

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

A Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements



October 2023

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 October 2023, we checked how services in Powys keep children safe.

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

Who was involved?

We had help from:

- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
- Healthcare Inspectorate Wales
- Estyn

We inspected:

- Powys Teaching Health Board
- local authority services – schools, children's services and more
- Dyfed Powys Police



What we did



We held focus groups.



We talked to children about their care and support.



We talked to staff and professionals.



We sent out surveys.



We checked 16 children's records.



We visited schools including a special school and held 'listening to learner' sessions with children and young people.



We looked at evidence.



We talked to organisations and groups.



We observed child protection conferences, a child exploitation strategy meeting and how staff work.

Some of our main findings

Support and protection

There are lots of skilled staff and professionals. They work together, act quickly and know how to keep children and young people safe.

Working together

Services and organisations work together well and understand what they must do to keep children safe.

Child protection meetings

Professionals from across services and organisations attend these meetings and share information to keep children safe.

The Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board

This Safeguarding Board covers a large area but they are good at sharing information and resources. They give guidance and help professionals understand how to spot risks, make referrals and protect children.

Pressure on services

More children and families are needing support from services.

Schools

Schools across Powys work well with many other services to support children and families.

Leadership

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

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.

But services use different systems and that can make sharing information harder.



Professionals and staff across Powys understand how abuse, neglect and harm impact children.

They:

- put children first in everything they do
- know how to spot risks and take action
- work together well with other services
- have a positive approach to learning and developing skills
- 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 young people and involve them in decisions
- stop children getting involved with unsafe people or crime
- attend meetings and child protection conferences
- take part in panels, groups and forums

Recruiting and keeping staff

Finding staff is a challenge and there aren't enough social workers.

Services have been filling the gap with agency workers which is expensive. Services are now starting to recruit more permanent staff.



Some of the good points we found

Powys Teaching Health Board

The Health Board works well with other services. They have lots of well trained staff that know how to spot risk and keep children safe.

They:

- make sure doctors, nurses and other professionals understand child protection
- check records and make sure children are safe when they carry out medical examinations
- make sure medical records are accurate, up-to-date and include information about a child's background, culture and language
- listen to children and young people
- make sure staff at the Minor Injuries Units know how to spot if a child is at risk
- attend safeguarding meetings and other meetings
- make sure care experienced children are safe and that staff understand the risks they face
- check if a child is on the child protection register
- make sure children are safe if their parents are getting support from mental health services
- have CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) that work with schools and other services
- protect unborn children
- work with services across other counties
- check the quality of their work and take action to improve

School nurses and health visitors:

- are told if a child goes to the Minor Injuries Units
- carry out a health assessment if a child's name is placed on the child protection register
- give young people advice and support through a text system called CHAT

Safeguarding team

The Health Board has also invested in a safeguarding team that:

- checks referrals
- gives advice to staff if they think a child is at risk
- gives staff support and training



In all the schools we visited pupils felt happy, well cared for, safe and listened to.



Schools and education

Keeping children safe is a big priority for schools and other education services.

They:

- step in quickly when they think a child is at risk
- know how to keep children safe
- know how to spot issues quickly and support families
- make sure children know how important healthy and safe relationships are, including online
- listen to children and young people
- support children's health and well-being
- work with other services including health services and children's services
- know how to share information and challenge decisions
- have Designated Safeguarding Leads
- have support from education officers
- have Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) to support well-being
- attend child protection conferences, safeguarding meetings and other forums
- have strong leaders and managers that understand their roles and responsibilities
- train staff to understand how to spot risks and keep children safe
- give Governors safeguarding training

Dyfed Powys Police

The police have good systems that help them spot when a child is at risk so they get to them quickly and protect them.

They:

- 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
- talk and listen to children and young people
- work well and share information with other services
- have systems to warn staff when a child is on the child protection register
- have specialist staff that check records and can spot when children are at risk of being abused, trafficked or exploited
- have call handlers who know how to assess risk and make sure the police get to vulnerable children quickly
- have leaders who understand their role and responsibilities
- train staff to know how to make informed decisions
- go to safeguarding meetings with other services
- support their staff's well-being

Call handlers know how to spot when a child is at risk and make sure the police get to them quickly.



Even though the number of referrals has increased, Children's Services don't have waiting lists.



Children's Services

Children's services have well-trained staff who know how to spot risks and keep children safe.

They:

- step in early and support families
- check referrals and take action quickly
- work with schools, other services and community organisations
- work with families and communities to keep children safe
- have well-being officers who help deliver care and support plans
- carry out assessments and make sure children get right level of support
- make sure information is up to date and accurate
- make sure care and support plans include the child's life experience
- share information with parents so they understand why decisions are being made and what needs to happen
- have leaders who understand their roles and responsibilities
- have managers available to support staff well-being
- have Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) who make sure children get the right support
- give staff training and opportunities to share good practice
- attend safeguarding meetings with other services
- check the quality of their work and take action to improve

Making it better for the future

Here are some ways we think services can improve:

➡ Share information and communicate better across services.

➡ Share information on the outcomes of referrals better.

➡ Make sure everyone knows the risks children face in their area.

➡ Make sure all staff have opportunities to train and develop skills.

➡ Make sure children on the child protection register get time alone with their Social Worker so they have opportunities to talk about their experience.

➡ Talk to and involve children and young people more.

➡ When a child is missing from care, make sure information is recorded and shared in the right ways.

➡ Make sure care and support protection plans put the child first and have clear outcomes.

➡ Make sure records include information about all areas of a child's life — ethnicity, religion and language.

➡ Make sure care and support plans are checked and updated regularly.

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

➡ Take action to recruit and keep staff across all services, including Welsh speaking staff.

➡ Make sure all children are safe, including those who are educated at home.

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

➡ Make sure children can have care and support in the Welsh language.

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.

Thanks for reading this.

You can read the full report here:

careinspectorate.wales/joint-inspectorate-review-child-protection-arrangements-jicpa-powys-2023

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