



AVON AND SOMERSET CONSTABULARY

www.avonandsomerset.police.uk

Avon and Somerset Constabulary
Police & Fire Rescue HQ
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Wednesday 30 October 2019

RE: CHANGES TO POLICE CONCERN FOR WELFARE POLICY FROM MONDAY 4th NOVEMBER 2019

The demand we face as a police service is increasing and growing in complexity. The threats of extremism, globalisation, organised crime and drugs, exploitation and abuse are less visible to communities, but if we fail to tackle them effectively the impact is substantial. Over the last 12 months, we've experienced some significant periods of pressure and demand and consequently we've had to examine the role of the police and the calls for service that we respond to.

In recent weeks, the Home Secretary has made it clear that the purpose of the police service is to uphold the law fairly and firmly; to prevent crime, to pursue and bring to justice those who break the law; and to keep the Queen's Peace; to protect, help and reassure the community; and to be seen to do all this with integrity, common sense and sound judgement.

Analysis of incident logs where officers have been requested to complete welfare checks has identified a large number of attended incidents where this does not form part of the core responsibilities of police officers. We have found these checks account for a considerable and growing amount of police time; 50,000 calls in the last 12 months, a 5% year on year increase, representing over 10% of our demand.

Often our officers are tasked to attend an address and speak to a named occupier to check they are alive, immediately safe and well – to determine the 'existence of life' and report back to the requesting agency or member of the public. Police officers in general have no formal medical training other than First Aid and are not qualified to diagnose a person's medical condition other than to confirm they are alive, immediately safe and appear to be well at the time of being seen.

The Constabulary has finite resources. Requests to complete 'checks' which should be the responsibility of other agencies where there is no immediate threat to harm or safety, can increase the risk of harm to those needing police support elsewhere. For this reason, we have taken the decision to no longer accept responsibility for carrying out checks where an agency makes a request which does not meet the below criteria.

- There is an identifiable and immediate risk to life or property.
- The vulnerable person or child is suffering or are at risk of suffering immediate and significant harm.
- It is reasonably believed that a crime has been committed, is being committed or is about to be committed.

- Attendance of a police officer is necessary to prevent a breach of the peace.

In the absence of an evidenced or assessed immediate risk to life by the requesting agency, police are unlikely to have a role in the below scenarios:

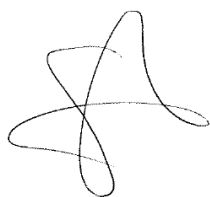
- Requests for regular monitoring over a weekend period where the reporting agencies' weekend provision is lessened or entirely removed.
- Checks on individuals who have failed to attend routine appointments at hospital, GP surgeries or mental health teams.
- Those apparently absent from a place that they should be or are expected to be, but who are not reported or classed as 'missing' e.g. those who have missed appointments and there are no other concerns identified.
- Requests to check whether an individual has taken their medication.
- Requests to check on family members that are failing to answer the phone

Where the police have concern regarding the care, safety and vulnerability of an individual or location, which is evidenced by requests for the police to conduct checks, these will be escalated to the appropriate governing or statutory agency. This will ensure they are aware of the level of police involvement and allow them to address the concern more appropriately.

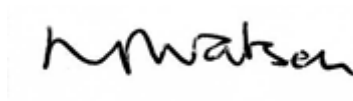
Notification will also be made to the relevant Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit, to ensure there is consideration of wider safeguarding issues, and whether multi-agency discussions and decision making needs to take place.

We have all faced significant challenges during the recent years of austerity requiring each of us to focus our resources on the vital services we provide to communities. I hope you will share my desire to continue working together to jointly understand the issues that cause members of the public to need our respective services. Working together in this way to problem solve is now more important than ever and we are committed to continue partnership working which will help us all manage our demands in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

Yours faithfully,



Stephen Cullen
Assistant Chief Constable
Neighbourhood Partnerships and Response



Nikki Watson
Assistant Chief Constable
Investigations and Operational Support