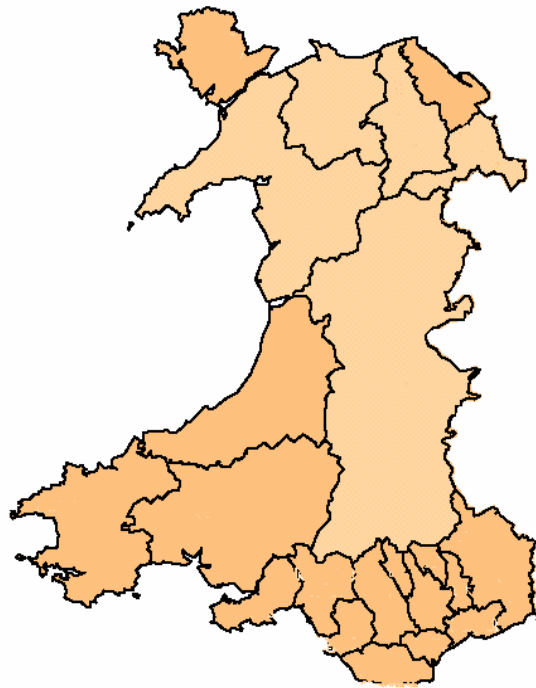




Gwasanaeth Cyngori a Chynorthwyo Llys i Blant a Theuluoed
Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service

CAFCASS CYMRU ANNUAL REPORT 2005-06



.....committed to providing an effective and efficient child-focused service that recognises the unique needs and rights of individual children



CAFCASS CYMRU 2005-06 ANNUAL REPORT

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1. FOREWORD BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF CAF/CASS CYMRU

This is the first Annual Report of CAF/CASS CYMRU following the transfer of functions to the Welsh Assembly Government.

1.1 CAF/CASS CYMRU plays an integral part in the efforts to improve the lives of thousands of children, young people and their families in Wales every year. The transfer into the Welsh Assembly Government has provided a clear opportunity to build upon work undertaken over the last few years and it is important that every effort is now made to ensure that the organisation capitalises on the opportunities presented by the transfer.

Transferring into the Welsh Assembly Government has meant considerable change for all CAF/CASS CYMRU staff up to and during 2005-06. There has been a strong commitment throughout the organisation to ensuring that the transfer should have no detrimental impact on the quality of the services provided to children, young people and their families. With their continuous commitment and hard work, staff have helped CAF/CASS CYMRU to achieve all of the relevant targets and to prevent any development of waiting lists or delays in the services we provide for Courts.

1.2 During the lead-up period and following the transfer a significant amount of time and resources had to be diverted to deal with transfer matters. There were also three other significant developments that impacted on the work of the Division during the year. These included:

- an Investors in People assessment
- a full inspection of the organisation by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Court Administration
- an internal audit

1.3 Dealing with a challenging change agenda, a number of resource intensive scrutiny processes and difficulties in recruiting staff to key posts inevitably had an impact on the developmental agenda in 2005-06. Despite this, the organisation has managed to achieve a considerable amount of progress within all areas including:

- Establishing more robust processes to improve the quality of services.
- Successfully dealing with increasing demand for the services.
- Receiving positive feedback from the IIP assessment process on the Action Plan.
- Continued commitment to continuously develop and improve staff skills with comprehensive training provision throughout the year.
- Responding positively to changes in legislation.
- Establishing and developing a Dispute Resolution Pilot Project.
- Significantly improving relationships with stakeholders.
- Establishing the organisation as an important part of the wider family justice system.

1.4 As part of the transfer CAF/CASS CYMRU took responsibility for a number of central specialist functions from the Cafcass National Office in London. This entailed developing

and implementing a new staffing structure as well as gaining a proper understanding of the roles and responsibilities associated with these functions. Although it has taken time for staff to familiarise themselves with being part of the Welsh Assembly Government, the response to the transfer has generally been very positive and effective links are now being developed between CAFCASS CYMRU staff and colleagues from other Divisions and Departments.

The overall trend of increased demand for services has continued. Although there was a slight decrease in Public Law cases referrals, there was a continued increase in Private Law case referrals. Coupled with this increase in demand there were also more complex and protracted cases that put further pressures on services. Developments in legislation also meant changes to working practices.

1.5 During the year there was substantial policy development within the wider family justice system and a number of key programmes and reviews were established and undertaken by Central Government departments. Throughout the year CAFCASS CYMRU have been successful in ensuring that a Wales perspective has been considered in these important developments.

The first year as part of the Welsh Assembly Government has provided CAFCASS CYMRU with a firm foundation upon which to continue to develop the service so as to ensure that the organisation continues to help improve outcomes for children, is able to respond effectively to changes in the wider family justice system and contributes fully to wider Welsh Assembly Government developments.

Dafydd Ifans
Chief Executive

2. CAFCASS CYMRU - ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

2.1 The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) was established on the 1st of April 2001 in accordance with the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000. It brought together the Family Court Welfare Service (part of the Probation Service), the Guardian ad Litem and Reporting Officer Service (Panels funded by Local Authorities) and the Children's Division of the Official Solicitors (part of the Lord Chancellors Department).

As an executive Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB), accountable initially to the Lord Chancellor and later to the Minister for Children at the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Cafcass was an England and Wales organisation. Provision was however made in the Children Act 2004 to transfer CAFCASS functions in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales with the key aim of putting the organisation at the heart of children's services in Wales. Following the implementation of the Children Act 2004, CAFCASS in Wales became part of the Welsh Assembly Government on 1st of April 2005.

CAFCASS CYMRU is part of the Department for Social Justice and Regeneration Department. A framework document approved by the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration has been established to protect the professional independence of the organisation.

2.2 What does CAFCASS CYMRU do?

CAFCASS CYMRU is a child-focused Social Work organisation, which provides expert Social Work advice to Family Proceedings Courts, the County Courts and the High Court. It is committed to providing an effective and efficient child-focused service that recognises the unique needs and rights of individual children. The primary duties of CAFCASS CYMRU as part of the Welsh Assembly Government are set in Part 4 of the Children Act 2004 (Section 35) which is in respect of family proceedings in which the welfare of children ordinarily resident in Wales is, or may be, in question. According to this Act, it is the function of the Assembly to:

- (a) Safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- (b) Give advice to any Court about any application made to it in such proceedings;
- (c) Make provision for the children to be represented in such proceedings; and
- (d) Provide information, advice and other support for the children and families

In undertaking these functions the organisation is committed to attaining and contributing to the Welsh Assembly Government seven core aims as highlighted in the key policy document Children and Young People "Rights to Action".

2.3 CAFCASS CYMRU Principles

The service is underpinned by a set of key principles, which are that:

- children and young people should be safeguarded from all forms of harm
- the needs of children and young people are paramount
- children and young people have a diverse range of backgrounds and needs
- where safe, children and young people are best brought up by their own family and within their own community
- safe and effective arrangements for contact with parents, siblings, extended family and friends should be in place for children and young people who are not able to live with members of their family
- children and young people have a right to be heard
- all forms of oppression and discrimination is damaging
- service users have a right to receive a bilingual service and an equitable service, regardless of circumstances or where they live
- continuous improvement and securing a diverse and bilingual workforce are essential elements to continued effectiveness.

A more detailed description of the services that CAFCASS CYMRU provide can be found in a recently published booklet 'A Guide to Our Services'

2.4 Aims and objectives

As part of the transfer of CAFCASS CYMRU into the Welsh Assembly Government, the Minister approved the initial objectives which were included in the 2005-06 Operational Plan. To emphasise the focus on improving outcomes for children and young people and following consultation with staff, CAFCASS CYMRU reviewed the initial version and developed a new set of aims and objectives that were more child and young people focussed.

The revised aims and objectives also reflect the organisation's commitment to the strategic direction set within several Welsh Assembly Government key policy documents i.e. "Wales a Better Country", "Making the Connections" and "Children and Young People Rights to Action".

CAFCASS CYMRU Aims and Objectives	
Aim: Improving outcomes for children and young people in Wales	
(i)	Ensure that children and young people's needs are fully represented, safeguarded and promoted in Family Proceedings matters.
(ii)	Provide quality and timely expert social work advice and support to the Family Courts.
(iii)	Provide effective services to families aimed at promoting the welfare of children.
(iv)	Develop and maintain effective and productive relationships with all key stakeholders.
(v)	Develop a range of service user, including children and young people, participation processes and respond effectively to all complaints and feedback.
(vi)	Play a proactive part in the Welsh Assembly Government agenda for children, young people and their families
Aim: Creating and making CAFCASS CYMRU a good place to work	
(vii)	Establish a learning, supportive and inclusive organisation which is committed to competence and which values diversity and participation.
(viii)	Secure efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services and all supporting functions leading to increased value for money, and a corporate commitment to continuous improvement.

2.5 Governance

The Minister agreed to put in place formal delegation arrangements, and a formal framework to safeguard the professional independence of CAFCASS CYMRU, thereby ensuring impartiality during Court proceedings to safeguard children.

Work has also been undertaken to assist elected representatives and officials within the Assembly to achieve a better understanding of CAFCASS CYMRU's statutory responsibilities, and the organisation's approach to its work. This included the development of an information booklet, attendance at Social Justice and Regeneration Committee, Ministerial Submissions and numerous meetings with officials from other Departments and Divisions within the Welsh Assembly Government.

2.6 The staff

To undertake the primary duties, the staff who work directly with children, young people and their families have to be experienced Principal Social Work Practitioners. These are generically referred to as Family Court Advisors (FCAs). In accordance with Court Rules, these individuals can be referred to by a range of titles according to the specific role being undertaken.

FCAs are skilled negotiators, committed to the needs of children and able to confront a wide variety of situations and circumstances. They visit children and families in their own homes, interview a range of other professionals who may have information about the child and will use the specialised interview facilities and family rooms in CAFCASS CYMRU offices to work with the child, interviewing family members in a neutral venue.

The work of FCAs, whatever their role, is supported by administrative and business staff and by specialist staff involved in developing the strategic direction of the organisation and in changing approaches to the work to best reflect current research and examples of good practice.

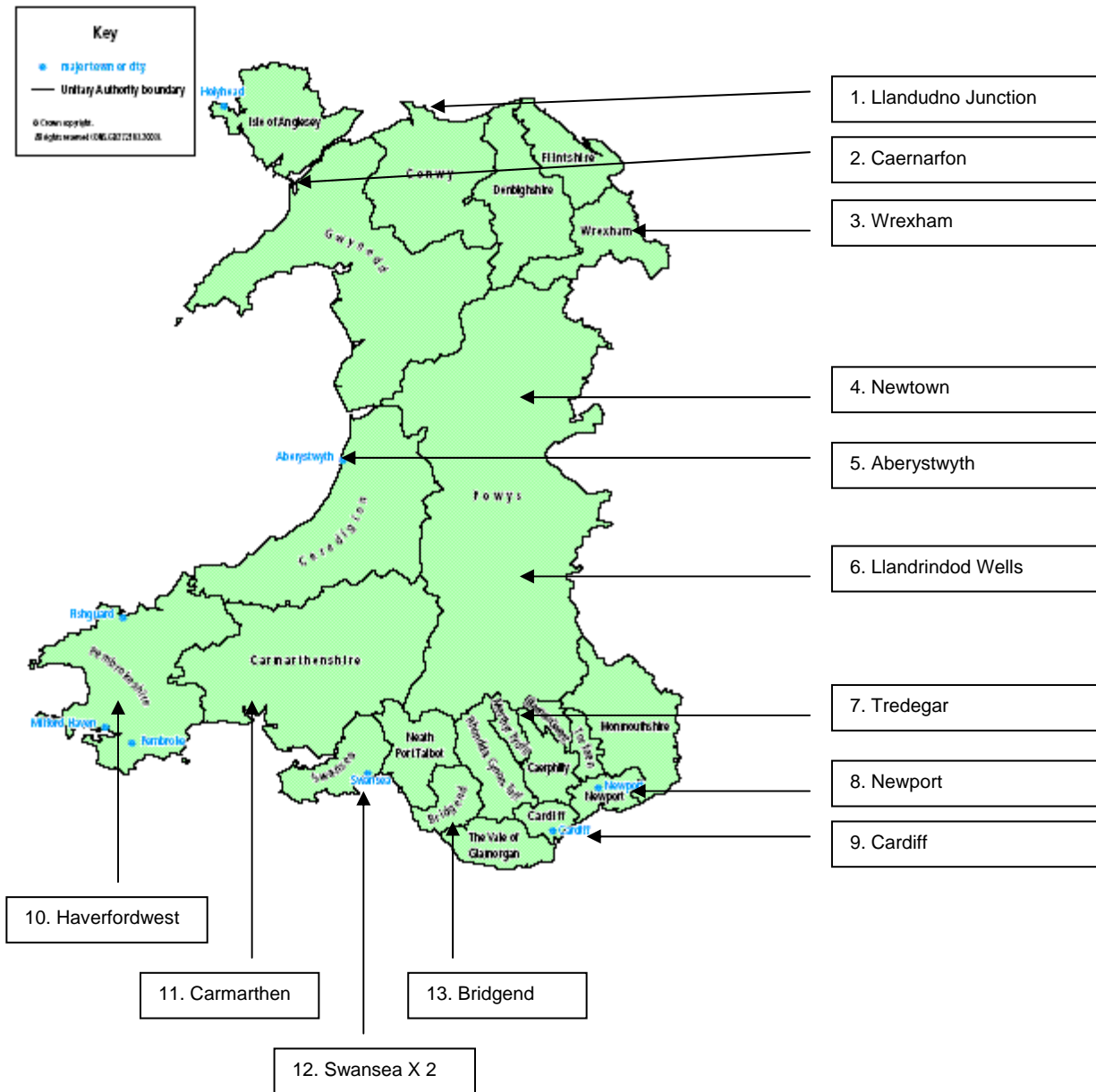
2.7 How the organisation is structured

In order to ensure equitable access to services across Wales the organisation is structured into ten Area Branches each covering two to three local authority areas. Area Branches are managed by Area Directors, who ensure that services are more responsive to local issues and needs as well as developing effective local links with key stakeholders.

In order to open up key posts to applicants across Wales the National Office is situated on two sites, Wrexham in the north and Cardiff in the south. The organisation currently employs 176 staff and is structured into three Units (see Appendix 1 to view a detailed breakdown of the structure):

- **Operations Unit** – responsible for the operational delivery of services.
- **Strategy and Performance Unit** – responsible for strategic planning, performance, practice and development related functions.
- **Corporate Services Unit** – responsible for the provision of corporate management functions.

2.8 CAF/CASS CYMRU Office Locations



1 - Heulwen, Glyn y Marl Rd, Llandudno Junction, LL31 9NS
2 - Government Buildings, Penrallt, Caernarfon, LL55 1EP
3 - Porthdy Grosvenor, 1 Grosvenor Rd, Wrexham, LL11 1BS
4 - Merchants House, 17 High St, Newtown, Powys. SY16 2NR
5 - Alexandra Rd, Aberystwyth, SY23 1PT
6 Unit 32 Ddole Road Enterprise Park, Llandrindod Wells, LD1 6PF
7 - Tredegar Magistrates Court, Spencer Square, Tredegar, NP22 3XR

8 - 35 Godfrey Rd, Newport, NP20 4PE
9. Llys y Delyn, 107 - 111 Cowbridge Rd East, Canton Cardiff, CF11 9AG
10 - Penffynnon, Hawthorn Rise, Haverfordwest, SA61 2AZ
11 - Hill House, Picton Terrace, Carmarthen, SA31 3BS
12a - Princess House, 10 th Floor, Princess Way, Swansea, SA1 3LW
12b - 37 The Kingsway, 3 rd Floor, Swansea, SA1 5LF
13 - Brackla House, Level 2, Brackla St, Bridgend, CF31 1BZ

3. 2005 – 06: THE KEY ISSUES

2005-06 was a challenging, exciting and successful year for CAFCASS CYMRU. Key issues addressed included:

Issue	Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration into the Welsh Assembly Government 	Maintenance of staff commitment and morale and action to raise awareness of role and responsibilities of CAFCASS CYMRU within the Assembly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of pre-transfer performance levels 	Responses to demand in response to Judicial protocol and in private law matters have been maintained at pre-transfer levels and slightly improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy development 	Development and implementation of revised Complaints Policy and Domestic Abuse Toolkit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved relationships with stakeholders 	Development of formal Memoranda of Understanding and development of Advisory Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of supervised Contact Centres 	Established network of Contact Centres across Wales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communications 	Established new meetings structure arrangement, monthly newsletter and development of information handbook
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved IT 	Successful transformation to NAFW IT system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established CAFCASS CYMRU as part of Family Justice System 	Gained membership of Family Justice Council and local Family Justice committees, as well as other cross-department programme boards and steering groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved facilities and access to children and families 	New office accommodation in Carmarthen and Llandrindod Wells with offices soon to open in Caernarfon and Colwyn Bay.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in practice 	Practice audits undertaken, Performance Managers recruited, quality assurance strategy being developed and work on Practice Guidance handbook commenced

4. CAFCASS CYMRU AND THE FAMILY JUSTICE SYSTEM

CAFCASS CYMRU has a key role to play within the family justice system. Good working relationships with key partners such as the Judiciary, Her Majesty's Court Service (HMCS), Local Authorities, Legal Services Commission, Law Society and Voluntary organisations have been established. During the year the Chief Executive has met the senior Judge for Wales, Sir Justice Hedley, on a number of occasions to discuss and address relevant issues relating to CAFCASS CYMRU's support of the Family Courts and the implementation of the Private Law Programme.

4.1 Improving relations within the Family Justice System

The organisation is committed to continually developing new and improved working relationships with other organisations. Basing these relationships on formal operational agreements such as Protocols or Memoranda of Understanding is leading to improved dialogue at all levels and helps deal effectively with misunderstandings and difficulties. The agreements also increase the understanding of how the organisation approaches its work in terms of its practices and its focus on the needs of children.

In 2005-06 Memoranda of Understanding were formally established between the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) and also Welsh Women's Aid. Work is also taking place on the development of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Children's Commissioner for Wales. A key challenge during the forthcoming year will be to work closely with Her Majesty's Court Service (HMCS) to develop formal arrangements to address and improve issues that have an impact on the quality and delivery of services for both organisations.

4.2 Links to Central Government Departments

CAFCASS CYMRU has also continued to develop good working relationships with Central Government Departments in relation to non-devolved areas within the Family Justice System, and now has representation on a number of committees alongside CAFCASS in England.

During 2005-06, we had representation on the following committees:

- Child Care Proceedings Review Steering Group – DFES/DCA led
- Relationship Breakdown Programme Board - DFES led
- Reducing Delays Programme Board – DCA led

Both the Child Care Proceedings Review Steering Group and the Reducing Delays Programme Board have now been amalgamated to form the Care Proceeding Programme Delivery Board. CAFCASS CYMRU has representation on this new influential group as its recommendations or findings will have significant implications for CAFCASS CYMRU in the future, and there is an important need to ensure that any developments take account of the Wales perspective.

During the year CAFCASS CYMRU had representation on the Child Care Proceedings Review panel. This review was established to examine how to improve systems for children and families subject to proceedings and to ensure better use of resources. The Review Report is due to be published in May 2006.

4.3 Family Justice Council

Following initial difficulties in gaining membership of the Family Justice Council, CAFCASS CYMRU secured membership of the Council during the latter part of 2005-06. The Council has been established to 'promote an inter-disciplinary approach to the needs of family justice and to monitor the effectiveness of the system and advise on reforms necessary for continuous improvement'. CAFCASS CYMRU is also represented on the four local Family Justice Committees in Wales. These aim to promote and improve interdisciplinary working at a local level.

4.4 Policy brief

As a result of the new staffing structure and taking on a policy brief in relation to Family Justice Policy, the organisation has also been significantly involved in work associated with the passage of relevant Bills through the UK Parliament, including the Children and Adoption Bill and the Education and Inspection Bill. Both pieces of legislation will have a significant impact on the work of the organisation and on the future inspection arrangements.

5. SERVICE DELIVERY

The work of CAFCASS CYMRU practitioners is governed by Legislation and Court Rules. Family Court Advisors have a wide range of statutory powers and are involved in numerous types of family court proceedings. Their work can generally be separated into two categories - Public Law and Private Law Proceedings. Fig 5.0 provides information on the number of Public Law and Private Law cases that CAFCASS CYMRU have been involved in during 2005/06 and a comparison with the previous year.

CAFCASS CYMRU Demand Trend

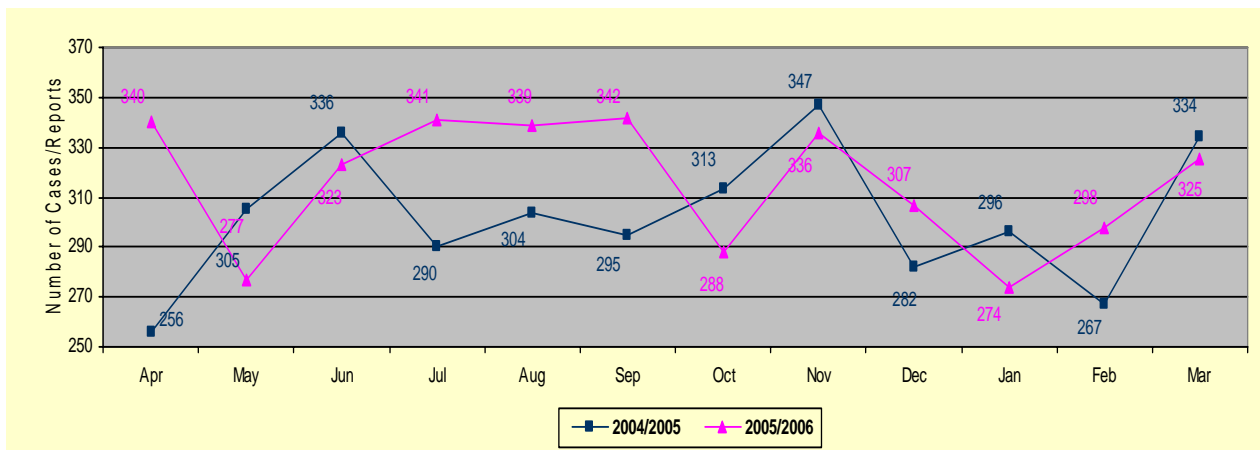


Figure 5.0

In 2005/06 the organisation responded to a total of 3790 applications to the courts in public and private law cases. This compares with 3625 applications in 2004/05, which highlights an increase in demand of 165 cases during 2005/06. Figure 5.0 shows the monthly profile of requests received over the course of 2005/06 in both private and public law compared with the monthly profile request in 2004/05. The monthly average in 2005/06 was 316 requests compared to 302 requests in 2004/05.

Out of the applications received during 2005/06, 937 of these were public law cases and 2,853 were private law cases.

5.1 Public Law

Public Law Demand

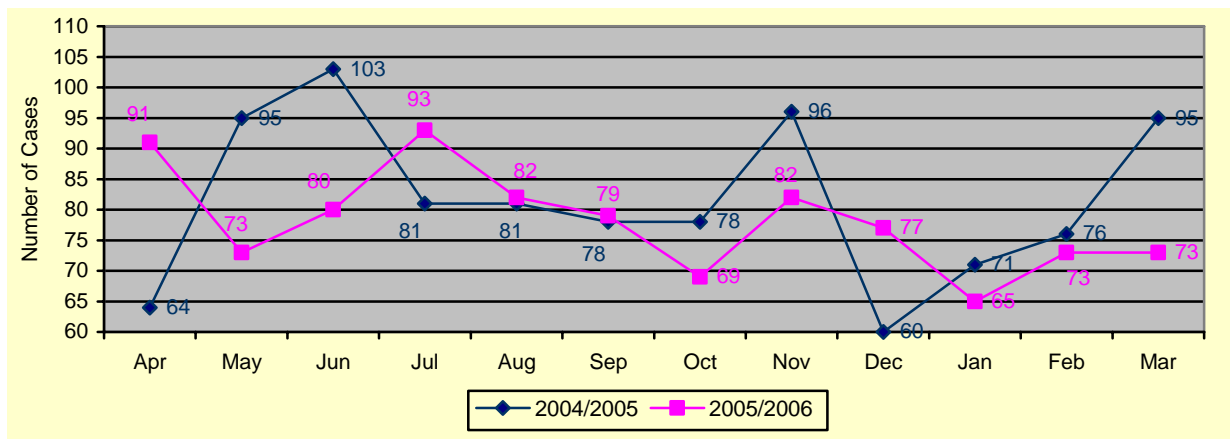
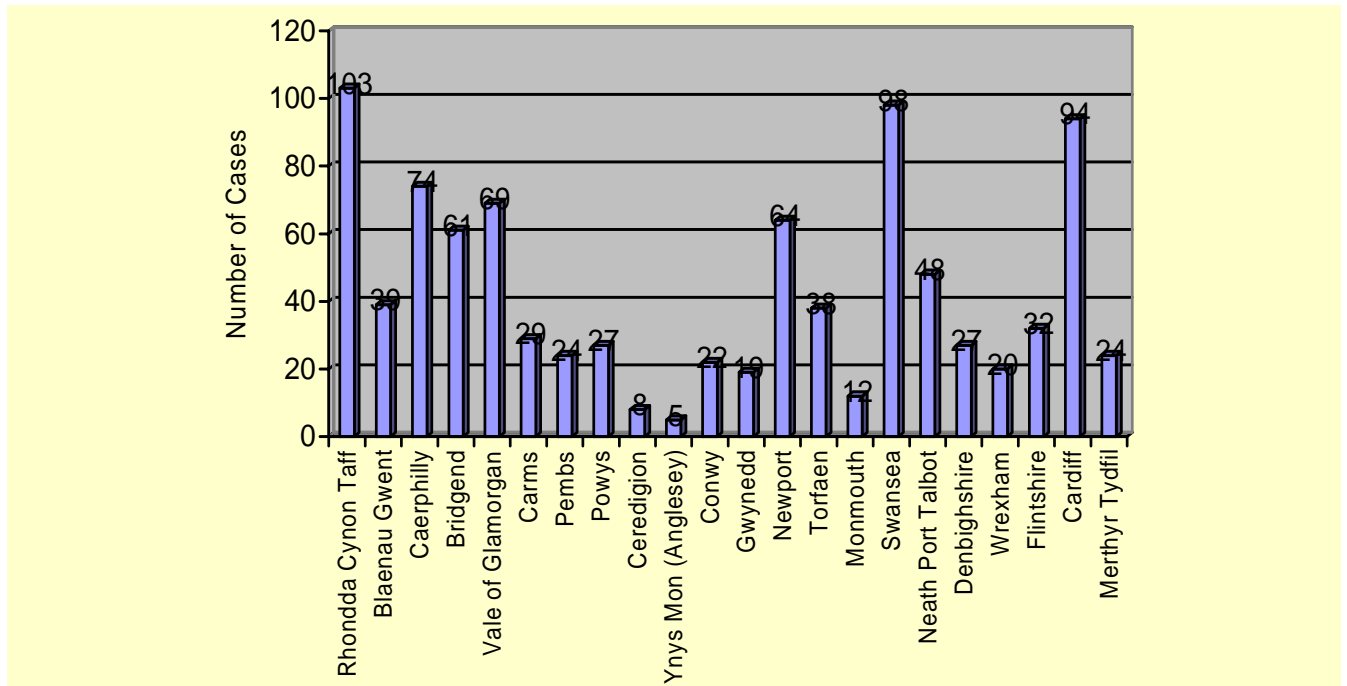


Figure 5.1

In 2005/06 the service responded to a total of 937 applications from the Courts in public law cases. This compares with 978 applications in 2004/05, which is a slight decrease in demand of 41 cases during 2005/06, a decrease of 4.2%. However cases are more complex and completion dates are longer which results in the involvement of practitioners being protracted. Figure 5.1 shows the monthly profile of requests received over the course of 2005/06 in public law compared with the monthly profile request in 2004/05. The monthly average in 2005/06 was 78 requests compared to 82 requests in 2004/05.

Public Law Demand – Local Authority



NB – Caerphilly/Blaenau Gwent Branch established 1st January 2006

Figure 5.1.1

Figure 5.1.1 shows the spread of the public law cases across all Local Authority areas in Wales during 2005/06. Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Authority referred the greatest number of public law cases to CAF/CASS CYMRU, which represented 11% of the total demand across Wales. Swansea had the second highest number of public law cases referred, which represented 10.5% of the total demand across Wales. Anglesey referred the least amount of public law cases to CAF/CASS CYMRU during 2005/06, which represented 0.53% of the total demand across Wales.

Public Law Types of Proceedings 2005-2006

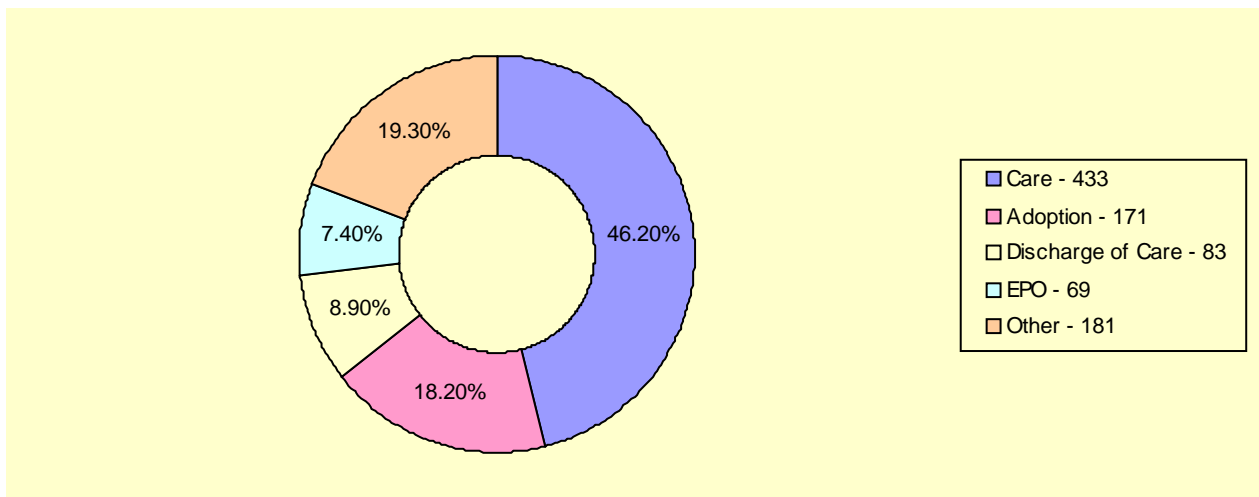


Figure 5.1.2

Figure 5.1.2 provides an overview of the types of public law proceedings that made up the total requested during 2005/06. As can be seen from Figure 5.1.2, most of the cases - 433 (46.2%) - were made up of care proceedings, accounting for nearly half of the requests.

Public Law Children Profile 2005/2006

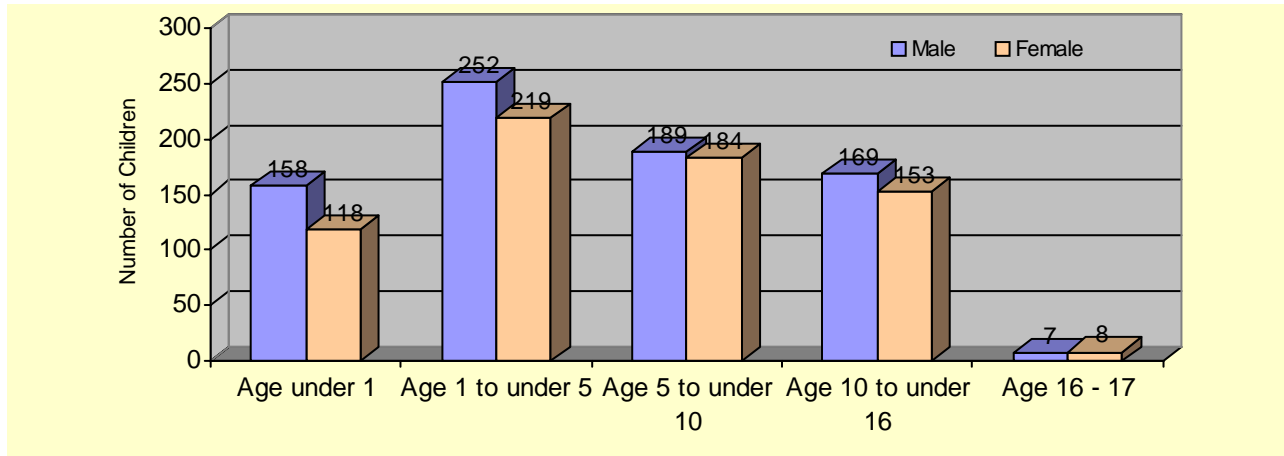


Figure 5.1.3

Figure 5.1.3 provides an overview of the gender and age profile of children and young people in public law cases during 2005/06. Out of the total of 1,457 children and young people worked with, 775 (53%) were male and 682 (47%) were female.

5.2 Care Proceedings

Care Proceedings – By Month

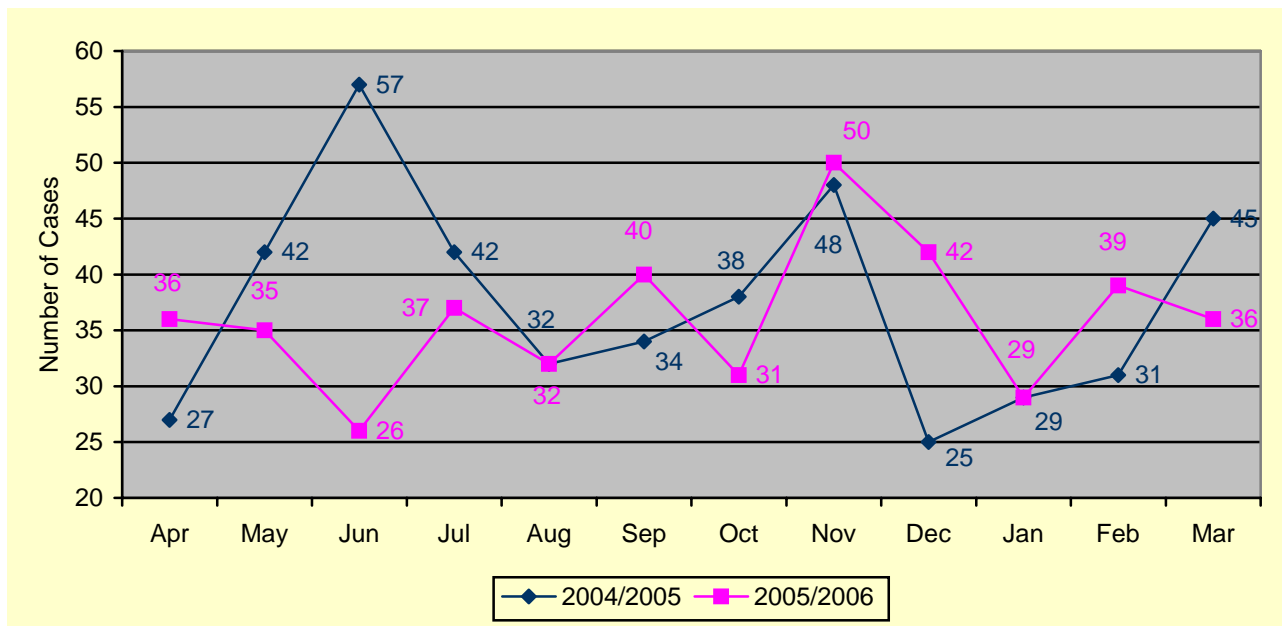


Figure 5.2

Figure 5.2 shows the monthly requests arising from care proceedings during 2005/06 compared to 2004/05. A total of 433 requests in 2005/06 compares to 450 in 2004/05, a decrease of 17 (3.8%). The average requests per month for 2005/06 was 36 compared to 38 in 2004/05, which highlights a slight decrease.

Care Proceedings – Local Authority

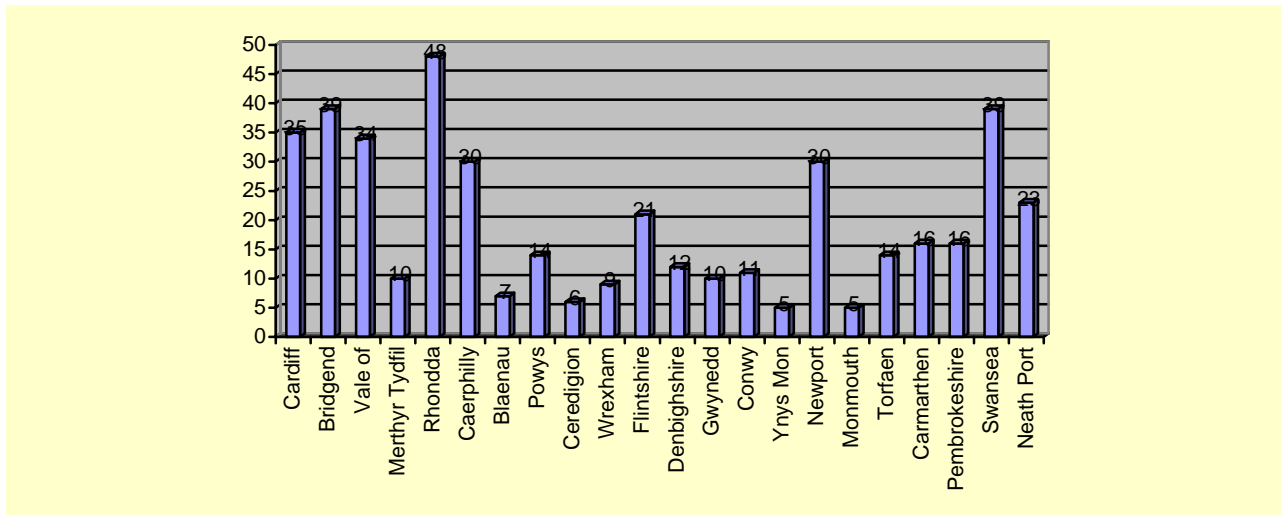


Figure 5.2.1

Figure 5.2.1 shows the requests arising from care proceedings by Local Authority areas during 2005/06. Of the 433 requests received in 2005/06 the greatest number of care proceeding cases was received from Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Authority, a total of 48 cases; this represented 11% of the total number of care proceeding cases received from Local Authorities in Wales during 2005/06. Anglesey and Monmouth Local Authorities referred the least amount of care proceeding cases to CAFCASS CYMRU during 2005/06, each referring 5 cases, which represented 1% each of the total demand for all care proceeding cases referred by Local Authorities in Wales during this period.

5.3 Adoption Proceedings

Public Law Adoption Proceedings Demand

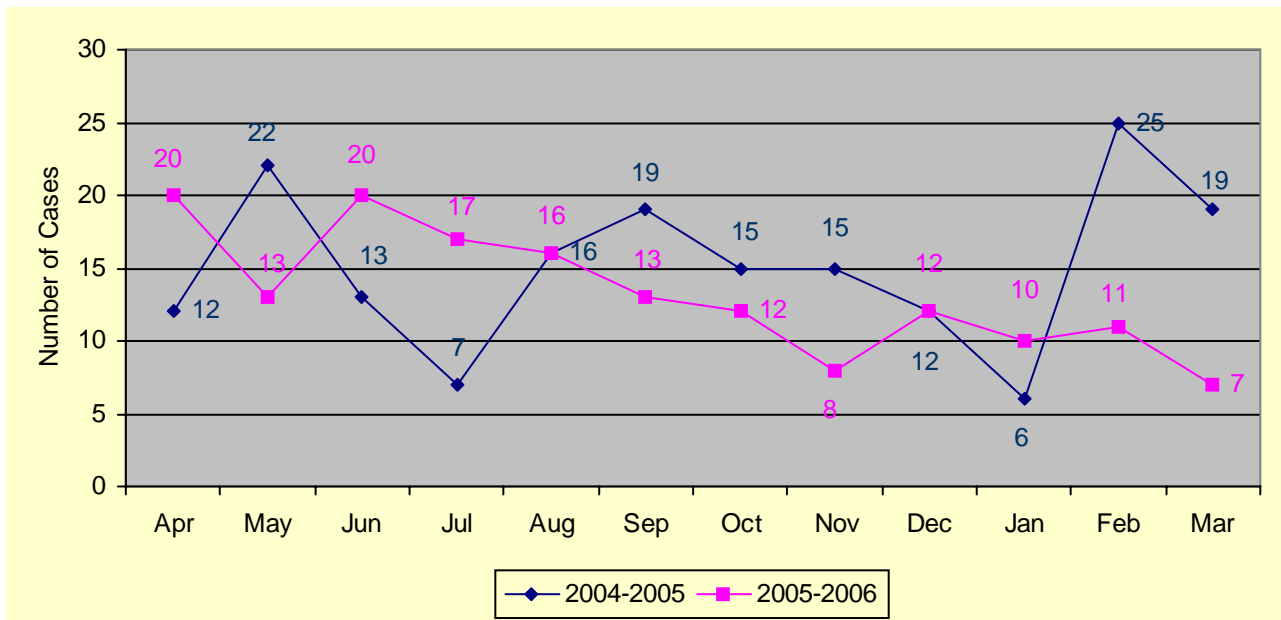


Figure 5.3 -

Figure 5.3 shows the monthly requests arising from adoption proceedings during 2005/06 compared to 2004/05 adoption proceedings. The total number of requests was 159 in 2005/06 compared to 181 in 2004/05; this represents a decrease of 12%. The average amount of requests per month for 2005/06 was 13 compared to 15 in 2004/05.

This decrease may be attributable to the implementation of some provisions within the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

Public Law Adoption Proceedings – By Local Authorities

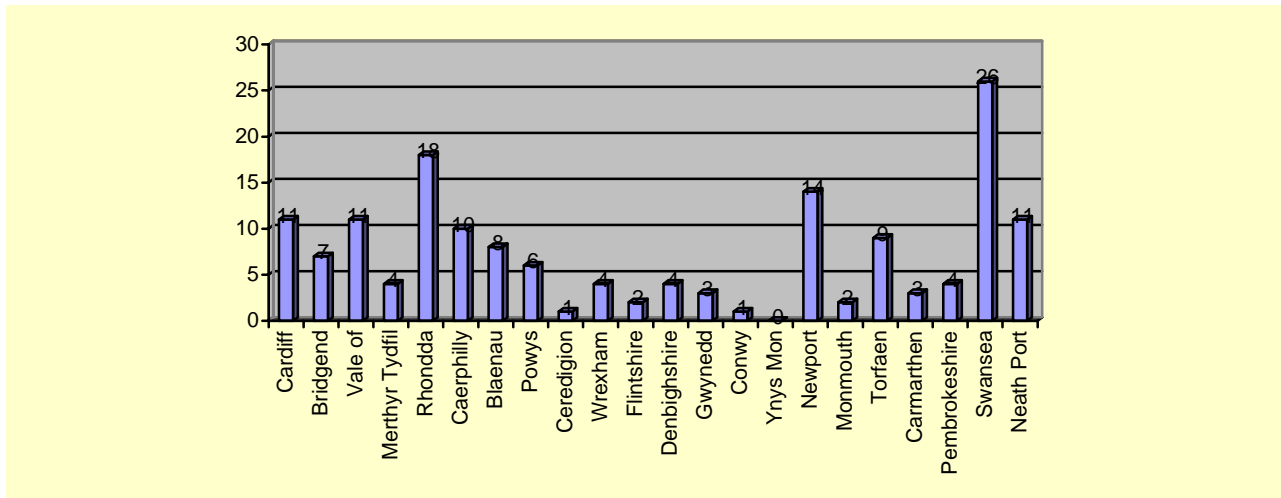


Figure 5.3.1

Figure 5.3.1 shows the number of requests received by Local Authorities during 2005/06 for adoption proceedings. Of the 159 requests received in 2005/06 the greatest number of adoption proceeding cases was received from Swansea Local Authority, a total of 26 cases, representing 16% of the total number of adoption proceeding cases received from Local Authorities in Wales. No adoption proceeding cases were received from Anglesey Local Authority during 2005/06.

5.4 Private Law

Private Law Demand

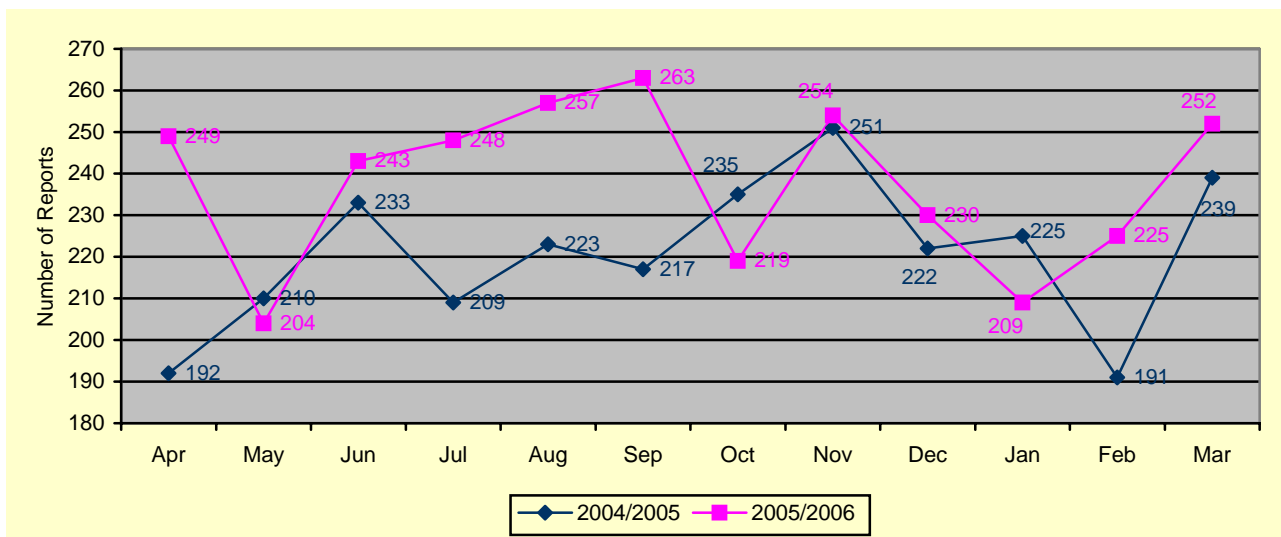


Figure 5.4

Figure 5.4 shows the monthly profile of requests received over the course of 2005/06 in Private Law cases compared with the monthly profile requests in 2004/05. In 2005/06 the service responded to a total of 2,853 applications to the Courts in Private Law cases. This compares with 2,647 applications in 2004/05, highlighting an increase in demand by 7% during 2005/06. The monthly average in 2005/06 was 238 requests compared to 221 requests in 2004/05.

Private Law Demand – Local Authorities

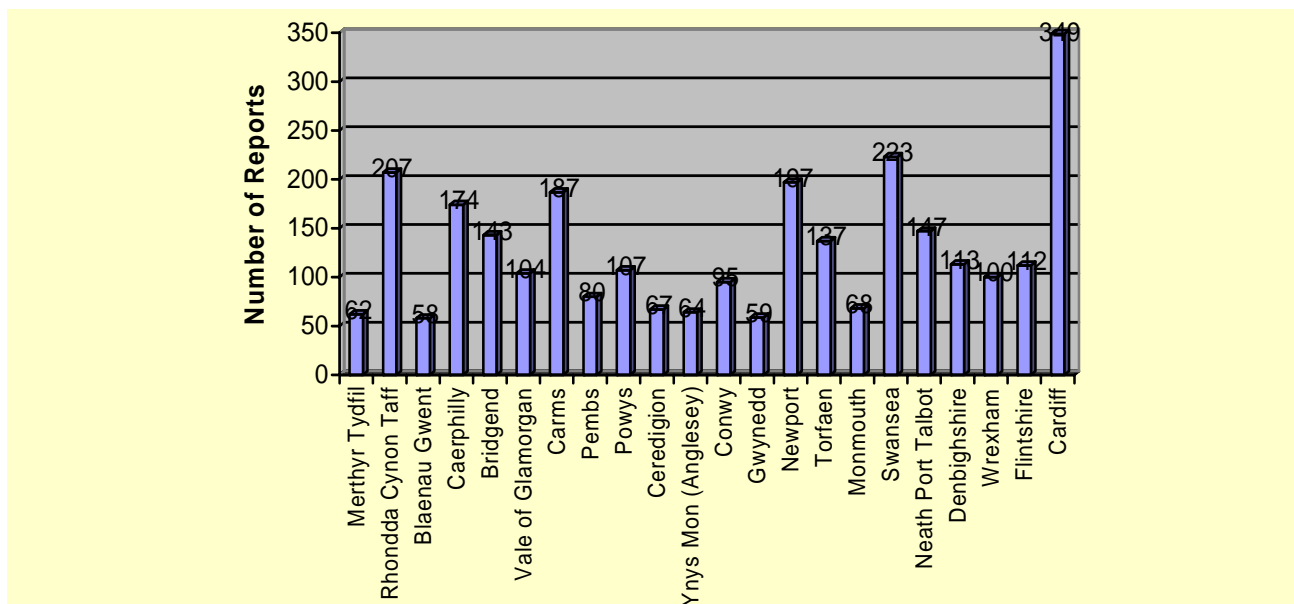


Figure 5.4.1

Figure 5.4.1 shows the spread of Private Law cases across all Local Authority areas in Wales during 2005/06. The greatest number of Private Law cases was received from the Cardiff Local Authority area, a total of 349, which represented 12% of the total demand across Wales. The least number of Private Law cases was referred by the Blaenau Gwent Local Authority area, 58 in total, which represented 2% of the total demand Wales.

Private Law Reports by Order Type 2005/2006

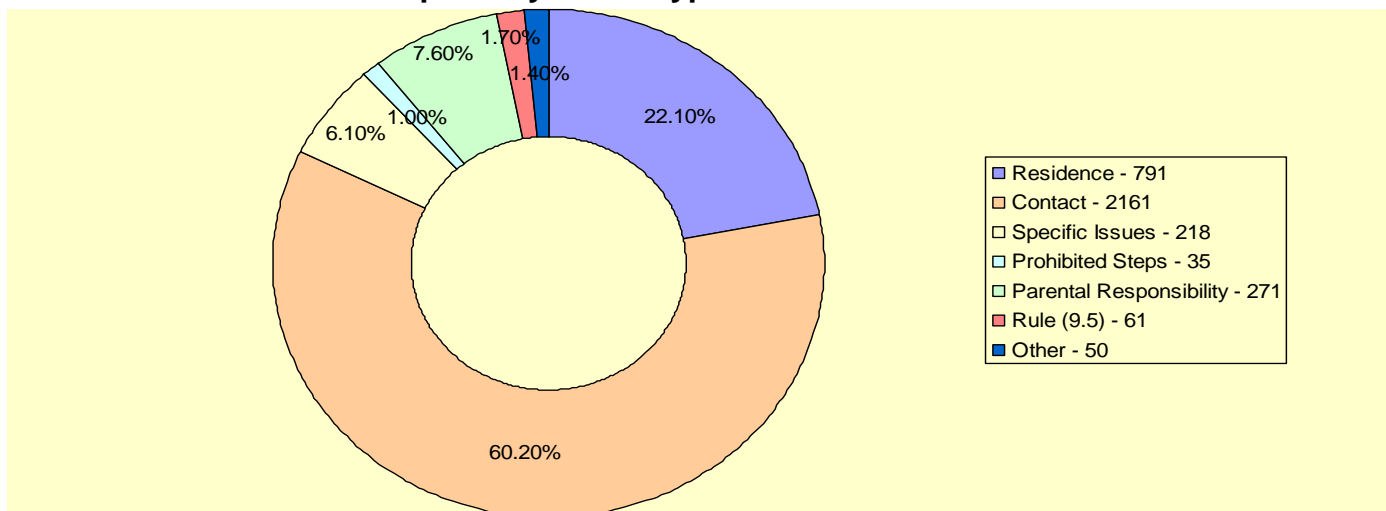


Figure 5.4.2

Figure 5.4.2 provides an overview of the types of private law proceedings that made up the total during 2005/06. As can be seen from this figure, most of the, 60.2%, were made up of contact orders, accounting for over half of the requests.

Private Law Children Profile 2005/2006

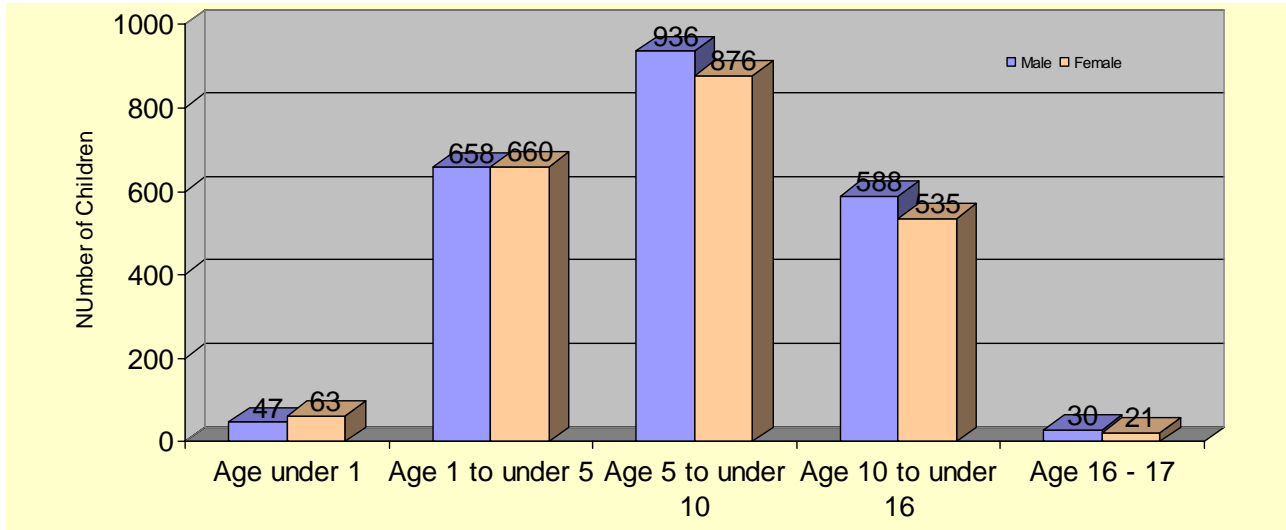


Figure 5.4.3

Figure 5.4.3 provides an overview of the gender and age profile of children and young people who the service worked with in Private Law during 2005/06. Out of the total of 4,414 children and young people worked with 2,259 were male and 2,155 were female.

5.5 Rule 9.5 Cases

Private Law Rule 9.5 Proceedings Demand

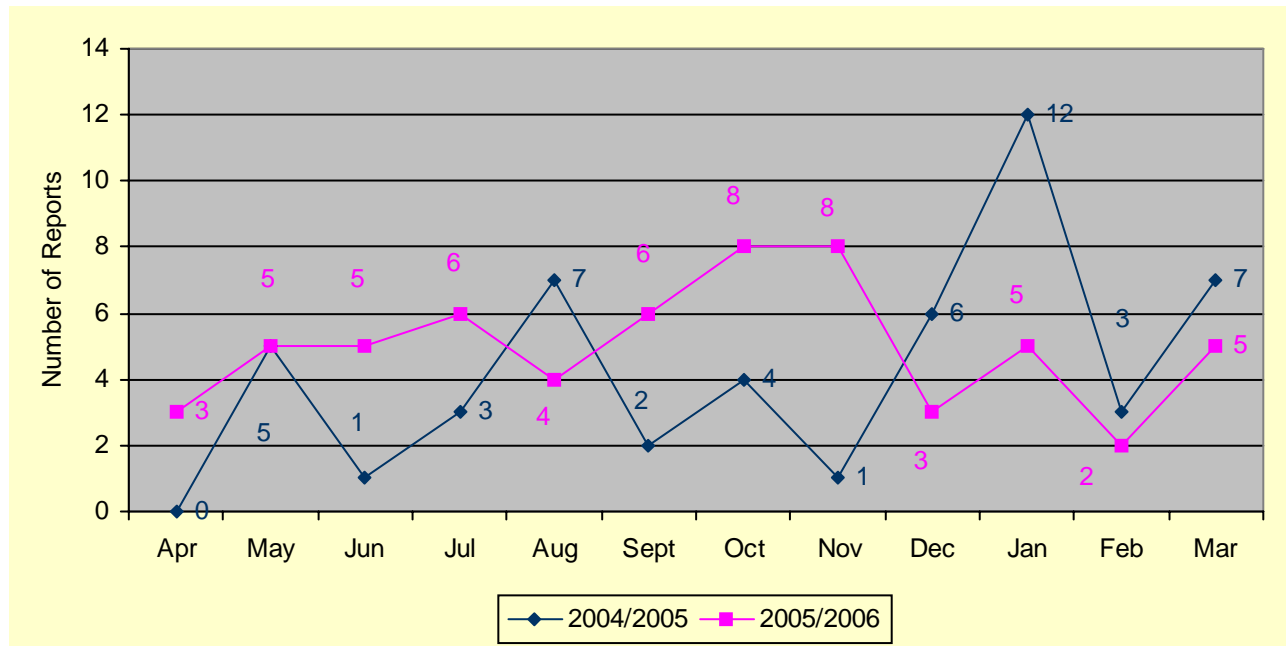


Figure 5.5

Figure 5.5 shows the monthly requests arising from Rule 9.5 cases during 2005/06 compared to 2004/05. The total number of requests was 60 in 2005/06, compared to 51 in 2004/05, an increase of 15%. The monthly average for rule 9.5 orders during 2005/06 was 5 compared to 4 in 2004/05.

5.6 Dispute Resolution

Dispute Resolutions including Privileged

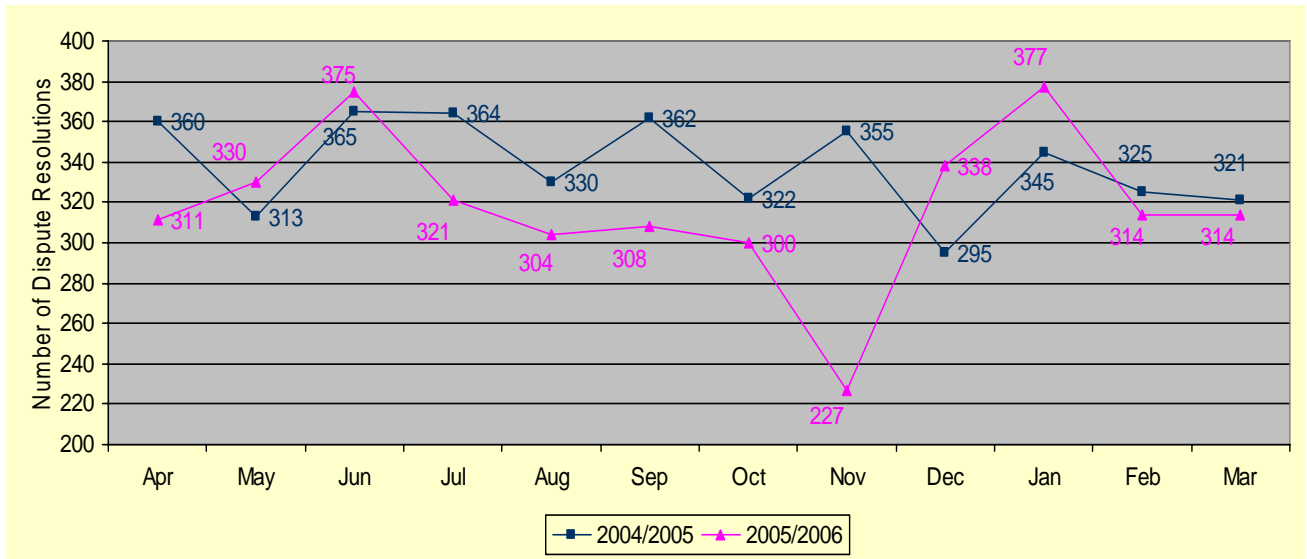


Figure 5.6

A significant aspect of work undertaken in private law is in the area of Dispute Resolution. Family Court Advisors work with families who are involved in an application to the court to try and reach an early agreement to avoid contested hearings.

Family Court Advisors participated in a total of 3,819 Dispute Resolution Hearings in 2005/06 compared to 4,057 in 2004/05, this represents a decrease of 6%.

Dispute Resolution Breakdown

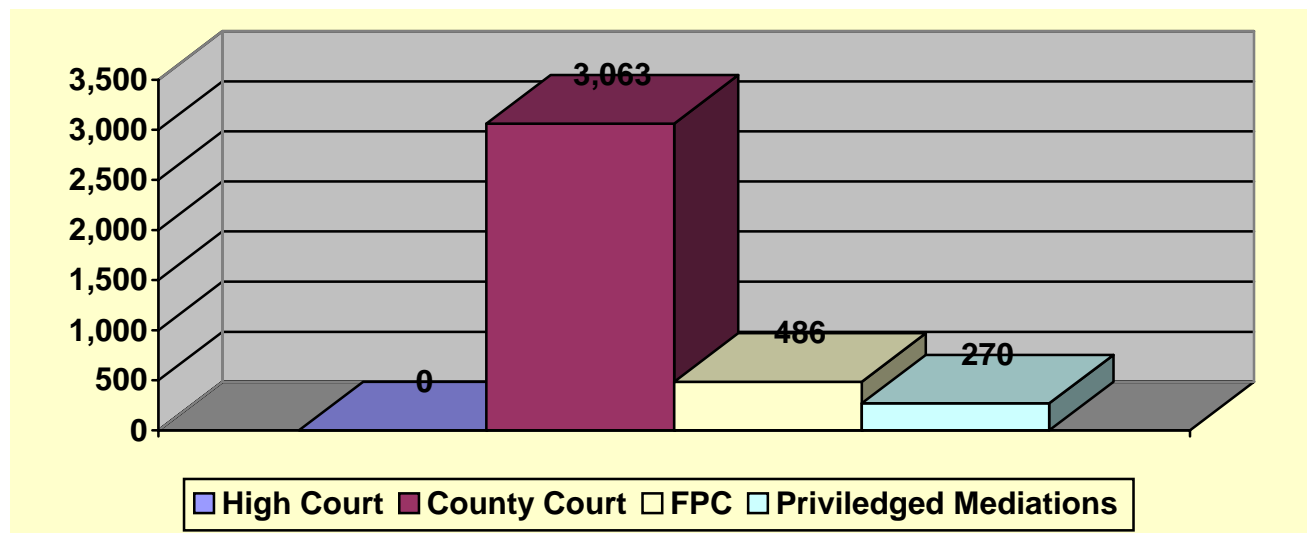


Figure 5.6.1

Figure 5.6.1 shows that 3,063 of the Dispute Resolutions were undertaken within a County Court in 2005/06, which represents 80% of the total undertaken. 486 (13%) were participated at a Family Proceedings Court and 270 (7%) were privileged mediations.

First Hearing Dispute Resolution

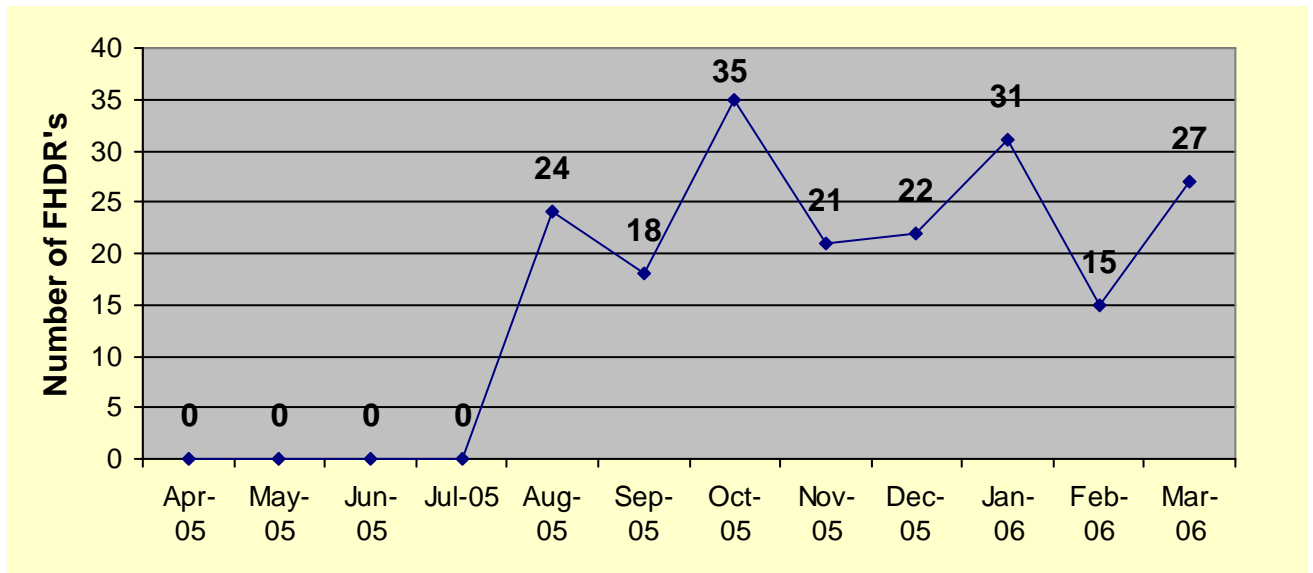


Figure 5.6.2

Figure 5.6.2 shows that CAF/CASS CYMRU undertook 193 First Hearing Dispute Resolutions during 2005/06.

5.7 Family Assistance Orders

Family Assistance Orders

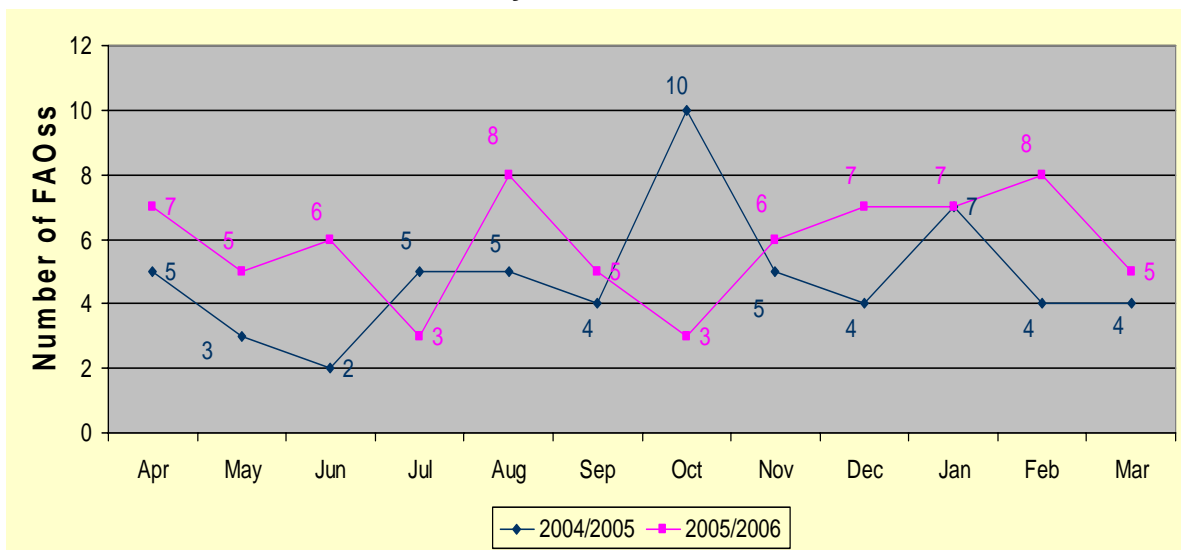


Figure 5.7

Family Court Advisors also supervise Family Assistance Orders at the end of proceedings as a way to provide social work support to families experiencing difficulties after separation or divorce.

Figure 5.7 shows the monthly requests for Family Assistance Orders across Wales during 2005/06 compared to the previous year. The total number of requests was 70 in 2005/06, compared to 58 in 2004/05, which represents an increase of 17%.

6. PERFORMANCE

Since 2002, Cafcass (pre-transfer) has experienced delays in allocating practitioner staff to cases. Cafcass had linked its Key Performance Indicator to this issue. CAF/CASS CYMRU has therefore retained these Key Performance Indicators for the interim as they provide an effective benchmark in relation to some of its outputs.

6.1 Key Performance Indicators

KPI 1 - Section 31s allocated within 2 days - Target = 70%

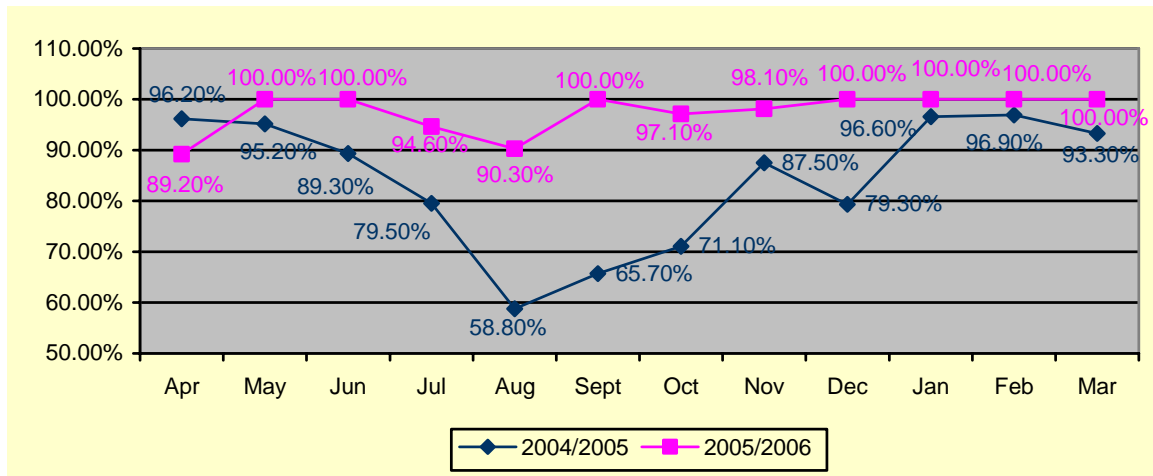


Figure 6.1

Figure 6.1 highlights that CAF/CASS CYMRU met the set target for Section 31's allocation within 2 days during 2005/06 by achieving an overall 96% allocation rate, which was an increase from 84.3% during 2004/05.

KPI 2 - Private workload unallocated less than 10 weeks - Target = 4%

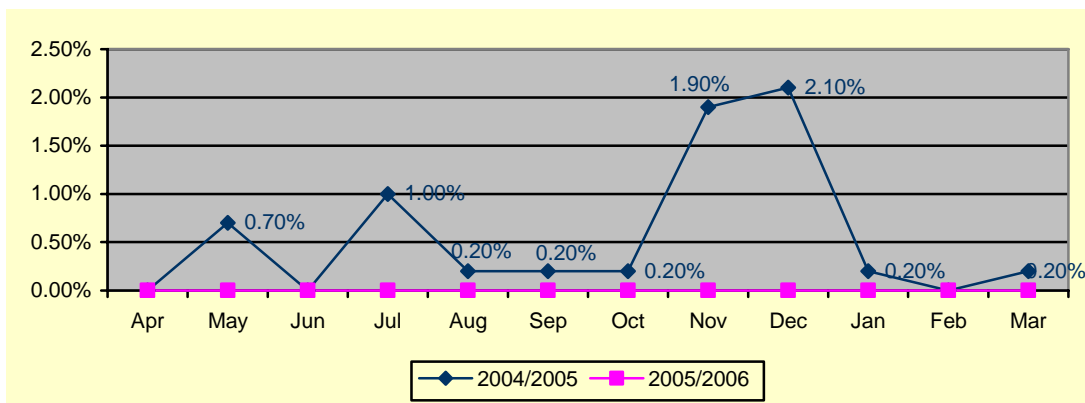


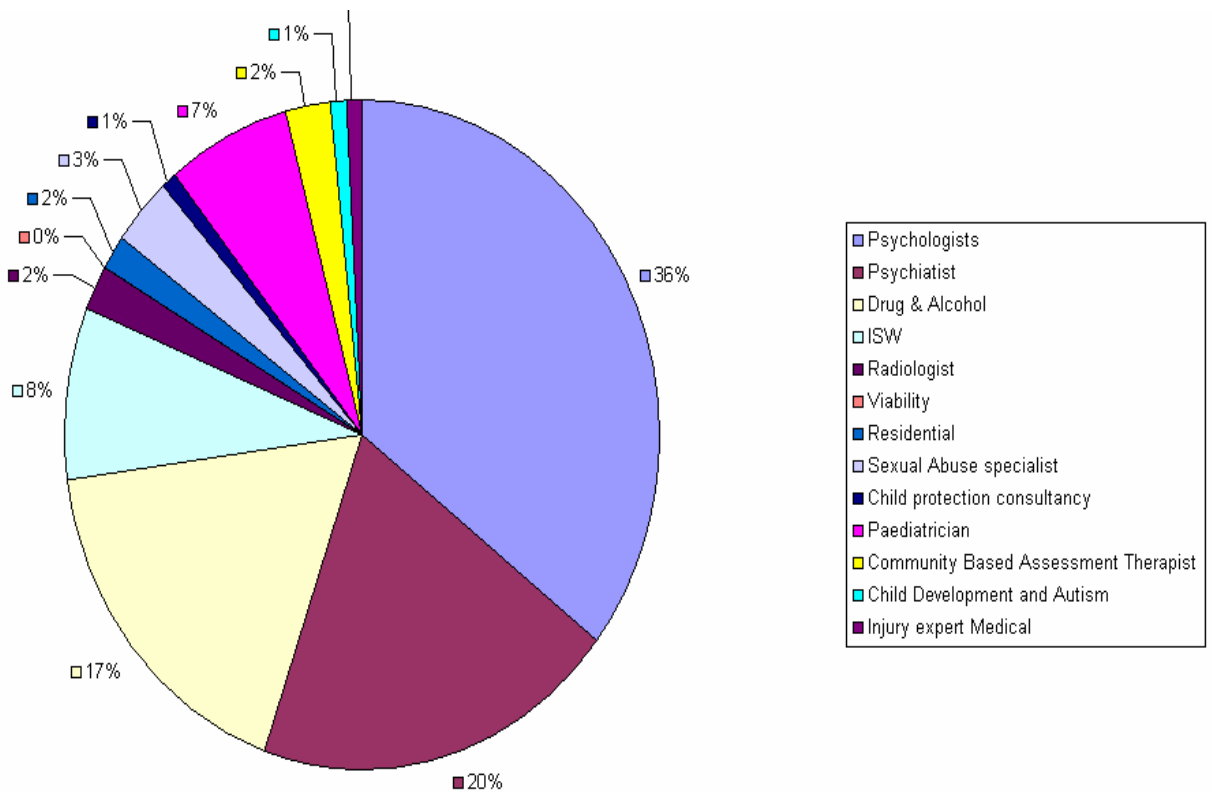
Figure 6.1.1

Figure 6.1.1 shows that no Private Law Reports were unallocated less than 10 weeks before the Court filing date during 2005/06, achieving the target that no more than 4% should be unallocated less than 10 weeks before a Court filing date, compared to 0.6% in 2004/05.

6.2 Audit of use of experts

It is accepted that the use of Experts in Family Proceedings in Public and Private Law has greatly escalated over time. This has obvious implications for the financial aspect of funding proceedings and the potential for causing delay.

Arrangements were made throughout Wales for the collection of basic information which would provide CAF/CASS CYMRU with information relating to the use of experts. In reported cases during October – December 2005, the breakdown of experts by type from the information CAF/CASS CYMRU has available is as follows:



This raises the question as to whether, in some cases, the appointment of an expert adds value to the contribution that is provided by Family Court Advisers and Social Workers within the family justice system, where the assessments of the professionals already involved in a case should already provide the degree of expertise required.

7. IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF SERVICES

Measuring the quality of the services provided by CAF/CASS CYMRU is an integral part of trying to continuously improve service delivery and the future direction of the service.

7.1 CAF/CASS CYMRU were initially unsuccessful in recruiting to posts to develop the quality assurance framework, however by early March 2006 two Performance Managers were appointed to address this area of work. Work has started to establish a more effective and comprehensive quality assurance system. This includes the :

- Development of a new and clear Performance Framework for the organisation which includes:
- The development of National Standards to replace the ones currently used which were inherited from Caf/cass.
- The development of a quality audit programme for Court reports.
- Service users and stakeholder feed-back.
- And qualitative performance indicators among other areas of work.

Below are some of the key developments and also details of current systems to monitor the quality of services:

7.2 Audit of Court Reports

During the year CAF/CASS CYMRU undertook an evaluation of reports submitted to Courts across Wales as a quality assurance exercise. The reports are an effective way of demonstrating both internally, and externally, the quality of the work being undertaken.

The final Court Report submitted by a Welsh Family Proceedings Officer is governed by the principles of the Children Act 1989. The Report provides details of the child and family, an assessment of the child's situation, the child's wishes and feelings and makes a recommendation to the Court.

The Report must also include an assessment of any experts' reports, and the ongoing planning for the child. Reports require an evaluation of extensive and complex information into a concise and accurate report. A Family Court Adviser may be cross-examined on their evidence in increasingly adversarial proceedings in the Family Courts.

The CAF/CASS CYMRU audit evaluated a sample of final Court Reports from each Branch, including self-employed contractors, against an established audit tool. The majority of the sampled reports were well evidenced and reasoned, easy to read, concise and had good critical analysis. The introduction of a standardised Report Template has addressed inconsistencies in presentation. As a result of some of the issues identified during the audit, a number of steps have been taken to further improve the quality of Reports and the added value they bring to Court proceedings. These improvements include:

- The development and implementation of new practice guidance
- Individual support through supervision
- Tailored training provision
- The sharing of best practice
- Improved Compliance

In addition, regular Court Report audits will also be undertaken as part of the new quality assurance system currently being developed.

7.3 Representations and Complaints

Family proceedings can often be difficult and stressful for all involved. CAFCASS CYMRU aim to provide a high quality professional service to children, young people and their families/carers on every occasion. Whilst there is a published Code of Practice on complaints by the Assembly (“The National Assembly for Wales Code of Practice on Complaints second edition 2005”), due to the sensitive and confidential nature of its work, the need was identified for CAFCASS CYMRU to establish an effective complaints procedure in order to deliver the best possible service.

CAFCASS CYMRU are committed to taking all complaints seriously, by thoroughly investigating and ensuring that the findings from all investigations are used to improve practice and the quality of the service provided. Not all problems that arise in the day to day running of services should become a complaint. Attempts are therefore made to resolve issues by discussion and negotiation as soon as possible.

Work has been undertaken during the year to develop a new Complaints and Representation Policy for CAFCASS CYMRU. This policy has been approved by the Minister, and is now fully operational. To underpin this policy, work is being undertaken to produce comprehensive procedures which will ensure a consistent and timely response by CAFCASS CYMRU to complaints in line with the principles outlined within the policy.

Since the transfer, a total of 49 complaints have been received by CAFCASS CYMRU in relation to cases involving 75 children. This is equivalent to 1.2% of the total cases CAFCASS CYMRU dealt with in 2005-06. Of the complaints received, the percentage of children who were involved in these cases is equivalent to 1.3% of the total amount of children with whom CAFCASS CYMRU were involved with during the 12 month period.

There are a total of four complaints which commenced prior to transfer and are now approaching the final stages.

The following table provides information on the outcomes of complaints at each of the different stages in the CAFCASS CYMRU complaints process.

Outcomes	Stage 1 Problem Solving	Stage 2 Investigation	Stage 3 Review	Totals
Not Accepted				
Not Resolved				
Partly Resolved				
Resolved / Withdrawn	30	3		33
Not Upheld				
Partly Upheld				
Upheld				
Not Known				
Ongoing at 1 April 06	11	5		16
TOTALS	41	8		49

7.4 HMICA Inspection

Specific provisions within the Children Act 2004 enabled the Minister to request that Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Court Administration (HMICA) inspect Cafcass functions in Wales. Following a request to the HMICA in April 2005, CAFCASS CYMRU were part of a full service inspection by the HMICA during January and February 2006. Initial feedback from the Inspection team has not identified any issues which had not already been identified by the CAFCASS CYMRU management team and which are included in the Annual Work Plan. A full report and findings of the Inspection will be published in July 2006.

7.5 Internal Audit

As part of their Annual Internal Audit Programme, the Welsh Assembly Government Audit Committee agreed to the proposal that CAFCASS CYMRU should be audited during the end of 2005-06. Following discussions with the Divisional Strategic Team agreement was reached on the terms of reference for the audit. To reduce duplication, the terms of reference also reflected that the process would not focus on issues that were addressed within the HMICA inspection.

CAFCASS CYMRU anticipate that the full audit report will be completed and their report available in June 2006.

8. DEVELOPING THE DELIVERY OF SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

8.1 A new Strategy and Performance Unit was established in April 2005 to undertake functions that were the responsibility of Cafcass National Office in London prior to the transfer. The Unit's primary aim is to play a key role in facilitating and driving the continuous improvement of the organisation.

Below are the Unit's key functions/ areas of work:

- Strategic planning
- Policy Development (including Family Justice Policy Development)
- Performance management and quality assurance
- Professional learning
- Welsh Language and Diversity
- Participation and Communication
- Practice Development

Delays in the approval of the structure meant that most of the individuals appointed to Unit only took up their posts towards the end of the year, and some key posts remain vacant following unsuccessful recruitment attempts. This has delayed progress in the development of a number of key strategies and policies. Also, during the year the structure was further reviewed and changed to address additional and wider policy responsibilities undertaken by CAFCASS CYMRU within the Welsh Assembly Government. These changes will help ensure that the Assembly can play a more proactive role in relation to Family Justice Matters.

The information below provides a summary of some of the main achievements by the Strategy and Performance Unit during 2005-06.

Function/ Area of work	Comment
Participation & Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Children and Young People Participation Groups established. • Monthly, Internal newsletter circulated • CAFCASS CYMRU represented on the Social Justice and Regeneration Internet site.
Performance management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of CAFCASS CYMRU staff have completed the Welsh Assembly Government Performance Management Training • Report reading exercise was undertaken as part of the HMICA inspection which identified good practice and practice that needs to be developed • Two Performance Mangers appointed to move the performance agenda forward.
Policy Development (including Family Justice Policy Development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out of updated policies and procedures for all members of staff • Establishment of Family Justice Policy function i.e. prepared responses for and input provided into various consultations • Meetings held with key personnel from WAG to raise their awareness and understanding of Family Justice matters. • Input into the development of the Education and Inspections Bill • Membership of the DCA/DfES Relationship Breakdown Programme Board
Practice Development (post still vacant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Good Practice guide • Leading on the development and implementation of the Family Dispute Resolutions Pilot Project in North West Wales
Professional Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up WAG Induction programme for staff • Establishing training group with representatives from all staff groups • Producing a Training strategy for 06-07 • Participating in the PQ and PQ Child Care Consortium
Strategic Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input into development of six month progress report • Input into the development of 06-07 Operational Plan • Development of CAFCASS CYMRU Planning Cycle
Welsh Language and Diversity issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation protocol and translation request form introduced • Popular stand at the National Eisteddfod • Diversity monitoring pilot launched • Diversity Steering Group established.

8.2 Family Dispute Resolution Programme

As part of the Private Law Programme in early 2005 CAF/CASS CYMRU established a Pilot Project on Family Dispute Resolution. The project was developed to pilot early intervention in cases of parental separation when applications are being made to Courts, and is an additional service that extends the current In-Court dispute resolution scheme. The project offers parents, prior to the First Directions appointment, the opportunity to improve their ability to communicate with one another more effectively concerning their children and to reach agreement over issues that are in dispute.

The project incorporates elements of education regarding the impact of separation disputes upon children and the provision of support and advice. Children are seen separately and their views are incorporated into the plans being made by the separated parents for future parenting arrangements. The aim is to enable children and young people to continue to maintain a quality relationship with both parents.

The pilot project has been operational in North West Wales since January 2006 and will run for a period of 12 months, accepting referrals from both Caernarfon and Llangefni County Courts. It has received the support of the Judiciary and the Courts in North West Wales.

8.3 Welsh Language

CAF/CASS CYMRU is committed to providing a bilingual service across Wales. It is particularly important that children and young people are able to engage with managers, practitioners and support staff in the language of their choice in order to effectively express their wishes and feelings. During the year the organisation has been committed to supporting and encouraging learners and appointing more Welsh speaking staff throughout Wales.

In line with the requirements of the Welsh Assembly Government Welsh Language Scheme, all of the information and literature that is published for the public and CAF/CASS CYMRU staff is in a bilingual format.

The number of service users who can speak Welsh is also monitored and details are shown in the table below:

	Percentage
English	83.0%
Welsh	5.7%
Other significant language	2.6%
Language question not answered	8.7%

8.4 Diversity

CAF/CASS CYMRU endeavours to work with all children and their families in a way that respects and values differences, and which promotes a non-discriminatory approach. By actively and consciously valuing diversity the organisation seeks to enrich itself as a public sector organisation, providing a high quality service and fair and equal treatment to all staff and service users.

Understanding the needs and requirements of the children who use the services is essential in effective planning and having adequate resources for the future. To reflect

this priority a Diversity Steering Group was established in January 2006 with the key task of addressing Diversity issues (including integrating with Welsh Assembly Government requirements) and developing a comprehensive Diversity Strategy for the organisation. Having met on several occasions during early 2006, it is anticipated that the finalised Strategy will be completed in July 2006.

In addition to the work of the Group, during the year CAFCASS CYMRU has:

- Developed more robust diversity monitoring arrangements
- Developed arrangements for appointing Interpreters
- Ensured that the majority of staff received the WAG corporate equalities training
- Endeavoured to improve and support children's requirements whatever their needs

The information below provides a breakdown of children and young people by ethnicity who received our services during 2005-06:

Total Ethnic Origin replies		
Asian or Asian British	52	1.9%
<i>Indian</i>	11	21.1%
<i>Pakistani</i>	21	40.4%
<i>Bangladeshi</i>	14	27.0%
<i>Other Asian background</i>	6	11.5%
Black or Black British	8	0.2%
<i>Caribbean</i>	4	50.0%
<i>African</i>	4	50.0%
<i>Other Black background</i>	0	0.0%
Chinese	5	0.2%
Mixed	50	1.9%
<i>White and Black Caribbean</i>	15	30.0%
<i>White and Black African</i>	7	14.0%
<i>White and Asian</i>	15	30.0%
<i>Other Mixed background</i>	13	26.0%
White	2392	89.3%
<i>English</i>	552	23.1%
<i>Welsh</i>	1664	69.6%
<i>Scottish</i>	20	0.8%
<i>Irish</i>	7	0.3%
<i>Other White background</i>	149	6.2%
Other	45	1.7%
Ethnic origin question not answered	127	4.7%

8.5 A Focus on Children and Young People

8.5.1 Participation Strategy

Work is underway to develop a comprehensive Children and Young People Participation Strategy to ensure that the work of CAFCASS CYMRU promotes children's rights across all aspects of the organisation.

At the heart of the aims of CAFCASS CYMRU is the goal of continuously developing an inclusive listening and child focused organisation. CAFCASS CYMRU values the diversity of all our service users and recognises that the voice of children and young people is an integral part of all that we do.

The development of the strategy has taken into consideration the views of Young People as expressed to CAFCASS CYMRU and other child focused organisations with which the organisation works. Their participation in different discussion groups and individual input has contributed to several aspects of the development of the CAFCASS CYMRU Participation Strategy.

8.5.2 Participation Groups – Children and Young People

During the year CAFCASS CYMRU developed two pilot participation groups in North West Wales. The participants are aged from five to fifteen years and are recruited from two school councils. During the year they have been contributing to the development of information leaflets suitable for children and young people providing information the role of the Family Court Adviser, the proceedings and the responsibilities of CAFCASS CYMRU. Both groups are also contributing to the development of the CAFCASS CYMRU internet site.

Following this initial Pilot project, CAFCASS CYMRU will develop Children and Young people Participation groups across the whole of Wales

8.5.3 Viewpoint – 'An interactive way to gauge the views of Children and Young People'

During the year work has been undertaken to develop the Viewpoint interactive computer system, with the aim of implementing the system over the next year. This is an interactive computer programme (Viewpoint) which surveys the views of the children and young people on their experiences of receiving the services of CAFCASS CYMRU, and it will be an effective tool for ascertaining the views children and young people have about the services they have received. Young people contributed to the design and development of the pilot which was completed in July 2005. The Interactive evaluation tool has now been translated into Welsh and plans are in place for this to be implemented during 2006 – 07.

8.6 A Learning Organisation

Throughout 2005-06 several developments and initiatives helped ensure that CAFCASS CYMRU was addressing one of its key objectives and becoming a learning and developing organisation.

These developments included:

- The development of a comprehensive training strategy.
- The establishment of the Professional Learning manager post.
- Delivery on identified training opportunities for all staff, e.g. child protection awareness training for business support staff, specialised practice training for practitioners.

8.6.1 Training and Development

The provision of appropriate training and development opportunities within CAFCASS CYMRU can at times be challenging. Having staff located throughout Wales means that courses or opportunities have to be provided in a number of locations or that staff have to travel considerable distances. In 2005-06, an equivalent of 688 training days were provided at a total cost of £54,000.

Despite there being no specific training Co-ordinator or Manager in post at the start of the year, the organisation still successfully delivered a number of important courses for FCAs and Business Support Staff. These included courses on Domestic Abuse and Attachment for FCAs and Child Protection training for business support staff.

In October 2005 a Professional Learning Manager was successfully appointed to address the organisation's training and development needs. With no formal induction into the Welsh Assembly Government following the transfer, the initial priority of the Manager was to establish an effective Induction Programme. Part of the Induction Programme involved the delivery of other important courses for all CAFCASS CYMRU staff including Performance Management training and Equalities and Diversity training.

Training on the implications of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 was also provided in conjunction with the Legal Services Department. Training was provided at all main branches with positive feedback from staff on the provision.

Practice Learning Opportunities were provided for five social work students during the past year and it is hoped to build on this in the coming years. One FCA undertook a week long secondment in a Local Authority, again it is hoped that in future more staff will be able to do this.

Throughout the year individual members of staff attended a range of external courses and conferences. Two members of staff were sponsored to attend management courses. Three members of staff also attended Welsh language courses at an intermediate level.

With the appointment of a Professional Learning Manager it was also possible to establish a Training group with representatives from all staff groups within CAFCASS CYMRU; the group has helped to formulate the training priorities for 2006-07 which have been incorporated into an updated Training Strategy.

CAFCASS CYMRU was also able to contribute to the ongoing discussions about both the present and future of Professional Qualification within Wales; it is hoped that the needs of CAFCASS CYMRU can be met within the new PQ framework that will be developed in the future.

8.6.2 Research and Information

Various research resources were identified during the year and links were created with the Welsh Assembly Government Library and Information services. The Library and Information Service played an important part in the Assembly Induction process and informed staff of the wealth of information and services available to CAFCASS CYMRU employees. Resources have been publicised via the newsletter over the last few months and developments are under way to produce a Research Resources leaflet for staff.

8.6.3 Communications

Work commenced during 2005-06 on developing a comprehensive Communication Strategy. Extensive internal and external consultation has been undertaken to ensure that all potential forms of communication were fully investigated in order to promote and establish a transparent workplace, a fully informed workforce and structured avenues for external enquiries.

Additional cross-departmental communication strategies were also piloted and implemented during the year in order to promote the sharing of information and best practice.

An internal monthly newsletter has been introduced and has proved to be an integral source of information sharing between staff in all branches across Wales. Information about developments within CAFCASS CYMRU and the Social Justice and Regeneration Department, as well as professional articles relating to social work and the Family Justice System, are included. The newsletter has proved a valuable tool in communicating information about the Welsh Assembly Government.

The "A Guide to Our Services" handbook received ministerial approval and has been published. This bi-lingual handbook is sent to all service users and stakeholders to explain the roles and responsibilities of CAFCASS CYMRU. The handbook has also proved beneficial during public relations events during the year.

CAFCASS CYMRU has a duty under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) and the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) to provide access to information requested by members of the public. Due to the sensitive nature of the work of CAFCASS CYMRU, discussions have taken place with the Information Management Unit of the National Assembly for Wales to develop appropriate procedures and guidelines. These procedures would be used to deal with specific requests made for access to information by service users on specific cases. This will help to ensure that processes are effective and that the organisation complies fully with the FOI and DPA requirements. It is anticipated that these procedures and guidelines will be in place by July 2006.

Work has also been undertaken to ascertain the views of staff on the development of a CAFCASS CYMRU Intranet site. The research and consultation has been completed and it is envisaged that the new site (or similar provision) will be established during 2006-07.

8.6.4 Investors in People

CAFCASS CYMRU was reviewed by Investors in People Assessors in November 2005. A cross-section of staff were interviewed and the assessors were presented with an Action Plan that will be implemented in time for the next assessment in November 2006. During the review Assessors were aware of the difficulties faced by CAFCASS CYMRU during the transfer but complimented the comprehensive Action Plan that has been developed to help address the new Standards.

A working group has been established involving representatives from all Units to look at how the organisation develops and implements the principles of the Investors in People standard.

Work completed during 2005-06 includes:

- Development of Training Strategy with agreed training priorities.
- WAG Induction Training.
- Personal Development Plans for all staff.
- Performance Management system.
- Improved communication.
 - Monthly Newsletter;
 - Regular Meetings Structure;
 - Staff Consultation Meetings;
 - Developing a Communications Strategy;
- Links with Staff Representative Groups.
- WAG Policies review.

There were also increased opportunities for staff involvement in the development of the organisation through input/attendance to some of the following groups –

- Quarterly Divisional Directions Group Meetings
- Safe Working Guidelines Task Group
- Regional Meetings
- Practice Teaching Group
- Best Practice Group (Business Support)
- Staff Consultation Meetings

9. SUPPORTING THE DELIVERY OF SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

The Corporate Services Unit (CSU) of CAF/CASS CYMRU provides the business and administrative framework which supports and facilitates the delivery of services to children and families.

The main activity areas within the Unit include:

- Delivery of Business Support Services
- Finance
- Information and IT
- Records Management
- Local Property Management
- Health and Safety
- Governance and Compliance
- Environmental and greening issues

9.1 Integration into the Assembly

The transfer into the Welsh Assembly Government on 1st April 2005 required a shared approach between Assembly officials and CSU staff on a number of centralised activities such as Estates, Health & Safety, ICT, Financial Management and Human Resources Management.

9.2 Governance and Compliance

During 2005-06 CAF/CASS CYMRU has actively encouraged and welcomed the increase in links with the Compliance section within the NAFW to review our progress in ensuring full integration into the Assembly. Both the Internal Financial Controls and the Assembly Statement of Internal Control documents have been completed and have been subject to audits by HMICA (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration) and liP (Investors in People) and by the Internal Audit Service.

9.3 Finance Issues

The transfer of funding from the DfES to WAG was a difficult and protracted process, resulting in a compromise settlement with a significant shortfall of the sum required to retain the current performance of the organisation. CAF/CASS CYMRU is working with Assembly Government officials to identify and make up this shortfall.

The total expenditure for 2005-06 was (after the year end adjustments) £6,593,109 which represented a 3% saving on a forecast of £6,780,600. There was a shortfall in funding due to difficulties in recruiting to a number of key posts following the transfer. As has already been noted some posts were not filled until the end of 2005-06. A breakdown of the expenditure by type can be found in figure 9.3 below.

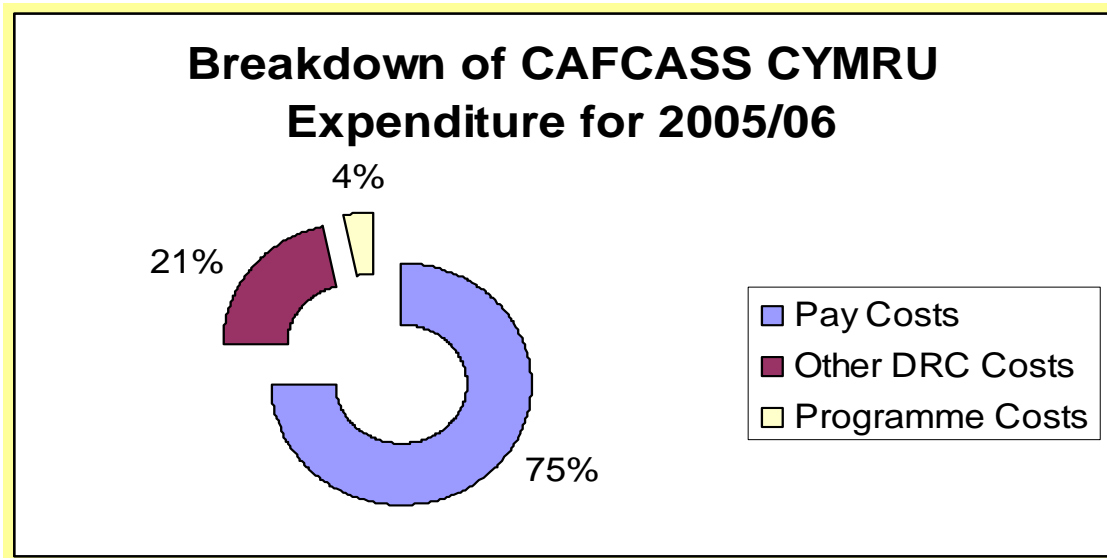


Figure 9.3

As would be expected, the majority of the organisation's expenditure has been on staffing costs. During the year most staff within the organisation worked over and above the requirements of the post to ensure continued development and to prevent a return to delays in allocation of cases.

2005/06 also saw the Division fully implement the Assembly's electronic payments system and the electronic travel and subsistence system. CAF/CASS CYMRU is currently working on the implementation of an electronic commitments system.

Since September 2005 the WAG target for payment of 97% of all payments made within 30 days of receipt of invoice has been exceeded by CAF/CASS CYMRU.

9.4 Staffing Issues

The Table below provides a breakdown of staffing levels. Staffing levels were calculated on workload policies agreed with the trade unions prior to the transfer. Current staffing levels are well below the required levels due to recruitment difficulties and this has placed additional pressures on staff that have worked well over the agreed policy requirements.

<u>Staff type - In post</u>	31/03/2006		As per Workload ratio	
	H/C	WTE	H/C	WTE
Family Court Advisor	110	100.53	127	117
Asst FCA	0	0	14	12
Area Director	11	10.5	11	10.5
Chief Executive	1	1	1	1
Director	3	3	3	3
Assistant Director	0	0	2	2
Strategy Mgr	6	6	9	9
Strategy D Grade	0	0	1	1
Business Mgr	5	5	6	6
Senior Business Mgr	0	0	1	1
PA	1	1	1	1
Branch Admin Mgr	12	12	14	14
Branch Administrator	27	20.96	31	24.96
National Office Administrator	0	0	13	12.5
	176	159.99	234	214.96

9.5 Information Technology

IT migration of CAF/CASS CYMRU involved providing a suitable IT service that would enable the workforce to work efficiently and flexibly in order to meet demand. To this end equipment was provided that enabled CAF/CASS CYMRU to work to a user to PC ratio of 1:1 (based on current staffing levels). The user to PC ratio for CAF/CASS CYMRU prior to the migration was 1: 0.82.

130 laptops have been provided with Remote Access which enables users to utilise a standard telephone line in connecting to the NAFW network. This has allowed users to send and receive emails, view both the Intranet and the Internet, and complete work whilst away from the office. Induction training for existing laptop users was also arranged covering various ways of using the laptops.

The IT migration has also provided an up to date operating system, Windows XP, along with the MS Office 2003 package. The upgrade to Office 2003 has provided CAF/CASS CYMRU with a number of useful business products in addition to the basic packages that were used prior to the migration.

9.6 Case Recording System

CAF/CASS CYMRU has continued to rely on 'legacy' information systems which were inherited from the previous organisations which existed prior to Caf/Cass. These systems are rapidly approaching the end of their useful operational lives and CAF/CASS CYMRU are working towards developing a new electronic Case Recording System (CRS) which will combine the information contained on current myriad systems in one database. During 2005/06, representatives from CAF/CASS CYMRU have been members of, and contributed to, a Case Recording System user group which is developing the database to meet the needs of the organisation. Information has also been shared with Merlin on

the details of the system and CAF/CASS CYMRU's specific requirements, with a view to developing a business case to support the implementation of the Case Recording System during 2006/07.

9.7 Records Management

During 2005/06, CAF/CASS CYMRU was involved in extensive discussions with the WAG Records Department over the proposed file structure and filing systems used. Agreements were achieved on the following;

- Public Law working file structure
- Private Law working file structure
- Public Law final file structure
- Private Law final file structure
- Policy file structure (Registered files)

Significant work took place on preparing case files for storage, and during the year CAF/CASS CYMRU managed to prepare 15,000 case files for long term storage in the Assembly's Neptune Point facility.

9.8 Health & Safety

As an employer the Assembly is subject to the main provisions of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. CAF/CASS CYMRU have liaised with the Assembly Health and Safety Division to ensure that processes adhere to the Assembly's requirements thereby ensuring that the requirements and provisions of this Act are met.

Arrangements are in the process of being established to set up a working group involving representatives from CAF/CASS CYMRU's three Units and led by CSU, to agree a set of safe working guidelines for staff to refer to when carrying out their duties. It is anticipated that the new guidelines will be developed by the middle of 2006-07.

9.9 Accommodation

An Accommodation Strategy covering the future needs of CAF/CASS CYMRU was presented to the Minister in October 2005. The strategy was referred to HR(F&E) and ABPM for advice on implementation and costing. It is anticipated that their recommendations or advice will be presented to us in early 2006-07.

The organisation continues to experience severe accommodation pressures in the Caerphilly, Merthyr, Swansea, Bridgend and Llandudno Junction branches, where our offices are either not fit for purpose or are significantly under capacity for the number of staff they house.

New offices were opened in Carmarthen and Llandrindod Wells during 2005/06 which resulted in improved facilities and improved access for service users and staff in those areas.

9.10 Legal Support

Legal support for CAFCASS CYMRU has been provided by lawyers from the Social Care Team within the Legal Services Department of the Welsh Assembly Government. Advice has been given across the range of functions and the lawyers can be contacted on both public and private law matters. In particular, lawyers must be consulted where there is an order for the separate legal representation of a child in Public Law proceedings, and in cases involving children leaving the jurisdiction of the Court and medical issues. Whilst out of office cover was provided by Cafcass Legal in England, cases which arose overnight were passed to the Assembly's Legal Services Department at the first opportunity.

Lawyers from the Assembly's Legal Services Department have also provided advice and guidance on overarching and policy matters. In addition, a monthly Legal Update document has been produced during the year which is specifically for CAFCASS CYMRU staff, detailing significant cases and legislation. Legal Services Department lawyers have also visited all regional offices to establish contact with practitioners and managers, and have provided legal training at branch level.

The services provided by the Assembly's lawyers have been very well received by both CAFCASS CYMRU and the courts throughout Wales.

10. WORKING TOGETHER – INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE

In trying to ensure the best service for children and service users it is essential that CAFCASS CYMRU has good working relationships with a range of agencies, voluntary organisations, service user groups and other stakeholders. Due to staffing difficulties the organisation was unable to undertake a comprehensive review of partnership arrangements and develop a Partnership Strategy. We anticipate that during 2006-07 a Practice Development Manager will be appointed to lead on this important facet of our work.

10.1 Advisory Committee

In order to improve the dialogue and relationships with these key stakeholders, the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration has approved the establishment of an Advisory Committee for CAFCASS CYMRU. Following agreement on the role and membership of the Committee, invitations have been distributed to relevant stakeholders to request nominations of suitable members.

We anticipate that the first meeting of the CAFCASS CYMRU Advisory Committee will take place at the beginning of 2006-07.

10.2 Safeguarding/Child Protection

As a service delivery organisation, CAFCASS CYMRU is identified in the "All Wales Child Protection Procedures" as one of the agencies with responsibility for the protection of children and young people. This includes a duty to promote and safeguard children from all forms of significant harm, including harm caused by the impact of domestic abuse, and by parental disputes following divorce and separation.

Child protection and domestic abuse are responsibilities which crucially depend upon effective information sharing, collaboration, and understanding between all agencies and professionals. CAFCASS CYMRU recognises the importance of this, and during

the past year there has been active participation by Senior Managers in all twenty one (now twenty two) Local Authority Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs) and the four Regional Child Protection Fora.

Local Safeguarding Children’s Boards (LSCBs), the new statutory bodies, will shortly replace ACPCs. CAFCASS CYMRU has Membership of the “All Wales Child Protection Review Group” and is also included in the Welsh Assembly Government Child Protection Group.

Domestic abuse has continued to be high on CAFCASS CYMRU’s agenda. Senior Managers have engaged with local and regional Domestic Abuse Forums to secure membership and are currently involved in initiatives across Wales, including the Welsh Assembly Government Domestic Abuse Strategy Group.

In February 2006, the CAFCASS CYMRU Domestic Abuse Standards and Toolkit was introduced and implemented across Wales, and is designed to improve the effectiveness of practitioners undertaking risk assessments.

10.3 Partnerships

Figure 10.3 provides a breakdown of the expenditure we provide to various partnerships during 2005-06. In total £252,909 was provided.

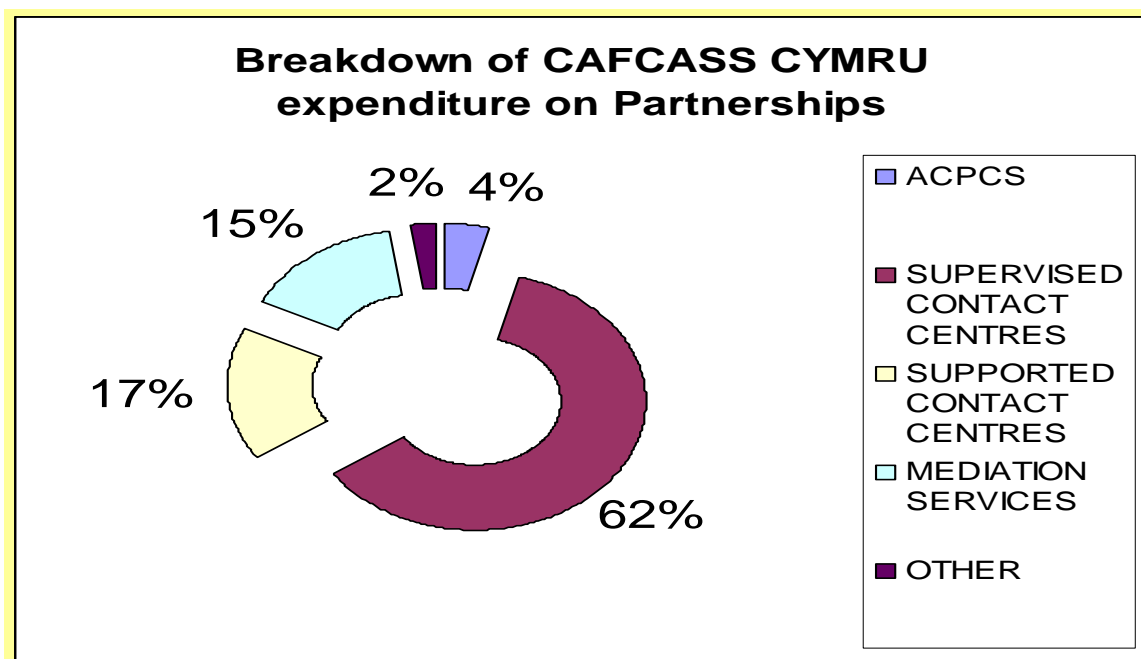


Figure 10.3

10.4 Supervised Contact Centres

Supervised Contact Centres are used when there is a medium to high risk of abuse, violence or abduction both to the child(ren) and the resident parent(s) and other family members, following family breakdown. Supervised Contact Centres have to be staffed by qualified individuals who are able to deal with a higher level of risk and provide, where necessary, reports on the contact sessions.

In October 2004, CAFCASS CYMRU was asked to lead on the development of Supervised Contact Centres in Wales under a Section 41 agreement, and has continued with this responsibility post transfer.

During 2005/06 the Welsh Assembly Government allocated £152k to fund and further develop a network of Supervised Contact Centres in Wales. At the end of 2005-06, 7 Supervised Contact Centres were operational and were run by 7 different voluntary organisations.

10.5 Supported Contact Centres

Supported Centres provide an independent venue for contact to take place and are usually run by volunteers. CAFCASS CYMRU provided funding to eight voluntary sector partnerships across Wales in 2005-06.

10.6 Mediation services

In trying to resolve disputes and reduce conflict between parties, CAFCASS CYMRU practitioners in certain circumstances may refer parties on to mediation services. During 2005-06 CAFCASS CYMRU provided approximately £21,000 to NCH Cymru and £9,000 to North Wales Mediation Services to undertake such services in Wales.

10.7 Counselling Services

In 2005-06, CAFCASS CYMRU have allocated £3,000 to Relate for counselling services for adults, and to Adytum to deliver counselling services for children and young people who were identified as requiring further support and help.

10.8 Local Partners

Throughout 2005-06 developments have occurred with local partners throughout Wales; the Family Dispute Resolution Project has worked in partnership with a number of local community and voluntary groups in North West Wales to provide appropriate venues for the Pilot to undertake work with parents and children.

11. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2005-06 WORK PLAN

To assist in the transfer process CAFCASS CYMRU developed an Operational Plan for 2005 – 2006, which included a detailed Work Plan for that period. The Plan identified clear targets for the implementation of key tasks set against the organisation's Key Objectives. Achievement against these targets was based on the assumption that all posts within the structure would be filled on transfer into the WAG, and that there was the required capacity in place to address the developmental agenda.

There were delays in approving the new structure for CAFCASS CYMRU, which led to subsequent delays in recruiting to key posts. This has had an impact on CAFCASS CYMRU's ability to address its work programme within identified targets. However, progress was regularly reviewed during the year, and targets revised as required.

A detailed breakdown of the organisation's progress on delivering the 2005-06 Work Plan can be seen in Appendix 2.

12. FUTURE DIRECTION

Having established a good baseline during 2005-06, CAF/CASS CYMRU has an opportunity to address key developmental issues from 2006-07 onwards.

12.1 Key organisational developments and challenges

CAF/CASS CYMRU will be faced with significant challenges during the forthcoming year. These will include:

- addressing the findings of the “Inspection undertaken by Her Majesty’s Inspection of Court Administration”.
- implementing the liP Action Plan.
- responding to the Internal Audit recommendations.

12.2 Key challenges and issues within the WAG strategic policy context

Having become fully integrated into the Welsh Assembly Government, CAF/CASS CYMRU is fully committed to achieving and contributing to its key policy priorities. This will include continued commitment to key policies within “Wales A Better Country”, “Making The Connections” and importantly “Children and Young People ‘Rights To Action’”.

12.3 Key challenges and issues within the wider family justice policy context

The organisation also faces a number of challenges resulting from legislative and policy changes within the Family Justice System. Some of these changes are already taking effect while others will become effective over the next twelve months and will require a substantial amount of preparatory work. Challenges for CAF/CASS CYMRU are presented by the following developments:

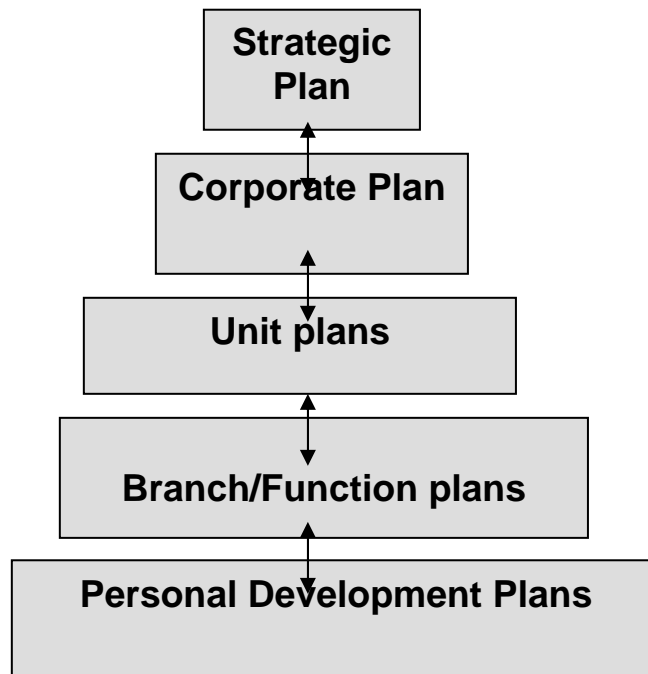
- **“Adoption and Children Act 2002”** - Implementing new requirements into working practices.
- **“Children Act 2004”** - Influencing and responding to consultations on Wales specific regulations.
- **Safeguarding arrangements** - The organisation will also have to adapt to changes in safeguarding arrangements and the implementation of Local Safeguarding Boards that will be replacing the current ACPCs.
- **“Private Law Programme”** - Implementing the Private Law programme will have a significant impact on the way the organisation delivers services, on its statutory duties and its capacity to deliver such services.
- The **“Review of the Child Care Proceedings System in England and Wales”** - The review is due to report on the year 06-07 and is expected to have several recommendations which will need to be considered and implemented.

- Development and implementation of the “**Children and Adoption Bill/Act**” - as already highlighted, this legislation has substantial implications to CAFCASS CYMRU.

12.4 Development of Strategic Plan and subsequent Planning Cycle

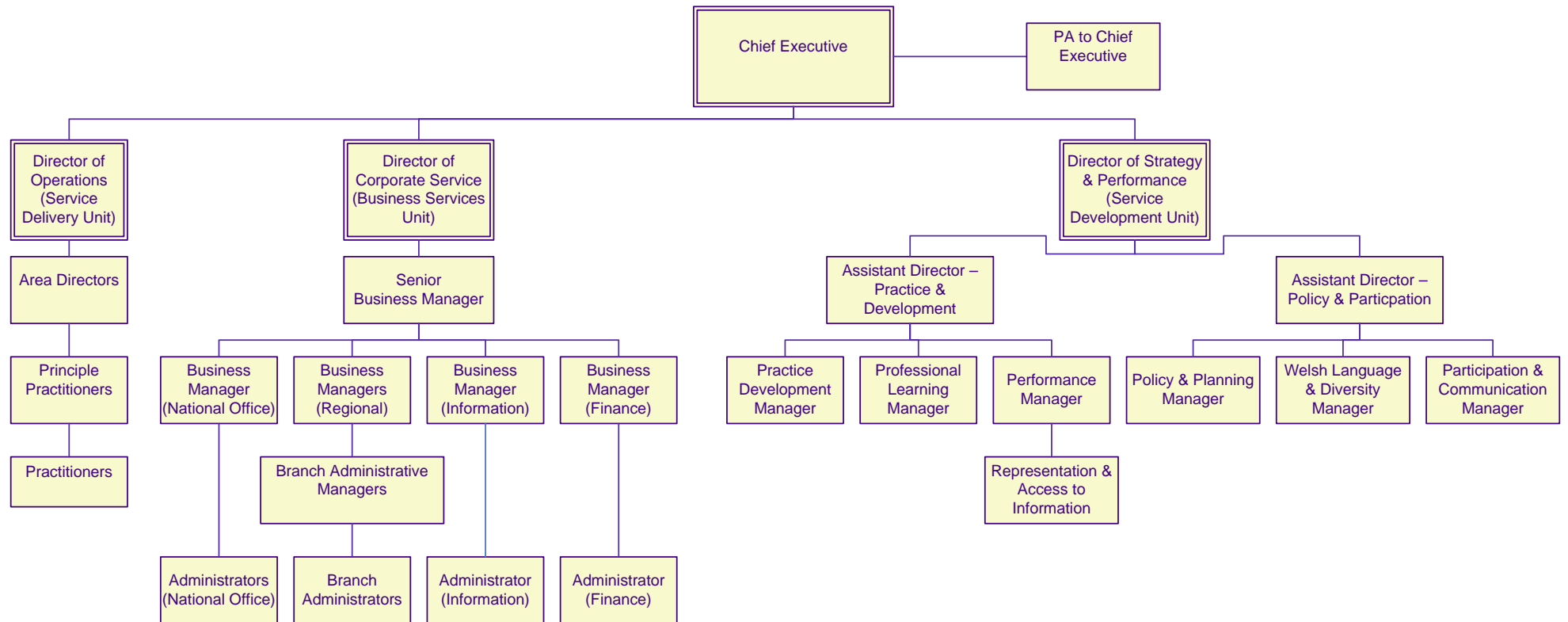
Establishing a clear and co-ordinated approach to planning will help ensure that CAFCASS CYMRU can continually provide high quality and responsive services and also make effective use of its resources. During 2005-06 a new planning cycle was adopted and developed to reflect the Welsh Assembly Government arrangements that was also able to meet CAFCASS CYMRU's own requirements. The diagram below provides an overview of the planning cycle and highlights the important part that every individual can play in contributing and ensuring that the organisation can achieve its strategic goals.

The full planning cycle will begin in September 2006 with the development of a 5 year strategic plan.



APPENDIX 1

CAFCASS CYMRU Organisational Structure



APPENDIX 2

CAFCASS CYMRU WORK PLAN – April 2005 to March 2006

<u>Key Objective 1</u>					
Ensure that children and young citizen's needs are fully represented, safeguarded and promoted in Family Proceedings matters.					
Activity	Target	Lead	Supported by	Progress	Revised target
Audit of practice relating to effectiveness in establishing wishes and feelings of children and young citizens.	December 2005	Director of Strategy and Performance	Performance Manager	Audit of reports undertaken. Analysis undertaken. Further audit undertaken by HMICA during formal inspection of CAFCASS CYMRU in February 2006.	COMPLETED
Develop strategy to realign focus of all practice to service the needs of children.	March 2006	Director of Strategy and Performance	Policy and Planning Manager/ Professional Learning Manager	Training needs identified and incorporated into the 2006 – 2007 Training Strategy	COMPLETED
Develop Diversity strategy for implementation, which addresses the needs of children and young citizens across Wales.	December 2005	Director of Strategy and Performance	Diversity and Welsh Language Manager	Establishing baseline through monitoring. Improved monitoring mechanisms developed, currently being piloted across all Branches. Diversity Steering Group established. Draft strategy in progress – with information from Diversity Monitoring pilot required to be incorporated into the Strategy.	September 2006

Develop protocol with the 4 Police Services in Wales to share information held by Domestic Abuse Units relating to reported Domestic Violence incidents.	December 2005	Director of Operations	Practice Development Manager	Achieved with SW police. Principle agreed with other Police services in Wales. To be reviewed during 2006 - 2007	COMPLETED
Evaluate current partnership arrangements relating to counselling services and consider expanding partnerships with voluntary organisations	March 2006	Director of Strategy and Performance	Practice Development Manager Director of Corporate Services	Delays encountered due to lack of Practice Development Manager in post. Contracts in place with agreed supervised contact provision providers. The introduction of the Children and Adoption Bill in 2007 will require new partnerships to be formed and will require a full review of Partnership arrangements to be undertaken.	September 2006
Develop a consistent approach to sharing information about children and their families with Social Services, Police and other statutory bodies	March 2006	Director of Operations	Practice Development Manager	Current Child Protection Procedure revised and strengthened. Regular meetings established between Area Directors and Local Authorities.	COMPLETED

Key Objective 2

Provide quality and timely expert social work advice and support to the Family Courts.

Activity	Target	Lead	Supported by	Progress	Revised target
Provide Dispute Resolution Services at all Private Law First Hearings.	October 2005	Director of Operations	Area Directors	Achieved	COMPLETED
Develop Strategy for the implementation of the Parental Separation: Children's Needs and Parents' Responsibilities initiative.	September 2005	Director of Strategy and Performance	Policy and Planning Manager	Achieved	COMPLETED
Review report templates and develop a fit for purpose version for new organisation.	March 2006	Director of Strategy and Performance	Policy and Planning Manager	Delays due to vacant posts in structure. Updated CAFCASS versions being developed to meet local need.	May 2006
Undertake an audit of the use of experts in children's cases and present findings to relevant agencies.	May 2005	Director of Operations	Area Directors Information Manager	Achieved. Analysis undertaken. Presentation to South Wales Family Justice Council April 2006. Process and ongoing analysis to be further developed and refined during 2006 – 2007 by S and P Unit.	COMPLETED
Alleviate all delays in public and private law cases through effective resourcing of Area branches.	August 2005	Chief Executive	Director Corporate Services & Director of Operations	Achieved. Weekly monitoring in place. Recruitment of FCA's progressing to fill ongoing vacant posts.	COMPLETED

Key Objective 3

Provide effective services to families aimed at promoting the welfare of children.

Activity	Target	Lead	Supported by	Progress	Revised target
Develop partnership arrangements with voluntary organisations to provide Family Group Conferencing and Parenting classes to support CAFCASS practice.	March 2006	Director of Strategy and Performance	Practice Development Manager	Delays due to continued vacant posts in structure. Discussions ongoing with Children in Wales and with local providers	September 2006
Develop operational policy, procedures and leaflets relating to Domestic Violence	March 2006	Director of Operations and Director of Strategy and Performance	Policy and Planning Manager	Domestic Abuse Policy and Toolkit developed and implemented February 2006.	COMPLETED
Negotiate the development of Parenting Plans with WAG, DfES & DCA which are 'fit for purpose' in Wales.	March 2006	Director of Strategy and Performance	Policy and Planning Manager	On going discussions taking place with DfES regarding responsibilities, including agreements on effective distribution, promotion and bilingual availability of plans.	July 2006
Evaluate current Mediation partnership arrangements and consider alternative funding arrangements through the Legal Services Commission.	March 2006	Director of Strategy and Performance	Performance Manager	Delays continue due to vacant posts in structure – Performance Managers not appointed until mid March 2006. Discussions taken place with LSC. Review to be linked with implementation of the Children and Adoption Bill in	September 2006

				2007.	
Develop strategy to fund Supervised and Supported Contact Centres across Wales	December 2005	Director of Strategy and Performance	Practice Development Manager	Delays due to vacant posts in structure. Development of the strategy to be linked with preparations for the implementation of the Children and Adoption Bill in 2007.	September 2006
Review Estates Strategy and explore further options of spot purchase and ad-hoc arrangements with other organisations.	July 2005	Director of Corporate Services	Business Managers	Achieved	COMPLETED

Key objective 4

Develop and maintain effective and productive relationships with all key stakeholders.

Activity	Target	Lead	Supported by	Progress	Revised Target
Complete negotiation and formally agree Memorandum of Understanding with Children's Commissioner	October 2005	Chief Executive	Director of Operations	In progress. Delays by Commissioners office.	July 2006
Develop and agree All-Wales Protocol with the new Court Service, which ensures that CAFCASS CYMRU resources are used appropriately.	October 2005	Chief Executive	Director of Operations	Initial meetings taken place with senior judiciary and court service. Recruitment issues have delayed progress.	September 2006
Agree amendments and finalise formal agreement of Protocol with ADSS (Wales)	October 2005	Chief Executive	Director of Operations	Achieved but being revised.	COMPLETED
Develop and formally agree Memorandum of Understanding with NAGALRO	January 2006	Chief Executive	Director of Operations	Work in progress including the need to review SEG contract during 2006 – 07 as part of this process. Developments in England are impacting on progress.	September 2006
Agree formal links with NACCC	June 2005	Chief Executive	Director of Strategy and Performance	Achieved	COMPLETED
Develop links and secure formal involvement in DCA, Court Service and other England and Wales forums.	June 2005	Chief Executive	Director of Strategy and Performance	Achieved and representation secured on a number of forums.	COMPLETED

Ensure appropriate membership of all ACPCs/LSCBs .	May 2005	Director of Operations	Area Directors	Achieved on ACPCs. Local Safeguarding Boards to be introduced 2006 – 07.	COMPLETED
Develop an external communications strategy which results in the development of a website accessible by the public, and which introduces information leaflets for all service users.	March 2006	Strategy and Performance Director	Communications Manager Information Manager	Delays due to vacant posts in structure. Handbook 'A guide to our services' published and display boards produced. New and updated Information Leaflets now being developed, including information for children and young people. Internal and external web sites being developed – delays encountered due to restructuring of SJ&R Website.	September 2006
Develop an internal communications strategy, which ensures that staff are consulted and informed, and that opportunities exist for staff to communicate with each other through the development of a Newsletter.	October 2005	Strategy and Performance Director	Communications Manager Director of Corporate Services	Delays due to vacant posts in structure. Legal updates circulated monthly to all staff. Monthly newsletters to staff introduced in October 2005 and all staff contributing regularly. Regular pattern of Regional Meetings established. Annual Conference planned for 2006 - 2007	COMPLETED
Implement a robust process for the management of ministerial questions	May 2005	Strategy and Performance Director	Policy and Planning Manager	Ministerial submission approved. Capacity now in place to respond to requests as required.	COMPLETED

Key objective 5

Develop a range of service user, including children and young citizens, participation processes and respond effectively to all complaints and feedback.

Activity	Target	Lead	Supported by	Progress	Revised Target
Complete negotiation, develop and formally agree Memorandum of Understanding with Welsh Women's Aid	September 2005	Chief Executive	Director of Strategy and Performance	Achieved	COMPLETED
Develop complaints policy and procedures, which is more child focused.	December 2005	Director of Strategy and Performance	Performance Manager	Achieved	COMPLETED
Negotiate formal agreements with service user groups	December 2005	Chief Executive	Director of Operations	Ministerial Submission regarding Advisory Group approved.	COMPLETED
Develop Participation strategy for children and young citizens.	March 2006	Director of Strategy and Performance	Communication Manager	Delays due to vacant posts in structure. Strategy being developed and pilot participation groups developed in NW Wales.	July 2006
Develop partnership arrangement with Advocacy group to support children in complaints against CAFCASS CYMRU staff	March 2006	Director of Strategy and Performance	Practice Development Manager	Delays due to vacant posts in structure – post remains vacant. Links established and training provided for managers and staff.	September 2006
Implement "Viewpoint"	March 2006	Director of Strategy and Performance	Participation and Communications Manager	Delays in approving business case for AFCAs required to implement viewpoint.	October 2006

			Information Manager		
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Key Objective 6

Establish a learning, supportive and inclusive organisation which is committed to competence, and which values diversity and participation.

Activity	Target	Lead	Supported by	Progress	Revised Target
Negotiate involvement in PQ consortium.	April 2005	Director of Strategy and Performance	Professional Learning Manager	Achieved	COMPLETED
Implement Training Strategy which addresses the needs of all staff and supports the development of the organisation and the individual.	December 2005	Director of Strategy and Performance	Professional Learning Manager	Achieved	COMPLETED
Develop long-term Training Strategy, which provides training opportunities to evidence continuing learning as required for SW Registration with CCW, and which secures CAFCASS CYMRU as a learning organisation.	October 2005	Director of Strategy and Performance	Professional Learning Manager	Achieved	COMPLETED
Provide training to ensure staff at all levels are fully trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of child abuse, and are clear about their child protection	March 2006	Director of Operations	Professional Learning Manager	Achieved, but further training to be identified in 2006 – 2007 strategy.	COMPLETED

responsibilities in accordance with both ACPC and organisational Child Protection policies and procedures					
Work towards meeting the requirements of Investors In People as they apply to the Welsh Assembly Government.	March 2006	Director of Corporate Services	Senior Business Manager Professional Learning Manager	Action plan approved by liP Assessors.	COMPLETED

Key Objective 7

Play a proactive part in the Welsh Assembly Government agenda for children, young citizens and their families.

Activity	Target	Lead	Supported by	Progress	Revised Target
Develop Protocol with SSIW	October 2005	Chief Executive	Director of Strategy and Performance	Achieved – relationship established and agreement obtained that formal protocol not required	COMPLETED
Develop Protocol with the Children and Families Directorate and other relevant parts of the Assembly relating to the agenda for children and families.	October 2005	Chief Executive	Director of Strategy and Performance	Achieved – relationship established and agreement obtained that formal protocol not required	COMPLETED
Secure the position of the new Directorate within the Assembly consultation forums	June 2005	Chief Executive	Executive Group	Achieved	COMPLETED
Develop a system of engagement with Assembly members on a local area basis.	June 2005	Director of Operations	Area Directors	Submission being prepared for Minister	July 2006

Key Objective 8

Secure efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of services and all supporting functions, leading to increased value for money, and a corporate commitment to continuous improvement.

Activity	Target	Lead	Supported by	Progress	Revised Target
Develop new National Standards	March 2006	Chief Executive	Director of Strategy and Performance Performance Manager	Delays due to vacant posts in structure – Performance Manager appointed March 2006. Work now in progress.	September 2006
Develop new Key Performance Indicators to cover all aspects of the service and which enable comparisons with England but which are fit for purpose in Wales.	September 2005	Chief Executive	Director of Operations Director of Corporate Services	Delays due to vacant posts in structure – Performance Manager appointed March 2006. Work now in progress.	September 2006
Work towards devolving budgets to the lowest level consistent with effective service delivery and meeting the needs of audit and assembly compliance requirements.	December 2005	Director of Corporate Services	Finance Manager	Processes in place, but delay due to CAF/CASS CYMRU budget not being agreed.	April 2006
Review CAF/CASS Workload measurement and develop 'fit for purpose' policy for Wales and implement.	March 2006	Director of Operations	Information Manager	Delays due to vacant posts in structure Currently working to CAF/CASS England version.	September 2006