

COVID-19 Police 24 March update Louis Smith

I am sure that you saw the Prime Minister's speech last night about COVID-19 and you will no doubt have many questions about what this means for policing in London.

I hope to provide you with some clarity on this now.

Policing

This is a very serious time for the country and for our city. We all have a key role to play in encouraging our communities and businesses to adhere to the new measures. At this difficult time, our relationships with our communities matter more than ever. As we do every day, we, alongside you, will be treating the people of London with respect, kindness and courtesy.

We fully anticipate the public and businesses in London will want to adhere to the new restrictions to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. In helping people to understand and comply with this new guidance, we will of course not be expecting officers to stop everyone in the street. We do not at this stage have additional powers to enforce these new measures, but these will follow. We will be applying our common sense and experience, taking a sensible and graduated approach to the situation. For example, if people are on their own or in a household group there will be no need to speak to them. If however officers see a group of more than two people who do not appear to be a household, they will speak to them and talk to them about the new guidance. They may then need to ask them to go their separate ways and play their part in protecting the NHS and saving lives. If a business is open which should not be then we will remind them of the need to follow government advice.

Met officers are all used to navigating challenging situations that require good judgement and in many ways this is no different. Whilst the circumstances we are dealing with are unprecedented and fast moving, alongside you we will be working to keep people safe and encourage everyone to play their part in this significant national response to reduce the impact of COVID-19.

Business Crime

The Met Police Business Crime Hub (BCH) works to improve partnership and communication with the business community to reduce the impact of crime.

Now that all 'non-essential' businesses have closed, or are in the process of closing, our BCH have shared advice to help support businesses.

Patrolling officers will be keeping an eye on properties as part of their daily duties.

Rumours of threats against NHS Staff

- There continue to be rumours of NHS workers being victims of robbery at hospitals.

Our medical and health colleagues are working tirelessly to protect the public from COVID-19, and the police are continuing to support and assist them during this time.

I would like to reiterate that we have no knowledge of such crimes taking place at this time and I ask

that if you do hear of rumours or speculation please let me or a member of my team know and we will be able to provide some clarity.

Religious funerals

Government ministers have assured Jewish and Muslim communities that their religious burial rights will be respected during the coronavirus outbreak, after concerns were raised over forced cremations. We are working with our Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) to support these communities.

Thank you to our educational colleagues

Whilst most business have closed, our colleagues in the education system and schools remain at work looking after the children of 'Key Workers' – which includes police officers and staff. I would like to personally thank the Teachers and Teaching Assistants on our BCU who are continuing to work under these circumstances and are allowing frontline police, police staff and other emergency workers to do their bit to keep the public safe.

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

Kind regards

Louis Smith

Acting NW BCU Commander

COVID-19 Message From Louis Smith to Partners 23 March.

"Thank you for your continued support over the past week. As you will have read, the main stories over the weekend have been related to social distancing. From a policing perspective, our policing plan remains the same and Met officers are continuing to carry out their daily duties as well as support and assist our colleagues in the health authorities.

We have included some information below in relation to other stories and issues we have become aware of in order to clarify the facts that we hold.

Rumours of threats against NHS Staff

This morning we have become aware of rumours of a number of NHS workers being victims of robbery at hospitals.

We can confirm that, at the time of writing, we have no reported incidents of this.

Our medical and health colleagues are working tirelessly to protect the public from COVID-19, and the police will continue to support and assist them during this time.

Supermarkets

Whilst we are aware of rumours and speculation about looting and rioting in supermarkets, the Met has no information to say that this has taken place in London.

Over the weekend, we were called to a small number of minor incidents at supermarkets across the capital. It transpires that these calls were mainly for overcrowding and not crime related. No action

needed to be taken by our officers.

The Government advice for shoppers remains the same; that the public should be sensible when buying food and groceries and there is no need to panic buy.

Faith Communities

We are aware of potential guidance that may be coming out from the Muslim and Jewish communities on changes to burial arrangements.

We will continue to support these communities, and others, during this time and will be listening to their concerns at this sensitive time.

There are ongoing discussions with the National Police Chief's Council and Government and we continue to monitor this.

UPDATE: Hospitality facilities

The Government confirmed today (Monday, 23 March) that Environmental Health and Trading Standards officers, with police support if appropriate, will work together to issue prohibition notices challenging unsafe behaviours where hospitality businesses do not follow current issued guidance.

Local government will be responsible for enforcing regulations with those businesses asked to close on 20 March 2020 in accordance with the new guidance issued.

As you will be aware, businesses including pubs, cinemas, theatres and casinos were told to close from 21 March, as part of the government drive to reduce the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and save lives.

Under the Business Closure regulations introduced on March 21, officers will have powers to prosecute for breach of regulations.

Hate Crime

As I have said previously, please continue to ask your communities, residents and/or stakeholders to keep reporting any hate crimes they have been subjected to or seen.

It is extremely important that we record all offences in order for us to provide the best support available to victims.

Whilst we have seen a number of instances of COVID-19 related hate crimes, there is not a significant number in comparison to other types of hate crime. We are of course monitoring this closely and responding as per normal.

Anyone who believes that they have been the victim of a hate crime is asked to tweet @MetCC or report the crime online: <https://www.met.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

Information can also be reported anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or online.

Remaining vigilant

We would like to reassure you that we continue to work with businesses and security teams to protect the security of buildings, both residential and non-residential (now that many of these are closed). Local officers will be working in communities to reassure and advise on crime prevention strategies.

I previously mentioned that officers were called to a number of supermarkets due to overcrowding.

Please remember to remain vigilant and our advice is to take care of your possessions in these circumstances. It is a common criminal tactic for pickpockets to operate in busy or crowded areas.

Please also remind your people and communities to be vigilant around cash points when withdrawing their funds. Our officers are also aware of these potential issues and will be visible at relevant places. We are not aware of these specific tactics being used in our BCU, but I thought I would take the time to remind you of appropriate crime prevention advice.

As ever we also ask our partners and the public to be our eyes and ears on the ground and let us know if you have any concerns at all.

Further crime prevention guidance can be found here: <https://www.met.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/>

Lastly, we ask you, as ever, to work with us to support communities, particularly those who may be vulnerable or who may find staying at home without their usual support systems difficult.

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

Kind regards

Acting BCU Commander

Louis Smith”