

Risk Assessment: Crisis Response Dog Visits

Organisation: Cariad Pet Therapy

Partner Organisation: *Local Authority in Wales*

Activity: Crisis Response Dog Visits – providing emotional comfort and support to individuals or groups who have experienced loss, trauma, or distress.

Location: Various community and council-managed settings across *Local Authority in Wales* (e.g. schools, community centres, offices, or private residences).

Assessment Completed By: Robert Thomas, Cariad Pet Therapy

Date: 1st April 2026

Review Date: 30th March 2027

1. Purpose

This risk assessment identifies and mitigates risks associated with Cariad Pet Therapy crisis response dogs visiting individuals or groups in *Local Authority in Wales* who have experienced loss, trauma, or distress. The aim is to ensure the wellbeing and safety of all involved – including the public, *Local Authority in Wales* staff, volunteers, and the therapy dogs.

2. Participants

- Cariad Pet Therapy crisis response dog teams (trained handlers and assessed dogs)
- Individuals and groups affected by crisis situations (including adults and children)
- *Local Authority in Wales* staff and associated support professionals

3. Hazard Identification and Risk Control

| Hazard | Who might be harmed | Risk level | Existing controls | Additional controls |
|---|------------------------|------------|--|---|
| Dog behaviour (jumping, mouthing, stress reactions) | Visitors, handler, dog | Medium | Dogs' temperament-tested, trained, and certified for crisis response. Handlers trained in canine body language and safe interactions. Visits | Continuous monitoring during visits; handler may terminate session if dog shows signs of stress or fatigue. |

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| | | | kept within dog's tolerance limits. | |
| Allergic reactions to dogs | Visitors | Low | Advance communication about dog visits; visitors advised they may opt out or avoid contact if allergic. | Provide hand sanitiser/wipes and ensure a dog-free space option is available. |
| Fear or trauma triggers related to dogs | Visitors | Medium | Prior consent obtained; handlers and staff briefed to identify potential distress. Dogs introduced calmly and slowly. | Debrief with council staff to refine pre-visit screening process. |
| Transmission of infection or disease (zoonotic risk) | Visitors, dog, handler | Low | Dogs fully vaccinated, groomed, and health checked. Handlers practise good hygiene. Visits cancelled if dog or handler is unwell. | Maintain health records and ensure use of hand sanitiser before/after contact. |
| Emotional distress or triggering conversations | Visitors, handler | Medium | Handlers trained in trauma awareness, mental health first aid and professional boundaries. No counselling or therapy provided; emotional first aid only. | Ensure presence of council wellbeing officers or crisis support staff during visits. |
| Environmental hazards at visit location (slippery floors, noise, debris, etc.) | Dog, handler, visitors | Medium | Pre-visit safety assessment completed by handler or host organisation. Dog always kept on lead. | Ensure safe, quiet space for visits and minimal environmental distractions. |
| Dog fatigue or overheating | Dog | Medium | Visits limited to appropriate duration (typically under 60 minutes). Dogs provided | Record visit durations and post-visit welfare checks. |

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| | | | with water and rest area. | |
| Unsupervised interaction or crowding | Dog, visitors | Medium | Handler always maintains control. No unsupervised or unstructured interactions. | Limit group size and ensure supporting staff available for crowd management. |
| Transport to/from location (road travel) | Handler, dog | Low | Dogs transported safely using crash-tested crates or harnesses, compliant with UK Animal Welfare (Transport) Order 2006. | Regular vehicle maintenance and welfare check during travel. |
| Data protection and confidentiality | Visitors, handler | Medium | No personal or trauma details recorded without consent. Data handled in compliance with GDPR | Handlers trained in safeguarding, confidentiality, and data protection procedures. |

4. Safeguarding and Welfare

- All Cariad Pet Therapy handlers are enhanced DBS-checked and trained in safeguarding, mental health first aid and emotional and trauma-informed practice.
- All dogs are temperament-assessed, insured, and registered for therapy and crisis response work.
- Visits occur only with prior consent and in coordination with Bridgend County Council staff.
- Handlers will prioritise dog welfare; sessions may be paused or stopped if the dog shows signs of stress.
- Emotional safety is prioritised: participation is voluntary, and individuals may decline interaction at any time.

5. Emergency Procedures

In a medical emergency:

- Follow *Local Authority in Wales* emergency procedures and call emergency services if required.
- In a dog-related incident (bite, illness, or escape): Remove the dog safely, report to the session lead and Cariad Pet Therapy coordinator, and complete an incident report.
- In an emotional distress incident: Notify council wellbeing or safeguarding staff immediately and ensure the person receives appropriate support.

6. Review and Monitoring

This assessment will be reviewed annually or after any incident, near-miss, or significant procedural change. Post-visit debriefs between Cariad Pet Therapy and, *Local Authority in Wales* will inform continuous improvement.

7. Authorisation

Assessor Name: Robert Thomas

Signature:

Date: 1st April 2026

Approved By: Neil Hawkshaw

Position: Director, Cariad Pet Therapy

Date: 1st April 2026