

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>CABINET COMMITTEE CABINET CORPORATE PARENTING</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>28 MAY 2026</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW) INSPECTION REPORT OF WESTERN BAY ADOPTION SERVICE NOVEMBER 2025</b>
<b>Report Owner / Responsible Chief Officer/Cabinet Member.</b>	<b>DEPUTY LEADER / CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>NICHOLA ROGERS – REGIONAL ADOPTION MANAGER</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>The content of the report does not have any impact on policy frameworks or procedures.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>The report is to update the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting of the recent Care Inspectorate Wales inspection of the Regional Adoption Service which was undertaken in September 2025 with the final report being published in November 2025. The Regional Service is based on the old Western Bay footprint (Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea), and this is set out in legislation. The report highlights a number of areas of good practice that is being undertaken by the service and concludes with identified areas of improvement.</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting about the recent Care Inspectorate Wales inspection report which can be found in **Appendix 1**. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspected Western Bay Adoption Service (WBAS) between 1 September and 5 September 2025.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 CIW reviews Local Authority social services functions, including functions in relation to adoption, on behalf of Welsh Ministers in accordance with Section 149B of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The last inspection of the service took place in 2018.
- 2.2 The inspection considered the following key questions under relevant headings.

## **Well-being**

- Are children's well-being needs appropriately safeguarded in achieving permanence?
- Is the service provided accessible, safe and responsive to people's needs?

## **Care and Support**

- Do children, birth and adoptive families achieve good outcomes through the provision of support which promotes their overall well-being?

## **Leadership and Governance**

- Do the leadership and governance arrangements ensure the provision of high quality services for people?

### **3. Current situation/ Findings**

#### **3.1 Summary of Inspection Findings**

The service has a central management structure, pooled budget, and shared IT systems enabling coordinated decision-making and consistent delivery of adoption services. Senior leaders from each authority participate in regular management board meetings to oversee strategic direction, resource allocation, and service development, underpinned by a formal partnership agreement.

WBAS applies National Adoption Service (NAS) policies and procedures consistently. The Statement of Purpose (SOP) is reviewed annually and is accessible. Some governance documents require minor updates to ensure alignment with current requirements.

Assessments for prospective adopters are comprehensive, with safeguarding and trauma-informed practice embedded throughout. Adopters feel supported and informed, and quality assurance processes help maintain standards.

Family finding and matching processes prioritise children's needs. Collaborative planning and trauma nurture timelines support positive outcomes. Transition arrangements (the planned process of moving a child from their present carers into their adoptive family) are managed with input from foster carers and adopters.

Adoption support services for children, adopters, and birth families include therapeutic interventions, peer groups, and practical assistance. The adoption support team provides advice and regular check-ins. Families report positive experiences, and there are no waiting lists for support.

Leadership is visible, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The

workforce benefits from supervision and professional development. Managers monitor performance and service delivery, with ongoing work to strengthen quality assurance and learning from audits.

Recruitment of prospective adopters is supported by targeted marketing and flexible budgeting, with campaigns delivered in English and Welsh. Recruitment campaigns are shaped by input from the Adopters Marketing Group.

WBAS securely manages and safely stores records, with clear arrangements for access and retention. Embedded systems facilitate efficient file retrieval, and the premises are suitable and meet the needs of the service.

Strengths include therapeutic support, robust assessment and matching, and a skilled workforce. Areas identified for improvement are updating governance documents and improving communication about adoption support services and entitlements.

### **3.2 Areas of Good Practice Identified:**

WBAS works in partnership with birth parents through sensitive and flexible approaches.

Life journey work is embedded in planning for children and aligns with the NAS Life Journey Work Good Practice Guide.

Adoption support services are a key strength. The team provides responsive, accessible, and tailored support to meet the needs of children, adopters, and birth families.

The Psychological and Therapeutic Service delivers a robust, multi-disciplinary model that is proactive, accessible, and responsive.

Practitioners focus on the emotional significance of contact for adopted children, birth parents, siblings, and significant others.

WBAS delivers timely and accessible intermediary services that support adopted adults and birth relatives to understand their histories and access information.

WBAS promotes a strong, supportive culture where practitioners feel well supported by colleagues and managers. Leaders ensure regular supervision, peer support, and a focus on well-being. The team ethos is described as positive, inclusive, and outcome focused.

WBAS delivers a proactive and well-resourced marketing approach, supported by a dedicated marketing officer and a predetermined budget. Campaigns are routinely delivered in English and Welsh, and the website includes an interactive adoption checker to support early engagement.

### 3.3 Areas for Improvement

These are considered in two separate categories:

### 3.4 Priority Areas for Improvement

WBAS **must** ensure that quality-of-service reviews fully comply with Regulation 39(1) of the Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019, with effective arrangements in place for monitoring, reviewing, and improving the quality of the service, including the evaluation of engagement, incidents, complaints, and audits to inform future service development.

WBAS **must** ensure that its records management arrangements fully comply with the requirements of Regulation 28(1) and Schedule 3 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019.

### 3.5 Recommendations

WBAS **should** continue to strengthen its use of Welsh Early Permanence (WEP) to ensure consistent and timely permanence planning.

WBAS **should** strengthen communication and written materials so that all adopters are fully informed about the range of adoption support services and entitlements available to them at every stage.

WBAS **should** continue to finalise arrangements to ensure equitable medical advice for all children across the region.

WBAS **should** continue prioritising diversity in panel members to ensure the panel represents the population it serves.

WBAS **should** ensure that Agency Decision Maker (ADM) decisions are clearly recorded in the minutes, including analysis and rationale, to strengthen transparency and accountability in line with best practice.

WBAS **should** continue to strengthen its marketing strategy and ensure it remains dynamic, inclusive and aligned to national priorities to support the recruitment of sufficient adopters.

WBAS **should** ensure the partnership agreement is updated as a priority to support effective governance and compliance.

### 3.6 Actions and Next Steps confirmed By CIW

- CIW required that WBAS compile an improvement plan and share this with CIW by 30 December 2025.

- CIW will review the improvement plan and seek further assurance of progress. This will be through a meeting with the Head of Children's Services of the host local authority as well as the Regional Adoption Manager (RAM) within 18-24 months of publication of the report.
- CIW will consider further activity to be assured of continued improvement and will consider bespoke engagement activity to support its ongoing monitoring.

The service completed the required action plan (**see Appendix 2**) and this was submitted to CIW in November 2025. The action plan is reviewed quarterly by the Management Board and CIW are provided with quarterly updates in respect of the identified actions. Many of the actions identified are already complete.

#### **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 implementation of the duties and responsibilities under the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) (SSWBA) 2014, in turn, supports the promotion of two of the seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 within the County Borough of Bridgend. By promoting an environment that maximises people's physical and mental well-being and by supporting children, young people, adults and their carers and families to fulfil their potential no matter what their circumstances, the well-being goals of a healthier and more equal Bridgend and Wales are supported.
- 5.2 The Wellbeing 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 relevant well-being goals have been considered in this report:
- Long Term – Social Services is demand led and the SSWBA focuses on sustainable wellbeing 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 transformation of services continues to be a priority.
  - Integration – the implementation of the SSWBA and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 requires local authorities to work with partners, particularly the NHS and Education, to ensure care and support for people and support for carers is provided. The report evidences work with partners to enable children to be placed in permanent arrangements.

- Collaboration – The collaborative approaches described in the report, are managed and monitored through the regional collaborative management board and the National Adoption Service Advisory Group and Governance Board where there is local authority and sector stakeholder representation.
- 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.

## **6. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 6.1 The service strives to work in line with the Councils climate change ambitions.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

- 7.1 The service works under Bridgend County Borough Council's Safeguarding Policy to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse or neglect and to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Regional Adoption Service.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising directly out of this report.

## **9. Recommendation(s)**

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting considers and notes the CIW inspection report and acknowledge that the Management Board will oversee the identified action plan.

## **Background documents**

None