

COMMUNITY UPDATE

COVID-19



15/01/2021



There's been much coverage and commentary this week about lockdown rules when it comes to travel, the definition of local and the do's and don'ts for daily exercise outside.

Under current lockdown measures, people are required to stay at home and only leave for a reasonable excuse. People are being asked to stay at home to help stop the spread of the virus, save lives and protect the NHS. You should only leave your house for a valid reason such as food shopping, getting medicine or seeking medical help and caring for a vulnerable person, among other exceptions which are fully listed on the government website. People are also permitted to leave their homes for one form of exercise a day and the government guidance is for people to stay local when leaving their home for any of these reasons.

When making any decision to leave the house, our first question should be; do I need to make this trip? If I am leaving my home for any of the permitted reasons, can this be done locally? It is only by reducing the number of journeys we make that we reduce opportunities, through choice or chance, of contact with others. For example, the more we travel, the chances of contact increases through the need to purchase fuel or the possibility of breaking down or

being involved in a collision. While critics might suggest this is a far-fetched position and the chance unlikely, we must all consider the necessity of our journeys for the benefit of our public services. Services which are already stretched under existing pressures, particularly our colleagues in the NHS. The more we avoid these situations, the more we can reduce the risk of transmission and support the collective effort.

The government defines local as your village, town or part of the city where you live. The question of imposing a legal ruling on the distance you can travel wouldn't be practical. Some people may have to travel outside of their village for work or to access basic necessities. Any limitations could penalise those in our rural communities.

For me though, local means if you can walk or take exercise near to your house and without needing a car journey this is what you should be doing. I think we would all agree that it's hard not having the freedoms we're used to. But, however tempting a trip to the coast or woodland might be for a change of scene, we must stay local. As I've said, we know lockdown is tough and we're all making sacrifices to adhere to the rules and guidelines, however, it's important to remember we all have a part to play in helping to stop the spread and support public services.

Last weekend alone, we issued 31 fines and 96 warnings for breaches of health protection regulations. This included fines for a man who had five other people from different households in his car, a woman who had driven from Colchester to Norwich to deliver a birthday present, a man who travelled from Peterborough to Wells for a walk and three friends who had travelled from Thetford to Great Yarmouth for a day out. There still seems to be a degree of non-compliance, with 13 fines issued yesterday, which included a father and son who had travelled from London to stay at their second home on the North Norfolk coast, a woman who invited a friend round to her house for drinks and a man who picked his girlfriend up from a friend's house to take her back home.

Officers will continue with their dedicated COVID-19 patrols this weekend, targeting the city and town centres along with beauty spots and coastal areas. We will assess cases on their merit and officers will of course use their discretion and take account of individual circumstances but blatant disregard for the regulations will result in enforcement.

In a week where death rates reached new records and hospitals are reaching their limits, working together to keep to the rules is more important than ever and I would encourage everyone to act like they've got the virus - stay home and save lives.

Many thanks - **Temporary Assistant Chief Constable , Julie Wwendth**



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