

Pharmacies launch codeword scheme to offer 'lifeline' to domestic abuse victims

From today (14 January), victims of domestic abuse will be able to access much needed support from thousands of pharmacies across the UK, backed by the government.

The Ask for ANI scheme allows those at risk or suffering from abuse to discreetly signal that they need help and access support. By asking for ANI, a trained pharmacy worker will offer a private space where they can understand if the victim needs to speak to the police or would like help to access support services such as a national or local domestic abuse helplines.

As an essential retailer based on high streets across the country, and with specifically trained staff, pharmacies can provide a safe space for victims to sound an alarm if they are isolated at home with their abuser and unable to get help in another way.

The Prime Minister committed to launch this scheme at the Hidden Harms summit last year in recognition of the impact of Covid restrictions on the ability of victims to reach out for help and support. The scheme was initially proposed by survivors as something that would have helped them.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

As we once again have to ask people across the country to stay at home to tackle this virus, it's vital that we take action to protect those for who home is not a safe space.

That is why we have launched this scheme, supported by pharmacies up and down the country, to give some of the most vulnerable people in society a critical lifeline – making sure they have access to the support they need and keep them safe from harm.

The codeword scheme will be promoted using discreet social media adverts and paid search. Pharmacies will be given promotional material to display in store to signal to victims that they are participating. Health professionals, social workers and Job Centres will also be asked to promote the scheme, alongside police, local authorities and specialist support services for victims.

The scheme will be initially available through the 2,300 Boots stores across the UK as well as 255 independent pharmacies. There will be an [on-going sign-up process open to all pharmacies](#).

Safeguarding Minister Victoria Atkins said:

I know that lockdown restrictions are especially difficult for those experiencing domestic abuse. Home should be a safe place, but for those confined with an abuser it is clearly not.

The codeword scheme will offer a lifeline to all victims, ensuring they get urgent help in a safe and discreet way.

Throughout this pandemic this Government has invested millions in ensuring that vital services including helplines, counselling and refuge accommodation remains accessible during this challenging period.

Boots UK Chief Pharmacist, Marc Donovan said:

With over 170 years at the heart of community care, Boots pharmacies have long been a place where people can turn to for help and advice on their local high street. Since the start of the pandemic, our 2,300 stores in communities across the UK have taken on increased importance as a place of safety for those who need one.

In addition to the designated Safe Spaces in our pharmacies, we hope with the new codeword scheme we can continue to help people access the support they need quickly, safely and discreetly.

This is something our pharmacy teams feel very passionately about, and we are proud of their continued dedication supporting those in need at a time of such extraordinary challenge.

Chief Executive of the National Pharmacy Association Mark Lyonette said:

Community pharmacies are about people, not just pills. There is a clear and urgent need to support victims of abuse and we want to play our part.

The Ask for ANI alert mechanism is a discreet and sensitive way to help support some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

The codeword scheme will complement the charity Hestia's UK SAYS NO MORE Safe Spaces initiative by enabling pharmacy staff to offer immediate and emergency assistance. Building on the successful Home Office #YouAreNotAlone campaign, this scheme is another way government is raising awareness of the vital support available through domestic abuse charities and other partners including the police.

The launch of the scheme comes as Home Secretary Priti Patel announces new laws to reform pre-charge bail which will allow for better protection to victims and witnesses in cases of violent and sexual offences, including

domestic abuse.

The Home Office today published [its response to a consultation on pre-charge bail](#), which enables police to release a suspect from custody subject to conditions, while they gather evidence or await a charging decision. The new measures will include removing the presumption against use of pre-charge bail, enabling police to impose strict conditions on more suspects in high-harm cases – including most cases of domestic abuse and sexual violence – and where there are real risks to victims, witnesses, and the public.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

As Home Secretary, it is my priority to deliver justice for victims and restore confidence in our criminal justice system.

The introduction of the national codeword scheme, Ask for ANI, will ensure victims of domestic abuse can always get help when they need it, while our pre-charge bail reforms will ensure that suspects, including those charged with domestic abuse, are more closely monitored and the public is protected.

