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## **Met announces stricter Covid enforcement approach**

**Londoners breaching Covid legislation are increasingly likely to face fines as the new national lockdown comes into force today.**

Although officers will still apply the 4 E's approach of engaging, explaining, and encouraging – only then enforcing, the Met has issued refreshed instructions to officers to issue fines more quickly to anyone committing obvious, wilful and serious breaches.

In practice this will mean that all those attending parties, unlicensed music events or large illegal gatherings, can expect to be fined – not just the

organisers of such events. Similarly, those not wearing masks where they should be and without good reason can expect to be fined - not reasoned with.

Additionally, with fewer “reasonable excuses” for people to be away from their home in the regulations, Londoners can expect officers to be more inquisitive as to why they see them out and about. Where officers identify people without a lawful reason to be away from home they can expect officers to move more quickly to enforcement.

Local officers will also be working with Council colleagues across the Capital in a partnership approach to help ensure businesses and people using public spaces such as parks or the retail spaces still open are following the rules.

**Deputy Assistant Commissioner Matt Twist, who leads the Met’s response to the Covid pandemic, said:** “After ten months of this pandemic the number of people who are genuinely not aware of the restrictions and the reasons they are in place is vanishingly small.

“We know the overwhelming majority of Londoners will do the right thing by staying at home, wearing masks and not gathering, but a small minority continue to ignore rules put in place to protect the NHS and save lives.

“Our first duty as police officers is to preserve life. The critical situation our NHS colleagues are facing and the way the new virus variant moves through communities, means we can no longer spend our time explaining or encouraging people to follow rules where they are wilfully and dangerously breaching.

“Less than a month ago we launched a new digital fines system which makes it quicker and easier for officers to issue fines on the spot. Since its launch more people have been reported for fines than in the rest of the year combined; this is also an indicator of a worsening position in the epidemic, and officers stepping in more quickly to try to keep communities safe.

“I hope it is not necessary for this particular trend to carry on but if people

continue to break the rules, putting themselves, their families and their communities at greater risk, our officers are ready to act robustly.

“This is why Londoners must take action now to stop this virus spreading further across our city. Action now by everyone will help reduce the time our Capital must live with these restrictions and crucially, will prevent more people from dying needlessly because of this virus. It’s up to us all to do the right thing.”