

SUBJECT:	Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection of Children's Services
MEETING:	People Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	23 July 2024
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide members of People Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to scrutinise Children's Services following a Performance Evaluation Inspection undertaken by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 For members of People Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the CIW inspection report and provide comment and feedback to Senior Council Leaders and the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services.
- 2.2 For members to scrutinise the Service response to the inspection report and the actions taken to date.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 In February 2024 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) carried out a performance evaluation inspection of Monmouthshire County Council's Children's Services on behalf of Welsh Ministers. The purpose was to review the Local Authority's performance in exercising its social services duties and functions in line with legislation using the principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.
- 3.2 In particular, the inspection focused on children's experience of the service; the outcomes that are achieved; on-going service improvement and development; and how the service manages opportunities and risks within its operational and strategic planning.
- 3.3 The inspection was undertaken by 4 inspectors and involved 4 weeks of pre-inspection work and a week of field work when the inspectors were on-site. The inspectors reviewed 34 children's files, 6 of which were tracked in detail.

The inspectors held focus groups and surveys with staff members, partner organisations and families, and where possible spoke directly to children and foster carers. During the pre-inspection period the inspectors reviewed performance data and key service documents.

- 3.4 The inspection report was published at the end of April 2024. The service was broadly pleased with the findings and felt that positive aspects of practice were recognised particularly in respect of children looked after, family support, and children's participation. Positive leadership and good morale within the service were also highlighted and the inspection confirmed that the service had a good understanding of its relative strengths and difficulties.
- 3.5 Within any inspection there will be areas for improvement. Particular areas identified for further attention and action included the impact of increased demand; ensuring that a strengths-based approach informs the initial stages of child protection process when appropriate; ensuring that direct work with children forms part of the case record and strengthening quality assurance.
- 3.6 The overall outcome of the inspection is that CIW expects the Local Authority to take appropriate action to address and improve areas as identified and share good practice with other bodies where relevant. CIW intend to monitor progress through routine engagement with the service, rather than through any special measures.
- 3.7 In response to the inspection, Children's Services has reviewed its existing plans to ensure they align with the findings and has begun to implement some actions around key areas. Notably this includes:
 - Building in some additional leadership capacity
 - Revising and re-launching training around the practice framework 'Keeping Children Safe'
 - Reviewing referral patterns into the service
 - Putting steps in place to support practitioners with statutory compliance.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 4.1 Improvements and developments made within Children's Services has a positive impact on children and young people aged under 18. The service has a strong preventative agenda and seeks to ensure that all children are supported to get a good start in life and achieve their personal health and

wellbeing outcomes. The service works in partnership with a number of key agencies and provides integrated care support to children and families.

5. REASONS:

- 5.1 To share the outcomes of CIW's performance evaluation of children's services with Scrutiny Committee in an open and transparent manner.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are no additional or specific resource implications associated with this report. The children's services budget is allocated and monitored through the usual Council processes.

7. CONSULTEES:

Children's Services Leadership Team
Cabinet
Strategic Leadership Team

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

CIW Performance Evaluation Inspection Report (appendix 1)

9. AUTHORS:

Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer – Social Care, Safeguarding & Health

10. CONTACT DETAILS:

E-mail: janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk