



Coronavirus (Covid-19) update from PCC Barry Coppinger

31 March 2020

We find ourselves in uncertain times, as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to alter the way we live our lives and poses a real threat to the vulnerable people in our communities.

I expected my last newsletter to be my final word to you in my current role, as I was due to step down as Police and Crime Commissioner ahead of local elections in May.

Earlier this month, the Government announced that it would be postponing local, Mayoral and PCC elections by twelve months as it would be unsafe to hold an election in the current crisis. I understand their decision and will be remaining as PCC until the election next year.

Coronavirus has given us all a new focus – to play our own part in keeping communities safe and working to slow the spread of infection. Over the next year I will play my part as PCC to get through this challenging time and will continue to deliver the objectives of my Police and Crime Plan.

Whilst it is only natural during these unsettling times that the focus of attention will be on the Covid-19 emergency, I can assure communities, partners and key stakeholders that my office is committed to continuing our core functions of:

- Supporting vulnerable victims
- Reducing offending
- Engaging with communities
- Holding Cleveland Police to account

My office can still be contacted via all the usual means – on 01642 301861, via email pcc@cleveland.pnn.police.uk and on social media.

These updates are going to be largely information-based, to disseminate some key advice and information to help you through the next few months. It will also provide information about how to access our services – and those of the agencies we commission – during lockdown.

Victims of crime & abuse will still have access to vital support services

I am aware that for many of the victims and vulnerable individuals our commissioned services support, the Covid-19 situation will bring added stress and danger. This is particularly true for those living with domestic abuse, who face being isolated with their abuser for weeks to come.

As PCC, I have a requirement in law to ensure victims and vulnerable people affected by crime have access to the support they need.

To ensure these services in Cleveland can continue to provide a lifeline to those most at-risk, I have personally contacted every one of our victim support organisations to ensure they have what they need to continue providing support.

Particularly for victims of domestic abuse, the message from myself and Chief Constable Richard Lewis is clear – domestic abuse is a priority for the police and support services are still available to help you.

Please call 999 or 101 to report to police or call one of the services below. **If it is safer for you to leave the property, do so and seek help from someone who can call the police for you.**

The following services are STILL operating and are ready to take your call:

Victim Care and Advice Service (victims of crime)

Opening times: 9am - 5pm, Monday – Friday

Tel: 0303 040 1099

Email: info@vcas.uk

Web: <http://victimcareandadvice.service.uk/>

My Sisters Place (domestic abuse)

Tel: 01642 241864

Email: hello@mysistersplace.co.uk

Web: <https://www.mysistersplace.org.uk/>

Harbour Support Services (domestic abuse)

Tel: 03000 20 25 25 (24 hours)

Email: info@myharbour.org.uk

Web: <https://www.myharbour.org.uk/>

Foundation (domestic abuse)

Tel: 0113 3030150

Email: central@foundationuk.org

Web: <https://www.foundationuk.org/team/foundation-redcar/>

24-hour National Domestic Violence Freephone Helpline - 0808 2000 247

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) Teesside (sexual violence)

Tel: 0333 344 8283

Email: info@sarc-support.uk

Web: <https://www.sarcteesside.co.uk/>

Arch North East (sexual violence)

Tel: 01642 822331

Email: support@archnortheast.org

Web: <https://www.archnortheast.org/>

EVA Women's Aid (domestic abuse and sexual violence)

Tel: 01642 490677

Email: info@eva.org.uk

Web: <https://evawomensaid.org.uk/>

The Halo Project (honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation)

Tel: 01642 683 045

Email: info@haloproject.org.uk

Web: <https://www.haloproject.org.uk/>

Government re-assurance on protective equipment for the frontline

I have been concerned to hear of the national shortage of personal protective equipment for frontline officers and raised the issue with the Policing Minister as a matter of urgency.

The Minister explained it was a matter of logistics, as supplies of PPE are available, it's a case of getting equipment where it needs to be. The army is supporting this work to ensure the smooth supply to Police and other emergency services.

