

## CYPE(5)-07-21 - Paper to note 1

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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

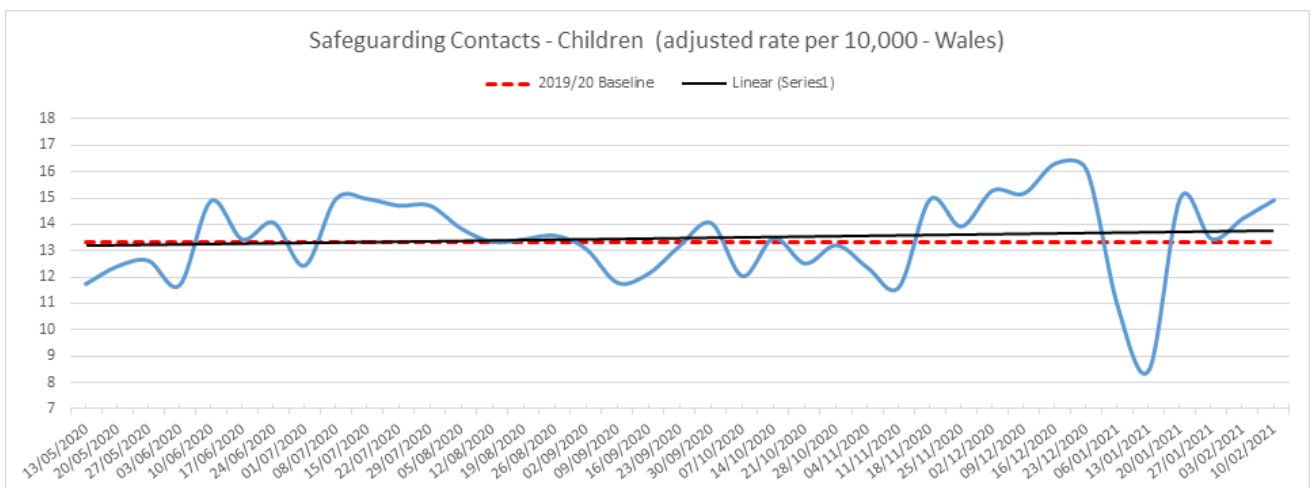
24 February 2021

Dear Lynne,

Thank you for your letter of 29 January asking for further information about the number of child safeguarding referrals and the latest position on the numbers of looked after children in Wales further to my attendance at Committee on 21 January.

During the pandemic, we have asked local authorities to provide us with weekly data on key aspects of service delivery. Data included safeguarding referrals and looked after children numbers. The data is produced rapidly in response to Covid-19 and used for internal monitoring only. It has not been validated for publishing.

Data on safeguarding contacts is not routinely captured, however, I can share that in respect of safeguarding contacts, local authorities reported that the rate of contacts to Children's Services has fluctuated over time, as has the rate of safeguarding contacts to Children's Services. The graph below provides details on the change per rate (per 10,000) in Wales for the period of 13.05.20 to 13.01.21. This demonstrates the fluctuation against the baseline figure of safeguarding referrals which was recorded the week prior to the pandemic. This baseline is represented by the red dotted line shown below.



In addition, the graph below provides an indication of the assessment undertaken to compare safeguarding contacts to those received twelve months previously. For illustrative

