with the Home Office about giving them a salary, as it attempts to cope with staff shortages caused by officers who are forced to stay at home, and extra demands on its resources.

Officers are being deployed to patrol near supermarkets and medical centres including hospitals, following reports of a small number of people being abusive and threatening towards shop-workers and NHS staff.

The police believe they can make good use of volunteer special constables who usually have other jobs, but are currently forced to stay at home despite being healthy. They will be paid a standard salary, which is currently around £23,000-a-year for someone at the start of their police career. West Midlands Police will need the agreement of the Home Office but, while technical details are still being agreed, Ministers are understood to be supportive.

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It's part of a plan drawn up by West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson to help the force during the current coronavirus crisis. Other measures include a focus on domestic abuse - to help people stuck at home with abusive partners - and on online child grooming. Police believe paedophiles are taking advantage of school closures and the fact that children are spending more time online to target potential victims. Mr Jamieson said: "To ensure the resilience of the force we are proceeding with recruitment, but also making more use of Special Constables and we are also working with government to ensure we can pay recently those that are now unable to work, so we can make even more use of them."

While some police forces have been criticised for an over-zealous approach to enforcing the Government's strict rules about not leaving the home unless absolutely necessary, Mr Jamieson said West Midlands Police would take a "pragmatic" approach that the public could support.

He said: "Overall, the absolute top priority remains working with the public to ensure people continue to stay at home. This requires a pragmatic and sensitive policing style." West Midlands Police is also to provide extra counselling facilities for police. They are expected to have to deal with a large number of deaths in the region in the weeks to come. The coronavirus measures have been added to force's existing Police and Crime Plan. They include:

Protection for key services during the crisis, such as health and retail. Those intimidating or targeting health or retail staff should be dealt with robustly. A pro-active approach to tackling domestic abuse, as cases are expected to rise whilst people are expected to stay at home.

The PCC will ensure any victim of domestic abuse in the West Midlands has access to the support they need. West Midlands Police should continue its pragmatic approach to stay at home measures to maintain the current public support. A renewed focus on online child grooming to deal with rises in cases as more children are using the internet during the crisis. Continue to ensure that officers and staff have the personal protective equipment (PPE) they require.

Expand the package of support (including counselling) that is available to officers and staff, during and after the coronavirus crisis, especially for those that will have to be involvement in the handling of the deceased.

Expand the use of Specials during the crisis, to maintain the resilience of the force. Work with government to allow the force to pay Specials who are not able to work in their main job. Work with government to ensure that there is flexibility in funding to support West Midlands Police and the array of support services for victims that the PCC funds.

Mr Jamieson, said: "This emergency Police and Crime Plan is to ensure the force has the support it needs and is adapting to the new threats as they emerge during the crisis.

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“Our officers and staff are dealing under huge pressure and will increasingly be exposed to distressing situations. That is why one of the key objectives of this plan is to ensure they have the support they need during and after the crisis, including counselling if they require it.

“Crime is changing as a result of the coronavirus, it is not going away. People are unfortunately targeting NHS and retail staff – this will not be tolerated. I am also worried about domestic abuse, with people spending more time at home. This will be prioritised and I will be working with the support charities I commission to ensure people can access those vital services. I am also particularly worried about a higher prevalence of online grooming with young people spending more time on the internet. I expect the force to work with national agencies to tackle this threat.”

### **Welfare (If you are self isolating)**

Taking care of your mind as well as your body is really important while staying at home because of coronavirus (COVID-19). You may feel bored, frustrated or lonely. You may also be low, worried or anxious, or concerned about your finances, your health or those close to you.

It's important to remember that it is OK to feel this way and that everyone reacts differently. Remember, this situation is temporary and, for most of us, these difficult feelings will pass.

The tips and [advice here](#) are things you can do now to help you keep on top of your mental wellbeing and cope with how you may feel while staying at home. Make sure you get further support if you feel you need it.

### **Tesco announcement**

Tesco colleagues in the UK who volunteer as police Special Constables will be given an extra five days paid leave each year to fulfil their policing duties. This is in addition to the ten days unpaid leave each year they currently receive to attend specialist training in connection to their duties.

88 Tesco employees serve as Police Special Constables, including those working in stores and at the company's headquarters in Welwyn Garden City. The change in policy reflects Tesco's desire to support colleagues who play an active role in society and give up a significant proportion of their leisure time to do so. It is also hoped the initiative will encourage more Tesco colleagues to volunteer in their community.

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Tesco has also signed up to the Hertfordshire Constabulary's Employer Supported Policing Scheme (ESP) where it's headquarters are based. ESP allows employers to tailor the scheme to the needs of their own business, choosing to give staff paid leave for training, duties and/or emergencies. Colleagues electing to join the scheme gain employer support for the police work they carry out alongside their employment and benefit from extensive Constabulary training and personal development.

Natasha Adams, UK People Director at Tesco, said:

"We know colleagues who are Special Constables hold positions of responsibility and trust in their communities. In recognition of this we have introduced a new initiative which will enable them to take up to five days paid leave a year towards their policing duties. We hope this will help those colleagues who give up a significant proportion of their time to help serve communities across the UK."

## 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, 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

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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.

## Useful links to advice & guidance

Staying at home and away from others (social distancing) guidance [here](#)

Entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) [here](#)

Self employment income support scheme [here](#)

Supporting your mental health while staying at home [here](#)

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