



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Cafcass Cymru Annual Report 2021-2022

For children and young people



Message from Nigel Brown, Chief Executive of Cafcass Cymru



Thank you for taking time to look at our report, which we hope you will find interesting. The aim of the report is to let you know what we did between April 2021 and March 2022 and a little about what we are planning to do next year. If you have any comments about this report, we'd like to hear from you and there are some links at the end of this report letting you know how to get in touch with us. We have also added a glossary at the end to explain some of the words we use in the report.

In a similar way to last year, this year has been another difficult year for Cafcass Cymru as we slowly moved from the full COVID-19 restrictions to a more usual way of working. We gradually started opening offices and returned to meeting with children and young people face to face even though sometimes we had to stop doing this as the rate of COVID-19 infections rose.

Despite this I am immensely proud that our staff in all areas found new ways of doing their work and made sure they continued to meet with children and their families in a way that was safe for everyone.

During this year the Pathfinder Pilot started in North Wales, this is a new way to work with families who experience private law proceedings. This two year pilot is being tested to change how the family courts work in light of the Harm Report (Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases).

Another new development was that members of the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) have joined our Advisory Committee. The FJYPB has always made a tremendous contribution to Cafcass Cymru and I am particularly delighted they are now permanent members of our Advisory Committee.

Finally, while this year we have once again seen a steady increase in the number of children and families we have worked with, the total number being 11,543 children, which is an overall increase of 4% on last year, our staff have continued to deliver a timely and child focused service and, there has been no delay in any child having to wait for a service from Cafcass Cymru.

Our Service (What we do for children, families and the courts)

We worked with
11,543
children and young
people this year.



For the families that we worked with as part of Private Law (where parents or guardians need some help sorting out who the children/young people live with or spend time with, we were involved with them for around

27
WEEKS

34
WEEKS

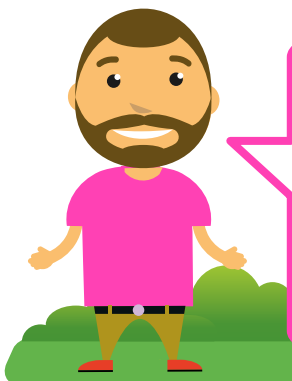
and as part of Public Law (that's when children's services are worried about the safety of children/young people) we were involved for around

So, you can see we aren't usually part of children's lives for very long, unlike other services such as social workers or support workers, who could be part of your lives for months or sometimes years.

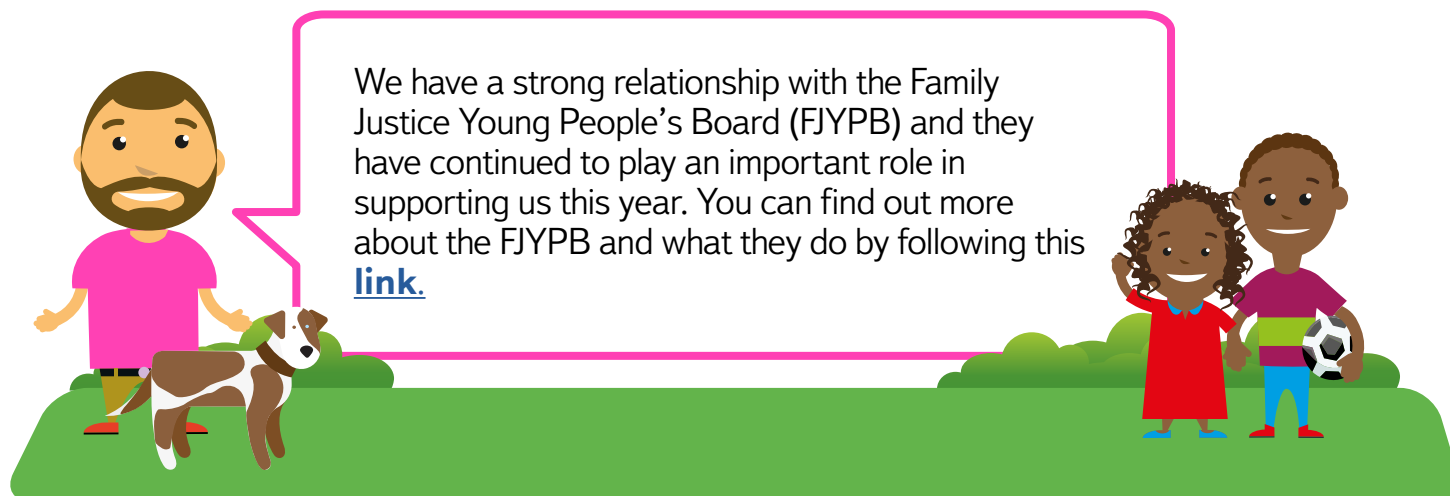
Our public law champions (these are some of the staff who are the most interested in this area of our work) have been working with local authorities (also called children's services), to make improvements to the work we do together. We all want to make sure the way we work with children and their families is the best we can, so working with other organisations to check what we did, helps us make sure we are always improving.



During this year we also updated our website and the letters we send to let people know what other services are available to help them, when they are involved with the family court. We updated our contact details on other agencies' websites like Dewis Cymru, so that everyone can find us more easily.



Family Justice Young People's Board



We have a strong relationship with the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) and they have continued to play an important role in supporting us this year. You can find out more about the FJYPB and what they do by following this [link](#).

We always like to ask for support on how to improve our service and this year, we worked with the FJYPB to make sure the way we are working with families — remotely and face to face — was still suitable. We also asked for their advice on the way we ask children and young people about things like gender, race, disability.

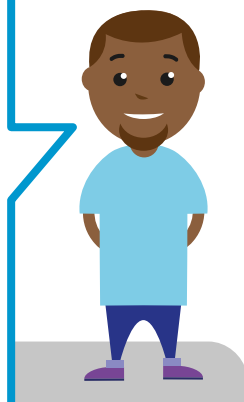
We have continued to send out blogs and 'Top Tips' written by members of the FJYPB for all our staff to read.

Members of the FJYPB have also helped us this year to interview lots of new people who wanted to work for Cafcass Cymru.

We also asked for feedback on our last year's annual report for children and young people and hopefully after listening to their advice, this year's report is even better!

We're really looking forward to working on all the things that we have planned together next year, some of these things include:

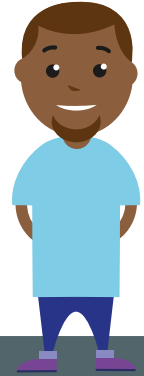
- Training for our business support teams.
- Workshops on how we can give children and young people information about our staff before we meet them.
- Feedback on new letters and information leaflets.
- Attend each other's conferences.



Our Staff (people who work for Cafcass Cymru)



Not being able to see people face to face due to COVID—19 was a really big change for us and even though we have started meeting people again, we still need to make sure we are keeping everyone as safe as possible.



What have we done this year to make sure this has happened?

We made sure everyone agreed not to visit anyone if they were feeling unwell or if they live with someone who was unwell with Covid.

We worked with the family courts and other organisations to make sure our staff could continue to work from home and where it was possible, they joined some meetings and court proceedings remotely using their laptops and phones.



Our Stakeholders (people or organisations who we get support and feedback from)

During the pandemic when we were not even allowed to leave our homes, we worked very closely with lots of other organisations to make sure we kept providing as good a service as we could. We are proud to have managed to work with so many different people on lots of different projects during this time. Some of our stakeholders include:

- The family court.
- Social Services.
- The Children's Commissioner's Office.

Even though we are now allowed to have meetings with people face to face, we have learnt that sometimes we can be better at what we do by meeting people more often and we can do that best by meeting remotely, with no one having to travel around the country too much. During this year we had lots of meetings with our stakeholders to set up lots of different new, and hopefully better, ways of working, for example:

- New types of family courts, new ways to share our information electronically.

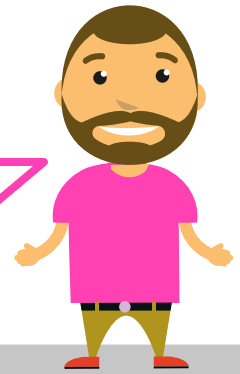


A look to the future

Our Service

Over the next year, lots of work will be taking place to help us all continue to recover from the effects of the pandemic. There will also be other changes in Family Law, and we will be working with our stakeholders, including the Family Justice Young Persons Board (FJYPB), on these.

Some of the best ideas about how we can continue to improve our service come from the people who we work directly with, like You! So please help us to get our bit right for you by giving us some of your thoughts (see the information at the end of this page), we would really love to hear from you.



Our Staff

We will also continue to listen to what our staff tell us. While we have supported them to do their job as well as they could during the pandemic, we will continue to provide support for them to work with children and young people in ways that feel right for the individual child or young person, whether that is remotely or face to face.



Our Stakeholders

In some ways our relationships with our stakeholders have been made better by meeting remotely and held more often than we could have if we had to travel to meetings. We will make sure we keep working closely with our stakeholders, looking at the best ways to engage with not only them, but also the most important people we work with, the children and their families. This will help us all to shape new services and continue to improve the services we provide.



Don't forget to give us your feedback if you are involved with us!



[LINK FOR CHILDREN](#)



[LINK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE](#)

Glossary

Advisory Committee

A group of people made up of members of different stakeholders, we let them know what we are doing and how well we are doing, and they tell us if we need to do something better or differently.

Business Support Teams

These are workers who sort out all the letters, e-mails, telephone calls and make sure any reports get to the right place. They also make sure that people's details are on our computer system correctly.

Cafcass Cymru worker

Depending on what the family court has ordered Cafcass Cymru to do, the worker (sometimes known as a practitioner or officer) can be known as a family court advisor or a children's guardian, or they can be members of our business support teams.

Cafcass Cymru

This is an organisation which works with children and young people and their families, and then advises the family court on what it considers to be in the best interests of each child.

Children's Commissioner for Wales

Supports children and young people to find out their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and has the power to promote positive change for children and young people in Wales

Family court

This is where important decisions are made about children, young people, and their families. It is different to criminal courts where people go when they might have done something wrong. Decisions in the family court are made by judges or magistrates when people need help agreeing about what is best for a child or young person.

Family Court Advisor (FCA)

Sometimes the family court may ask an FCA to meet with a child or young people to talk about their wishes and feelings and to make sure the family court hears what they have to say. The FCA also gives their view to the court about what is best for the child. FCAs do not need to meet all children and young people because sometimes families can agree themselves on what is best.

Guardian's report

The family court will ask the children's guardian to write a report to help it make decisions about a child or young person. The report will include information on the child's wishes and feelings and a recommendation from the children's guardian on what they think is best for the child. The report will also include information from the other people involved such as the parents and any other individuals such as experts.

Local authority (also known as children's services or social services)

This organisation is responsible for making sure all children and young people in their local area are kept safe by the people who care for them.

Pathfinder Courts

This is a new way to work with families who experience private law proceedings, promoting a 'safety first' approach and much earlier engagement with children and young people where appropriate.

Private law

These cases are brought to the family court by private individuals, generally in connection with divorce or parents' separation. The family court may make a child arrangements order, prohibited steps order or a specific issues order or no order at all.

Public law

Public law cases are brought to the family court by local authorities where they are worried that a child or young person is not being looked after safely. The family court may make a care order, a supervision order, or no order at all.

Stakeholder

An individual or group of people that have an interest in any decision or activity of an organisation. Without their support an organisation cannot exist.