

Improving social care and childcare in Wales

Chief Inspector's Annual Report 2022–23



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Foreword



Foreword by Chief Inspector

As you read this year's report, you will no doubt be struck by a sense of déjà vu, that many of the issues outlined in our 2021/22 Annual Report remained as acute in 2022/23. This is because social care does not take place in a vacuum, and problems facing the outside world inevitably filter through or are felt even more acutely within the social care sector.

It is easy to use words like 'crisis' or 'unprecedented' when describing some of these topics but, for those working directly with people who use care services, this is their day-to-day reality. The most important things we can do as an inspectorate and a regulator are to shed light on these issues and work collaboratively where possible with other organisations, to try and alleviate some of the burdens placed on social care and childcare services at this difficult time. We are in a privileged position to work across sectors and identify trends and themes which we can then report to Welsh Ministers, as well as to you, the public who read our inspection reports and use services either yourselves, or arrange care for your family or friends.

Another demanding year, another year of exceptional commitment and dedication from all those working in social care and childcare and play services. They richly deserve our appreciation and thanks. It is such a privilege to be Chief Inspector of an organisation that makes a difference to the lives of so many people across Wales. What we do can only be achieved by the hard work and passion of our staff, and I am deeply grateful to each and every one of them.

Some of the topics covered in this report will not make easy reading. This is a difficult time for the sectors we regulate and inspect and yet, our inspectors consistently find most services are providing good, safe care for

those who use them. It is important we continue to celebrate the wonderful work that goes on in care services throughout Wales on a daily basis, and to give people hope too. Let's capture and celebrate good practice and share it widely and often. Promoting positive cultures and practice is something we will be doing a lot more of during the coming year, and you can expect to read more about this in next year's report.



Gillian Baranski, Chief Inspector, CIW





Reflections

We have identified key trends for each of the areas we regulate and inspect in the main body of the report. Here we highlight four cross-cutting issues requiring collective action.

The number of people needing care and support has continued to increase which in turn is creating unsustainable pressure on social care services.

Last year we reported on what was then an ‘unprecedented’ increase in demand for care and support services. This did not abate in 2022/23 and so is perhaps no longer unprecedented. Across the whole system, social care continues to be under immense pressure with the journey to full recovery post-pandemic being impacted by the cost of living crisis. Consequently, the number of people seeking assistance has increased as has the complexity of people’s needs, with many waiting for planned healthcare treatment. There are delays in completing

assessments for people across social care and we know many people have delayed requesting services. There has been additional pressure on family carers, and, in places, care arrangements have broken down. We are particularly concerned about the limited choice and control people have, especially when they are well enough to be discharged from hospital but have ongoing care needs.

There remains a fluctuating picture across Wales, with most local authorities consistently reporting that assessments are not being completed due to capacity and, when completed, are taking significantly more time due to the complexity of people’s needs. In addition, all local authorities have consistently reported they are unable to provide domiciliary care for most people, or they do not have any additional capacity to respond to changes in care and support needs or additional people requiring care and support.

Our call to action is a continued focus on investing in and developing early intervention and prevention services for children and adults. Where possible, duplication should be reduced by integrated approaches to working across social care, education, health services, housing and the third sector. The planned National Office for Social Care must help to facilitate this.



The workforce continues to tirelessly improve outcomes for people but recruitment and retention in social care and childcare and play remains at crisis point.

For social care and childcare and play workers, low salaries compounded by weak role status and fewer career opportunities have all contributed to this situation. While this is an incredibly rewarding career, many feel there is a lack of public recognition of the essential public service provided by social care and childcare and play workers. This is despite significant national, regional and local efforts to address this, including the professionalisation of social care workers, the introduction of the real living wage and the investment in the social worker bursary. Increasing demand and staffing shortages compound the pressure being felt as practitioners know only too well that people are waiting for their support. While agency social workers, care workers and nurses have been deployed to bridge the gap, this is not sustainable. It is important to recognise these staffing issues are also

present in the childcare and play sector and it is of concern we have seen a continued reduction in the number of childminders in Wales. We have seen much positive practice in efforts to support the well-being of staff including the work of Social Care Wales in developing a health and well-being framework, as well as the free [Canopi](#) service for confidential mental health support, which Welsh Government has extended to social care staff.

Our call to action is for continued investment in pay and progression. This must be underpinned by targeted promotion of these rewarding career opportunities, and supported by compassionate leadership, with relentless focus on staff well-being. There is clear evidence the development of positive cultures (where staff are supported and valued) also improves outcomes for people accessing services.

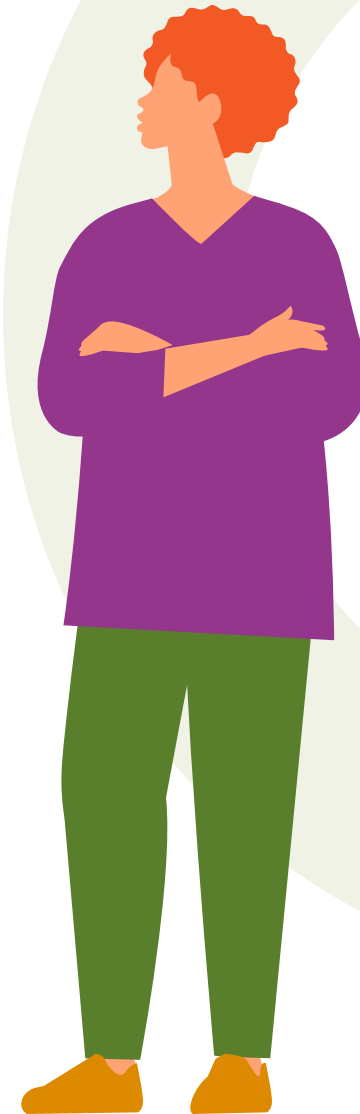




There is a lack of suitable placements for children who are looked after.

This is leading local authorities to make arrangements, often at short notice, for children to be cared for in services which are not registered to provide care. These services are operating illegally and lack the safeguards that come with registration. This is particularly concerning when children are living in unregistered services having been deprived of their liberty by the court. Children subject to Deprivation of Liberty orders have complex needs and require high levels of skilled care and supervision. We recognise the significant lengths to which local authorities are going to, ensure they meet their statutory duty to provide care, support and accommodation for the children they are looking after.

Our call to action is for all partners to work together regionally and nationally to ensure the availability of an appropriate range of services that are able to meet the needs of children who are looked after. There is an urgent need for collective problem-solving and action by all involved in safeguarding children who are looked after. As always, complex problems can rarely be solved by a single agency and require collaborative effort. This includes investment in early intervention services to support children and their families, alongside foster care and care homes for children.





We see lots of positive practice across Wales.

Services failing to deliver positive outcomes for children and adults are a minority. We need to celebrate success and do more to share positive practice across services and sectors right across Wales, as well as learning when things go wrong. Social care and childcare, unlike education and NHS sectors, do not currently have a coherent and coordinated improvement offer.

Our call to action is for us all to do more to proactively celebrate success, promote positive practice and cultures and to support improvement. We encourage all services to continuously improve and aspire to excellence.



Overview of our organisation





Overview of our organisation

Who we are and what we do

We are Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), the independent regulator of social care and childcare. We register, inspect and take action to improve the quality and safety of services for the well-being of the people of Wales.

Services regulated by us

Services we regulate and inspect:

- Care home services (adults and children)
- Domiciliary support services
- Adult placement services
- Secure accommodation services
- Fostering services
- Adoption services
- Residential family centre services
- Advocacy services
- Childminders and day care providers

We refer to these as “regulated services”.

We also review the performance of local authorities in delivery of social services functions. We carry this out through a combination of inspection and performance evaluation activity. In addition, we inspect:

- Boarding schools
- Residential special schools (boarding arrangements under 295 days)
- Further education colleges, which accommodate students under 18
- Local authority fostering and adoption services.





Our values

Our core values ensure people remain at the heart of everything we do. We aim to demonstrate our values in everything we do.

The values shown here were developed with CIW staff back in 2017. We recognise the vital importance of ensuring these are reflected in all we say and do, and so during the course of the year we engaged with our staff and our National Advisory Board to develop a clear set of statements about what people can expect of us. These apply equally to how we work with each other in CIW and with others.

To complement this, we reviewed the feedback questionnaire we issue at the end of every inspection to more closely align the questions we ask with our values. [Here is an example.](#) We encourage all providers to complete the post-inspection questionnaire to feed into our quality assurance process, helping us to know what we do well and where we need to improve. It was heartening to see very positive responses from providers who completed the questionnaire. For example 97% of providers said inspectors engaged with the people who used the service and 99% said inspectors treated people at my service with respect.

