

RIGHT CARE, RIGHT PERSON

Chief Inspector James Willis



INTRODUCTION

On the 1st July 2023 Northamptonshire Police adopted a new Welfare Check Policy based on 'RIGHT CARE, RIGHT PERSON' (RCRP). This has been successfully trialled in other Forces, and is supported by the College of Policing and the Home Office.

All of our key partners have been briefed on the changes.

The College of Policing states in its Authorised Professional Practice (Risk) that,

"The police should not assume, directly or indirectly, responsibility for all forms of risks. They may have no legal right or power to do so and could compromise their reputation by exceeding their role. Other agencies may have more appropriate skills in risk assessment, resources, and legal powers.

*Officers should consider whether it is appropriate for them to accept, or to continue to accept, responsibility for a risk when there are more appropriate agencies or methods of tackling the problem. They should not encourage the public to think automatically of the police as the first or most appropriate port of call for every problem. The police must work with partner agencies rather than take on their responsibilities. **Being helpful may create other risks for police"***

- College of Policing, Risk APP.

Protecting vulnerable people and keeping people safe is a priority for Northamptonshire police and the force would never knowingly make a decision about its resources that would put people in danger. It is important that vulnerable people are given the right support when they need it, but the skills and support they need are often not those of a police officer. This procedure will help to ensure the member of the public is given the right care by the right person from the right agency.

DEFINITIONS WITHIN THE NEW POLICY

Welfare Check

A request from an **external agency** to check on the general welfare of an individual, who the external agency deem to be vulnerable, for the purpose of reporting back to the external agency that the individual is safe and well.

External Agency

Any agency other than the police service. It does **not** include a relative or friend of the person being reported as vulnerable, nor does it include a person from their place of work.

Northamptonshire Police will respond to requests for assistance from external agencies to conduct welfare checks on vulnerable adults and children only when its **threshold** is met. Nothing in this procedure prevents Northamptonshire Police from discharging its core duties.

From 1st July 2023 - The **threshold** for police intervention in these cases will be when:

- **There is an immediate* risk to the life of, or serious** harm to, an identified person.**

Northamptonshire Police will not accept a call from an external agency which does not meet this threshold. In these cases, external agencies should assess the risk and adopt other options to meet their obligations.

Northamptonshire Police will not accept a call from an external agency simply because the agency does not have the capacity to meet its own demand. The failure of an agency to manage its own risk does not mean it becomes the responsibility of Northamptonshire Police.

*** Immediate” – it is obvious to the police that there is a risk to life presently, at this moment or in the immediate future or has already occurred*

*** “Serious harm” – there is a risk of significant harm to the person concerned, this can be physical harm, serious neglect issues, significant mental health symptoms, all of which would amount to the suffering of potential significant injuries or psychological harm.*

MENTAL HEALTH

Northamptonshire Police will not accept a call from an external agency when someone has not returned to a mental health establishment following a period of voluntary leave (AWOL). In the absence of specific information that they are imminently going to come to harm it should be assumed their mental state was sufficient to allow them unescorted leave and the reporting agency should complete basic enquiries prior to contacting Northamptonshire Police. It is important to note the Home Office care framework highlights that a medical professional should attend the home address prior to contacting police when there is no critical concern justifying an emergency response.

Where a person has left a mental health facility despite being detained without consent the force will not accept a call if the location of the person is known and they do not present a significant risk to themselves or others. If the person is missing (i.e., their location is not known despite reasonable steps to establish it) then they should be dealt with as a missing person.

Where a call relates to a person who has left an acute hospital the force's guidance on persons who have gone missing from hospitals should be consulted. This contains steps and guidance that have been agreed with partners at the hospitals.

DISAGREEMENTS WITH REQUESTING AGENCIES

In the event of a disagreement between the requesting agency and Northamptonshire Police, the matter should be referred to an Control Room Sgt who will examine the decision and rationale of the Control Room Operative. If the Control Room Sgt is unable to resolve this it should be referred to the Force Incident Manager (FIM) who will make the final decision. The duty superintendent is available for contact, should the FIM wish to speak with them, where a refusal to accept a call may result in a complaint or criticism from an external agency.

CALLS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC / PLACES OF WORK

A different approach will be taken to calls from members of the public who may have concerns for an individual and may not be able to act on those concerns or indeed may not hold any responsibility for that individual.

Northamptonshire Police will continue to deal with such calls and, using a THRIVE (Threat / Harm / Risk / Investigation / Vulnerability / Evidence) assessment to respond appropriately. It will signpost callers to the correct external agency when it is appropriate to do so.

Monitoring and Oversight

- Oversight Board within Force that ran for the first few months. Internally focussed.
- Northamptonshire has a RCRP Gold Group (known as the '**Core Group**') was established by the County ICB, from which the **Co-Chairs** are drawn. This is partnership led (not police led), and the membership consists of senior strategic partners (e.g. ICB, EMAS, Mental Health Services, Children's Services, NHS, Fire & Rescue, DWP, police and others).
- The Core Group has broken the strategic objectives down into 5 Workstreams.
 - **Workstream 1:** Achieving joint agreement for clear definitions of "risk of criminality" and " risk of serious harm to self or others."
 - **Workstream 2:** Removing Police Involvement from responding to Welfare Checks (unless risk of criminality or serious harm to self or others.)
 - **Workstream 3:** Removing Police involvement from responding to instances of missing persons from MH facilities, and walkouts of people with MH needs from other facilities (unless risk of criminality of serious harm to self or others.)
 - **Workstream 4:** Reducing Section 136 Handover times between Police & Health Partners (including reducing S136 handover times to 60 minutes in majority of cases.)
 - **Workstream 5:** Reducing Police involvement in the initial response to people in mental health crisis (unless risk of criminality of serious harm to self or others.)
- Each of these workstreams has its own separate working group. Each working group has a gap analysis for its respective area. They report to the Core Group.

Next Steps....

- It's only been 7 months – need to allow to run to understand seasonal fluctuations
- Work through the gaps with the Core Group (Partnership Gold Group)
- Continue to monitor the performance figures



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