



Wales Centre for Public Policy
Canolfan Polisi Cyhoeddus Cymru

Children looked after in Wales: Flows into and out of the care system

Dr Helen Hodges
September 2020



Our Mission

The Wales Centre for Public Policy helps to improve policy making and public services by supporting ministers and public service leaders to access and apply rigorous independent evidence about what works. It works in partnership with leading researchers and policy experts to synthesise and mobilise existing evidence and identify gaps where there is a need to generate new knowledge.

The Centre is independent of government but works closely with policy makers and practitioners to develop fresh thinking about how to address strategic challenges in health and social care, education, housing, the economy and other devolved responsibilities. It:

- Supports Welsh Government Ministers to identify, access and use authoritative evidence and independent expertise that can help inform and improve policy;
- Works with public services to access, generate, evaluate and apply evidence about what works in addressing key economic and societal challenges; and
- Draws on its work with Ministers and public services, to advance understanding of how evidence can inform and improve policy making and public services and contribute to theories of policy making and implementation.

Through secondments, PhD placements and its Research Apprenticeship programme, the Centre also helps to build capacity among researchers to engage in policy relevant research which has impact.

For further information please visit our website at www.wcpp.org.uk

Core Funders



Cardiff University was founded in 1883. Located in a thriving capital city, Cardiff is an ambitious and innovative university, which is intent on building strong international relationships while demonstrating its commitment to Wales.



Economic
and Social
Research Council

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is part of UK Research and Innovation, a new organisation that brings together the UK's seven research councils, Innovate UK and Research England to maximise the contribution of each council and create the best environment for research and innovation to flourish.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government is the devolved government of Wales, responsible for key areas of public life, including health, education, local government, and the environment.

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Summary | 4 |
| Introduction | 5 |
| Flows into and out of the Care System: A Conceptual Framework | 6 |
| What do we know about the numbers coming into the care system? | 7 |
| What was the picture in 2018-19? | 9 |
| How has the balance of flows into and out of the care system changed over time across Wales? | 10 |
| Is the trend the same across Wales? | 12 |
| What is the relationship between the balance and changes in local authority rates of children looked after in recent years? | 13 |
| Have there been changes in the 'modes' of exit from care? | 17 |
| Conclusion | 24 |
| Local Authority Summaries | 26 |
| Data Annex | 49 |
| References | 52 |

Summary

- This report updates and develops the Centre’s previous analysis of the factors affecting variation in rates of children looked after in Wales. Whilst earlier reports have tended to focus on the numbers coming into care, this report focuses upon the balance between in- and out-flows.
- In 2018-19 there were 435 more entries into care than there were exits: Of the 4,505 episodes that ceased during the year to 31st March 2019, 2,815 ceased with a new episode beginning on the same or next day. Excluding these suggests that there were 1,690 ‘exits’ compared to 2,125 starts during the year.
- When compared to trends in the rates of children looked after, it highlights that the drop in the number of exits – the ‘out-flow’ – appears to have had a significant impact on increasing rates over the last four years.
- Since the age profile of those exiting the care system is not published, the numbers ‘ageing out’ is not known. Similarly, as figures from across the year are not published, the numbers remaining in care are not known.
- Reunification is the most commonly occurring reason for an episode of care ceasing accounting for 34% of all exits in the year to 31st March 2019 (580 out of 1,690 exits). However, there has been a steady decline in the numbers returning to live with parents, relatives or others with parental responsibility since 2014-15 – decreasing by 16%.
- The numbers leaving care as a result of adoption was broadly stable from 2002-03 to 2011-12, increasing to a peak in 2014-15 with 385 children adopted from care. Since then the numbers have dropped to around 305. However, they have been stable for the last 3 years.
- Those adopted from care tend to be younger with the majority of looked after children adopted during 2018-29 were aged 1 to 4 years (250 out of 310) with more than two-thirds of these being taken into care before their first birthday.
- As with adoption and reunification, the number of exits as a result of Special Guardianship Orders have also been falling since 2014-15, falling at a faster rate than the overall trend for exits.
- Whilst thinking about the children looked after cohort as a system where there are flows in and out is potentially an overly simplistic approach, it highlights how reducing the numbers entering care is not sufficient if we wish to reduce the overall numbers of children looked after in Wales.
- As much focus needs to be put on children and young people safely exiting care as there is put on stopping them from entering it. Reunification in particular (given its historic share of ‘exit’) should be a key priority.

Introduction

This is the third in a series of briefings providing context for the Centre's wider programme of work around children looked after in Wales. This briefing focuses on flows into and out of the care system in Wales and hence is intended to enhance our understanding of the factors associated with variation in the local authority rates of children looked after¹ in Wales. As such it complements the first briefing which focused on describing local and national trends by providing additional information about the four local authorities which have seen their numbers of children looked after steadily decrease and the nine local authorities which have seen upward trends in recent years (details can be found in Tables 1 and 2).

As with other briefings in this series, it relies on publically available sources, largely published annually as aggregate data at a local authority level. As such, the analysis presented supplements that published by Statistics for Wales and the Welsh Government in Experimental Statistics: Children Looked After by Local Authorities, 2018-19 (SFR 106/2019).² In the earlier report [Factors Contributing to Higher Rates of Care in Wales](#)³ analysis was presented from the PLATO dataset (Ministry of Justice, 2019). This highlighted that relative to England and its constituent regions, there has been both a higher rate of applications for section 31 care orders, and a higher conversion rate into resulting orders in Wales. As this tool has not been updated, the analysis is not replicated here. Rather this briefing focuses on data contained within two key tables which have been made available on *Stats Wales: Children starting to be looked after during year to 31 March by local authority and need for care* (Stats Wales, 2019d), and *Episodes finishing for children looked after during year to 31 March by local authority and reason for finishing* (Stats Wales, 2019e).

Unlike other data published from the children looked after (SSDA903) data collection which provide a snapshot of the situation on 31st March each year, these two tables reflect the numbers from across the year. However, in relying upon aggregate data, it is not possible to get an appreciation of the extent to which children have had multiple entries into care over a 12-month period. Nor is it possible to learn more about the characteristics or legal status of any of the children. Cafcass Cymru also publish data summarising the numbers of section 31 applications made across Wales on a monthly basis which is presented here.

¹ Throughout this report references are made to 'children looked after' rather than 'looked after children' since the label 'looked after child' and particularly the shortened version of 'LAC' can give the impression of children lacking in something. However, in some instances it has been necessary to use the term 'looked after children' as it is a statutory term used by the Welsh Government. Notably the Looked After Children Census has been abbreviated to LAC Census.

² Technical guidance for the Children Looked After Census 2018-19 can be found: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-05/looked-after-children-census-2018-19-guidance_1.pdf

³ This can be down loaded from the WCPP website: <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/publication/analysis-of-the-factors-contributing-to-the-high-rates-of-care-in-wales/>

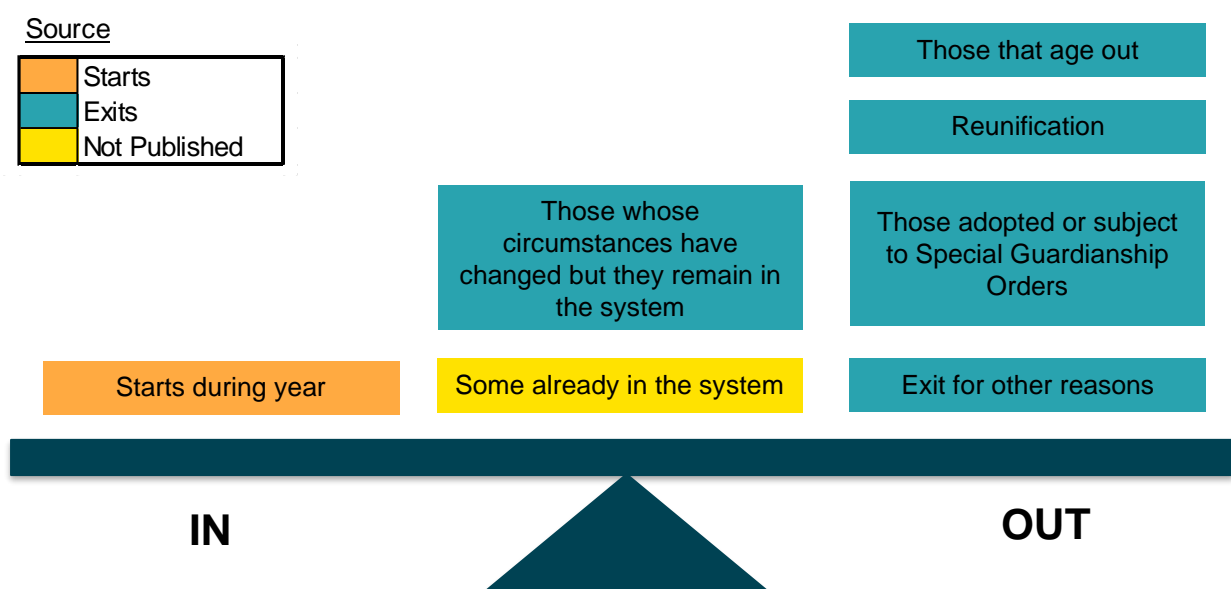
Flows into and out of the Care System: A Conceptual Framework

The period of time during which a child is looked after by the local authority is broken down into "episodes" of care. Each episode represents a period of being looked after under the same legal status and in the same placement. A new episode is started:

- Every time a child starts to be looked after.
- When there is a change of legal status code. The renewal of an ongoing legal status does not require a new episode.
- When there is a change of placement. There are some specific exceptions to this where the change in placement can be considered to be temporary e.g. temporary periods in hospital and holidays.

The reasons the episode ceased are also recorded. It is therefore possible to differentiate between where the child continues to be looked after – i.e. where an episode ceases and the new episode starts the same day – and where care ends and the child is no longer looked after.

Figure 1: The balance between flows into and out of the care system



In a balanced system, the numbers coming in are equal to those going out. However, if there are more coming in than going out, then this will tip the scales and the overall numbers will

increase. Conversely if there are fewer coming in than going out, this will reduce the numbers in the system.

