



Gavin Stephens
Chief Constable

Dear Parent/Carer,

In the spring of 2020 I wrote to parents and carers across Surrey to explain how The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions), (England) Regulations 2020 applied to children and young people. Little did we know then that almost a year hence we would find ourselves in the position we are today. Lockdown measures are still in place, many of you are juggling the demands of home schooling, work and all of the other challenges in modern life. None of us know when the lockdown will end.

We do know that the impact on children and young people is huge, restricting their lives immeasurably, often with hour's staring at a screen and little opportunity to exercise, see friends and explore. It is therefore really important that we all reinforce the message that the measures continue to be critical in order to protect friends, family, the NHS and the wider public.

There is light at the end of the tunnel with the rollout of the vaccination programme, but lives are still being put at risk by those who are breaching restrictions. Meeting with friends in groups prolongs the lockdown and increases the chance of spreading the virus.

Across Surrey we are seeing persistent 'hot spots' where children and young people gather – we see parties in homes and groups meeting in skate parks. This isn't exclusive to children and young people but they can be part of the solution in helping us get control of the infection rate, by following the rules.

We would ask – **“Do you know where your son or daughter spends their time?”**

Officers and PCSOs are doing all they can to patrol 'hot spots' - engaging, explaining and encouraging anybody in breach of regulations to adhere to the rules. Where these approaches fail, we will use our policing powers to remove that child or young person and return them home. In circumstances where we find persistent and blatant rule breaking then enforcement action will be taken against the parent or carer of that young person (under 18). For a first offence this is a £200 fine.

We understand that the restrictions on families are hugely challenging and are grateful for all that you are doing to reinforce the message with loved ones in order to keep people safe. Together we will recover from this pandemic and the more we adhere to the restrictions, the sooner that will be.

There are resources available to support families during the pandemic in relation to children and young people including:

yourpolice.uk – Instagram channel for young people to ask questions and find out more about the law and policing.

www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/ - On-line safety advice for parents

www.activesussex.org/activeathome/children-and-young-people/reboot-activesussex-activity-schedule-2/ - free online physical activity sessions for young people during this lockdown.

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/childrens-mental-health/ - Support and Advice for parents on how to help keep young people's mind stay mentally healthy

www.victimandwitnesscare.org/ - Provides an online directory of local victim and witness specialist support services.

Yours Sincerely

Gavin Stephens
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