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

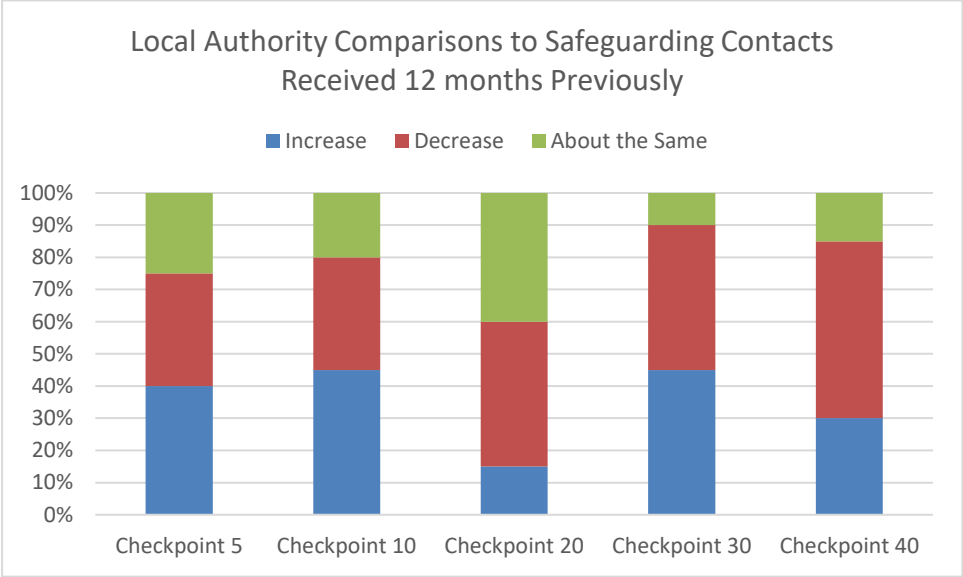
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

purposes, a snapshot has been taken at weeks 5 (week of 03.06.20), 10, 20, 30 and 40 (week of 03.02.21) of the reporting period from the outset of the pandemic. This demonstrates the assessments by local authorities who have measured whether the numbers of contacts are an increase, decrease or about the same as the same period twelve months previously.

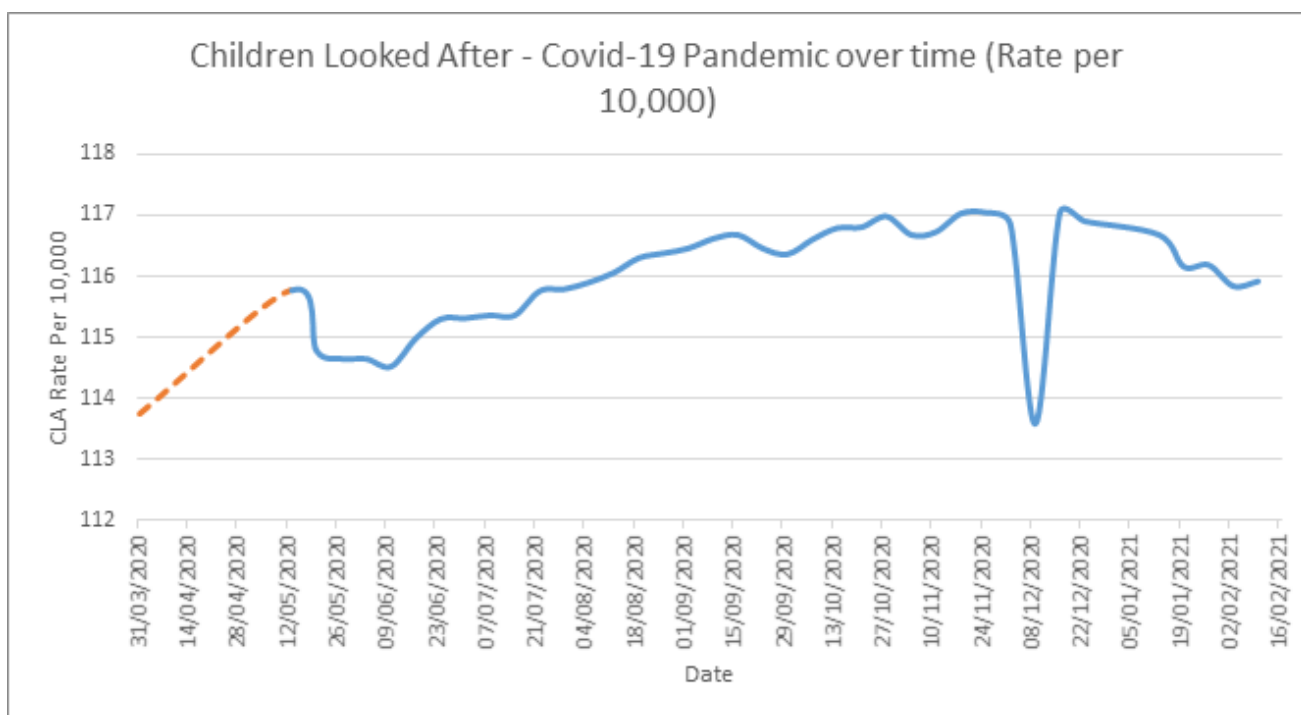


Welsh Government officials have maintained regular engagement with Chairs and Business Managers of the six Safeguarding Boards in Wales throughout the pandemic to date. These discussions provide an opportunity for Chairs of the Safeguarding Boards to share views on any emerging themes or areas of concern regarding safeguarding referrals. Whilst there was some early concern regarding a reduction in safeguarding referrals at the early stages of the pandemic, a steady increase to expected levels was experienced into the summer months which has been maintained, save for the fluctuations mentioned above.

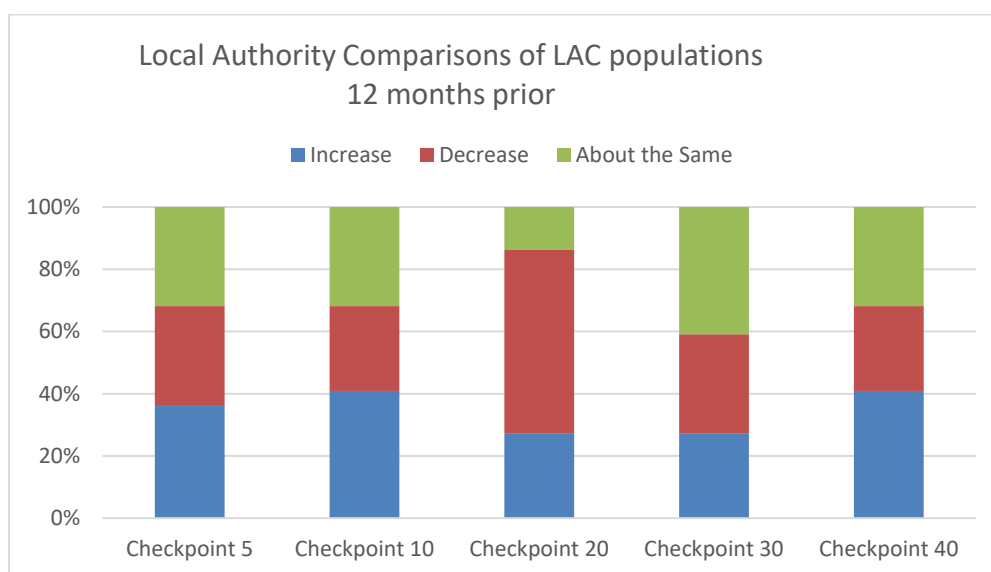
In your letter you asked about whether the number of children in care during the pandemic has been stable. The weekly local authority data shows a slightly increase in numbers but fewer than we have seen in previous years, with latest figures in February showing a 1.9% increase since March 2020.

Officials undertook some informal analysis of the first 3 months of lockdown. This analysis showed that exits from care were reasonably static during that period with 50% fewer exits than the same period in 2018/19. From regular meetings with Heads of Children’s Services we understand that exits from care are beginning to increase.

The graph below shows the change in rate per 10,000 since March 2020. *(NB the dip in December was due to missing data)*



As per safeguarding referrals above, the graph below provides an indication of the looked after children numbers compared with the previous twelve months.



Throughout the pandemic, officials have routinely kept contact with Heads of Children’s Services. This has been through weekly meetings initially, latterly these changed to bi-weekly and through periodic regional meetings. We have worked closely with all stakeholders throughout the pandemic to encourage open dialogue and opportunities to raise concerns. This open approach has enabled the whole system to adapt ways of working in response to the dynamics of the pandemic so that children and families remain supported by services.

In respect of published data, the next iteration of the looked after children statistical release will be published on 24 February 2021 and will cover the period from April 2019 to March 2020.

The following link to access the data will become live from 24 February  
<https://gov.wales/children-looked-after-local-authorities-april-2019-march-2020-announcement>

I hope you have found my reply helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie', written in a cursive style.

**Julie Morgan AS/MS**

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Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services