

Dear

ATISN 27557: Request for information - Torfaen Children's Services

Thank you for your request which we received on 23 September 2026.

Information requested

You asked for the following information:

Recorded information and inspection metrics held by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) concerning Torfaen County Borough Council Children's Services and its multi-agency interface with Gwent Police.

1. Inter-Agency Threshold Audits

In CIW's performance reviews, monitoring activities, or local authority inspections of Torfaen Children's Services from 2022 to the present date, what specific findings, recommendations, or inspection flags were recorded regarding:

- a. Multi-agency decision-making at the "front door" / Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) service.*
- b. Compliance with joint Section 47 strategy discussions with Gwent Police.*
- c. The management of cases stepped down from multi-agency police investigations to single-agency social care.*

2. Escalations & Provider Concerns

How many regulatory concerns, formal whistleblowing disclosures, or practitioner notifications have been logged by CIW regarding threshold disputes or police step-downs in child protection cases in Torfaen during this period

Our response

We have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

We searched our records for the period 1 January 2022 to 23 September 2026 to identify any information held within the scope of your request. Our responses to your questions are set out below.

1. Inter-Agency Threshold Audits

- a. Multi-agency decision-making at the 'front door' / Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) service.**

To provide context, 'front door' refers to the initial access point to children's and adults' social care services through which contacts and referrals are received, screened and assessed. This includes safeguarding concerns and requests for support, with decisions made about the most appropriate response by the local authority.

We reviewed Head of Service biannual meeting records, Director of Social Services annual meeting records, intelligence logs, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Review records and relevant concern records. The wording below is drawn from those records. Staff initials have been omitted. Where the evidence compilation did not state an exact date, this is made clear rather than inferred.

The records identified include the following:

- **Biannual Performance Review, Head of Children's Services, 6 May 2022:** The record notes that MASH was using an online referral process and a DTR approach, initially piloted with ten schools. It states that 'there is not a reduction in referrals'; that with IAA and the front door combined, 'everything goes through as a referral (which is problematic)'; and that 'workshops are needed with partner agencies to look at thresholds'.
- **Biannual Performance Review, Head of Children's Services, 6 May 2022 - Wellbeing section:** The record states that the DTR approach was being used across all schools; 'the percentage of NFA referrals remains high at 67% and referrals are still high'. It notes work through a Regional Safeguarding Board task-and-finish group and a need to improve partner understanding of thresholds.
- **Biannual Performance Review, Head of Children's Services, 6 May 2022 - Prevention section:** The record states that 'responses across the wider prevention/Early Help arena need to improve, to reduce referral rates and ensure all is being done that can be done before referring to the local authority'. It refers to MASH objectives, partner training in strengths-based approaches and a wish to develop a more joined-up approach with Early Help.
- **Annual Meeting with the Statutory Director of Social Services, Torfaen County Borough Council, 20 December 2022 - Safeguarding section:** The record notes that MASH was in a beta phase with a new referral form. It states: 'It is hoped this will streamline referrals. Work is also taking place regionally to improve the quality of referrals from the Police.'
- **CIW and Director of Social Services Annual Meeting Minutes, Torfaen County Borough Council, 2024 - Prevention section – 10 January 2024:** The record states that children's services had historically experienced difficulty with partner referral thresholds. It records that the Threshold of Need document had been in place for more than three years, was considered effective and required continuing review, including regional review to support consistency.
- **Head of Children's Services Biannual Review, 11 April 2025 - EIP development discussion:** The record refers to the proposed Early Intervention and Prevention Hub and how it would link with IAA, MASH and other services. It states that the Early Help Hub would centralise the access point and was intended to manage cases that did not meet the safeguarding threshold at that stage. **Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 discussion:** The same record also states that the legislative change had been interpreted differently and practice varied. Torfaen's recorded view was that the defence had changed but the safeguarding threshold had not; some authorities were automatically progressing relevant referrals to strategy discussion. This meeting record also indicates that MASH referrals were reviewed by the end of the next working day.

- **Head of Children's Services Biannual Review, 24 March 2026 - Prevention section:** The record states that the Early Help Hub went live in June 2025, sits before MASH and is intended to promote appropriate pathways and reduce contacts to MASH. It also records that demand remained high and notes an increase in recent police referrals.
- **Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Review, 11 June 2026 - "Demand, thresholds and partner referrals":** The record states: 'Front door demand pressures remain significant'. It notes joint work, including social care input into police safeguarding training, to improve understanding of thresholds and alternative pathways.
- **Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Review, 17 August 2026 - EIP impact review:** The record states that work to strengthen early help, including the EIP Hub, 'has not yet translated into a reduction in demand at the statutory front door' and that 'MASH referral volumes remain high, with limited evidence at this stage of the EIP Hub diverting demand away from statutory CS'.
- **Biannual Performance Review, Head of Children's Services, 26 September 2023 - Wellbeing and performance discussion:** The record notes discussion about whether changes in Child Protection Register and looked-after children numbers reflected threshold, quality-assurance or systemic changes. It states that the Head of Service had asked Cheka to undertake a review to better understand the data.

b. Compliance with joint Section 47 strategy discussions with Gwent Police.

- **Head of Children's Services Biannual Review, 26 September 2023 - Partnership section:** The record states that regional work was being completed 'to improve the timeliness of Police attendance at strategy meetings'. It records that police resource pressures led to prioritisation of urgent strategy meetings and: 'This resulted in delays with some meetings, which are considered less urgent by the Police.'
- **Head of Children's Services Biannual Review, 1 May 2024 - Partnership section, subsequent review:** The record notes 'periodic challenges with police attending safeguarding/strategy discussions' and states: 'There is no issue for the most urgent meetings/initial meetings, but there is delay for those that may be perceived as less urgent due to their capacity.'
- **Head of Children's Services Biannual Review, 1 May 2024 - Partnership section, regional Threshold of Need update:** The record refers to completion of a regional threshold document, its approval through safeguarding arrangements, and plans to support publication with training and a launch.
- **CIW Annual Meeting with the Statutory Director of Social Services, 28 January 2026 - CIW Work Programme section:** The record states that Torfaen's Safeguarding Unit manages all Part 5 safeguarding concerns, including coordination of strategy discussions.

The records contain information about Section 47 referrals, safeguarding thresholds, police attendance and demand pressures. However, no formal inspection

recommendation, enforcement action or regulatory finding was identified which specifically concluded that Torfaen was non-compliant with requirements for joint Section 47 strategy discussions.

Additional information about Section 47 determinations is available in the Wales Safeguarding Procedures: <https://safeguarding.wales/en/chi-i/chi-i-c3pt2/c3pt2-p3/>

c. The management of cases stepped down from multi-agency police investigations to single-agency social care.

Following review of the records held, CIW has not identified a recorded inspection finding, audit conclusion, recommendation or regulatory determination specifically concerning the management of cases stepped down from multi-agency police investigations to single-agency social care.

The records refer more generally to threshold management, front-door decision-making, referrals that do not progress to further action, diversion from statutory intervention, prevention and early intervention services, police and partner referral quality, and demand management. No specific audit, thematic review, inspection finding or concern record was identified that examined police step-down arrangements as a discrete area of practice.

2. Escalations & Provider Concerns

During the period covered by this request, CIW identified five concern records relating to safeguarding practice within Torfaen County Borough Council Children's Services. No formal whistleblowing disclosures were identified.

CIW does not categorise concerns in a way that enables us to identify how many specifically involved threshold disputes between agencies or police step-down decisions. We therefore do not hold a separate recorded figure for those categories. CIW also does not hold a separate recorded figure for practitioner notifications relevant to this request.

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with our handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely