

Midlothian Council, emergency services, business and volunteers have joined forces to urge local people to follow the level 3 coronavirus restrictions.

The co-ordinated response will see the agencies that form Midlothian's Community Planning Partnership work together to encourage compliance in the run up to Christmas.

The Community Planning Partnership is made up of Midlothian Council, Emergency Services, NHS, Health and Social Care Partnership, Third Sector, Community Councils, the Armed Forces, the Business Sector, the UK Department for Work and Pensions, and the range of Scottish Government agencies working in Midlothian.

The call came after the Scottish Government announced on Tuesday Midlothian is to remain in level 3 because positive cases are rising.

Midlothian Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for communities, Councillor Russell Imrie said: "The rise in positive cases is worrying and we want to do all in our power to keep local people safe so we can enjoy Christmas after a year like no other.

"The level 3 guidance is there to be followed, not adapted to suit your own needs.

"Remember to stick to the FACTS, by wearing a face covering as required, cleaning your hands regularly, sticking to the 2 metres social-distancing rule and self-isolating if you have symptoms or you've been asked to do so by your local test and protect team because you've been in close contact with someone who has tested positive."

Calum Campbell, Chief Executive of NHS Lothian, said: "The rate of transmission is not only higher here now than it is in the west. It's still climbing. So we need everyone to stop and think and do the right thing. It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to follow the rules so we can halt the spread of the virus and reverse this trend. If we can't do that we may face more stringent restrictions. With Christmas round the corner that's the last thing anyone wants.

"So, if you want to enjoy a safe, happy Christmas please take action now. Keep your distance from people who are not within your household, limit the number of people that you have interactions with and only shop for essential items. Wear face coverings, wash your hands. We all know what to do, so please, let's pull together in one great big collective effort and do it.

"By being more vigilant and stopping mixing, we can slow the transmission rates and enjoy the festive season."

Midlothian Police, Area Commander, Arron Clinkscales added: "As a result of COVID , this is going to be a difficult festive period for all that we could never have imagined . Please take care and abide by the rules. The Midlothian Community Action Team is working closely to keep the people and communities of Midlothian safe."

Area Commander of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Steve Gourlay also reminded people to take care at home. He said: "Over the festive period we would urge people to consider fire safety in the home alongside the restrictions in place for the pandemic. For what is going to be a difficult Christmas and New Year for all of us it would be terrible to have accidental fires compounding the problems."

Dr Lesley Kelly, Chief Officer, Midlothian Third Sector Interface, said: "We are extremely grateful for the hard work of third sector staff and volunteers who have risen superbly to the challenges of COVID over the past months. We wish everyone well for the festive season, and hope that they stay safe by following the guidance issued by the Scottish Government."