

Meeting of:	SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	25 SEPTEMBER 2025
Report Title:	CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW) FOSTERING SERVICE INSPECTION JUNE 2025
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	DAN BOLTON GROUP MANAGER – PROVIDER SERVICES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	This report presents the findings of the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspection of Bridgend County Borough Council’s local authority fostering service, which took place in June 2025. The inspection followed a previous inspection in November 2023, where eight areas were identified as requiring significant improvement. CIW found that progress has been made in all areas with some requiring further improvement. Particular strengths related to safeguarding, oversight, and the support provided to prospective carers. The service has benefited from recent leadership stability and a clear strategic focus on improving outcomes for children. However, three areas continue to require further improvement: the robustness of matching processes, consistency in the review and monitoring of foster carers, and the quality and delivery of carer training. CIW did not issue any Priority Action Notices which reflects that some improvements had been made across all areas. The Local Authority has already taken steps to address these areas as part of a wider service remodelling programme. An improvement plan is in place and will be monitored through the Council’s governance mechanisms including the regulatory tracker which is reported to Governance and Audit Committee and robust scrutiny at regular intervals to be determined by the Committee.

	The report and associated actions are presented for Committee scrutiny and recommendation prior to presentation to Cabinet in October for approval of the action plan.
--	--

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Committee the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspection report following the inspection of Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC) local authority fostering service in June 2025, and to request that the Committee **scrutinises the inspection report and action plan and makes any recommendations on the action plan prior to consideration by Cabinet in October to approve of the action plan. In addition, the foster care recruitment strategy is contained in the report to reflect the council's response to this agenda which is at appendix 3.**

2. Background

- 2.1 CIW undertook an inspection of BCBC's fostering service between 23 to 27 June 2025. The inspection follows a previous visit in November 2023, where whilst good practice was evidenced eight areas were identified as requiring significant improvement.
- 2.2 The fostering service comprises a general fostering team and a kinship and permanence team. The service recruits, assesses, supervises and supports foster carers (including connected persons) to provide safe, nurturing placements for children.
- 2.3 The inspection focused on the following themes:
- Well-being
 - Care and Support
 - Environment
 - Leadership and Management
- 2.4 The inspection included case tracking, staff and carer focus groups, observation of practice, and review of documentation, complaints, compliments, and surveys.
- 2.5 CIW found that progress had been made in five of the eight areas previously identified as requiring improvement and needs to be sustained, including safeguarding, governance, and training and information provided to prospective carers.
- 2.6 CIW noted that recent management stability over the previous 6 months brought more consistency and clear strategic commitment to service improvement.

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 identified where no improvements had been made.

Principle	Areas of Improvement Identified in 2023	Progress Identified at June 2025 Inspection
Leadership & Management	Oversight and governance of the service	Improvements made and must be sustained
Leadership & Management	Application of policies and procedures	Improvements made and must be sustained
Well-being	Safeguarding arrangements – safety and protection from harm	Improvements made and must be sustained
Care & Support	Foster carers' delivery of safe and supportive care	Some improvements made – further action is required
Care & Support	Monitoring and reviewing foster carers' responsibilities	Some improvements made – further action is required
Care & Support	Foster carer training, support, and information	Some improvements made – further action is required
Leadership & Management	Training, advice and guidance for prospective carers	Improvements made and must be sustained
Leadership & Management	Adherence to statutory and regulatory responsibilities across the fostering service	Improvements made and must be sustained

3.3 Recommendations and Next Steps

3.3.1 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 Children and Families 3 year strategic plan 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.

CIW have indicated they will be monitoring the Council's performance and progress in achieving the improvements required.

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. 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** -The fostering service is being remodelled to ensure it meets the evolving needs of children, carers, and the workforce in a sustainable way. Improvements to governance, recruitment, and carer support are intended to secure positive long-term outcomes for children and young people.
- **Prevention** - The focus on improving placement stability, matching processes, and trauma-informed support helps prevent placement breakdowns and escalation of need. Early identification of carer support requirements and the development of behaviour support services are also key preventative actions.
- **Integration** - The fostering service works in close partnership with children's social work teams, education, health, and regional Foster Wales colleagues. The improvements being made are integrated within wider children's services strategies and linked to the local authority's Corporate Parenting and Sufficiency objectives.
- **Collaboration** - The ongoing remodelling process involves carers, staff, senior managers, and partners. Engagement events, working groups, and consultations have ensured that collaborative voices shape service redesign and improvement planning.
- **Involvement** - Care-experienced children, foster carers, and staff have been actively involved in providing feedback through focus groups, surveys, CLA reviews, and youth voice forums. This feedback is central to shaping a more responsive, user-led fostering service.

- 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** – by strengthening foster placements, supporting carers, and improving outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

- **Smarter use of resources** – by aligning service improvement to existing structures, reducing reliance on agency staff, and promoting carer retention and development to maximise in-house capacity.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct climate or nature change 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 inspection relates directly to the Council's responsibilities for safeguarding and corporate parenting within its local authority fostering service.
- 7.2 The CIW report acknowledges that safeguarding arrangements within the fostering service have improved, with stronger links between the fostering and safeguarding teams. Staff are included in safeguarding meetings, and the use of individualised safer care plans and safety agreements has been strengthened. Improvements in leadership and governance have also contributed to more effective oversight of safeguarding practice.
- 7.3 However, the inspection also identified areas where further improvement is needed to fully safeguard children — notably in relation to matching processes, consistency of carer reviews, and the availability and impact of training. Addressing these areas is key to ensuring children live in placements where their needs are fully understood and met.
- 7.4 The Council, as corporate parent, must ensure children in foster care are not only safe but are supported to thrive. The improvement plan addresses these expectations by embedding trauma-informed practice, strengthening carer support, and promoting placement stability. This reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to its corporate parenting duties and to improving the experience and outcomes for looked after children.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

9. Recommendation(s)

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee scrutinises the CIW findings report and associated Action Plan prior to its consideration by Cabinet.

Background documents

None