

Making sure everyone works together to keep children across Wales safe

Rapid review of child protection arrangements

Report 2023





Care Inspectorate Wales check and inspect services. We make sure that services do the right things in the right ways. If they don't, we can do something about it.

In September 2023, we looked at how services across Wales work together to protect children who are at serious risk of harm.

We worked with:

- Estyn
- Healthcare Inspectorate Wales.

What we wanted to know

We wanted to check that professionals and staff can tell when a child is in danger and at significant risk of harm so they are placed on the Child Protection Register (CPR).

i What is a Child Protection Register (CPR)

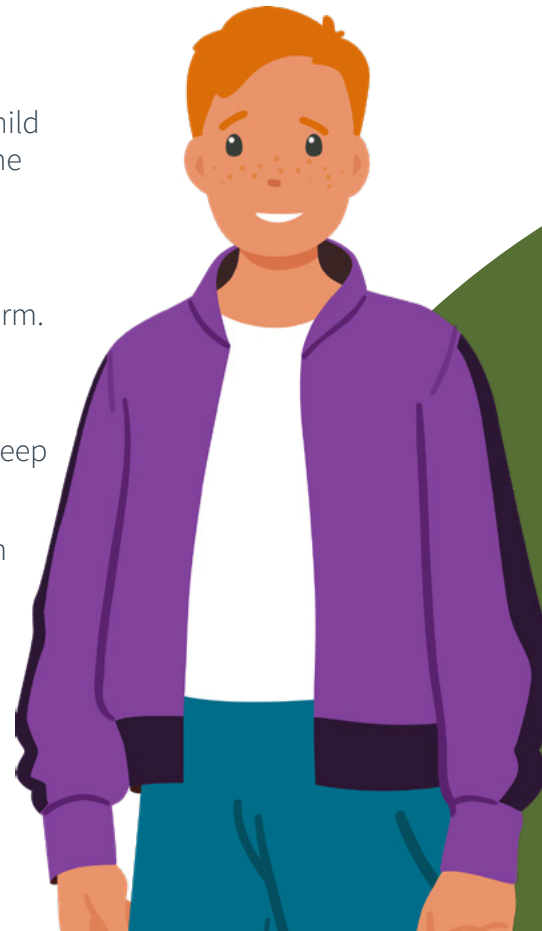
It's a list of the names of children who are at serious risk of harm. Each local authority has a CPR.

If a child is on the list, they will have a care and support protection plan so everyone knows what they have to do to keep them safe.

The child's name comes off the list when they are no longer in danger.

We looked at:

1. How services share information when they think a child is at risk.
2. How services work together.
3. How children's needs are met.
4. How leaders and managers work.
5. How a child's name goes on and comes off the CPR.
6. How staff spot (establish) a child is at risk.



3670

children were on the child protection register in Wales in 2021-22

What we did

We talked to different professionals such as those working in:

- education services
- children's services
- the police
- health.

We also talked to children and young people.

1. How services share information



What we found



There are good examples of information and reports being shared with children's services and **Child Protection Conferences**.

Some professionals, especially new staff, don't know how to spot the risk of 'significant harm' or danger to a child.

i **Child Protection Conference** — a meeting where people from different services can talk about a child and share information.

Sometimes the CPR is used in the wrong way like when children are put on it or kept on it to get help from services.

Some services and areas of Wales have different training and guidance for staff.

Some social care records for children are closed too quickly after they are taken off the CPR.

There are also gaps in sharing information that could lead to children being harmed or increasing risks.

The ways services share information is different and don't always work well together.

Schools sharing information

Some Welsh-medium schools find it hard to report problems in Welsh.

Some systems to share information between schools and local authorities are better than others.

Information needs to be shared better when a child moves school or goes from primary to secondary school.

Health services sharing information

The way information is shared between healthcare and children's services is better in some areas of Wales than others.

GP's aren't always kept up to date on information about children who are at risk of harm or included in Child Protection Conferences.

GP's records don't always say if a child is on the child protection register (CPR).

Some of the health services keep records on paper and some on computers, so they don't always work well together.





- ▶ When people report problems, children's services should tell them what's going on faster.
- ▶ Children should:
 - keep getting help even after they are taken off the CPR
 - get a health assessment and support for their health needs if they're on the CPR.
- ▶ Professionals and staff should:
 - be able to refer people or report problems in Welsh
 - have training and guidance on what 'significant risk of harm is' and how to spot it
 - go to Child Protection Conferences — this includes GPs and health workers.
- ▶ Health boards should have one main IT system (computer system) which everyone working in health can use to share information better.
- ▶ Schools and other education services should have one main IT system to help keep pupils safe.

2. How services work together



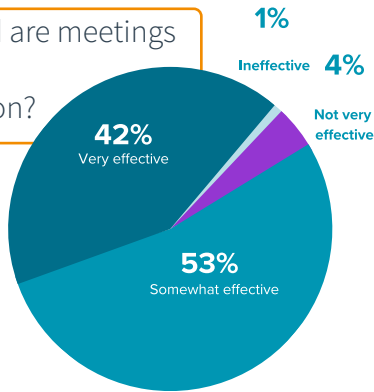
What we found



Services work together well and know how to make decisions.

Services get together often and work together to care for and support the child.

How good are meetings at sharing information?



Children's services don't always react fast enough, and meetings or visits get put off.

Meetings

Lots of professionals from across services and the police attend initial (the first) Child Protection Conferences (ICPC). But they could be better attended at review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC).

The Police could be more involved in Child Protection Conferences, especially when domestic violence is involved.

Services could talk to each other better so everyone knows what risks children face.

