

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

Health & Care Scrutiny Committee 19th December 2024

Report Author: County Councillor Sandra Davies
Portfolio Holder for Future Generations

Lead Officer: Dr Holly Gordon, Senior Manager for Safeguarding & Quality Assurance

Report Title: JICPA Update for Scrutiny

Report For: Information

1. Purpose

1.1.

2. Background

2.1. In October 2023 Powys agencies were informed that Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), and Estyn would be undertaking a Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) in Powys County Council during the week commencing 16th October 2023.

2.2. The primary focus of the JICPA involved reviewing:

- the response to allegations of abuse and neglect at the point of identification
- the quality and impact of assessment, planning and decision-making in response to notifications and referrals
- the protection of children aged 11 and under at risk of abuse and neglect
- the leadership and management of this work
- the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding partner arrangements in relation to this work

2.3. The methodology focused on three main areas:

- a) an evaluation of the multi-agency 'front door' for child protection when children at risk of harm first become known to local services.
- b) a 'deep dive' evaluation of the experiences of children at risk.
- c) an evaluation of the quality of the leadership, management, and governance arrangements in place to develop and support service delivery.

2.4 A total of six in-depth case file audits occurred focusing on practice within the previous 6 months with two of these cases being selected for involved agencies to attend a focus group with inspectors. A total of 10 Front door referral were also sampled with particular emphasis on Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA). This included an evaluation of the local authority 'front door' multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for education, health and police. It also included a focus on how well organisations communicate, share information and contribute to safeguarding arrangements.

2.5 In preparation for the inspection, a joint evaluation form was completed on all six cases selected. This was completed via a multi-agency reflective session which drew out responses and reflections. On the first day of the inspection, a multi-agency presentation

was delivered led by Social Services and Education Directors.

- 2.6** The inspection concluded that safeguarding organisations in Powys have systems and arrangements in place for effective joint working when children are considered at risk of abuse or neglect. Senior leaders in the local authority, police and health boards demonstrate a joint approach to regional safeguarding arrangements. Leaders and managers have established a highly positive culture of joint multi-agency working.
- 2.7** The inspection report specifically highlighted areas of good practice such as: PTHB regularly attending strategy discussions, a clear CP medical pathway, pupils reported feeling happy, safe and listened to, Local Authority leaders scrutinised performance data and have an effective QA framework in place, senior police leads chairing daily management meetings and a valued IRO role.
- 2.8** The inspection recognised that Children's Services have a skilled social care workforce with wellbeing worker positions having made a positive impact on practice. The assessments undertaken were highlighted as comprehensive and included an understanding of situational and historical contexts. Senior managers in Children's services were described as visible and supportive with peer support being identified by staff spoken to as part of the inspection. The inhouse psychologist was recognised as providing support to staff to enhance wellbeing and upskill staff. Supervision was found to be frequent and good inductions programmes are in place for new staff.
- 2.9** Areas for development were also identified such as multi-agency training, the lack of review/outcome strategy meetings after s47 enquiries are completed, a need for education services to improve the effectiveness of auditing, increased conference participation for children and young people and for PTHB to ensure 1-1 supervisions are triggered at the correct time.
- 2.10** The JICPA inspection report highlighted that for some children exposed to long term neglect, the effectiveness of multi-agency planning, and interventions required improvement. In response to this, multi-agency practice guidance and assessments tools were launched in April 2024. The practice guidance provides staff with a model to use to monitor home conditions for children and families and provides a clear framework for multi-agency practitioners to work within where there are worries about home conditions.
- 2.11** The guidance has been adopted by the following agencies who will utilise aspects of the content within their day-to-day practice when appropriate:
- Children's Services
 - Adults Services
 - Education
 - Health
 - Housing
 - Police
- 2.12** The home conditions assessment tool considers 20 aspects of home conditions such as odour, cleanliness and home maintenance. It concludes with a decision about the level of concern, what actions need to be taken, what tasks need to be done and who needs to undertake them. The toolkit includes resources on how to capture the daily lived experience of a child at various stages of development. The toolkit was launched at the multiagency safeguarding fora where an academic specialist presented research alongside the policy officer who presented the toolkit. This was a successful event with over 80 staff from various agencies attending. The toolkit is now available to staff across the safeguarding partnership.

