

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

A Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements



January 2024

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.

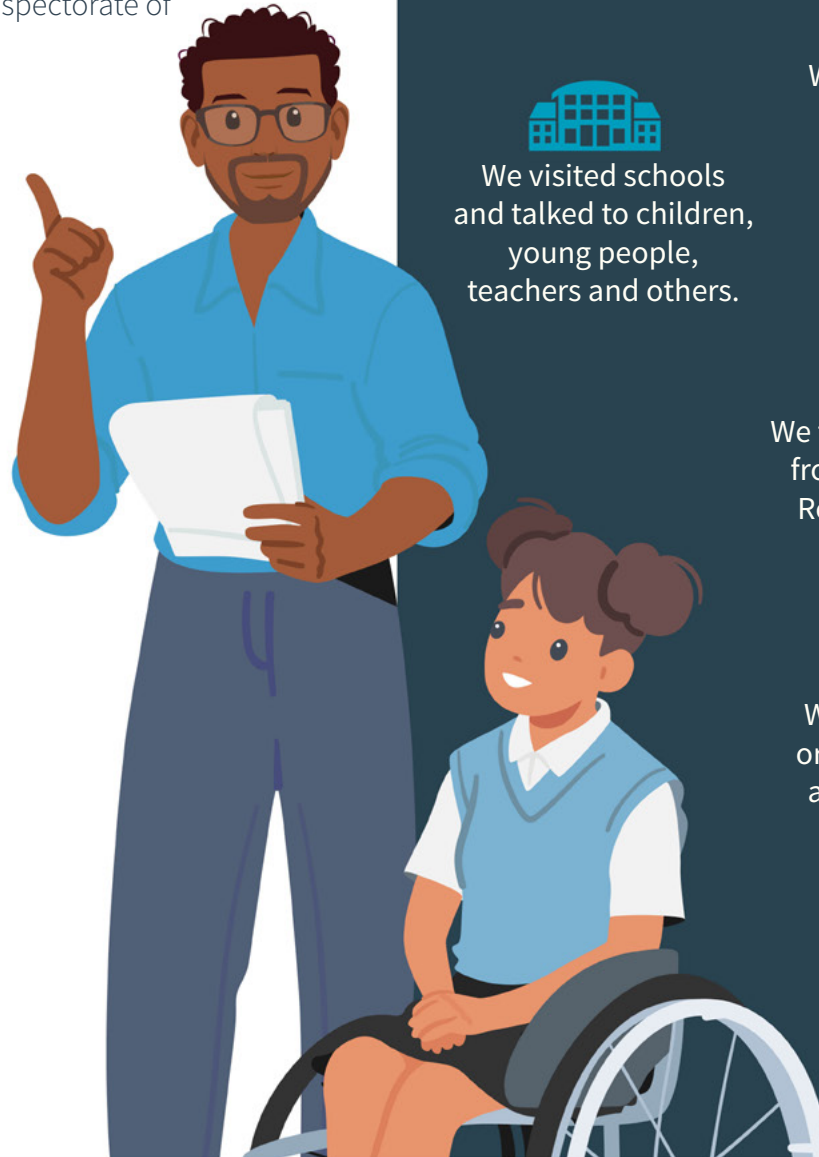
In January 2024, we checked how services in Cardiff keep children safe. It wasn't just us - this piece of work was carried out alongside Estyn; Healthcare Inspectorate Wales; and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services.

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.

We inspected:

- Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
- local authority services – schools, the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), children's services and more
- South Wales Police.



What we did



We held focus groups.



We checked children's records.



We talked to children about their care and support.



We sent out surveys.



We talked to parents, carers and families.



We visited schools and talked to children, young people, teachers and others.



We talked to staff from the Pupil Referral Unit.



We talked to staff and professionals from across services.



We talked to organisations and groups.



We looked at evidence.



We sat in and observed a child protection conference, a child exploitation strategy meeting, and a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) meeting.

Some of our main findings

Support and protection

Cardiff has lots of skilled staff and professionals. They work together, act quickly and know how to keep children and young people safe. They understand children's needs and experiences.

Understanding how abuse, neglect and harm impact children

Professionals and staff:

- put children first in everything they do
- have a positive focus on keeping children safe
- know how to spot risks and take action
- respond to referrals quickly
- work together well with other services
- use evidence-based approaches which reduce risks and meet needs
- 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 involve them in decisions
- attend meetings and child protection conferences.

Working together

Services and organisations work together well and understand what they must do to keep children safe. Staff understand that keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility.

Pressure on services

More children and families are needing support from services. There is less money in budgets, which is a challenge.

Recruiting and keeping staff

Finding and keeping experienced staff is a challenge. There are lots of newly qualified staff across services that work hard, but this can make keeping children safe more difficult.

Leadership

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



The Regional Safeguarding Board

The board supports local services well. They have improved how they work and have a new safeguarding delivery group to help them check how services work to keep children safe.

Listening to children

Professionals and staff listen to the views of children and families, involve them in developing protection plans and decisions.

Sharing information and making referrals

Professionals and staff working across services share information in the right ways. They make the right referrals so children get the right support.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

MASH helps services work together, share information and step in quickly to support children. They get referrals from services, professionals and the public.

Child protection meetings

Professionals from across services and organisations attend these meetings and share information to keep children safe. Police attendance at these meetings has improved.

Schools and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

Schools and the PRU work well with other services to support children and families. They are safe places to learn and they meet pupils' needs.



