

Edinburgh Carers Council



for those supporting people with mental health difficulties

Contacting The Police

a guide for mental
health carers



Why would I need to contact the Police?

Most mental health carers do not need to contact the Police. However, you may contact the Police if the person you care for:

- is at risk of causing harm to themselves
- is at risk of harming you or others
- has gone missing and you are concerned about their safety

Calling the Police in a crisis.

How will my call be dealt with?

When you make a call to the Police in Edinburgh you will be connected to the Police Force Communication Centre in Bilston. The action the Police take is based on the information they receive from the caller. The Police use a 'grading system' to decide how urgent a call is and what action, if any, they should take. It is important to give as much information as possible to help the operator prioritise the urgency of the call. This system is used for all calls, not just those in relation to someone with mental health difficulties.

If you have called the Police previously from the same address; there will be a trace to the call. If you have previously informed the Police that the person you have called about has mental health difficulties this should be automatically flagged up. This gives those officers involved an indication that someone may need to be approached in a particular way and if taken to a police station that an Appropriate Adult may be required.

Contacting the Police in a crisis. Checklist.

Is there immediate danger to you, the person you care for or others

YES - call 999

NO - call (0131) 311 3131

Information to consider

- Have you contacted the Police before? – Let them know.
- Has the person's behaviour changed? – In what way?
- What is your main concern? i.e. danger or threat of self-injury; harm to others.
- Where is the person now?
- If approached by the Police, what is their likely response?
- How best should they be approached?

If a person goes missing

- If this happens regularly, has there been a change in circumstances? Is the person at a higher risk than before?
- Have you already contacted The Royal Edinburgh Hospital and Edinburgh Royal Infirmary to check if they have been admitted? – This is usually required before a missing person report can be filed.

Remember

The information you provide will help the Police to respond appropriately so that the person can receive the support they need.

Using Advocacy Support

Edinburgh Carers Council provide an independent advocacy service for carers. You can use this service to contact the Police on your behalf or support you to approach the Police to alert them of your concerns regarding your situation and that of the person you are supporting.

The advantages of this are that if you do call the Police in a crisis:

- the Police are already aware of
 - an individual's mental health difficulties and how they may behave at times of crises that may put themselves, yourself, or others at risk.
 - how to handle the situation with due care and sensitivity.
- you have already spoken to or met with one of your local Beat officers who will be likely to respond to a call-out to your address, you have already spoken to or met with one of your local Beat officers who will be likely to respond to a call-out to your address.

- the police will be aware that the person may need an Appropriate Adult. An Appropriate Adult is an independent person with specialist training who is present during a police interview to support and assist a person with a mental health difficulty. Their role is to make sure that, as far as possible, the person understands the questions the Police may ask, and is able to respond.

Promoting Best Practice

In most circumstances Police Officers should have an understanding of the amount of security that is needed, so that the level of action is appropriate. However, if you feel a situation has been mishandled it is helpful to feed this back to the Police Force so that improvements can be made. We can provide advocacy support for carers wishing to provide feedback.

Crisis Contact Numbers

- Police **999**
- Edinburgh Crisis Centre **0808 801 0414** 24 hour service free telephone helpline and face to face support
- Mental Health Assessment Service **0131 537 6000**
24 hour emergency mental health assessment service provided by a team of mental health nurses.

Social Work Service

- For all first time contact with adult social care services contact Social Care Direct **0131 200 2324** Monday to Thursday 8.30am-5.00pm, Friday 8.30am-3.40pm
- If you are concerned about a child's safety or welfare call Children and Families Social Care Direct **0131 200 2327** and not your local social work office Monday to Thursday 8.30am-5.00pm, Friday 8.30am-3.40pm
- For all out of hour social care services contact Emergency Social Work Service **0800 731 6969**

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