

**WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL****NSPCC Report as requested by Cllr Mike Burtenshaw****1. Report Summary**

1.1 Record numbers contacted the NSPCC with concerns during lockdown. Recent data shows that in April, May and June there were more than 22,000 contacts to the NSPCC helpline from adults with concerns for the wellbeing of a child.

This is an increase of almost a third (32%) on the monthly average for the three months prior to lockdown. We received 8,287 of contact in May – the highest number made to the NSPCC helpline in a single month on record.<sup>1</sup>

The main concerns people have spoken to NSPCC helpline about during this period have been parental behaviour, physical and emotional abuse and neglect. Around 40% of the contacts received were referred on to local authorities or the police for further action, which is also a slight increase on pre-lockdown levels.

These figures back up the findings of a research report recently released – *Social Isolation and the risk of child maltreatment in lockdown and beyond* – which underlines how: increasing parental and family stress, reductions in protective services, and the intensification of pressures on children's emotional wellbeing caused by lockdown can increase the risk of abuse and neglect.

Now we are calling on the government to urgently commit to a children's recovery plan which sets out how they will:

- deliver the long-term investment in children's social care that is needed to provide high quality preventative and therapeutic services for children in every part of the country
- invest in rebuilding support for families with babies and young children who have missed out on the normal support from health visitors during the lockdown
- support multi-agency partnerships of the local authority, NHS and police to work with schools to review support for children known to the designated safeguarding lead, and identify those who continue to miss class with a plan to understand and address any barriers to a child's school attendance
- ensure schools are ready to help all children who need it – particularly those who may have suffered abuse, neglect or other traumatic experiences during the lockdown
- support the NHS, including through the provision of additional investment, to develop a coordinated plan to respond to what is likely to be an increase in referrals into Children and Mental Health Services (CAMHS) arising from the coronavirus crisis.

- 1.2 The Parish Council could highlight awareness of the issues and promote helpline contact details, and, access to existing services through its communications, website and noticeboards.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 The Parish Council is holding very limited flexibility in its budget for new, unscheduled work. Full Council on 28 September approved funding of up to £5,000 to support the creation of family support sessions. It is possible that this project could respond to issues raised by the NSPCC and/or could be enhanced to develop a response for children's support.

## **3. Recommendations:**

- 3.1 The Committee considers the points raised by the NSPCC and identifies any actions it wishes to take on this issue.

Paula Harrison  
Parish Manager

