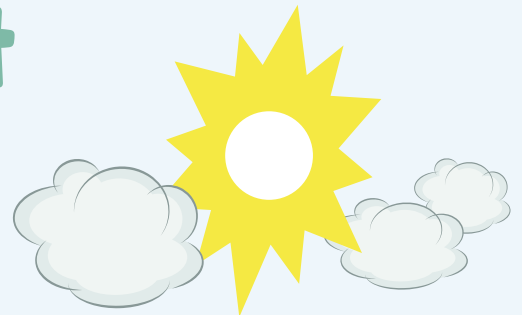


Children & Young People

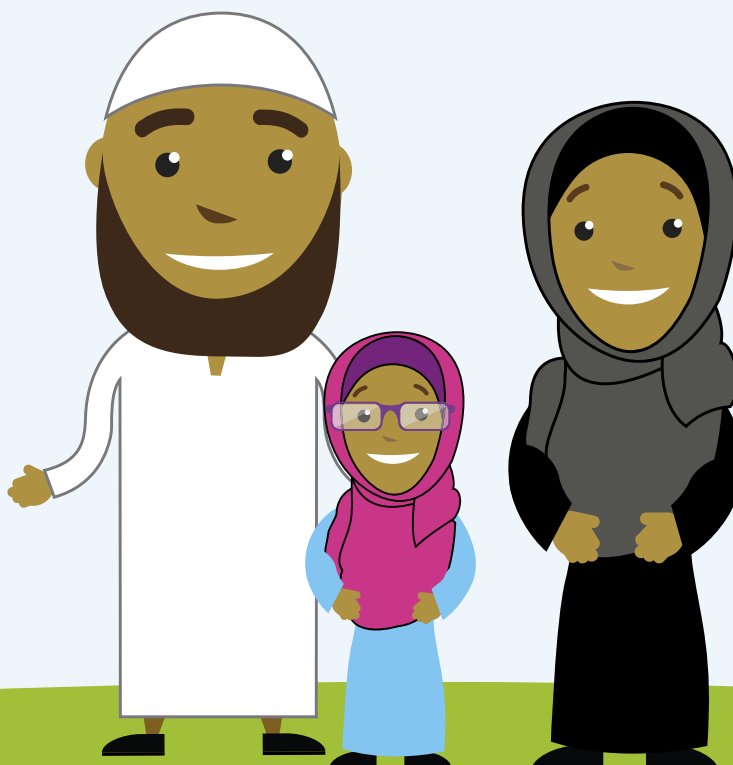
Annual Report 2017–2018



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If you want to read the full version of this report, you can find it at:
<https://beta.gov.wales/cafcass-cymru-annual-report-2017-2018>



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

Foreword by the Chief Executive



Hello, I am Nigel Brown, the Chief Executive for Cafcass Cymru. This Annual Report for 2017 / 18 will tell you a little about how well Cafcass Cymru has done over the year and some of our challenges.

This year has again been a challenging year for us with **6% more children** we have worked with, meaning we are now working with 20% more children than we were in 2015 / 16, which is **over 9000 of the most vulnerable children and young people in Wales**.

Listening to and representing the voice of children and young people in the Family Court is at the heart of our work. 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 Family Justice Young Peoples' Board (FJYPB) have agreed to lead and host our staff conference in May 2018 that will focus on Equality and Diversity.

It is essential that we keep focusing in the year ahead to continue to learn and improve so we build on our strengths and ensure children remain the focus of all that we do.

Nigel Brown
Chief Executive

Who we have worked with

In response to continued high levels of demand for our service in 2017/18, we delivered a number of ways 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:



Key pieces of work

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:

Care Crisis Review

- This involves many stakeholders across Wales and England who work in the family justice system. We looked at the reasons why there is an increase in children becoming involved in public law proceedings. The full care Crisis Review can be found at: www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/reforming-law-and-practice/care-crisis-review

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Protocol

- We worked together to better set out what role Cafcass Cymru has and a child's IRO has to make sure that the child is clear and that both services are working towards the best outcome for the child.

National Adoption Service

- We worked with the National Adoption Service and Children's Services in Wales to set out a good practice guidance when working with new babies who will be adopted (relinquished babies).

Cafcass England

- Together we made an agreement for us both to share cases and the information for those children who move in or out of England and Wales.
- We also developed a joint guide for practitioners when working with those children and young people who are not permitted the freedom to leave their local authority placement or who are not able to give consent to their arrangements.








Summary of the year

Our work is mainly split into two areas:

Private Law and Public Law

Sometimes families can find it hard to agree on what is best for their child/ren. If they can't sort out these problems, they might ask the family court to help.

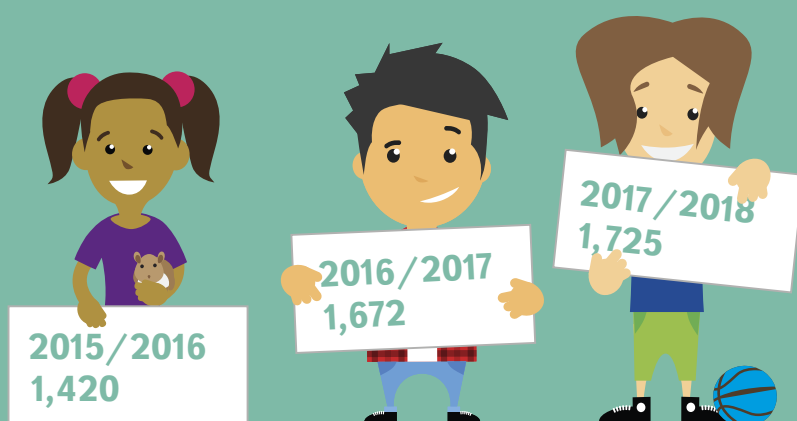
Sometimes people can become worried for a child/ren that is/are not being looked after properly or at risk of harm. If this happens, the local authority will ask the court to become involved.

Private Law		Public Law
Age: < 1		
2015/2016 – 236		2015/2016 – 582
2016/2017 – 267		2016/2017 – 685
2017/2018 – 308		2017/2018 – 728
Age: 1 – 5		
2015/2016 – 2,083		2015/2016 – 905
2016/2017 – 2,319		2016/2017 – 1,005
2017/2018 – 2,452		2017/2018 – 989
Age: 6 – 11		
2015/2016 – 2,059		2015/2016 – 748
2016/2017 – 2,342		2016/2017 – 832
2017/2018 – 2,574		2017/2018 – 846
Age: 12 – 16		
2015/2016 – 512		2015/2016 – 401
2016/2017 – 543		2016/2017 – 478
2017/2018 – 583		2017/2018 – 502
Age: 17 – 18		
2015/2016 – 12		2015/2016 – 8
2016/2017 – 16		2016/2017 – 18
2017/2018 – 20		2017/2018 – 17

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.

Public Law Applications



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.

Section 31 Application



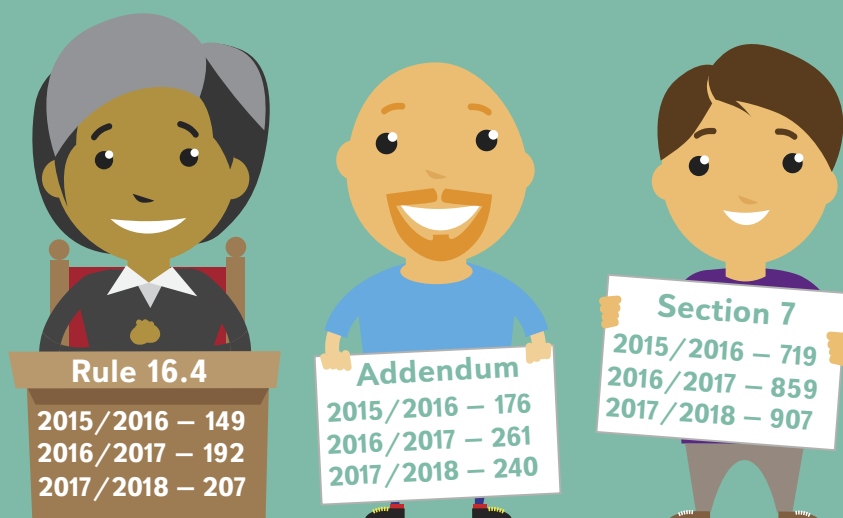
The main driver in public law work is Section 31 (care) applications. A local authority will make a Section 31 application to the court when it has significant concerns about the safety or welfare of a child. They will apply to take the child into care or to have responsibility for supervising the child's care. We received **1,050** applications in 2017 / 18, a **24%** increase in the last two years.

Secure Accommodation



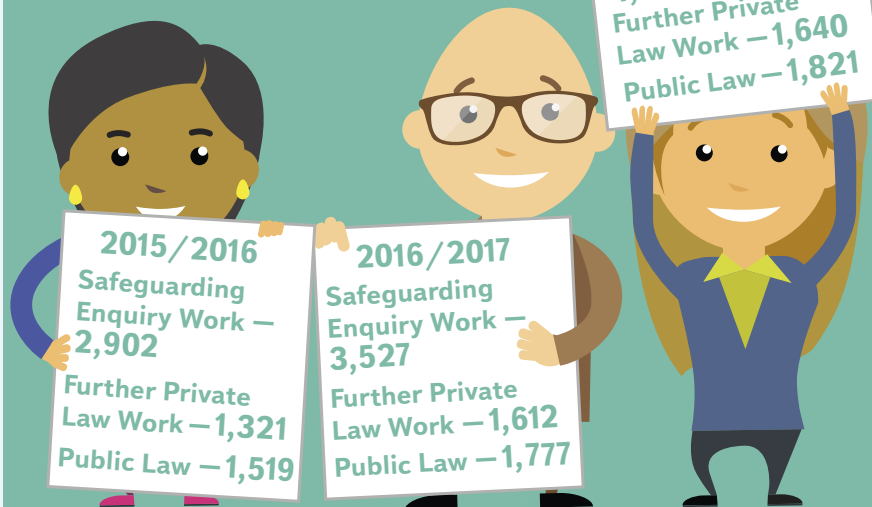
Secure Accommodation Applications cover a small percentage of our work but referrals have been increasing significantly in the last two years. This year saw a **100%** increase in the last **two** years.

Further 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.

Cafcass Cymru Workload



Combined Workload

The volume of work we have completed has increased each 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.

Budget

Our budget for 2017/18 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.



Involving Children & Young People

Our 'Your Voice' participation strategy enables us 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.

'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 with a wide variety of children and young people, service users, stakeholders and colleagues in redesigning our branding.

Involving young people in our core business aims continues to be an important part of our participation strategy and this year we:

- Created a process to involve young people in the recruitment of our staff, including our Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Operations vacancies.
- Asked young people to design and lead national training for our staff on participation and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and a programme of ongoing induction training of our new staff has been planned for next year.



The Family Justice Young People's Board



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 our rooms more engaging.

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

- 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. These can be found on our website.
- 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.



Improving our service

We continue to learn as a service and we developed our Quality Assurance, Learning and Improvement Framework during 2017/18. This helps us to learn from what we do well and identify areas of improvement. By listening to the public to improve the quality of our service, we are making changes to help strengthen our service.



Learning & Developing

We want all our staff to have access to high quality, informative and relevant training is vital to the ongoing service.

Our learning and development programme changes constantly to make sure that staff can continue to learn about the key things that affect children and young people.



Feedback

Feedback is really important to us, it helps us improve and tells us about your great ideas. We have developed some different ways for people to leave us their feedback.

These include:

- The Feedback hub which will be launched on our new website.
- Inviting people to tell us what they think about Cafcass Cymru over a quick telephone survey.
- From the recommendation of the FJYPB, we have introduced a Feedback Tree in each of our family rooms to encourage feedback from the children and young people who visit our offices.
- Over the next year we will be working to better improve our methods of feedback for children and young people.



Compliments & Complaints

From April 2017 to March 2018, we had 51 compliments from people we worked closely with. Many of these were positive comments from parents for our staff on their hard work and support for their child/ren. Judges and solicitors also complimented our staff on the quality of their reports and conduct in court proceedings.

We worked with 9,000 children and young people across Wales. None of the children and young people made a complaint!

From adults, we had:

- 140 complaints, of which we were able to resolve 112 at an early stage. The remaining 28 complaints needed further work.
- Most of the 28 complaints were in our private law cases
- 10 out of the 28 complaints were either fully or partially upheld.

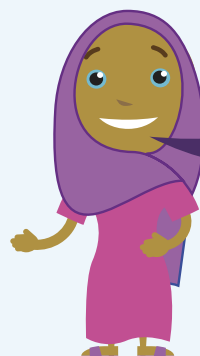
We value all feedback, which service users can provide to us through our website. The lessons we learn from both compliments and complaints helps us to continuously improve our service!

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 by:



Exploring innovative technologies and service developments to further improve how we work and empower our workforce to work flexibly, efficiently and effectively.



Continuing to work with partners across the sector to contribute to better outcomes for children and young people in Wales.



Already starting work 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.



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.



Driving 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.