

# Checking Care Homes for Children

National Review 2018 – 2019



# We are the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW).

We visit and check on places that care for children and adults:

- care homes for care experienced children.
- care homes for younger adults
- day-care for children
- fostering services
- adoption agencies
- residential special schools
- boarding schools
- domiciliary care.

We make sure they are safe and care for people in the right way.

If they're not doing what they should be doing, we take action to make sure they improve.

If they're not safe, we can close them and stop them providing services.

**This report tells you what we found when we checked care homes for looked after children across Wales.**



**Some children are looked after by a local authority.**

There were  
**6,407**  
looked after children  
in Wales  
(March 2018).

**Some of those looked after children are in children's homes.**

Homes can be run by:

- local authorities
- voluntary organisations or charities
- private businesses.

We call them home providers.

There are

**178**

care homes for  
children in Wales  
(March 2019).

**Home providers:**

**14%** are local authorities

**5%** are voluntary  
organisations or charities

**81%** are private businesses.

There were

**465**

children living in  
care homes  
in Wales  
(July 2018).

# What we did

From July 2018 to March 2019 we visited children's homes across Wales.

We checked:

- the quality of care
- how well they look after children's health and well-being
- how they help children reach goals
- what children think about life in the home
- the challenges homes face.

We talked to:

- home providers
- the staff that work there
- children who live there.



There are 10 statements that we used to check care homes.

- 1 Children should visit the home before moving in.**
- 2 Children should have a personal plan.**
- 3 Children should have their health needs met.**
- 4 Children should have their educational needs met.**
- 5 Children should have opportunities to be social and enjoy activities.**
- 6 Children should have good quality care and support.**
- 7 Children should be supported to reach their goals and full potential.**
- 8 Children should be safe and protected from harm.**
- 9 Children should know about and enjoy their rights.**
- 10 Children should live in a warm, safe, comfortable home.**

# 1. Children should visit the home before moving in.

## What children told us

Some had visited the home, met people and felt included in the move, others hadn't.

- After I arrived there was '12 hours of mayhem' which resulted in an ambulance being called.
- I knew I was moving but I thought I had two weeks: I was then told you're coming tomorrow. It was just before Christmas...I was annoyed with the social worker.
- I think children could be moved in a bit quicker, if it needs to be.

## What we found

Visiting the home means children get to see where they will be living and meet the staff.

A well-planned move makes a visit possible. Visits also help homes prepare and:

- plan how to meet that child's needs
- get the information they need
- involve the other children at the home.

Sometimes moves aren't well planned or are emergencies. This means there isn't time for a visit.

Not having a visit makes the move harder and causes other issues.

## Areas for improvement

Home providers should:

- think about all areas of a child's life before offering them a place
- have systems that support a child's move
- prepare and know they can meet the child's needs.

Local authorities should have up-to-date information to share with homes.




## 2. Children should have a personal plan.

### What children told us

Some children felt 'very involved' in writing their plans.

Most children felt 'quite involved'.

 I can talk to my key worker about how I feel.

 I fully trust all the workers in my house, we have good banter.



### What we found

We saw lots of good examples of personal plans that:

- set out the care and support needed
- managed risks
- included emotional support
- help build positive relationships with staff.

Some children are involved in making decisions and keeping records for their plan.

Some children have a key worker who helps them write their plan.

Some plans aren't clear about the support offered.

Some children don't have a chance to be involved.

### Areas for improvement

Home providers should:

- make sure children understand their personal plans
- involve children in writing their plans
- keep checking the plan meets the child's needs.

# 3. Children should have their health needs met.


## What children told us

Some children told us:

- the staff helped them stay healthy
- they enjoyed cooking as it prepared them for life
- they liked eating with staff as it felt like family.

Others said they didn't get the support they needed to stay healthy.

 The fridge is locked, and the cupboards too.

 We plan menus, go shopping for food. I can help if I want.

## ➡ What we found

Most children:

- have support for a healthy life
- are registered with local health services
- get good support from Looked After Children Nurses
- get support with health issues, including substance misuse.

In some homes healthy eating is part of the care. Children are involved in planning meals, cooking and eating with staff at meal times.

We also found:

- some older children lose contact with health services
- health information isn't always up-to-date.
- homes need to store medicine better so it's safe
- there aren't enough mental health services
- some children don't have support for their health needs.

## 📈 Areas for improvement

Local authorities, health boards and home providers should work together so children get the health services they need.

More specialist nurses and mental health services are needed for issues like alcohol and drug misuse.



## 4. Children should have their educational needs met.

### What children told us

School was important – it made them feel 'normal'.

 I feel proud I'm going to university. I've worked hard.

 My school is important to me.

### What we found

Education is important, it adds structure to a day and gives many other opportunities.

Most children have support to learn and reach their goals.

Some children go to local schools, others go to independent schools.

A few children have been out of education for a long time or don't get any education.

Some homes have a good working relationship with schools.

Some local authorities are not putting education in place before children move into a home.

### Areas for improvement

Local authorities and home providers should:

- work together and make sure children get an education
- make sure children don't miss out on learning
- make sure there's a Personal Education Plan that is checked and kept up-to-date.



# 5. Children should have opportunities to be social and enjoy activities.

## What children told us

- There were lots of opportunities for activities.
- There is enough money to do things.
- I play rugby for the local team and attend scouts.
- I get to plan my activities for the week and this includes free time as well as house activities.
- Friday evening take-away is a favourite.

Some said they:

- felt they didn't have the same opportunities as other children.
- couldn't do the things they wanted to because of local authority rules.

## What we found

Most homes support children to enjoy activities like:

- sports teams
- youth clubs
- rock-climbing
- diving
- going on holiday
- friends visiting them
- volunteering
- having a job.