Taken together, these changes will help us create a safer more secure UK after the pandemic.

In another move to support victims of domestic abuse, Business Minister Paul Scully has today issued a rallying call to employers across the country to take some simple steps to ensure their organisation is spotting signs of domestic abuse and helping their staff find the right support. In an open letter to all UK employers, the Business Minister has outlined a few key, practical steps they can take to build awareness of domestic abuse, ensure they are noticing warning signs, and helping workers access the support they need.

[Past COVID-19 infection provides some immunity but people may still carry and transmit virus](#)

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[Consultation launched to improve Manchester's railways](#)

- new consultation launched, focused on improving performance and punctuality of railways for passengers
- proposals will result in increased reliability of services post coronavirus (COVID-19)
- passengers urged to have their say after extensive work between Department for Transport (DfT), rail industry and Transport for the North

A [new consultation on improving the performance on the rail network in and around Manchester](#) has been launched today (14 January 2021).

Passengers are being presented with 3 options that feature increasing levels of change from the pre-COVID service patterns. The 3 options affect different routes, and which routes have direct services to Manchester Oxford Road and Piccadilly stations, and Manchester Airport.

The agreed option, scheduled to be introduced in May 2022, will significantly improve overall reliability while maintaining the pre-COVID travel connections for the vast majority of passengers. Some changes may mean making different choices for travel.

This change will give passengers a more reliable service with less risk of knock-on delays, while longer-term infrastructure changes are developed that will enable more services to be added in the future in a sustainable way.

Chris Heaton-Harris, Rail Minister, said:

We are putting the power to improve Manchester's rail network in the hands of those that use it daily.

I urge passengers to use this opportunity to comment on the future of your railway.

Improving punctuality and reliability is one of my key priorities. As we continue to build back better from the pandemic, these proposals will ensure that the rail network is more dependable for

those who use it every day.

Congestion in the region before the pandemic created regular delays to services around Manchester, with knock-on impacts to reliability across the north. While the public are being asked to stay at home, the rail industry is using this opportunity to plan improvements around Manchester ready for when passengers return in much greater numbers.

This work brings together the DfT, [Transport for the North](#), Network Rail, and the train operators Northern and TransPennine Express (TPE).

The consultation builds on government [investment in electrification schemes](#), and [brand new trains for Northern and TPE](#), as it works together with Transport for the North and Network Rail on the development of a new robust timetable, underpinning a transformed offer to passengers.

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, said:

I welcome this consultation and the government's focus on this issue. The bottleneck in central Manchester is a problem for the whole of the north – and solving these congestion issues will improve the reliability of rail services for passengers right across the north.

As we look to build back better from the pandemic, we want to work with the government to deliver a reliable and dependable timetable, alongside the much-needed upgrades to our Victorian infrastructure.

Liam Robinson, Transport for The North's Rail North Committee Chair, said:

Passengers need a better deal when it comes to reliability. When they return to the north's trains, they need to step onto services with confidence.

Manchester's congested rail network has long been the source of delays and frustration for passengers, with knock-on effects for the north's communities. We urge everyone to take a look and give their view on these proposals.

While the goal of these short-term changes is to reduce delays and increase reliability, it is clear that the work we are doing with government and the industry on longer-term investment in rail infrastructure is also critically important, alongside changes to services.

Phil James, Network Rail route director for the North West, said:

The proposed changes to the timetable in Manchester aim to give

passengers across the north consistently safe and reliable train services, running to a schedule they can trust.

We look forward to hearing people's views on it.

[RWM welcomes launch of second GDF 'Working Group'](#)

A [Working Group has been formed](#) in Allerdale, Cumbria, to begin discussions about the potential for hosting a deep geological facility for the safe and secure disposal of radioactive waste.

Today's announcement follows two months after the first group was established in neighbouring Copeland. Chaired independently by Jocelyn Manners-Armstrong, the Allerdale Working Group will now begin local discussions and fact-finding about the potential for the future siting of a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) in Allerdale.

