



Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021

Dear parent/guardian,

During the last week, the police and council have been working hard to tackle antisocial behaviour by young people in and around Woolwich Town Centre, particularly during the run up to Halloween and Bonfire Night.

On Sunday evening, hundreds of teenagers gathered in General Gordon Square in Woolwich and began throwing lit fireworks at each other and other members of the public. Four police officers have been badly injured, as were several members of the public. Over 30 arrests have been made, including for possession of a firearm and someone being stabbed.

We are appalled by this eruption of violence, especially the worrying intent to harm members of the public, police officers and council staff. It is completely unacceptable that staff are facing verbal abuse, threats and physical violence, when they are trying to protect the whole community.

We understand that this is the actions of a minority of teenagers, but we are asking all parents to work with us to keep our children as safe as possible. This means ensuring that your children don't have access to fireworks, making sure you know where they are as much as possible, and encouraging them to look after themselves and each other.

You must be aged 18 or over to purchase and use fireworks. Category 4 fireworks are banned for sale to the public and are for professional displays only. If you are aware of any sale of illegal fireworks to children or teenagers, please report this to the police immediately. You can do so anonymously by contacting Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

We will be working closely with schools in the coming days to make sure that our communities – and our children – are kept safe, including closing General Gordon Square to members of the public until after Saturday 6 November.

We are also appealing for any information that may help prevent further incidents or someone coming to serious harm.

This kind of violence is just as serious as any knife or firearm crime. The effects of fireworks are extremely dangerous when used illegally. They can cause serious and life-changing injuries, and in some cases, death.

Please help us to keep our young people safe. Thank you for your support and understanding.

A message from BCU Commander, Detective Chief Superintendent Trevor Lawry:

*"Woolwich is a fantastic place and I want everyone to feel safe, especially your children. Scenes of young people throwing fireworks at others saddens me. It saddens me as it demonstrates a lack of respect for the amazing community of Woolwich. As the senior Police Officer responsible for Woolwich, I would rather we seek to address these issues through prevention as opposed to dealing with them through enforcement. Cllr Danny Thorpe and I are committed to making the borough safe and we need your help to achieve this. Please help us by knowing what your young people are doing and by stopping them from congregating in Woolwich Town Centre in the run up to fireworks night. Neither Danny nor I want to see any young person get caught up in a situation that can be avoided."*

Yours sincerely,



**Councillor Danny Thorpe**  
Leader, Royal Borough of Greenwich



**Trevor Lawry**  
Detective Chief Superintendent  
BCU Commander