PCC to raise public questions on new Covid-19 policing powers

I am inviting the public to raise any questions they may have with regard to the new Covid-19 police powers, brought in by the government last week.

I will be able to raise issues direct with the Chief Constable of Cleveland and to the Policing Minister Kit Malthouse.

The new measures mean no-one will be allowed to leave their home "without reasonable excuse" and officers can ensure that people stay at home, avoid non-essential travel, police will be able to order people to go home, leave an area or disperse.

The new powers mean officers can:

- **Ensure parents are doing all they can to stop their children breaking the rules**
- **Issue a £60 fixed penalty**
- **Issue a £120 fixed penalty for second-time offenders, doubling on each further repeat offence**

Anyone who does not pay can be taken to court, with magistrates able to impose unlimited fines. If they still refuse to comply, police can arrest them.

As the single elected individual responsible for the totality of policing, I will be the public's voice, engaging directly with the Chief Constable on a daily basis to ensure the new powers granted to police are used in a way that the public can have confidence in.

I also hold regular scrutiny meetings via video link with the Chief Constable where I can raise any concerns the public or partners may have.

I was pleased to hear Cleveland Police's senior officers reiterate that the Force polices our communities by public consent.

This legislation is necessary in order to prevent the spread of the virus and to hopefully ensure we come through the crisis as swiftly as we can and with as little loss of life as is possible. At this time the support of the public is more important than ever and for that to be maintained, policing needs to be firm but fair and so far I believe the force has got the balance right.

If you have a question for the Chief Constable or the Policing Minister, please get in touch with my office.

We are still listening to your community safety concerns!

A huge part of my role as Police and Crime Commissioner is community engagement and my Your Force Your Voice programme has been incredibly successful in helping me understand what crime and safety issues communities are worried about.

My team and I usually attend community events and meetings to gather this information, but due to the Coronavirus, this is no longer possible.

Nevertheless, I urge people to get in touch with my office to raise their concerns using the following contact details or by posting on our social media pages:

Telephone: 01642 301861

Email: pcc@cleveland.pnn.police.uk

Postal: Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Cleveland, Steria Shared Service Centre, Ash House, III Acres, Princeton Drive, Thornaby, Stockton-On-Tees, TS17 6AJ

Alternatively you can visit my website (www.cleveland.pcc.police.uk) and visit the Coronavirus section of my site to complete our form.

Protect yourself from Covid criminals

Nationally there has been a sharp escalation of Covid-19 related online scams. These include online shopping scams where people have paid upfront for protective face masks, hand sanitiser, and other products, which have never arrived.

Other frauds being reported include ticket fraud, romance fraud, charity fraud and lender loan fraud and over 200 reports of coronavirus-themed phishing emails. These attempt to trick people into opening malicious attachments which could lead to fraudsters stealing people's personal information, email logins and passwords, and banking details.

To protect yourself follow these three steps:

1) Watch out for scam messages

Don't click on the links or attachments in suspicious emails, and never respond to unsolicited messages and calls that ask for your personal or financial details.

2) Shopping online:

If you're making a purchase from a company or person you don't know and trust, carry out some research first, and ask a friend or family member for advice before completing the purchase. If you decide to go ahead with the purchase, use a credit card if you have one, as most major credit card providers insure online purchases.

3) Protect your devices from the latest threats:

Always install the latest software and app updates to protect your devices from the latest threats.

Covid Heroes

I'm sure many of you have seen examples of these 'Covid Heroes' – whether it's takeaways offering free tea and coffee to health workers, corner shops providing free sanitiser to the elderly or individuals using social media to provide free remote fitness classes, home schooling or reducing social isolation.

Please do let me know of any Covid Heroes you come across so I can include them in my regular updates to the public. You can email pcc@cleveland.pnn.police.uk.

Thank you

Finally, can I thank all the emergency service officers and staff, the NHS workers and the many other key workers and volunteers who are doing such valuable work at this time of national emergency.

Can I urge you all to please follow the Government advice – this is the best way to keep you and your family safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry Coppinger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B'.

Barry Coppinger
Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland