

## **Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board Covid 19- Press Statement**

**Headline:** *Concern Social Isolation Increases Risk Levels to Vulnerable Children and Groups in the Communities of Mid and West Wales*

The Mid and West Safeguarding Board, CYSUR and CWMPAS, are leading a campaign to raise awareness amongst communities across the region (Pembrokeshire, Carmarthen, Ceredigion and Powys) to be extra vigilant for vulnerable groups and individuals who may be at increased levels of risk due to social isolation restrictions in place. Elderly members of the community who may be susceptible to scams, and children and adults who live in households where domestic abuse occurs are being specifically targeted by a series of staff briefings, website content and social media campaigns.

### **Scams**

Particular concern has been raised in respect of financial abuse in the wake of COVID-19. Members of the community are urged to be vigilant, as reported scams so far include fake news updates, fake insurance, fake texts and tax refund schemes, and online sales of miracle cures, vaccines and home-testing. There is also an increased likelihood of fake cleaning services and health workers going door-to-door.

Although there have been some excellent voluntary programmes set up to help the vulnerable with shopping, cleaning, medical needs and so on, many of which are genuine acts of good, members of the public should be aware there are a small number of abusers who may take advantage of such a scheme to gain access to vulnerable people's homes for criminal purposes.

### **Domestic Abuse**

Although the statistics do not show an increase in reports of domestic abuse in the wake of COVID-19, it is believed that actual instances are likely to have increased. The impact of COVID-19 and the isolation measures imposed are likely to be adversely affecting victims of Domestic Abuse.

There is concern financial pressures and restrictions to social life may place additional pressures on families and cause incidents of domestic abuse within the home to escalate. Measures such as home-working, school closures and social distancing also mean victims spend much more time at home, away from family, friends and other sources of support. As children are not attending school, it is less likely professionals will detect if something is wrong at home and there is less opportunity for children to express their worries or disclose abuse.

### **Reporting Concerns**

The Regional Safeguarding Board has highlighted agencies are doing everything possible to operate business as usual. Any member of the community concerned about the protection or welfare of a child or adult who may be at risk should continue to report their concern in the normal way. Information on how to report concerns are available on the Board's website, [www.cysur.wales](http://www.cysur.wales). Reports can also be made to Dyfed Powys Police by calling 101, for those at immediate and high risk of harm members of the public should always phone 999. Although all cases will be risk-assessed, there has been no change to reporting arrangements and all calls and referrals received are being screened and triaged in the usual way. The Regional Safeguarding Board are working closely with all their partner agencies to raise awareness of the increased risk, and in particular with Dyfed Powys Police to reassure members of the public no child or adult who may be at risk and/or in need of protection will be left without a service or support.