

Annual Report 2017-2018



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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Foreword by the Chief Executive

This has again been a challenging year for Cafcass Cymru with a further increase of 6% in the number of children we worked with, meaning we are now involved with 20% more children than we were in 2015–16. Our priority continues to be to provide a timely and high quality service for over 9000 of the most vulnerable children and young people in Wales. We achieved this only because of the professionalism and dedication of our staff and I would like to thank them for their commitment and resilience under considerable pressure and their incredible support and hard work.

Further increases are predicted in the number of children and young people we will work with in the coming year and so it is vital we continue to work collaboratively with partners to support improved outcomes for children and young people who are involved in the Family Court in Wales.

During the year we:

- worked with the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS Cymru) to develop joint protocols and guidance for staff to support and enhance how we work together;
- contributed to the work of the Ministerial Advisory Group focused on Improving Outcomes for Children;
- became a member of the Steering Group and Stakeholder Reference Group for the Sector Led 'Care Crisis Review – Options for Change';
- contributed to two research projects seeking to identify and better understand the outcomes achieved by children and young people who have been involved in the Family Court.

We continued to pilot different ways of working to improve how we work and ensure children are the focus of our intervention. We piloted a Child Impact Analysis approach to our Private Law work and the evaluation found it very well received by families, the judiciary and our staff.

The learning from the pilot will inform the development of our Private Law work programme in the coming year as we seek to strengthen our child-focused approach to all our work.

Highlights during the year included:

- sustaining our performance and ensuring no child in Wales had to wait for a service despite the further increase in the number of children and young people we worked with;
- developing a new Quality Assurance, Learning and Improvement Framework that will underpin and inform our continued organisational and professional learning and development;
- strengthening our engagement and work with children and young people who are members of the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) to ensure they are actively involved in shaping and designing the services we provide.

Listening to and representing the voice of children and young people in the Family Court is at the heart of our work and their contribution is invaluable in helping us to ensure children and young people remain at the heart of all we do. We want to ensure children and young people continue to be involved in shaping our service so I am delighted the FJYPB have agreed to lead and host our staff conference in May 2018 that will focus on Equality and Diversity.

I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution the Cafcass Cymru Advisory Committee made in shaping our work and especially to thank Jackie Murphy for the effective and challenging way she chaired the meetings.

It is crucial we maintain in the year ahead our focus and commitment to continuous learning and improvement so we build on our strengths and ensure children remain the focus of all that we do.

Nigel Brown
Chief Executive

Collaboration and Innovation

In response to continued high levels of demand for our service in 2017-18, we initiated a number of approaches to ensure we work in the most effective and efficient way possible and ensure we deliver the best possible outcomes for children and young people. Some of these approaches included:

- working with Cafcass (England), we developed **Guidance on the use of professional time to benefit children**. Aimed in particular at staff and the courts, and noting the very busy context in which the system is currently operating, the overriding aim of the guidance is to ensure practitioner time is used to best effect; it also introduced the concept of the Child Impact Analysis Reports in private law cases;
- reviewing a series of **public law reports** in consultation with practitioner staff and the Designated Family Judges in Wales to clarify our role in public law cases and streamlining report templates. Following this we published an expectation statement in relation to our role in Section 31 cases to help clarify what we do and what we don't do as part of the role. We also updated practice guidance for our practitioners when undertaking a public law case;
- appointing a number of **Fee-Paid Practitioners** during the year to provide us with additional capacity during periods of peak demand for our services.

We continually seek to improve how we work and focus on strengthening the voice of the child in all our work. We piloted a **Child Impact Analysis** approach in our private law work that strengthens our focus on the

child's experience and adopts an approach of working with parents to help them understand and see issues from their child's perspective. The approach provides the child, the family and the court with succinct, clear and robust reports with recommendations that focus on representing the voice of the child.

The evaluation of the pilot was very positive and the learning will inform our approach to wider development of our Private Law work in 2018-19.

We worked with the Children and Families Division within the Welsh Government to make the **Working Together for Children (WT4C)** resource widely available to parents who separate in Wales. The aim is to provide accessible early advice and support to these parents so issues can be resolved before matters become entrenched.

We extended the **Safeguarding Enquiry Report (SER) pilot** to all our operational areas across Wales. Cafcass Cymru Safeguarding Enquiry Officers support the delivery of safeguarding services to children and families by recording safeguarding summaries, interviewing service users and providing reports to courts in selected cases. The pilot will conclude in September 2018 and the evaluation will determine future direction.

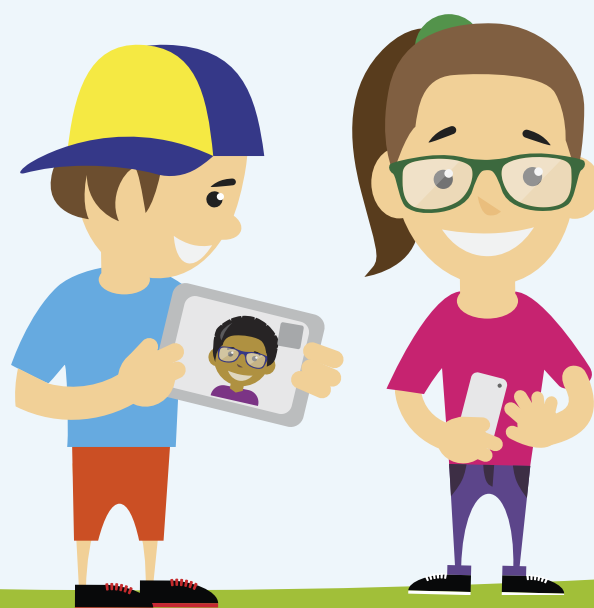
Continuing to develop the range of data we collect to help us understand the needs and circumstances of those we work with and inform how we develop our services. This has enabled us to become involved in exciting and innovative developments such as working with the Nuffield Foundation, Lancaster University and Cafcass (England) on the data platform and analytics functions within the Family Justice Observatory for Wales and England.

We also worked with key stakeholders and partners at a national, regional and local level to ensure we are well-placed to respond to the demand for our services. Key pieces of work included:

- a **working agreement with Cafcass (England)** for the transfer of cases and disclosure of information. The agreement outlines the statutory functions governing both organisations and clarifies the issue of ‘ordinary residence’ – this helps determine whether Cafcass Cymru or Cafcass are the most appropriate agency to work any case in question. The agreement also sets out the process for transferring cases and information between both organisations;
- drafting an **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) protocol** between ourselves and the Association of the Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSS Cymru). The protocol, that will become operational in 2018-19, sets out the key functions of both Cafcass Cymru and the IRO in attempting to secure the best possible outcomes of children. It reminds and reinforces the message around the importance of meaningful engagement between the Cafcass Cymru practitioner and the IRO at all stages of a care case subject to court proceedings;
- working with the All Wales Heads of Children’s Services and the National Adoption Service to produce the protocol ‘Good Practice Guidance for Adoption Agencies and Cafcass Cymru: Children Relinquished for Adoption’, to assist local authority social workers and Cafcass Cymru practitioners when working with **relinquished babies** and their parents;
- taking the lead in developing joint practice guidance with Cafcass (England) in respect of **Deprivation of Liberty safeguards** (DOLs) which was agreed in February 2018.

DOLs involves children in the care of a local authority (or sometimes a local health board or education authority) who are not permitted the freedom to leave their placement and who lack capacity to consent to their arrangements. The Family Court has given increased attention to DOLs and consequently we have seen an increase in such cases;

- contributing to the sector-led **Care Crisis review** involving key stakeholders across Wales and England in the family justice system, instigated in response to the significant and sustained increase in care cases. The review aims to gain an understanding of the factors that are driving the increase in care applications and to recommend changes to improve outcomes for children, safely reduce the number of children becoming looked after and reduce the number of care cases coming before the Family Court. The review will be published in June 2018.



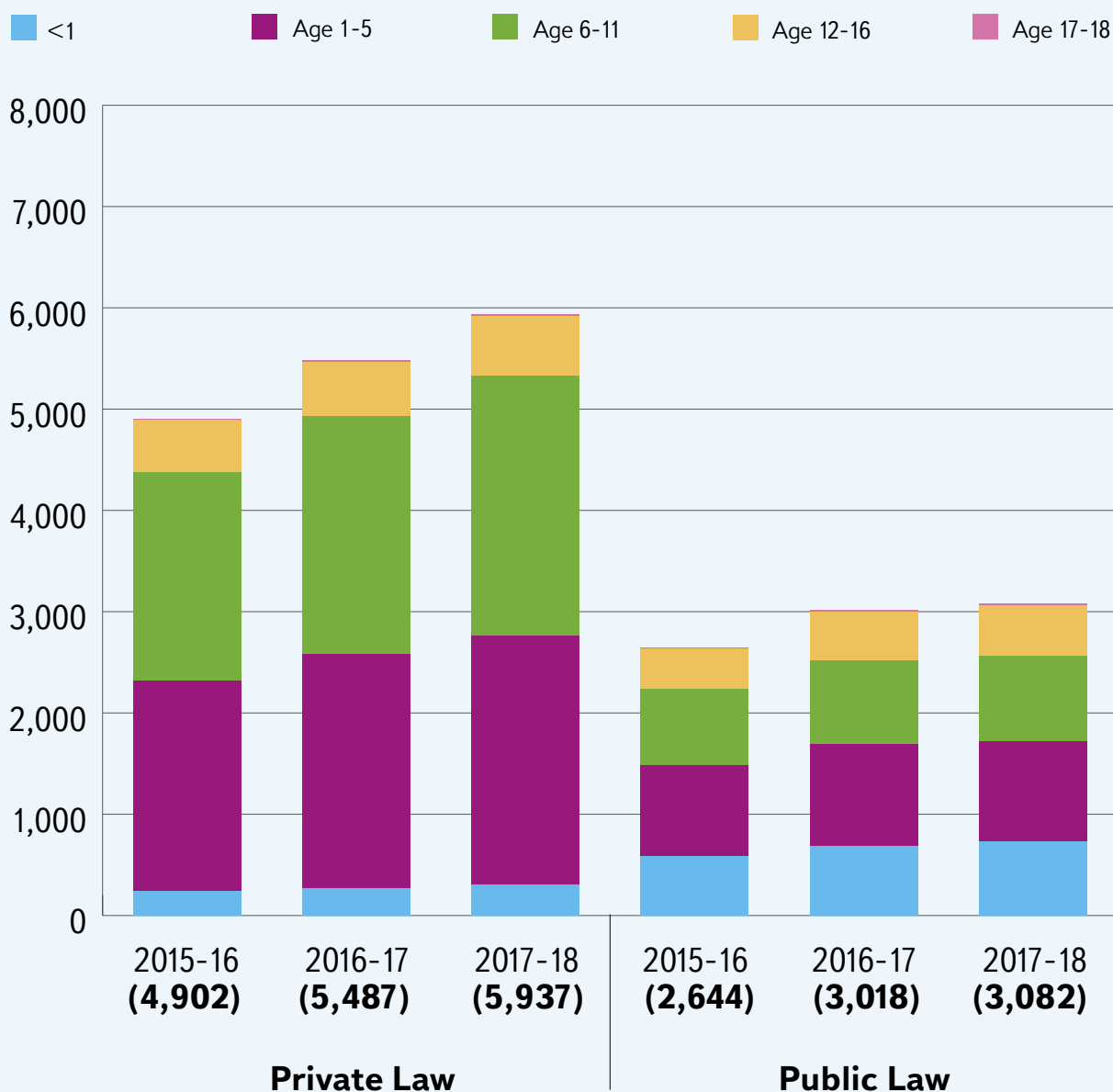
Service Delivery

The Number of Children we worked with

During 2017-18 we worked with 9,000 children and young people, a 6% increase compared to the 8,500 in 2016-17. There has been an increase of 20% in the volume of children

involved with Cafcass Cymru since 2015-16. Most of the children we worked with last year (87%) were aged eleven years and under.

Children involved with Cafcass Cymru



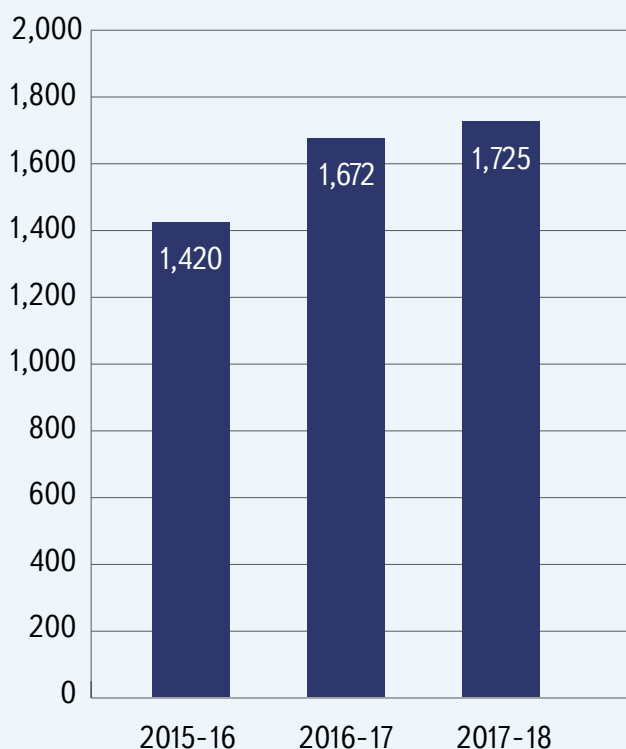
Our work is split mainly into two areas: public law and private law. The demand placed on each area of work varies significantly and the following information provides an overview of the level of demand for these services.

Public Law

The total number of children involved in public law proceedings in 2017-18 was 3,082, an increase of 2% on the previous year.

Public Law applications have increased over the past three years, with a 21% increase since 2015-16.

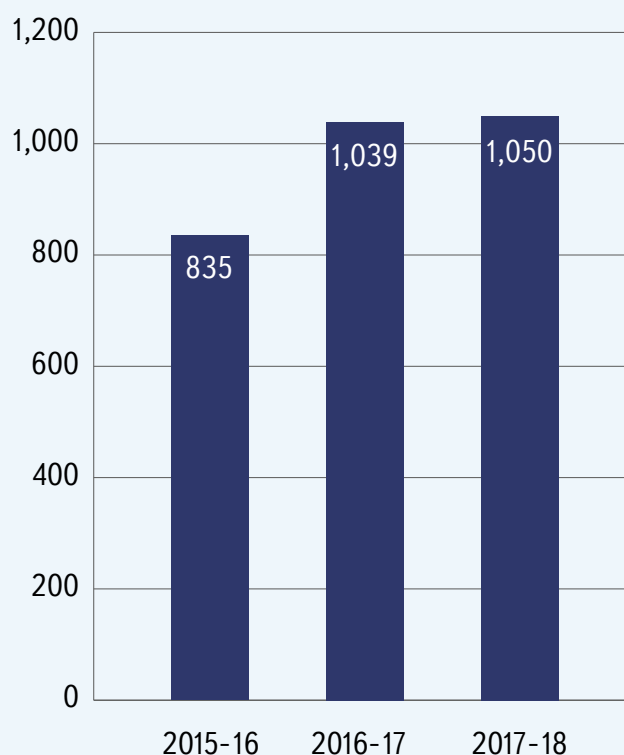
Public Law Applications



The main driver in public law work is Section 31 (care) applications. A local authority will make a Section 31 application to the court when it has significant concerns about the safety or welfare of a child.

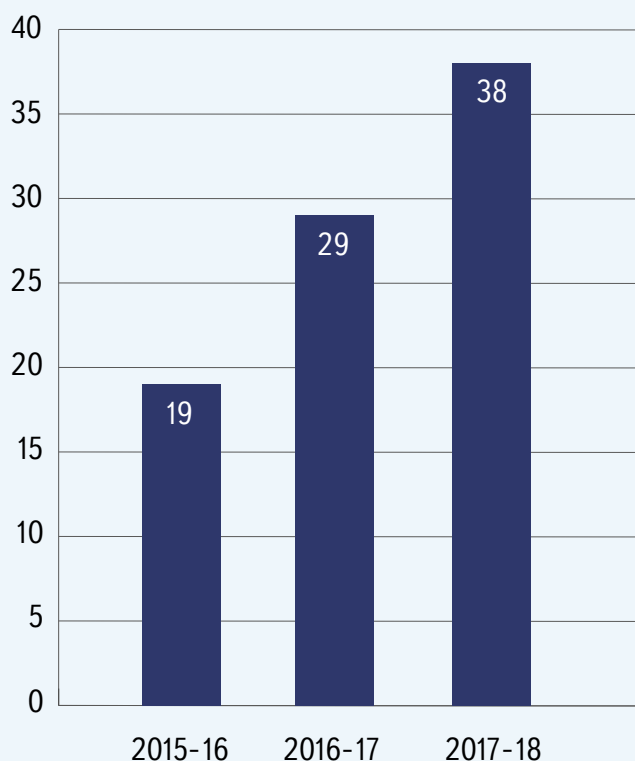
They will apply to take the child into care or to have responsibility for supervising the child's care. We received 1,050 applications in 2017-18, a 24% increase in the last two years.

Section 31 Applications



Secure Accommodation Applications cover a small percentage of our work but referrals have been increasing significantly in the last two years. This year saw a 100% increase in the last two years.

Secure Accomodation



Private Law

The total number of children involved in Private Law proceedings in 2017-18 was 5,937, an increase of over 8% on the previous year.

Private law cases arise when there is a post-separation dispute regarding child arrangements, such as where the child should live and/or who the child sees, which family members are unable to resolve without intervention from the court. At the first hearing, we meet with the parties to explore with them any opportunities for agreement and to ensure any arrangement for their child is safe and in the child's best interests. Where agreement cannot be achieved due to the dispute between the parents or safeguarding matters, the court can ask us to undertake an assessment and write a report to assist the court in making a decision.

In private law, we are required to undertake safeguarding enquiries in connection with the vast majority of applications made to the Family Court. These enquiries often involve seeking information from the police and social services, and conducting telephone interviews with the parties (family members associated with the court application).

The purpose of our safeguarding enquiry work is to detail any risk for the court to consider when making decisions about a child.

The number of reports we completed relating to our safeguarding enquiry work increased from 2,902 to 4,130 (42%)¹.

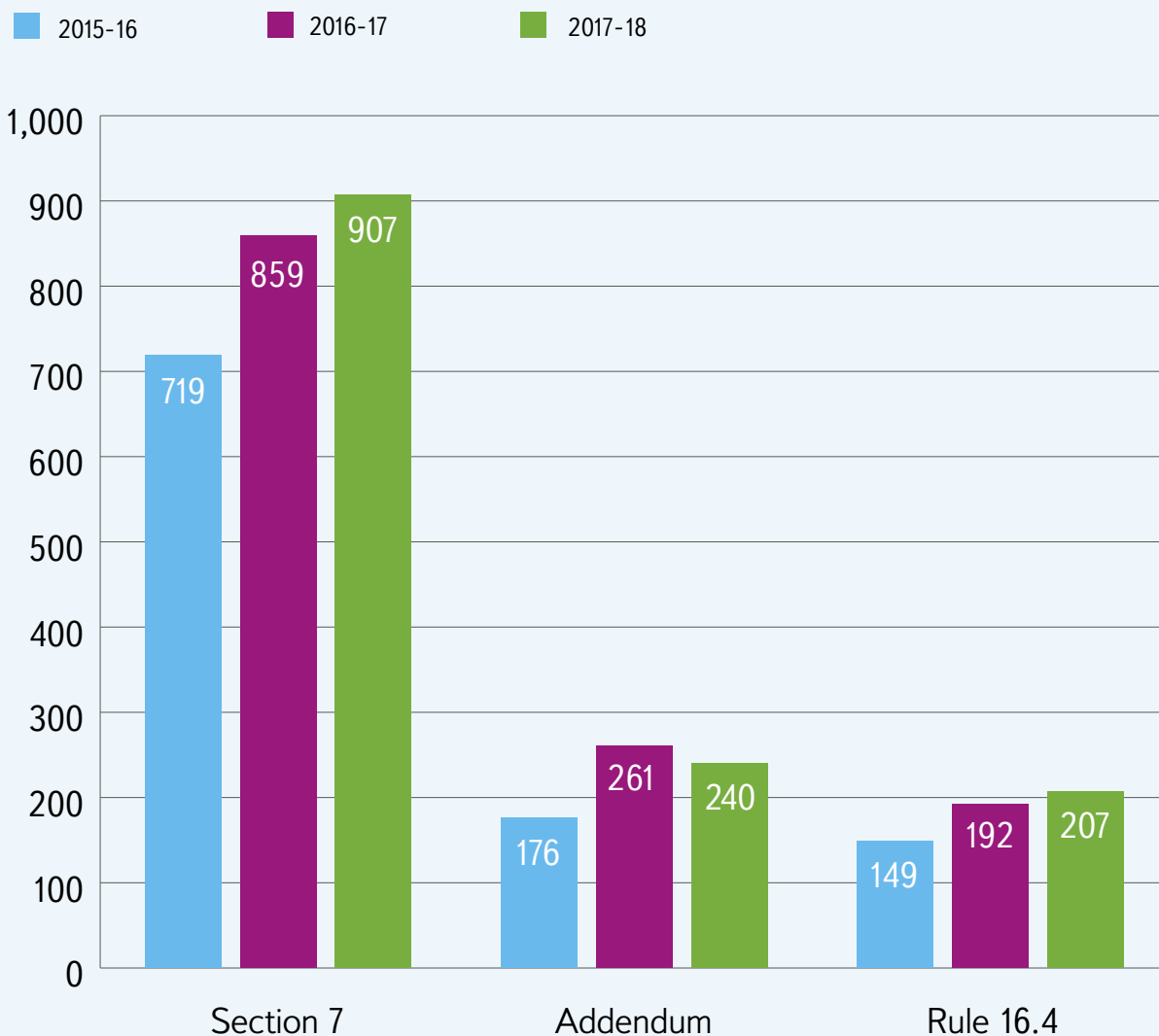
Beyond our safeguarding enquiry work, we may be asked by the court to provide a more detailed analysis of a child's situation.

1. In 2017-18 we redefined the way we calculate our statistics to ensure consistency in all of our reporting. This shows not only the number of cases we have dealt with but separates out any additional work we have undertaken to give an overall picture of our workloads.

This is usually through requests for a Section 7 report, or alternatively a Rule 16.4 appointment (a complex private law case in which the court makes the child party to proceedings by appointing a Guardian for the child).

We may also be asked to provide an addendum Section 7 report. Over the past two years we have received a significant increase in such work, with a 22% increase in 2016-17 followed by a further 2% increase in 2017-18.

Further Private Law Work

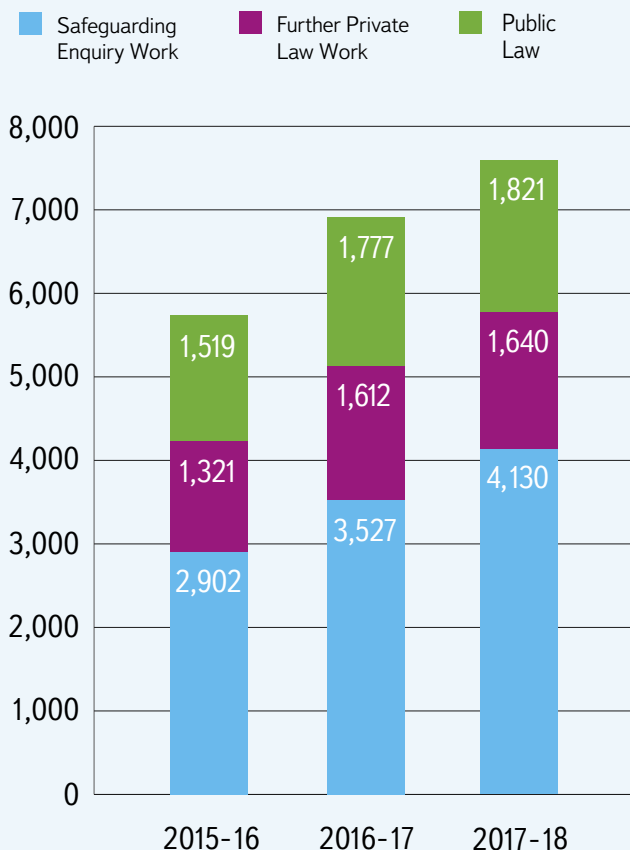


Combined Workload

The volume of work we have completed has increased year on year. In 2017-18 we completed 7591 pieces of work across Public and Private Law.

The volume for 2017-18 is a 10% increase on 2016-17 which in turn was a 20% increase on 2015-16.

Cafcass Cymru Workload



Key Performance Indicators

We work against four Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) measuring timeliness of allocation and court filing dates, these cover the main statutory areas of our work. All KPIs have a target of 95%. KPIs for the period April 2017 to March 2018 were as follows:

- KPI 1 – Timeliness of allocation of Section 31 applications. We allocated 96.46% of Section 31 cases within two working days with an average allocation time of 0.78 working days.
- KPI 2 – Timeliness of allocation of Section 7 Reports. We allocated 94.29% of Section 7 reports within five working days with an average allocation time of 1.65 working days.
- KPI 3 – Section 7 Reports that met their court filing date. We filed 85.22% of Section 7 reports by their court filing date – this is a 4% increase on the same period in 2016-17.
- KPI 4 – Safeguarding Reports that met their court filing date. We filed 94.02% of Safeguarding Reports by their court filing date – this is an increase of more than 2% over the 2016-17 figure.

Budget

Our budget for 2017-2018 was £10,267,000, the majority of which was staff costs (92%); we employed 145 social work practitioners across Wales in addition to 60 support staff. The remaining 8% of our budget covered our running costs and court ordered family support services.

Participation with Children and Young People

Our 'Your Voice' participation strategy enables the organisation to build upon the day to day interactions our staff have with children and young people, enabling them to influence the way they, and future children, receive our services.

Underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Participation Standards for Wales and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, 'Your Voice' has three strategic aims in addition to supporting the wider organisational aims:

- **Listen and Learn** — we listen to your views and learn from what you tell us;
- **Involve and Inform** — we find out what information you want and how you want to get it;
- **Work together and share** — we work with organisations so your voice is heard within the family justice system.

We listened to young people's views and as a result engaged a wide variety of children and young people, service users, stakeholders and colleagues in redesigning our organisational branding. Launched during 2017-18, our new modern logo design reflects our child-centred approach and our organisational aspirations and the new Cafcass Cymru characters used to create a relaxed environment in our family rooms and to make our publications more engaging for the readers.

The Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) has played a major part in many of our participation successes. We are very pleased that we were able to assist with the recruitment of two new Welsh representatives to the FJYPB.

As a result of last year's child-led office inspections, led by the FJYPB, we also made further changes to our family rooms: we added notice boards with information specifically for young people, a 'feedback tree' as an additional way for children to feed back to us and we added some of our direct work tools for children to our walls to make them more engaging.

Through participation events, feedback and consultations, young people also told us the new ways in which they would like our information and so during the year we:

- updated and rebranded our information packs for children, making the information specific for their age and the type of case in which they are involved;
- redesigned our website to better reflect young people's needs for a modern design and provide information that is specific to them and written in a way they would like. This included developing a new young people's section, new feelings-based feedback form and new young person-designed videos on the process of being involved in a Family Law case.

Involving young people in our core business aims continues to be an important part of our participation strategy and this year saw the successful creation and embedding of a process to involve young people in the recruitment of our staff, including our Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Operations vacancies. Young people also designed and led national training for our staff on participation and the UNCRC, and a programme of ongoing induction training of our new staff has been planned for next year.

Quality Assurance, Learning and Improvement Framework

We continued to develop our Quality Assurance, Learning and Improvement Framework during 2017-18. The Framework brings all elements of Quality Assurance together making the necessary connection to internal learning and organisational improvement with the outcome of the child at the centre of everything we do. It also provides a structure for collating and sharing key information with external bodies in order to contribute towards any identified change and improvements for future generations.

Learning from what we do well and identifying areas of improvement by listening to the public to improve the quality of our service, we are making changes to help strengthen our service. The framework underpins our commitment to being a reflective and learning organisation and one which works closely with others to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people.

We have reviewed our methods for obtaining service user feedback with the intention of introducing visual, engaging, simple, modern and accessible methods of feedback. Our work programme included:

- the design of a feedback hub which will be launched with our new website, where service users can access a range of feedback options in one place;
- inviting service users to engage in a quick telephone survey at the commencement of private law cases as part of a pilot with the intention of embedding it across the organisation in 2018;
- in conjunction with the participation team we introduced a feedback tree in all of our family meeting rooms to encourage

feedback from the children and young people we work with. Over the next year we will continue to work closely with our participation team to further strengthen and develop our feedback methods for children and young people.

In addition to this, we have also:

- reviewed and improved our data reports and set new performance indicators. We routinely share our data with stakeholders in order to analyse and learn from the information to inform future priorities, work plans and areas of improvement both internally and externally;
- reviewed and improved our complaints process, introducing electronic data collation in order to analyse trends, identify learning and inform areas of development;
- undertaken a thematic report on the Secure Accommodation of Children in Wales which has led to Social Care Wales commissioning further analysis and research into this area;
- piloted a new strengths-based Practice Review model that helps us to learn more about the impact of our work and more importantly identifies what we can do to improve our practice so we can provide an outstanding service to children and young people;
- revised our supervision procedure to support our practitioners' ongoing professional development. This will be rolled out across the whole of the organisation from April 2018.

Investing in Learning and Development

Ensuring our staff have access to high quality, informative and relevant training is vital to the ongoing provision of our service and the development of our staff and the wider organisation. We are keen to ensure a rolling programme of training which supports all our staff. Our learning and development programme changes constantly to respond to local and national issues and to ensure staff have opportunities for Continual Professional Development.

In addition to the wide choice of Welsh Government training events and e-learning opportunities available, we offered training focused on areas including analytical writing, conciliation, attachment and sibling separation, the Cafcass Cymru Child and Adolescent Welfare Assessment Checklist and delivered training in response to new case law which guides how we work with vulnerable service users, including cases where domestic abuse is raised. We also collaborated with the judiciary and local authorities in joint training.

We have a range of training opportunities planned over the next year, including the commencement of a programme focused on child sexual exploitation and trafficking; a workshop on 'Extremism, radicalisation and practice implications'; and specific training opportunities to support the review and implementation of the new approach to private law work.

Compliments and Complaints

During the year, we received 51 compliments from parents, other family members, solicitors and the judiciary. We record all compliments to inform service improvements. Much of the positive feedback received from parents complimented our practitioners on the positive work they had undertaken in their role, including the support given to their child/ren in what can be a very difficult time. We also received several compliments from judges and solicitors praising the quality of our staff's reports and their professionalism during court proceedings.

We value all feedback: learning what we do well and identifying areas of improvement helps us to strengthen our service. We aim to continuously improve the service we provide and welcome the learning opportunities that arise from complaint investigations.

During the period April 2017 to March 2018, we worked with 9,000 children and young people. In this time, we did not receive any complaints from children or young people.

We received 140 complaints from adults of which 28 were formally investigated and the remainder resolved without the need for a formal investigation. Of the 28 formal investigations, the majority related to our private law work, and ten complaints were either fully upheld or had elements of the complaint upheld.

Looking to the year ahead

In 2018-19, we will continue to respond to the increased demand for our services to ensure delivery of a timely and consistent service to children, families and courts across Wales. We will do this through exploring innovative technologies and service developments to further improve how we work and empower our workforce to work flexibly, efficiently and effectively. We will drive forward developments within Private Law through our 'Best Practice approach in Private Law: Child in Focus' programme. We will continue to embed our Quality Assurance, Learning and Improvement Framework that will include the organisational roll out of a strengths-based

Practice Review process and implementation of a revised Complaints procedure. Contributing to wider service planning and development with our stakeholders will enable a shared goal of improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people in Wales. Work has already started on several of the 'Your Voice' projects for next year and we very much look forward to building on and strengthening the involvement of the FJYPB in the ongoing development of our services. We will continue to work with partners across the sector to contribute to better outcomes for children and young people in Wales.

