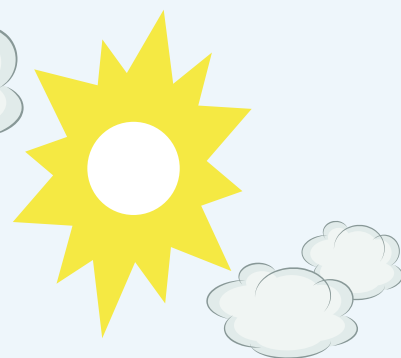


Cafcass Cymru Annual Report 2019–2020



Contents

Foreword by the Chief Executive	3
Key facts	4
Goal 1: To provide high quality, timely, independent expert advice and information to children, families and courts	5
Goal 2: To ensure our intervention promotes the voice of the child and is centred on their rights, welfare and best interests	6
Goal 3: To influence the Family Justice System and services for children in Wales	7
Goal 4: To enable staff to be the best they can be within a dynamic, diverse and open organisation	9
Look Forwards	10



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

Foreword by the Chief Executive

This has been another challenging year for Cafcass Cymru. We worked with over 10,400 children, which is an increase of 8% from 2018–2019. In addition to this increase, the organisation had to take decisive action in response to the pandemic and quickly adapt to providing a remote service to children, families and courts. I am tremendously proud of our staff who responded quickly and professionally to the changes we had to make in how we provided services. Their commitment to children, their families and the courts we work with has been outstanding and enabled Cafcass Cymru to continue to provide a service and to help secure positive outcomes for children in Wales throughout this difficult period.

Our 2016–19 Strategic Plan came to an end this year and we collaborated with our staff, stakeholders and the Family Justice Young Peoples Board (FJYPB) develop our new Five Year Strategic Plan that was published in June 2020. Our new Five Year Strategy seeks to build upon what we have already achieved and ensure that Cafcass Cymru is well placed to continue to provide the best service possible to children, families and courts in Wales.

Highlights from this year include:

- Strengthened our links with universities, Nuffield Family Justice Observatory and SAIL Databank to undertake research that will improve outcomes for children involved in the Family Justice System.
- Actively contributed to the work of the Public and Private Law Advisory Groups to develop proposals for the improvement and reform of the family justice system.
- Developed our new Strategic Plan 2020–2025.
- Engaged key stakeholders and staff to produce new practice guidance for practitioners, including the Domestic Abuse Practice Guidance, Harmful Conflict Practice Guidance and Children's Resistance, Refusal to Spend Time with a Parent Practice Guidance.
- Strengthened our relationship with the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB.)

Nigel Brown
Chief Executive

Key Facts:



We worked with **10,439** children & young people, **an increase of 8%** from the previous year.



We received **1695** public law applications, **a decrease of 5%** from 2018-2019.



We saw **890** Section 31 applications, **13% lower** than the previous year.



We were involved in **2338** First Hearing Dispute Resolution Appointments (FHDRAs).

692 were successfully resolved with no further work undertaken as parties agreed on arrangements which were safe, suitable and in the best interests of the child; **an increase of 30%** from 2018-2019.

1060 resulted in Cafcass Cymru undertaking a Child Impact Analysis (CIA) reports, where our practitioners met with children to better understand their needs before working closely with the parties involved.

Further work with families was undertaken in **877** cases.



We received **31** secure accommodation applications compared to **25** in 2018-2019, **an increase of 24%** from the previous period.



Goal 1:

To provide high quality, timely, independent expert advice and information to children, families and courts.

Key Performance Indicators

- Of the Section 31 applications, **93%** were allocated within 2 working days, with **43%** being allocated on the day of receipt.
- **95%** of Section 7 requests were allocated within 5 working days with **31%** allocated on the day of receipt.
- **88%** of section 7 reports met their court filing date.
- **96%** of safeguarding reports met their court filing date - an increase on the previous year.

Our interventions enabled children to be safeguarded, and their voices heard in family law proceedings.

Quality Assurance

We undertook thematic reports on cases relating to:

- Deprivation of Liberty
- Secure Accommodation
- Care Proceedings
- Revocation of Placement Orders

The findings and learning from these reports is shared with stakeholders to improve practice and outcomes for children in Wales.

Practice Review Model

The practice review model is a strengths based approach that promotes learning and development.

Key strengths identified in our practice reviews include:

- Safe recommendations which are clear and evidence based
- Child-centred assessments
- Effective engagement with stakeholders
- Identification and analysis of risk/impact of risk
- Information gathered and analysed effectively

Budget

- Our budget for the year was **£11,738,000.**
- **93%** of our budget was spent on staffing costs.
- **7%** covered our running costs and court-ordered family support services.



Goal 2:

To ensure our intervention promotes the voice of the child and is centred on their rights, welfare and best interests.

We are committed to maintaining our strong relationship with the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB), who are integral to the development of our services.

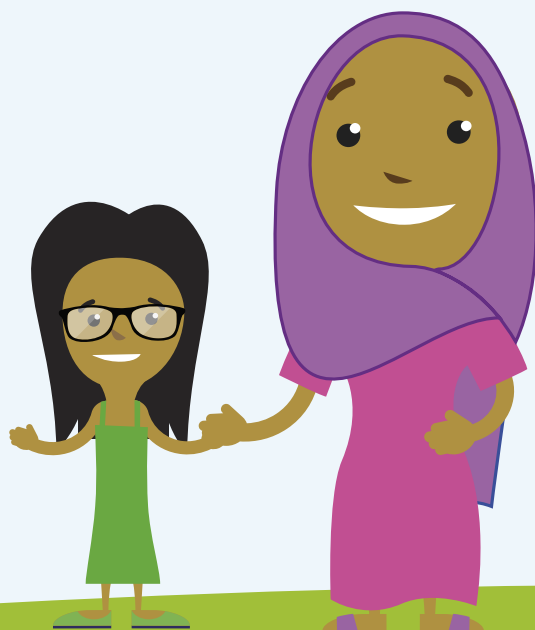
We promoted the Family Justice Young People's Board Top Tips on Diversity and Inclusion and facilitated practice focussed sessions with our practitioners on diversity within our local operational areas.

We supported the FJYPB to raise awareness of their work in Wales and, following a successful recruitment campaign, the board now has 76 members, 9 of whom are Welsh.

We developed a new five year strategic plan and the FJYPB made a significant contribution to ensuring that the best interests of children and young people are at the heart of all we plan to do.

The FJYPB plays a key role in the recruitment of our social work practitioners and a young person is a members on all interview panels for practitioners.

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



Goal 3:

To influence the Family Justice System and services for children in Wales.

Collaborative working

We continue to be an active member of the Family Justice Board, Family Justice Council and the Family Justice Network (Wales). During the year we also made a significant contribution to the work of the Public Law Working Group and Private Law Working Group.

We contributed to the development and rollout of the Welsh Government initiative for the “Standard Offer” of support to special guardians, published in March 2020, which is key to developing improved support for children and carers.

We collaborated with stakeholders in the development of good practice guides in respect to adoption. These include best practice guidance on helping children transition and making decisions around contact with birth parents and siblings.

We are committed to raising awareness and delivering training to ensure all our practitioners have a working knowledge of practice improvements required in these areas.

We continue to work closely with local authorities to develop ways we can work together to improve outcomes for children and their families.

This included:

- A pilot approach to joint case reviews
- A pilot to accelerated Discharge of Care Orders
- Joint training opportunities with local authorities.



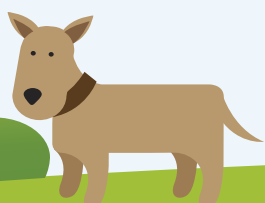
Research

We continue to strengthen links with Nuffield Family Justice Observatory (NFJO) and Swansea University SAIL data bank to inform research that will improve our collective understanding of outcomes for children who have been involved in the family justice system. This included providing Cafcass Cymru's administrative data to the NFJO, which was then used to write 'Born into Care: new-borns and infants in care proceedings in Wales' which was published in October 2019. This report provided instructive insights for the sector around the numbers and proportion of infants and new-borns involved in s31 court proceedings in Wales.

Building on the Born into Care series, further work was published in June 2020 focused on the health needs of both mothers and babies who come into care proceedings — 'Born into Care: 1000 mothers in care proceedings in Wales.'

Diversity and Inclusion

This year, we refreshed our network of 'in house' disability champions to offer advice and support to colleagues in ensuring our services are accessible to those who have an impairment, health condition or use British Sign Language. We facilitated staff development days with support from Disability Wales and ASD Info Wales to raise awareness and promote best practice.



Goal 4:

To enable staff to be the best they can be within a dynamic, diverse and open organisation

Learning and Development

We are committed to being a learning organisation where our staff have access to opportunities to continue to learn and develop. During the year we:

- Facilitated student social work placements in all our operational areas
- Supported practitioners to undertake the Practice Assessors Award.
- Contributed to the Harm Report commissioned by the Ministry of Justice.
- Delivered a range of training for staff on topics including domestic abuse, harmful conflict, attachment and sibling relationships, safeguarding procedures, and court skills.

Complaints and Compliments

During 2019–2020 we worked with over 10,000 children and their families and received 94 complaints. Of these, we were able to resolve 71 at early resolution, while 23 progressed to a full investigation.

During the year we received 22 compliments from parents, children, solicitors and the judiciary.



Look Forwards

New strategic plan

During 2019 – 20 we worked with colleagues, stakeholders and the FJYPB to develop a new 5 Year Strategic Plan that sets out our core organisational values and goals. Structured around three pillars - our service, our staff and our stakeholders - our Strategic Plan describes how we want to provide the best service possible to children, their families and courts. Our organisational values are:

- Child Centred — we have children and young people at the heart of all our work
- Inclusive — we respect difference, challenge discrimination, promote inclusivity and embrace diversity

Integrity and Respect — we work in a fair, honest and transparent way with everyone, valuing and respecting their individuality

Adapting to Covid-19

In March 2020 we took decisive action in response to the pandemic to ensure we were able to continue to deliver a service to children, families and the courts. The need to protect our staff and those we work with was a priority and so the way we delivered our services had to change immediately, placing a heavy reliance on technology to facilitate remote ways of working.

We will continue to adjust how we deliver our services in light of the ongoing pandemic and consider how to embed some of the new ways of working into our practice and the operational delivery of our services in the future.

Diversity and Inclusion

Cafcass Cymru is committed to respecting difference, challenging discrimination, promoting inclusivity and embracing diversity. We plan to deliver a comprehensive range of training opportunities for staff as part of our commitment to delivering an inclusive service. To help us better understand the needs of those we work with, we have been working with the FJYPB to develop and implement a new approach at point of referral and to capturing information about our service users. This will enable us to better understand the needs and circumstances of those we work with and support us to provide a more inclusive service. The pillars of our approach are outlined below.

- Visible and Hidden Disabilities
- Mental Health and Vulnerability Factors
- Gender and Sexuality
- Ethnicity and Culture
- Literacy and Language