Here is what one provider said about our inspection process:

"I wanted to say that the inspector showed absolute empathy with residents, and significantly, with staff. He understands the difficulties faced by modern day carers and in talking to them gave them the confidence to speak to him without ever feeling they were being asked loaded questions or channelled to a specific answer. This empathy is powerful. It ensures that there is never an 'us and them' culture with CIW and makes [staff] feel valued by authority figures. His support of my manager through tough times has been exemplary, again understanding her tasks in hand in a very difficult period for all care homes. The feedback meeting was purposeful, balanced and aimed simply at achieving better outcomes for our residents."





Our guiding principles

The way we work, in line with our values, is guided by the following principles.

- **Putting people first: the voice and well-being of people are at the heart of our work underpinned by a rights-based approach.**
- **Being intelligence-led: our work is informed by data and intelligence.**
- **Being risk based and responsive: we take a planned, risk based, proportionate and timely approach to our work.**
- **Working collaboratively: we listen, share information and work collaboratively.**
- **Supporting improvement and innovation: we use our knowledge and powers to support social care and childcare services to improve and encourage new ways of working.**
- **Reflecting and learning: we take time to reflect and learn from all aspects of our work, and to adjust our approach where necessary.**

“This is a difficult time for the sectors we regulate and inspect and yet, our inspectors consistently find most services are providing good, safe care for those who use them.”

Gillian Baranski, Chief Inspector, CIW

Our Strategic Plan 2020-2025

We have three strategic priorities:

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

Our [strategic plan](#) contains 26 actions to help us to achieve our priorities over its five-year life span. To date we have completed eight of these, with the remaining underway and on track for 2025.

A particular focus during the year has been to clarify our role in improvement. We took time to work with staff and our key stakeholders to talk about our specific role in supporting improvement in social care and childcare. This resulted in our [improvement statement](#), and we have developed an action plan to support its implementation. We are clear that by carrying out our core functions of registration, inspection, performance review and enforcement, we are supporting improvement on a service-by-service basis. We are also in a unique position to have a national overview and are able to identify themes and trends to support and encourage sector-wide improvement.

Promoting the use of Welsh in all we do

Promoting the use of Welsh is another action in our strategic plan as well as a priority for Welsh Government. This year, Welsh Government published a [new five-year ‘More than just words’ action plan](#) to promote Welsh language and culture in health, social care and childcare and play services. In recognition of the importance of this for people living in Wales, our internal Welsh language champions group reviewed our guidance for inspectors and for providers and published this on our [website](#).

Receiving services in Welsh is an integral part of good quality, rights-based and person-centred care. Adoption and delivery of ‘More than just words’ by social care and childcare services should help improve the quality of care and outcomes for people living in a bilingual country. The aim of ‘More than just words’ is to provide a greater level of recognition among service providers that the use of Welsh is not just a matter of choice but also a matter of need for many people.

A core aim of the framework is to ensure people who need services in Welsh have an ‘active offer’. This is when a service is provided in Welsh without someone having to ask for it. It means providers naturally anticipate the needs of Welsh speakers. They do not wait for a person to ask for a service in Welsh but incorporate and promote the belief that if you are a Welsh speaker, being able to use your own language must be seen as a core component of your care and not an optional extra.



Providing an active offer is about people's rights. When communication is improved then people's rights are more likely to be respected and protected. This is important in all aspects of daily living but never more so than in challenging times in people's lives, such as when they are being assessed under the Mental Capacity Act or moving to a care home, being cared for in a childcare setting or involved in child protection procedures.

Everyone who works in social care and childcare and play can make a difference by asking themselves: "What can I do to help improve Welsh language provision?"

We have actively recruited inspectors and business support staff to ensure we are able to provide an 'active offer' and speak to people in Welsh should they wish. Our guidance for inspectors and providers makes clear what we expect providers to do to promote Welsh language and culture. Small changes can make a big difference.

Engaging with people

Hearing the voice of people is a core part of our inspection activity. Feedback forms on our website are one way of increasing the amount of intelligence we have about individual services and the social care and childcare sector, as well as of course speaking to people while our inspectors are out visiting services.

We have invited feedback via our [website](#) using online surveys since May 2021. Previously these were either paper surveys or people downloaded a document to complete. Our new suite of surveys also extend to staff and other visitors such as social workers and health staff.

In last year's Chief Inspector's Annual Report, we talked about how we have introduced QR codes either on posters or window stickers to be displayed at the entrance to social care or childcare services, encouraging people who use or work at the service to feed back to us. We'd like to thank those providers who have prominently displayed these materials, as we are now receiving more survey responses than previously, giving us aggregated data, which provides an overview of regulated services across Wales. Where the person completing the survey provides the name of the service, this gives us valuable information about that service which goes on to inform our inspections.

In time we hope to fully integrate our surveys with our in-house database system so that the two 'talk to each other' seamlessly and allow us to fully analyse all the rich intelligence and anecdotal information we receive from people across Wales.

You can find out more about how our local authority inspectors engage with people during their work, in the 'Providing assurance' section.





National Advisory Board

Reflections from Dr Ruth Hussey, Chair of the CIW National Advisory Board



As chair of the CIW National Advisory Board, I lead the Board in monitoring, scrutinising and raising awareness of CIW's work. In 2022–23, we welcomed new members and the Board continued to meet virtually, with our focus being on how we support and inform the way CIW continues to regulate, inspect and review services.

During the year we took some time to look back at the COVID-19 pandemic and considered what CIW might do to support the system in future.

Members valued the approach taken during the pandemic and wanted CIW to recognise that the impact was still being felt, and asked CIW to support recovery and improvement, including communicating with providers outside of inspection. The cost of living crisis

was a concern affecting many aspects of services and members were able to give their own views and experiences around the pressure being experienced within domiciliary support services in Wales.

Children's services were discussed in the context of the proposal to eliminate profit from children's care homes and the childcare and play improvement project. Useful perspectives on children's care homes were provided by those members who work in this field, exploring the impact on providers, placements and alternative approaches. Members gave advice on a process for implementing the childcare and play project across other sectors, as well as how best practice might be shared more widely.

The Advisory Board provided perspectives on many aspects of CIW's work including approaches to rating of services; the updated local authority code of practice; direct payments; and the importance of listening to unpaid carers. The establishment of Llais, the new citizen voice body provided an opportunity to raise CIW's profile.

In relation to CIW's [Strategic Plan 2020-25](#), members urged CIW to capture the experience of people who use services more consistently, as well as ensuring providers have a consistent experience regardless of who their inspector may be. Joint work is underway with Social

“We are so fortunate to have a group of hard-working, knowledgeable members who regularly come together to analyse, scrutinise and discuss our work. Their feedback and insight is often the key to unlocking difficult pieces of work that need shaping to be the best they can be.”

Gillian Baranski, Chief Inspector, CIW

Care Wales to see how data from annual returns can be used to avoid organisations asking providers for the same information and useful comments were provided on CIW's Improvement Statement.

The need for seamless working between health and social care services was noted. Members felt social care provides an invaluable service in its own right which is not always recognised or valued.

In order to improve communication and transparency, the members asked for an easy read version of the Chief Inspector's Annual Report and agreed for the minutes and agendas of the Advisory Board meetings to be published on the [CIW website](#).

My thanks to all the members who provide a vital perspective on CIW's work and to the team at CIW who provide the content and support to enable effective discussions.



Providing assurance





Local authority social services

During the year we continued to embed our revised approach to reviewing the performance of local authority social services, and to engage with the social care sector to seek views and feedback as our revised [Code of Practice](#) evolved.

The updated Code of Practice for our local authority inspection activity reflects the changes we've made to how we work. We've introduced assurance checks for local authorities to enable us to have a baseline understanding of what is happening across Wales. Reports from these checks are now published to improve transparency. Other types of activity include performance evaluation inspections and improvement checks. Take a look at our [animated video](#) to learn more.

We have tested and improved our approach throughout the last few years, following our guiding principles to put people first and be intelligence-led.

An important component of our work is the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of local authority performance in relation to its delivery of social services functions. Our starting point is whether people are being supported to achieve positive personal outcomes.

Our aim is to support local authorities to better understand their strengths and the areas they need to

develop. We report on good practice; what must improve (where local authorities aren't meeting their statutory duties); and what should improve. We will share positive practice to support improvement across Wales. Following the principles in our updated Code of Practice we completed inspections in [Pembrokeshire County Council](#), [Bridgend County Borough Council](#), [Wrexham County Borough Council](#), [Monmouthshire County Council](#), [Cyngor Gwynedd](#), [Isle of Anglesey County Council](#), [Vale of Glamorgan Council](#) and [Ceredigion County Council](#). We completed a follow-up improvement check in [Bridgend County Borough Council](#) and [Powys County Council](#).

In response to a number of tragic child deaths across England and Wales, Welsh Government asked us to lead on a collaborative, multi-agency rapid review of decision-making in relation to child protection. We worked closely with Estyn and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales to do this.





The purpose of this review was to determine to what extent the current structures and processes in Wales ensure that children's names are appropriately placed on, and removed from, the Child Protection Register when it is safe to do so. Collaborative activity took place across children's services, education, and healthcare services in Gwynedd, Merthyr Tydfil, Swansea, Blaenau Gwent and Pembrokeshire. The rapid review is ongoing, and we will share our initial findings in autumn 2023.

