**Message from Deputy Chief Constable Serena Kennedy, Chair of the Merseyside Resilience Forum**

The Merseyside Resilience Forum (MRF) is a multi-agency partnership set up to prepare for and respond to any emergency in the county and it has been pivotal to our management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given we are now ten months into the pandemic, it is important to acknowledge the pressure and challenges this has had on everyone’s daily lives. Many of our residents are juggling home schooling and home working, other caring responsibilities, unemployment, furlough, financial issues, bereavement to name just a few. Many residents are key workers and are continuing to travel to / from work on a daily basis. Whatever your situation, it’s so important that you look after your mental health and wellbeing. You are not alone and help and support is available online or over the phone. Visit [www.kindtoyourmind.org.uk](http://www.kindtoyourmind.org.uk) for tips, advice and support.

Throughout lockdown, many organisations remain open, providing essential goods and services, so its vital that businesses continue to play their part and ensure their workplaces are safe for all staff. Where possible, staff should work from home, but if they are needed in the workplace, employers are encouraged to keep numbers to a minimum and ensure safety measures are implemented. This includes staggering start and finish times to limit interactions with other people, ensure social distancing measures are in place and ensure that staff who need to self-isolate, follow the law and do so for 10 days. This includes if they, someone in their household or support bubble, or a close contact has tested positive. Remember, staff may be eligible for a self-isolation payment. Employers are also encouraged to review and update their risk assessments and ensure they are following COVID-secure guidance. Further information can be found on the [Government’s website](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19).

It is also essential that staff who are unable to work from home have access to regular testing – they could have COVID-19, but are not displaying any symptoms and could (unknowingly) be passing it on to others. Across our region, there are many testing sites for people without symptoms. Simply [enter your postcode here](https://liverpool.maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/findatestcenter.html) to show your nearest testing facility – you can also see how busy it is. Many businesses are also offering on-site testing. If you’re a business and would like to introduce testing within your workplace, please contact your local authority’s Public Health team. Regular testing (at least twice weekly) is recommended and remember, your test result is only at that moment in time – it isn’t a free pass to break lockdown rules.

As you know, the COVID-19 vaccination is now well underway with priority groups being invited to receive their vaccine. It may take some time to get through all of the priority groups, but please be assured that when it is your turn to get vaccinated, the NHS will contact you. The vaccine can take a while for your body to build up immunity so even if you’ve had the vaccine, it’s vital that you continue to follow the lockdown rules – stay at home as much as possible, wear a face covering where advised, maintain social distancing and continue to regularly wash your hands.

If we all work together and follow the rules, we can get our infection rates down and hopefully get back to some kind of normality sooner.