

Agenda – Wales COVID–19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 5, Tŷ Hywel

Meeting date: 2 December 2024

Meeting time: 11.00 – 12.50

For further information contact:

Fay Bowen

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

SeneddCovid@senedd.wales

Private, Stakeholder Event

1 Stakeholder event as part of the Committee's inquiry into the UK Covid–19 Inquiry Module 1 Report

11.00 – 12.50

(Pages 1 – 29)

Attached Documents:

WCISPC(06)–11–24–P1–Stakeholder Event – Members' Briefing

WCISPC(06)–11–24–P2–Research Brief

WCISPC(06)–11–24–P3–Stakeholder Event Leaflet



Document is Restricted

By virtue of paragraph(s) ix of Standing Order 17.42

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Stakeholder Event:

UK Covid-19 Inquiry: Module 1 Report -
- The resilience and preparedness of the
United Kingdom

2 December 2024, 11.00-13.00



The Welsh Parliament is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people. Commonly known as the Senedd, it makes laws for Wales, agrees Welsh taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account.

Copies of this document can also be obtained in accessible formats including Braille, large print, audio or hard copy from:

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Stakeholder Event:

UK Covid-19 Inquiry: Module 1 Report -
- The resilience and preparedness of the
United Kingdom

2 December 2024, 11.00-13.00

Committee Room 5 and Conference Room B

Tŷ Hywel
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN



About the Committee

The Committee was established on 16 May 2023. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddCovid

Current Committee membership:



Co-chair:

Tom Giffard MS

Welsh Conservatives



Co-chair:

Joyce Watson MS

Welsh Labour



Mabon ap Gwynfor MS

Plaid Cymru



Rhianon Passmore MS

Welsh Labour



Sam Rowlands MS

Welsh Conservatives



Buffy Williams MS

Welsh Labour

Agenda

11.00 – 11.15

Registration and refreshments

11.15 – 11.20

Opening words from the Co-Chairs

11.20 – 12.20

Breakout groups – Discussion

12.20 – 12.50

Feedback session

12.50 – 13.00

Close

Information for attendees

We intend to take photographs at the event which will be used to promote the work of the Senedd and engage with the people of Wales. We may do this through our social media platforms, our website or in printed and digital material. If you do not want to appear in such media, please contact a member of staff.

We will also be taking a note of the discussion, which will be publicly available, and referred to in future correspondence or reports, but comments made will not be attributed to individuals. Full details of our privacy policy can be found on the Senedd website:

<https://senedd.wales/help/privacy/senedd-committee-privacy-notice>

Fay Bowen

Wales COVID-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee Clerk

✉ senedd.covid@senedd.wales

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Principles for participation at the event

To ensure that everyone feels comfortable to participate, we kindly ask attendees to note a few principles.

- Participation in this event is voluntary.
- Speak as openly as you feel comfortable.
- You can abstain from discussing specific topics if you are not comfortable.
- All responses are valid - there are no right or wrong answers.
- Please listen to each other and respect the opinions of others even if you don't agree.
- Speak one at a time.
- Try to stay on topic. We may need to interrupt so that we can cover all areas and enable contributions from all.
- Help protect others' privacy by not discussing personal details or information outside the group.
- In the meeting notes, comments made will not be attributed to

individuals. Participants must respect this and not repeat opinions or experiences outside of the focus group.

- Notes will be shared with the participants and published, so they can be fed into the Committee's work.
- Your time and views are valued.

If you are joining online:

- Please mute your microphones whilst you are not speaking.
- Raise your hand to contribute and unmute your own microphones once the Chair calls you to speak.
- If required, the Chair will have the option to mute all participants and operate the microphones.



Committee's Remit

The Wales COVID-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee (the Committee) was established on **Tuesday 16 May 2023**, in accordance with Standing Order 16.5.

The Committee's remit is to:

- consider the reports at each stage of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry and in the context of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry's terms of reference and timetable, propose to the Senedd by motion, any gaps identified in the preparedness and response of the Welsh Government and other Welsh public bodies during the Covid-19 pandemic that should be subject to further examination.
- undertake a review into those areas identified for further examination (subject to Senedd approval)
- publish reports and make recommendations accordingly.