In the context of the care system, those entering in any given year as a result of becoming a 'looked after child' will add to those already in the system. Without any intervention (e.g. a change in the child's legal status meaning that they are no longer looked after), the 'natural' out-flow occurs as a result of the child either reaching 18 and hence either ageing out of the care system or transferring to adult service, or death.

The main reasons for a child ceasing to be looked after are reunification with their birth family; adoption; being the subject of a special guardianship order (SGO) or a discharge of care order; or moving into independent living.

There are some children who may return to care, for example following failed attempts to return to live with their family. This issue of re-entry into care was explored by Elliott (2017). He identified that there is a statistically significant relationship between the length of a child's first period of being 'looked-after' and their likelihood of returning for a further period in care:

- A child whose first stay in care was less than a month in duration is 3.5 times more likely to return to care than a child whose first stay was over two years.
- A child who had been 'looked-after' for between 3 and 6 months is over 2.5 times more likely to return than a child that stayed for more than two years.
- Lengths of stay over 6 months, however, cease to have a statistically significant relationship to likelihood of return to care.

This trend is likely linked to the circumstances which led to the safeguarding measures being introduced. For example, if the child is taken into care due to parental substance misuse, mental ill-health or domestic abuse then the duration of the episode should be sufficient to allow for there to be a meaningful change in parental capacity so that it is safe for the child to return. The duration would therefore need to reflect the time it takes for treatment / interventions to result in a sustained positive outcome.

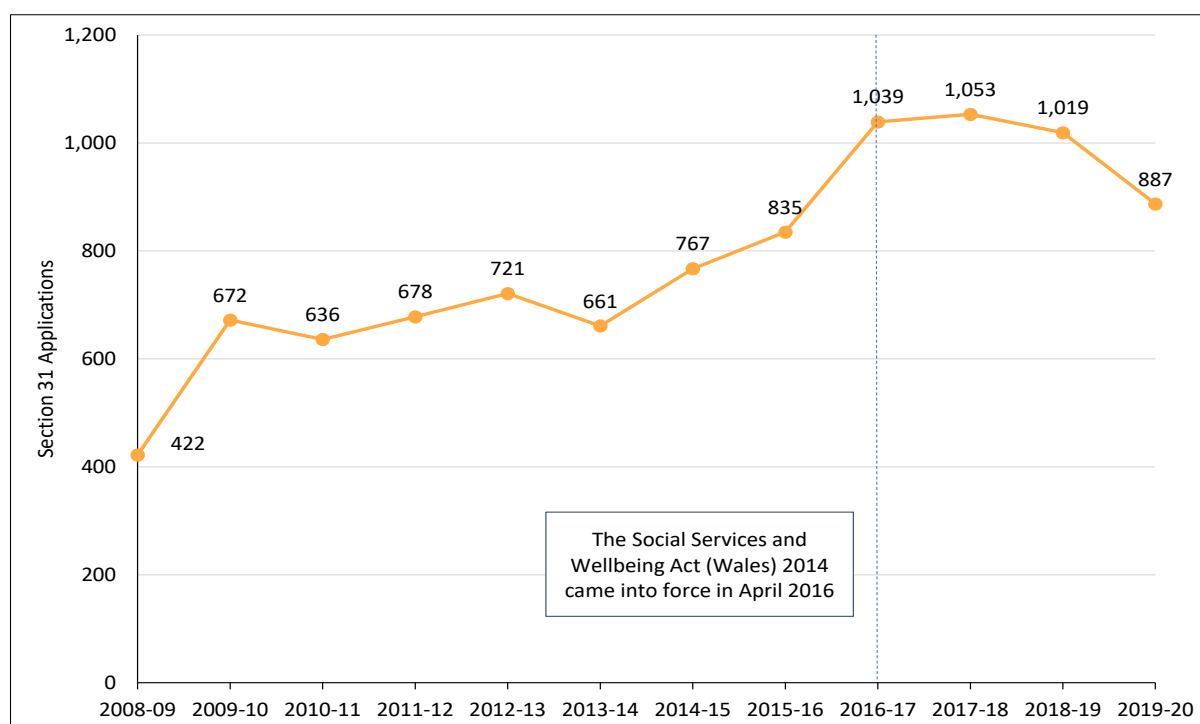
What do we know about the numbers coming into the care system?

Data from CAF/CASS Cymru about the number of applications for section 31 care orders suggests that from 2014-15 to 2016-17 there was a notable increase in applications. This has been linked to the increased scrutiny arising from concerns about the misuse and abuse of section 20 (section 76 in Wales) arrangements. Following two key cases⁴, Sir James

⁴ In *Re N*, Munby attacked the "misuse and abuse" of section 20 arrangements suggesting that many local authorities had been using it inappropriately as an alternative to care orders, rather than for voluntary short-term periods with a clear purpose when a family need planned support. New guidance around what represents good practice was therefore issued. In *Re B-S*, Munby outlined how practitioners should use the balance-sheet approach when considering care proceedings.

Munby, then president of the Family Division, set out clear guidelines about how social workers and local authorities should approach cases where the individual was voluntarily accommodated – especially as a prelude to care proceedings – and special guardianship cases. Stevenson (2017) asserts that this prompted local authorities to re-examine section 76 cases and bring some to court as care proceedings. The number of applications for care orders peaked in 2017-18 at 1,053 and is now decreasing (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Section 31 Applications, by Year



Source: Cafcass Cymru (2020)

It should be stressed that the Cafcass Cymru data only provides part of the picture – based on snapshot data reflecting the position on 31st March 2019 (Stats Wales, 2019a):

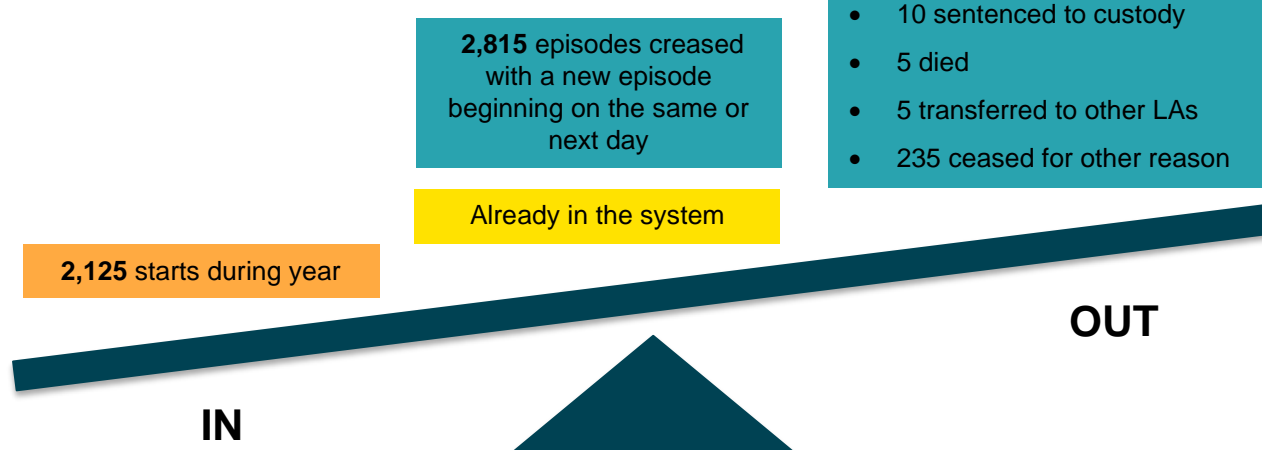
- Approximately 83% of children looked after were on care orders (5,670 out of 6,875)
- 8% (555) were voluntarily accommodated under section 76
- 9% (600) had a different legal status including being on an emergency protection order, being under a child assessment order and being under police protection in local authority accommodation
- There were a further 20 who were on remand, detained or other compulsory order.

Notably the numbers with other legal statuses has been rising. This is consistent with anecdotal evidence from stakeholders that suggests that whilst the number of applications for section 31 orders has fallen by 16%, applications for other orders have increased during this time.

What was the picture in 2018-19?

Figure 3: The balance between flows into and out of the care system, 2018-19

Of the **4,505 episodes that ceased** during the year to 31st March 2019, **2,815 ceased with a new episode beginning on the same or next day**. This suggests that there were 1,690 'exits' compared to 2,125 starts during the year. As a result, there were **435 more entries into care than there were exits hence an upward trend**.



Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019c). Note: Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) can be issued by the family courts where one or more individuals, usually family members, are given parental responsibility for a child who cannot live with their birth parents. As a result of this the child ceases to be looked after. Whilst parental responsibilities are given to the child's special guardian, they are not required to sever the legal relationship with their birth parents.

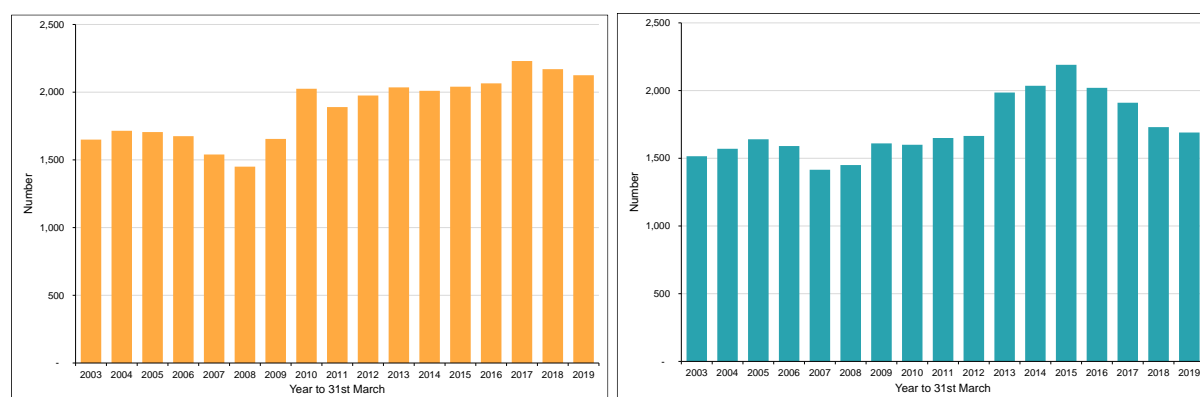
Since an age profile of those entering care and exiting care is not published, it is difficult to determine how many of those exits relate to ageing out. However, conceptually if a child enters care at a young age and remains in the care system until they age out at 18, then there will be a core cohort who are already in the system. The way in which the data is published means that we do not know how large this group is – simply that it is over and above the 2,815 whose circumstances changed as a result of either a change of legal status and/or placement.