In November 2022 we commenced a thematic review of care planning for children and young people subject to the Public Law Outline pre-proceedings. This will provide external scrutiny, assurance and help to promote improvement regarding the quality of practice in relation to the care planning for children and young people subject to the Public Law Outline pre-proceedings.

Our review aims to consider the extent to which practice has progressed since the publication of both our [National review of care planning for children and young people subject to public law outline pre proceedings \(2019\)](#) and the Public Law Outline [working group report](#) including best practice guidance (2021).

Activity has been completed in [Neath Port Talbot Council](#), [Torfaen County Borough Council](#), [Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council](#), and [Conwy County Borough Council](#). We will publish a national report in late 2023.

During June 2022 we completed an assurance check of Cafcass Cymru, focusing on the quality and effectiveness of its main function of acting as children's guardians providing expert advice to courts, safeguarding and supporting children and families. You can read the inspection report [here](#).

We continue to work with partners and have supported an inspection of [Aneurin Bevan University Health Board](#) and [Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board](#) Community Mental Health Teams. We also contributed to an [inspection of youth offending services](#) in Cardiff by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. Furthermore, our joint work has supported Healthcare Inspectorate Wales' stroke pathway national review which will be published late autumn 2023.

In keeping with our commitment to the Welsh Language Standards we undertook two inspections through the medium of Welsh.





Feedback from people

During our performance review activity we engaged with approximately 820 people who use or interact with local authority social services.

This includes people receiving care and support, families and carers and practitioners across the social care system.

An important part of our work is to review how well local authorities listen to the voice of people, record this and take appropriate action.

We plan to make improvements to the way we engage with people and how we capture this.

Feedback from people who access children's services

Some people, including carers, told us their social workers took time to listen to them which supported them to build good working relationships. There was some very positive feedback from younger children we spoke with about their social workers, one child told us: "They are funny and they always talk with us."

We saw practitioners working consistently and collaboratively with children; one young person said they had the same social worker for many years and they "know me really well" and were "always at the end of the phone" when needed. One care experienced person told us "my YPA (young persons advisor) is amazing and supportive. She cares." It should be noted however that some children expressed the difficulties they have in building relationships when social workers change often. Care experienced children and young people told us they receive the help and support they need and know who to contact should they need something. They used

words like "supportive" and "kind" when describing the social workers that support them.

One parent told us that whilst they were not happy about the outcome, they understood why actions were taken, with the reasons for this being clearly explained to them alongside the strengths and the risks. One parent powerfully described the approach as "understanding, actually supporting me and letting me speak". Another told us: "My children aren't in foster care; they have supported me to keep them safely. I understand about parenting now and am a better father. I can't think of anything they could have done better."

Others were very complimentary, particularly in relation to communication with the social worker, and the nature of relationships developed with their children. One parent commented: "The social worker was great with the children. Always made the visits fun and the children never felt like they were being watched or checked up on. Very child focused like that."



What we found in adult social services

Local authorities are experiencing a challenging time in relation to the provision of adult social care, with high levels of demand and increased complexity of people's needs. It is positive to note that generally, there is strong corporate and political support for social services across Wales.

Local authorities are working hard to effectively respond to the increase in the number of people contacting them for help. The increased level of demand has resulted in many local authorities operating waiting lists for assessments and other services such as domiciliary support and reablement. Whilst local authorities routinely take action to triage and monitor waiting lists, delays in receiving assessments and services can adversely impact on the well-being of people, including unpaid carers.

We have seen positive examples of person-centred practice supporting people's voices to be heard with a focus on what matters to them. Many local authorities are striving to improve the quality and consistency of recording how people have been supported.

We have seen examples of how the use of direct payments can provide people with the opportunity to tailor and manage their own care and support. However, the recruitment of personal assistants to provide support can be a challenge in some counties.

Hospital discharge has been an area of pressure across Wales. We have seen how local authorities have continued to work strategically and operationally with their partners in the local health boards to look for solutions to alleviate the pressures and to assist with safe discharge arrangements. We have been engaging at a national level to ensure people's rights are respected about where they wish to live.

The investment, development and provision of preventative services is crucial in supporting people's well-being and reducing or delaying the need for formal care and support. Local authorities are aware of the importance of preventative services, and we have seen many positive developments. The third sector has a vitally important role in providing preventative services and the positive impact these services have on promoting people's well-being should not be underestimated.

Feedback from people who access adults services

Many people said social services were helpful and they were treated with dignity and respect by practitioners. One carer shared: "I feel heard, valued and listened to." A person who receives care and support commented: "The care workers are great, always smiling".

As part of one inspection, feedback from people with a learning disability was gathered for us by People First. One key area highlighted was access to services, where many people said getting in contact with social services through the main telephone contact line could be prolonged. People said social workers used to be more accessible. Making contact in a crisis was a particular worry and they suggested there should be a dedicated social care line.



What we found in children's social services

There are significant challenges for children's services across Wales in relation to the recruitment and retention of practitioners. This has led to an over reliance on newly qualified and agency workers. The latter are often able to leave employment without much notice period resulting in disruption for the service and, more importantly, for children and families. An increasing number of local authorities are commissioning a service from a managed team of agency workers rather than individual agency workers, to enable them to meet their statutory responsibilities and respond to the increase in demand for services and complexity of need. Moving on from such arrangements can be problematic.

We saw examples where children and families had experienced several changes of social worker due to practitioners leaving children's services. This disruption in key relationships can be exacerbated if children are transferred between teams as part of their pathway through social services. A young person described how they could not recall the numbers of social workers they had, having had some social workers for just a day or a week. Positively the young person mentioned they'd had their current social worker for a while and had a good relationship with them but worried about when they might be leaving. This has a significant impact on

children and families as it affects their safety, wellbeing and the progress they make.

Family group conferences are used effectively for considering the best options to support children, including the involvement of wider family members. This demonstrates a clear commitment to considering the extended family as part of safety and contingency planning. We saw this being used at a very early stage on some occasions enabling children to be supported by family members who know them well.

When children do have to come into care, placement sufficiency and suitability remains a real concern. Children are often placed far away from home, and there is an increase in the number of children being placed in services which are not registered with the regulatory body. This means not all children in care are afforded the safety of a registered placement.

We saw that children are seen alone when there are concerns about their safety. This provides children with an opportunity to share their views and what a day is like in their life. However, sometimes we saw information shared by children could be better captured and with greater detail. We found the individual voice of a child is often missed when they are part of a large sibling group. Children's participation in planning their care and support, subject to their age and stage of development, also needs to be better promoted and strengthened.





Unregistered care homes

Local authorities are aware of their responsibilities for meeting the needs of care experienced children. However, there is a lack of appropriate registered residential and secure accommodation for some care experienced children with complex needs. This has led to many local authorities putting together improvised care and support arrangements, sometimes at very short notice, to meet the needs of some children. These services are often operating without being registered.

We understand the significant pressures on local authorities in finding suitable placements for some children with the most complex needs and they make sustained efforts to source an appropriate and registered service for children. However, we are very concerned about the increasing number of children placed in services that are not registered as required by law and, as such, lack the safeguards that come with registration.

This is a problem we identified in our [report](#) on care experienced children in 2019 and we will produce a more detailed report on care homes for children operating without registration later in 2023.

We know local authorities are keen to avoid placing children in unregistered services and understand emergency situations will arise where a local authority has a duty of care towards a child who needs care and accommodation. We have been considering approaches to this from across the UK and Ireland. For example, in Ireland there is an exemption for a short time period whilst suitable arrangements are put in place. This would require a change to legislation which is a matter for Welsh Ministers, not CIW.

During 2023/24 we will review our process around services operating without registration, taking into account lessons learned from our experience over the last few years and feedback from stakeholders, to ensure we continue to work and make decisions that place children's well-being and rights at the centre.

We will continue to explore further commissioning plans of local authorities and their partners, to ensure sufficiency of services to meet the care and support needs of children and young people.



Adult and children's regulated services

Key facts

Services

2,068 registered as at 31st March 2023. There has been a 2% increase in registered services since last year (43 additional services).

The largest increase has been in domiciliary support services and children's care home services.

Variations

914 variations received, a reduction of 8% compared to last year.

The most common variation type was to 'add a responsible individual' or 'remove a responsible individual'.

All variation types reduced in comparison to last year with the exception of 'vary service maximum capacity' (which rose 4%). The majority of these were to increase maximum capacity.

Concerns

There was an overall reduction of 18% (-486) concerns raised with us relating to adults and children's services.

The greatest reduction was seen in adult care home services (-352/-23%); followed by domiciliary support services (-129/-22%).

The most common themes were around Care & Support followed by Leadership & Management.

