

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.

			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.

			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