The largest proportion of 'exits' were as a result of reunification. However, as highlighted previously, relying upon aggregated data means that we are unable to determine how many of the exits and starts reflect re-entry into care after the breakdown of the reunification process. It should be noted that not all re-entries into care result from an unsuccessful return to live with birth parents. As Elliott (2017) highlights, although the numbers are very small, potentially re-entry can also result from adoption disruption and also disruption of special guardianship orders (SGOs).

Exits reflecting a transition into permanence either with the birth family or others through either adoption or special guardianship are generally seen as being the most desirable since they offer the child stability. The trends in relation to each of these exit modes is considered later in this briefing along with those relating to children ceasing to be looked after as a result of moving into independent living.

How has the balance of flows into and out of the care system changed over time across Wales?

Figure 4: The number of (a) starts and (b) exits from the care system, by year



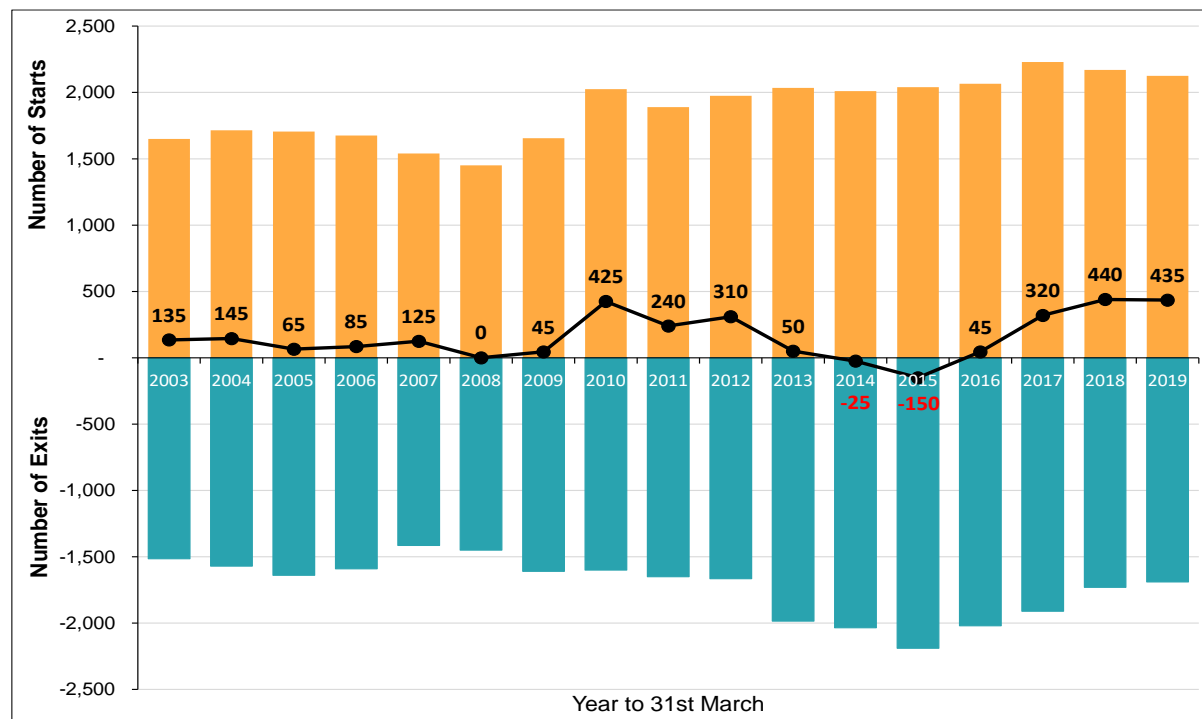
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019c). The number of exits has been determined by considering the number of episodes ceasing over the course of the year to 31st March and subtracting those where the episode ceased with a new episode beginning the same or next day.

As can be seen from Figure 4(a), there have been around 2,000 starts per year since 2012 – although, having peaked at 2,230 in the year to 31st March 2017, the number has fallen slightly. In the year to 31st March 2019 there were 2,125 starts. The majority of these (65%, 1,395 out of 2,125) were as a result of abuse or neglect with around one in eight (14%, 305) becoming looked after as a result of family dysfunction and one in eleven (9%, 190) as a result of the family being in acute stress.

In contrast, from around 2007 the number of exits from the care system had been rising, peaking in the year to 31st March 2015 with 2,190 exits. Since then the number of exits has fallen by 23% with 1690 exits in the year to 31st March 2019 (Figure 4(b)).

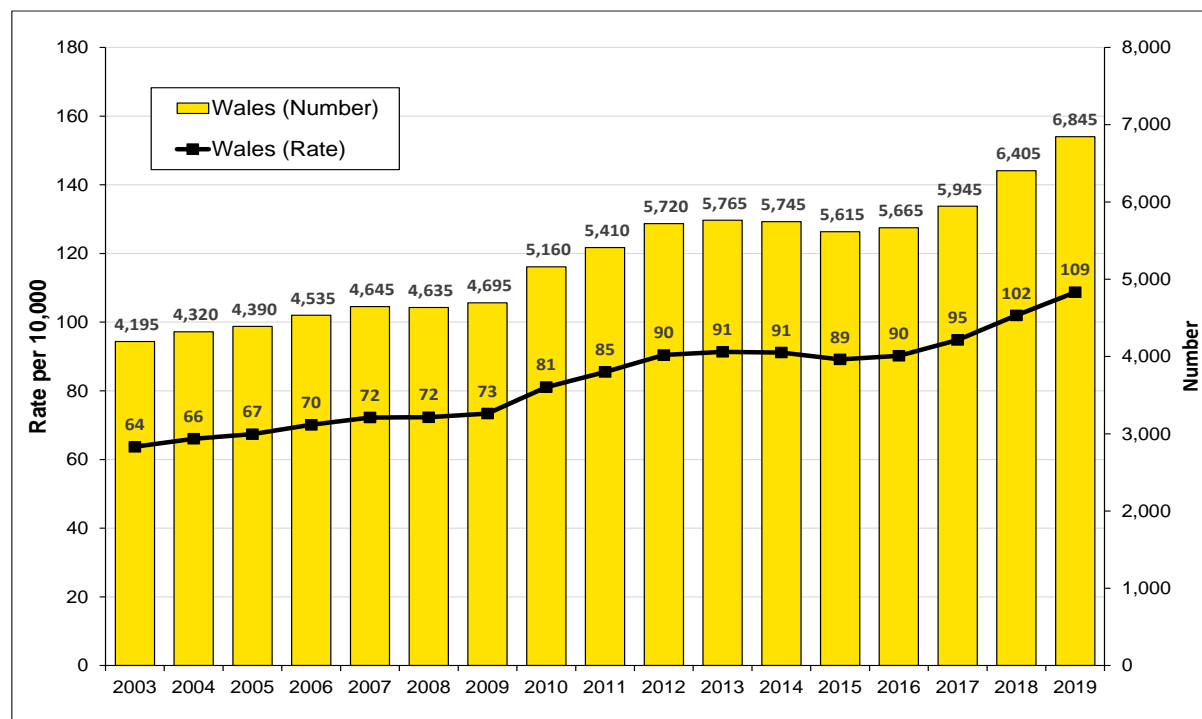
The balance between starts and exits is summarised in Figure 5. The trend line reflects the balance between the two. Notably, between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2015 there were more exits than starts hence the negative balance. Whilst the two measures are not directly comparable since one covered the whole year and the other is a snapshot, it is possible to see from Figure 6 how this negative balance has translated into a slight dip in both the number and rates for 31st March 2015.

Figure 5: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time across Wales



Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e). The number of exits has been determined by considering the number of episodes ceasing over the course of the year to 31st March and subtracting those where the episode ceased with a new episode beginning the same or next day. The numbers presented here are the same as in Figure 4(a) and 4(b). The underlying data can be found in the Data Annex.

Figure 6: The numbers and rates of children looked after on 31st March



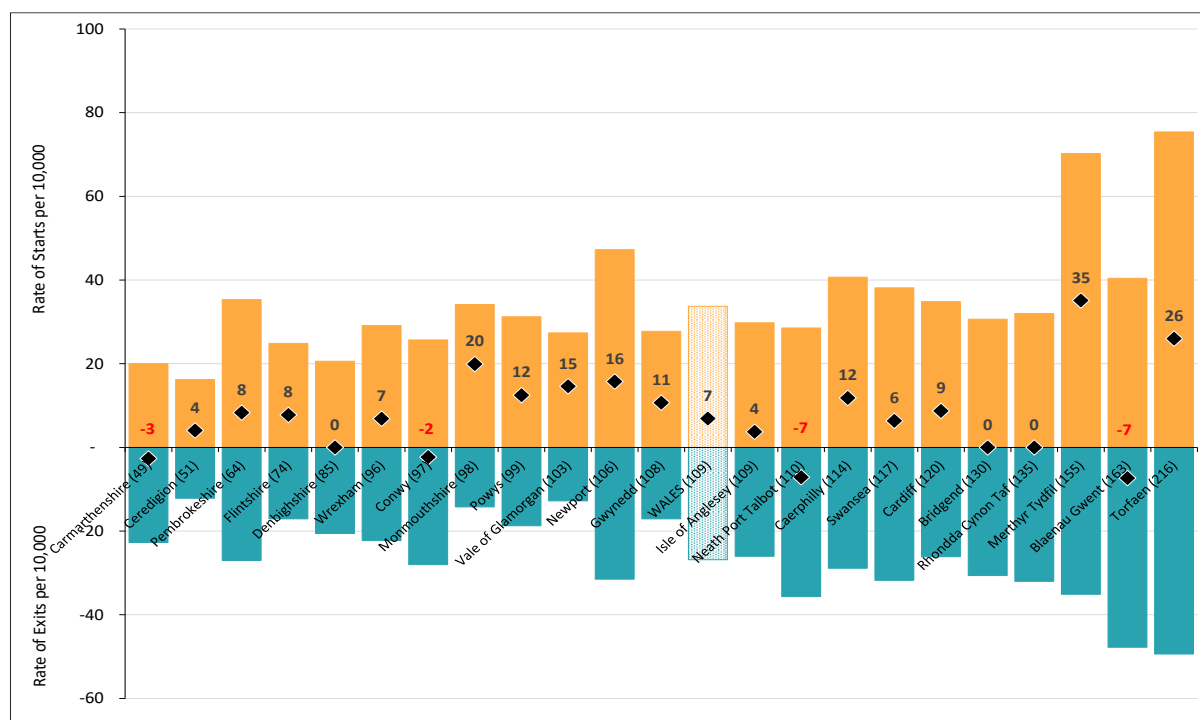
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Since April 2016, there have been more starts than exits with data from the last two years suggesting that there have been around 440 more starts than exits each year. This increasing trend is also apparent in Figure 6. Changes in the form of exits are considered in more detail later in this briefing.

Is the trend the same across Wales?

Given that the 22 local authorities have differences in the size of their child population and their children looked after cohort, the rates of starts and exits per 10,000 children have been determined to consider the balance based on data from 2018-19. The average across Wales has been included for reference.

Figure 7: The balance between flows into and out of the care system by local authority in 2018-19



Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e). The number of exits has been determined by considering the number of episodes ceasing over the course of the year to 31st March 2019 and subtracting those where the episode ceased with a new episode beginning the same or next day. Local authorities are ordered by their respective rate of children looked after on 31st March 2019 shown in brackets. The underlying data can be found in the Data Annex.

The 2,125 starts recorded in 2018-19 is equivalent to a rate of 34 starts per 10,000 whilst the 1,690 exits are equivalent to a rate of 27 per 10,000. The balance is therefore 7 – reflected on Figure 7 as a black diamond. Crucially, not all the local authorities had a positive balance i.e. more starts than exits. Carmarthenshire, Conwy, Neath Port Talbot and Blaenau Gwent all had a negative balance i.e. fewer children entered the care system than exited. Last year, Denbighshire, Bridgend and Rhondda Cynon Taf had the same number of starts and exits.

Notably two of the three local authorities with the highest rates of children looked after on 31st March 2019 – Merthyr Tydfil and Torfaen also have the highest difference in their start and exit rates over the course of the year, adding to their high rates of children looked after on 31st March 2018.

What is the relationship between the balance and changes in local authority rates of children looked after in recent years?

The following tables summarise the net change and direction of travel in terms of the local authority rates of children in care on 31st March compared to 10, 5 and 3 years ago. Comparisons have also been included relative to the rate on 31st March 2018.

In the first briefing in this series, we identified that there were four local authorities which have seen their number of children looked after steadily decrease (Table 1), and two in particular – Carmarthenshire and Neath Port Talbot – which had seen large reductions. In contrast, there were nine local authorities which have seen an upward trend in recent years (Table 2). In this briefing we look at the trends over a longer period and have sought to group the local authorities on the basis of the trajectories of their respective rates over the 10-year period. Whilst the groupings are subjective, they have been used to aid understanding of the relationship between the balance of flows into and out of the care system and the implications this appears to have had upon the rates of children looked after at a local level.

Table 1: Local authority rates of children looked after - net change and direction of travel - Steady decrease

| | 10 years (cf. 2009) | | 5 years (cf. 2014) | | 3 years (cf. 2016) | | 1 year (cf. 2018) | |
|-------------------|------------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Carmarthenshire | -9 | ↓ | -17 | ↓ | -9 | ↓ | -3 | ↓ |
| Ceredigion | -0 | ◆ | -9 | ↓ | -12 | ↓ | 1 | ◆ |
| Neath Port Talbot | 10 | ↑ | -58 | ↓ | -25 | ↓ | -7 | ↓ |
| Bridgend | 43 | ↑ | -12 | ↓ | -1 | ◆ | -2 | ◆ |
| Wales | 35 | ↑ | 18 | ↑ | 18 | ↑ | 7 | ↑ |

Source: Stats Wales (2019c). ◆ has been used to denote where the rate has been comparatively stable i.e. a net change of +/-2. The underlying data is summarised in the Data Annex.

As can be seen in Table 1, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire are the only two authorities where compared to the rate 10 years ago (on 31st March 2009) there has been a reduction (or in the case of Ceredigion, the rate of children looked after is now the same as it was when the snapshot was taken in 2009). An examination of the balance of flows in and out of these two authorities highlights two key trends:

- Carmarthenshire has consistently had fewer starts than exits since 2013. During this time, the number of children looked after on 31st March has fallen from 270 to 185 (Figure A19).
- Ceredigion has, with the exception of the year ending 31st March 2018, had a very similar number of starts and exits each year (+/- 5) since 2003 (Figure A15).

When compared to the trends in their respective numbers and rates (Figures A20 and A16), the impact that this has had can be seen. Notably, Figure A20 highlights the year on year reductions in Carmarthenshire's rate of children looked after. A similar trend can also be observed in the data for Neath Port Talbot which has had seen the difference between starts and exits narrow since 2012, with more exits than starts since 2014 (Figure A24).

As one of the smallest Welsh local authorities, the rate of children looked after in Ceredigion is sensitive to even small changes in the size of the cohort. Figure A16 highlights the impact of having a negative balance in 2017 and 2018 on the local rate. Bridgend whilst having a larger children looked after cohort, has similarly had little difference in the number of starts and exits in recent year (Figure A25). This has translated into similar trends as observed in Ceredigion.

Table 2 summaries the trends observed in the nine local authorities which had seen the largest increases in cohort sizes over the last 5 years. Together, they accounted for almost 83% of the net increase in the number of children looked after in Wales.

Table 2: Local authority rates of children looked after - net change and direction of travel - Upward trend

| | 10 years (cf. 2009) | | 5 years (cf. 2014) | | 3 years (cf. 2016) | | 1 year (cf. 2018) | |
|-------------------|------------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Gwynedd | 39 | ↑ | 30 | ↑ | 20 | ↑ | 11 | ↑ |
| Wrexham | 50 | ↑ | 25 | ↑ | 29 | ↑ | 8 | ↑ |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 43 | ↑ | 35 | ↑ | 31 | ↑ | 13 | ↑ |
| Cardiff | 45 | ↑ | 36 | ↑ | 33 | ↑ | 9 | ↑ |
| Powys | 48 | ↑ | 40 | ↑ | 39 | ↑ | 12 | ↑ |
| Pembrokeshire | 12 | ↑ | 14 | ↑ | 12 | ↑ | 8 | ↑ |
| Caerphilly | 35 | ↑ | 44 | ↑ | 43 | ↑ | 14 | ↑ |
| Monmouthshire | 41 | ↑ | 42 | ↑ | 25 | ↑ | 19 | ↑ |
| Torfaen | 116 | ↑ | 64 | ↑ | 75 | ↑ | 26 | ↑ |
| Wales | 35 | ↑ | 18 | ↑ | 18 | ↑ | 7 | ↑ |

Source: Stats Wales (2019c). The underlying data is summarised in the Data Annex.

Looking at the balance of flows in and out of these local authorities, it is notable that Gwynedd, Wrexham, Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff have had generally upward trends for a sustained period with only an occasional dip in their rates of children looked after. Powys,

Pembrokeshire, Monmouthshire, Caerphilly and Torfaen experienced more sustained decreases, largely prior to 2015 but have since experienced year on year increases.

Notably, Torfaen which has the highest local authority rate of children looked after across Wales had 4 years (between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2016) where there were more exits than starts. It is only more recently that this trend has reversed, corresponding with a significant increase in its rate (Figures A39 and A40)

In addition to these nine local authorities (Table 2), there are a further four local authorities – Swansea, Newport, Merthyr Tydfil and Flintshire, who, based on the way in which the data have been summarised, appear to have experienced a net longer term upward trend (Table 3). However, examination of their respective charts suggests a more complicated picture with the net upward trend masking year-on-year variation across the 10-year period.

Table 3: Local authority rates of children looked after - net change and direction of travel – The upward trend masks year-on-year variation

| | 10 years (cf. 2009) | | 5 years (cf. 2014) | | 3 years (cf. 2016) | | 1 year (cf. 2018) | |
|----------------|------------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Swansea | 24 | ↑ | 3 | ↑ | 9 | ↑ | 7 | ↑ |
| Newport | 19 | ↑ | 20 | ↑ | 19 | ↑ | 12 | ↑ |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 29 | ↑ | 15 | ↑ | 42 | ↑ | 32 | ↑ |
| Flintshire | 30 | ↑ | 8 | ↑ | 9 | ↑ | 6 | ↑ |
| Wales | 35 | ↑ | 18 | ↑ | 18 | ↑ | 7 | ↑ |

Source: Stats Wales (2019c). The underlying data is summarised in the Data Annex.

As one of the largest local authorities in Wales, Swansea had significantly more starts than exits in 2010. Since then the balance between in- and out-flows has fluctuated each year. However, the difference between the two has been less significant with a run of 4 years when there were more exits than starts. This has helped to reduce the local authority rate from a peak of 125 per 10,000 on 31st March 2013. Whilst the rate has been increasing since 2017 (when it was 102 per 10,000), it has not returned to this level (Figures A21 and A22).

Newport had been maintaining a fairly neutral balance between 1st April 2006 and 31st March 2017 which had been contributing to a gradual decrease in rate from 2007 onwards. However, in the last two years there have been more starts than exits which has translated into an increase in their rate which is now equivalent to 19 additional children looked after per 10,000 compared to 10 years ago (Figures A43 and A44).

Merthyr Tydfil has also seen an increase in its rate since 2016 having previously experienced a decrease from 153 on 31st March 2012 – notably between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2016, there had been increasing numbers of exits relative to starts which had contributed to this falling rate. The rate on 31st March 2019 was 155 per 10,000 (Figures A33 and A34).

As one of the authorities with a lower rate of children looked after, Flintshire had for a long period had a fairly neutral balance. However, since 2016 there have been more starts than exits which contributed to an increase of 6 additional children per 10,000 on 31st March 2019 compared to the previous year. This short run of comparatively low numbers would not have had such an impact in a local authority with a higher rate (Figures A9 and A10).

The remaining local authorities are summarised in Table 4. What is particularly notable about these is that they have recently achieved a more neutral balance between their respective in- and out-flows which has resulted in a reversal in the previous upward trend. In the case of Blaenau Gwent, this resulted in a notable decrease in the rate on 31st March 2019 compared to the previous year.

Table 4: Local authority rates of children looked after - net change and direction of travel – A recent reversal of an upward trend

| | 10 years (cf. 2009) | | 5 years (cf. 2014) | | 3 years (cf. 2016) | | 1 year (cf. 2018) | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|
| Blaenau Gwent | 79 | ↑ | 62 | ↑ | 24 | ↑ | -9 | ↓ |
| Isle of Anglesey | 58 | ↑ | 53 | ↑ | 29 | ↑ | 2 | ◆ |
| Conwy | 26 | ↑ | 22 | ↑ | 19 | ↑ | -1 | ◆ |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 49 | ↑ | 5 | ↑ | 10 | ↑ | -1 | ◆ |
| Denbighshire | 15 | ↑ | 1 | ◆ | -4 | ↓ | -0 | ◆ |
| Wales | 35 | ↑ | 18 | ↑ | 18 | ↑ | 7 | ↑ |

Source: Stats Wales (2019c). ◆ has been used to denote where the rate has been comparatively stable i.e. a net change of +/-2. The underlying data is summarised in the Data Annex.

Blaenau Gwent has had one of the highest rates of children looked after in Wales (although lower than Torfaen). Figures A37 and A38 highlight how having a large positive balance (i.e. more starts than exits) can result in a core group of children looked after who remain in the system into the next year. As a result, the reduction that you would expect to see as a result of narrowing the gap between the in- and out-flows takes some time to be reflected in the local authority's rate.

Both Isle of Anglesey (Figure A1) and Conwy (Figure A5) have seen a recent closing of the gap between the number of starts and exits after a number of years of having a positive balance – for Isle of Anglesey the number of starts relative to exits increased each year between 2013 and 2017, and has since been more evenly balanced. In Conwy there is a similar trend until the year to 31st March 2018 when there were 35 more starts than exits.

Rhondda Cynon Taf (Figure A31) saw significantly more starts than exits in the year ending 31st March 2017 following two years when the numbers had been broadly equal. It has since returned to a more balanced position.

Denbighshire is something of an outlier in that it's rate of children looked after has remained comparatively stable over the last five years. This has resulted from having maintained a fairly neutral balance between in- and out-flows since 2011 (Figures A7 and A8).

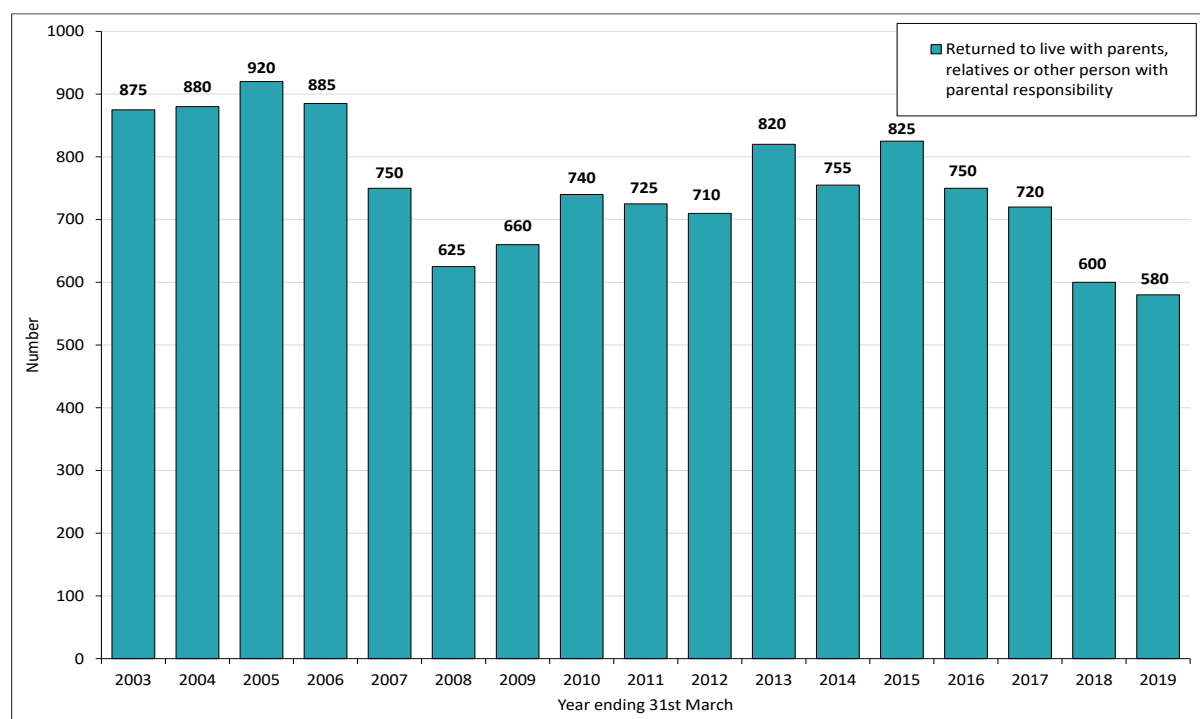
Have there been changes in the ‘modes’ of exit from care?

The following section is based on analysis of data published by Stats Wales. Whilst this provides information on the reason that the episode ceased, it does not provide any additional data about the characteristics or legal status of the child. Limited supplementary information has been published by the Welsh Government in response to freedom of information requests. However, this is not available for all forms of exits and therefore it is not possible to compare for example the age profile of those leaving as a result of SGOs as opposed to those moving into independent living. As previously highlighted, data on exits relate to episodes that ceased during the year to 31st March, excluding those which ceased with a new episode starting on the same or following day. Given the comparatively small numbers involved, it has been necessary for the Welsh Government to suppress some local authority level data.

Trends in the reunification numbers

Although reunification with family is the most commonly occurring reason for an episode of care ceasing accounting for 34% of all exits in the year to 31st March 2019 (580 out of 1,690 exits), there has been a steady decline in the numbers returning to live with parents, relatives or others with parental responsibility since 2015 (equivalent to a fall of 30%) (Figure 8). This is occurring at a faster rate than the decline in the number of exits (these have fallen by 22% over the same period).

Figure 8: Episodes ceasing where the child returns to live with family



Source: Stats Wales (2019e)

As can be seen from Figure 8, the numbers being reunified with family in the year to 31st March 2019 were lower than in any year since 2003 (Stats Wales, 2019e). However, there is variation within Wales, with generally those local authorities with the largest CLA cohorts also having the highest numbers returning to live with parents.

To understand the variation within Wales, two measures have been considered:

- The proportion of all exits in a given year leading to reunification
- The local authority's share of the total number of exits due to reunification

These measures are summarised in Table 5 along with the number of exits due to reunification.

In terms of the total number of exits due to reunification, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Cardiff have the highest number and hence largest share of children who return to live with their parents. Despite one in ten children who return to live with their parents being looked after by Rhondda Cynon Taf, the actual number of exits has halved compared to 2015. The number reunified with parents from Cardiff has fallen by 44% over the same period.

At the other extreme, Monmouthshire and Ceredigion had only around 5 children⁵ who returned to live with their parents in the year ending 31st March 2019, with the small size of their CLA cohort having a role to play in this.

Based on the proportion of all exits leading to reunification in recent years, it would appear that the smaller, more rural local authorities such as Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion have made more use of reunification than some of the larger, more urban authorities. However, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about this trend without knowing more about the individual circumstances of each child/family since decisions will need to be made on a case by case basis to reflect the best interests of the child.

⁵ The published figures are rounded to the nearest 5 and are subject to suppression. Very small numbers are denoted by a * in the published tables and could relate to there being 0, 1 or 2 children in that particular category.

Table 5: Exits due to reunification during year to 31 March by local authority

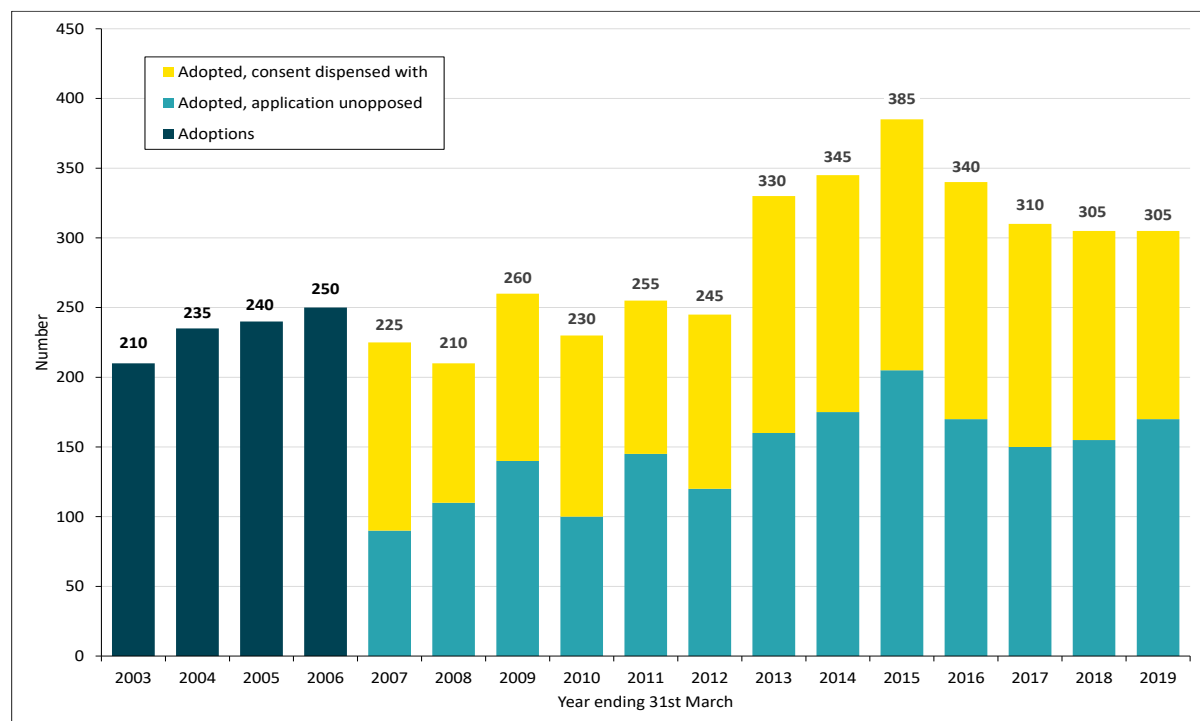
| | Number of Exits Due to Reunification | | | | | | % of Exits Due to Reunification | | | | | % Share of Welsh Total | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | Ave | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
| Isle of Anglesey | 10 | 15 | 20 | 10 | 15 | 14 | 40 | 60 | 57 | 50 | 43 | 1.2 | 2.0 | 2.8 | 1.7 | 2.6 |
| Gwynedd | 20 | 20 | 20 | 15 | 15 | 18 | 36 | 40 | 40 | 38 | 38 | 2.4 | 2.7 | 2.8 | 2.5 | 2.6 |
| Conwy | 20 | 20 | 5 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 31 | 36 | 13 | 38 | 25 | 2.4 | 2.7 | 0.7 | 2.5 | 2.6 |
| Denbighshire | 20 | 25 | 25 | 10 | 15 | 19 | 36 | 36 | 42 | 29 | 38 | 2.4 | 3.3 | 3.5 | 1.7 | 2.6 |
| Flintshire | 15 | 30 | 20 | 20 | 15 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 33 | 33 | 27 | 1.8 | 4.0 | 2.8 | 3.3 | 2.6 |
| Wrexham | 40 | 15 | 30 | 40 | 30 | 31 | 44 | 38 | 40 | 57 | 46 | 4.8 | 2.0 | 4.2 | 6.7 | 5.2 |
| Powys | 20 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 10 | 15 | 40 | 38 | 30 | 33 | 22 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 2.5 | 1.7 |
| Ceredigion | 15 | 15 | 10 | 20 | 5 | 13 | 60 | 50 | 40 | 50 | 33 | 1.8 | 2.0 | 1.4 | 3.3 | 0.9 |
| Pembrokeshire | 30 | 30 | 45 | 35 | 30 | 34 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 50 | 46 | 3.6 | 4.0 | 6.3 | 5.8 | 5.2 |
| Carmarthenshire | 50 | 55 | 40 | 45 | 40 | 46 | 53 | 50 | 47 | 56 | 47 | 6.1 | 7.3 | 5.6 | 7.5 | 6.9 |
| Swansea | 75 | 60 | 85 | 55 | 45 | 64 | 36 | 31 | 43 | 32 | 30 | 9.1 | 8.0 | 11.8 | 9.2 | 7.8 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 20 | 25 | 40 | 10 | 25 | 24 | 17 | 20 | 31 | 11 | 25 | 2.4 | 3.3 | 5.6 | 1.7 | 4.3 |
| Bridgend | 65 | 40 | 30 | 25 | 35 | 39 | 46 | 33 | 35 | 33 | 39 | 7.9 | 5.3 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 6.0 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 15 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 25 | 14 | 20 | 22 | 29 | 1.8 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.7 | 1.7 |
| Cardiff | 90 | 115 | 80 | 60 | 50 | 79 | 33 | 40 | 31 | 29 | 26 | 10.9 | 15.3 | 11.1 | 10.0 | 8.6 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 120 | 95 | 95 | 65 | 60 | 87 | 50 | 44 | 51 | 39 | 38 | 14.5 | 12.7 | 13.2 | 10.8 | 10.3 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 25 | 15 | 15 | 10 | 20 | 17 | 33 | 27 | 38 | 20 | 44 | 3.0 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 1.7 | 3.4 |
| Caerphilly | 50 | 55 | 40 | 45 | 45 | 47 | 45 | 46 | 40 | 36 | 41 | 6.1 | 7.3 | 5.6 | 7.5 | 7.8 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 10 | 15 | 25 | 15 | 25 | 18 | 22 | 33 | 36 | 30 | 38 | 1.2 | 2.0 | 3.5 | 2.5 | 4.3 |
| Torfaen | 55 | 30 | 30 | 35 | 45 | 39 | 46 | 32 | 43 | 39 | 47 | 6.7 | 4.0 | 4.2 | 5.8 | 7.8 |
| Monmouthshire | 10 | 10 | 20 | 25 | 5 | 14 | 33 | 33 | 44 | 56 | 20 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 2.8 | 4.2 | 0.9 |
| Newport | 55 | 35 | 30 | 35 | 25 | 36 | 33 | 28 | 25 | 30 | 23 | 6.7 | 4.7 | 4.2 | 5.8 | 4.3 |
| Wales | 825 | 750 | 720 | 600 | 580 | 695 | 38 | 37 | 38 | 35 | 34 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Stats Wales (2019e). Note: The data published on Stats Wales is rounded to the nearest 5 therefore average (mean) figures should be treated with caution. The figures have been included here so that comparisons can be made with those relating to adoption (Table 6). Due to rounding, column figures may not sum to 100%.

Trends in the numbers being adopted

As with reunification, the numbers leaving care as a result of adoption are also falling although the headline number is higher than it was in 2003 (Figure 9). Having peaked at 285 in 2015, the numbers have since fallen although they have been broadly the same for the last 3 years (Stats Wales, 2019e).

Figure 9: Episodes ceasing as a result of adoption



Source: Stats Wales (2019e). Note: The court can only dispense with the consent of a parent or guardian where it is satisfied that (a) the parent or guardian cannot be found or lacks capacity (within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005) to give consent or (b) the welfare of the child requires the consent to be dispensed with.

Due to small numbers, a breakdown of the number of episodes ceasing due to adoption is not available for each local authority. However, Table 6 summarises the average number of children who have been adopted each year between April 2014 and March 2019. Broadly speaking those with larger CLA cohorts are more likely to have higher numbers adopted whilst those with smaller cohorts have smaller numbers of adoptions.

Table 6: Average number of adoptions a year, by local authority (5 years)

| | Average |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Isle of Anglesey | 5 |
| Gwynedd | 7 |
| Conwy | 8 |
| Denbighshire | 10 |
| Flintshire | 9 |
| Wrexham | 9 |
| Powys | 7 |
| Ceredigion | 5 |
| Pembrokeshire | 6 |
| Carmarthenshire | 13 |
| Swansea | 33 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 28 |
| Bridgend | 25 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 9 |
| Cardiff | 35 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 36 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 7 |
| Caerphilly | 13 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 13 |
| Torfaen | 19 |
| Monmouthshire | 6 |
| Newport | 28 |
| Wales | 331 |

Source: Adoptions of looked after children (ADF1) data collection, Welsh Government (2020a). Figures relate to the 5-year period from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2019.

Unlike the other modes of exiting care, data about the characteristics of children adopted from care and those who adopted them are published by Statistics for Wales and the Welsh Government as part of their reporting on *Experimental Statistics: Children Looked After by Local Authorities* (SFR 106/2019)⁶.

The majority of looked after children who were adopted in the year ending 31st March 2019 were aged 1 to 4 years (250 out of 310), with a further 50 adopted who were between 5 and 9 years old. Slightly more girls than boys were adopted (165 compared to 145 boys). More than two-thirds (69%, 215) children had been taken into care before their first birthday, with 145 (67%) of these being in care for between 1 and 2 years prior to adoption.

Across all ages, 55% of children looked after who went on to be adopted were in care for 1 to 2 years prior to the adoption order being granted. 30% were in care for 2 to 3 years whilst

⁶ This can be downloaded from the Welsh Government website: <https://gov.wales/children-looked-after-local-authorities-april-2018-march-2019>. Supplementary tables can be found on Stats Wales: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/Adoptions>

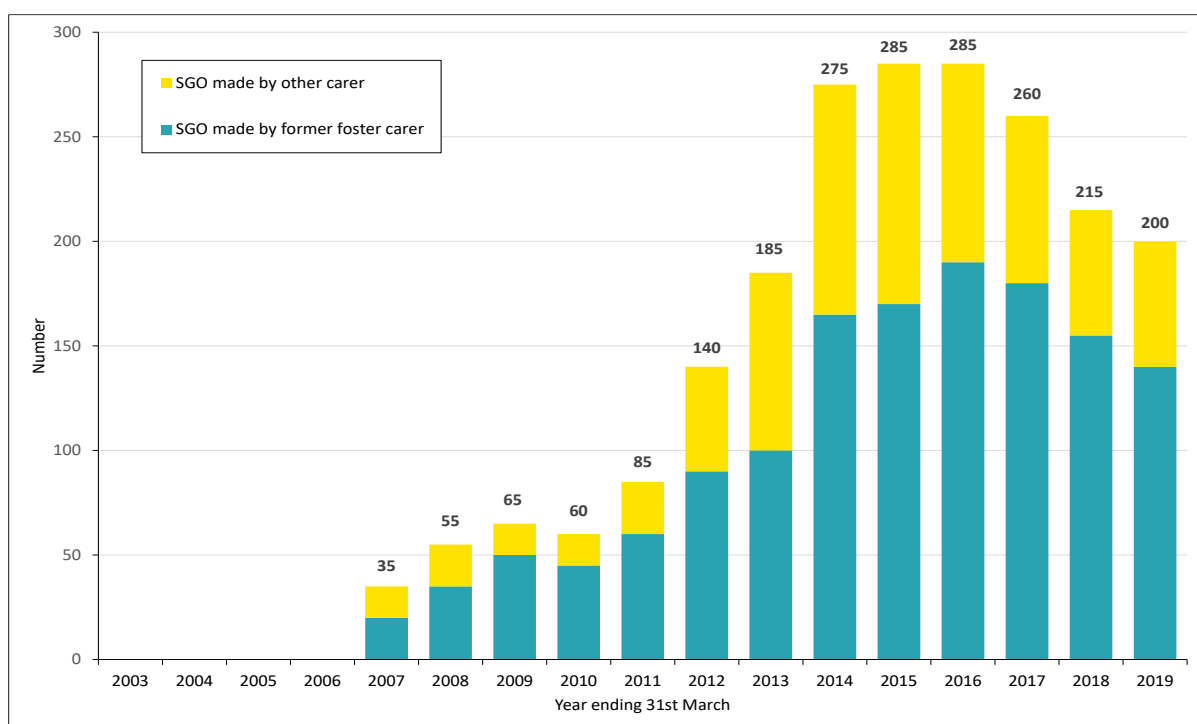
6% were in care for 3 to 4 years. Approximately 5% of those adopted in the year to 31st March 2019 were in care for 4 to 5 years prior to adoption.

The majority of children were adopted by couples (92%, 285). However, a small number were adopted by single adopters. Where this happened, the single adopter was typically female. Children were typically not adopted by their foster carer – this only occurred in 25 out of 310 cases in 2019 (8%).

Trends in the numbers subject to special guardianship orders (SGOs)

Special guardianship orders are intended as a permanent arrangement providing a legally secure placement, whilst parental responsibilities are given to the child’s special guardian, they are not required to sever the legal relationship with their birth parents.

Figure 10: Episodes ceasing as a result of special guardianship orders



Source: Stats Wales (2019e)

As with adoption and reunification, the number of episodes ceasing as a result of SGOs has also been falling – since 2015 there has been a 30% fall. This is also faster than the rate at which the overall number of exits has fallen over the same period.

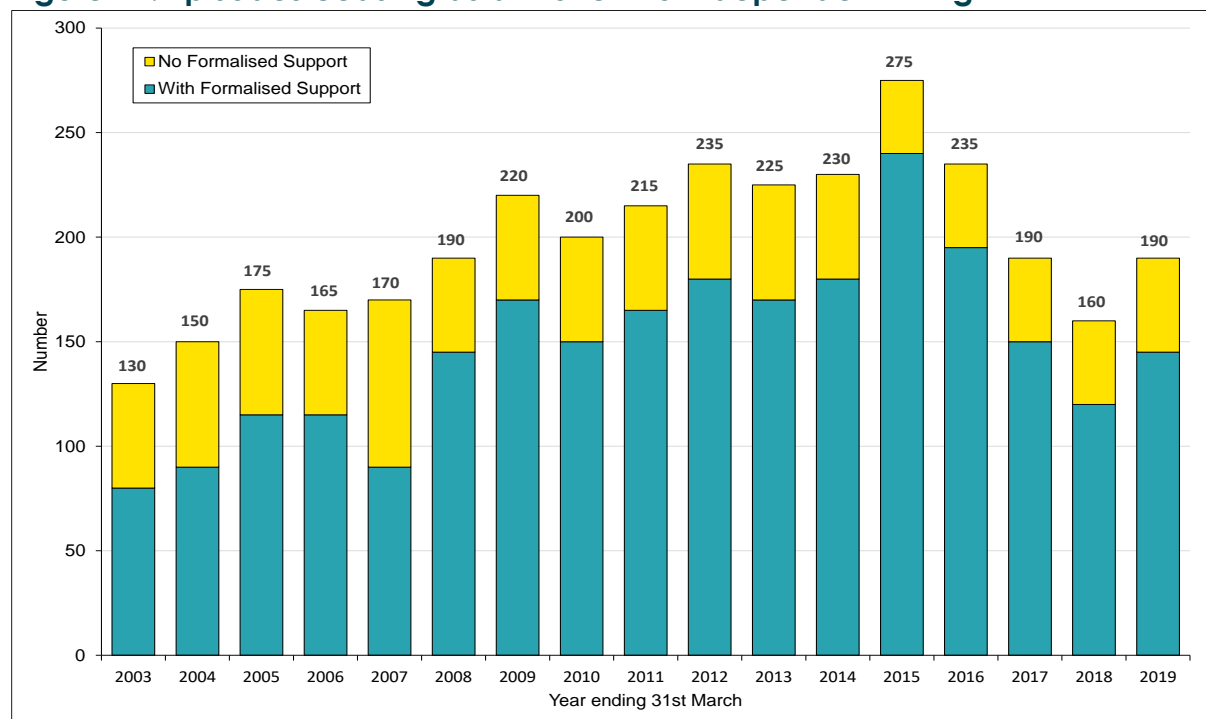
Trends in the numbers ceasing to be looked after who move into independent living arrangements

Independent living arrangements are broadly divided between:

- Supportive accommodation providing formalised advice/support arrangements (e.g. most hostels, YMCAs, foyers, and care leavers projects), and
- Moved into independent living arrangement and no longer looked after: accommodation providing no formalised advice/support arrangements (e.g. B&B, bedsit, own flat, living with friends)

Those children living independently tend to be older. On 31st March 2019, there were approximately 125 children looked after who were living independently with no formalised advice or support arrangements. Of these 80% (100) were aged 17, the remainder were aged 16 (Welsh Government, 2020b).

Figure 11: Episodes ceasing as a move into independent living

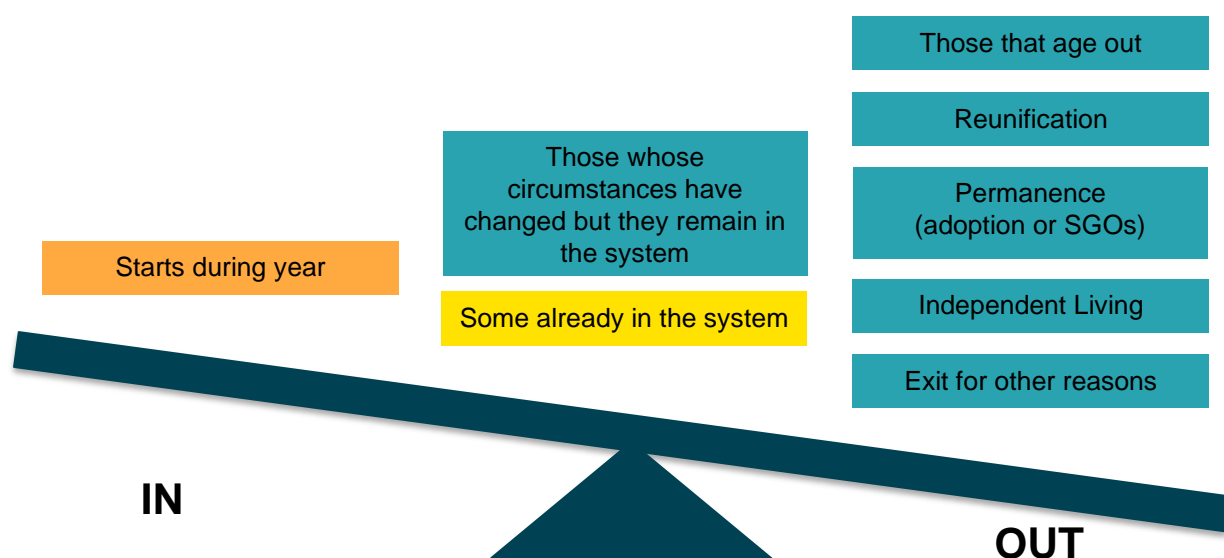


Source: Stats Wales (2019e)

As can be seen from Figure 11, the numbers leaving care to move into independent living had been increasing until 2015. Since then number have been falling although there was an increase in the number of episodes ending for this reason in the year to 31st March 2019, returning to the broad trend seen prior to 2009.

Conclusion

Whilst thinking about the children looked after cohort as a system where there are flows in and out is potentially an overly simplistic approach, it highlights how reducing the numbers entering care is not sufficient if we wish to reduce the overall numbers of children looked after in Wales. There is also a need to focus on children and young people safely exiting the system – for example, through permanence arrangements such as adoption or SGOs, or through successful reunification with the family. Where it is in the best interests of the individual child this could also mean a move into supported independent living arrangements until they reach the age of 18.



Since this briefing relies on data available in the public domain, it is not possible to get a sense of the age profile of those entering care, how long they are remaining in care or what proportion of starts relate to returnees. Similarly, there is very little published information available around the characteristics of those exiting care other than as a result of adoption.

To date, Elliott (2017) has been one of the few researchers to utilise individual level data from across Wales to examine the trends around entry and re-entry into care. However, the recent creation of the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory; acquisition of Cafcass Cymru data by SAIL Databank, and requirement to provide individual level returns for the children looked after census and children receiving care and support census presents new opportunities. Approved researchers can now build upon the work of Elliott (2017) to enhance our understandings of how the care system functions and where there may be pressure points.

Whilst potentially there is scope to increase the numbers of adopters and increase the use of SGOs, there are also opportunities around reunification (Moultrie and Bilous, 2020). Elliott (2017) identified that approximately one in four of the cohort between 2008 and 2014 were

returnees i.e. they had re-entered the care system after a period of not being looked after. This study highlighted that not only were age and legal status at the start of the child's first episode of care significant determinants of the likelihood of returning for a further period of care, but so was the length of time that the child was looked after. Elliott's findings raised the question as to whether families were being given sufficient time and support to address the underlying issues which had led to the child being taken into care, especially when taken in the context of the primary reason recorded for why the child was removed from the family home. This suggests that more work needs to be undertaken to understand why reunification is not always successful and hence what can be done to reduce the incidence of children re-entering care.

Until the balance can be tipped so that there are more exits than starts, there will remain a core group who remain in care until they reach 18 and age out of the system. As highlighted in Hodges and Bristow (2019), the cohort aged 16-17 is growing at a faster rate than all other age groups, a consequence of the difficulty of exiting the system.

