

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

A Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements



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 March 2025, we checked how services in Pembrokeshire 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:

- Hywel Dda University Health Board
- local authority services – schools, children's services and more
- Dyfed-Powys Police.



What we did



We looked at evidence.



We checked 30 children's records.



We talked to staff from PRUs (Pupil Referral Units).



We talked to children about their care and support.



We held focus groups.



We visited schools and talked to children, young people, teachers and others.



We talked to staff and professionals from across services.



We talked to organisations and groups.



We talked to parents, carers and families.



We studied documents sent to us as part of the inspection.



We sent out surveys.



We sat in and observed a meeting about planning services and a child protection conference.

Some of our main findings

Support and protection

Pembrokeshire has lots of skilled staff and professionals. They work together, act quickly and know how to keep children and young people safe. They understand children's needs and experiences.

Pressure on services

More children are needing care, support, and protection.

The number of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) has more than doubled in the last two years.



More children are being cared for and looked after by the Local Authority.



But there is extra pressure on budgets.

Childcare Assessment Team (CAT)

This team works well with other services and professionals value their support. To improve their work they need to:

- respond quicker in some circumstances when there's a concern about a child
- let people know and confirm in writing the outcomes of referrals.

Recruiting and keeping staff

Pembrokeshire are working hard to develop a stronger workforce. But the pressure of increased workloads has had an effect on teams and staff well-being.

Working together

Services and organisations work together well and understand what they must do to keep children safe. Staff understand that keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility.

Local Operational Groups (LOGs)

All local authorities in the region have Local Operational Groups that:

- monitor local child safety issues
- help services work together
- support services to improve.

The Signs of Safety (SoS)

Most services understand and use the Signs of Safety toolkit to help keep children safe. It helps professionals:

- make sure children are protected and cared for in the right ways
- listen to what children have to say about their life and what matters to them
- work with families.



Some of our main findings

Partnership strengths

Professionals and staff across services:

- aim to put children first in everything they do
- have a positive focus on keeping children safe
- know how to spot risks and take action
- work together well, especially the police and social services
- share information and report concerns in the right ways
- understand how abuse, harm and neglect impact children's lives
- step in early to support children and families
- challenge and learn from each other
- attend meetings and child protection conferences
- know where to get advice and support.

Safeguarding champions

Pembrokeshire has safeguarding champions working across services.

Child protection meetings

Professionals from across services and organisations attend these meetings and share information to keep children safe. Police attendance at these meetings has improved.

Leadership

Most senior leaders and managers have a positive focus on safeguarding. They understand their responsibilities and put children's safety at the centre of their work.

Leaders have a clear vision; 'Working together to improve lives.' Keeping children and young people safe is a big part of this.



Some of the good points we found

Hywel Dda University Health Board

The Health Board has lots of staff that know how to spot risks, raise concerns and keep children safe. They:

- know how to report concerns and get children the support they need
- have good safeguarding systems and policies
- carry out assessments and give children the right support
- have improved their information and recording system
- have reduced the waiting times for CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)
- have a Pre-Birth Team to protect babies and unborn children.
- attend safeguarding meetings and other meetings
- share information and work well with other services including schools.

Leadership

Some areas of the Health Board have stronger leaders who take action, challenge working practice and responsibility for safeguarding than others.

The CLA (Children Looked After) Team

This team makes sure children who are looked after, have health assessments and are kept safe. They listen to children and involve them in decisions about their care. They also keep records and other information up to date and accurate.

New ways of working

The Health Board has put a new safeguarding lead in one of the Hospital Emergency Departments to make sure children are safe. They are exploring doing this in other hospitals.

Health Visitors

Health Visitors know how to spot risks and work to make sure families get the right support. They carry out assessments, listen to families and record information about a child's life. They work well with midwives and children's community nurses.



Education

All schools, the PRU and education services have high standards of safeguarding. They:

- step in quickly when they think a child is at risk
- know how to spot issues and support families
- work well with other services to improve children's lives
- have strong leaders that understand their roles and responsibilities
- make sure all staff have safeguarding training
- have up-to-date safeguarding plans and policies
- make sure new staff know how to keep children safe
- have a digital platform to share information and raise concerns — the Information Case Management System
- work with the Education Welfare Service (EWS) who follow up on concerns about a child
- work with Family Engagement Officers
- get advice from the local authority if there's a concern about a member of staff
- know which children are on the child protection register and make sure they get support
- have ways for the public to raise concerns about a child's safety
- listen to children and young people and involve them in decisions
- have named 'trusted adults' for children and young people to talk to
- teach children and young people about good mental health, well-being, and healthy relationships
- work with organisations to support families
- go to child protection meetings and other meetings with services.

The Director of Education

They have the role of lead safeguarding officer and make it clear that it's everyone's responsibility to keep children safe.

Improving how they work

Each year, the Education Manager visits schools and the PRU to make sure they are keeping children safe and supporting well-being. Each school and the PRU check their work and give the Education Manager all the information they need. The Manager writes a report for each school on how to improve.



Dyfed-Powys Police

The police have well-trained officers and staff who keep vulnerable children safe. They:

- know how to spot when a child is at risk, get to them quickly, and protect them
- know how to collect, share and use information to keep children safe
- have a new team to investigate child abuse concerns and work with social services
- have given staff specialist training
- have well trained officers and staff who continue to improve their knowledge
- have good systems to spot risk and keep people safe
- work well with the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and other specialist teams
- have leaders that understand their roles and responsibilities
- have call handlers who spot risk and help officers get there quickly
- have staff who check work and improve how the police keep vulnerable people safe
- have staff to check missing children reports and make sure they're treated as high risk
- have staff to check domestic abuse records and make sure children living there get support
- listen to and record what children have to say about their experiences
- step in to stop offenders connecting with children
- work with schools to investigate things like sexting and other types of online child abuse
- go to risk management meetings and other meetings
- support officers and staff well-being
- check and keep improving their work.

The INTACT programme

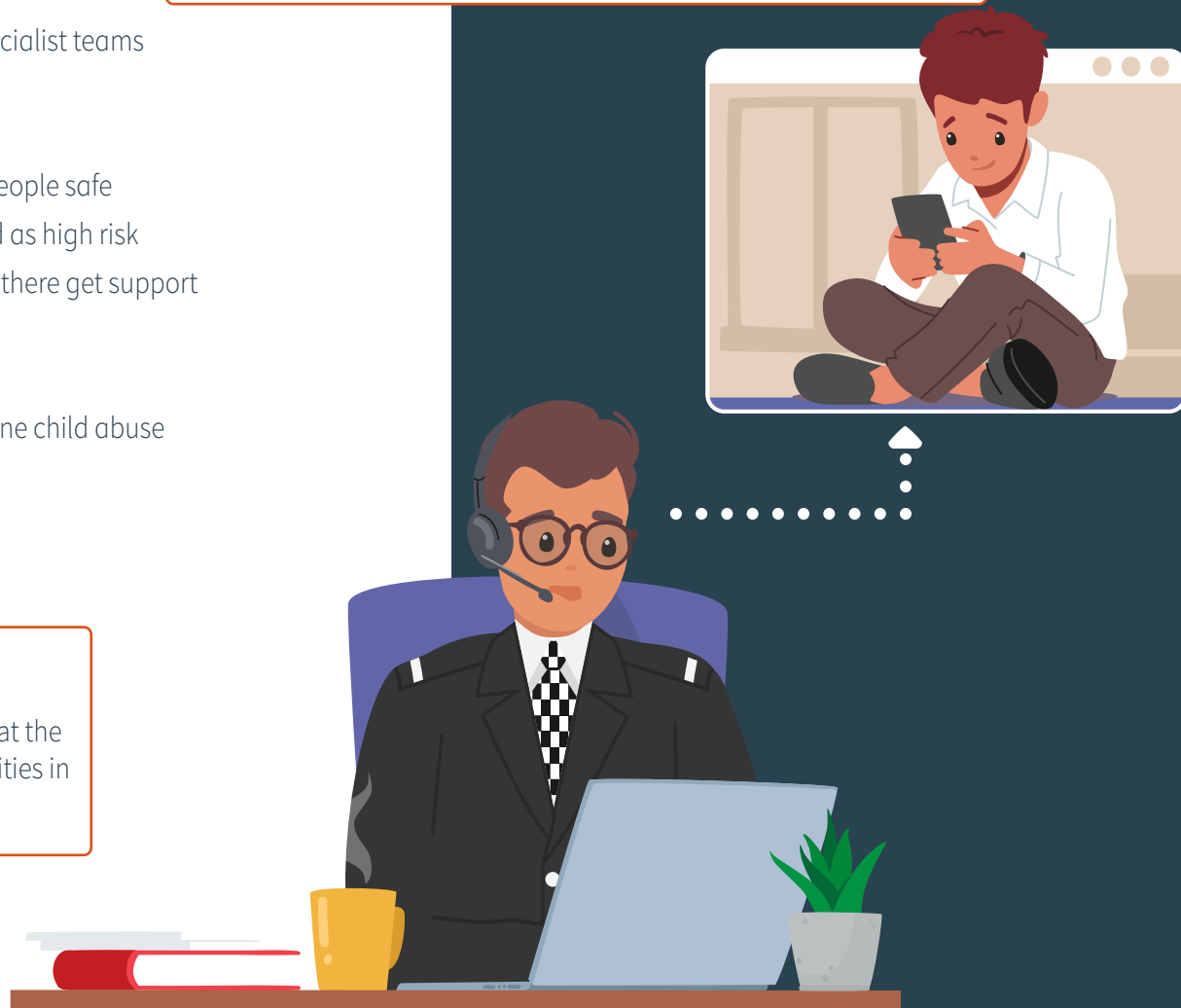
This programme helps the police work with other services working to keep communities safer and help children and young people get the right support, at the right time. Part of this includes connecting children and young people to activities in the community so they don't get involved in crime.

