

**November 2020**

**Barnardo’s launches counselling and wellbeing services for families struggling with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in Wales**

Children’s charity Barnardo’s has launched two new services to support vulnerable families who are struggling to cope with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

See, Hear, Respond will work with families across Wales, offering practical and therapeutic support including counselling seven days a week. The aim is to help those facing a wide range of challenges, from anxiety, loneliness and isolation to children struggling with a return to school and parents worried about relationship breakdowns or poverty.

The second will be a UK-wide helpline, the first of its kind specifically for children from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities who are among those who have been most badly affected. Families from anywhere in Wales can access the services.

Both are being funded through the National Emergencies Trust with finance from the insurance and long-term savings industry.

The national helpline for Black, Asian and minority ethnic children will tackle the particularly complex issues facing those communities and therapeutic support will be offered where needed.

Sarah Crawley, Director of Barnardo’s Cymru, said both services would identify and support “hidden” children, young people and families who were not currently receiving the help they needed.

She said: “Our most vulnerable communities are facing serious challenges to their mental health and wellbeing alongside their physical health. Those challenges include anxiety, isolation, family breakdown and financial worries as more families fall into poverty.

“These new services will provide the help they need to overcome their challenges and prevent problems escalating to crisis levels. We will be providing a mix of signposting support and advice alongside online or telephone therapeutic support including counselling.”

The aim is to improve families’ resilience and emotional and mental wellbeing, strengthen relationships and help them with any necessary lifestyle changes.

Families will be signposted to specialist or statutory services if there are significant mental health or safeguarding concerns.

Families can self-refer online or through a telephone helpline available from noon until 7pm, Monday to Friday, or be referred by professionals. Barnardo’s will work closely with schools and colleges, local authorities, healthcare professionals and other vital services involved in protecting children to identify families in need of support.

A microsite (barnardos.org.uk/see-hear-respond-net) will include an inquiry form and hold a wealth of self-help information and links to local services which support families with issues such as emotional wellbeing, bereavement, domestic abuse and financial worries.

Barnardo’s believes the issues families face include anxieties about living with lockdown and other restrictions, returning to school, relationships, feelings of isolation, money problems and supporting children with disabilities and other vulnerabilities.

Contact See, Hear, Respond on 0800 157 7015 or visit

<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/see-hear-respond-net>

The helpline for children from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds is 0800 151 2605 or visit <https://helpline.barnardos.org.uk>

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**For further information, please contact Barnardo’s Cymru Media and Communications Manager Margaret O’Reilly on 029 2043 6229/07827 977830.**

**About Barnardo’s Cymru**

**Barnardo’s Cymru has 63 services supporting around 11,000 of Wales’ most vulnerable children, young people and families each year. This includes work with children affected by today’s most urgent issues including poverty, homelessness, disability, mental health, bereavement and abuse.**

**Among those we support are young carers, care leavers, foster carers and adoptive parents, young people who have been trafficked and those at risk. We help parents build a better future for their families and we work to change the lives of vulnerable children through influencing decision makers.**

**The See, Hear, Respond helpline and support service in NI, Scotland and Wales, will build on the therapeutic work being carried out by Barnardo’s See, Hear, Respond programme in England, which is funded by the Department of Education to provide therapeutic support to children and families impacted by COVID-19.**

**Visit** [**https://www.barnardos.org.uk/wales**](https://www.barnardos.org.uk/wales)**. Registered charity No. 216250 and SC037605**

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**About the National Emergencies Trust**

**The National Emergencies Trust is a charity set up to raise funds from the general public in the event of a domestic disaster or emergency. When a disaster hits, the Trust will collaborate with charities and other bodies to raise and distribute money and support victims. The funds collected will be distributed by local partners on the ground in the areas affected by the emergency event. The National Emergencies Trust is a registered charity no. 1182809. For more information, visit https://nationalemergenciestrust.org.uk/**

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