

# Avon and Somerset launch new national approach to concern for safety calls



Avon and Somerset Police have launched the first phase of the national initiative 'Right Care Right Person' to ensure vulnerable people receive the most appropriate support. This approach changes how the police respond to calls about mental health and wellbeing, making sure the right professionals are involved.

Right Care Right Person (RCRP) involves collaboration between police and healthcare services to handle concern for safety calls more effectively. Call handlers will assess if a police response is necessary or if a healthcare professional is better suited to help.

This initiative ensures that individuals get the specialised support they need from healthcare professionals, allowing police to focus more on crime prevention and protecting our communities.

Assistant Chief Constable Jon Cummins said: "The key focus of Right Care Right Person is to ensure that community members are getting the most appropriate care from the right service. Part of that is to recognise that the police are not always the best responders for certain incidents, with health and social care partners often equipped to deliver better and more specialist support.

"Of course, police will always attend incidents where there is a threat to life, but we are collaborating closely with our healthcare partners to adapt our service provisions and ensure that people are receiving not just suitable care, but the right care. This in turn will allow us to focus more on our primary purpose to protect our communities and tackle crime."

To support the new process, Avon and Somerset Police have partnered with the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT) to introduce a new Mental Health Link Officer role to better assess and respond to calls. This role has been funded by Avon and Somerset Police, and the NHS Integrated Care Boards for Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire and Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire.

Matthew Truscott, Head of Mental Health at SWASFT, said: "The Mental Health Link Officer (MHLO) is an innovative resource using an Avon and Somerset Police officer based in our Emergency Operating Centre to support safe and efficient dispatch of emergency vehicles to mental health related 999 calls.

"The officer will work as part of the nationally credited Integrated Access Partnership, a model co-led by SWASFT, BrisDoc Healthcare Services, Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership and Avon and Somerset Police."

## Need Help?

If you need support for your mental health or you are concerned for the safety of someone else, please:

- Call NHS 111 or visit [NHS 111 online](#)
- Contact your local GP
- In an emergency, always dial **999**.

Other support services:

- [Samaritans](#): 116 123
- [Shout](#): Text SHOUT to 85258
- [National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK](#): 0800 689 5652

## FAQs

### What is Right Care Right Person

Right Care Right Person (RCRP) is a new way of responding to concern for safety calls to ensure that vulnerable people get the right specialist support. It means that while police may need to attend some incidents, many can be better handled by health or social care professionals.

### How will it be different?

When someone is experiencing a mental health crisis, a police presence can sometimes make things worse. If there is no immediate danger, health and social care professionals who are better equipped to help will respond instead of police. This approach allows police to focus on crime prevention while ensuring people get the best care for their needs.

Where there is a real and immediate threat to life or serious harm, police will still respond to incidents and calls for concern.

### **What does concern for safety mean?**

“Concern for safety” calls are when someone contacts the police because they believe a person is vulnerable or at risk. This could be due to missing a healthcare appointment or worrying about their own or someone else’s mental wellbeing.

### **How will we know if an incident needs police or another agency to attend?**

If there is an immediate threat or serious harm, always dial 999. Our call handlers are trained to assess each situation based on the level of threat, harm and risk to decide if police or another service should respond. They have received specific training for RCRP to make the best decisions and there is a process to address any concerns about their decisions.

### **What happens if police decide not to attend?**

If police determine they are not the most appropriate agency to respond, the call handler will explain why and direct you to the right agency. Police will always respond when there is a threat to life or someone is in danger.

### **What are the other phases of RCRP?**

RCRP will be rolled out in phases throughout 2024:

- **Phase one:** Concern for safety calls (starting June 2024)
- **Phase two:** Walkouts from healthcare facilities and AWOL from mental health establishments
- **Phase three:** Transportation
- **Phase four:** Section 136 of the Mental Health Act and voluntary mental health patients