Some homes make sure children know how to keep safe so they can enjoy activities.

## Areas for improvement

Local authorities and home providers should work together so children can enjoy activities.





# 6. Children should have good quality care and support.

## What children told us

There were lots of positive things said about care and support. Children liked having a key worker.

-  I love being in residential care.
-  I feel safe with staff, they calm me down.
-  The good thing about the home is having people who are for you.
-  The therapy is the best thing about living in residential care. Talking about my feelings and not keeping it in.
-  I've seen too many people come and go, 5 staff and 12 children over a few years, so it's difficult to make relationships.
-  At the beginning I was unsettled in family life and the staff here supported me through every hard decision made and have gone beyond for my care here.

## What we found

Care and support are better when services work together.

Some homes:

- use creative ways of working to support children
- have trained staff dealing with issues like self-harm
- manage behaviour well
- involve children in writing rules and plans for the home.

In some homes, therapists work with children and their emotional needs. But, in other homes the therapists only attend staff meetings and give advice.

Sometimes staff use physical restraint to stop bad behaviour. Some staff don't have the right training for this. Some local authorities aren't checking this enough.

## Areas for improvement

Home providers should:

- check how they deliver care
- have systems that work well
- have clear ways to deal and manage behaviour and risk issues.

Local authorities should check how care homes deal with behaviour issues and risks.



# 7. Children should be supported to reach their goals and full potential.

## What children told us

They wanted support to move out and live on their own as adults. Some had step-by-step help to build trust in themselves and staff.

- 🗨️ I want to stay here a bit longer as I get a new job and want to move carefully and not rush it.
- 🗨️ You build up trust with people. As you gain trust you get more – like going on the train alone.
- 🗨️ Staff are kind and want the best for me.
- 🗨️ I get free time.
- 🗨️ It's good to have a key worker. They ask if I'm ok and help me to get the practical things I need.

## ➡️ What we found

When services work together with homes, children do better.

When children have to move a lot, it's harder for them to reach their goals.

Some homes help children move to living independently when they become adults. Others don't.

Some local authority plans are too short term.

Some decisions take too long.

## 📈 Areas for improvement

Home providers should:

- think about having independent living programmes
- work on developing trusting relationships with children.



# 8. Children should be safe and protected from harm.

## What children told us

- 🗨️ I think the staff know how to protect kids well and know how to look after them.
- 🗨️ Staff are overprotective when it comes to computers.
- 🗨️ I feel safe here and they know what to do when I can't manage my feelings.
- 🗨️ I know how to keep safe by always making sure I stay in a large group and meet the guys (staff) for collection in a well-lit area to take me back home.

## ➡️ What we found

Most homes have assessments and systems that keep children safe.

Staff work hard to build trust with children so they don't go missing from the home.

Staff have good basic training but need more training to understand and spot risks.

Some homes need:

- better risk assessments that link to personal plans
- better systems to stop children going missing
- better working relationships with local authorities and the police
- better systems to stop children getting involved in crime.

## 📈 Areas for improvement

Local authorities and home providers should:

- check their plans for reporting missing children
- make sure there is guidance for staff
- work with the police to stop children getting involved with crime.



# 9. Children should know about and enjoy their rights.

All children have rights. They are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).


## What children told us


They knew about their rights, including how to complain.

Children said that having their views heard was important to them.

Most felt listened to.

Keeping in contact with family and friends was an important right.

 I miss my mam, not seeing my brother.

 At the moment, I am not seeing my family members.

 Everything is good apart from living so far from family.

 It's a three-and-a-half-hour drive to see my family.

## What we found

Most care homes tell children about their rights and involve children in making decisions.

Lots of children understand they can have an advocate if they need one.

Children understand an advocate is on their side to help make sure they are listened to.

Most children get support from an advocate when they need it.

Most homes get visits from Tros Gynnal, and the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS).

## Areas for improvement

Local authorities and home providers should:

- make sure children know about advocacy
- make sure all children can have advocacy services, including disabled children.
- give more information about the home and its services
- make sure children have access to education
- have more opportunities for play and leisure activities.



# 10. Children should live in a warm, safe, comfortable home.

## What children told us

- 🗨️ I have decorated my room loads of times.
- 🗨️ I have a new life here, I feel safe in the home.
- 🗨️ I don't have support to tidy my room because I tidy it myself.
- 🗨️ I feel safe but sometimes when I hear about bad things on the news that has happened in the local area it worries me slightly.

## ➡️ What we found

Most homes:

- are warm, well looked after, safe places
- have bedrooms with good furniture
- are comfortable
- meet children's needs including disabled children
- have good gardens and grounds
- let children decorate and make their rooms their own.

Some homes:

- lock bedrooms and children have to ask staff to open them
- need repairs and better furnishings
- don't allow children to decorate their rooms
- are in areas that put children more at risk.

## 📈 Areas for improvement

Home providers should:

- have resources to decorate and make repairs
- promote well-being
- carry out risk assessments of their area.



# Leadership and management

It's important to manage homes well. It can make a big difference to children's health, well-being and outcomes.

When we were checking homes, we found lots of good leaders and managers. They:

- are often at the home and available to talk
- have good systems to meet children's needs
- have good systems to recruit, check and develop staff
- have clear, up-to-date policies, procedures and information.

## Areas for improvement

Home providers should:

- make sure staff have the right introduction to the home and training
- make sure all managers and staff have training
- have systems to check the quality of care and support.

## Thanks for reading this

You can read the full report here:

[careinspectorate.wales/our-reports](https://careinspectorate.wales/our-reports)