Radioactive Waste Management (RWM) Chief Executive, Karen Wheeler, said: "I'm delighted to see the formation of the GDF Working Group in Allerdale which will start to engage local residents, businesses, and other organisations about the possibility of hosting a GDF. This is the second Working Group to form, following Copeland's announcement in November, with more planned to come across England in the months ahead.

The formation of a Working Group is a very early step in the process, but it demonstrates real progress is being made towards finding a willing community and suitable site for one of the biggest environmental protection projects of our lifetime – disposing of higher activity waste safely and securely in a GDF.

This is a massive infrastructure investment for a local economy, and a vital project for the UK. It will create thousands of jobs over its lifetime, bringing opportunities to develop a local workforce with the skills and expertise that will be needed. A GDF will also attract further inward investment together with supply chain opportunities over the course of many decades and into the next century.

The group will initially focus on gathering information about the local area and views of the local community, and identifying a Search Area for further detailed consideration. As is the position in Copeland, the Lake District

National Park will be excluded.

There is no requirement to make any commitment on future willingness to host a GDF. The Working Group will also identify the initial members of a Community Partnership that will continue these early discussions once a search area is identified, sharing information and working alongside RWM as geological investigations take place.

Setting up a Working Group does not mean a GDF will be built in a particular location. Before any final decision is taken, the community must demonstrate its willingness to host a GDF through a test of public support, and it must be shown that the local area has suitable geology such that a GDF could be constructed safely and securely.

Information about a GDF:

- Geological Disposal is the internationally recognised way to dispose of higher-activity radioactive waste and involves a series of highly engineered vaults located up to 1,000 metres deep in a suitable rock formation. Combined with manmade barriers, this protects the environment and keeps the waste safe and secure while the radioactivity decays naturally to safe levels.
 - Successive UK governments have endorsed deep geological disposal, and there are similar programmes already under way in Canada, Finland, France, Sweden and Switzerland.
 - Initial construction is likely to span approximately 10 years and employ up to 2,000 people during the peak phase, with underground construction continuing as the facility expands gradually over its operating life of more than 100 years.
 - A GDF is also expected to support thousands of jobs, both at the facility and in the wider supply chain, as well as generating wide-ranging contract opportunities for local businesses.
 - The invitation to open discussions and get involved in the GDF programme remains open to any community organisation, local authority, business or individual in England or Wales.
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RWM yn croesawu lansiad ail 'Weithgor' Cyfleuster Gwaredu Daearegol

Mae Gweithgor wedi cael ei greu yn [Allerdale](#), Cumbria, i ddechrau trafod y posibilrwydd o gynnal cyfleuster daearegol dwfn ar gyfer gwaredu gwastraff ymbelydrol mewn modd diogel.

Daw'r cyhoeddiad heddiw ddau fis ar ôl i'r gweithgor cyntaf gael ei sefydlu yn ardal gyfagos Copeland. Bydd Gweithgor Allerdale, dan gadeiryddiaeth annibynnol Jocelyn Manners-Armstrong, nawr yn dechrau trafod yn lleol a chasglu'r ffeithiau ynghylch y posibilrwydd o leoli Cyfleuster Gwaredu Daearegol (GDF) yn Allerdale yn y dyfodol.

Dyweddodd Prif Weithredwr Radioactive Waste Management (RWM), Karen Wheeler: "Rydw i wrth fy modd bod y Gweithgor GDF wedi cael ei greu yn Allerdale ac y bydd yn dechrau ymgysylltu â thrigolion lleol, busnesau a sefydliadau eraill ynghylch y posibilrwydd o gynnal GDF. Dyma'r ail Weithgor i gael ei greu, yn dilyn cyhoeddi gweithgor Copeland ym mis Tachwedd, ac mae rhagor ar y gweill ledled Lloegr dros y misoedd i ddod.