Improving their work

The police are improving their information systems so they have the up-to-date information they need to keep children safe.

Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass helps the police and education services work together. The Police make sure schools know when a pupil needs support because they've experienced domestic abuse.



Children's Services

Staff are highly dedicated and committed to promoting the safety and well-being of children. They:

- put children first in everything they do
- work hard to improve the lives of children and families
- step in early and support children and families
- deliver support in the Welsh language
- work well with other services
- make sure records and information are up to date and accurate
- keep contact with and visit families
- make sure they see children alone so they can listen to their experiences
- have different ways to involve children and listen to their views like using toys and art
- share information with parents and involve them in decisions
- clearly tell families what needs to happen and why
- work well with Independent Reviewing Officers who check children are getting the right support
- have the Pembrokeshire Families' Support Network (PFSN) that helps families connect to services
- support and advise families who choose to home educate their children
- go to safeguarding meetings with other services.

Leadership and managers

Children's services have experienced leaders and managers. They work hard to reduce pressure on staff and increase capacity. They're available to talk and support staff well-being.

Teams

There are lots of teams and projects that can step in early to support families and keep children safe including:

- the Family Support Team (FST)
- the Edge of Care Team
- the Childcare Assessment Team (CAT)
- the Parent and Baby Early Intervention project
- the Step-Up Step-Down Fostering project.

Overcoming challenges

Stepping in early and supporting families makes a big difference. But the demands on staff and limited resources is making this harder. So, Children's Services have been given more funding to help deal with this and improve ability to support people. They are looking at adding more staff to their teams.



Making it better for the future

Here are some ways we think services can improve

➡ Listen to children and young people more and involve them in decisions.

➡ Make sure all staff understand how important it is to keep up-to-date records.

➡ Make sure staff follow-up on concerns and referrals.

➡ Services should make sure reports are ready for meetings so everyone knows what is happening and why. This will help people make better decisions and reduce delays for children getting support.

➡ Leaders at the Health Board need to:

- make sure staff attend safeguarding training
- listen to feedback more.

➡ Social services and the Health Board need to:

- check the quality of their work
- give staff good and frequent supervision sessions
- give staff opportunities to share good practice, develop their skills and learn.

➡ Make sure IT systems can connect and share information better, especially at the Health Board and the Police.

➡ Talk to and involve family members in decisions more.

➡ Recruit more staff to meet the demands in Children's Services so there are no gaps in support.

➡ All services need to communicate better, for example between school nurses and social workers. Sharing information at the right time makes a big difference.

➡ Make sure staff have support to look after their well-being and handle pressures.

➡ Make sure Child Protection health checks and medicals happen in Pembrokeshire so children get support quicker.

➡ The police need to improve safety planning for children who are part of an investigation.

➡ Children need to be offered an advocate so they can have help to be heard.



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:

