

Gareth Jenkins  
Director of Children's Services  
Caerphilly County Borough Council

Date: 29 January 2026

Dear Gareth Jenkins,

**Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) - Assurance Check of Caerphilly County Borough Council Children's Services**

**1 Introduction**

This letter describes the findings of our assurance check on 17 to 19 November 2025. We carry out inspection activity in accordance with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) and the quality standards in the Code of Practice in relation to the performance and improvement of social services in Wales. This helps us determine the effectiveness of local authorities in supporting, measuring and sustaining improvements for people and services. We focused our key lines of enquiry on the four principles of the 2014 Act and sought to answer the questions below:

**Key Lines of Enquiry:**

**People - voice and control**

1. *To what extent are people equal partners who have voice, choice and control over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them.*
2. *To what extent is leadership effective evident at all levels with a stable and sustainable highly skilled, well qualified and supported workforce working towards a shared vision*

## **Prevention**

- 1. How well is the need for care and support minimised and the escalation of need is prevented, whilst ensuring that the best possible outcomes for people are achieved.*
- 2. How effectively does the authority anticipate demand, manage service pressures, and adapt preventative models to meet changing needs across the population.*

## **Well-being**

- 1. To what extent is the local authority ensuring that people are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm?*
- 2. How well does the local authority ensure safeguarding arrangements are timely, proportionate, and consistently applied across agencies?*
- 3. How is learning from safeguarding activity used to improve practice and outcomes for children?*

## **Partnerships**

- 1. To what extent is the local authority able to assure themselves effective partnerships are in place to commission and deliver fully integrated, high quality, sustainable outcomes for children and families?*
- 2. How well are shared governance and joint planning used to align priorities and improve service delivery.*

## **2. Terminology and Quality Definitions**

A glossary of terminology is contained in Appendix one and a table of quantity definitions in Appendix two.

## **3. Summary of assurance check**

- 3.1** Caerphilly Children's Services demonstrates a strong commitment to delivering person-centred, strengths-based support for children, young people, and families. Leaders and practitioners share a clear vision and work collaboratively to promote positive outcomes, with a stable and well-supported workforce underpinning service delivery. People are treated with dignity and respect, and there is a consistent focus on capturing the voice of children and families in assessment and planning.
- 3.2** Early intervention and prevention are embedded across the service, supported by effective multi-agency working and a culture of continuous improvement.

Practitioners identify emerging needs promptly and work proactively with families to prevent escalation. The authority adapts its preventative models in response to learning and feedback, and there is evidence of robust contingency planning to manage service pressures.

- 3.3 Safeguarding is prioritised and well understood at all levels. Practitioners are proactive, well supported and skilled in managing risk, and multi-agency arrangements support timely and proportionate responses to safeguarding concerns. The authority is committed to promoting the broader wellbeing of children and families, with a range of interventions in place to support positive outcomes.
- 3.4 While permanence planning is generally robust, there are a very few children for whom preventable delays have been identified. The local authority is strengthening oversight in this area and is also taking steps to improve the timeliness of strategy discussions regarding sexually harmful behaviour.
- 3.5 Partnership working is a notable strength, with clear governance structures and a shared ethos of safeguarding and promoting children's wellbeing. The local authority is proactive in seeking and responding to feedback from partners, children, and families, and there is a strong emphasis on joint problem-solving and shared accountability. Information sharing and communication between agencies are generally effective, though the consistency of partner engagement and the timely sharing of reports requires strengthening.

#### 4. Key findings and evidence

Key findings and some examples of evidence are presented below in line with the four principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

##### People

##### Strengths

- 4.1 Leaders and practitioners model a person-centred and strengths-based approach, promoting independence and the voice of people. The majority of people who completed the CIW survey shared as part of this inspection, feel listened to and supported by their social workers. Research-informed practice supports direct work with people, including multi-disciplinary approaches for trauma-informed interventions. Tools such as 'social stories' are used to aid understanding and adapt plans to individual needs. **This is positive practice.**
- 4.2 Leaders at all levels communicate a clear and consistent vision for children's services. Practitioners understand service priorities and work together to achieve positive outcomes for people.

