

Cllr Jim Millard: Hello and welcome to episode 12 of Talk Richmond. I'm Jim Millard, your host, and in this week's episode I'm very lucky to be talking to the Inspector for Richmond Neighbourhoods, Rebecca Robinson. Together I'm hoping we'll be talking about what the police are doing to help with the COVID-19 response effort, how enforcement of the rules works, and what the experience has been like for police officers working on the frontline during this global pandemic. So, without further ado, welcome Inspector Robinson.

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: Thank you.

Cllr Jim Millard: Thanks for coming on.

As Tenants' Champion, I've benefited from your experience obviously when we have multi agency meetings that involve housing issues and the police and our Community Safety Teams and it's been fantastic to work with you, but I don't know very much about your background so this is a fantastic time for me and our listeners to ask you a bit more about you. How did you start? How did you get to be the Inspector and does your role as Inspector for Richmond Neighbourhoods involve?

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: Thank you, thank you councillor, so I've been the Inspector for Richmond now for about a year. Unfortunately, just starting just at the same time COVID came to Richmond, which means that you know it's largely – Safer Neighbourhoods is all about partnership work - so it's incredibly frustrating that I've actually not met a lot of sort of the key community members, so you know, very much like everyone else, I just can't wait for it all to get back to normal, for us to be able to to meet face to face. So, I've got about 13 years in the police. I got promoted about six months before I started at Richmond and I set up our probationers development unit on the Southwest, which is a unit that trains all the new recruits. So, we still have the benefit of being able to work quite closely with them in Richmond, which is great. So, I've done a variety of things in my career, including work in Clubs and Vice, getting paid to go clubbing, I've worked round Shepherd's Bush, I've worked as a staff officer up at New Scotland Yard. But I have to say Richmond is by far you know the nicest – I probably shouldn't say that should I because I used to work in Wandsworth, which was also nice - but Richmond is...

Cllr Jim Millard: Is wonderful!

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: Is wonderful! Richmond is a lovely place to work and I'm really looking forward to this being over and actually getting out and you know meeting. I think we've only met face to face once haven't we? So yeah, getting out and meeting people.

Cllr Jim Millard: Absolutely yes, so right. You know this has made us really value what we don't currently have and looking forward to getting back to that.

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: Yeah.

Cllr Jim Millard: There has been quite a lot of media coverage, quite understandably a lot of public interest in the role of the police in enforcing COVID-19 rules. So, I just wanted to start by asking if you can tell us more about what the exact role is of the police during this part of the pandemic.

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: So, we're at a very critical part at the minute with this pandemic and it's more essential than ever that people do stay at home and they do listen to the rules and ultimately the police's job is to enforce that. You know, we're here for a reason. We're here to keep people safe and people breaking those rules should expect enforcement, as should the general public. You know that that's what we're here for. We're here to keep people safe, and that's what myself and my officers want to do.

Cllr Jim Millard: When it comes to enforcing the rules and the stay at home law that helps to keep everyone safe, what sort of approach to police officers take?

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: So, we will engage with people at the first instance, but ultimately the rules are there - they've been there for a while - people should be well aware of these rules, so you know, ultimately, people should expect to be fined if they are breaking these rules. We do find to be honest with you in Richmond most people compliant if we stop and speak to them and ask them to go home, they will do that. But we are issuing fines where needs be. There was one issued recently on Richmond Green for households gathering with no good reason. You know, we understand massively that businesses are struggling in this time, but you know, we ask them to remain compliant and we have issued fines to restaurants and businesses that have not. And obviously we will see the start the Six Nations again starting up on Saturday which will be behind closed doors. So, if I could just take this opportunity just to remind businesses to adhere to the rules.

Cllr Jim Millard: Very important, yeah, I've been fascinated. I've read about the four E's. Is that a thing?

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: So, the four E's are engage, explain, encourage, and enforce. So that's a process that the police move forward with when approaching people in the street. Obviously the first point is to engage - ask people, have a conversation, because you know there are reasons that you're allowed out. You know you are allowed out once day for daily exercise and for essential reasons, so there are reasons people are allowed out. So, at first, we will engage. But we will move quickly to enforcement where necessary because it is very important that we adhere to the rules and keep each other safe.

Cllr Jim Millard: So, what sort of things are people being fined for?

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: So, we are focusing on areas of priority. We have dedicated resource to COVID calls every day. So, we have specific COVID cars which will answer those calls across the BCU and it's mainly because of large gatherings, parties - we had the incident in Richmond Green where they were mixing in households. Also, businesses that are operating outside of those restrictions, but the focus is mainly on the large gatherings and the priority is around the greatest risk to the public, as we have to prioritise our resources.

Cllr Jim Millard: And what sort of level of are fines at?

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: So, the fines start at £200 and can go up to £10,000

Cllr Jim Millard: Wow that's pretty serious, isn't it?

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: Yes, it is. It really is.

Cllr Jim Millard: And can I ask what the police are doing to engage with the community while we're in this situation. What are the ways that the police are able to engage with the community locally?

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: So, we've had to be a bit creative. We've had to, you know, look at new ways because it is important that we still engage in our community. We're on a drive at the minute to increase people's awareness of how they contact their local dedicated Ward officer. So, Richmond is broken up into 18 wards and every one of those wards will have two dedicated police officers and one dedicated PCSO to that Ward. Obviously, if it's a case of emergency, it's 999. But it's important that people know how to contact their Ward for those or ongoing long-term problems.

Cllr Jim Millard: And just while you were mentioning the local Ward Officers, I wanted to reiterate how as councillors, we are really aware of how valuable that structure of Community policing is for our communities. You know, it's really valued and obviously that's central to what you're doing as Inspector of Richmond Neighbourhoods.

It's obviously difficult at the best of times and let alone during a global pandemic and we are aware that tributes were recently paid to five serving Met Police officers who have sadly died from COVID-19 in the last few weeks. So just wanted to ask a bit more about how that has impacted you and your team?

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: Yeah, I mean we have huge obstructions at the minute to be honest with you due to the impact. We also work quite closely with our response team colleagues who

answer the 999 calls and it's imperative that they keep their numbers at a minimum level in order to answer those emergency calls. So, if some of their officers are off with COVID, then the Neighbourhood Officers will step in to help because it's really important that we just keep that going. The teams are in the best traditions of the Met are carrying on regardless. It is tough, it's just important to remember as well that all the police officers, you know I'm a mother, all of them, you know, have got families and it's quite sort of a scary situation for everyone. But we are working closely with the councillors, with the Council as well, so the Council have put out COVID marshals that my team work very closely with as well because it is important that, especially where we might have less numbers on the street due to COVID impact in the police, that we work together with our partners. And indeed, the community so I would encourage people to please do continue to report those breaches. It might feel like we we're not dealing with them, but I can assure you that we are, that they are all logged.

Cllr Jim Millard: Absolutely, and you're still open for business in terms of everything else? It's not just all about COVID - the police is still functioning as normal, what are the best ways reporting crime?

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: Of course. So obviously through 999 if it's an emergency or 101. You can report crime online or use those phone numbers or all the wards email addresses that we shall put out later.

The Safer Neighbourhood teams are still working on long term problems. I've got a meeting later today around Richmond Green. I'd hate residents to think that we've just forgotten about everything else because of COVID because we really haven't and all the ward teams are still working on on their priorities as well.

Cllr Jim Millard: Yes, absolutely from what from what I can see from my position as a councillor, that's absolutely true and working harder than ever. And you know, thank you for talking about all this. Yes, it's a very difficult time for everyone, but I'd love to hear what you said, in the great spirit of the tradition of the Met. I love that attitude. And you know, amongst all this difficulty there have been some very inspiring things - the pandemic has seen an upsurge in community spirit hasn't it. I mean, I wondered if you had any other possible positive experiences or anecdotes that stuck out for you that you can share with us?

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: Oh, I feel like I'm going to think of something really good like later on today!

Cllr Jim Millard: Yeah, you definitely will!

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: I think I'd just reiterate that real mentality of, you know, keep going. I came in this morning and the officers are still laughing and smiling. Keen to get out there, keen to do their jobs, keen to be visible in their wards. It has really highlighted you know that that team spirit,

the neighbourhood teams, came in last week and there were minimal officers on response team because some had to isolate overnight and they stepped in to help answer those calls together.

Cllr Jim Millard: Well, absolutely amazing. Good on you.

Thank you so much Inspector Robinson for speaking to us on Talk Richmond. We really do appreciate everything that you and all your colleagues working on the frontline are doing to keep us safe and the fantastic spirit of the Met that's keeping us going and is an inspiration to all of us.

Inspector Rebecca Robinson: Thank you, thanks councillor.

Cllr Jim Millard: If you have any questions or feedback, please email us on talk@richmond.gov.uk. If you've enjoyed the episode, please feel free to subscribe. And if you're on the sort of service that allows you to leave a review, please do give me a spotless charge sheet. We'll be back in a couple of weeks. I'm your host, Jim Millard. Thanks for listening.