

Guideline on Police Welfare Checks

Introduction

This guideline has been developed to support the practice of Police and Social Services staff. To effectively protect children there is a need for Police and Social Services to work together collaboratively, and wherever possible to support each other in carrying out safeguarding activities. It is not possible to give a definitive list of circumstances where a welfare check would be required and each request must be considered on its own merits with the best interests, safety and welfare of a child being the first principle.

Criteria for Requesting a Police Welfare Check

The following situations would warrant a welfare check request **or** be planned as part of section 47 enquiries, or child protection planning.

1. An out of hours visit is required to establish if a **‘person posing a risk’** is visiting a family home. However, there needs to be some intelligence/information that the person posing a risk is visiting the family home and cannot simply be based on a ‘gut feeling’.
2. An out of hours visit is required when **adult behaviours** are causing a risk to the child e.g. alcohol or substance misuse, but when there has been a lack of clear evidence of this.
3. Where there has been an allegation of **children left at home unsupervised** where there is a lack of clear evidence.
4. Cases where Social Services have applied for a Court Order and the case has been delayed for a contested hearing and there is a risk of significant harm.
5. There is an on-going S47 enquiry where the child has not been located. Links must be made with the Missing Person’s Unit and it must be clarified that the Police are actively searching for the child.

When a Police Welfare Check cannot be requested

When a referral is made to the Social Services Department during their office hours and the child needs to be seen on that day.

Process

1. The Welfare Check must be agreed between a Senior Practitioner or above and the PPU Detective Sergeant during office hours or the Police Control Room Supervisor out-of-hours.
2. Written information will be provided to the Police either via secure e-mail or fax and will include the following information:-
 - Contact details of the Social Worker
 - Contact details of the child and family/carers
 - Family composition – to include names, dob, address, telephone number
 - Description of any ‘person posing a risk’ who should not be visiting the family (if known), together with their name and dob.

- Purpose of the welfare check
- Summary of the potential risks that necessitate a welfare visit
- What, if any, work has not been completed and why.
- What legal advice has been taken? If none, why not.
- Details of any risks to staff
- Confirmation that EDT has been made aware of the request
- If the risks become evident during the welfare visit:- what is the agreed plan?

Outcome of the Welfare Check

Following the Welfare Check, the Police Officer will provide written information to Social Services which will include:-

- Contact details of the Police Officer undertaking the welfare check
- When the Welfare Check/s were undertaken
- Details of who was seen during the visit
- Details of concerns/risks identified
- Details of any actions taken