Some services aren't sure what standards and rules their local authority uses to keep children safe and deal with risks.

Meeting minutes aren't shared with services as much as they should be.

Training

Some areas of Wales offer staff training more than others.

Professionals and staff should have opportunities to learn new skills, work together, and learn from each other.

Since there are a lot of changes in the workforce, there should be a lot of chances for new staff who support children who are at risk to train and learn new skills.

40%
of Police said they'd not had training on Risk of Harm





- ➔ **Professionals and staff should have a clear framework or work model to follow so they know exactly the part they play to keep children safe.** Models of work help staff to know what to do when they're worried about children.
- ➔ **All services should be represented at planning meetings, Child Protection Conferences, and other groups.**
- ➔ **Regional safeguarding boards (who work with agencies who support children such as police, children's services and education), should make sure these services work together and:**
 - protect and support children
 - deliver training on child protection
 - give children the right care and support protection plan.



3. How children's needs are met

What we found



Social workers

Social workers are important and understand children's needs. Some children have had lots of different social workers, which makes it hard for them to build trust. Some children's records show that a social worker never came to see them or talk to them. When a child has a stable social worker, their wants and ideas are more likely to be heard.

Listening to children

Some parts of Wales are better than others at making sure children are seen, heard, and given chances to talk about their lives. Lots of professionals promote that it's important to listen to children and include them in choices. Children are sometimes given clear information about what's going on, but not always. Records show that children's language needs and culture are listened to and respected. Some young people said they would like to:

- go to the meetings and have a bigger say in how their lives are run.
- be more involved with their care and support plan and to know more about it.

Children said their Social Worker was...



Helping children to be heard – Advocate services

Sometimes children are offered an advocate, but not always. Some parts of Wales are better than others at providing advocacy services. Having an advocate has been helpful for a lot of parents.

Schools

The school staff knows how to help pupils who are on the CPR. Most children feel safe at school and can talk to and trust their teachers.





- ▶ The needs of the child should come first. Their life story should be the main topic of meetings, and it should help experts decide how to keep them safe.
- ▶ Professionals should listen to children more and make sure:
 - their views are included in records and plans
 - children can go to meetings.
- ▶ Assessments should look at every part of a child's life, including the rest of the family and adults who live elsewhere.



4. How leaders and managers work



What we found



Wales has a lot of good leaders and managers working across services.

In some parts of Wales, it's hard to find and keep skilled managers.

Checking work

Managers have good ways to check the work of their staff, but some services in Wales do this better than others.

There should be better ways to check (audit) work so staff can get help to learn new skills and get better.

Regional safeguarding boards

Regional safeguarding boards are a big part of how services are led and supported.

They are getting more requests to do additional things, but they have less money and resources.

Health Boards

Managers are there to help the staff and know what to do when a child is in danger.

There are good systems for staff to get help if they think a child is in danger.

Health Boards have safeguarding teams that staff can go to for advice.

Children's services

Children's services check the quality of their work in different ways. Some do it better than others.

There are problems hiring and keeping social workers, managers, and people with a lot of experience.

New staff who've just qualified don't always get the help they need.

Agency workers and temporary staff are filling in the gaps, but this can mean that children and families don't get the best help as they can leave at short notice.





The **National Safeguarding Board** helps **Safeguarding Boards** in different areas across Wales to work well, support people and keep people safe.

➔ The **National Safeguarding Board** and the **Regional Safeguarding Boards** should work together and:

- develop a clear way to check how services work to keep children safe and report on it
- set up clear ways for people to share information.



5. How a child's name goes on and off the CPR



What we found



Most children are put on CPR at the right time and taken off of it for the right reasons.

A lot of workers know what needs to happen and what choices to make.

Sometimes a child's name is left on the CPR when it shouldn't be because it means they will continue to get help. They should still be able to get help even if their names are no longer on the CPR.

Involving parents and carers

Most of the time, parents or carers are involved and know why choices are being made to keep their child safe.

A lot of parents and carers see the social worker's report before it goes to the child protection meeting, but not always.

Parents and carers don't always know:

- why their child is on the CPR or why they were taken off
- what's on the care and support plans for their children.

Safeguarding meetings

Since Covid, meetings take place in different ways—some are online, some are in person, and some are a mix of the two.

Some professionals think that face-to-face talks are better for families than virtual ones.

Sometimes parents and professionals join virtual meetings from places that aren't private.

Sometimes, parents don't have enough help with IT.

Leadership at these meetings is good. They:

- put the child's safety first and make sure the right decisions are made
- work well with parents and experts
- meet with the parents before and after the meeting
- let the staff talk about problems and question decisions.





- ▶ All records, including safeguarding meetings records should show the steps taken to keep children safe, what decisions were made, and why.
- ▶ Services should check the quality of their work and show what happens when someone challenges a decision.

6. How staff spot (establish) a child is at risk

What we found



Most professionals across services know how to spot a child who is in danger and how to protect them.

Some professionals and staff understand what it means for a child to be at risk of significant harm or how it affects their lives.

Child Protection Conference reports need to make the risk of significant harm clearer.

Some services include the chance of harm in their assessments, while others don't.

Care and support plans can sometimes put too much focus on support and not enough on safety.

Professionals do not always tell children and their families what worries them and what will happen if risks don't go down.





- ▶ Children's services should make sure:
 - assessments and information from different services are brought together so that a full picture of what's happening in the child's life can be seen
 - assessments are looked at again when something happens in the child's life.
- ▶ Services should make sure children are protected while decisions are being made.

Thanks for reading this

You can find the full report here:

careinspectorate.wales/rapid-review-child-protection-arrangements