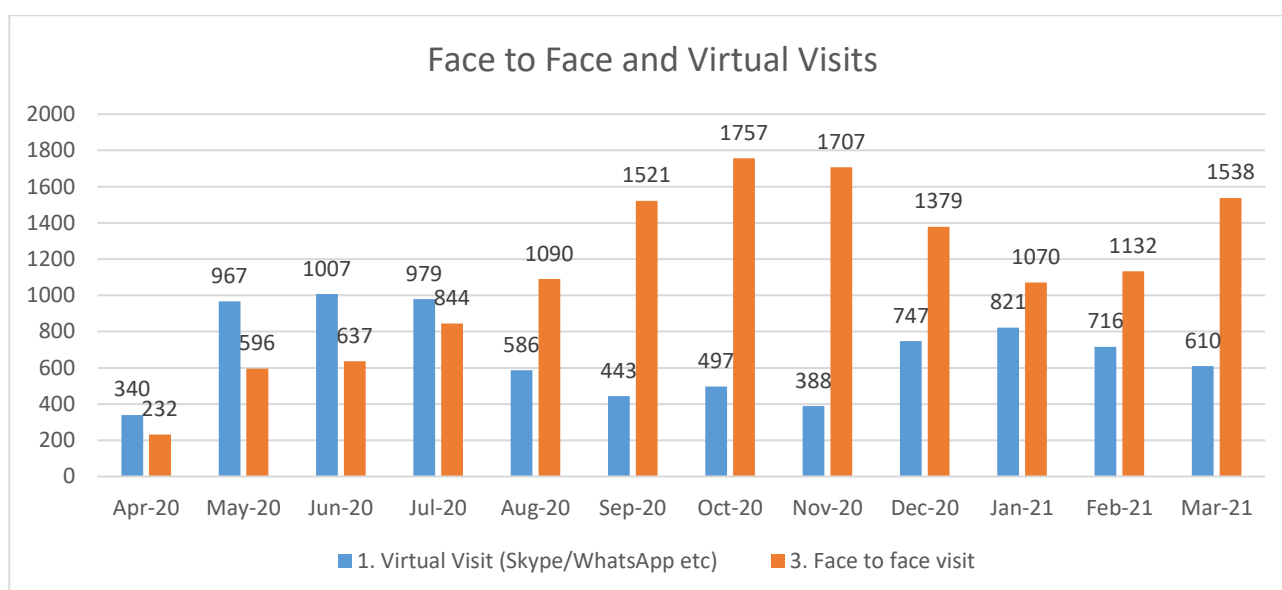


Update for Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee May 2021

Updates to Children's Services Operating Model and Structure

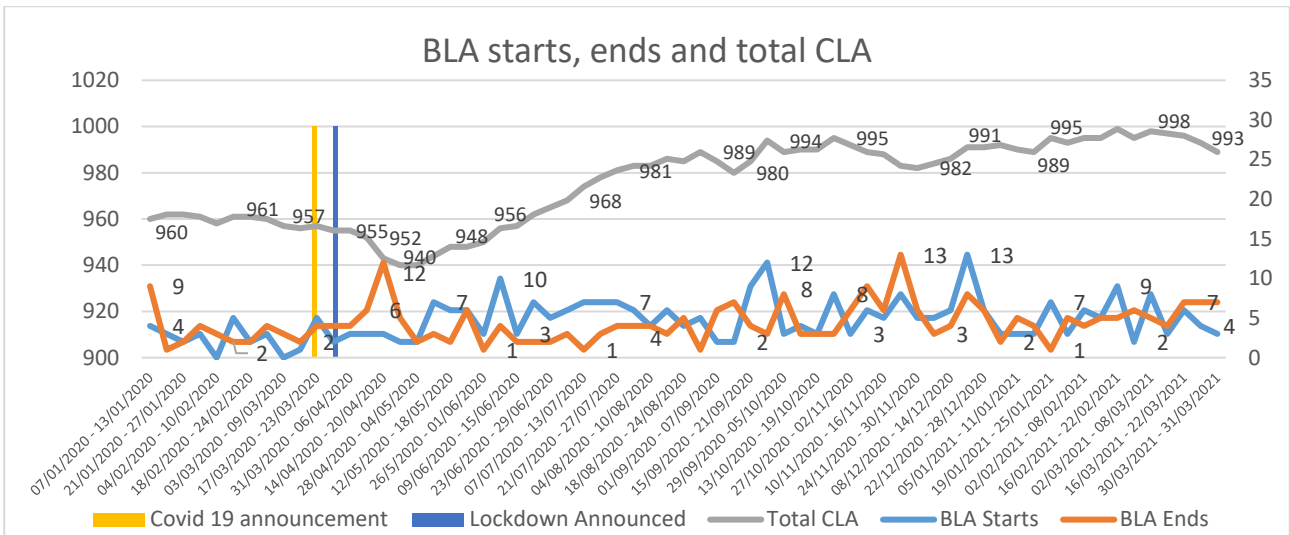
- Face to face visits reinstated for all children.
- Initial risk assessments need to be completed prior to face to face visits and updated to reflect any change of circumstance.
- Face to face supervised contact for all children looked after has resumed, with priority given to children who have not had face to face contact for some time.
- Up to date risk assessments are required before face to face contact can go ahead.
- The graph below demonstrates the proportion of face to face and virtual visits over time.



- Commitment to recruiting to permanent social worker posts remains a priority.
- Exit strategy for the departure of the Managed Team implemented - remaining staff have transferred to locality teams, taking their caseloads with them.
- Specialist 11+ services also integrated into the locality teams.
- Recruitment to temporary posts to support locality teams to develop robust delivery of multi disciplinary services to develop a wraparound response to children and families in crisis is ongoing.

Children Being Looked After

After a decrease in the number of children looked after in the early days of lockdown, a subsequent increase in new admissions led to a gradual increase from 939 at 27th April 2020 to 993 at 31st March 2021 (provisional). The number of children looked after has been relatively stable since October, but is being closely monitored. 111 of the 277 children (40%) who started being looked after during 2020/21 were placed with parents on a Care Order, with family / friends or in parent and baby placements.

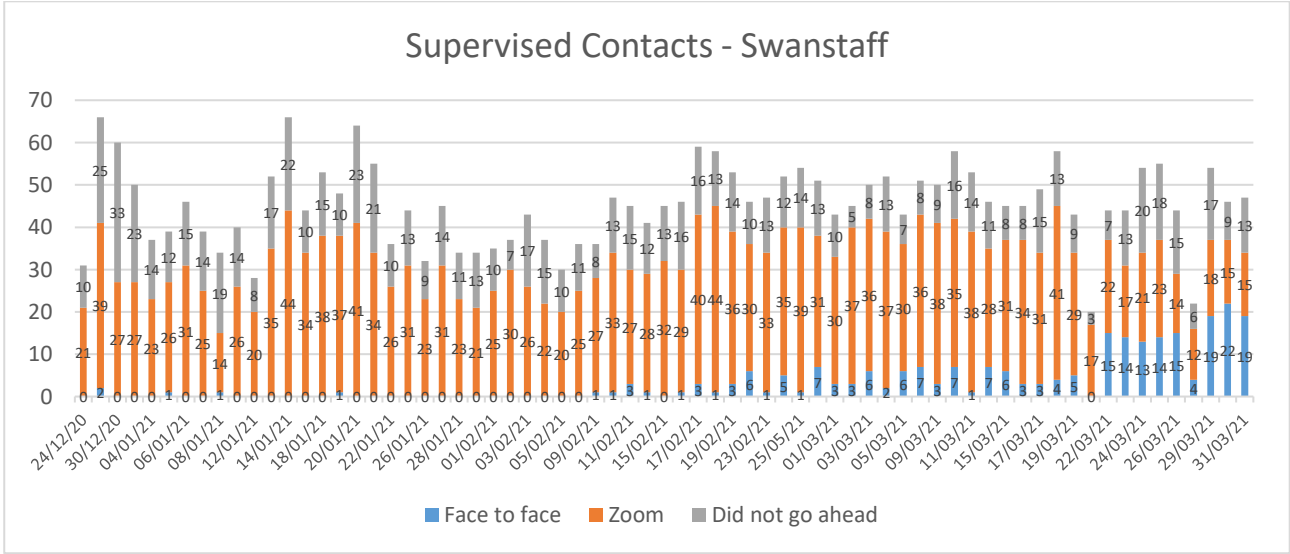


Contact

On 27th February Welsh Government announced a change to COVID-19 rules allowing households with a child aged under 1 to bubble with another household. In light of this, kinship carers are able to support contact with families where they are in a bubble and where this is in accordance with the child’s plan. 16 and 17 year olds living alone or with young people of the same age, but no adult, are also able to form a bubble with another household so are able to use this as an opportunity to have contact with their families or a significant other to support their emotional health and wellbeing. Going forward, contact can be a mixture of face to face and virtual in line with COVID-19 guidance and the child / young person’s needs.

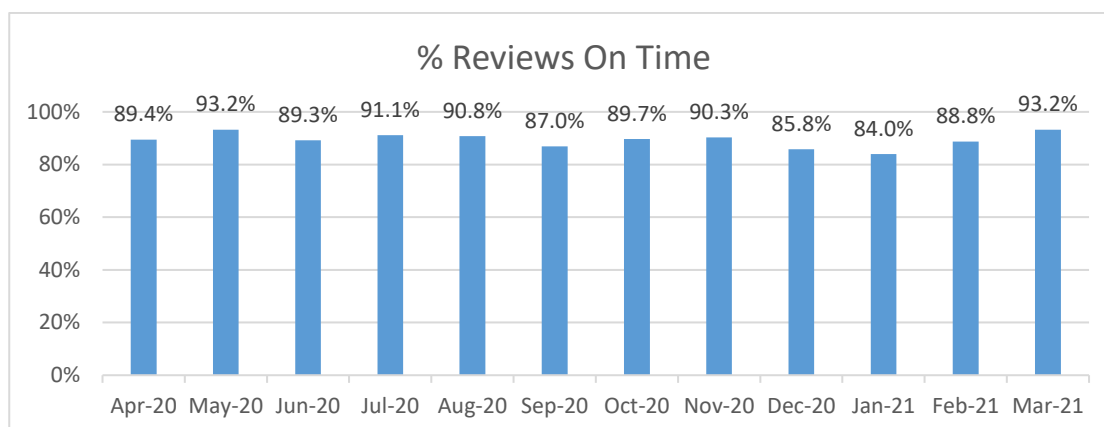
Supervised Contact

Following the return of all primary school age children to school, face to face contact was reinstated for all children aged 0-5 with effect from 22nd March 2021. Supervised contact for other children has also resumed, with priority given to children who have not had contact for some time. Up to date risk assessments are required before face to face contact can go ahead. Contact will be undertaken in line with health and safety guidance and with the recognition that length and frequency will be effected by the need to follow this guidance. The graph below sets out the proportion of contacts undertaken on a face to face and virtual basis, and those that did not proceed.



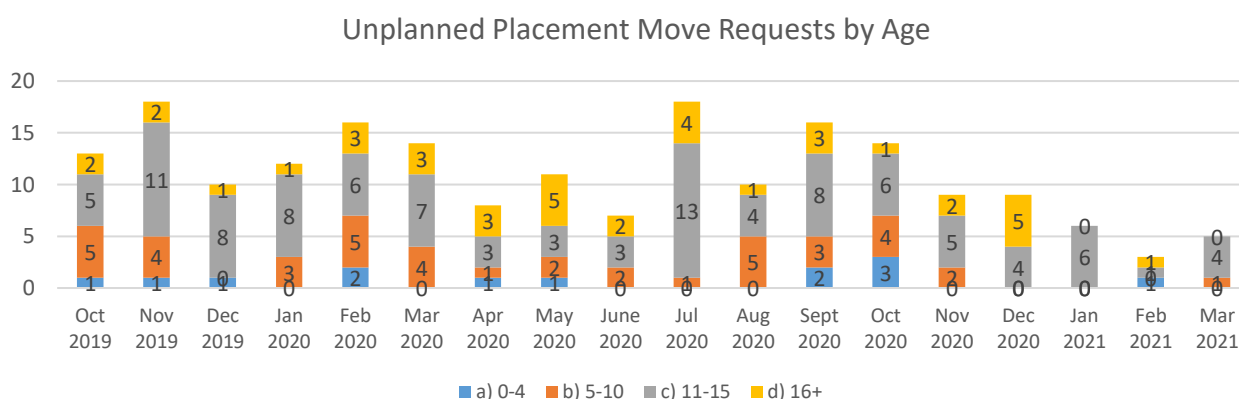
CLA Reviews

The process for children who are looked after continues as indicated in previous briefings - reviews continue to be held virtually using Microsoft Teams. To enhance and support these meetings, as well as to help ensure we are effective in reviewing plans, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) contact children and young people, as well as carers and family members before and/or after a review to ensure that there is an input. Children are spoken to separately to ascertain their views and wishes. A hybrid model is being developed to build on the positive elements of virtual working identified during the COVID-19 crisis. The implementation of this will take account of the latest Welsh Government position and with the Children's Services operating model. Provisional figures on children looked after reviews show that the majority of reviews are taking place on time. The small dip in timeliness in December and January noted in the last report has recovered. IROs continue to do informal work to monitor plans, including reviewing CareFirst, having virtual contact with children / young people and carers and having discussions with social workers. A small number of face to face IRO visits have taken place, where this was deemed necessary or virtual visits were impractical. COVID government guidelines have been followed. IROs have also introduced an optional midpoint review for many of the children and young people they are working with, to better track their plans.



Placements - Unplanned Placement Moves

After an increase in the number of unplanned placement move requests in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 announcement, the situation stabilised during Quarter 1. After an increase during Quarter 2 and the early part of Quarter 3, numbers have since fallen and remain relatively low. The majority of unplanned placement move requests are for children aged 11-15.



Providers

We are continuing to closely monitoring placements to ensure we are aware of those that are at risk of breaking down. Decision making in relation to placements continues to be undertaken by the Children’s Management Team so all OMs have oversight of placement arrangements and arising issues.

An emergency residential provision for 11-18 years “Oakway” is being established – the registration application has been submitted to Care Inspectorate Wales alongside the registration application for the Assessment Centre, Falconwood. The building for the Assessment Centre has been purchased and work to prepare for opening is underway. The Manager and Deputy Manager are in post, recruitment to other posts is ongoing and the multi disciplinary assessment model is being developed. The purpose of the provision will be to support a 10 week assessment to identify a young person’s needs to enable the right placement to be made going forward. This will include rehabilitation home as appropriate or move on to a fostering or residential placement. We are working with partnerships to develop and agree the multi agency approach to this assessment. Residential placements are monitored closely by the Children’s Management Team on a weekly basis and the Residential Panel is being reinstated to support proactive planning for children and forecasting accommodation needs.

A mechanism is in place to monitor future demand for Gateway provision / plans for young people aged 15.5+. We currently have 7 young people in agency fostering and residential placements who are waiting for a Gateway placement or tenancy, costing in excess of £13.5k per week. Work with Housing to increase provision has secured additional properties – the first of which are due to come on stream early in Quarter 1 2021/22. A deep dive exercise to better understand the needs of these young people to inform the development of provision has been undertaken – the report is pending.

Work is being undertaken to develop reporting and monitoring process to support CMT to monitor and track placements and demonstrate a shift in the balance of care.

The pie charts below show the growth in proportion of children placed with parents on a Care Order or in kinship arrangements with family members in recent years:

