

New support for Brum as variant cases on up

Extra support to tackle a rise in cases of the Delta variant, which was first recorded in India, has been announced for Birmingham and the North West.

The additional support will be introduced in Birmingham, Blackpool, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Liverpool City Region and Warrington, a spokesman for the Department of Health and Social Care said on Monday.

The package, which is the same as was announced for Greater Manchester and Lancashire last week, will see more support for surge testing, tracing, isolation support and maximising vaccine uptake after a number of cases of the Delta variant were detected in the areas. Those living in the areas will also be given extra guidance including to minimise travel in and out of the affected areas.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said: "We are doing everything we can to stop the spread of the Delta variant, and working with local authorities, we are providing a strengthened package of support in areas where cases of the variant are increasing."

Princess Royal visits charity base

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal visited a charity base to see the support it provides to adults and children affected by domestic abuse.

Princess Anne was visiting New Era's Staffordshire hub in her capacity as Patron and President of Victim Support.

During the 30 months from October 1, 2018 and March 31, 2021, New Era received more than 14,000 referrals and inquiries to its victim services, and over 900 referrals and inquiries to its perpetrator services. HRH The Princess Royal also heard how New Era will be busier during the UEFA Euro 2020 football tournament; traditionally, domestic abuse support services like New Era often see a rise in referrals during such football competitions.

During the visit The Princess Royal also spoke to survivor Becky Warrender, who turned her life around after receiving support from New Era. She became the face of New Era in a recent campaign to raise awareness about the specialist support available and encourage other victims to come forward.

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And she met fundraiser Paul Wright, chairman of Lichfield Social Community Football Club, who raised £3,000 for New Era from a sponsored climb of Mount Snowdon after being so impressed with the support provided by New Era to a friend. Chantelle Thompson, New Era's head of service, said: "HRH The Princess Royal has a long-standing association with Victim Support."

"We discussed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on local families and how we had seen peaks in referrals at different times in the year, often coinciding the easing of lockdowns. Although the majority of survivors of domestic abuse supported by New Era are women, The Princess Royal heard how we support male victims too. We also have dedicated advisors for the LGBT+ and Black Asian Minority Ethnic and Refugee communities."



Princess Royal and Emma Tennant from New Era

Swastikas etched on war memorial bench

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A memorial bench dedicated to First World War soldiers has been desecrated with Nazi symbols.

The bench in Ashmore Park, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, has had a number of swastikas scratched into it.

The Rev Tom Fish, Vicar of St Albans C of E Church, said the graffiti does not "represent what we are or what we want to be as a community" and it "represents divisions rather than community".

Mr Fish said: "As a Christian I am aware that Jesus came to break down the barriers between races and create a new humanity where everyone is working together."

He added it is ironic the symbols are etched into images of soldiers who "stood against what that symbol represents".

The bench was placed 'on behalf of the people of the City of Wolverhampton to commemorate 100 years since the end of the First World War and to remember those who served'.

Councillor Phil Bateman, who represents Wednesfield North, said the racist graffiti has "caused quite a backlash in the community" and the issue was brought to his attention by residents themselves.

Councillor Bateman said: "I think everyone has been left saddened and let down by the fact that these swastikas have desecrated the benches."

"The benches in Wednesfield North are very popular not only because of the remembrance part of them, they are strategically placed so that residents can rest while taking exercise."

"It is extremely upsetting for residents."

Councillor Bateman has already written to both the police and local authority regarding the issue.

A response to Councillor Bateman's letter from PCSO Carl Smith states: "We have sadly been given information, that unknown offenders have been on The Park at the rear of Barnard Road and defaced a



The bench has been daubed in graffiti

memorial bench, dedicated to those fallen soldiers in the World War of 1914-1918.

"Offensive images have been scratched into the shapes of soldiers which make up the back of the bench. This is totally outrageous and unacceptable."

"This has been reported to the council for repair and inquiries are ongoing, patrols will be continued and any offenders identified will be dealt with accordingly."

Although it is not being linked to the graffiti it comes after another concerning racism incident earlier this month.

A Muslim family was racially abused in West Park.

Two teenagers who were arrested after the incident were released pending further investigations.

A video, shared on social media, which was taken in a play area in West Park appeared to show a group of young men shouting abuse at members of a Muslim family on June 5.

West Midlands Police confirmed two teenagers, aged 15 and 17, had been arrested on suspicion of racially-aggravated assault before saying the two teenagers had now been released pending further investigation. Following this it was confirmed that windows were smashed and a man was injured in what is believed to have been a revenge attack.

£21,000 raised after hospice shop burglary

More than £21,000 was raised for Acorns Children's Hospice after one of the charity shops was broken into by burglars. The burglars broke into the Kings Heath store overnight between June 7 to 8, damaging doors, tills, computers, and even raiding a donation tin.

But since the raid supporters have rallied together to raise the huge sum for the hospice.

Acorns chief executive Toby Porter said: "The response to the news that one of our shops had been burgled and vandalised has been truly heartwarming. The purpose of our 45 Acorns charity shops is to

generate the funds we need to provide our vital children's hospice care.

"Facing significant costs repairing our Kings Heath shop, we are thrilled and humbled to announce that hundreds of amazing supporters have made donations via our website and a special JustGiving page, and together they have donated a total of just over £21,000 in 24 hours. It costs £7,000 to fund all of the costs of one of our children's hospices and their family services for a day. This is going to pay for three full days of world-class children's hospice care."



Only question is, red or brown?

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