- 4.3** People are treated with dignity and respect. The voice of children, young people and families is evident in many records. Practitioners maintain proportionate contact and consistently record the lived experience of children and families, adapting communication approaches to individual needs, including for those with disabilities. There are examples of 'What Matters' conversations held with people captured in first-person narrative within care and support plans. In a few cases, the individual voices of very young children and of children who are part of larger sibling groups are not clearly reflected in care and support planning. **The local authority should further strengthen its approach to ensure each child's voice is captured and informs person-centred care and support planning.**
- 4.4** Whilst most of the workforce is stable there is turnover of some frontline practitioners and recruitment can be challenging, recruitment and retention strategies are in place, including the successful 'grow your own' initiative. Findings from the practitioners' survey confirm that most practitioners feel valued and supported by managers, with supervision described as reflective and helpful. Support and guidance are consistently available, and survey feedback highlights strong collaborative working towards a shared vision for service improvement.
- 4.5** The local authority actively offers a Welsh language service. Welsh-speaking practitioners are available, and translation services support families who speak other languages, ensuring inclusive and effective communication.
- 4.6** Equality, diversity and inclusion are considered in case management and supervision. Team Managers and Senior Managers routinely review caseloads with attention to individual circumstances, and flexible working arrangements are used to support staff wellbeing. The practitioner survey and evidence from file reading show complexity of need and cultural considerations to be increasing, requiring consistent and confident practice across teams. **The local authority should continue to enhance training and support to ensure all staff are fully equipped to meet the increasingly diverse needs of people using services.**
- 4.7** Supervision and management oversight are evident across teams. Practitioners report that managers are visible, supportive and approachable, and regular supervision provides opportunities for reflection on practice, professional development, and well-being. There is managerial oversight of safeguarding decision-making and further opportunities for practice reflection through team meetings and pod discussions. In a few cases, decisions were not clearly recorded on the case management system, which limits visibility for managers and reduces assurance of consistent oversight. **The local authority should ensure that decision-making is consistently recorded and clearly visible**

**on the electronic recording system to support effective oversight and accountability.**

## **Prevention**

### **Strengths**

- 4.8** Early intervention and preventative approaches are embedded across children's services and are a notable service strength. Practitioners identify emerging needs promptly and work proactively with families to prevent escalation. Assessments are undertaken, and timely support is provided. Practitioners use a range of tools and approaches to promote positive outcomes for people. An example was seen where early help services enabled a child to remain safely with their family by providing timely youth programmes, practical support, and advocacy, which helped prevent escalation to more restrictive interventions.
- 4.9** Multi-agency working supports effective prevention. Practitioners collaborate with health, education, and other partners to deliver coordinated preventative support. There is effective communication between partner agencies. This joint working enables early identification of risks and ensures families receive the right help at the right time.
- 4.10** The local authority anticipates demand and manages service pressures effectively. Managers monitor trends in referrals and caseloads, adapting resources and staffing to meet changing needs. There is evidence of contingency planning and flexible deployment of staff to respond to peaks in demand.
- 4.11** Practitioners use a range of early help and targeted interventions, including family meetings, advocacy, and resource panels, to minimise the need for statutory intervention. Feedback from practitioners and partners in focus groups indicates that these approaches are responsive to local priorities and emerging risks.
- 4.12** Managers and practitioners maintain a strong focus on learning from quality assurance, reviews, and critical incidents. They routinely share findings from audits and reflective work across teams and with partner agencies, using this learning to inform service development and improve practice. Preventative approaches are regularly reviewed and adapted in response to audits and service user feedback. **The local authority should continue to strengthen its application of quality assurance work to capture and analyse data throughout the service to further inform resource planning and the development of preventative models.**

### **Areas for Improvement**

- 4.13** Early help offers across children's services are generally strong, but the consistency of provision in the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) team is affected by fluctuating demand, capacity pressures, and waiting lists for some preventative services. **The local authority should continue to strengthen this area, including decision-making capacity, to ensure all families benefit equally from timely early intervention.**

### **Well-being**

### **Strengths**

- 4.14** Safeguarding is prioritised across Caerphilly Children's Services, with practitioners demonstrating clear responsibility, vigilance, and timely responses to concerns. Robust risk assessments, multi-agency information sharing, and well-attended strategy meetings and child protection conferences, support effective safety plans, statutory visits, and coordinated interventions. The local authority is proficient at determining safeguarding thresholds and escalating concerns, with health, education, and police partners contributing to assessments and planning.
- 4.15** The voice of the child is central to safeguarding practice. Practitioners make concerted efforts to engage children and young people in discussions about their safety and wellbeing, adapting communication methods to meet individual needs. Advocacy is routinely offered, and children are supported to express their views in meetings and reviews. There is a focus on ensuring that children understand their plans and are involved in decisions that affect them.
- 4.16** The local authority is committed to promoting the broader wellbeing of children and families. Practitioners use a range of interventions including direct work, therapeutic support, and access to community resources to help children achieve positive outcomes. There is a focus on maintaining children's connections with family, school, and community wherever possible, and practitioners are proactive in addressing barriers to participation and inclusion. There are very few cases where preventable delay in permanence planning was evident. **The local authority should ensure the systems in place to identify drift and delay result in all children benefiting from timely and secure permanence.**

### **Areas for Improvement**

- 4.17** There is evidence that sexually harmful behaviour strategy discussions have not always been initiated promptly, resulting in delays to coordinated safeguarding responses. The local authority has identified this, and action is

underway to strengthen processes. **The local authority must continue to monitor the timeliness and effectiveness of harmful sexual behaviour strategy discussions to ensure that all safeguarding concerns are addressed without delay.**

## **Partnership**

### **Strengths**

- 4.18** Partnership working is a notable strength across Caerphilly Children's Services. Practitioners and managers demonstrate a strong commitment to collaborative working with a wide range of partners, including health, education, police, and the third sector. Regular multi-agency meetings and joint planning forums support the delivery of integrated services and ensure that children and families receive coordinated support. Stakeholder and practitioner feedback from surveys and focus groups highlight positive relationships and a shared ethos of safeguarding and promoting children's wellbeing.
- 4.19** The local authority contributes actively to regional and national partnership arrangements. There is evidence of effective participation in the Regional Safeguarding Board and its subgroups, with the local authority recognised by partner agencies for its responsiveness, openness, and willingness to share learning. Partners also report that the local authority is proactive in disseminating new policies and practice guidance, and that information is shared efficiently across agencies to support timely decision-making.
- 4.20** Joint working arrangements are underpinned by clear governance structures and shared priorities. Practitioners and managers work together to align resources and develop joint solutions to complex challenges, such as sufficiency of placements and support for children with additional needs. There is a culture of mutual respect and professional trust, with partners describing open communication and a willingness to challenge and learn from one another. This approach supports continuous improvement and the delivery of high-quality, sustainable outcomes for children and families.
- 4.21** Multi-agency training and development opportunities are routinely offered and well attended. The local authority works with partners to deliver joint training on safeguarding, trauma-informed practice, and other key areas. This supports a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities and ensures that practitioners across agencies are equipped to work together effectively. Feedback from partners and practitioners indicates that these opportunities are valued and contribute to improved practice and outcomes.
- 4.22** The local authority is proactive in seeking and responding to feedback from partners, children, and families. Mechanisms such as stakeholder surveys, parent networks, and junior forums are used to gather views and inform service

development. Evidence from surveys and focus groups indicates that partners feel valued and included in decision-making processes, and that their contributions are recognised in shaping service priorities and delivery.

- 4.23** There is a strong emphasis on joint problem-solving and shared accountability. Practitioners and managers work collaboratively with partners to address challenges such as placement sufficiency, support for children with complex needs, and transitions between services. Regular review meetings and joint panels support the alignment of priorities and the development of integrated solutions. Where barriers arise, such as variable attendance at partnership meetings or differences in agency thresholds, the local authority is committed to open dialogue and continuous improvement.
- 4.24** Information sharing and communication between agencies are generally effective, supporting timely and coordinated responses to the needs of children and families. Partners report that the local authority is responsive to requests for information and that there are clear protocols in place for sharing safeguarding and wellbeing concerns. There is ongoing work to further strengthen information sharing arrangements, particularly in relation to complex cases and transitions between services.

### **Areas for Improvement**

- 4.25** Most multi-agency child protection meetings are attended by relevant partners, but capacity issues in health and police, and variable engagement from schools, affect consistency. Stakeholder feedback and focus groups highlight that partners do not always attend or contribute as needed. **The local authority should work with partners to strengthen consistent engagement so all agencies are fully involved in service delivery, review, and monitoring of safety plans**

## **5. Next Steps**

CIW expects the local authority to consider the areas identified for improvement and take appropriate action to address and improve these areas. CIW will monitor progress through its ongoing performance review activity with the local authority. Where relevant we expect the local authority to share the positive practice identified with other local authorities, to disseminate learning and help drive continuous improvement in statutory services throughout Wales.

## **6. Methodology**

### **Fieldwork**

- Inspection evidence was gathered by reviewing the experiences of 25 people through review and tracking of their social care record. We reviewed 21 and tracked 4 children's social care records.



- Tracking a person's social care record includes having conversations with the person in receipt of social care services, their family or carers, key worker, the key worker's manager, and where appropriate other professionals involved.
- We engaged, through interviews with 7 people receiving services and/or their carer.
- We engaged, through interviews with 56 local authority employees. This included social workers, team managers, operational managers and head of service.
- We reviewed supporting documentation sent to CIW for the purpose of the inspection.
- We administered surveys to local authority social services staff, partner organisations and people.

Our Privacy Notice can be found at <https://careinspectorate.wales/how-we-use-your-information>.

## **7. Welsh Language**

CIW is committed to providing an active offer of the Welsh language during its activity with local authorities.

The active offer not required on this occasion. This is because the local authority informed us that people taking part did not wish to contribute to this assurance check in Welsh.

## **8. Acknowledgements**

CIW would like to thank staff, partners and people who gave their time and contributed to this inspection.

Yours sincerely,



**Lou Bushell-Bauers**  
Head of Local Authority Inspection  
**Care Inspectorate Wales**

## Appendix 1

### Glossary of Terminology

Term	What we mean in our reports and letters
<b>Must</b>	Improvement is deemed necessary in order for the local authority to meet a duty outlined in legislation, regulation or code of practice. The local authority is not currently meeting its statutory duty/duties and must take action.
<b>Should</b>	Improvement will enhance service provision and/or outcomes for people and/or their carer. It does not constitute a failure to meet a legal duty at this time; but without suitable action, there is a risk the local authority may fail to meet its legal duty/duties in future.
<b>Positive practice</b>	Identified areas of strength within the local authority. This relates to practice considered innovative and/or which consistently results in positive outcomes for people receiving statutory services.
<b>Prevention and Early Intervention</b>	A principle of the Act which aims to ensure that there is access to support to prevent situations from getting worse, and to enhance the maintenance of individual and collective well-being. This principle centres on increasing preventative services within communities to minimise the escalation of critical need.
<b>Voice and Control</b>	A principle of the Act which aims to put the individual and their needs at the centre of their care and support, and giving them a voice in, and control over, the outcomes that can help them achieve well-being and the things that matter most to them.
<b>Well-being</b>	A principle of the Act which aims for people to have well-being in every part of their lives. Well-being is more than being healthy. It is about being safe and happy, having choice and getting the right support, being part of a strong community, having friends and relationships that are good for you, and having hobbies, work or learning. It is about supporting people to achieve their own well-being and measuring the success of care and support.
<b>Co-Production</b>	A principle of the Act which aims for people to be more involved in the design and provision of their care and support. It means organisations and professionals working with them and their family, friends and carers so their care and support is the best it can be.

<b>Multi-Agency working</b>	A principle of the Act which aims to strengthen joint working between care and support organisations to make sure the right types of support and services are available in local communities to meet people's needs. The summation of the Act states that there is a requirement for co-operation and partnership by public authorities.
<b>What matters</b>	'What Matters' conversations are a way for professionals to understand people's situation, their current well-being, and what can be done to support them. It is an equal conversation and is important to help ensure the voice of the individual or carer is heard and 'what matters' to them

## Appendix 2

### Quantity Definitions Table

Terminology	Definition
Nearly all	With very few exceptions
Most	90% or more
Many	70% or more
A majority	Over 60%
Half	50%
Around half	Close to 50%
A minority	Below 40%
Few	Below 20%
Very few	Less than 10%