

Meeting of:	COUNCIL
Date of Meeting:	24 SEPTEMBER 2025
Report Title:	CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW) IMPROVEMENT CHECK OF CHILDRENS AND FAMILY SERVICES JUNE 2025
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	LAURA KINSEY HEAD OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	This report describes the findings of a Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Improvement Check (IC) visit to Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) children and family services in June 2025. The improvement check focused on understand how well the Council has progressed recommendations for improvement set out in a Performance Evaluation Inspection and Improvement Check undertaken in May and December 2022 and a CIW led Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) undertaken in June 2023. The IC found that BCBC leaders have consistently prioritised children and family services, to support sustained and timely improvements. This, in turn, has significantly strengthened the quality and delivery of our social services functions.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Council the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Improvement Check (IC) findings report and to request that the Council considers the report and scrutinises the associated Action Plan.

2. Background

- 2.1 CIW carry out inspection activity in accordance with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the quality standards in the *Code of Practice in relation to the performance and improvement of social services in Wales*. This helps them

determine the effectiveness of local authorities in supporting, measuring and sustaining improvements for people.

- 2.2 Further to a Performance Evaluation Inspection in May 2022 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) completed an Improvement Check in December 2022 and noted the *'local authority must continue to assure itself of the priority status, pace, quality, delivery, and impact of its improvement activity'*.
- 2.3 In June 2023 CIW and partner inspectorates carried out a Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) in Bridgend. They found leaders and partners had a shared vision and positive approach to safeguarding. The local authority and partners had taken action to instigate learning following critical incidents, there were ambitious plans to drive forward improvements, and it was important to manage these changes with careful oversight. It was a relatively early stage in the Council's improvement journey and whilst there were indication positive changes were being progressed further work was needed to stabilize the workforce and embed a model of practice that would sustainably improve outcomes for children and families.
- 2.4 The most recent IC carried out in June 2025 focussed on progress made in the areas for improvement, which were identified during the inspection activities of 2022 and 2023.
- 2.5 The scope of the inspection included:
 - The experiences of people at the time of the improvement check.
 - The outcomes people achieve through their contact with social services
 - Evidence of improvements made following inspections in 2022/2023 and plans for service development and improvement
- 2.6 In advance of the inspection, a range of information/documentation was submitted including:
 - Strategy and Structure
 - Key Documents and Operational Protocols
 - Cabinet/Committee Reports
 - Development Work
 - Performance Data and Quality Assurance
 - Workforce and Supervision information
- 2.7 The inspection team reviewed the experiences of people's journey through care and support through review and tracking of their social care record. The team reviewed 25 cases, with more detailed case tracking of 3 of these cases. This included a conversation with the person receiving support and/or their family, carers, advocates, or key workers afterwards interviewing the allocated case worker and their manager.

- 2.8 In addition CIW also sought the views of staff and stakeholders through focus groups and by using a range of surveys to gather information to inform the inspection. The latter included public surveys.
- 2.9 Other activities included observations of meetings and reviews of complaints and compliments.

3. Current situation/ proposal

3.1 The CIW inspection report is attached at **Appendix 1**.

3.2 Summary of findings

3.2.1 The table below summarises CIW findings and further details are available throughout the full report. It should be noted that there were no areas for improvement from the previous inspection identified where no improvements had been made.

Principle	Areas of improvement identified in 2022-23	Progress identified at this Improvement Check
People	Seeking, hearing and recording the voice of the child	Improvements made and must be sustained
People	People consistently feel listened to and treated with dignity and respect	Some improvements made – further action is required
People	Workforce recruitment and retention	Improvements made and must be sustained
People	Recording demographics and associates	Improvements made and must be sustained
People	Management oversight	Improvements made and must be sustained
People	Staff support, supervision, and training	Improvements made and must be sustained
Prevention	Provision of information, advice, and assistance (IAA). People receive the right support at the right time	Some improvements made – further action is required
Prevention	Placement sufficiency	Some improvements made – further action is required
Partnerships	Thresholds for early help and statutory services	Improvements made and must be sustained
Partnerships	Learning from reviews and audits	Improvements made and must be sustained
Wellbeing	Compliance with statutory responsibilities	Improvements made and must be sustained
Wellbeing	Arrangements for supervised contact between children and their families	Improvements made and must be sustained

Wellbeing	Identification and response to child exploitation	Some improvements made – further action is required
Wellbeing	Ensuring priority status, pace, quality, delivery, and impact of its improvement activity	Improvements made and must be sustained

3.3 Recommendations and Next Steps

- 3.3.1 Overall, the inspection is a positive commendation of the work of the Council to improve the way vulnerable children and families are supported and the quality of outcomes they receive. There are some areas where further work is required, and an Action Plan has been developed in response to the recommendations made by CIW and can be found at **Appendix 2**. The actions in the attached plan are cross-referenced with the actions in the Council's 3 year strategic plan for children and families which was approved by Council in September 2023 to ensure there is alignment and no duplication of effort. The progress to implement the actions will be overseen through the Social Services and Wellbeing Quality and Performance Framework and reported to the Social Services Improvement Board chaired by the Leader of the Council. The improvements required will be integrated into the Council's regulatory tracker which is reported to Governance and Audit Committee and can be scrutinised regularly by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a frequency to be determined by the Committee.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:
- Long Term – Social Services is demand led and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) focusses on sustainable prevention and well-being outcomes for the future. There is a requirement to meet the needs of people in the longer term and, because of rising demographics and increasing complexity, the remodelling and transformation of services continues to be a priority.

- Prevention – one of the four themes within the CIW inspection is Prevention. CIW have identified areas of strength for Prevention in their report. The areas for improvement are also included, and actions for improvement have been addressed within the Action Plan at **Appendix 2**.
- Integration – one of the four themes within the CIW inspection is Partnerships and Integration. CIW have identified areas of strength for Integration and Partnerships in their report. The areas for improvement are also included, and actions for improvement have been addressed within the Action Plan at **Appendix 2**. The SSWBA requires local authorities to work with partners, particularly the NHS and the Police, to ensure care and support for people and support for carers is provided. The report refers to work with statutory partners.
 - Collaboration – The collaborative approaches described in the report are managed and monitored through various strategic and collaborative boards across Directorates and with partners
 - Involvement – the key stakeholders are the people who use social care. There is considerable engagement including surveys, stakeholder meetings, feedback forms and the complaints process. The provision of accessible information and advice helps to ensure that the voice of adults, children and young people is heard.

5.2 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct climate change or nature implications associated with the report and associated action plan at this stage.
- 6.2 The importance of decarbonisation to help protect and sustain the environment over the long term and in line with our climate change ambitions will be considered and promoted as and when strategies identified within the action plan are implemented.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 This report and action plan has a direct link to safeguarding and corporate parenting:
- 7.2 The Council's workforce shares a responsibility both collectively and individually to ensure that children and adults at risk are protected from harm. Council employees,

Councillors, volunteers, contractors, and partners who encounter children or adults at risk in the course of their duties are expected to understand their responsibility and where necessary take action to safeguard and promote the welfare of people so that everyone can live their life free from harm, abuse, and neglect. The children we provide with care and support are among the most vulnerable in our community, and the services they receive are vital in keeping them safe. This action plan will ensure we continue to provide a high standard of service.

7.3 When a child or young person enters the care of the Council, the role of being a parent is taken on by the local authority. This constitutes Corporate Parenting. The Council has the responsibility to seek positive outcomes for care experienced children and young adults who are care leavers in the same way a good parent would for their own child. Bridgend's Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out the following commitments:

- We will keep you safe, give you somewhere comfortable to live where you are cared for properly and make sure you have all that you need.
- We will make sure that all of those that work with you and support you are well trained and treat you with dignity and respect
- We will work with you to understand your housing needs and make plans so that we can support you.
- We will help you with the skills and information you need and develop a clear pathway of support for you to live independently.
- We will strengthen the support given by all of your corporate parents; improve the contact we have with you, and we will keep in touch to see how you are doing after you are 18 years of age.

7.4 These will continue to be delivered through the action plan. From early years into adulthood all our children, young people and young adults should be kept safe, happy and have every opportunity to thrive.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation(s)

9.1 It is recommended that Council notes the CIW findings report and associated Action Plan.

Background documents

CIW Improvement Check report

Local Authority Action Plan