The Senedd agreed that in undertaking its work the Committee will not revisit the conclusions of completed Senedd Committee inquiries and should seek to avoid duplication. It also agreed that the Committee will not be prohibited from investigating matters previously examined by Senedd Committees where there is updated information and a clear benefit of further scrutiny.

UK Covid-19 Inquiry

On 18 July 2024, the UK Covid-19 Inquiry published its **Module 1 Report – The resilience and preparedness of the United Kingdom**. The report makes 10 recommendations:

Recommendation 1: A simplified structure for whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience

The governments of the UK, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should each simplify and reduce the number of structures with responsibility for preparing for and building resilience to whole-system civil emergencies.

The core structures should be:

- a single Cabinet-level or equivalent ministerial committee (including the senior minister responsible for health and social care) responsible for whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience for each government, which meets regularly and is chaired by the leader or deputy leader of the relevant government; and
- a single cross-departmental group of senior officials in each government (which reports regularly to the Cabinet-level or equivalent ministerial committee) to oversee and implement policy on civil emergency preparedness and resilience.

This should be put in place within 12 months of the publication of this Report.

Within 6 months of the creation of the group of senior officials, it should complete a review to simplify and reduce the number of structures responsible for whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience.

Subsequently, within 24 months of the publication of this Report, the ministerial committee should rationalise and streamline subordinate or supporting groups and committees responsible for whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience. Any groups and committees retained or created to support this core structure should have a clear purpose and should report regularly about progress with, and completion of, tasks assigned to them.

Recommendation 2: Cabinet Office leadership for whole-system civil emergencies in the UK

The UK government should:

- abolish the lead government department model for whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience; and
- require the Cabinet Office to lead on preparing for and building resilience to whole-system civil emergencies across UK government departments, including monitoring the preparedness and resilience of other departments, supporting departments to correct problems, and escalating issues to the UK Cabinet-level ministerial committee and group of senior officials in Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 3: A better approach to risk assessment

The UK government and devolved administrations should work together on developing a new approach to risk assessment that moves away from a reliance on single reasonable worst-case scenarios towards an approach that:

- assesses a wider range of scenarios representative of the different risks and the range of each kind of risk;
- considers the prevention and mitigation of an emergency in addition to dealing with its consequences;
- provides a full analysis of the ways in which the combined impacts of different risks may complicate or worsen an emergency;

- assesses long-term risks in addition to short-term risks and considers how they may interact with each other;
- undertakes an assessment of the impact of each risk on vulnerable people; and
- takes into account the capacity and capabilities of the UK.

In doing so, the UK government and devolved administrations should perform risk assessments that reflect the circumstances and characteristics particular to England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole.

Recommendation 4: A UK-wide whole-system civil emergency strategy

The UK government and devolved administrations should together introduce a UK-wide whole-system civil emergency strategy (which includes pandemics) to prevent each emergency and also to reduce, control and mitigate its effects.

As a minimum, the strategy should:

- be adaptable;
- include sections dedicated to each potential whole-system civil emergency – for example, one on pandemics with a clear explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the UK government, devolved administrations and their departments/directorates as well as local responders;
- consider a wide range of potential scenarios for each type of emergency;
- identify the key issues and set out a range of potential responses;
- identify how the strategy is to be applied to ensure that any potential responses are proportionate to the particular circumstances of the emergency;
- include an assessment in the short, medium and long term, based on published modelling, of the potential health, social and economic impacts of the emergency and of potential responses to the emergency on the population and, in particular, on vulnerable people; and
- include an assessment of the infrastructure, technology and skills the UK needs to respond effectively to the emergency and how those needs might change for different scenarios.

The strategy should be subject to a substantive reassessment at least every three years to ensure that it is up to date and effective, incorporating lessons learned between reassessments.

Recommendation 5: Data and research for future pandemics

The UK government, working with the devolved administrations, should establish mechanisms for the timely collection, analysis, secure sharing and use of reliable data for informing emergency responses, in advance of future pandemics. Data systems should be tested in pandemic exercises.

The UK government should also commission a wider range of research projects ready to commence in the event of a future pandemic. These could be ‘hibernated’ studies or existing studies that are designed to be rapidly adapted to a new outbreak. Better working with international partners should be encouraged. This should include projects to:

- understand the prevalence of a new virus;
- measure the effectiveness of a range of different public health measures; and
- identify which groups of vulnerable people are hardest hit by the pandemic and why.

