

# Safeguarding During Covid-19 Pandemic

Canolfan Gymraeg am Weithredu ar Ddibyniaeth

# WCADA

Welsh Centre for Action on Dependency and Addiction

Inspiring Change  Achieving Potential



During the last few months, due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, many of us have had to stay indoors, 'shield', work from home and home school our children. The impact of this for some has provoked anxiety and stress. Many people have been experiencing lots of negative feelings such as loneliness, frustration, isolation and 'cabin fever'. In addition to this, many support services may be closed or offering a limited service and may be more difficult to contact, increasing some individuals' feelings of isolation and frustration.

Unfortunately, as a result of the enforced social isolation, this has also increased the risk of some people being at risk of harm and abuse.

## Harm, Significant Harm and Abuse

Harm can be defined as the ill treatment, the impairment of physical or mental health or the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. Significant harm can be a one off incident or a series of incidents which can cause psychological or physical harm to another person. Abuse is when a child or adult experiences harm, significant harm or distress. Abuse can be split into several categories examples of the different forms of abuse are included below:

- **Physical Abuse:** Hitting, punching, kicking, undue restraint (such as tying people to chairs or beds), withholding medication from someone, hair pulling, biting, shaking, using weapons, spitting and pinching.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Rape, kissing someone when they do not want to be kissed, forcing people to watch pornography or sexual acts, digital penetration, exposing yourself to someone, touching someone intimately when they do not want to be touched, revenge porn and unwanted 'sexting', having sex with someone who is under the influence of substances. It is important to remember that a person under the age of 16 does not have the capacity to make sexual choices and that any form of sexual behaviour towards a child is abuse.
- **Financial Abuse:** Theft, pressure in connection with wills or property, selling peoples belongings, fraud, exploitation, misappropriation of benefits or funds, and using someone's catalogues, credit cards or store cards.

- **Emotional/Psychological Abuse:** Witnessing domestic abuse, hurting someone's pets, withdrawing love and affection, name calling, humiliating someone, gaslighting (manipulating someone into questioning their own sanity), persistently ignoring someone, shouting or blaming, not giving someone privacy or dignity, and not allowing someone to have friends.
- **Neglect:** Ignoring a person or child's nutritional, developmental, hygiene and health needs. Not providing stimulation, suitable and adequate clothing, and not providing a bed or safe environment for the child or adult to be comfortable and safe from harm.

There are also other forms of abuse such as Discriminatory Abuse, Domestic Abuse, Modern Slavery and Institutional Abuse.

## County Lines

County lines is the practice of larger gangs trafficking drugs into smaller towns from bigger cities such as Liverpool, Manchester and London. Often this involves taking advantage of vulnerable children and is a form of child slavery or exploitation. Children as young as 7 are being groomed and coerced into illegal activity, initially with offers of a better lifestyle, gifts, money or food. However, this often turns to intimidation, threats and violence – sometimes of a sexual nature. In some cases, young children have been stabbed, beaten and even killed by rival gangs.



 **999 (for emergencies)**

 **101 (for non-emergencies)**

If you have been a victim of or have witnessed abuse you can report this to the police on the above numbers

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## Potential Indicators of Abuse

Under many circumstances, it is unlikely that we will witness the aforementioned forms of abuse taking place. However, we may see or hear 'cues' which could make us feel unsettled or think that something 'isn't right'. Often, children or adults who are experiencing abuse may hide the abuse or even protect the abuser because of feelings of shame or fear. However, it is still important that if we suspect someone is at risk of harm, we act to protect the individual.

There are many indicators that someone is being abused which could include one or more of the following\*:

- Unexplained bruising or marks to the body
- Behaviour changes such as becoming more introverted or losing touch with friends
- Wearing long or baggy clothes
- Presentation may be unkempt; they may smell or look malnourished
- Foraging or asking for food or money
- Having no lighting/heating/electricity
- Not wanting to be left alone or with particular people
- Appearing tearful or scared

*\*this list is not exhaustive.*

## Where does abuse take place?

Abuse and harm can take place anywhere, however during the lock down period much of the abuse is taking place at home. Individuals are more at risk of abuse at home if: they are isolated, have communication difficulties such as a language barrier or hearing impairment, they are dependent on their carer, the carer is dependent on substances, or they are relied upon for emotional and financial support\*.

Should you have concerns, there are plenty of confidential services you can contact for advice to check out the situation with, we have included some to the right. In many cases you do not have to give your name and you could be the reason that someone receives the care they need.

\*Reference: NHS.com ([www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/help-from-social-services-and-charities/abuse-and-neglect-vulnerable-adults/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/help-from-social-services-and-charities/abuse-and-neglect-vulnerable-adults/))

## Support available from WCADA

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had to reduce face-to-face contact with members of the public. However, we are still facilitating Needle Exchange and providing telephone support and are now operating at our original opening times:

**Monday - Friday: 9am - 5pm**

You can contact our agencies on the below numbers:

**Swansea WCADA: 01792 472519**

**Neath WCADA: 01639 633630**

**Port Talbot WCADA: 01639 890863**

**Bridgend WCADA: 01656 667717**

If you require support outside of these hours, please contact



Wales Drug and Alcohol Helpline  
**DAN 24/7**  
Telephone 0808 808 2234 Or  
Text DAN to 81066

## Support from other Organisations



Childline provide help anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through. They have a free and confidential helpline operating from 9am to midnight and a website full of useful resources.

## Social Services



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

### Bridgend Social Services:

- ☎ (01656) 642477 (Adult)
- ☎ (01656) 642320 (Children)
- ☎ (01443) 743665 (Out of Hours)

### Neath Port Talbot Social Services:

- ☎ (01639) 685378 (Adult)
- ☎ (01639) 685717 (Children)
- ☎ (01639) 895455 (Out of Hours)

### Swansea Social Services:

- ☎ (01792) 636854 (Adult)
- ☎ (01792) 635700 (Children)
- ☎ (01792) 775501 (Out of Hours)