Inspections

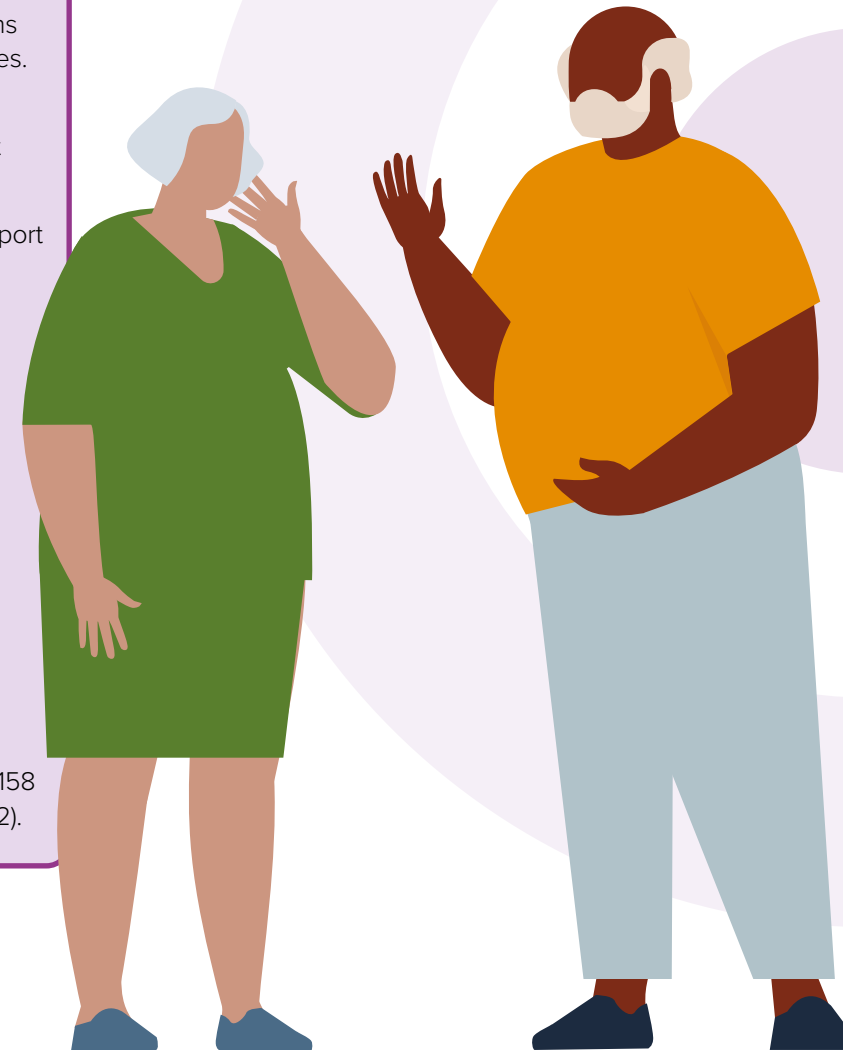
A total of 1,433 inspections were performed, a 28% increase in comparison to 2021/22, or an additional 314 inspections. There was also an increase in site visits up from 1,533 to 2,085 (36% increase).

Notifications

35,604 notifications were received; a reduction of 4% compared to the previous year.

Enforcement

A total of 858 Priority Action Notices were issued to 158 services (compared to 693 to 189 services in 2021/22).





Registration

Care homes for adults

During the last year, we saw a very small reduction in the number of care homes and number of places available for people to choose from, compared with the previous year. A greater proportion of the places lost were for people requiring nursing care, a reduction of 444 (4%).

Where providers have stopped operating, the most common reasons given were:

- the service was no longer financially viable - seven services (25%),
- cancelled by CIW as part of our enforcement process due to quality and safety concerns - six services (21%)
- issues with staffing - two services (7%), and
- issues with premises lease - two services (7%).

In six (21%) of the cases the care homes' registration was cancelled by CIW as part of our enforcement process due to quality and safety concerns.

The trend of adult care homes closing has been steady since 2015. Despite a 17% increase in new registrations (six) this year, overall, there are 88 (-8%) fewer adult care homes in 2023 than in March 2015 resulting in the loss of 1,037 (-4%) places available for people to choose from.

Number of services over time

Time	No. of services	No. of services with nursing	No. of services without nursing
Mar 2015	1,104	265	839
Mar 2016	1,109	267	842
Mar 2017	1,081	259	822
Mar 2018	1,082	262	820
Mar 2019	1,060	259	801
Mar 2020	1,053	263	790
Mar 2021	1,049	263	786
Mar 2022	1,033	260	773
Mar 2023	1,016	251	765

This reduction could reflect the aim to support people to continue to live in their own homes. However, there are concerns about the decreasing number of nursing places available for people with more complex care needs.

Domiciliary support services

There continues to be a general trend in the number of domiciliary support services increasing over time. This represents 60 additional domiciliary support services on 31 March 2023 compared to the same period in 2020.

Number of places over time

Time	No. of places	No. of places at services with nursing	No. of places at services without nursing
Mar 2015	25,852	11,433	14,419
Mar 2016	25,612	11,542	14,070
Mar 2017	25,753	11,408	14,345
Mar 2018	25,993	11,657	14,336
Mar 2019	25,655	12,019	13,636
Mar 2020	25,493	12,391	13,102
Mar 2021	25,466	12,408	13,058
Mar 2022	25,332	12,452	12,880
Mar 2023	24,815	12,008	12,807

Despite this increase, we are aware there is a shortage of care to support people to live in their own homes. This is leading to pressures on family carers and people being unable to leave hospital in a timely way or having to move to a care home where their preference was to return home.



Children's homes

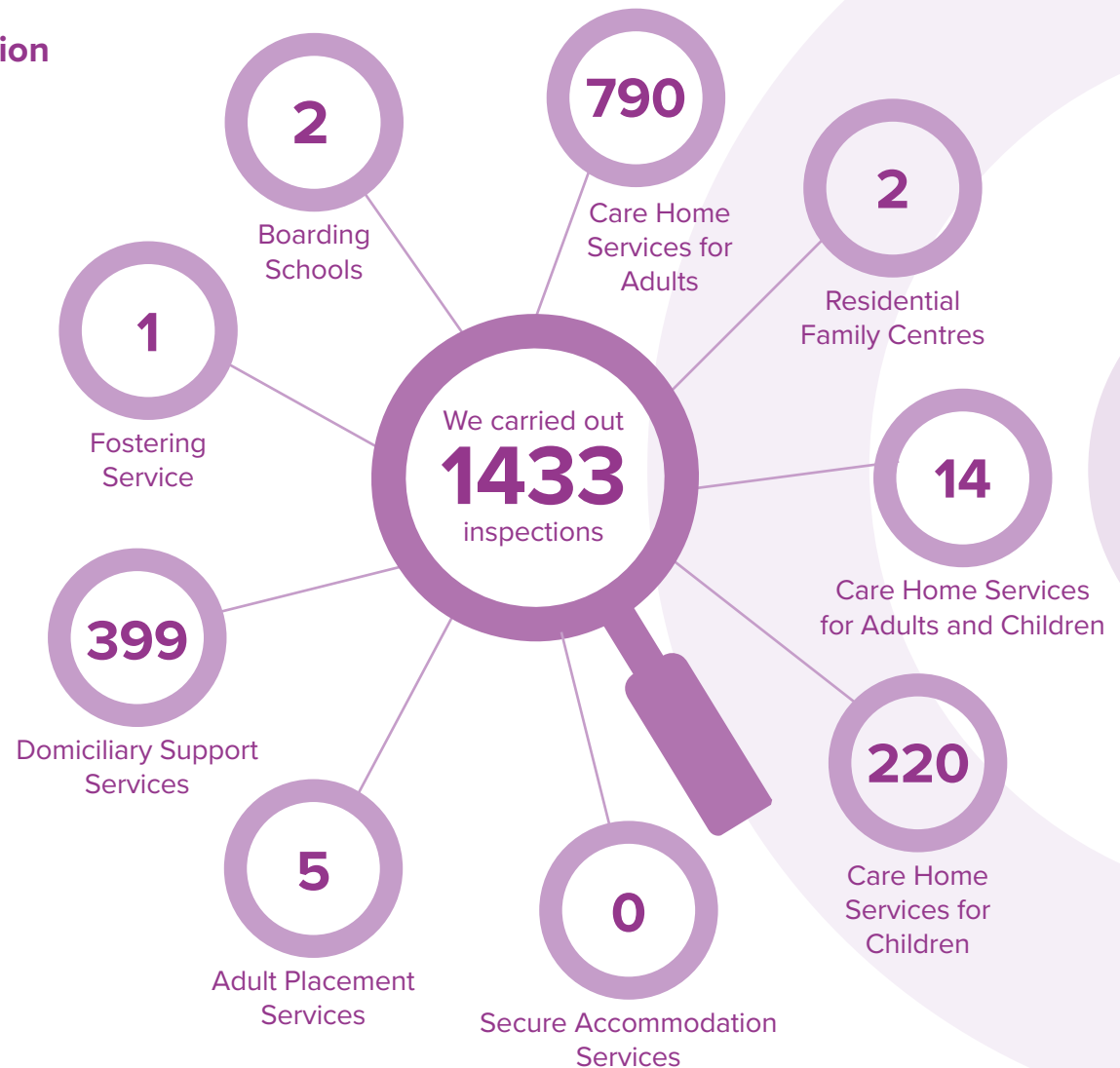
Despite some providers deciding to stop operating, the increase in the number of care homes for children has continued, both in respect of the number of services and places available for children. Thirty-one new care homes for children were registered in 16 of the 22 counties of Wales increasing the number of children's care home services from 256 in March 2022 to 277 in March 2023. This resulted in 45 new places available for children. Of the new services registered, 26 (84%) are owned by private providers, with five (16%) being provided by local authorities. Despite this increase in the number of places available, there remains a lack of sufficient placements for children whose needs are more complex.

Of the nine care homes that closed, the reasons given were they were no longer viable, staffing issues or a change in circumstance.

Other services

While the number of adoption services has remained static, there were two fewer fostering services compared to the previous year. We also registered two additional residential family centres in Wales bringing the total number of this service type to four. All other service types have remained static.

Inspection





We use the information we hold about services to plan and prioritise our inspections. We consider key lines of enquiry from our inspection framework at every inspection, with additional areas of focus, depending on the analysis of the information we hold about individual services. The number of inspections increased from the previous year from 1,119 to 1,433 (a 28% increase). This included 165 services being inspected on more than one occasion, usually to check if improvements had been made following a previous inspection.

There was an increase in the number of inspections of adult care homes up from 717 last year to 790 this year (+10%). Children's care home services inspections also increased from 142 last year to 220 this year (+55%).

Our inspections of domiciliary support services have similarly increased from 244 to 399 (+64%). This sharp increase is because last year we focused our inspection activity on care homes due to the impact of the pandemic.

Feedback from providers

'Inspection was a positive experience, positive feedback from the inspector.'

'Inspection was centred around outcomes and well-paced.'

'The inspectors were respectful and courteous to both staff and children at the home. Open with communication. Polite and pleasant during the visit. Happy in their appearance.'

What we found in regulated adult and children's services

As reported last year, we continued to find failings in Leadership & Management with 58% of Priority Action Notices issued under this theme. Responding to feedback from Responsible Individuals (RIs) at one of our provider events, we have started work with Social Care Wales to provide a peer support network for RIs to enhance and share their skills and knowledge in the sector.

There continues to be issues with recruitment and retention of staff in adult services leading to concerns about workforce stability. Some providers continue to rely on agency staff to meet their staffing ratio requirements. Some mitigate risks of this by only employing agency workers who are registered with Social Care Wales. We also saw this in children's care home services with two closing as a direct result of staffing issues.

We welcome the introduction of the Care Home Education Facilitators (CHEF) project which supports healthcare students to have placements in the social care sector. Early findings indicate this has potential to impact positively on the recruitment of nurses to the sector.

We saw several services which had gone the 'extra mile' to enrich people's life experiences, and this had significantly enhanced their well-being and overall outcomes.





Case Study

“We inspected a children’s home where a therapeutic model was embedded in the delivery of care. The home provided interventions from external health professionals who supported care staff to follow the therapeutic model which enables children to feel safe and secure. Children told us they have a voice and were happy living at the home. Care staff had undertaken a range of training to ensure they had the skills to provide care for children with specific needs. They were motivated

to provide high quality care and support which promotes meaningful relationships. A robust safeguarding policy was in place, ensuring care staff and children understood the safeguarding protocols and worked together to ensure children felt safe. New care staff were recruited following a robust and safe recruitment and vetting process. The provider and managers were proactive in identifying and driving improvement within the service.”

Inspector, Adults and Children’s Services Inspection
Team





It's the little things

“Gwnewch y pethau bychain” or “Do the little things” are considered to be St David’s most famous words. He believed the people of Wales should do the small, considerate things which often make a big difference.

We asked our inspectors for examples of the little things they had seen that improved outcomes for people and here are just a few of things they shared.

‘In one care home people living with dementia help with the gardening, also, there is an old car outside that people can “tinker” with.’

‘A person with learning disabilities uses parts from old wheelchairs to make new and useable ones which are then transported to Africa. The staff made it possible for him to travel to where the wheelchairs were sent and he was able to see how they were used. It was his first time travelling overseas.’

‘Helping people stay in touch with families, making sure the home phone is answered and people get to speak to their loved ones when they want.’

‘People having their life experience valued. For example, one person helped a trainee chef so they could improve the gravy, which in turn pleased everyone in the home.’

‘People receiving care in their own homes receiving a rota, showing who will be supporting them during the coming week.’

‘Using the outdoor space available creatively. One provider has the ‘Budding Minds’ initiative where they use the large garden to extend children’s learning experiences with polytunnels and fruit trees. The children make their own jams and preserves, which they sold at a local farmers’ market.’

‘I think the best thing I have seen is the practice of service users being part of recruitment processes and being on interview panels when new staff are recruited.’

Welsh language

Since the pandemic, services have struggled across the social care sector with recruitment and retention which may have a bearing on the number of staff recruited who are able to offer a service in Welsh or who have basic Welsh language skills.

There was an increase of two services with Welsh provision (one domiciliary support service and one children’s care home service) and one adult care home service with Welsh provision that no longer operated.

Notifications

As the regulator, service providers are required to notify us of events which affect people using their service. There has been a slight decrease in the number of notifications we received this year, falling from 37,038 notifications in 2021/22 to 35,604 in 2022/23. The most common type of notification was ‘outbreak of infectious disease’; however, this fell by 39% this year. This is likely due to a substantial decrease in the incidents of COVID-19 infections in Wales.



We are working with police authorities to ensure children living in care homes who go missing are appropriately safeguarded. We saw a 3% decrease in notifications from care homes for children of children going missing. There was a 11% increase in the number of notifications about other types of incidents reported to the police. We continue to embed work with police and providers to support the implementation of the Welsh Government's protocol *'Reducing the criminalisation of care experienced children and young adults'*.

In both adult and children's services there was a notable increase in notifications relating to safeguarding. As a result, we carried out an audit of notifications. In the sample reviewed, 35% of notifications should not have been reported to us because they did not meet the threshold required by regulation (these were mostly minor medication errors). We will ensure additional communication with the sector to ensure only information required by the regulations are submitted to us.

We also saw an increase in notifications about allegations of misconduct by people working at services (154 in 2021/22, to 321 in 2022/23). This may reflect the impact of staffing pressures and possibly lack of access to training during the pandemic. The increase in Priority Action Notices for Care & Support may be due to the lack of permanent care staff and the reliance on agency workers.

Concerns

As at 31 March 2023 there had been a reduction in the number of concerns we received, mainly in adult care homes (down by 352 concerns or 23%) closely followed by domiciliary support services (down by 129 concerns or 22%). In children's homes the number of concerns increased slightly by 7% (21 concerns).

The most common theme for concerns raised with us related to Leadership & Management, closely followed by Care & Support. We have noticed a link between concerns around leadership and management or poor care and support with reports of insufficient numbers of care staff.

Out of 2,149 concerns we received across all services, 280 led us to carry out an urgent inspection of the service. The most common action we took (750 concerns) was to report the issues raised to the service representative (Responsible Individual or Registered Person) for a provider led investigation. We then follow this up either at the next inspection of the service or by requesting inclusion in the provider's response.

492 concerns were raised by staff working in a care service. These are classed as 'whistle blowers' because they are protected in law when making disclosures to us. It is positive that care workers are prepared to come forward with their concerns.

Feedback from children and young people

'I can speak to my carers about any feelings I have whether it be home life, school or anything else on my mind'.

'My relationship with my foster carer is good, because we speak to each other'.

'I like living with my foster carers, they are nice, and they listen to me'.

'Foster carers are very good, can speak to them, trust them, love living here'.



Enforcement

Where we find failings which are impacting on people using services, or there is a risk of significant impact occurring, we use our enforcement pathway to require the provider to improve by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

During the year we were pleased to see fewer services where people were experiencing poor outcomes with 12% of the inspections resulting in Priority Action Notices being issued, compared to 23% in the previous year. However, the total number of priority action notices increased overall with 858 Priority Action Notices issued to 158 services in 2022/23, compared to 693 to 189 services in 2021/22. This is because where some services were failing, they were doing so in more areas. As with the previous year, the greatest areas of concern related to Leadership & Management, followed by Care & Support, which mirrors the concerns raised with us.

Failings in leadership and management can have a profound impact on the quality of service provided and outcomes for people receiving care and support. This can include failures to have sufficient and stable staffing impacting on the quality of care and support for people. In those services where we issued a priority action notice, 56% (88) had taken appropriate action to make all, or most, of the improvements required.

Securing improvement – adult and children’s services

In 2022/23 we found:



158
services did not meet legal requirements.



And we issued
858
Priority Action Notices (PAN).



The majority of these related to Leadership and Management.

Our follow-up visits confirmed that:



56%
of providers had taken appropriate action by March 2023.



The remaining 70 had been given time to make the required improvements and we will return to test this at an inspection.



We cancelled the registration of six adult care homes and two domiciliary support services because the providers had not made the necessary improvements. This related to the oversight and/or financial mismanagement of services resulting in poor outcomes for people.

The remaining services have been given time to improve and we will return to review this at our inspections.

Partnership working

In the Children's and Younger Adults team we continued to develop our links with South Wales Police, to address the drive towards the decriminalisation of care-experienced children, and to review and monitor the number of episodes of children missing from care homes. Our information sharing with the police continued to provide valuable information relating to missing episodes and the vulnerabilities for the children who are subject to child sexual exploitation. Work also continued with Dyfed Powys Police to progress Welsh Government guidance on the decriminalisation of care-experienced children.

Adult services

In adult services we work in partnership with local authorities and health board commissioners and safeguarding teams. This has included the development of a Memorandum of Understanding about how we will work together, a copy of which will be available on our website. This joint working is essential in avoiding duplication and in supporting improvement.





Childcare and play services

Key facts

Services: 3,434 on the register

We saw an overall decrease in services (-4%) and places (-3%) registered for childcare and play compared to last year. The largest number reduction was once again in childminders, with 97 (-6%) fewer services and 697 (-5%) fewer places. However, the largest percentage reduction was in respect of sessional day care (-10% services and -10% places) and out of school care (-8% services and -10% places). Full day care services saw an increase of 29 (1,098 places).

Variations: 882 received

In 2022/23 we received 18% fewer applications to vary registration than the previous year. It is important to note this decrease is from a high point last year as, in 2021/22, numerous settings informed CIW of adjustments to their provision as they resumed business after the pandemic. The most common variation received was to cancel a service, however, this reduced by a third in comparison with last year. This variation was most common for childminders which is

not surprising given the decline in childminders noted above. The second most common variation was to vary the maximum capacity of a service; the majority were to increase the maximum capacity in full day care and childminders.

Concerns: 549 raised

There was a slight increase (4%) in the number of concerns received compared to last year (from 528 last year to 549). The most common service type for concerns raised was full day care (70%). The most common theme of concerns received was Leadership & Management followed by Care & Development.

Notifications

The number of notifications we received reduced from 13,339 to 9,764 – a decrease of 27%. The decrease occurred in all service types. The most common notifications concerned changes to people at the service and changes in a service's statement of purpose. There was an increase in notifications concerning an allegation

of harm or abuse to a child – up from 62 in 2021/22 to 141 in 2022/23. This increase is likely to be explained by the increase in settings reopening post-pandemic or fully reopening by increasing the number of children attending, rather than reflecting an increase in the prevalence of harm to children. We will monitor this development closely in 2023/24.

Inspections: 719 completed

There was a 23% increase in the number of inspections compared to last year, an additional 135 inspections. The percentage of services inspected more than once increased to 10%, from 6% last year.

Enforcement: 252 Priority Action Notices issued

This number of Priority Action Notices increased to 252 (issued to 42 services) from 149 (issued to 59 services) during the previous period.



Registration

The decline in the number of childminders is a trend evident in recent years and the subject of considerable concern and interest from all concerned with supporting the childcare and play sector. The most common reasons given for child minders cancelling their registration during 2022/23 was due to retirement (23%)

and changes in career (21%). In a small number of cases (5%), the childminder reported they had deregistered as the business was no longer viable.

An independent review of childminding commissioned by Welsh Government is due to publish its findings in June 2023. We will carefully consider the recommendations of the report and are committed

to working with all partners to promote the value of childminding as a profession and as an option for parents and carers. While the safety and wellbeing of children is always our priority, we know that promoting improvement in the sector more generally is the best way to achieve that goal in the long term.

The reduction in services and places in sessional and out of school day care continues the downward trend reported last year. The increase (+3%) in full day care services and places continues a trend noted in last year's report. It may suggest services developing economies of scale are better able to manage the financial and recruitment and retention difficulties in the sector. The increase in the number of Priority Action Notices against a smaller number of settings is likely to reflect CIW's focus, post-pandemic, on following up concerns and repeat visits to services that are struggling.

Number of services & places						
	Number of services		% Change in services	Number of places		% Change in places
	31/03/2023	31/03/2022	31/03/2023	31/03/2023	31/03/2022	31/03/2023
Childminder	1,589	1,686	-5.8%	12,820	13,517	-5.2%
Crèche	16	14	14.3%	474	406	16.7%
Full Day Care	1,044	1,015	2.9%	40,510	39,412	2.8%
Open Access Play Provision	37	38	-2.6%	2,758	2,931	-5.9%
Out of School Care	330	358	-7.8%	13,229	14,723	-10.1%
Sessional Day Care	418	463	-9.7%	9,400	10,437	-9.9%
Grand Total	3,434	3,574	-3.9%	79,191	81,426	-2.7%



Inspection

This year saw the first full year of inspections without significant adjustments to our methodology because of the pandemic. The impact of the pandemic, however, affected the way we prioritised our inspections and the findings of our inspections suggest the recovery in the sector is far from complete. We undertook 719 inspections, prioritising those settings most overdue an

Childcare and play services - Number of Inspections by Service Type

Service Type	Service Sub Type	No. of Inspections
Child Minder		205
Day Care	Full Day Care	393
	Open Access Play Provision	2
	Out of School Care	44
	Sessional Day Care	73
	Creche	2
Total		719

inspection, those subject to enforcement action, and those in response to concerns. The number of settings inspected more than once has more than doubled, from 31 during the previous period, to 63 during 2022/23. This increase should be seen in the context of the growth in the number of concerns received, albeit small and our focus on services subject to enforcement action.

We give a rating against each of the four inspection themes, but do not give an overall rating. The most common rating recorded is Good (415), followed by Adequate (261). We awarded Excellent on 98 occasions and Poor 48 times. This reinforces the point that most services in Wales do a good job for their children. The challenge for CIW is to play our part in guiding and supporting these services to do even better, while maintaining our oversight of those services that have a poor rating for one or more themes and ensuring children are safe and secure. Our childcare and play improvement project (see case study below) is designed to help CIW do better in promoting improvement in individual services and in the sector more widely. In 2023/24 we will be testing the use of improvement meetings with some providers in between inspections and developing better arrangements to share and promote best practice.





Case Study

Childcare and Play Improvement Project

In spring 2022, we set up our Childcare and Play Improvement Project. Since then, we have been working with a range of people, including providers, staff from other organisations and our own staff. They have helped us consider what more we can do to encourage improvement across the whole sector as well as in individual settings.

Inspection will continue to be at the heart of what we do, and every setting will still be inspected at regular intervals. We plan to do more to

celebrate and share excellent practice we see at inspection. We will make better use of our website and other communication channels to promote our findings.

We plan to develop our provider events to establish annual improvement conferences. We will use these to share the learning from our inspections, highlight common themes and celebrate achievements. We will invite providers to share their ideas and examples of best practice.

We have developed a new type of meeting, called improvement meetings, which we aim to carry out with providers between their inspections. The purpose of these meetings is to allow providers the opportunity to tell us about any improvements they have made since their last inspection and any they plan to make in the future. During February 2023, we asked for volunteers from the childcare and play sector to take part in the pilot of these meetings. Our pilot will run for around three months, from April 2023 until the end of June 2023.



Welsh language

Welsh Government has ambitious plans to expand the number of childcare places available in Wales and, as part of that expansion, increase the amount of Welsh language provision. This is in addition to Welsh Government's strategic plan to strengthen Welsh language provision across all childcare and play services. A key part of this strategy is for these services to provide a Welsh language 'active offer'. The strategy states: "An 'active offer' simply means providing a service in Welsh without someone having to ask for it. The Welsh language should be as visible as the English language." The data for 2022/23 is very similar to that seen during the previous year. The main operating language of services was English, with 75% of places provided by services that operate mainly in English. This period saw a decline in the number of Welsh, or both Welsh and English places in settings. The percentage of services providing the active offer (18%) and working towards the active offer (17%) is similar to that reported last year. We will continue to do all we can to promote and support the use of the Welsh language in childcare.

Feedback from people

This year we made it easier for people to give feedback about childcare and play services. We have separate online surveys for parents and staff to use. People can submit the surveys anonymously if they wish. We introduced the use of QR codes to make it easier for people to provide feedback. Posters and window stickers were distributed to all full day care settings in Wales in early 2023 and a social media campaign promoted their use. These materials were scanned over 300 times between 1-22 February 2023, and over the year, we received 1,670 responses to our online surveys. Most parents and carers thought their child was happy at the service (95%) and most thought their child could take part in a good range of age-appropriate activities (96%). Most staff (94%) thought children were happy in their care, with 98% saying they had a good understanding of their role and responsibilities in keeping children safe and healthy. The lowest percentage scores in both the parent/carer and staff surveys related to the Welsh language active offer. Sixty-seven percent of parents and carers stated that the Welsh language 'active offer' was promoted in the service they used for their child, with 61% of staff responding positively to the same question. These figures should be seen alongside the information from our inspections which also suggest that more needs to be done by all to support the ambition to promote and expand the use of the Welsh language.