Recommendation 6: A regular UK-wide pandemic response exercise

The UK government and devolved administrations should together hold a UK-wide pandemic response exercise at least every three years.

The exercise should:

- test the UK-wide, cross-government, national and local response to a pandemic at all stages, from the initial outbreak to multiple waves over a number of years;
- include a broad range of those involved in pandemic preparedness and response; and
- consider how a broad range of vulnerable people will be helped in the event of a pandemic.

Recommendation 7: Publication of findings and lessons from civil emergency exercises

For all civil emergency exercises, the governments of the UK, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should each (unless there are reasons of national security for not doing so):

- publish an exercise report summarising the findings, lessons and recommendations, within three months of the conclusion of the exercise;
- publish an action plan setting out the specific steps that will be taken in response to the report's findings, and by which entity, within six months of the conclusion of the exercise; and
- keep exercise reports, action plans, and emergency plans and guidance from across the UK in a single, UK-wide online archive, accessible to all involved in emergency preparedness, resilience and response.

Recommendation 8: Published reports on whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience

The governments of the UK, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should each produce and publish reports to their respective legislatures at least every three years on whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience. The reports should include as a minimum:

- the risks that each government has identified are likely to result in whole-system civil emergencies;
- recommendations that have been made to each government to mitigate those risks (whether these recommendations have been accepted or rejected);
- a cost-benefit analysis setting out the economic and social costs of accepting the risks as against taking action to mitigate the risks;
- who may be vulnerable to the risks and what steps are being taken to mitigate those risks;
- a plan setting out the timescales for implementing the recommendations that

have been accepted; and

- an update on the progress that has been made on implementing previously accepted recommendations.

Recommendation 9: Regular use of red teams

The governments of the UK, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should each introduce the use of red teams in the Civil Service to scrutinise and challenge the principles, evidence, policies and advice relating to preparedness for and resilience to whole-system civil emergencies. The red teams should be brought in from outside of government and the Civil Service.

Recommendation 10: A UK-wide independent statutory body for whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience

The UK government should, in consultation with the devolved administrations, create a statutory independent body for whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience. The new body should be given responsibility for:

- providing independent, strategic advice to the UK government and devolved administrations on their planning for, preparedness for and building resilience to whole-system civil emergencies;
- consulting with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector at a national and local level and directors of public health on the protection of vulnerable people in whole-system civil emergencies;
- assessing the state of planning for, preparedness for and resilience to whole-system civil emergencies across the UK; and
- making recommendations on the capacity and capabilities that will be required to prepare for and build resilience to whole-system civil emergencies.

As an interim measure, the new body should be established on a non-statutory basis within 12 months of this Report, so that it may begin its work in advance of legislation being passed.

Today's session

Areas which may be covered in today's session:

- Do you think the Module 1 recommendations address the most important actions needed to improve Wales's preparedness and resilience as part of the UK? Are they clear and specific enough? What, if anything, is missing?
- Are the recommendations realistic and achievable, within the timeframes set out in the report? What challenges or barriers might arise when implementing the recommendations?
- Which individuals, organisations, or bodies should be responsible for implementing the recommendations?
- What role should key stakeholders, including the bereaved, healthcare professionals, and community groups, play in implementing and monitoring the recommendations? What are the best ways to keep the public and stakeholders updated on the progress of implementing the recommendations?
- Do the recommendations adequately address the unique needs and circumstances of Wales within the broader UK context? Do you think the resources required to implement these recommendations are adequately considered in the report?

Additional information

The Committee is currently consulting with stakeholders and interested individuals to help inform its work on considering any gaps identified in the preparedness and response of the Welsh Government and other Welsh public bodies during the Covid-19 pandemic that should be subject to further examination.

The consultation closes on 3 January 2025. Full details on how to respond to the consultation are available via [this link](#).

Help and support

Please see information on what you can do if you need help and support or if you're struggling.

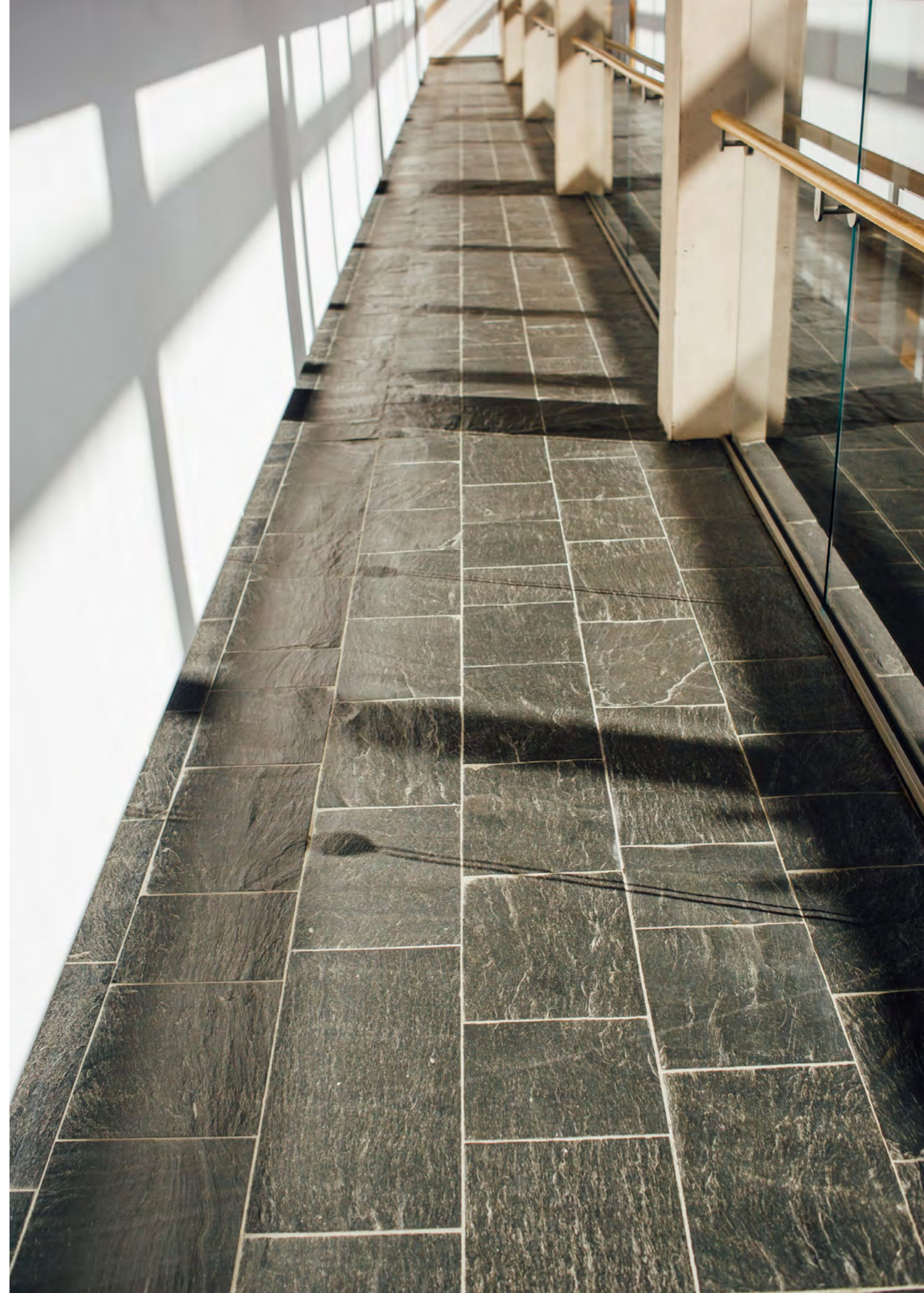
If you need help and support, the C.A.L.L. Mental Health Helpline for Wales provides mental health and emotional support, and signposting to local services:

- Freephone 24 hours a day on 0800 132 737, or email: call@helpline.wales
- Website: <http://callhelpline.org.uk/> - Community Advice and Listening Line which offers emotional support and information/literature on mental health and related matters to the people of Wales.

Pack Page 28 If you're struggling to cope, need to talk to someone, or are feeling suicidal, you can contact Samaritans:

- Freephone 24 hours a day from any phone on 116 123.
- Welsh Language Line: 0808 164 0123 (7pm-11pm, 7 days a week).
- Email: jo@samaritans.org
- Website: Samaritans Cymru

You can also find information about other mental health resources and sources of support in the Senedd Research [mental health support factsheet](#).





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