Fôn Roberts
Director of Social Services
Isle of Anglesey County Council

Date: 18/03/2026

Dear Fôn Roberts,

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) - Assurance Check of Isle of Anglesey Children's Services

1. Introduction

1.1 This letter describes the findings of our assurance check between January 12 and 16 2026. 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.

1.2 We focused our key lines of enquiry on the four principles of the 2014 Act and sought to answer the questions below:

People - voice and control

- To what extent does the local authority ensure children can express their voice, and that they are actively offered an advocacy service?

- To what extent does the local authority ensure the workforce has sufficient numbers, has the relevant skills, is experienced and supported?

Prevention

- To what extent does the local authority ensure the need for care and support is minimised, and the escalation of need is prevented whilst ensuring that the best possible outcomes for people are achieved?

- To what extent does the local authority ensure families are supported to stay together, where this is safe and in the best interest of the child through timely, strengths-based, and preventative approaches?

Wellbeing

- To what extent does the local authority ensure children are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm?

- To what extent does the local authority ensure there is good analysis of risk, protection plans/care and support plans are put in place, and that action is taken when necessary to safeguard children and young people from harm and promote their welfare?

Partnerships

- To what extent do partners work together to deliver high-quality, sustainable outcomes for children and families?

2. Terminology and Quantity 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 Leaders are experienced, provide stable leadership and know their service very well. Practitioners describe them as visible, approachable, and very supportive.

3.2 Practitioners are skilled, innovative, and committed to supporting children and families to achieve the best outcomes. This is consistently acknowledged by leaders.

3.3 There is a positive culture where healthy professional challenge is encouraged. Leaders promote two-way communication and an open-door approach with the workforce. Practitioners are encouraged to be innovative and share their suggestions to improve services.

3.4 There is a consistent focus on practitioner wellbeing. Practitioners and leaders are supported through regular formal and informal supervision, and necessary adaptations are undertaken to promote personal and professional needs.

3.5 Recruitment of experienced practitioners can be a challenge. The local authority has implemented strategies to mitigate these risks.

3.6 There is a strong focus on preventing escalation of need in a timely manner, supported by strong partnership working. However, people at times experience delays in receiving support due to the limited capacity of practitioners and multi-agency partners.

3.7 There continues to be an increase in demand for support from children's services, with needs becoming increasingly complex. Rising demand, including higher levels of court and safeguarding activity, is impacting on workforce capacity and resilience.

3.8 Political and corporate support is strong, with the council leader and portfolio holder demonstrating a clear understanding of the work, strengths and challenges across children's services.

3.9 Performance is well scrutinised in committees and panels. The local authority also has a quality assurance framework, but this is not fully embedded in practice

3.10 Safeguarding practices are mostly robust and follow Wales Safeguarding Procedures (WSP).

4.   Key findings and evidence

We present our key findings and evidence below in line with the four principles of the 2014 Act.

People – Voice and Control

<u>Strengths</u>

4.1 Children's voices are strong with clear evidence of their lived experience in most records viewed. Practitioners utilise tools, such as Three Houses model and About Me, appropriately to support communication with children and encourage them to express their views.

4.2 Practitioners use person-centred and strength-based approaches to promote the voice and independence of children and their families. In the best examples, practitioners write records directly for children in the first-person narrative. This ensures records are accessible, child-centred, and meaningful if records are accessed. **This is positive practice as it supports children's experiences, wishes, feelings, and identity remaining central to the record.**

4.3 The local authority benefits from a strong cohort of Welsh-speaking practitioners. There is clear evidence of services provided in Welsh to meet

children and families' linguistic needs. However, records do not consistently evidence that a formal active offer of a service in the Welsh language has been made. **The local authority should ensure that records consistently reflect whether an active offer of a service through the Welsh language has been made.**

4.4 Practitioners have regular opportunities to reflect on their practice across a range of forums, including reflective sessions within the Resilient Families Team and weekly clinical consultation sessions with a psychologist. These opportunities are available to all teams, with partner agency representatives also able to participate. **This is positive practice.**

4.5 Practitioners benefit from regular supervision with a balanced focus on children and family's needs and their own personal wellbeing. Of the 92 practitioners who completed a CIW survey, most (93%) strongly agreed or agreed that supervision was regular. Most practitioners (90%) further said it gave them an opportunity to reflect on practice. However, supervision records viewed did not consistently evidence reflective practice occurs. This is important, as it supports practitioners to analyse complex situations, understand the impact of interventions, and make better-informed decisions. Clear links should be made in case supervision records whether the intended outcomes for children and families have been achieved. **The local authority should ensure that records consistently reflect that practitioners have had opportunities to reflect on their practice in supervision.**

4.6 The local authority is aware of the challenges in recruiting and retaining practitioners in children's services. The local authority mitigates these risks through corporately and politically supported initiatives such as Grow Your Own. This has enabled practitioners to progress into qualified social work roles, strengthening succession planning, retention, and service stability for children and families. **This is positive practice.**

4.7 Complaints are managed in line with relevant guidance, which supports a consistent and evidenced based approach to addressing concerns promptly. Easy read complaints leaflets are available to promote people's understanding of their rights. Issues raised are well scrutinised with independent oversight where required.

Areas for Improvement

4.8 Informal advocacy is well promoted, but there is little evidence that formal advocacy is consistently offered, re-offered, or promoted, despite its strategic priority. There are a few examples where referrals have been made for a formal advocacy service, however, is has not been provided timely. **The local authority must ensure formal advocacy, is actively offered, re-offered, and provided in a timely manner (where required).**

4.9 Despite children's voices being strong in most records, there are examples whereby children's voices are insufficiently represented. This includes records made in relation to meetings held under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. **The local authority must consistently ensure that children's voices, including their views and wishes, presentation, and understanding of events, are clearly noted in all relevant records.**

4.10 There are examples of children with complex needs being cared for by family members who may also be regarded as their informal carers. There is inconsistency in how practitioners identify potential unpaid carers. This limits the routine offer of carers' assessments and it may result in carers' care and support needs not being identified and supported. Carers' assessments, when applied consistently, will ensure opportunities to support carers and promote their wellbeing. **The local authority must strengthen its offer of a formal carers assessment to ensure the rights and voice of all informal carers are fully promoted.**

Prevention

Strengths

4.11 Leaders place a strong emphasis on early help and prevention of escalation of needs. A good example of this is the Early Help Hub which convenes twice weekly and includes wide multi agency representation from partner agencies and third sector services. This pathway promotes timely, co-ordinated multi agency responses which prioritises de-escalation and early intervention.

4.12 As well as the Early Help Hub, the youth workers and supporting education and wellbeing teams are examples of integrated working, providing targeted support and helping to prevent escalation to statutory services. There is ongoing evaluation of these models, with annual reports and feedback informing future development.

4.13 Children and families benefit from individualised responses, proportionate to their needs and associated risks. There are consistent examples of effective interventions that support children's safety, promote stability, and enhance the wellbeing of both children and their parents.

4.14 Children and families benefit from well-embedded trauma-informed practice across the local authority, including in direct care and education settings. One secondary school has achieved trauma-informed status, which is a notable achievement. The model is being shared regionally and nationally.

4.15 The local authority continues to upskill its workforce to become trauma-informed practitioners. It also contributes to the development of

trauma-informed practice across partner agencies and within the wider community, making effective and innovative use of virtual reality training.

4.16 All children's services teams are co-located and there is an active office presence. Leaders and practitioners are supportive of this and note clear benefits in supporting timely communication, collaboration and informal reflection between teams. Practitioners are encouraged to be innovative and to share their own ideas to promote positive outcomes.

4.17 The pre-birth pathway exemplifies good preventative practice, ensuring early coordination between midwifery, health and social care. Positive judicial feedback confirms its impact, with babies remaining safely at home due to robust early planning and analysis. **This is positive practice.**

Areas for Improvement

4.18 Children and families do not always receive timely and appropriate care and support, including respite care and specialist placements. The local authority is experiencing a continued increase in demand for support and services, and children and family's needs are becoming increasingly complex. This is placing pressure on the sustainability of preventative services, particularly as partner agencies capacity is also constrained. Positively, the local authority has commissioned an external consultant to assess the demand, provision, sustainability, and effectiveness of early preventative services. **Once the report is received, the local authority should drive forward any recommendations made in relation to the preventative agenda to ensure sufficiency in early help and prevention services.**

4.19 The increase in demand for support and services, along with the rising numbers of children on the child protection register and children who are looked after by the local authority, is placing additional pressure on the workforce. There are examples where actions and meetings intended to support children's and families' outcomes have not been completed in a timely manner. This results in delays in support and creates drift in children's and families' situations. Children and families do not always move promptly to the social work team best placed to support them due to a lack of capacity. **The local authority should review the workforce to ensure it is sufficient to meet current and predicted demand together with consistency in meeting its statutory responsibilities.**

4.20 Communication with children and families, which includes during pre-court and court proceedings, is variable. Results of the CIW survey issued to people, indicated only 9 out of 20 respondents (45%), find it easy to contact children's services for support. **The local authority should ensure that communication with children and families is consistent and timely.**

4.21 The standard of recording and the timely uploading of records to the social care system is variable, which can hinder practitioners' and leaders' access to up-to-date information. In the CIW survey, 20 of 92 practitioners (22%) reported that IT systems do not work well, citing system crashes, unreliability, and the need for improvement. **The local authority should ensure recording standards are consistent and that records are uploaded promptly.**

4.22 The safeguarding and quality improvement team has recently undergone a restructure, which has reduced its capacity to fully embed the quality assurance framework. Audit and learning activity have been limited and undertaken in isolation, meaning practice does not yet align with the framework, although the changes made aim to promote greater consistency and reliability. As audit responsibilities have now shifted from a single dedicated post to a wider service responsibility, it is anticipated that this will strengthen resilience and better support the implementation of the quality assurance framework. **The local authority must ensure its quality assurance framework, Securing Practice Quality and Improvement, is robustly embedded in practice.**

4.23 Recorded outcomes in assessments, plans and meetings are not always SMART (Smart, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely). This can compromise accountability, clarity, and limit the effectiveness of overseeing progress. **The local authority should ensure outcomes are consistently SMART to support effective evaluation of whether, and how well, progress in children and families 'outcomes, have been achieved.**

Wellbeing

<u>Strengths</u>

4.24 Safeguarding practices are robust and mostly consistent with the WSP. Most decisions and subsequent actions are undertaken in a timely manner, including making decisions within one working day of receiving a report about a child's potential safety, and holding strategy discussions within 24 hours of determining that one is required.

4.25 Enquiries undertaken in line with section 47 of the WSP are comprehensive and involve children, parents, carers and other agencies as appropriate. There is good focus on safeguarding children whilst enquiries are ongoing. There is clear analysis and rationale to inform decisions post completion of section 47 enquiries, including whether the child is or is not at continuing risk of significant harm.

4.26 Appropriate consideration is given as to whether section 5 of the WSP need to be instigated when concerns arise about any person who works with children

and young people, to include local authority practitioners, practitioners in partner agencies and volunteers. This strengthens the protection and wellbeing of children and young people.

4.27 There is good multi-agency participation at strategy meetings held under sections 3 and 5 of the WSP which supports a comprehensive and accurate understanding of risk and need. This is supported by effective information-sharing between partners to ensure children's safety.

4.28 Records clearly evidence the outcomes of a section 5 strategy meeting held in line with section 5 of the WSP. This supports further decision making as to what further action is required.

4.29 There are good examples of contingency plans being considered in the event of a care and support protection plan not being successful. However, this practice is not consistent and there are examples where it would have been beneficial to have a clear contingency plan, to further promote children's safety in a timely manner. **The local authority should ensure that contingency plans are implemented consistently.**

4.30 There are good examples of practitioners who make reports about concerns for children's safety receiving written confirmation of the outcome of their report. However, there are some examples where outcomes have not been shared in writing with those who have parental responsibility. **The local authority should confirm the outcome of reports made to children (if appropriate) and in writing to a child's parent/carer.**

4.31 Regular structured meetings such as Early Help Hub, One Front Door, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and pre-birth partnership meetings ensure that all agencies are sighted on risk and can collaborate effectively.

<u>Areas for Improvement</u>

4.32 Whilst strategy meetings often have multi-agency contributions, strategy discussions held under sections 3 and 5 of the WSP are routinely held between the local authority and the police only. Whilst this aligns with the minimum requirement under the WSP and may be appropriate in urgent circumstances, there are clear examples where it would be beneficial to include other practitioners. Namely the report maker (if appropriate) and practitioners actively involved with the child and their family. This helps ensure initial discussions are as robust and well-informed as they can be. **The local authority must ensure all relevant practitioners, to include practitioners from other agencies, are invited to strategy discussions where circumstances allow.**

4.33 Despite examples of timely actions and decisions undertaken under sections 3 and 5 of the WSP, there are some examples where they are untimely to include public law review meetings which do not consistently align with best practice expectations. Such inconsistencies can lead to children being at prolonged risk of harm and delay essential planning. **The local authority must ensure that decisions made, and actions taken, are consistently timely and in line with relevant procedures.**

4.34 Despite examples of partner agencies reporting concerns about children's safety promptly to the local authority practice is variable. We noted instances of delays and insufficient information in reports from schools. This places additional demand on duty practitioners in having to seek further information and risks delay in safeguarding action. The local authority has positively identified steps to address this. Sessions have been convened with partner agencies and third sector agencies to discuss when referrals meet eligibility for action in line with the WSP, and what would be expected to be included in reports made. **In order to further support timely safeguarding of children, the local authority should consider convening further regular forums with stakeholders.** This to support further understanding of eligibility for different services, as well as to ensure reports consistently include relevant details.

4.35 There are few examples where records do not evidence what welfare support, information and advice is provided for adults who are in positions of trust and who are subject of concerns/allegations in line with Section 5 of the WSP. **The local authority must ensure that records consistently clarify what support, information and advice is provided and by whom for adults who are deemed to be in positions of trust, and who are subject of concerns/allegations.**

Partnerships and Integration

<u>Strengths</u>

4.36 Leaders and practitioners continue to develop, strong partnerships locally, regionally and nationally, both strategically and operationally.

4.37 There are strong relationships across different departments in the local authority, which have successfully supported capital programmes. An example of this is the development of the local authority's own care provision for children looked after, Cartrefi Clyd. There are clear plans for further in house children's care homes to be developed. Children and families benefit as children are cared for locally, where their social, health, educational and linguistic needs are met.

4.38 Leaders actively contribute to the work of the Regional Safeguarding Board and Regional Partnership Board. Its active participation ensures its voice in shaping

how regional developments and responsibilities evolve is promoted. Equally, the forums enable the local authority to benefit from cross-agency learning and training opportunities which improve local practice and workforce capability.

4.39 The local authority, a neighbouring local authority and BCUHB have commissioned an evaluation of the service provided for disabled children by an independent consultant. This is to identify the strengths, challenges, risks and sustainability of the service and drive improvements in service provision. **Once the report is received, the local authority should drive forward any recommendations made.**

Areas for Improvement

4.40 Integration with health partners can be challenging due to differences in operational pace and systems. This can delay service developments and implementation of new initiatives. **The local authority should continue with its work with the BCUHB to further improve outcomes for children and families.**

4.41 Despite the success of Cartrefi Clyd, the service continues to face challenges in securing appropriate placements for children with complex needs, teenagers and children with additional health needs. The market for placements is limited and can be costly, and there are gaps for children who do not meet strict criteria for existing services. This contributes to the local authority accommodating a small number of children in services which are operating without registration. **The local authority should continue its efforts in ensuring a range of suitable accommodation within its area to meet the needs of the children it looks after.**

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

- Most inspection evidence was gathered by reviewing the experiences of 25 children and families through review and tracking of their social care record. We reviewed 22 social care records and tracked 3.
- Tracking a person's social care record includes having conversations with a child or person in receipt of social care services, their family or carers, key

worker, the key worker's manager, and were appropriate other professionals involved. In relation to the randomly selected tracked cases, we engaged with one family member through interview. Other family members were offered the opportunity to participate but declined, or an interview was assessed as not appropriate due to the child's circumstances, the nature of children's services' involvement, and/or because parents or carers did not consent for their children to be interviewed.

- We engaged, through interviews with 43 local authority employees (this included but not limited to social workers, practice leads, service managers, council leader and portfolio holder).
- We reviewed supporting documentation sent to CIW for the purpose of the inspection.
- We administered surveys to local authority social services practitioners, 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 was accepted on this occasion. We carried out focus groups and interviews through the medium of Welsh during this assurance check.

8.   Acknowledgements

CIW would like to thank practitioners, 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
Must	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.
Should	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.
Positive practice	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.
Prevention and Early Intervention	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 wellbeing. This principle centres on increasing preventative services within communities to minimise the escalation of critical need.
Voice and Control	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 wellbeing and the things that matter most to them.
Wellbeing	A principle of the Act which aims for people to have wellbeing in every part of their lives. Wellbeing 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 wellbeing and measuring the success of care and support.
Co-Production	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.

Multi-Agency working	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.
What matters	'What Matters' conversations are a way for professionals to understand people's situation, their current wellbeing, 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%