

Looking at how children and young people are being kept safe in Bridgend

A Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements



June 2023

Hello

Care Inspectorate Wales check and inspect services. We make sure services are doing the right things in the right ways. We can take action if they aren't.

In June 2023, we checked how services in Bridgend keep children safe.

We checked:

- how they deal with abuse and neglect
- how they assess, plan and make decisions to keep children safe
- how well leadership and managers work
- how services work together.

Who was involved?

We had help from:

- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
- Healthcare Inspectorate Wales
- Estyn.

We inspected:

- Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
- Local authority services – children's services, schools and more
- South Wales Police.



What we did



We talked to children about their care and support.



We talked to staff and professionals.



We held focus groups.



We checked records.



We sent out surveys.



We visited schools, including a special school.



We looked at evidence.



We observed child protection conferences and how staff work.



We talked to organisations and groups.

Some of our main findings

Support and protection

There are lots of skilled staff and professionals. They act quickly and know how to keep children and young people safe. They do a good job.

The workforce

Recruiting and keeping staff is a challenge, especially in social services. There aren't enough social workers, so services have to fill the gap with agency social workers.

Pressure on services

More people need support from services. Children's and families' needs are becoming more complex.

Working together

Services and organisations work together well and understand what they must do to keep children safe.

Leadership

Senior leaders and managers are positive and support the workforce. They work as a team and put children's safety and their needs at the centre of their work.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board

The Safeguarding Board is good at sharing information and resources. They've helped services improve.

Schools

Schools work well with many other services to support children.

Referrals and sharing information

Professionals and staff working in services make the right referrals, but there are challenges with sharing information and giving feedback. There is a new digital platform being developed which should help to improve this.



Professionals and staff across Bridgend understand how abuse, neglect and harm impact children.

They:

- know how to spot risks and take action
- make sure information and records are accurate and up to date
- share information and report concerns in the right ways
- step in early to support children and families
- listen to children and young people and involving them in decisions
- stop children getting involved with unsafe people or crime
- report when they think a child is at risk of domestic abuse or neglect
- have a positive approach to learning and developing skills
- attend strategy meetings and child protection conferences
- take part in panels, groups and forums.

Child protection meetings

Professionals from across services and organisations go to these conferences. They share information and raise awareness of how harm affects children's lives and other things.

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

MASH helps services work together, share information and step in quickly to support children. Referrals come from both professionals and members of the public.



Some of the good points we found

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

The Health Board has lots of well-trained staff that know how to keep children and young people safe.

They:

- understand what to do and how to keep children safe
- communicate and share information with other services well
- make sure staff know how to make referrals and send copies to the safeguarding teams
- make sure information and reports are accurate and up to date
- listen to children and young people
- work with parents and carers
- make sure professionals attend safeguarding meetings and other forums
- make sure a paediatrician or safeguarding nurse is present if a child comes to hospital with a non-accident injury
- make sure staff understand the added risks care experienced children face
- hold monthly meetings so professionals can learn from each other and get support
- have safeguarding meetings attended by professionals from across departments
- train staff on how to keep vulnerable children and young people safe
- make sure staff have support.

They have invested in:

- a Safeguarding Team to support, advise and offer training to staff
- Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) in hospitals
- public protection nurses who work with MASH
- a well-being service for staff.

Safeguarding champions

The health board are introducing safeguarding champions across their departments. They will have extra training on how to keep children safe and give staff support and advice.



In all the schools we visited, pupils felt happy, safe and listened to.



Schools and education

Keeping children and young people safe is a big priority for all education services.

They:

- step in quickly when they think a pupil is at risk and know how to keep them safe
- know how to spot issues quickly and support families
- have Designated Safeguarding Leads
- train staff to understand the needs of vulnerable pupils
- have Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) to support well-being
- have forums for teachers and staff to discuss issues, share good-practice and learn
- have developed activities that promote safe relationships, online safety and well-being
- know how to make referrals and connect well to other services
- work with MASH, Team Around the School and the Education Engagement Team
- know how to share information and challenge decisions
- train staff to understand pupil safety, risks, trauma and how to support needs
- have strong leaders and managers that understand their responsibilities and work together to keep pupils safe
- are working to improve school attendance
- listen and involve pupils in planning and decisions
- make sure pupils whose first language isn't English get support
- attend child protection conferences, safeguarding meetings and other forums.

The 'Early Help' hubs.

Bridgend has three 'Early Help' hubs. They have a team of professionals that offer schools help and support. Schools work well with these hubs and connect families so they can get the help they need quickly.

South Wales Police

The police have good systems in place to keep children and young people safe.

They:

- work well and share information with other services
- work well with families and communities
- know how to spot crimes in referrals and record them
- know how to spot a vulnerable child and step in to keep them safe
- have specialist staff who check records and know how to spot risks
- share information across the force
- investigate when they think a child is at risk
- keep records accurate and up to date
- have call handlers who know how to assess risk and make sure the police get to vulnerable children quickly
- talk and listen to children and young people
- have a board of professionals that meet regularly to improve how the police work with vulnerable people and keep them safe
- train staff on how to keep children and young people safe
- raise awareness about child exploitation and other topics
- support staff well-being
- go to safeguarding meetings with other services.

Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass was set up to help the police and education services work together. The Police make sure the school knows if a pupil needs support because they have experienced domestic abuse.



Children said they know their social worker, trust them and understand how they keep them safe.



Children's Services

Children's services know how to spot risks and work hard to keep children safe.

They:

- step in early to support children and families
- share information well
- work well with MASH, schools and other services
- look at referrals and take action quickly
- have improved how they work and no longer have waiting lists
- work with communities to keep children safe
- offer people support in the Welsh language
- make sure all children get the right level of support
- listen to the views of children and young people
- listen to people's feedback and use it to improve how they work
- have an Improving Outcomes for Children Board that focuses on improving services
- make sure staff have training and opportunities to share good practice
- work well with groups and organisations
- have managers available to talk and support staff well-being
- go to safeguarding meetings with other services.

Advocacy

Children's services make sure children and families are offered an advocate. The advocate supports them, makes sure they understand information and are listened to.

Making it better for the future

Here are some ways that we think services can improve:

➔ Share information and communicate better across services.

➔ Make sure everyone knows the risks children face in their area.

➔ Make sure staff know where to get advice and support when they need it.

➔ Make sure all staff understand how important it is to keep accurate records.

➔ Make sure services including the Health Board can access the child protection register.

➔ Make sure the Health Board has a clear safeguarding strategy and staff have up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

➔ Make sure that MASH has the resources and staff it needs.

➔ Make sure staff have opportunities to train and develop skills.

➔ Talk to and involve children and young people more.

➔ Take action to recruit and keep staff across all services.

➔ Make sure Police systems highlight information about vulnerable children and adults that could put them at risk.

➔ Keep better records of meetings so there's evidence about why decisions happen, and everyone knows what they have to do.

➔ Make sure care and support protection plans put the child first and have clear outcomes.

➔ Make sure IT systems can connect and share information better.

➔ Make sure information about the child's ethnicity is recorded so services can understand all areas of their lives.

➔ Talk to and involve family members in decisions more.

Stepping in early makes a big difference!



Next steps

We've written to all the services involved to explain what we found and what they have to do. They will let us know how they plan to improve their work.

We will inspect services again in the future.

Thanks for reading this.

You can read the full report here:

careinspectorate.wales/joint-inspectorate-review-child-protection-arrangements-jicpa-bridgend-2023

We'd love your feedback about this report! Please visit the following link to complete a short survey:

[Inspection report survey](#)

