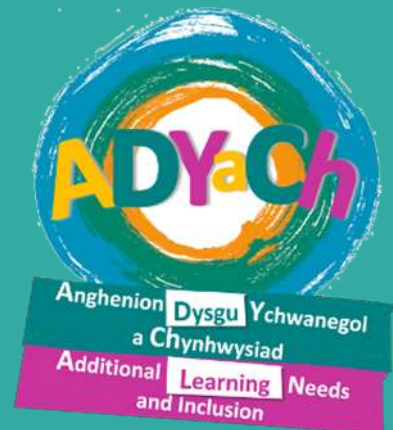

COVID-19: Support for victims of domestic abuse



APRIL 2020

Advice and Guidance for Families:
Gwynedd & Môn Educational Psychology
Service



Foreword

Domestic Abuse and Social Distancing

There has sadly been an increase in reported cases of domestic abuse following the rollout of social distancing measures in the UK and other countries around the globe. While the UK government has pledged funding to support services in response to calls from police forces and charities, the educational psychology service has been considering how best to support families on this issue.

The purpose of this document is to signpost available support and provide clarity for families.

“The household isolation instruction as a result of coronavirus does not apply if you need to leave your home to escape domestic abuse” – UK Government.

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse does not always mean physical violence. It can also include the following:

- coercive control
- economic abuse
- online abuse
- verbal abuse
- emotional abuse
- sexual abuse

If you believe someone is experiencing domestic abuse

If you believe someone is in immediate risk of being harmed, contact 999.

Be aware of the possible signs of domestic abuse and remind the individual of what support is available to them.

Document and keep any material that can be used as evidence that can be shown to the police and other relevant services.

Possible Signs to Look For

If you believe that you or someone else could be a victim of domestic abuse, some of the warning signs include:

- Withdrawn behaviour
- Unexplained bruises
- Lack of financial Control
- Being controlled (e.g. not being allowed to leave the house)
- Having a phone tracked or, messages/social media monitored

If a Child Reveals They are Experiencing Abuse

The [NSPCC](#) advises that if a child reveals abuse to you, it's essential to:

- Listen carefully to what they're saying
- Let them know they've done the right thing by telling you
- Tell them it's not their fault
- Say you'll take them seriously
- Don't confront the alleged abuser
- Explain what you'll do next
- Report what the child has told you as soon as possible.

If you're a child or know of a child experiencing abuse, please contact:

Teulu Môn on 01248 725 888 and when prompted select option 3 for children's services or via email on teulumon@ynysmon.gov.uk

Or Gwynedd Children's team on 01758 704455 and via email on cyfeiriadauplant@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

Where Can I Find Support For Myself or Someone I know?

You are not alone in this situation. For any family member that believes they are suffering from or at risk of abuse, you have available support from online services, helplines and of course **Police response**. North Wales Police are reminding those experiencing abuse in the home that officers are still on hand to deal with perpetrators regardless of the government restriction measures.

Members of the community, family and friends can also provide vital support to those living with domestic abuse. Advice from the UK government can be found [here](#).

If you believe you are in immediate danger, do not hesitate to call 999. [The National Helpline for Domestic Abuse](#) can be contacted freely 24 hours a day on

0808 2000 247

Support Services

- [Gorwel](#) is a service that provides support for domestic abuse and homelessness in Gwynedd and Môn. Their domestic abuse helpline is 0300 111 2121. [DASU](#) provides similar services in North Wales outside Gwynedd & Môn.
- [NSPCC](#) Provides support for adults concerned about domestic abuse and the safety of a child. Freephone helpline: 0808 800 5000 (24hrs). You can also Text: 88858, Email: help@nspcc.org.uk or complete an [Online form](#).
- [Family Rights Group](#) Provides advice for families whose children are involved with or need children's services because of welfare needs or concerns.
- [Refuge](#) offers a range of services that give women and, children access to professional support whatever their situation – helpline, a network of refuges, advocacy and child support.
- [Welsh Women's Aid](#) is a charity that provides support to women and children who have experienced domestic abuse. They have a live fear free helpline on [0808 80 10 800](tel:08088010800).
- [The Dyn Project](#) is an online helpline for men who have experienced domestic abuse in Wales.
- [Galop](#) is a domestic violence helpline for the LGBT community.
- For sexual violence and assault, the NHS has [an online tool](#) to help you find your closest sexual assault referral centre.

How Can I Keep Myself Safe?

Protecting yourself from harm is just as important as protecting the rest of your family. Remember to call 999 when you feel that you are in immediate danger, use the personal and professional support available to you and that your family's safety is more important than social distancing.

[Gorwel](#) has suggested the following guidelines for people experiencing domestic abuse.

1. Make sure your phone is charged at all times. Download apps like [Hollie Guard](#) which is activated by a shake or tap and immediately notifies chosen contacts pinpointing your location and sending audio/video evidence to their phone.
2. Don't drink alcohol together, as this increases the risk of violent attacks. Alcohol also impairs your ability to run, defend yourself or escape.
3. If you have children, try and get them to a different room in the house (preferably with a lock and a phone) and teach them how to dial 999 in emergencies.
4. Try and be aware of your surroundings and where you're more vulnerable (e.g. walking up the stairs or using a comb/hair straighteners).
5. If you're in immediate danger call 999 and follow by pressing 55 to indicate you can't talk but need help.
6. For further advice call Live Fear Free Helpline Wales on 0808 80 10 800 or Gorwel Gwynedd & Anglesey domestic abuse services on 0300 111 2121.

How Can I Best Protect My Child?

Protecting a child from domestic abuse will be a priority for any parent experiencing domestic abuse as any child witnessing domestic abuse is experiencing emotional abuse themselves.

Children will react in different ways to being brought up in a home where there is violence depending on their *age, sex, culture, stage of development, or individual personality*. Most children will be affected in some way by witnessing arguments, distressing behaviour or assaults, even if they do not always show this.

Here are a few tips on supporting your child from [YoungMinds](#).

1. Seek help for yourself and your children. Your safety is the most important thing.
2. Help your children cope by letting them talk when they need to, either with you, a family member or a professional.
3. You are not to blame for the abuse you or your child is experiencing. It is common to worry that you have somehow failed as a parent or that asking for help will result in your child being taken away.
4. Talk to someone yourself about your experience. Your emotional needs are important to and addressing these will mean you can provide more support for your child.
5. Agree on Code words when you talk with your child if it helps you feel safer.
6. Seek advice for charities, the police or other organisation about finances, housing or schooling.

Apps for children and young people

- Bright Sky (Domestic Abuse)
- Clear Fear (Help with Anxiety)
- SAM (Anxiety Tracker)
- Breathe (Meditation and relaxation strategies)
- Ap Cwtsh (Meditation)
- Calm (Help with sleep and meditation)
- Action for Happiness (Help with mood).
- Headspace (Wellbeing and meditation)
- Calm Harm (Self-Harm Support)
- Stay Alive (Suicide Prevention)

Where can I get help if I'm worried about my behaviour?

If you're worried about your own behaviour escalating in the home due to the environmental stressors of social distancing measures, there is a helpline for domestic abuse perpetrators on:

0808 802 4040

More information on support for can be found for domestic abuse perpetrators on the [Respect UK website](#).

The Educational Psychology Service

The EPS provides assessment and intervention for children with additional learning needs as well as consultation and support to school staff and families. You can find out more about the service and what we provide [here](#).

In this document, we have aimed to provide useful advice and resources that can be used for families affected by domestic abuse.

Tell us how can we help

Like many of us, the Educational Psychology Service is trying to adapt to the changes following the closure of schools and the wider UK lockdown. We are still in the process of finding the best possible way to support families, teachers and children in both their education and psychological wellbeing as well as provide a response to the new challenges coronavirus has brought.

If you have any questions or feedback on how we can better support families or schools, please get in touch with us on twitter @seicolegol or via email:

GweinyddolADYaCH@gwynedd.llyw.cymru