Some of the good points we found

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

The Health Board has lots of trained staff that know how to spot risk and keep children safe. They:

- make sure staff know what to do when a child at risk needs their service
- make sure staff know how to get advice
- have a staff member who follows up if a child comes to the emergency department lots of times
- have a CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) crisis service
- have a named Safeguarding Midwife and Pre-Birth Team to protect babies and unborn children
- have a Youth Board to help them understand the experiences of young people
- have two emotional wellbeing nurses which support children in schools, and the PRU and also support home educated children
- have a digital safeguarding tool to support doctors make decisions
- have a special Health Team in the emergency department to support victims of violence
- have a Safeguarding Nurse Advisors in MASH each day
- has a safeguarding team to check referrals, give advice and support staff
- check safeguarding decisions
- make sure staff have opportunities to learn and improve their work
- listen to children and young people
- attend safeguarding meetings and other meetings
- check the quality of their work and take action to improve.

Goleudy service

This is a team of specialists including doctors, mental health staff, social worker assistants and education coordinators. They help children who come to hospital and are emotionally distressed.



Schools, the PRU and education services

All Cardiff schools, the PRU included in the inspection and education services have high standards of safeguarding. They:

- step in quickly when they think a pupil is at risk
- know how to spot issues quickly and support families
- work well with other services including children's services
- share information in a timely manner
- have effective Designated Safeguarding Leads
- know if a pupil is on the child protection register and make sure they get appropriate support
- make the right referrals and actions when they think a pupil is at risk
- have worthwhile emotional support and wellbeing classes
- have named 'trusted adults' for pupils to talk to
- listen to children and young people
- have an established and effective digital platform to share information and record concerns
- have effective school-based counselling services for Year 6 and secondary school pupils
- have strong leaders and managers who understand their roles and responsibilities
- support pupils who have Anxiety Based School Avoidance (ABSA)
- train staff to understand how to spot risks and keep pupils safe
- work with Youth Services to understand the issues pupils and their families face where they live
- attend All-Schools Risk meetings and other meetings with services.

There are also lots of teams working across education services to keep children safe including:

- an Additional Learning Needs (ALN) team
- the Education Welfare Service (EWS)
- the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS)
- the Education Safeguarding Team
- the Emotional Health and Wellbeing team
- the Children Looked After Virtual School (CLAVS) team.



South Wales Police

The police have good systems that help keep vulnerable children safe. They:

- know how to spot when a child is at risk, get to them quickly and protect them
- have leaders who understand their roles and responsibility
- investigate when they think a child is at risk
- know how to assess risk and make the right decisions
- keep records and other information up to date and accurate
- have call handlers who know how to assess risk and make sure the police get to vulnerable children quickly
- hold regular meetings to discuss and manage child protection
- work well and share information with other services
- attend Regional Safeguarding Board meetings, the Health Board Safeguarding meetings and other meetings
- work with other services to help children who have been affected by violence and harm
- work with Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- have Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) who work with young people aged 11 to 17
- have specialist staff who can spot when children are at risk of being abused, trafficked or exploited
- have a Community Police Officer team
- work with services to keep children at risk of going missing safe
- raise awareness about child exploitation and other topics
- connect with schools and run projects like Mini Police
- train staff to know how to keep children safe.

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.



Parents and children say staff are supportive and communicate well.



Children's Services

Children's Services know how to spot risks and work hard to keep children safe. They:

- put children first and at the centre of their work
- step in early and support families
- carry out assessments and give children the right support
- make sure assessments clearly explain the child's life, what matters to them and their strengths
- report issues in the right way, check referrals and take action
- work well with MASH
- make sure information is up to date and accurate
- deliver support in the Welsh language
- listen to children and young people
- understand people different cultural needs
- make sure families have support and information in their language as much as possible
- share information with parents, involve them in decisions and clearly say what needs to happen and why
- have improved how they work in the Child Protection Case Conference process
- support children's wellbeing
- have leaders who understand their roles and responsibilities
- have managers available to give advice and support staff
- support social work assistants (SWAs)
- have managed to recruit permanent staff
- give staff training and opportunities to share good practice
- collect data and use it to check their work and improve
- work with schools, other services and community organisations
- attend safeguarding meetings with other services.

Making it better for the future

Here are some ways we think services can improve:

➡ Make sure all children get a visit from a Social Worker after a referral as quickly as possible.

➡ Make sure there is always open, regular communication between social services and the police.

➡ Make sure all looked after children get a health assessment and all the support they need.

➡ Share information and communicate better across services.

➡ Make sure staff have training on exploitation, safeguarding young people, and culturally harmful behaviour.

➡ Make sure all staff understand how to identify risks.

➡ Talk to and involve children and young people more.

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

➡ Make sure all IT systems can connect and share information better.

➡ Make sure concerns are recorded and information is kept up to date.

➡ Make sure staff understand when a referral should be sent to MASH and when it should be sent to early help services.

➡ Make sure more Health Board staff have safeguarding training.

➡ Gather more data and use it to spot risks and plan for the future.

➡ Review the plans and support of children whose names have been on the child protection register for a long time.

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

➡ Reduce early help services waiting lists so families get support as quickly as possible.

➡ Make sure schools are told if a child has experienced domestic abuse so they can support them better.

Sharing information at the right time, in the right ways 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.

You can read the full report here:

careinspectorate.wales/joint-inspectorate-review-child-protection-arrangements-jicpa-cardiff-2024

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