



Coronavirus (Covid-19) update from PCC Barry Coppinger

1 May 2020

Scrutiny of Cleveland Police continues as normal

With new powers granted to the police to uphold the Government's guidance on social distancing and essential travel, it's more important than ever that I fulfil my role as Police and Crime Commissioner and ensure Cleveland Police are acting with proportionality and legitimacy.

We are maximising the technology available to us to maintain our programme of scrutiny as normal, whilst adding some additional elements to improve transparency and accountability at this unusual time.

Cleveland Police's approach

Chief Constable Richard Lewis has assured me that his officers and staff are led by the guidance published by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing to **engage, explain, encourage and as a last resort, enforce**.

On 15 April, Cleveland Police published their latest figures on the number of enforcement notices and warnings they had issued during Covid-19. As of that date, 119 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued by the Force, with 442 official warnings.

I am satisfied that the policing approach the Force has taken is in line with what the public want and expect. As the situation develops I will continue to probe and scrutinise the force's performance.

I'm pleased that so far, there has been no significant impact on Cleveland Police's service delivery as a result of sickness or other Covid-19 related effects. They are among only a handful of forces in the country to maintain this level of 'business as usual'.

Video chats with Chief Constable Richard Lewis

My engagement with Chief Constable Richard Lewis has increased since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. We speak on the phone daily, have a brief scrutiny session on a weekly basis and take part in a formal scrutiny meeting every month.

Since my last update, I have filmed and published two of my weekly scrutiny meetings with Richard – meaning you can see first-hand what key issues we are discussing during the crisis. [Watch them on my website now.](#)

Ahead of each meeting with Richard I collate questions that I think the public have a right to hear answered and include a number of questions submitted directly by you. Your question could appear in the next video – [why not submit it via the form](#) on my website or by emailing pcc@cleveland.pnn.police.uk

Scrutiny meetings continue via telephone conferencing

I'm pleased that through broadcasting my weekly meetings with Richard and asking for public questions, we've been able to deepen our scrutiny of Cleveland Police during Covid-19. However, I was keen that our original programme of scrutiny continues as normal.

On 6 April, our formal scrutiny process took place via telephone conferencing and I received a more detailed update from Cleveland Police about how Covid-19 has been impacting on various areas of their business.

The meeting was an opportunity to put over 20 questions submitted by the public directly to Richard Lewis and his senior team. Topics ranged from police powers, travel for exercise, social distancing and queries about MOT tests.

Minutes from this meeting will be published on my website as soon as practicable: <https://www.cleveland.pcc.police.uk/Decisions/Scrutiny-Meetings.aspx>

Unique partnership with Teesside University on Covid research project

My team are being assisted by academics from Teesside University on a research project to measure public perceptions of policing during Covid-19.

Experts from the University's School of Social Sciences, Humanities & Law will be analysing data on the number of enforcement notices and warnings issued by Cleveland Police during the crisis.

The project will also seek views directly from the public on two key themes:

- **How communities – particularly 'at risk' groups – perceive Cleveland Police's implementation of the Coronavirus Act powers;**
- **How communities would like Cleveland Police and the Commissioner's Office to engage with them during social distancing, when usual face-to-face engagement is limited.**

The findings will be used to assist me in my work scrutinising Cleveland Police and will give the Force valuable insight from the public as they drive forward their improvement plans.

Contribute to the research by sharing your views via email at communitymailbox@tees.ac.uk

Assurances sought on early prisoner releases in Cleveland

On Friday 17 April 2020, the Ministry of Justice suspended their plans for the phased early release of up to 4,000 low-risk prisoners nationally, after an administrative error resulted in six offenders being released incorrectly in other parts of the country.

The scheme will see detainees with two months or less to serve released in stages and on temporary licence – and got underway again last week.

Last week, I co-chaired the second fortnightly meeting of the Cleveland and Durham Local Criminal Justice Partnership – made up of representatives from the police, prison services, probation service, CPS, courts, local authorities, health providers and victim services.

Agencies were asked to provide assurances that:

- **Errors that had occurred in other parts of the country had not affected Cleveland**
- **Prisoners released under the scheme will have access to adequate rehabilitation and resettlement support services in the community**
- **Victims and witnesses can access the necessary support as offenders return to communities**

COVID-19 cases have been confirmed in more than half the prisons in England and Wales. A total of 294 prisoners have tested positive for COVID-19, with 231 prison staff infected.

Survey for rural communities

Rural communities across Cleveland may feel more isolated and vulnerable during the Covid-19 crisis - particularly as we see national evidence that people from urban areas are using rural areas for exercise.

As PCC, it's important that I listen to the concerns and worries of **all** communities in Cleveland, including those like the rural community who have their own unique challenges and demands.

This is particularly important when we consider that I am unable to get out and meet members of the community, due to rules on social distancing and essential travel.

Working with Cleveland Police's Rural Crime Officer Paul Payne, my office has put together a short survey to measure how rural communities are feeling during the pandemic.

The results will help my office to develop further solutions to support rural communities and will assist Cleveland Police in the development of their next Cleveland Rural & Wildlife Crime Strategy.

Click the link to complete the survey and please share this web address with any person or agency that you think need to make their voice heard:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/PCCRuralCrimeSurvey/>

Continue to support local food banks if you can

Food banks across the country are facing increased demand as people face hardship caused by the Covid-19 virus. If you're able, I would urge you to continue to support your local food bank and help others who are finding this period particularly financially difficult.

To play my part, I've placed a box in my street to encourage neighbours to donate what they can to Middlesbrough Food Bank. I'm delighted by the overwhelming response so far and we have safely made two generous deliveries to the food bank in the last two weeks.

Could you organise a collection in your street or neighbourhood?

Find your local food bank here: <https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/>

Remembering those who lost their lives to Covid-19

This week my office marked Internal Workers Memorial Day by taking part in the one minute silence at 11am, in memory of all the NHS staff and other key workers who have lost their lives to the virus.

It's important to remember that every additional number added to the current death toll is another family going through the pain of losing a loved one and not being able to say goodbye in the way they would like.

Lockdown is still in full effect - and while it becomes increasingly challenging to spend time away from our family and friends, we all must play our part in staying home to protect the NHS and save lives.

We have published a range of information and advice on our website, including where to access support for vulnerable people, financial aid for organisations and businesses and the latest on the work of my office. [Visit here.](#)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry Coppinger". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Barry Coppinger
Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland