

Annual Report 2018-2019



Contents

Foreword by the Chief Executive	3
Developing how we Work	4
Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection	7
Service Delivery	9
Participation with Children & Young People	14
Quality, Learning & Improving	15
Forward Look to the Year Ahead	18



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

Foreword by the Chief Executive

I am very proud of our workforce and their commitment to ensuring the needs and rights of children are the focus of our work. It is the dedication and professionalism of all our staff that enables us to provide a timely and good quality service, despite the sustained high level of work we are managing. It is to their credit that in the recent inspection report, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) recognised that:

“Cafcass Cymru’s officers were committed to delivering best outcomes for children and this has assisted the organisation in managing the increase in the volume of its work. The organisation has faced the challenge of increasing numbers of children who they work with and has provided a timely response and good quality service and has the capacity to build on existing strengths.”

We strive to provide the best possible service to every child we work with, their families and the family courts in Wales, and it was pleasing that Inspectors found the overall quality of the service we provide is “good”.

Our priority is for children to be at the heart of all our work so their ‘voice’ is heard in family law proceedings. Similarly we want to involve children and young people in the strategic development of our service and we greatly appreciate the meaningful contribution members of the Family Justice Young People’s Board have made to our work over the past year.

This has been another busy year and our key achievements include:

- Strengthening and broadening the range of staff learning and development opportunities
- Holding a Staff Conference, hosted by members of the Family Justice Young People’s Board

- Introducing a Quality Assurance, Learning and Improvement Framework
- Implementing a revised complaints procedure with a focus on early resolution
- Including young people on our staff recruitment panels
- Involving key stakeholders in developing guidance on domestic abuse and refusing or resisting contact
- Working with the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory and Swansea University to share our data to inform improvements in the wider family justice system.

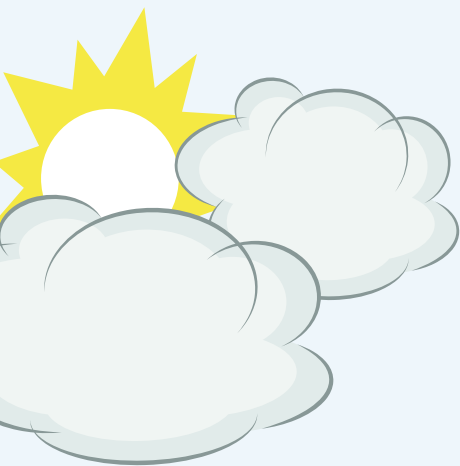
We aspire to be an organisation that promotes and embraces a culture of continuous learning and improvement. The valuable feedback we receive from people who use our service, our stakeholders, along with the findings identified in the CIW Inspection Report, enables us to continue building upon our strengths and focus on further improving our service.

Our Advisory Committee makes a significant contribution in assisting us to improve and develop the services we provide. Therefore I would like to thank members for their considerable contribution and in particular, Jackie Murphy, for the effective and challenging way she chairs the meetings.

The coming year will bring new challenges and opportunities but our priority will continue to be to ensure children remain at the heart of all our work.

Nigel Brown
Chief Executive

Developing how we Work



Child in Focus, Private Law Programme

Following on from the successful 2017-18 pilot, our Child Impact Analysis (CIA) approach is now embedding in practice across Wales. The CIA adopts a dispute resolution approach to Section 7 cases, which seeks to promote greater consistency for the child and adult service users. It aims to consider the dispute from the perspective of the child and to forecast the impact in the future too.

We co-developed our Domestic Abuse Practice guidance along with survivors and specialists from the sector, our Family Court Advisors (FCAs) and Welsh Government policy colleagues. The practice guidance has now been published and aims to strengthen our practice in respect of domestic abuse and promote greater evidenced-based practice, leading to robust and safe recommendations for children.

We developed and implemented our Refusing and Resisting Contact Practice guidance, which seeks to encourage FCAs to consider the wide ranging reasons as to why children may resist or refuse to have a relationship with a parent. Our starting point is to ensure the child and/or parent is not at any risk of safeguarding concerns including domestic abuse. We involved a range of specialist advice from academics and professionals in developing the guidance, including commissioning Cardiff University to produce a literature review on 'Parental Alienation'.

Building upon the harmful conflict work we have already undertaken, next year we will further develop this area and look to produce practice guidance and development of our staff in this complex and important subject area.

Staff Health & Well-being

We operate flexible working and promote autonomy to aid the best use of time and to promote well-being, reducing unnecessary travel and maximising time management.

We have a focus and investment in health and well-being and set up a programme of work in which to date we have:

- Developed staff health and well-being newsletters.
- Delivered bespoke workshops optimising well-being for performance; focussed on time management and resilience.
- Packaged and promoted useful health and well-being training available within Welsh Government that best supports our staff and encourages those who have an interest in mindfulness to facilitate regular sessions within office bases.

We have introduced health and well-being champions in each operational area, to assist in signposting and supporting staff and encouraging health and well-being as a whole.

We have revised our supervision procedure to include well-being on the agenda, changing the culture to Practitioner support meetings and introducing real time feedback on practice strengths and development linked to our Quality Assurance Learning and Improvement (QALI) Practice Review Model (internal audit).



Safeguarding Enquiries Reports (SER)

The SER pilot, supporting the delivery of safeguarding services to children and families, has been successfully concluded. The pilot demonstrated an overall benefit to service delivery and as a result seven Safeguarding Officer posts have been established.

The model adopts an integrated approach between operational areas to provide an effective and responsive safeguarding service.

Digital & Analytical Improvements

We recognise the value and importance of the information we collect during the course of our work with children, young people and their families involved with the family justice system in Wales. During 2018-19 our Digital Team began to explore how we can better use this information to inform us of the quality of our services and identify how we can improve them.

Using a range of data sources a new suite of business intelligence tools have been developed to aid managers and senior leaders in understanding and managing our services and to inform conversations with our internal and external partners.

The Digital Team has also supported a number of innovation projects, redesigning processes and digitally transforming services. They have been a key part of developing and implementing our case planning/recording and complaints improvements within our core service database (IRIS).

Further to this work we have also started the process of upgrading IRIS. This major project will enable us to continue to support IRIS and continue its development in response to service needs and improvements. This major and complex project is expected to be completed in the autumn of 2019.

In early 2019, due to the Welsh Government's ICT Strategy and Digital, Data and Technology initiatives, Cafcass Cymru staff started to benefit from new, updated ICT equipment and cloud-based services. These improvements will mean significant improvements in our ability to continue to innovate in support of service developments, improve usability for staff and be a key factor in delivering more flexible working arrangements for our staff.

Safeguarding Procedures

We revised and updated our safeguarding procedure, for children and adults, to reflect legislation in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The safeguarding of children and adults is the golden thread that runs through all of Cafcass Cymru's intervention with families and the updated procedure ensures a clear process for ensuring that the safeguarding of children, young people and adults is prioritised by all staff and recognised as everyone's responsibility.



Collaborating with the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory

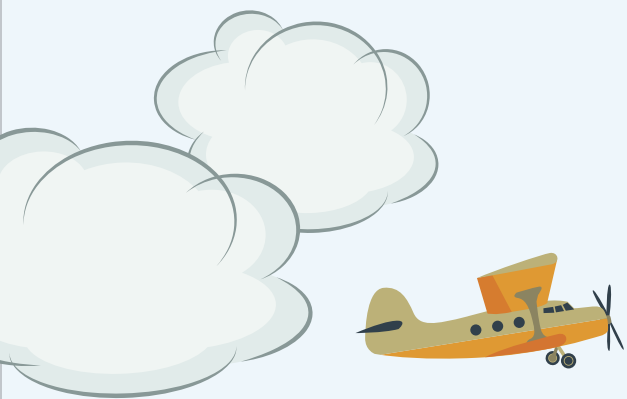
We have been working pro-actively with the Nuffield Foundation, Lancaster University and Cafcass (England) to develop the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory (NFJO) for England and Wales. The overarching aim of the NFJO is to improve the Family Justice System through the use of research evidence, alongside other forms of professional knowledge and insight, to support best interest decisions for children.

A significant element to this development has been the transfer of our core service database (IRIS) into the Secure Anonymised Information Linkage Databank (SAIL) at Swansea University which will allow our anonymised dataset to be linked to other datasets within SAIL including that of Cafcass (England). The dataset we shared with SAIL will support the development of the NFJO, its Data Platform Analytics Service and its 5 year research agenda. We look forward to the publication of the first NFJO research report — 'Born into Care — Wales' — in the autumn of 2019.

The SAIL Databank is a world-class flagship for the robust secure storage and use of anonymised person-based data for research to improve health, well-being and services. Its databank of anonymised data about the population of Wales is internationally recognised.



Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection



During 2018-19 Cafcass Cymru was inspected by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). The inspection reviewed the quality and effectiveness of practice on individual cases as well as the leadership and governance of the organisation at an operational and strategic level. This was undertaken through extensive case-file reviews, tracking in all operational areas, interviewing staff, key partners and stakeholders, observations of practice and meeting and speaking with children and families.

The inspection's findings, published in March 2019, were very positive. The report highlighted a number of strengths including:

- The overall quality of practice was deemed good with some excellent engagement with children and families. There were foundations in place to further strengthen the quality of practice.
- Staff were found to be highly committed to achieving best outcomes for children even in a context of a sustained increase in referrals. Staff felt valued and supported, and the inspection confirmed Cafcass Cymru having a positive culture.
- The voice of the child was found to be at the heart of what we do.
- The organisation evidenced itself to be ambitious and committed to promoting continuous learning and improvement.
- Senior Managers were found to be innovative, responsive and worked well with key partners and stakeholders.

- There was evidence of good collaboration with local authorities and judiciary in terms of sharing approaches and influencing wider practice, and of effective working relationships with Cafcass (England) and ADSS Cymru to promote the needs of children and families.
- The Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) had made a significant contribution to the development of the organisation.

The inspection outlined four issues in which further improvement is needed, and which will assist in our next phase of development. These involve:

- Improving our links and signposting to family information services.
- Continuing work to improve quality of case planning and recording.
- Further promoting the range and application of direct work tools available to practitioners.
- Strengthening the working relationship with Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs).

An action plan has been developed aimed at addressing these issues in a meaningful and timely manner.

'We found Cafcass Cymru's officers were committed to delivering best outcomes for children.'

'The voice of children and young people is at the heart of practice.'

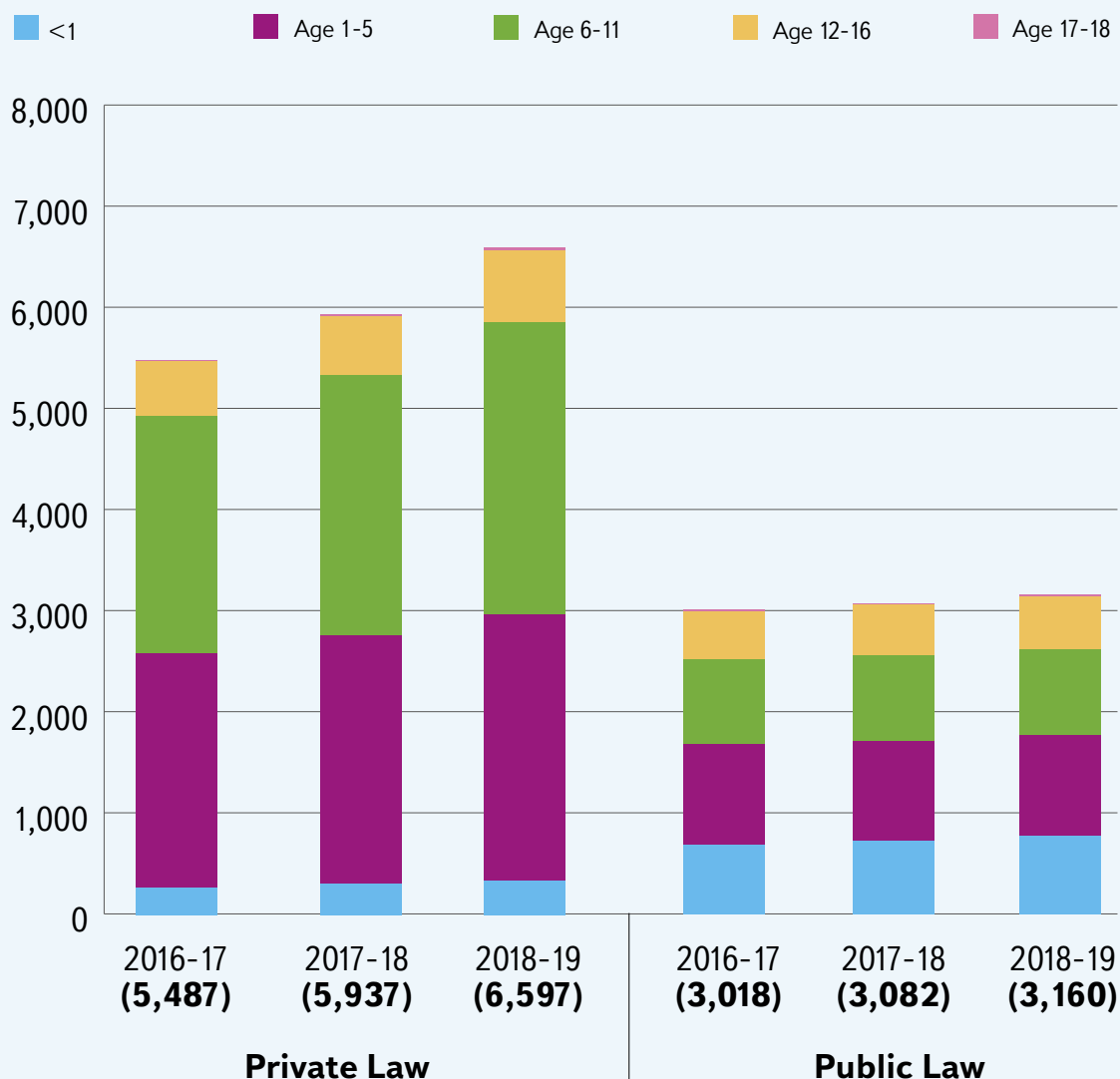


Service Delivery

The Number of Children we worked with

During 2018-19 we worked with 9,700 children and young people, an 8% increase compared to the 9,000 in 2017-18. There has been an increase of almost 30% in the number 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

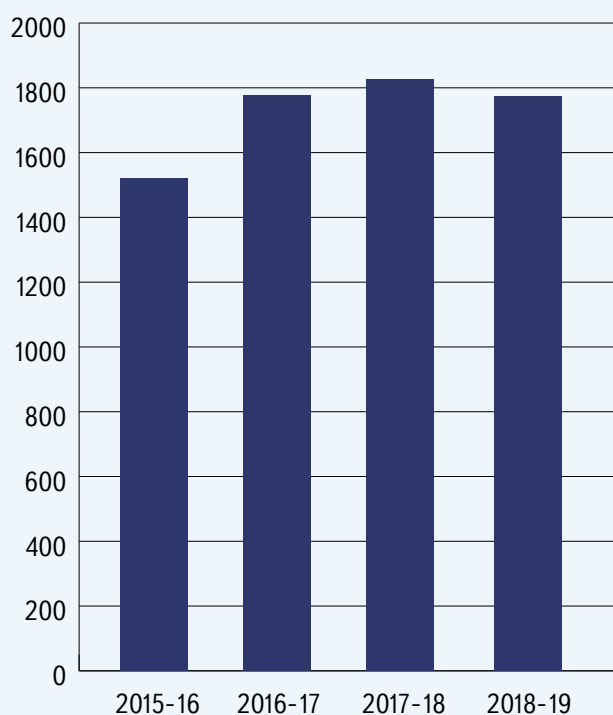


Our work is split into two areas: public law and private law. The demand placed on each area of work varies significantly and the following information provides an overview of the level of demand for these services.

Public Law

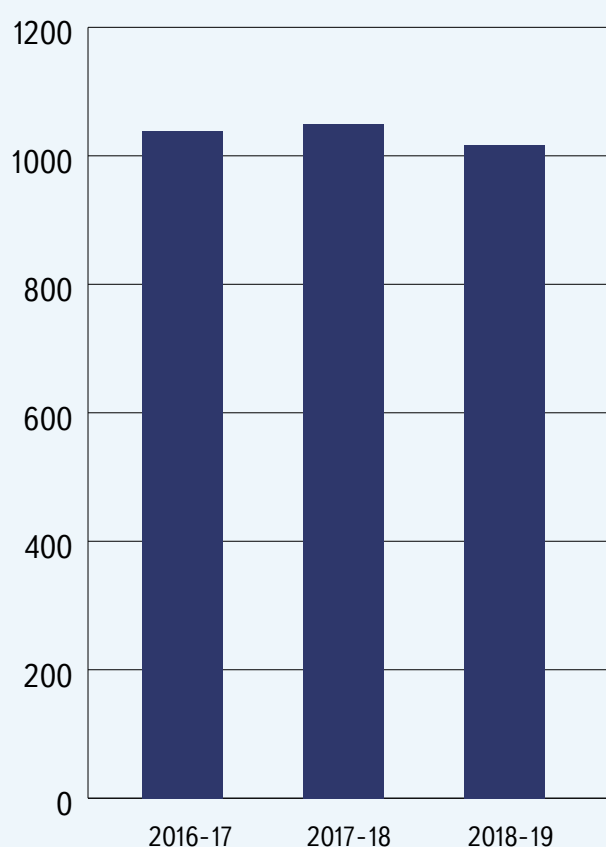
The total number of children involved in public law proceedings in 2018-19 was 3,160, an increase of 3% on the previous year. Public Law applications have remained at a constantly high level over the past three years, following a significant increase in 2015-16, with 1,775 applications made last year.

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 1,018 applications in 2018-19.

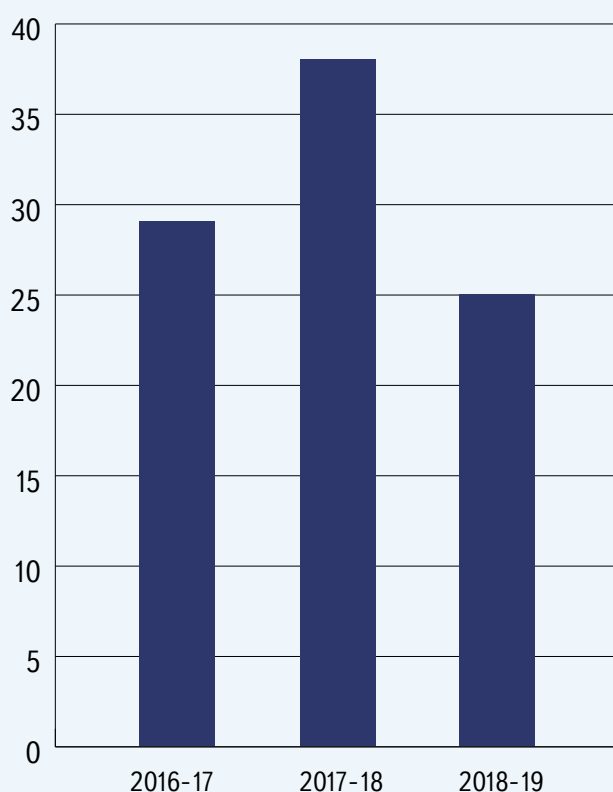
Section 31 Applications



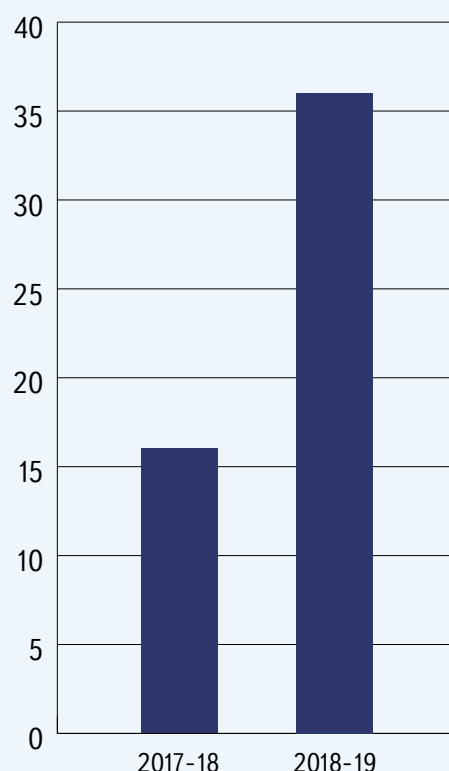
Secure Accommodation and Deprivation of Liberty (DoLs)

Children involved in these applications represent some of the most vulnerable children in Wales. We undertake an annual analysis of these applications and during 2018-19 there were 13 cases fewer compared to 2017-18 in the number of secure accommodation applications and an increase of 20 applications made in respect of DoLs.

Secure Accommodation



DoLs Applications



Private Law

The total number of children involved in Private Law proceedings in 2018-19 was 6,597, an increase of 11% 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, who the child sees and/or 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.

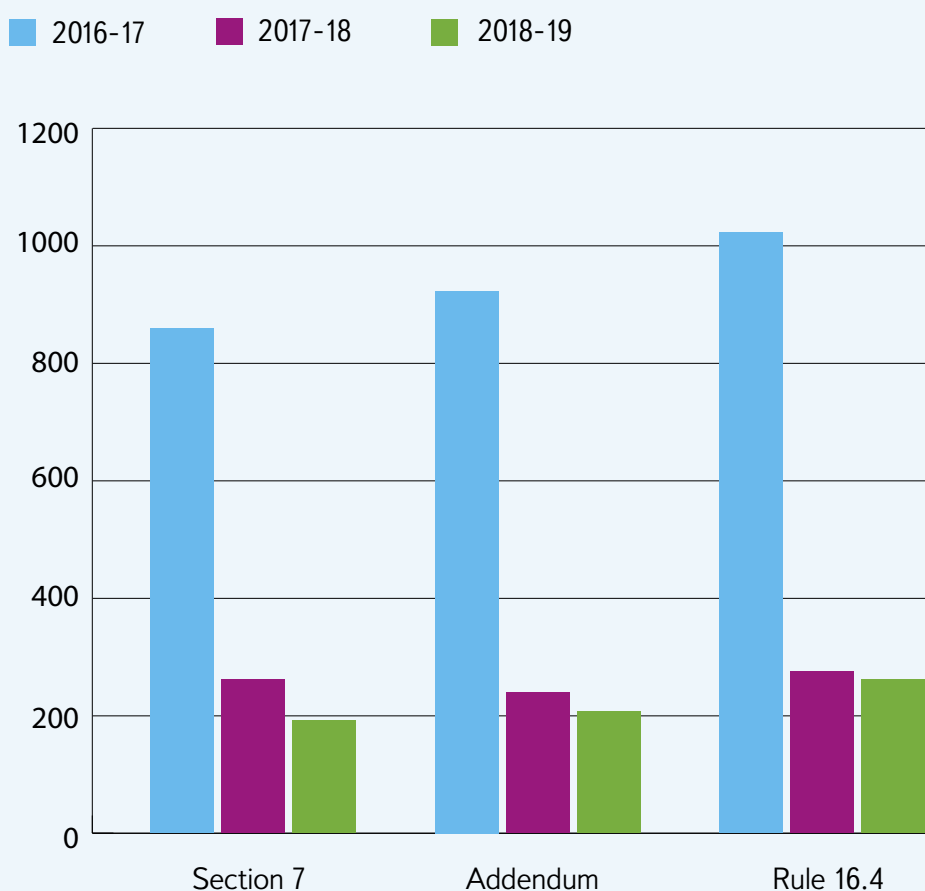
The number of reports we completed relating to our safeguarding enquiry work increased from 4,130 to 4,622 (12%) resulting in the total number of applications rising past the numbers previously experienced pre the introduction of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

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

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 three years we have received a significant increase in such work, with a 22% increase in 2016-17 followed by a further 3% increase in 2017-18 and a 12% increase in 2018-19.

Further Private Law Work

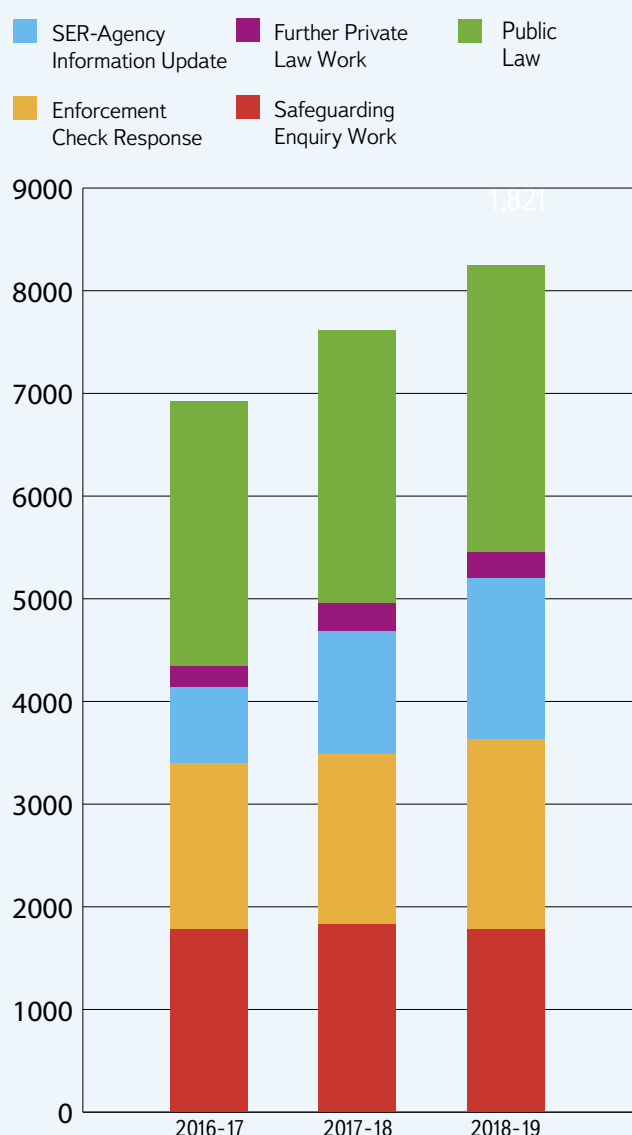


Combined Workload

The volume of work we have completed has increased year on year. In 2018-19 we completed 8,246 pieces of work across Public and Private Law.

The volume for 2018-19 is an 8% increase on 2017-18 which in turn was a 10% increase on 2016-17.

Cafcass Cymru Workload



Key Performance Indicators

We have four Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) measuring timeliness of allocation and court filing dates covering the main statutory areas of our work. All KPIs have a target of 95%. KPIs for the period April 2018 to March 2019 were as follows:

KPI1 – Timeliness of allocation of Section 31 applications. We allocated 95.28% of Section 31 cases within two working days with an average allocation time of 0.89 working days.

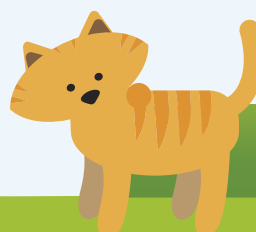
KPI 2 – Timeliness of allocation of Section 7 Reports. We allocated 95.64% of Section 7 reports within five working days with an average allocation time of 1.73 working days.

KPI 3 – Section 7 Reports that met their court filing date. We filed 85.75% of Section 7 reports by their court filing date. Further work is ongoing to improve the reported performance in this area.

KPI 4 – Safeguarding Reports that met their court filing date. We filed 95.41% of Safeguarding Reports by their court filing date – this is an increase of more than 2% over the 2017-18 figure.

Budget

Our budget for 2018-19 was £10,267,000, the majority of which, 92%, was staffing costs. The remaining 8% of our budget covered our running costs and court-ordered family support services.



Participation with Children & Young People

Our 'Your Voice' participation strategy supports 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 focus areas 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.

2019 sees the planned conclusion of the Your Voice strategy. In 2019-20 work will be undertaken to ensure our culture of participation with children and young people continues through our commitment to the FJYPB charter on working with children and underpinning our five year strategic plan with the participation aims.

This year we have deepened our relationship with The Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) and they have continued to play a major part in many of our participation successes.

We are also very pleased we were able to assist with the ongoing recruitment of Welsh representatives to the FJYPB.

Together we have achieved:

- The introduction of children and young people in our recruitment processes for practitioner and senior staff, ensuring the people we recruit are what young people would expect.
- The co-design and co-hosting of the Cafcass Cymru staff conference on the theme of Equality, Diversity and Equality for over 200 staff. This provided an opportunity not only for staff to get together to discuss these issues but also to learn about personal experiences and best practice.
- Further development of our Cafcass Cymru characters, reflecting a wider range of ethnicities, disabilities and sexualities, better representing the diverse citizens of Wales and ensuring young people can relate to our communications and feel comfortable in our office spaces.
- Translation of a range of top tips produced by the FJYPB into our learning and development offer and have introduced the 'top tips for parents' into our private law process.
- The FJYPB assisted with our staff induction programme, raising awareness of their work and training the attendees on engagement with young people.



Quality, Learning & Improving



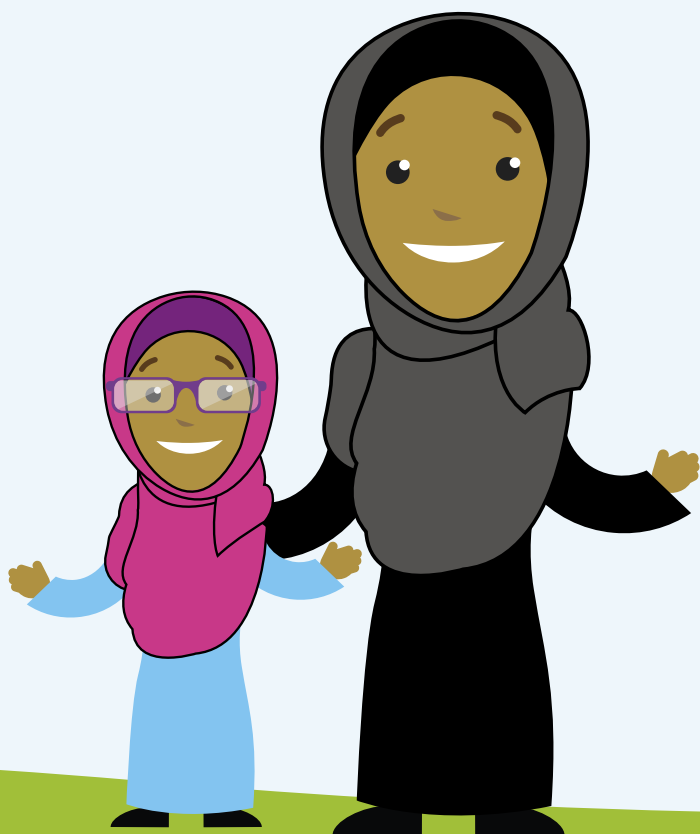
Compliments & Complaints

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 to consider what actions we need to take as an organisation. As part of our commitment to learning from our feedback we revised our complaints procedure and have now introduced early resolution to ensure service users are responded to in a timely manner.

The information we received from feedback has also resulted in the development of a Communications Expectation Document for service users and the revision of our safeguarding procedure. Our complaints information has also moved to an electronic platform in order to provide a modern and accessible platform and to analyse trends, identify learning and inform areas of development.

During the year, we received 19 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 worked with 9,700 children and young people in 2018-19 and in this time, we did not receive any complaints from children or young people.



Of the 9700 children and young people and their families we worked with, we received 103 complaints from adults of which 22 were formally investigated and the remainder resolved without the need for a formal investigation. All of the 22 formal investigations related to our private law work, and six complaints were either fully upheld or had elements of the complaint upheld.

QALI Programme

The Quality Assurance Learning and Improvements (QALI) programme ensures quality within our organisation whilst also capturing and delivering on areas of learning and improvement.

Through the programme we have realigned resources to strengthen our capacity to oversee and drive forward the work in this area.

We have implemented a new internal auditing methodology: Practice Review April 2018.

The model is a strengths-based inclusive approach to driving practice, it identifies what we are doing well but also important areas of

learning and development that we can then focus on improving. This data is captured electronically which means we can then use it effectively to summarise what we are doing well and target areas of improvement. In 2018-19 we undertook three Practice Reviews with our practitioner staff, relating to case planning and recording, reports and observation of practice.

Key evidence-based strengths have been:

- Appropriate liaison with key agencies and professionals.
- Timely, proportionate and responsive service.
- Analysis of risk.
- Child-centred assessments.
- Clear evidence based recommendations.
- Safe recommendations.

Areas of development identified:

- The quality of case plans.
- Use of assessment tools in practice and in evidencing consideration of diversity.



As a result we developed and implemented a new approach to case planning, inclusive of an internal guidance document, an aide-memoire focusing on the child's unique attributes, alongside promoting the FJYPB top tips on diversity. We are also developing bespoke training for our practitioners on diversity and on the quality of report writing inclusive of assessment tools and analysis.

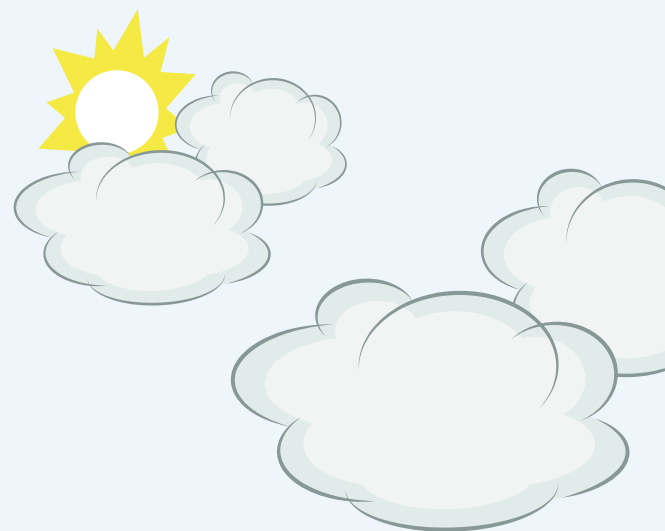
To further support our Practice Review model we have implemented a revised supervision procedure, strengthening practice-related discussions, real time feedback, performance management and practice priorities.

Learning & Development

An important element in supporting our staff is ensuring they have access to the right learning and development. We consider learning and development to be a priority and have taken on board the views of staff. To enhance, develop and embed learning and development in our organisation we have appointed a Senior Learning and Development Manager.

We have linked into local universities and have Masters Students undertaking research within Cafcass Cymru and we have introduced a shadow and exchange process with local authorities.

Involving staff and consulting them remains a key aspect in enabling developmental opportunities for all staff. In all of our 2018-19 developments our staff were part of the projects and work streams, contributing and delivering on key areas of work.



Forward Look to the Year Ahead

In 2019-20 we will continue to focus on providing a timely and consistent service to children, families and courts across Wales in the face of increasing demands being placed on our service.

We will continue to explore innovative technologies and service developments to further improve how we work and empower and support our workforce to work flexibly, efficiently and effectively. Work has been planned to develop our case management system and look at ways our QALI programme can be developed further.

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. We look forward to deepening our partnerships with the NFJO, Cafcass England and Welsh Government Policy teams as well as working with the FJYPB on our joint programme of service development.

Our partnerships and stakeholder engagement will be vitally important in 2019-20 as we look to act upon the recommendations laid out in the Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection, work with the NFJO and SAIL at Swansea University to deepen our understanding of our data to strengthen our service and improve the wider Family Justice System.

Along with a wide range of stakeholders, Cafcass Cymru has assisted with the development of judicial consultations on Private and Public Law developments. We look forward to the conclusion of the consultations and the implementation of the work streams.

2019-20 will also see the development of a renewed Cafcass Cymru strategic plan, a plan that will develop with our staff and partners to inform the type of organisation we will strive to be over the next five years.

