

Our approach to assurance and recovery August 2021

We have continued to provide assurance about the safety and well-being of people receiving social care and childcare services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The well-being of people who work in social care and childcare services, including our own staff has also been a key priority. Across Wales we have learned so much from our experience over the last year and this is informing our approach for the coming months.

All action we take is in line with Welsh Government and Public Health Wales guidance to help limit the spread of COVID-19.

Our work is underpinned by a set of principles and we have adapted the way we work in line with these.

- **Putting people first:** the voice and well-being of people is at the heart of our work underpinned by a rights based approach. This includes people using and working in social care and childcare services, and our staff.
- **Being intelligence led:** our work will be informed by data and intelligence. This includes intelligence from:
 - people who use services
 - people working in services
 - people commissioning services
 - people working in wider social care, health and childcare networks
 - our findings from inspections
- **Being risk based and responsive:** we will take a planned, risk based, proportionate and timely approach to our work. We will review and inspect regulated services and local authorities; respond to concerns and take action to reduce risks to people's safety and well-being; and promote improvement.
- **Working collaboratively:** we will continue to listen, share information and work collaboratively across social care and childcare sectors, other inspectorates and the Welsh Government.
- **Supporting improvement and innovation:** we will use our knowledge and powers to support social care and childcare services to improve and encourage new ways of working.
- **Reflecting and learning:** we will take time to reflect and learn from all aspects of our work, and adjust our approach where necessary.

We also continue to work to in line with our strategic priorities as set out in our [Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#) which provides us with our organisational direction and focus over the next four years. Our strategic priorities are:

- to be a trusted voice to influence and drive improvement
- to consistently deliver a high quality service
- to be highly skilled and responsive

Our focus remains on people's well-being and the quality and safety of social care and childcare services. We are prioritising the services we inspect, responding to concerns and actively seeking feedback from a wide range of sources about the quality of care and support people are receiving. We want to learn about exemplary practice as well as areas for improvement. We continue to test new ways of working, including making effective use of technology available to us, and learn from this to inform how we operate in future.

Putting our principles into practice

We recognise there is continued pressure on social care and childcare services caused by COVID-19 and do not wish to unnecessarily add to this. Nevertheless providing assurance about people's safety and well-being is essential.

It is important we hear about the experience of people using social care or childcare services, and from staff working in them. We encourage people to give us feedback by contacting our Connect team or completing our new [online surveys](#).

We are taking an intelligence led and risk based approach to our work. We are working closely with local authority and health board commissioners and childcare leads to share information and intelligence about services to inform our decision making.

Registration

We continue to prioritise new applications and variations for registration to help create additional capacity in adults and children's social care and childcare provision.

We have adapted our registration processes to ensure our work can continue in a safe and effective way. We have resumed physical site visits and will keep our processes under review and adapt them as appropriate.

Inspection and Review

We are inspecting and reviewing services and local authorities by:

- considering feedback, information, notifications and concerns
- actively seeking feedback from:
 - people receiving services
 - local authority and health board commissioners
 - professionals who have had recent contact with the service
- seeking information from providers
- carrying out physical inspection of regulated services
- carrying out performance review activity with local authority social services

We are using this intelligence to prioritise our work. This is underpinned by risk assessments and risk management plans in relation to COVID-19 to ensure the safety of people using services, staff and inspectors.

In carrying out our inspection activity we will spend sufficient time at a service to arrive at a rounded assessment of the safety and quality of the care being provided.

We continue to work closely with other inspectorates to consider opportunities for joint work and reduce duplication.

Childcare and Play services

Most childcare and play services that closed during the pandemic have now reopened. They are once again providing a vital service to many children and their families. Consequently, it is important that we undertake onsite inspections that explore all four of our inspection themes.

Ratings will remain suspended, for now, to allow more time for the sector to recover. We plan to resume ratings in November 2021.

Adults and Children's services

We are continuing to inspect services, ensuring all inspections consider specific Key Lines of Enquiry (KLoE) to enable us to inspect all services over an 18 month period (commenced April 2021).

We are taking a flexible approach and will add additional KLoE dependent on analysis of the information we hold about a service and in response to what we find during the inspection.

Enforcement

We continue to work in line with our Securing Improvement and Enforcement guidance, taking enforcement action as required.

Local authority performance review

We will be following up on our assurance checks with local authorities and in the autumn will be publishing a national overview report on our findings. We will carry out risk based inspection of local authority social services where we have concerns about people's safety and well-being.

Other activity

We continue to coordinate communication across a range of organisations with the aim of providing clear information and guidance for providers. This includes sharing communication on behalf of Welsh Government.

We share data and intelligence with the Welsh Government and other partners to inform COVID-19 planning and response. We also share issues raised with us by providers to ensure they are supported to deliver high quality services that promote positive outcomes for people.

Over the coming months we will be reviewing our ways of working to ensure we continue to develop and improve in line with the actions set out in our [strategic plan](#) and will be engaging with our staff and key stakeholders in this.

Social Care Recovery Framework

We have participated in the development of Welsh Government's [Social Care Recovery Framework](#) and have set out in more detail our specific contribution in line with our guiding principles below.

We recognise the importance of the childcare sector in supporting social care recovery. This sector provides care and support for young children from vulnerable families as well as supporting the social care workforce.

Putting people first

Throughout the pandemic we have championed people's rights and this will continue. For example, supporting work on, and implementation of, guidance on visiting for people living in care homes.

We will seek feedback from people about their experience and outcomes. This includes people using social care services, their families and staff working in them.

We will proactively seek feedback using social media campaigns and continue to work with Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) to encourage staff to speak up to share positive practice and issues of concern. As well as using this to inform our inspection planning, we will collate themes and share these to shape our wider recovery planning.

Being intelligence led

We will continue to collate, analyse and share our data and intelligence. This will inform our inspection activity but also help inform wider Welsh Government and partner approaches.

Analysis of data and intelligence will enable us to understand trends and themes, for example financial viability, to help shape targeted action and support by CIW and social care partners.

Being risk based and responsive

We are prioritising inspection activity based on analysis of risk. This will ensure we are proportionate in securing improvement during recovery where it is needed most.

Working collaboratively

Our approach in responding to the pandemic highlighted the importance of positive relationships and trust and we will continue with this. Through our regular meetings with Welsh Government, commissioners and representative groups we will share

information about what is working well and concerns. Coordination of activity will help to reduce duplication and burden on service providers to support recovery.

We will work collaboratively with local authorities to develop our forward programme of performance review activity.

We will work collaboratively with other inspectorates to develop inspection activity that takes a systems approach recognising recovery relies on all parts of the system working well together. We will build on our learning from joint inspections of child protection arrangements.

Supporting improvement and innovation

We will continue to actively communicate and share learning including targeted events for providers.

We are working closely with Social Care Wales to develop an improvement support programme focused on developing positive cultures in social care services to promote people's well-being.

We will also support recovery by sharing positive practice. This will include thematic reports of our assurance checks with local authorities and from our inspection of regulated services.

Reflecting and learning

Across social care we have adapted to new and flexible ways of working and we will continue to test new ways of working during recovery. We will seek feedback from key stakeholders about what is working well and where we can improve.