Mae creu Gweithgor yn gam cynnar iawn yn y broses, ond mae'n dangos bod cynnydd go iawn yn cael ei wneud tuag at ddod o hyd i safle addas a chymuned sy'n barod i gynnal un o'r prosiectau gwarchod yr amgylchedd mwyaf yn ein hanes – gan waredu gwastraff uwch ei actifedd yn ddiogel mewn GDF.

Mae hwn yn fuddsoddiad enfawr mewn seilwaith ar gyfer economi leol, ac yn brosiect allweddol ar gyfer y DU. Bydd yn creu miloedd o swyddi yn ystod ei oes, gan gynnig cyfleoedd i ddatblygu gweithlu lleol sydd â'r sgiliau a'r arbenigedd angenrheidiol. Bydd GDF hefyd yn denu mewnfuddsoddiad pellach ynghyd â chyfleoedd i'r gadwyn gyflenwi dros nifer o ddegawdau ac i mewn i'r ganrif nesaf.

Bydd y grŵp yn canolbwyntio i gychwyn ar gasglu gwybodaeth am yr ardal leol a sylwadau'r gymuned leol, ac ar ganfod Ardal Chwilio i'w hystyried yn fanylach. Yn debyg i'r sefyllfa yn Copeland, ni fydd Parc Cenedlaethol Ardal y Llynnoedd yn cael ei ystyried.

Nid oes gofyniad i ymrwmo i barodrwydd ardal i gynnal GDF yn y dyfodol. Bydd y Gweithgor hefyd yn nodi aelodau cychwynnol Partneriaeth Gymunedol a fydd yn parhau â'r trafodaethau cynnar hyn unwaith y bydd ardal chwilio wedi cael ei chanfod, gan rannu gwybodaeth a gweithio gyda RWM wrth i ymchwiliadau daearegol fynd rhagddynt.

Nid yw creu Gweithgor yn golygu y bydd GDF yn cael ei adeiladu mewn lleoliad penodol. Cyn gwneud unrhyw benderfyniad terfynol, mae'n rhaid i'r gymuned

ddangos parodrwydd i gynnal GDF drwy brofi cefnogaeth y cyhoedd, ac mae'n rhaid dangos bod gan yr ardal leol y ddaearog addas er mwyn gallu adeiladu GDF yn ddiogel.

Gwybodaeth am Gyfleusterau Gwaredu Daearegol:

- Gwaredu Daearegol yw'r dull a gydnabyddir yn rhyngwladol o waredu gwastraff ymbelydrol uwch ei actifedd ac mae'n cynnwys cyfres o gladdgelloedd o'r radd flaenaf hyd at 1,000 metr yn ddwfn mewn craig addas. Ar y cyd â rhwystrau dynol, mae hyn yn gwarchod yr amgylchedd ac yn cadw'r gwastraff yn ddiogel tra bo'r ymbelydredd yn dadfeilio'n naturiol i lefelau diogel.
- Mae llywodraethau olynol y DU wedi cefnogi gwaredu daearegol dwfn, ac mae rhaglenni tebyg eisoes yn mynd rhagddynt yn Canada, y Ffindir, Ffrainc, Sweden a'r Swistir.
- Mae'r gwaith adeiladu cychwynnol yn debygol o bara tua 10 mlynedd a chyflogi hyd at 2,000 o bobl yn ystod y cyfnod prysuraf, gyda'r gwaith adeiladu tanddaearol yn parhau wrth i'r cyfleuster ehangu'n raddol dros ei oes weithredol sef dros 100 mlynedd.
- Mae disgwyl i GDF gefnogi miloedd o swyddi, yn y cyfleuster ei hun ac yn y gadwyn gyflenwi ehangach, yn ogystal â chynnig cyfleoedd am gontractau amrywiol i fusnesau lleol.
- Mae'r gwahoddiad i ddechrau trafod a chymryd rhan yn y rhaglen GDF yno o hyd i unrhyw sefydliad cymunedol, awdurdod lleol, busnes neu unigolyn yng Nghymru neu Loegr.