



Diogelu Gwent
Gwent Safeguarding

Multi Agency
Children & Adults
Welfare Check Policy



Ratified by Board
March 2022

Protocols & Procedures
Group

Review Date
March 2025

Contents	Page No
Aims of Policy	3
Definitions	3
Background and Information	3
Operational – making and receiving a request	3
Non – Gwent Welfare Check request	7
When the Threshold for a Welfare Check is not met	7
Escalation Policy	7

Aims of the Policy

To provide clarity to Social Care, Gwent Police, and other partner agency staff regarding the conducting of welfare checks on individuals who may be at risk of harm.

This includes:

- To outline and provide guidance when a welfare check is appropriate.
- Procedural and recording requirements necessary.
- Resolution and escalation in the event of concerns by agencies.
- Any legal background to such requests

Definition

The welfare check process describes when the Police are requested to engage with children and adults who are at risk of harm and seek to manage any safeguarding risks.

This policy applies to requests for welfare checks made to Gwent Police from another agency

Background Information

This policy supports practitioners from social care, Gwent Police, and other agencies to fulfil their collective responsibilities to effectively safeguard the public of Gwent. It is essential that all agencies work collaboratively to support each other to carry out these responsibilities and there should be no barriers to agencies seeking to request a welfare check in circumstances they, in their professional capacity, feel necessitate such action.

It is not possible to provide a definitive list of circumstances where a welfare check would be appropriate, and each request will need to be considered on its own merits within the criteria laid out in this policy.

The law provides Police officers with certain powers to enable them to fulfil their duties that are not bestowed on other agencies such as a power of entry as well as the tools, training, and mechanisms with which to enforce their powers. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Police resources are utilised to best effect, in the collaborative duty of public bodies to safeguard individuals.

It is important to note that Police officers will be accountable for their decisions in exercising these powers, but their decision making is likely to be based on the information provided to them by other agencies utilising these powers.

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 practitioner.

Operational – Making and receiving a request

A request should be made to Gwent Police from external agencies to conduct 'welfare checks' on vulnerable adults and children when certain criteria are met:

The primary criteria to be met is:

- **That it is reasonably believed that an adult or child is at immediate risk of harm.**

The referrer would have to have concerns for the imminent risk of harm for the child or adult. It would be the expectation that the referrer would have tried to make contact with the child or adult before requesting a welfare check.

See link for key determinations for children and adults (Wales Safeguarding Procedures), <https://www.safeguarding.wales/chi/c3pt2/c3pt2.p3.html?highlight=determination> and <https://www.safeguarding.wales/adu/a3pt1/a3pt1.p13.html?highlight=determination>

If a welfare check is agreed, a Police officer will always attend if;

- There is an identifiable and immediate risk to life or property.
- It is reasonably believed that a crime has been committed or is about to be committed.

Examples may include but are not restricted to:

- Where it is reasonably believed based on documented intelligence and information, a person 'posing a risk' is believed to be visiting a family. This would be strengthened by specifics of a date/time/place.
- Out of Hours visit is required where it is believed that children are left at home unsupervised.
- An out of hours visit is required when 'adult behaviours' are believed to be causing an immediate risk to another person for example, sexual behaviour, substance misuse, exploitation.
- Where it has been directed by a court, or a court order has been applied for and the process has caused delays there is a risk a child or adult will come to harm.
- Where a child or adult is vulnerable or reasonably believed to be in such poor health and circumstances would suggest they are in need of medical intervention or deceased.

***Reasonably believes should be read to mean**, that in light of all the surrounding facts and circumstances which are known, a **reasonable** person would **believe**, under those facts and circumstances, that an act, event, or situation, is occurring, will occur or has occurred.*

Gwent Police will accept responsibility for carrying out checks on the welfare of vulnerable children and adults where any of the criteria set out in this policy are met.

Please note:

Where a child cannot be located and reasonable attempts to locate the child have been undertaken the child should be reported to the Police as a missing person and not as a request for a welfare check.

If attendance is being requested to prevent a breach of the peace in cases where another agency is attending this should not be treated as a welfare check request and a normal call for service to the Police.

Process for making a request

If the Police receive concerns of safety from members of the public then this procedure will be followed.

- The welfare check request must be agreed by a Senior Practitioner or equivalent. If the time of day allows there will also be the option to discuss the request with the Detective Sergeant within the Safeguarding Hub.
- Information of the request will be provided to the Police by direct phone call and verbally recorded by the Police contact centre.

- The level of detail provided should include the reason the check is being requested and other relevant information held or known about the person concerned.
- On receipt of the phone call the Police should open an incident record and pass this to the Area Incident Sergeant within the Force Control Room to determine the next steps and discuss the request with the referrer.

Irrespective of the final course of action agreed, a computer record will be created by the Police containing the following:

- Details of the person requesting the welfare check (including a phone number)
- Details of the person believed to be at risk.
- The purpose of the welfare check.
- Timeline to date - When the risk was first known and what action has already been undertaken to determine the person's welfare.
- Any known risks to be taken into consideration by officers attending e.g., violence, mental health etc.
- If a check is likely to be out of hours, details of a Social Services contact and/or confirmation that Emergency Duty Team (EDT) are aware of the request.

Information for the request should be provided and recorded using the following format and guidance:

1. Intelligence and information available.

2. Assessment of the Threat / Harm / Risk

- **Threat – to who?** Named individual(s)
- **Harm – Of what?** If there is a threat to more than one individual this should outline the harm perceived to each named above.

What harm might the child or adult be in danger of or may have already come to e.g., death, physical abuse, sexual abuse etc. and from who

- **Risk - what is the likelihood that this will take place?**

This will provide the rationale for the belief that significant harm will come to the child or adult and should include the perceived immediacy of that harm.

This can be difficult to define and prescribe and each case will differ. However, this may include observations or information by professionals, previous offending, and behaviour, change in patterns of behaviour, corroboration of information, social media, third party information, professional assessment, known triggers, signs of exploitation, escalating behaviour.

3. Legal Considerations and Powers

While the Police will assess the situation on attendance and the need to use powers available to them such as forcing entry to a property, it will be important to provide details of any court orders in place or legal advice taken to date regarding the individual.

4. Options and Contingencies

Agencies requesting a welfare check must consider a contingency plan and, if out of hours notify EDT.

Contingency plans could consider:

Is a child at risk of significant harm? Where could the child be taken as a place of safety? Are there family members/friends or a foster placement on standby? Does the Local Authority have parental responsibility, or will Police Powers of Protection (PPP) be required?

Similarly, in respect of an adult who is at risk of harm consideration should be given to convey the individual to a place of safety i.e., family networks for support.

Once the check is made and the child or adult located, what is the intended course of action with the individual? This will be particularly important in relation to a child or adult suffering from mental health.

Are the Police the best resource to send to mitigate the risk?

Is there another agency who are better placed to deal with the risk?

The presence of a uniformed Police officer can have a significant negative impact on a vulnerable child or adult, and therefore the deployment of Police officers needs to be necessary and proportionate in the circumstances.

Police control room staff should discuss with the practitioner requesting the check what plans are in place to provide assessment and/or medical care for the child or adult when they have been located. Plans may include:

- Call an urgent ambulance and consider mental capacity issues
- Call the community mental health team and request arrangement of an urgent Mental Health Act 1983 (MHA 1983) assessment
- Refer to the hospital accident and emergency department on a voluntary basis or to their GP for follow-up.

A healthcare practitioner doing a visual examination or asking clinical questions may be able to assess a child or adults' safety and wellbeing, while police officers are only able to advise an individual to seek medical assessment and support. Unlike Police, Health and Social Care practitioners have the legal ability to arrange for detention of a child or adult within their own dwelling.

5. Take Action

What course of action is required?

Once a course of action is agreed between the Police Area Incident Sergeant (or another Sergeant if the Area Incident Sergeant is not available) and the referrer, the proposed action will be documented within the Police incident log.

The check will be allocated to an appropriate policing resource to attend and an assessment of the timeframe for attendance should be provided to the referrer.

6. Review

The Police will provide confirmation of the welfare check in the form agreed when it was requested, e.g., phone call to the referrer, direct to out of hours EDT or in writing and this will be as soon as is practical after the check is carried out.

Additional information can be agreed at the point of the request but as a minimum this should include:

- Details of the Police officer carrying out the check.
- When the check was conducted.
- Details of who was seen and present.
- Any concerns/ risks.
- Summary of action taken.

In all cases a Public Protection Notice will be completed by the attending officer and it may be more appropriate and efficient for a copy of this to be sent to the referrer of the check.

Agencies making or receiving a request must adhere to and reference any internal relevant agency policy or guidance.

If a 'welfare check' is carried out by Police, the officer/s carrying out the check **must update the relevant agency** and update the NICHE occurrence to confirm that they have done this. **In all cases officers MUST submit a PPN referral form.**

Non – Gwent Welfare Check Requests

If another Police Force or Social Care/agency from outside of Gwent requests a welfare check then the same criteria should be applied.

When the threshold for a welfare check is not met

In the event the threshold for Police attendance is not satisfied, the concern and the resolution of that concern, will remain that of the referring agency.

If the request is declined after initial recording of it or after assessment, then the referrer must be notified of this by a Sergeant. If the referrer is not available due to the time of day, the EDT must be informed of this recognising the opportunity to escalate the decision.

It may occasionally be considered appropriate for Police to accompany another agency to conduct such a check, but this will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. It is for the referring agency to provide the relevant information to support the need for the presence of the Police.

Escalation Policy

In the event of a disagreement between the referring agency and the Police, the matter should be referred to the Force Incident Manager (FIM) and, if out of hours, the EDT Manager who will be responsible for determining whether Police resources are deployed.

If any agency has concerns or feedback on either the suitability of a request or response, then this should be raised for resolution and consideration to either a Senior Manager within the agency or the Detective Superintendent of Public Protection.