

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc
ac Addysg**

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**Children, Young People and
Education Committee**

Chief Inspector, Care Inspectorate Wales

Gillian Baranksi

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General Scrutiny Session – Follow-up on children’s social care

Dear Gillian,

Thanks to you and Margaret for attending our scrutiny session on 28 January 2026. We appreciate your time and engagement with the issues raised.

As we approach the end of the Sixth Senedd, we have been reflecting on the range of serious concerns raised with us about children’s social care in Wales. You will be aware that this policy area has been the subject of much of our scrutiny. Throughout this Senedd term, we have examined the experiences of care-experienced children, children who go missing and those who are criminally exploited. In addition to our own scrutiny, during this Senedd we have also seen yet more cases where frontline services have not protected children or listened to their voices. These include the failings highlighted in the Gwynedd Child Practice Review.

We are therefore taking this opportunity to follow up on the issues explored during our recent session, looking specifically at how we can secure system-wide improvement. We remain increasingly concerned that the challenges facing children’s social care in Wales arise from wider systemic issues, rather than isolated shortcomings within individual services.

This letter is therefore focused on clarifying how Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) uses its position, the intelligence and data it has and its authority to support improvement across the whole system in line with its remit. We are seeking assurance that CIW is doing all within its remit to take a strategic view of the quality and safety of children’s social care – connecting inspection findings to wider trends, identifying risks early, and using its voice to drive change. Inspection reports and data are important, but they cannot be the end point. We want to further understand in what ways CIW contributes to system-wide learning, strengthens accountability, and ensures that children’s experiences and voice shape improvement.

In that context, we would welcome further clarity on the following areas:

- **CIW's strategic role for local authority social services:** How does CIW ensure that its own inspections and its joint inspections of local authorities, its thematic reviews and its intelligence works to build a coherent picture of system performance across Wales? Are there effective mechanisms in place for CIW to identify patterns, escalate concerns to Welsh Government and support the improvement across local authorities?
- **Learning from inspections:** How does CIW assure itself – and us – that issues in inspection reports relating to the performance of social services are swiftly highlighted to other local authorities? We note that a joint CIW and Estyn inspection was carried out following the Gwynedd review. What changes, if any, will CIW be making to its future inspections to ensure cultural failings, weak governance or non-compliance with established safeguarding processes and guidance are always identified in inspection reports? ?
- **Voice of the child:** How is CIW strengthening its own approach to hearing directly from children and young people? How does this test whether children's voices genuinely influence inspection outcomes?
- **Oversight and knowledge gaps:** There is a lack of Welsh-specific oversight in Deprivation of Liberty (DoL) cases applying to children as was highlighted in our session and as set out in our previous scrutiny work. What role does CIW believe it should play in addressing this gap, and where do you believe responsibility should sit for maintaining oversight of children subject to Deprivation of Liberty orders and those living in unregistered settings?
- **Financial pressures:** We are aware of reports that some private providers of accommodation for children in care have doubled their placements costs during the implementation of the legislation to restrict profit. How concerned is CIW about the impact of this on local authority budgets and in turn the delivery and stability of children's social services in the short to medium term?
- **Looking ahead:** What is the single most important message you would wish to convey to the next Welsh Government about the challenges facing Care Inspectorate Wales and its work in trying to ensure the provision of quality services for children and young people?

During the session, you also committed to providing us with further information in two areas:

1. How extensively CIW inspectors speak directly with children and young people living in social care settings, and how this has changed over time.
2. When CIW last inspected Gwynedd Children's services prior to the 2025 report and the findings of that inspection.

We would welcome this information at your earliest convenience, and if possible by 5 March 2026, to ensure that we can consider the response at our final meeting of the Senedd term.

Thank you again for your engagement with our work and for your continued contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people in Wales.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS

Chair

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.





Senedd Cymru
Welsh Parliament