



One minute guide

Police Welfare Checks

No. 205, May 2022

What is a Police Welfare Check?

A Police Welfare Check is the act of a police officer attending to ascertain the welfare of an individual or individuals, either in their place of residence or a public place.

Welfare checks typically involve a partner agency or member of the public asking the police to attend and check on someone. In these circumstances, the powers for the police to intervene are extremely limited in all but the most urgent of circumstances. This is particularly the case when the person in question is inside a private address, but also applies when the person is in a public place.

The only powers of entry or detention exist purely in emergency situations.

When is a Police Welfare Check appropriate?

West Yorkshire Police guidance states that police officers will only conduct welfare checks where one or more of the following circumstances occur:

- It is considered that there is an immediate, real and substantial risk to the life and/ or a risk of serious injury to the person or any other person.
- The circumstances mean there is a reasonable belief that a crime has been, is being or is about to be committed.
- In the case of a child, there is a reasonable belief that the child is suffering or is at risk of suffering immediate and significant harm as set out in [Section 47](#) of the Children's Act 1989.

What should practitioners do?

If a practitioner is concerned about the welfare of a child, individual or family and a welfare check is appropriate in line with the West Yorkshire Police guidance, then a welfare check should be requested by calling 101, or 999 if there is concern that there is an immediate risk to life.

If a practitioner is unsure if a Police Welfare Check is appropriate they should discuss this with their designated lead for safeguarding, and they can also discuss this with Duty and Advice, tel: 0113 376 0336, or out of hours tel: 0113 535 0600.

If a Police Welfare Check is not deemed appropriate, practitioners should consider the steps they can reasonably take to be assured of the safety of a child, individual or family. This may include a home visit, contact via telephone or social media, or discussions with other professionals or practitioners in contact with the family.

What happens during a Welfare Check?

When conducting a Welfare Check, police officers are required to establish a person's location and ascertain whether they are alive, breathing and conscious (ABC). Police actions are limited to:

- Finding the individual;
- Calling for medical assessment of people who are found (where necessary);
- Feeding back this information to the person/ organisation that has requested the check.

Police officers are neither trained nor equipped to carry out clinical assessments on the mental health or wellbeing of an individual (no matter how urgent the issue is) and it is not appropriate for them to fulfil the role of a healthcare professional.

Where police officers have concerns about mental health or wellbeing during a welfare check they have two available options:

- Confirm that the person is safe and well, leave them in the known location and update the concerned person who requested the check. If medical assistance is required, the police officer will also inform hospital or medical facility staff.
- Stay in close proximity to the person and immediately contact a crisis team service for urgent assessment under the Mental Health Act 1983. Officers cannot force entry on to a premises for this purpose and require a warrant under [section 135\(2\)](#) Mental Health Act 1983 if consent has not been provided.

If life and limb is at immediate risk, the officer may use powers under [section 17](#) Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to gain entry.

Healthcare staff and police officers should use their professional judgement and risk assess the circumstances of each case to ascertain which of these two options is appropriate.

Key contacts or for more information

Practitioners can contact the Duty and Advice Team tel: 0113 376 0336, or out of hours (evenings, weekends and bank holidays) tel: 0113 535 0600.

When members of the public are concerned about a child, they should ring the Contact Centre tel: 0113 222 4403.