



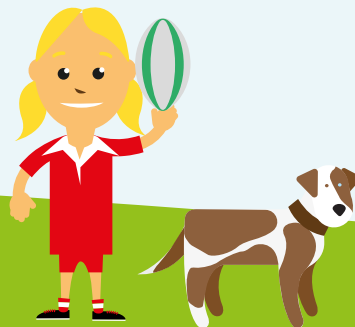
Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Cafcass Cymru Annual Report 2021-2022



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Foreword from Nigel Brown, Chief Executive of Cafcass Cymru

Alongside many public services, Cafcass Cymru has risen to the challenge of continuing to deliver a safe and timely service to the public during the pandemic. The combined impact of the ongoing increase in the number of new family court applications, the increase in the number of cases delayed in the system, and the ever-changing restrictions needed to respond to the ongoing pandemic, has been incredibly challenging.

Throughout the year there has been a sense of 'start / pause' in the recovery of the Family Justice system and Cafcass Cymru has sought to carefully balance maintaining the delivery of a timely service with protecting the safety and health of our staff. We have learnt a lot and having listened to feedback from children, families and our staff, we have embedded into our day-to-day practice different ways of working which we adopted during the pandemic.

I am immensely proud of how all our staff have responded and adapted to the uncertainty caused by the pandemic. The way they have embraced different ways of working has enabled us to continue to provide a timely and child focused service.

Cafcass Cymru is one part of the Family Justice System in Wales and England and is determined to play its part in delivering reform and improvement. I am therefore particularly pleased we have the opportunity to be part of two pilots in Wales that seek to improve how the Family Justice system serves children and families:

- The Welsh Government is funding the first Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) in Wales and I am delighted Cafcass Cymru has been part of this exciting initiative in South East Wales. The FDAC provides an approach to public law cases which seeks to utilise a problem-solving approach to work with parents who struggle with drug and alcohol misuse. The pilot is operating across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan for a period of two years, and is being evaluated by Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (Cascade).

- The Ministry of Justice is funding two 'Pathfinder' pilots (one in North Wales and one in Dorset) which are a new and innovative approach to responding to families who are accessing the Family Courts, in private law proceedings. The approach being tested in the pilot sites is a direct response of the (Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases) which was published in June 2020.

I am also particularly pleased the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) has become a permanent member of the Cafcass Cymru Advisory Committee. Two members of the FJYPB attend each meeting and are supported to raise issues and deliver presentations on issues and matters they have identified are key for children and young people involved in the family justice system. Their contribution is always rich, challenging and very much welcomed by everyone. I also wish to extend my sincere thanks to Jackie Murphy who chairs the Advisory Committee and the other members of the committee who continue to offer their insight and advice.

Finally, as we look ahead to the coming year, the key challenges for Cafcass Cymru will be:

- Managing and responding to high workloads and ensuring no child has to wait for a service in Wales.
- Working with stakeholders to deliver the Pathfinder Pilot in North Wales and the Family Drug and Alcohol Court in South East Wales.
- Responding to the Care Inspectorate Wales Assurance Check of Cafcass Cymru.
- Delivering the work arising from the President of the Family Division's Public Law and Private Law Work Programmes.

Key Figures

This year, we worked with **11,543** children.

We received **1,455** public law applications.

We were involved in **1,464** First Hearing Dispute Resolution Appointments:

1,174 resulted in us 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.

341

First Hearing Dispute Resolution Appointments 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. All these hearings were conducted remotely.

729

Section 31 applications came to Cafcass Cymru in 2021/22.

Key Performance Indicators

In the context of the pandemic, it has been a testament to our staff that we have continued to perform so strongly around the allocation of work across both public and private law, ensuring no delay in service provision for the children we work with.

Whilst good performance has been met in relation to the timely filing of court reports, we recognise continued work is needed to make further improvements.

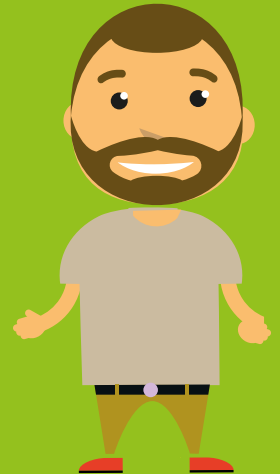
We have met our target of **95%** across 2 of our Key Performance Indicators.

96% of Child Impact Analysis requests were allocated within 5 working days of receipt.

92% of Safeguarding reports met their court filing date of 3 days before the first hearing.

87% of Child Impact Analysis reports met their court filing date.

95% of the section 31 applications received were allocated within 2 working days of receipt.



Our Strategic Plan

Developed with our staff, Our Strategic Plan provides direction and focus to what we do and how we do it and ensures our involvement in the lives of children and families continues to make a positive difference.

Our strategy includes 3 over-arching goals that describe how we will focus our efforts towards achieving our purpose.

These goals are focused on Our Service, Our Staff and Our Stakeholders.

- **Our Service**

We want to provide the best quality service to support improved outcomes for every child, young person and family we work with.

- **Our Staff**

We want an environment and learning culture where staff feel valued and their well-being is supported.

- **Our Stakeholders**

We want to share our knowledge, learn from partners and use our collective influence to improve the family justice system and children's social care in Wales.



Our Services

GOAL 1

Provide high quality, evidence-based analysis and recommendations tailored to the needs and circumstances of each child and young person.

This year has seen us progressing our plans to continuously improve our service and enhance the quality of our work.

In response to our learning from case audits, we have developed and introduced a new case closure summary document for public law cases. This has enabled us to capture key information and outcomes for the children and young people we work with in public law.

Going forward, we anticipate this information will help shape continued improvements to our service, especially in terms of how we engage with the children and young people we work with in Wales.

We have worked with local authorities across Wales to undertake collaborative reviews on a sample of closed cases to inform learning and practice development for our practitioners and those in local authorities.

The aim is to strengthen working relationships between agencies, identify good practice and strengthen practice development.

We provided feedback on an evaluation commissioned by the Welsh Government into how local authorities are implementing and embedding the 'standard offer' for families who care for children under Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs).

The 'standard offer' aims to provide an agreed level of individualised support for children who are subject to SGOs and was launched across Wales in 2019: this feedback will inform and shape ongoing improvements for children and young people.



Consistently listen to and promote the voice of the child in everything we do.

This year, the Family Justice Young People’s Board (FJYPB) celebrated their 10th anniversary. We are proud to have been involved in their celebrations and to be a part of that journey. We continue to maintain a strong working relationship with them, helping to ensure the voice of the child is always at the forefront of our work. We have successfully introduced the FJYPB to our Advisory Committee, with board members providing quarterly presentations to the Committee on matters within the family justice arena that impact them.

We are extremely proud to have worked together with members of the FJYPB on a number of projects this year, including creating and delivering bespoke training for our business support staff.

We have continued to publish the FJYPB’s ‘Top Tips’ on our intranet pages for our staff to access, alongside members of the board attending team meetings to deliver their ‘Mind your Language’ top tips in person.

FJYPB members continue to play a key role within our recruitment process for social work practitioners and management posts by being part of our interview panels. The FJYPB have also played an important role in providing feedback on how they would like our annual report for children and young people to look.

Listening to feedback from our staff, stakeholders and the FJYPB, we updated our website and written communications to better signpost families and children to a wider range of services. We also undertook an audit of the complaints we investigated to identify any learning to ensure we provide the best service.



Understand and demonstrate the difference our service makes to children, young people and families.

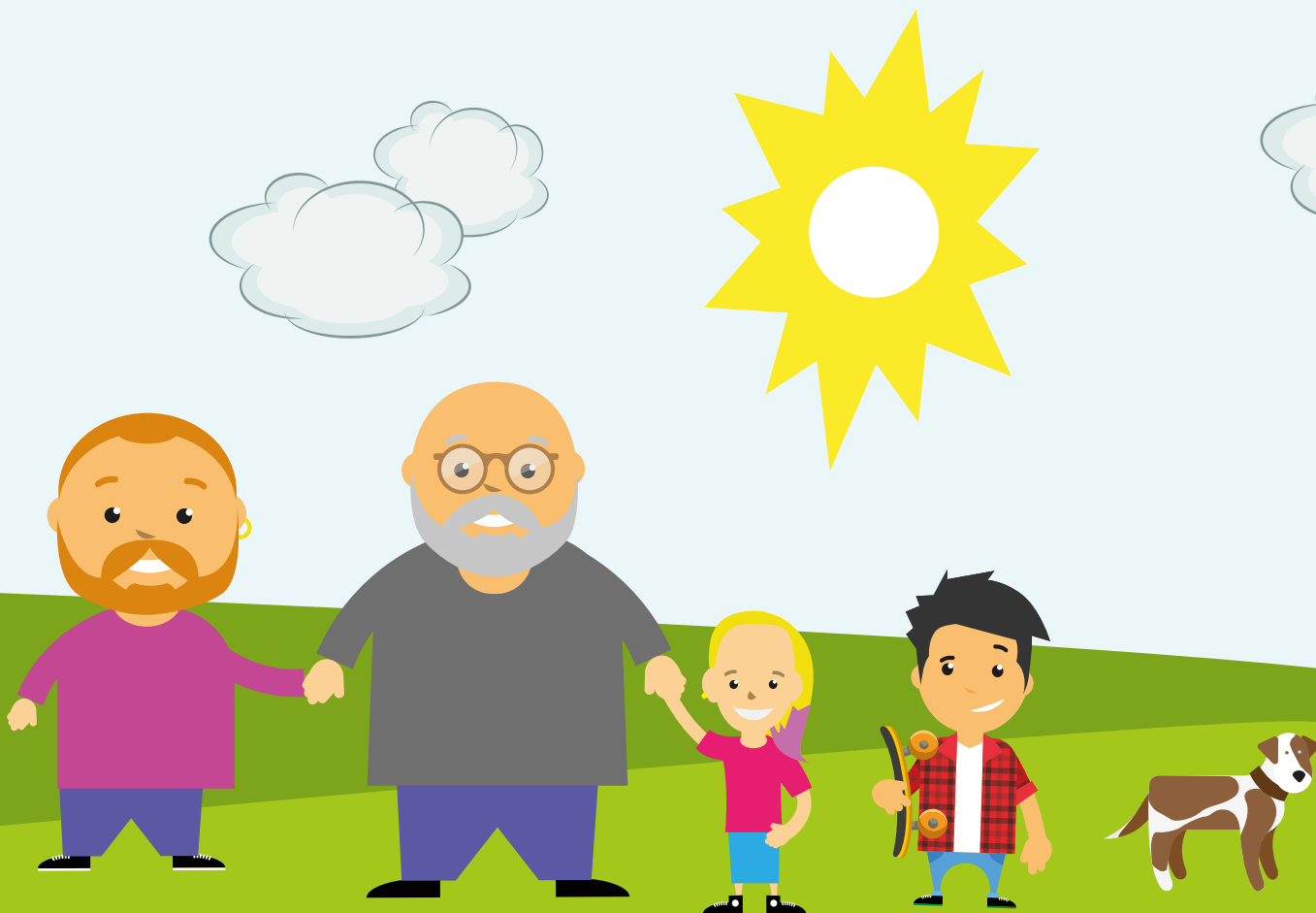
We have undertaken audits of our work during the year to help us understand better the quality of our work and the impact we have on securing safe outcomes for children that promote their best interests. An example of how this has influenced our practice is the development of guidance and tools which support our practitioners in ensuring the child or young person is visible and their voice is at the heart of every report provided to the family courts. We also reviewed our case closure processes and now have a much better sense of outcomes at the point of cases concluding, as well as routinely considering the 'added value' we have brought to that child's situation.

We completed a short, focused audit of Rule 16.4 cases which highlighted a number of issues and led on to us undertaking a more in-depth audit.

A report into the outcomes is due to be completed in the summer of 2022, we will share the results of this extended audit with stakeholders to influence and shape wider service improvements.

In a year in which we worked with over 11,000 children and their families, we received 46 complaints, including one from a child. This is a decrease of nearly one third from last year. We continued, as we have done in previous years, to work with service users to try to resolve their complaints at an early stage, with only 14 of the complaints progressing to a full investigation.

We also received 49 compliments and continue to be grateful for feedback we receive from our service users to enable us to learn and improve the service we provide.



Continuously improve our service by exploring new ways of working.

We have continued to review the way we work and engage with children and families in light of our learning during the pandemic. We have heard from some children and families that they prefer a blended approach to how we engage with them which includes meeting remotely and face to face. Going forward, we will continue with this tailored approach which best meets the needs of the individual child.

We welcome the roll out of the public law portal by HM Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) which enables us to quickly access case information that has been filed with the family courts in public law cases, without needing to download information.

We look forward to continuing to work with HMCTS in their implementation of the private law portal in 2022-23.



Promote the health and well-being of all staff, to achieve a work-life balance whilst sustaining the delivery of an efficient and effective service.

We have embraced the use of technology to streamline and improve how we operate which has enabled our colleagues to respond to the increased work. We have adopted the use of communication tools such as Attend Anywhere and Microsoft Teams as a means of engaging in virtual meetings with children and families where it is appropriate.

We have introduced a number of Microsoft Teams channels for our staff to access resources, support and training, allowing our colleagues across the organisation allowing them to easily share knowledge and learning with one another.

The health and wellbeing of our staff is a priority and we have undertaken regular surveys to inform what we can do to fully support staff. Our monthly Health and Well-being newsletters signpost staff to resources to provide them with hints, tips and information on a variety of issues.



Invest in continuous learning, helping to inspire and motivate staff to develop in their roles.

We have provided a range of training and development opportunities for our staff to support their professional development including areas such as trauma, intra-familial child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and child psychology.

Alongside the training sessions, our monthly newsletters include additional resources that our staff can access at a time suitable for them.

During this period, our staff took part in a number of working groups to take forward practice development and updated operational guidance, including one on public law which reviewed and updated guidance on supervision and care orders.

Listening to feedback from our business support staff, we have begun developing guidance and delivering bespoke training aimed directly at the critical role they play in the organisation. To aid this continued learning, we have been working with some of our stakeholders, including HMCTS and FJYPB, in delivering a number of bespoke workshops for our business support teams.



Recruit, retain and invest in a highly skilled, motivated and diverse workforce.

We remain committed to being an employer who recognises the benefits of promoting diversity within our workforce. We have changed the wording in our adverts to actively seek people with diverse lived and / or professional work experience and advertised the diversity networks available within the Welsh Government, of which Cafcass Cymru is a Division.

We have worked closely this year with Welsh Government groups such as Disability Awareness and Support (DAAS); Minority Ethnic Support Network (MESN); Mind Matters (Mental health and well-being); PRISM (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex +); and Women Together, all with the aim of continuing to promote our organisation as one that celebrates and respects diversity and inclusion for all.

We have implemented and encouraged among our staff ongoing conversations about our own diversity and unique lived experiences, as part of focussing on the need to consider the same in respect of our service users.

As part of this ongoing commitment, we have used the 'GGRRAAACCEEESSS' tool as a way of encouraging staff to engage in reflective discussions about diversity.

We have established groups of champions within our workforce to focus on issues such as disability, neurodiversity, ethnicity, race and culture.

Open to all members of staff, these groups provide a forum to share and learn from members' different backgrounds and experiences. These groups can support and advise others and ensure we call ourselves to account in respect of how we are addressing diversity within both our own workforce and our work with service users.

Calling upon the lived experiences of our staff, we undertook a staff induction survey in which we asked our newest members of staff for feedback on their first 6 months of employment in the organisation. The feedback has helped us gain a better understanding of their initial experience and will be considered as part of future inductions for new staff.



Our Stakeholders

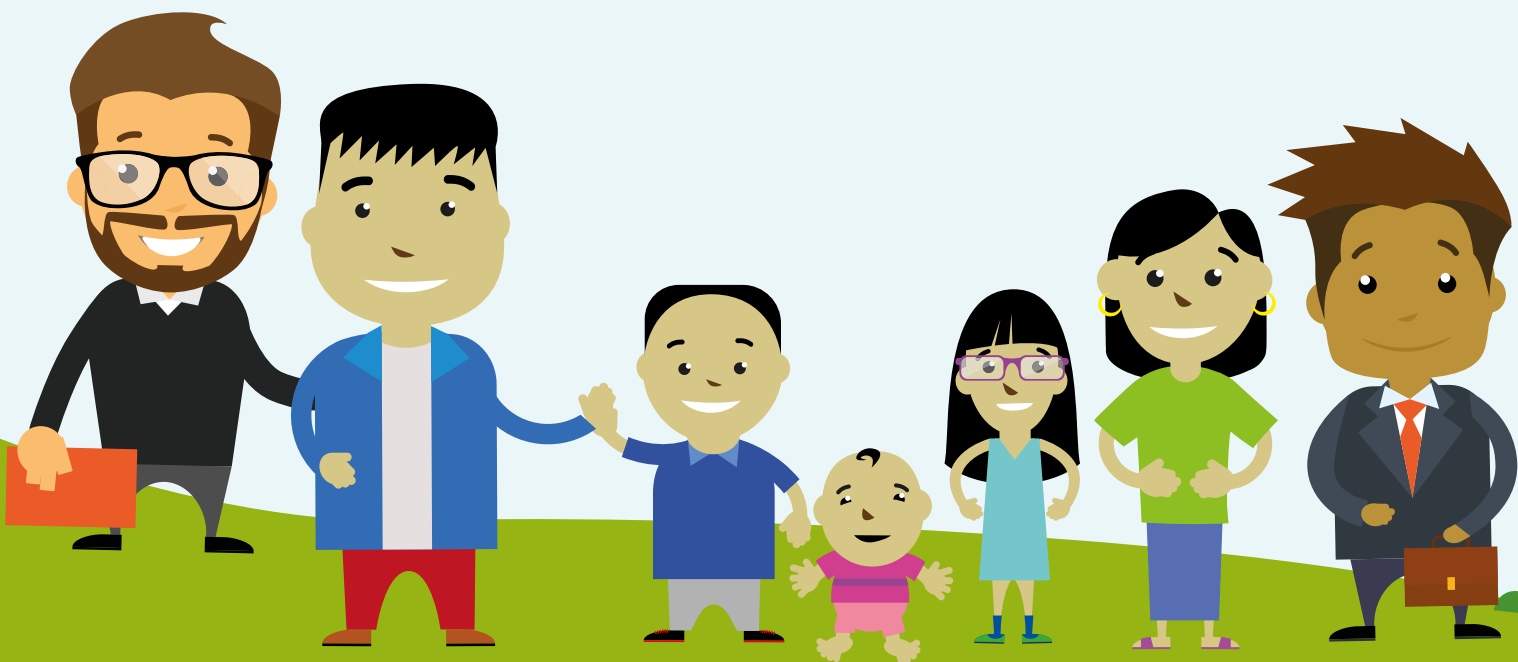
GOAL 8

Enhance and strengthen our relationships with stakeholders.

It is vitally important we have strong and positive working relationships with our stakeholders as we want to be a progressive and listening organisation.

The strong links we developed during the last year have been further developed as our focus changed from the daily challenges of the pandemic to the 'business as usual' matters that needed our attention.

As part of our work with stakeholders which includes the judiciary, HMCTS and local authorities we have been involved in implementing change in private law in response to Practice Direction 36Q, in addition to working closely with Cafcass England, MoJ and the new pathfinder courts.



Our Stakeholders

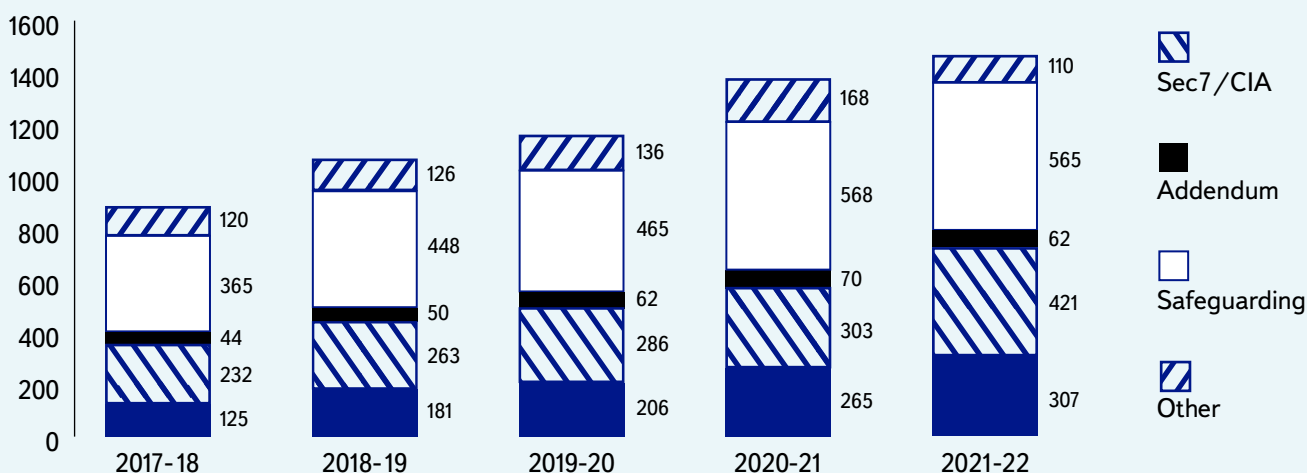
Continue to improve our systems for capturing, reporting and analysing information.

We have continued to develop our case management system, IRIS, to strengthen our case management processes and data analysis.

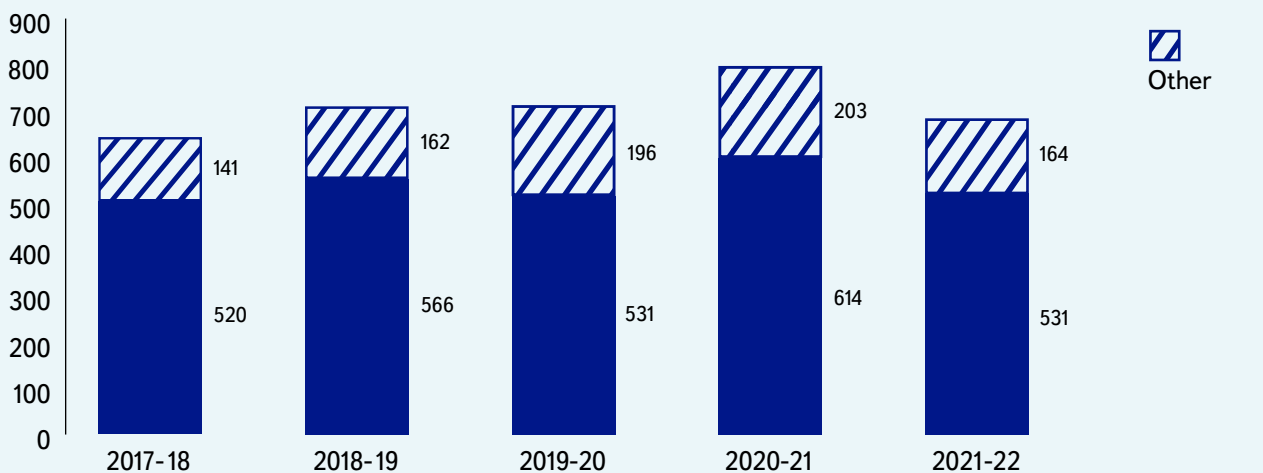
We have developed our data quality dashboards making more information available and extending access to allow staff to track their own data quality information. Alongside this we have also developed and piloted new dashboards to monitor diversity and report outcomes at point of case closure in public law cases.

Our case management system continues to support us in understanding the demands that are placed on our service. The graphs below evidence the continued year on year increase in our involvement with families in private law, while in public law applications we have experienced a return to the figures that are closer to the 2019-20 rate.

Private Law Caseload



Public Law Caseload



Our Stakeholders

GOAL 10

Play a leading role by appropriately sharing our information and intelligence with stakeholders to support improvements in the family justice system and social care.

We continue to be committed to contributing and responding to research. We have maintained and built on our relationship with key partners, including the Nuffield Family Observatory and Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru.

Continuing to work closely with stakeholders, we were able to provide valuable information and data to help inform and shape the introduction of both the Family Drug and Alcohol court (FDAC) and the North Wales Pathfinder pilot.

We also worked closely with the University of Bristol with whom we shared anonymised information and data to help inform the England and Wales discharge of care study, due to be published in 2022-23.



A look to the future

Our Service

Over the coming year we will continue to work collaboratively with others to deliver improvements for families as part of the reform and recovery of the Family Justice system.

We will continue to engage positively with the Pathfinder Pilot in North Wales and the Family Drug and Alcohol Courts in South Wales.

We also look forward to welcoming the independent feedback we will receive from Care Inspectorate Wales following their assurance check on Cafcass Cymru in June 2022.

Our Staff

We will continue to listen and act upon the feedback we gain from our staff in terms of our new ways of working, following the significant challenges we faced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We will continue to promote the health and wellbeing of our staff by responding to the most recent staff survey, continuing to deliver staff training and a staff conference, and promoting one-to-one meetings to provide staff with individual support.

Our Stakeholders

We will continue to maintain strong professional relationships with our stakeholders, including our Advisory Committee, Ministry of Justice, local authorities, Cafcass (England) and HMCTS, as we participate in pilots that shape and inform the development of family justice in Wales.