- 2.13** The inspection found that in some cases child protection visits were mainly announced, stressing the importance of unannounced visits to provide a balanced perspective of the child's lived experience.
- 2.14** A thematic audit on child protection visits was undertaken in June to August 2024 with a report completed in September 2024. The audit found that visits were often occurring at the same time / day even when they were unannounced. The audit report offers recommendations which aim to enhance the effectiveness of unannounced visits and ensure the safety and well-being of children supported by child protection plans. A webinar regarding the findings is planned for December 2024 in line with Children's Service 'Theme of the Season'. The audit did find the large geographical area did make unannounced visits more challenging as there is a risk that the family are not at home.
- 2.15** Outcome strategy meetings were identified as not always occurring following the completion of a s47 enquiry which Children's Services and Police colleagues are required to improve. This area of improvement has been given considerable attention since the inspection and has been discussed at several managers meetings. Some teams have implemented a tracker to ensure oversight of these. Performance reporting has shown that this requires ongoing monitoring, and this action remains in progress to date.
- 2.16** The inspection report considered workforce stability across the sector. The reduction of agency social work reliance was highlighted and efforts in this area continue. Since the inspection, Children's Services workforce continues to stabilise with agency social worker numbers decreasing. The reduction of agency staff has reduced staffing costs and has stemmed from the success of the grow our own social work project and the number of agency staff who have joined the workforce on a permanent contract.
- 2.17** The inspection found that multi-agency audits need to be completed routinely to disseminate the good practice which was evident. The partnership welcomed this finding and a renewed focus on multiagency auditing has emerged. This has supported the longstanding audit subgroup to take forward identified areas for auditing as well as an increased auditing focused within regional subgroups.
- 2.18** The identification of a need for increased multi-agency training was also welcomed and supports existing efforts being made by multiagency training subgroups. In response to this finding, there has been an increase in efforts such as developments to deliver joint investigation training with police and children's services staff. This is a critical course for staff progressing with their professional development and was historically delivered jointly across Wales. The first inhouse joint course will commence in 2025. Additionally, there has been a renewed effort to support the partnership in understanding the signs of safety approach which is the practice model used by Children's Services.
- 2.19** Other joint initiatives include the development of multiagency supervision which is currently in progress whereby there has been a lengthy period of child protection registration and the development of a child protection medical peer review group which will see agencies assess child protection medicals against prescribed national standards.
- 2.20** The areas identified for improvement have been developed into a multi-agency action plan and this will be monitored as a multi-agency group on a quarterly basis with PLOG monitoring progress. This action plan has also been submitted to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and feedback on progress will be provided on a regular basis. The action plan continues to be reviewed, and good progress has been made since its inception. The current

initiatives in development are building on the success of the JICPA inspection and promoting continual improvement on both a local and regional level.

- 2.21** The JICPA outcome overall has been a very positive inspection for the Powys safeguarding partnership. The public can feel assured that children are being protected and that agencies are proactive in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. This offered Powys an opportunity to highlight the progress which has been made over many years and has given increased confidence that safeguarding partnerships are strong and effective. The link to the full report is below.

<https://www.careinspectorate.wales/joint-inspectorate-review-child-protection-arrangements-jicpa-powys-2023>

3. Advice

(Include officer advice on the issue and set out what is being proposed for Cabinet to agree/approve)

3.1

4. Resource Implications

(State here any resource implications of the Cabinet / Council approving the recommendation. This should include financial (ie budget); workforce (ie staff); digital (ie ICT/customer service) and physical (ie property). Confirm that the report has been approved by the Section 151 Officer)

4.1

5. Legal implications

(State here any legal implications and confirmation that the report has been approved by the Monitoring Officer)

5.1

6. Data Protection

(State here if the proposal involves the processing of personal data and if it does insert the comments of the Data Protection Officer)

6.1

7. Comment from local member(s)

(insert here any comments received from local Members on the subject matter and impact assessment)

7.1

8. Impact Assessment

(Please include the Overall Summary from the Impact Assessment here and attach the full Impact Assessment as an appendix, or explain why an assessment is not required)

8.1

9. Recommendation

(Clearly state what you are recommending – be specific)

Contact Officer:	Dr Holly Gordon
Tel:	01597 827029
Email:	holly.gordon@powys.gov.uk
Head of Service:	Sharon Powell
Corporate Director:	Nina Davies