We will be distributing our QR code materials to other types of childcare service, such as out of school clubs, later in 2023.



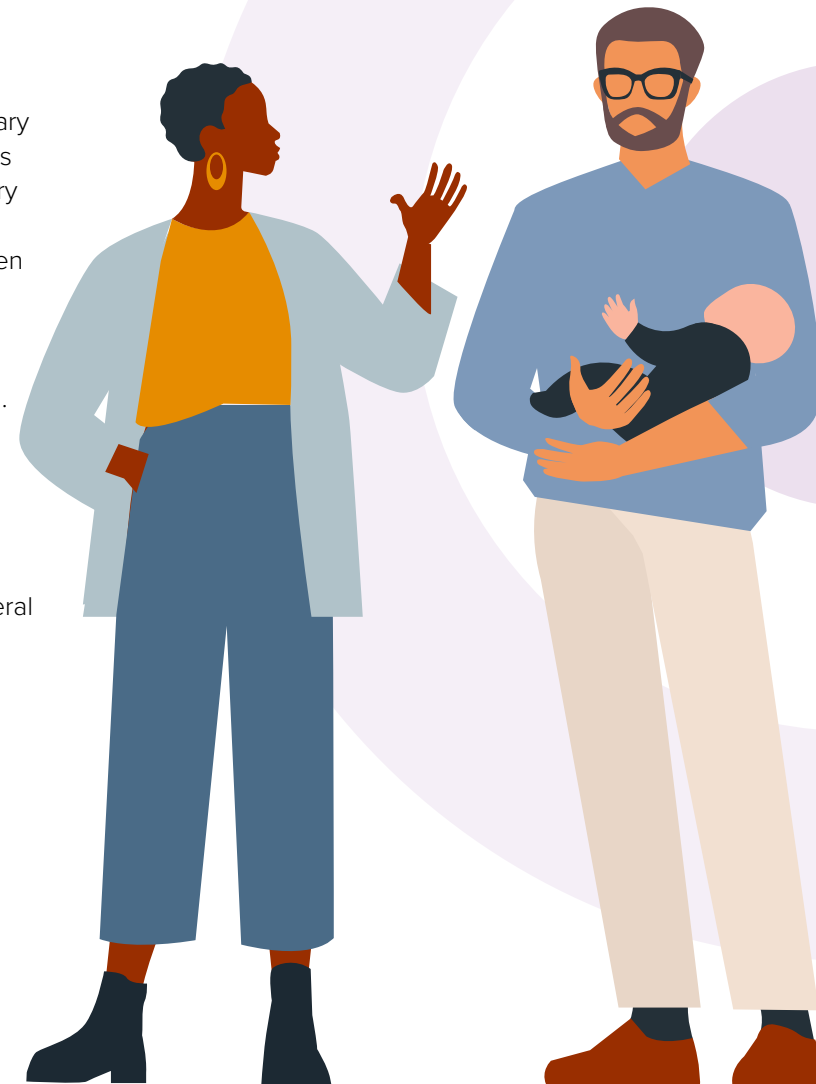


Concerns

There were 549 concerns raised in 2022/23, the majority (385) about full day care settings. The total for 2022/23 is higher than last year, and higher than the pre-pandemic year of 2019/20 (439). It is still too early to tell whether this is a long-term trend. The most common concerns raised were around Leadership & Management followed by Care & Development. Our response depended on the nature of the concern. In some cases, we asked the provider to investigate the matter and report back to us, in others we considered the matters raised at the next scheduled inspection or brought forward the inspection of the service. Where necessary we inspected within 24 hours of a concern being received. The detail of concerns received against the theme of Leadership & Management includes a number of examples where the concern is linked to insufficient staffing or deploying the right mix of suitably qualified and experienced staff. This in turn may reflect the financial pressures in the economy generally and their impact on childcare and play services.

Joint inspections with Estyn

Our joint inspection programme with Estyn was established in January 2019. Together, we inspect the care and education of children in non-maintained settings which are eligible for funding for part-time education. Having suspended the joint inspection programme in late March 2020, we reviewed the decision each term and resumed inspections in January 2022, with ratings paused until April 2022. Last year's report noted our first few inspections between January and March 2022 confirmed that some providers continued to do a good or excellent job for the children and families they serve. Others, however, were less confident than before the pandemic with some of the basic requirements in providing a safe service for children, including the understanding of safeguarding. One of the ways we responded to this was by presenting and discussing safeguarding issues in our provider events during 2022. This year's inspections have consistently found better outcomes being achieved, with children mostly happy, secure, and enjoying their time in the setting. We have found several examples of notable practice in our inspections. We publish case studies of this notable practice on our website. One example is described in a case study below.





Case study: Ysgol Feithrin Pont-y-pŵl

The nursery makes extensive use of the excellent local park to learn about nature and the seasons. Visits are organised to the library, weekly market and local supermarket, and the children enjoy visiting the local care home, forging a close relationship with the residents and preparing activities and choosing books to share with their new friends. In addition to being part of their local community, the children are encouraged to be curious about Wales, the Welsh language and other cultures. As a result, the children are enthusiastic about the

learning opportunities around them and extend and develop their own ideas confidently. Natural equipment and materials are used extensively, for example wooden cups and plates in the mud kitchen, and the nursery aims to provide authentic resources in all learning areas, such as fruit and vegetables from the market or garden in the farm shop, loose change in the till, a full-sized guitar in the music corner and hammers and saws in the woodwork area.





Enforcement

Our goal is to ensure all services provide a safe and good quality experience for their children. Where we find failings, we will take enforcement action to both challenge services and to support them to improve.

Where we find poor outcomes for children or risk to their well-being, we issue a Priority Action Notice. The provider must take immediate steps to address this and make improvements. This year we issued 252 Priority Action Notices against 42 different services.

Leadership & Management continued to be the most common inspection theme resulting in a Priority Action Notice.

Securing improvement – childcare and play services

In 2022/23 we found:



42
services did not meet legal requirements.



And we issued
252
Priority Action Notices (PAN).



The majority of these related to Leadership and Management.

Our follow-up visits confirmed that:



64%
of providers had taken appropriate action by March 2023.



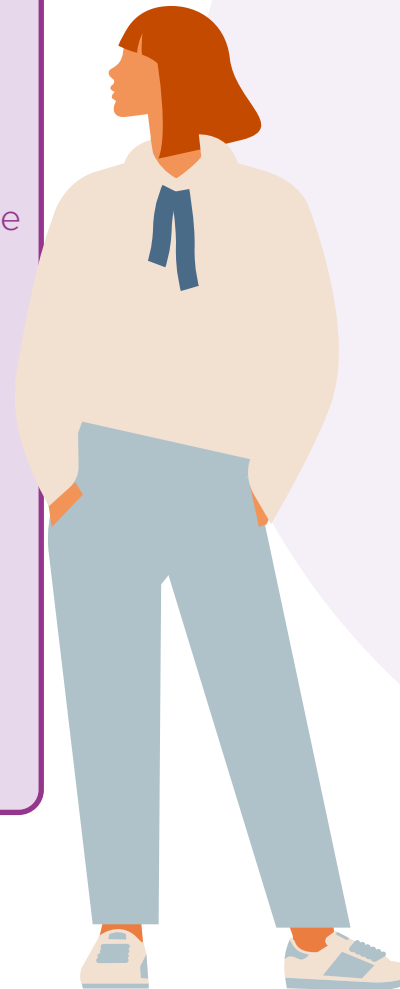
The remaining 15 had been given time to make the required improvements and we will return to test this at an inspection.



Securing improvement: outcomes for children

We received numerous concerns relating to a childcare service and undertook an inspection. We identified significant failings under the themes of Care & Development, Environment and Leadership & Management, which placed children at risk of harm. We issued four Priority Action Notices and identified two Areas for Improvement. The ratings were 'Adequate' for Well-being and 'Poor' for all other themes. We followed our Securing Improvement and Enforcement pathway, discussed the service at our enforcement panel and held a formal meeting with the provider. The provider responded positively and worked proactively to improve their practice and address the failings identified. Following

the provider meeting, the Responsible Individual thanked us for our time and professionalism, stating the meeting had given them an opportunity to evidence the improvements they had already made. They gave assurances they would sustain this and make further improvements. The Responsible Individual fully engaged with the process and looked forward to welcoming us back for the re-inspection. We undertook a follow-up inspection within six months and found they had made significant improvements. At this inspection, we awarded ratings of 'Good' for Well-being, Care & Development and Environment and 'Adequate' for Leadership & Management.





Safeguarding people

The safety of people is at the core of all our work. We work closely with local authorities who have the statutory responsibility for safeguarding, regularly attending strategy meetings and contributing to investigations.

We take account of the learning points that arise from child and adult practice reviews.

In addition to our core activity, we have carried out two specific multi agency reviews of children's safeguarding.

Rapid review of child protection arrangements in Wales

In the latter part of the year, we began work on a rapid review of child protection arrangements in Wales alongside Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and Estyn. The purpose of the review is to determine to what extent the current structures and processes in Wales ensure children are appropriately placed on, and removed from, the Child Protection Register (when sufficient evidence indicates it is safe to do so).

This review will be shaped by feedback from peers in education, police, health, and regional safeguarding boards as well as talking directly to children and young people who are or have been on the child protection register.

This collaborative approach highlights the fact safeguarding is everybody's business. As inspectorates, we want to work with stakeholders to get a holistic picture of current practice across Wales and to identify together what is working well and where there's room for improvement.

We will publish our interim findings from the review in June 2023 in order to share learning and promote best practice at the earliest possible opportunity. It is hoped this will enable practitioners from across Wales who are involved in safeguarding and child protection to take forward and learn from the early findings, to strengthen work with children and young people in the immediate and longer term.

The full report, which is one of several pieces of work relating to the safeguarding of children, will be published in autumn 2023.



Joint Inspection of child protection arrangements (JICPA)

In February 2023 we resumed our programme of collaborative inspections of child protection arrangements in Wales. This followed successful pilot inspections in Newport (2019) and Neath Port Talbot (2021).

JICPA is a cross inspectorate review of how well safeguarding partners work together to protect children. Working alongside His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and Estyn we evaluated the effectiveness of the arrangements and practices to safeguard children in Denbighshire. Our focus this time was on protecting children aged 11 and under at risk of abuse and neglect.

Our methodology emphasises the importance of engagement with people, including a clear focus on the extent to which organisations are respectful of people's dignity, promotes the ethos of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, with a focus on the child's voice, safeguards and positive outcomes for children and families.

This joint inspectorate programme will continue in 2023/24, when we will complete a systems review of child protection arrangements in each regional safeguarding board/health board area in Wales.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

Deprivations of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) ensure people's human rights are protected and maintained, and the care they receive is in their best interests and delivered in the least restrictive way. We continue to monitor their implementation on behalf of Welsh Ministers and [published the 2021/22 DoLS report](#) in February 2023.

It has been widely recognised there are number of challenges associated with the current DoLS system, particularly in light of the increases in the number of DoLS applications following the Supreme Court ruling in 2014. Due to the ongoing delays in DoLS applications being assessed most of the supervisory bodies in Wales were unable to assure themselves that people's human rights were not being breached by being deprived of their liberty unlawfully during 2022/23.

We are aware many local authorities are experiencing an increase in the volume of safeguarding referrals where people may be at risk of harm. We understand investment and improvement in service design and provision is occurring, however it remains to be of significant concern and challenge for social care partners to work together to consider how services can most effectively be configured and funded to meet these demands and ensure sustainability.





Annex



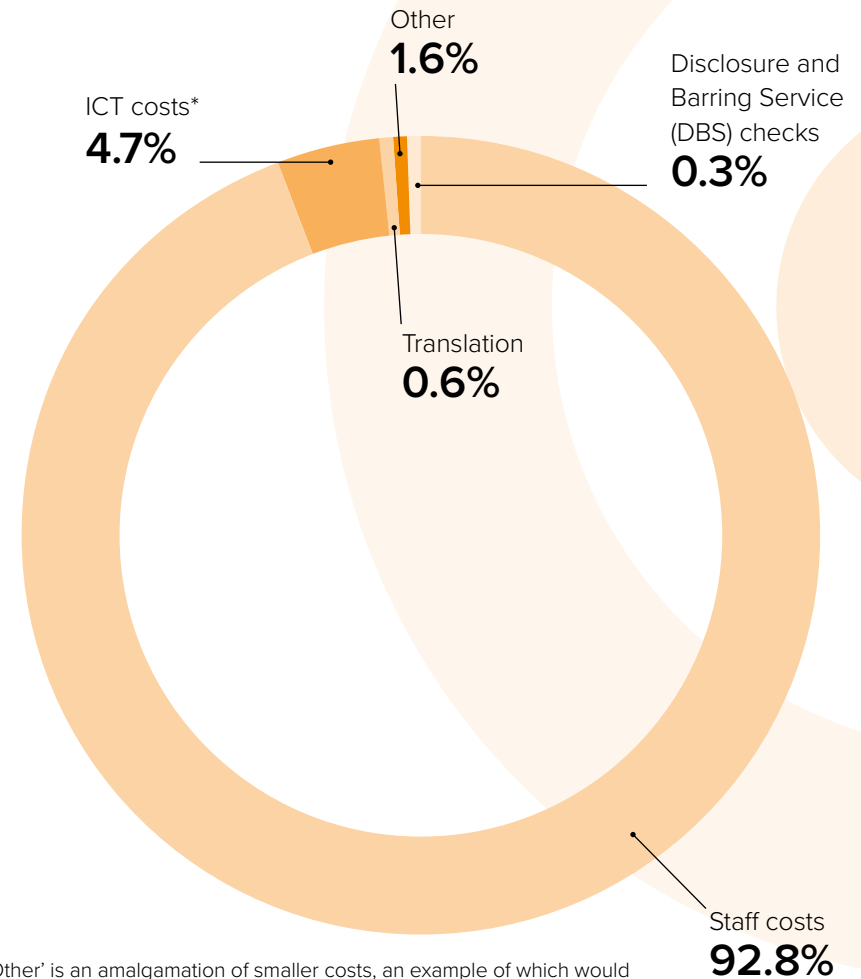


Financial budget and breakdown

	£
Our allocated budget for 2022/23 was:	14,233,000
We also received funding to support:	
The implementation of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016	584,590
The development and implementation of online Self-Assessment of Service Statements (SASS) for childcare and play services and for administration of the Voluntary Approval Scheme (known as the Nanny Scheme).	172,109
Joint Inspectorate Reviews of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) across Wales in 2022/23 and 2023/24.	24,621
Child Protection Rapid Review	4,118
Additional Welsh Government funding	293,384
Total funding	15,311,822
Costs	
Staff costs including Fee Paid Inspectors	14,221,868
Non-staff costs (ICT, translation, telephony, travel and subsistence etc)	1,089,954
Total costs	15,311,822

By the end of the financial year, £14,221,868 was spent on staff costs and £1,089,954 was spent on non-staff costs with 77% of the staff costs representing inspection and regulation activity.

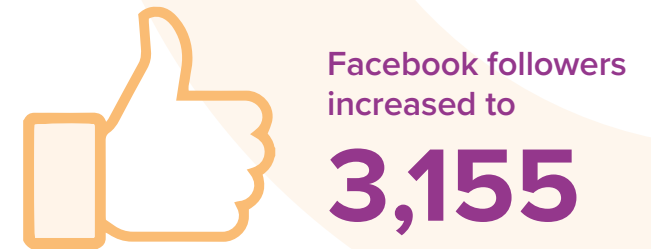
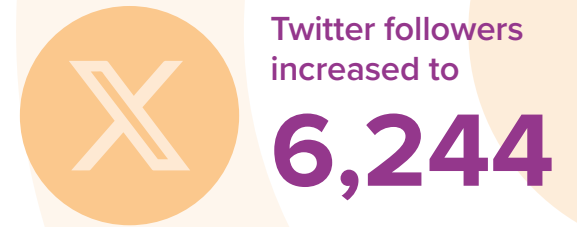
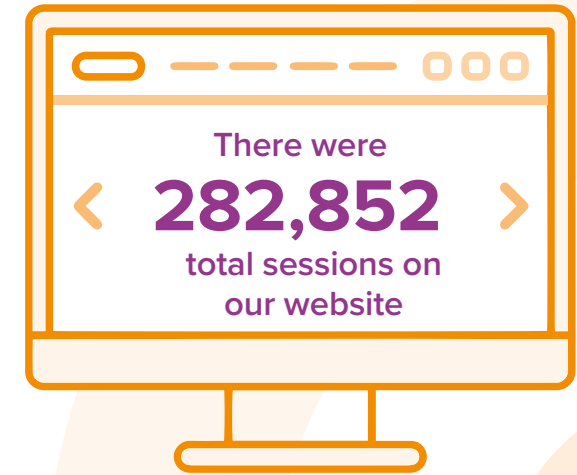
Breakdown of spend



*'Other' is an amalgamation of smaller costs, an example of which would be staff training and communication. *Includes ICT consultancy fees




Communication and engagement





We launched our LinkedIn page



We replaced **17** PDF guidance documents on our website with a new HTML format, making information easier to find and use.

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What did you think of our Annual Report? Please [click here](#) or scan the QR code to fill out a short survey.

