

# National Advisory Board meeting minutes - 10 June 2026

The minutes from the National Advisory Board Meeting on 10 June 2026.

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# Attendance

## Attendees:

- Ruth Hussey (Chair)
- Valerie Billingham (Office of the Older People's Commissioner)
- Kate Cubbage (Carers Trust)
- Stuart Davies (Provider Domiciliary Support Service)
- Tomos Davies (Children's Commissioner's Office)
- Peter Max (Provider Residential Care)
- Melanie Minty (Care Forum Wales)
- Claire Protheroe (CWLWM)
- Jenny Williams (ADSS Cymru)
- Gillian Baranski (Chief Inspector)
- Kevin Barker (CIW)
- Lou-Bushell Bauers (CIW)
- Neil Fewtrell (CIW)
- Sarita Marshall (CIW)
- Margaret Rooney (CIW)
- Elizabeth Wallwork (CIW)

## Apologies:

- Natalie Fletcher (Provider)
- Alyson Thomas (Llais)
- Bethan Louise Kay (Local Authority early years officer)
- Carol Bishop Jones (Carer and service user, adult services)
- Rachel Overton (Provider, full day care)

## 1. Welcome, apologies and introductions

- The Chair opened the meeting and noted apologies.
- Members present introduced themselves. New members and first-time attendees were welcomed.

## 2. Minutes of the previous meeting

- The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as an accurate record.

### 3. Outstanding actions

- Actions were discussed and noted.

### 4. Chief Inspector's update

Key developments since the last meeting included:

- **Election update:** A new Welsh Government Plaid Cymru-led administration is now in place, with an early focus on childcare and play, social care, and the elimination of profit from children's services.
- **Recent reports:** Reports show strong engagement across the sector, including the *Childcare and play: practice worth sharing* round-up report, which received positive feedback from providers.
- **Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards:** A joint report with Healthcare Inspectorate Wales highlighted demand in local authorities and health boards, recruitment challenges, and inconsistent practices. The recent Supreme Court decision will affect thresholds.
- **SASS response rate:** The SASS closed on 27 March with a 96% completion rate. In 2025, 97% of providers submitted their returns.
- **Annual Returns / joint data collection with Social Care Wales:** The response rate to date is approximately 95%.
- **Communications and engagement strategy:** A new strategy has been developed and will be published shortly.
- **Safeguarding:** Significant work is underway, including a major joint thematic review of the implementation of section 5 of the Wales Safeguarding Procedure – concerned with allegations against those in positions of trust.
- **Quality conferences and engagement:** CIW has delivered quality conferences with providers from both childcare and play and adult and children's services. These opportunities are helping to share good practice across services.
- **Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025:** Implementation marks a major long-term change to children's services. CIW is on track to deliver what is needed to support this.

### 5. What's happening in our local authority world

Lou Bushell-Bauers provided a national overview of Local Authority Social Services in Wales, drawing on inspection evidence, oversight activity and thematic reviews. The overall position is broadly stable, with most services judged to be good and supported by strong leadership and committed teams.

**Key strengths identified:**

- Strengths-based, person-centred practice is becoming more embedded
- Safeguarding systems and multi-agency working are generally strong
- Increasing use of reflective, relationship-based approaches, particularly in children's services

**Key system pressures:**

- Delays in timeliness (assessments, planning and reviews)
- Workforce shortages and retention challenges
- Placement and market sufficiency issues, especially for complex needs

Lou emphasised these pressures are interconnected and system-wide, affecting consistency and outcomes for people.

The key message is that while services are performing relatively well, sustained improvement will depend on addressing wider system pressures, not just individual service performance.

**CIW also outlined its own improvement programme, focusing on:**

- Stronger follow-up and accountability after inspections
- Better use of data and intelligence
- Increased joint working with partners
- Expanding learning and sharing of good practice across Wales

**Member contributions:**

- Strong agreement that Lou's overview reflects the current reality.

**Constructive challenge around:**

- Impact of policy changes (e.g. not-for-profit model)
- Consistency of data, reporting, and service user voice

**Reinforcement of key issues:**

- System pressures
- Carer burden
- Need for better alignment across systems and reporting

Valerie Billingham advised the Older People's Commissioner ran a survey of older people's experiences of social care between November 2025 and January 2026. A briefing will be published before recess.

## **Actions**

- Kevin Barker and Lou Bushell-Bauers to follow up on inconsistencies relating to unpaid carers.
- Older People's Commissioner report to be shared once available.

## **6. Voices from members**

- Peter Max raised a concern that current registration processes may be slowing down development of new care settings and should be reconsidered. Margaret Rooney advised our data shows our new approach has resulted in applications being processed quicker.
- Melanie Minty raised concerns about increasing instability in the care home sector, noting pressures around fees and a shift by some local authorities towards bringing services in-house which may lead to more closures and resident transfers. Better holistic support for residents and families, particularly those with complex needs, who may be most vulnerable during such transitions is needed.

CIW will monitor closures very carefully providing feedback as required.

## **7. CIW performance discussion, 2025-2026**

Margaret Rooney provided a performance update for CIW, covering inspection activity, staffing, and regulatory work.

**Overall, CIW is meeting most performance targets, particularly:**

- Timely inspection reports issued and published
- Strong performance in registration decision times

There has been a slight reduction in inspections, mainly due to:

- Previous vacancies and recruitment pause
- The 6-month induction period for new inspectors delaying full capacity to inspect

A key issue highlighted was overdue routine inspections:

- Caused by prioritising higher-risk inspections and responding to concerns

- Expected to improve as new inspectors become fully operational

An increase in concerns and notifications was noted, which:

- Adds pressure on inspection activity
- Can trigger additional inspections

Registration performance has improved significantly, partly due to:

- Changes in process (requiring full documentation upfront)
- Increased staffing
- Decrease in the number of applications received

The local authority inspection programme delivered:

- Inspections, improvement checks and joint work with partners (e.g. HIW)
- Strong engagement with people, staff and stakeholders

Margaret introduced a key discussion point on moving towards a more risk-based inspection model, considering:

- Inspecting high-performing services less frequently
- Allowing greater focus on higher-risk services

### **Member contributions:**

Use quality meetings as a way to:

- Maintain oversight between inspections
- Encourage continuous improvement without formal inspection pressure

Consider how to:

- Detect early warning signs (e.g. leadership changes)
- Provide more dynamic, real-time information to the public
- Reflect on resource implications of any new model
- Maintain incentives for improvement

## **8. Strategic Plan – achievements and what's changed**

Gillian Baranski provided an update on delivery of the Strategic Plan and priorities for the year ahead.

**Of the 11 planned actions, 7 were completed, with 4 delayed mainly due to:**

- System changes (new case management platform)
- Resource pressures (vacancies and high recruitment activity)
- Time needed for wider engagement and development work

**Key achievements included:**

- Progress on digital developments and registration improvements
- Collaborative work with Social Care Wales and partners
- Continued focus on sharing good practice

**Gillian highlighted external events significantly shaped priorities, including:**

- Safeguarding work following the Neil Foden crimes
- Implementation of the not-for-profit agenda in children's services
- Policy changes and preparation for the COVID-19 public inquiry

**Looking ahead, priorities include:**

- Delivering core regulatory functions
- Implementing the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan
- Improving engagement with people using services
- Developing a digital and data strategy
- Making better use of intelligence and data
- Building on the success of ratings to drive improvement across the sector

## **9. A digital strategy for CIW - prioritisation**

Neil Fewtrell introduced an early draft of CIW's digital strategy, seeking feedback from members.

**The strategy is aligned to Digital Standards for Wales, focusing on:**

- User needs
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Data-driven improvement

**The overall vision is to create:**

- Simple, inclusive digital services for users
- A more efficient digital working environment for staff

**Key focus areas include:**

- User-centred digital services (accessible, bilingual, inclusive)
- Improving how the public access information to make informed choices
- Streamlining interactions with providers to reduce burden
- Improving internal systems and workflows for staff
- Building digital skills and culture within CIW
- Ensuring secure, modern technology and strong governance

**The strategy recognises four main user groups:**

- Providers
- The public
- CIW staff
- Wider stakeholders

**Success will be measured through:**

- Easier interactions for providers and the public
- Increased use of digital services
- Reduced manual effort and improved productivity and decision-making

**Neil specifically asked members for:**

- Feedback on the vision and priorities
- Input on gaps or missing areas
- Support in establishing user groups, particularly involving providers and service users.

**Members feedback**

- The digital strategy was well received with agreement it is moving in the right direction and appropriately focused on user needs and accessibility.
- Members highlighted the need to strengthen the data and analytics element, including better data sharing, integration and use of intelligence to support risk-based regulation
- There was strong support for establishing user groups, particularly involving providers, with a gap identified in engaging service users and the public
- It was emphasised that a digital strategy should enable business outcomes, rather than operate as a standalone function
- Members noted increasing use of AI and digital tools across the sector, encouraging CIW to explore similar approaches and learn from others

- Suggestions were made to link into existing sector-wide digital initiatives and consider ethical use of technology
- It was also suggested that CIW could help progress a digital approach across providers less adept at using digital tools.

## 10. Any other business

- Next meeting confirmed 11 September 2026.

### Conflict of interest register

- Further to a request from members CIW has added to the Terms of Reference a point concerning 'carrying out an annual conflict of interest audit.'
- CIW is seeking to carry out an annual audit on any conflicts of interest members may have.
- The next audit will take place June 2027.

### Actions:

- All members to submit a declaration of interests (by end of June) to support the new NAB conflicts of interest process.
- A new conflict of interest form will be sent out by CIW, with members asked to declare any relevant professional or personal interests.

On receipt of declarations CIW will review and confirm whether it needs to be formally recorded.

### Micro care

Valerie Billingham asked about micro care. Margaret confirmed options are under consideration with further action pending Ministerial decision.

## NAB Action Log – 10 June 2026

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(<https://www.careinspectorate.wales/ciw-national-advisory-board-meeting-minutes-wednesday-10-june-2026-html>) to view in full.

| Ref | Action                                                                                                                                  | Owner         | Timescale / Next Update |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| A   | Kevin Barker and Lou Bushell-Bauers to follow up on inconsistencies relating to unpaid carers.                                          | Kevin/<br>Lou | 11<br>September         |
| A   | All members to submit a declaration of interests (by end of June) to support the new NAB conflicts of interest process.                 | NAB           | 30 June                 |
| A   | Older Peopleâ€™s Commissioner report to be shared once available.                                                                       | OPC           |                         |
| A   | A new conflict of interest form will be sent out by CIW, with members asked to declare any relevant professional or personal interests. | CI<br>Office  |                         |



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