# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Update to National Assembly for Wales on Powys County Council Children’s Social Services** |
| **DATE** | **9 January 2019** |
| **BY** | **Julie Morgan AM, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services** |

In October 2018, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) undertook an inspection of Children’s Services in Powys County Council. CIW’s report is published today (9 January). This inspection follows up on its previous inspection in July 2017, where serious concerns were identified about the delivery of children’s services in Powys. A formal Warning Notice, was issued to Powys County Council under Part 8 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, in October 2017. The Warning Notice placed a number of requirements upon the local authority; including the development of an Improvement Plan and the establishment of an Improvement Board.

A Follow-Up Warning Notice was issued in January 2018 and an Addendum to the Follow-Up Warning Notice issued in April 2018. Both these notices highlighted further work to be progressed to deliver improvements to services in the medium and long term. CIW has been formally monitoring the implementation of the local authority’s improvement plan.

In May 2018, the then Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services delivered an oral statement to Plenary announcing details of a corporate support package for the Council. This support provided the opportunity to introduce an Improvement and Assurance Board to support and monitor progress of improvement across the organisation. The Board provides strategic oversight to the Leader of the Council, ensuring cross-authority collaboration and action to secure the improvements required.

Care Inspectorate Wales has now completed a follow-up inspection of Powys County Council’s Children’s Services. The report acknowledges the hard work of staff within Powys County Council’s Children’s Services to support and deliver improved outcomes for children and young people. It recognises there have been significant improvements in certain areas of practice, these include:

* Greater corporate oversight of children’s services and strengthening of management oversight.
* Greater ease of access to the ‘front door’ of children’s services and greater timeliness and quality of initial decision making through strengthened management oversight
* Significant improvements in the regularity of visits to children looked after and subject to child protection registration.
* Assessment teams have been established and indications of improving timeliness and quality of assessments.
* Improvement in timeliness and quality of applications for court orders in respect of children.
* Reduction in individual workloads and significantly increased regularity of staff supervision.

Priority areas for action identified are:

* Ensure a clear strategic vision to direct overarching planning and the delivery of a seamless service for children and families, incorporating effective early help and family support services alongside statutory intervention.
* Clearer focus on improving strategic relationships with partners to increase collaborative working to the benefit of children and families.
* Development of a commissioning strategy and social work practice to anticipate children’s accommodation needs and reduce the numbers of emergency placements.
* Ensure the safeguarding process incorporates multi-agency information sharing as soon as possible following referral to ensure informed practice and best outcomes for children.
* Ensure an immediate multi-agency response is in place to safeguard children at risk of sexual exploitation.
* Ensure investigations of complaints are thorough and timely in accordance with Welsh Government guidelines.

Care Inspectorate Wales expects Powys County Council’s Children’s Services to review its existing improvement plan in response to its new report.

Formal monitoring will continue through Care Inspectorate Wales’ through focussed activity. The Improvement and Assurance Board continues to support the Leader of the Council in driving improvement and the Chair, of the Assurance Board, provides Welsh Ministers with regular updates on progress.