

Information for Police Forces and Security Professionals

The purpose of this document is to enable police forces and security professionals to widen their understanding of Prader-Willi Syndrome (PWS), whilst protecting members of the public and themselves.

Those with PWS are vulnerable adults, and should be treated as such, as mentioned in The Policing Vision 2025.

What do you need to know?

- PWS is a rare, genetic disorder that causes the brain to function in a way that is not typical of other people.
- Strong autistic traits will be displayed.
- People with PWS do not receive a message of being full after eating, regardless of the amount of food eaten.
- Theft of food can occur because of the insatiable appetite they experience.
- Money or other goods may also be taken with the purpose of buying or bartering for food.
- Individuals experience significant meltdowns and behaviours of concern, both of which are a feature of PWS.
- Those with PWS may destroy property when upset, abscond for no apparent reason, and call 999 if upset with their parents or carer.
- Some people with PWS may skin pick or self-harm. This behaviour can be more prominent during times of anxiety.
- Food theft and behaviours of concern should be treated as a manifestation of the person's disability rather than a criminal act.

How can you help?

- Insist a carer or parent is present before you speak to them and maintain contact with the parent or carer.
- Utilise vulnerable adult training, and inform carer/individual that you are doing so.
- Avoid high calorie meals while they are in your custody. This could be seen as a "reward" and an inducement to reoffend in order to gain more food.
- The high pain threshold present in those with PWS may mask them being in pain, and may affect how they react to a taser. Those with PWS will also bruise easily and this must be taken into account.
- Speaking loudly may escalate behaviours.
- Work with the parents and/or carers to develop positive behavioural solutions to avoid repeat incidents.

All people with PWS are individuals. For further information about any person with PWS with whom you are dealing, please contact:

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