

# Checking learning disability services in Torfaen

What we found out



# How to use this report



This is an Easy Read version of: **Care Inspectorate Wales & Healthcare Inspectorate Wales - Assurance Check of Torfaen County Borough Council's Community Learning Disability Team (CLDT) and the Learning Disabilities Directorate within Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.**



You might need help to read it. Ask someone you know to help you. Words in **bold blue** may be hard to understand. You can check what they mean on **page 37**.



Where the document says **we**, this means **Care Inspectorate Wales** and **Healthcare Inspectorate Wales**. For more information contact:



**Websites:**

[www.careinspectorate.wales](http://www.careinspectorate.wales)

[www.hiw.org.uk](http://www.hiw.org.uk)



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# About this report



We are **Care Inspectorate Wales** and **Healthcare Inspectorate Wales**.



From **29 September to 1 October 2025**, we did an **Assurance Check** of:

- Torfaen County Borough Council's Community Learning Disability Team and
- The Learning Disabilities Directorate in Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.



An **Assurance Check** is a check to make sure they are doing their jobs well and following the rules.



This report shares what we found out.

# What we do



We check how well councils and health boards are doing their jobs and helping people.

Our focus is on how well they work in these 4 areas:



**1. People** - Make sure everyone has a say and control in their life.



**2. Prevention** - Keep the need for support low and stop problems from getting worse.



**3. Partnerships** - Work well with others to provide good, lasting services.



**4. Wellbeing** - Protect people from harm and abuse, so they feel safe, happy, and supported.





We also talked to 18 people who use services or their carers.



We talked to 29 council workers and health board workers and checked documents.



We did surveys with people who use services, carers, and council workers.

# What we found



We found good work being done.



And we found some things that need to be better.



There are some things we want the council and health board to do.



When we say **must**, this means changes that need to be done to follow the law.



When we say **should**, this means changes that will make things better but are not law.

# People

## Good work



Nearly all people said their care is good or very good. Staff are kind, caring and listen well.



Care could be better if social workers speak to people, not just to carers or family.



The council trains staff to focus on each person and what matters to them.



Staff often stay in their jobs a long time. This helps people trust staff. And it helps staff learn what people like.



Most people have plans that focus on their strengths and goals. After reviews with the psychiatrist, people get letters in plain English and GPs get a copy.



The council has a team that checks if care plans match what people need and want. This helps people get better results.



Staff think about how people communicate. They offer information in Welsh language.



Staff use tools like **talking mats**. This tool uses pictures or symbols placed on a mat to help people share their thoughts, feelings, and choices.



Staff work with other services to make information easier to understand.



Using Easy Read for all documents would help even more.



Managers give guidance and support on time. Staff said this helps their work and personal life. Staff have sessions to learn and reflect. This helps staff wellbeing.



The council brings staff together to focus on what matters to each person and their support network. This helps staff learn from appeals and support safe and fair decisions.



Most reviews happen on time. People's views are usually recorded. People can give feedback to make services better.



Most health board staff complete 3 levels of training.



The council and health board give training about the laws **Mental Health Act** and **Mental Capacity Act**. This builds staff skills and protects people's rights.

## Things that need to be better



Services need to include people with a learning disability more in their care. Their views are not always written clearly in plans or **safeguarding** records.



**Safeguarding** means keeping people safe from harm and abuse.



**The council and health board should include people's views in plans and safeguarding records.**



People often get help to speak up from their family or carers.



Formal advocacy is not offered enough. Formal advocacy is official help for people to say what they want. Some people needed it but were not offered it.



**Leaders and staff should offer formal advocacy whenever someone needs it.**



The council meets staff once a year to plan training.



Staff want more training with different agencies. They want detailed training suited to their own jobs.



In the council and health board reviews of staff work are not always done on time.



Leaders should make staff training and work reviews better.



The council does not have enough **Best Interest Assessors**. These are workers who check what is best for someone who cannot make some choices for themselves.



The council offers training, but few workers do it. This may be because doing it does not give extra pay. Leaders know this and are looking at ways to make it better.



**The council must train enough staff to do Best Interest Assessments so they meet legal rules.**



Some health staff meet people in the community. Some meet people in Alders House. This building is hard to find and in bad condition. It does not match the good work done by staff.



**The health board should check the use of Alders House. They must make sure staff have safe and suitable rooms.**

# Prevention

## Good work



Leaders know it is important to help people early. They focus on people's strengths and help them stay safe and well.



They want people to be part of their community and reach their goals.



The council is making lasting changes that put people first:

- Adult services are part of the council team that manages community services.



- There is 1 place for people to get information and advice.



- Home support services have joined to make 1 **reablement** service.



**Reablement** means providing support to help people regain skills and confidence after an illness, injury or hospital stay.



Health board leaders know they need to prevent problems more. They are checking how they can give more care in the community.



They should include feedback from partner organisations and people who use services.



People get support from teams that work well together. Different workers help plan support.



Staff adjust support quickly when someone's needs change. This helps stop problems and gives better results.



Some people have a wellbeing worker for longer assessments. This finds out what matters to them, like hobbies and being part of the community. It helps people not use day services.



People get help to join community groups and work. **Reablement** and Ty Glas y Doran hub help people do more for themselves. Some people move from 24-hour support to more independent living.



A local day service works with other groups to help people join activities in the community. This helps people do more of what they enjoy.



Plans that help staff support someone's behaviour in a good way work well when used. Workers should always use them when needed.



People get support when things change, with clear plans for what to do. This helps stop problems and builds trust.

## Things that need to be better



Often, people who get care paid for by both the council and the health board are not offered direct payments. This reduces people's choice and control.



Welsh Government is thinking about letting health boards give direct payments for healthcare. This could give people more choice and help people get care at home.



**Leaders must make sure direct payments are always offered following the law.**



**The health board should focus on results and better choice for people.**



People with a learning disability made the Gwent Charter for Working Together. It says what matters to them, like fair chances to work.



A study showed people with a learning disability face barriers to training and work. Many want more support. And half want more chances to work. There is a big gap between what people want and what they can get.



**The council should use this study to improve chances for people with a learning disability to find work.**



The study says local plans should include work for disabled people and match plans for Wales. And the council should hire disabled people and make sure all parts of the council welcome them.



**Council leaders should keep working to agree to give support.**



**The health board should work with social services to develop supported work.**



People need more support when they have big life changes, like moving to adult services.



Leaders know this is a problem and are looking at how to make services better.



**Leaders should keep making better support for people at times of big change.**



Health board waiting lists can delay support for people and affect results. Waiting lists are checked and put in order of risk.



**The health board must keep checking waiting lists and record clearly how they put people in order.**



Staff are completing more carer assessments and are doing them on time.



Carers can get support from the **Carers Hub** and **Bridging the Gap** service. But information about services is not always clear. Carers also have different results after assessments.



**Leaders should talk to carers and find ways to make services and support better.**



In 2024 the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales** shared a report about carer's needs assessments. It has ideas on things like sharing information and training.



**Council leaders should use the report to improve their services.**

# Partnership

## Good work



Communication between staff is respectful and works well. Staff said the health board and social services work together **well** or **very well**.



Managers let workers try new ideas. They said managers and leaders are friendly, skilled, and supportive.



There is a focus on learning, strengths and community. The health board and social services work as one team.



Health and social care teams work in the same building. This gives people better access to services and fewer delays. It helps staff work well together and gives people better care.



Most people can get services quickly, when an assessment shows they have a need.



Waiting lists for home support, **reablement**, and care home services are short. This shows good working and planning with service providers.



Council and health board leaders want to improve service provider forums. To help them work together and share ideas.



The council changed its plans for buying care and support services in 2025 to match Welsh Government rules. Leaders have a plan up to 2030 for what care people need and what services they will buy.

## Things that need to be better



The lead nurse job is empty, and there are not enough nurses. This causes problems with sharing information and making decisions.



**The health board should hire more nurses, to improve leadership and help make waiting lists shorter.**



Most people get support with their physical health. People get equipment, changes at home, and help with medicines. But there are problems:



- People with a learning disability cannot always get help from physical disability teams.



- Many people cannot see their GP on time.



The health board must work with GP practices to make sure people get their annual health check and a named GP.



Leaders should find ways to make it easier for people to see their GP. And get help from physical disability teams.



The council offers short breaks and **Shared Lives** placements. Many of these are outside the local area. Some carers say this is hard and can delay support.



Leaders should keep listening to people and carers and make these services better to meet needs locally.

## Good work



Staff follow the rules when dealing with **safeguarding** concerns. Managers check this work and involve experts when needed.



Checks happen on time and records show how staff made each decision. Concerns are passed to senior staff when needed. This helps keep people safe.



Staff complete **Best Interest** decision forms well. They:

- Write clear reasons for each decision.
- Speak to the right experts and family members.
- Think about each person's needs and their life.



This follows the law and supports fair decisions.



Council leaders use a tool that shows them information about services. This helps them check they are following the law.



Managers do checks to:

- Check how staff are working.
- Spot common problems.
- Understand what people need.



This helps leaders see what is working well. And what needs to be better.



Health board leaders check what is working well through regular meetings. These meetings look at results, money, staffing and risks. This helps leaders know about problems and make services better.

## Things that need to be better



Staff do not always write down the person's views in risk assessments and **safeguarding** documents. They should include what the person thinks and sometimes what carers, family, or advocates think.



**Leaders should help staff make this part of their daily work.**



There is a national tool to help decide which **Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards** cases are most urgent. The waiting list is checked often but delays still happen. There are not enough staff or trained doctors.



**Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards** is a legal process. It is used when a person cannot decide about their own care or treatment. It lets staff limit someone's freedom to keep them safe from harm.



**Leaders should keep raising these problems with the Integrated Service Partnership Board.**



Staff look for people in the community who might need legal protection if their freedom is limited.



Staff use a tool to choose the most urgent cases and send these to the Court of Protection. The court is busy, so some people do not get the legal protection they should have.



**The council must make sure staff find everyone who may be deprived of their liberty. And send cases to the Court of Protection on time.**



There are systems to check **Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards**. Delays happen because there are not enough staff or resources. Delays affect applications, renewals, and reviews.



**Leaders should keep checking the system and work with the Integrated Service Partnership Board to make things better.**

# What happens next



We want the council and health board to fix the things that need to be better.



At **Care Inspectorate Wales**, we will check the work done by the council.



The council should share what works well with other councils to make services better across Wales.



At **Healthcare Inspectorate Wales**, we will check health things that need to be better with an Improvement Plan.



It will say what needs to change, who will do it, and when.



You can find out how we use your information at:  
[www.careinspectorate.wales/how-we-use-your-information](http://www.careinspectorate.wales/how-we-use-your-information).



We offered people the choice to take part in Welsh,  
but no one wanted to use it.



Thank you to the people, staff and partners who  
helped with our checks.

# Hard words

## Assurance Check

An Assurance Check is a check to make sure they are doing their jobs well and following the rules.

## Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards is a legal process. It is used when a person cannot decide about their own care or treatment. It lets staff limit someone's freedom to keep them safe from harm.

## Reablement

Reablement means providing support to help people regain skills and confidence after an illness, injury or hospital stay.

## Safeguarding

Safeguarding means keeping people safe from harm and abuse.