

Thank you for inviting Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to share our views on progress to date, and on the next steps in relation to the recommendations following the inquiry into the emotional and mental health of children and young people.

CIW has not undertaken any direct evaluation of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) since 2009, when there was a joint evaluation undertaken with Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and the Wales Audit Office. HIW is the independent regulator and inspectorate of healthcare in Wales.

Below we highlight our findings in relation to the emotional and mental health and well-being of care experienced children and young people arising from two national reviews we carried out during 2018 and 2019.

CIW National Review of Care Homes for Children in Wales 2018–19

The full report, and reports for the individual care homes, can be found at:
<https://careinspectorate.wales/190926-national-review-care-children-wales>

The findings of the review in relation to the emotional and mental health of care experienced children and young people included:

- children achieve the best outcomes where care home services use recognised and holistic models of care which include therapy and education
- there was a general commitment to ensuring children and young people have positive social and leisure experiences, improving their social skills. This contributed significantly to their overall emotional well-being
- some children and young people did not have their emotional health needs met. We found for these children, local authorities and health boards were not working collaboratively to ensure children had the right support to meet their well-being outcomes
- some children had experienced several placement breakdowns leading to a significant number of moves between services. This included fostering, residential care and, for some children, secure placements. This has a negative impact on their well-being, increasing their trauma, and severely impacting on their ability to form attachments and have secure relationships with their carers and peers

- a significant number of providers highlighted issues with access to mental health care, such as CAMHS, and they expressed concern that children were not getting the appropriate support needed to address their emotional health needs. This was echoed by children we spoke to, including access to support for substance misuse. This was resulting in poor outcomes for children and young people

Our key recommendations in the report included:

- service providers, placing authorities, local authorities and health boards must ensure children have access to local specialist services including health and education, to ensure their well-being outcomes are met
- providers, local authorities, health boards, police and other relevant agencies should work more collaboratively to improve children's well-being by ensuring timely access to specialist health services, particularly CAMHS and all children living in care homes have access to advocacy and independent visitors

CIW National overview report in relation to care experienced children and young people

The full report, and reports of individual local authorities inspected, can be found at: <https://careinspectorate.wales/190619national-overview-report-relation-care-experienced-children-and-young-people-wales>

Our findings in relation to the emotional and mental health of care experienced children and young people included:

- there is a need for urgent focus on securing better outcomes for looked after children with emotional and mental health needs, so they are able to access timely and appropriate support
- we saw a mixed picture of joint working with partner agencies at a strategic level, with significant further development needed to secure multi-agency partnership working and collaborative working to ensure positive outcomes for children and families
- all local authorities had formal advocacy services available for looked after children and care leavers. These commissioned services were mainly issue based and relied on the children and young people opting in, this means some children who might benefit from an advocacy service were not independently represented at decision-making meetings
- concerns continued regarding the poor availability of emotional and therapeutic support services particularly in relation to CAMHS. This was despite the shared recognition that the majority of children who are in care for lengthy periods will have suffered adverse childhood experiences which impact on their emotional wellbeing. As a result, many local authorities have developed their own in-house support

services to help ensure children and young people could access timely help. This highlights deficits in partnership working and has a financial implication for children's services at a time of constricting budgets

- more work is needed urgently with health boards to develop a clear assessment of looked after children and care leavers' health needs including their mental health needs. This needs to inform clear access pathways to an appropriate range of services able to meet identified needs
- issues were identified regarding the lack of a clear pathway for care leavers with ongoing health needs. Young people in need of therapeutic services were often poorly served
- we found lack of choice in placements for teenagers. This sometimes resulted in young people being placed, at least initially, in settings that are unable to meet their often complex emotional and behavioural needs and makes them vulnerable to placement breakdown. This was also found to be one of the main factors for children and young people requiring out of local authority area placements
- foster carers considered therapeutic support as critical to the stability of children living with them and where this was not available, this was a contributory factor in placement breakdown. Some foster carers were positive about the support they received from their local authority. They described this as timely and supportive, with access to out of hours' support, therapeutic social workers and 'edge of care' teams

Our local authority inspectors are currently reporting that many local authorities are using their own budgets to fill gaps in provision that should really be provided through CAMHS. To address this some local authorities are directly providing psychology/therapy services for children and young people. For example, both Bridgend and Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) have separately employed psychologists, to mitigate the lack of access to CAMHS for looked after children and children in receipt of care and support. RCT plan to develop these resources further to support the increasing numbers of children with emotional and mental health needs.

We have outlined below some positive examples of how local authorities are promoting children and young people's emotional and mental well-being. This is not an exhaustive list.

Carmarthenshire:

- consultation events held with the aim to establish pilots within school to address increase in levels of self-harm / suicide amongst young people. A new forum has been established with an emphasis on early collaboration and identification of young people who do not have a formal diagnosis to enable early intervention and prevention in response to concerns that services are missing the needs of some young people

- the Education and Well-being Team are continuing to deliver Attachment Awareness training, advice and support to all schools to better equip them in being able to meet the emotional needs of vulnerable children
- the Young Carers Services is supporting families and schools to improve outcomes. They are working collaboratively with schools, health, and voluntary sector to ensure they are 'young carers aware' and to deliver a range of initiatives for young carers. Schools are engaging in the Young Carers Awareness Award

Newport:

- specialist CAMHS referrals are considered at the local authority multi-agency panel
- CAMHS have processes in place to respond to children and young people with complex needs in a timely manner. CAMHS staff make follow up telephone calls to families when young people have not attended appointments. This persistent approach is particularly important when working with young people who may be reluctant to engage
- officers in the local authority's Engagement and Inclusion Team work very closely with school leaders to provide support for school based staff. Leaders ensure all staff receive appropriate training in supporting pupils' social and emotional development. Training has included a focus on understanding threshold requirements for action when completing multi-agency referral forms as well as preventive training through the Attachment Awareness Programme. This includes appropriate support for staff to respond to issues such as the impact and trauma of bereavement, anger management and pupil self-esteem

Gwent:

- Gwent-wide attachment and trauma service offers good support and consultation. Practitioners from children's social work teams receive specialist advice and support from the service

Monmouthshire:

- ISCAN: Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) Integrated Service for Children with Additional Needs. Includes health and social care staff which includes CAMHS and psychologists
- the local authority's Well-being Service includes:
 - MyST Support Team, who work in partnership with carers, forming and maintaining an integrated multi-disciplinary team around the young person and their family. It creates a shared understanding of the young person's risks and needs. This is a highly intensive service
 - Creative Therapies Team who provide play and drama therapy and also run anxiety and transition groups for young people
 - school based Counselling Team who provide 1:1 counselling for 11-18 year olds

- Building Attachments, Security and Emotional Well-being Team which includes psychologist and play therapist
- Achieving Change Together Team includes a psychologist and systemic family therapist
- Early Help Panel which is a multi-agency referral/allocation panel has plans in place to develop its role to be used as a non-urgent referral route for access to CAMHS

Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT):

- senior managers in RCT and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB) have taken initial steps to develop a joint commissioning approach for children with complex needs via the regional partnership board
- have a newly remodelled and well-resourced early help service for children - the Resilient Families Service. Staff can access a psychologist employed by the local authority for advice and support. This is a strengths based service intent on increasing the emotional resilience of families
- plan to remodel its disabled children's team into a Children with Complex Needs Team. The emphasis would shift from diagnosis of disability/condition to the complexity of the child's needs as a result. The remit of the team was anticipated to expand to include more children with emotional and mental well-being difficulties than previously, in response to the local authority's perception of the need/demand for specific support for this large group of children
- run parenting programmes for parents of young children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and provide support to manage behaviour
- is developing an emotional well-being service jointly with CTMUHB

CIW has recently commenced a programme of local authority inspections of services for disabled children and young people. This thematic review includes consideration of how children and young people's emotional and mental well-being is being promoted and protected.

Conclusion

Whilst there is evidence that some action has and continues to be taken by local authorities to support children and young people's emotional and mental well-being, the findings contained in our national overview reports confirm that children and young people are experiencing poor outcomes in relation to their emotional and mental well-being. These are not new findings and confirm that significant improvements are still required to promote good well-being outcomes for children and young people across Wales.