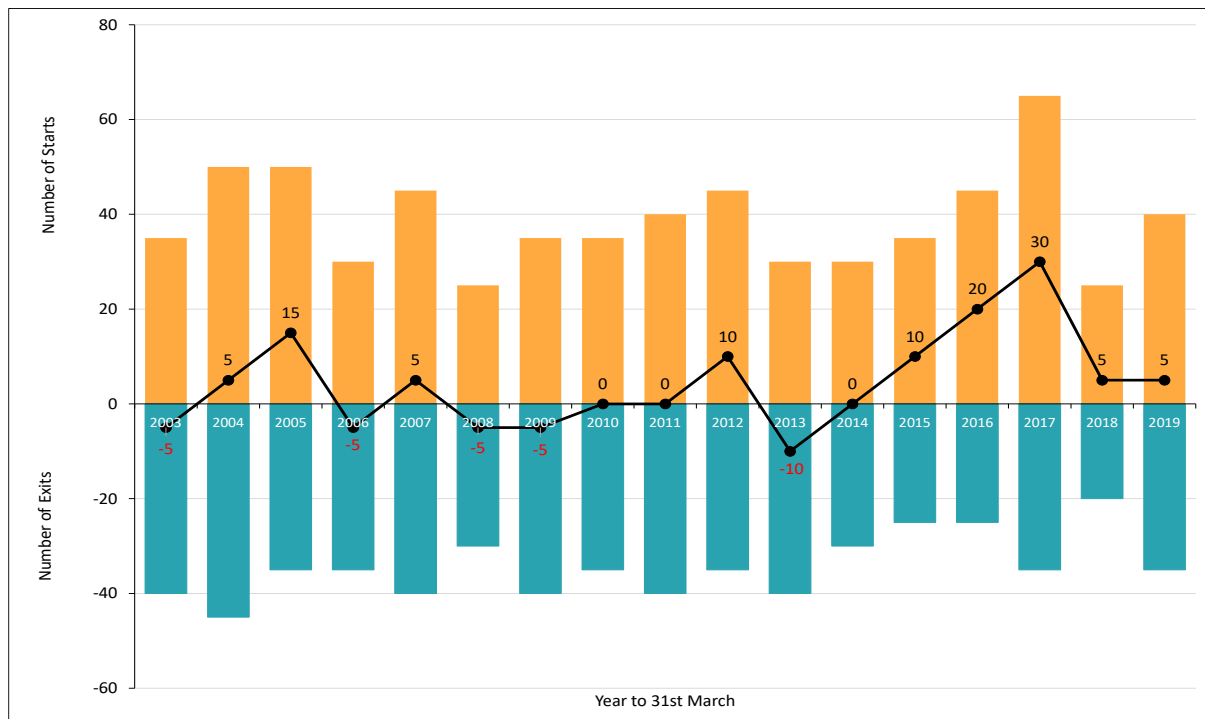
Local Authority Summaries

The following summaries have been prepared using published data on the number of children starting to be looked after and the number of exits. They do not take into account where there is re-entry into care following a period, potentially where they have returned to live with the family or another person with parental responsibility. All numbers are rounded to the nearest 5.

Whilst the reasons for episodes ceasing are published, in some instances they are subject to suppression and hence have not been reproduced here as it is not possible to present the trends for every local authority.

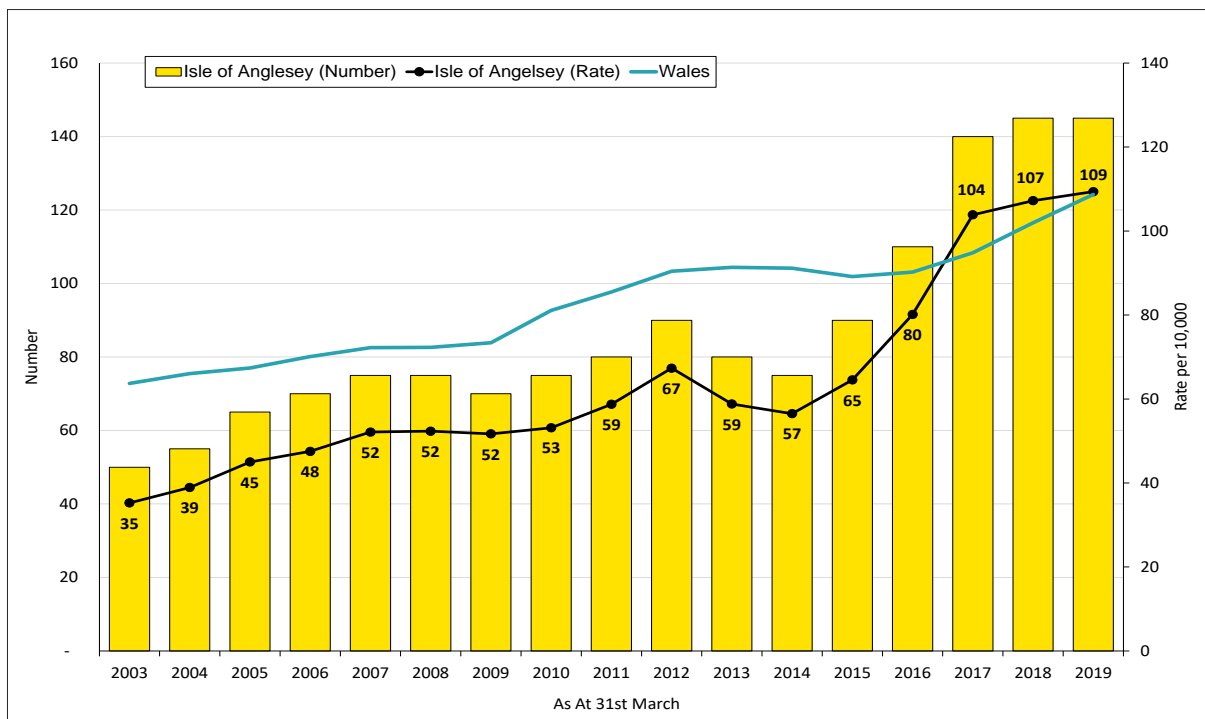
| Figure Reference | Area | Page |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| A1 and A2 | Isle of Anglesey | 27 |
| A3 and A4 | Gwynedd | 28 |
| A5 and A6 | Conwy | 29 |
| A7 and A8 | Denbighshire | 30 |
| A9 and A10 | Flintshire | 31 |
| A11 and A12 | Wrexham | 32 |
| A13 and A14 | Powys | 33 |
| A15 and A16 | Ceredigion | 34 |
| A17 and A18 | Pembrokeshire | 35 |
| A19 and A20 | Carmarthenshire | 36 |
| A21 and A22 | Swansea | 37 |
| A23 and A24 | Neath Port Talbot | 38 |
| A25 and A26 | Bridgend | 39 |
| A27 and A28 | Vale of Glamorgan | 40 |
| A29 and A30 | Cardiff | 41 |
| A31 and A32 | Rhondda Cynon Taf | 42 |
| A33 and A34 | Merthyr Tydfil | 43 |
| A35 and A36 | Caerphilly | 44 |
| A37 and A38 | Blaenau Gwent | 45 |
| A39 and A40 | Torfaen | 46 |
| A41 and A42 | Monmouthshire | 47 |
| A43 and A44 | Newport | 48 |

Figure A1: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Isle of Anglesey



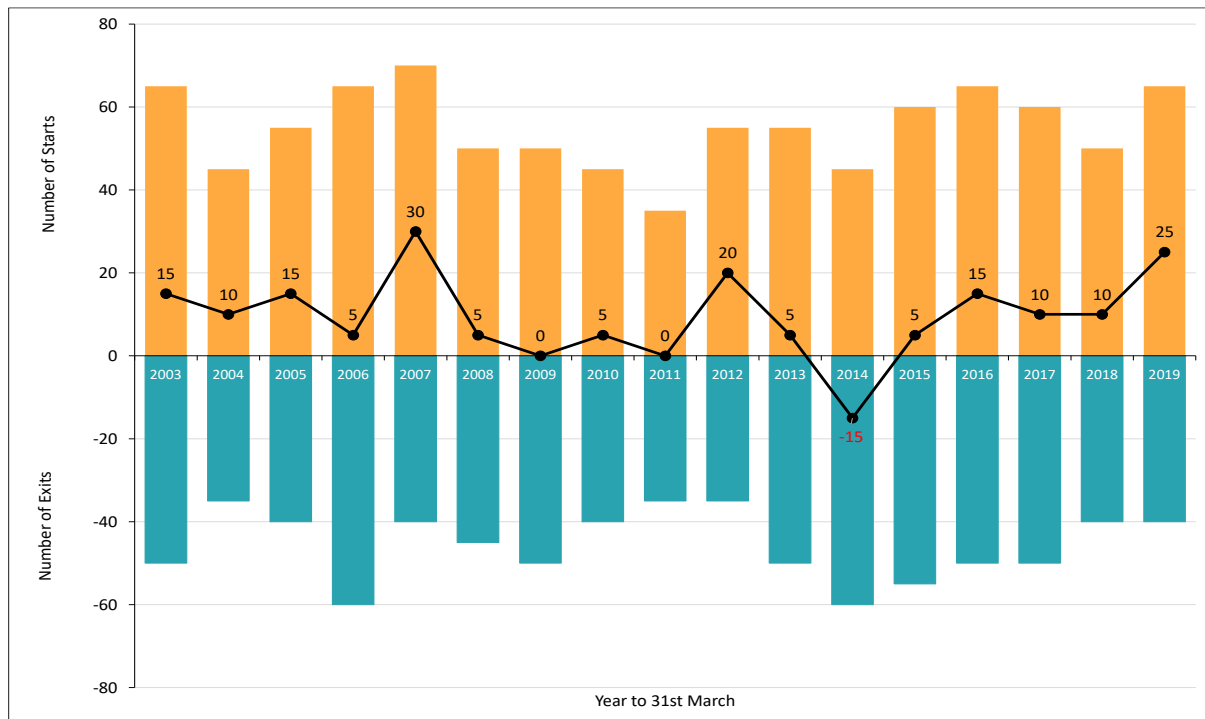
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A2: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Isle of Anglesey



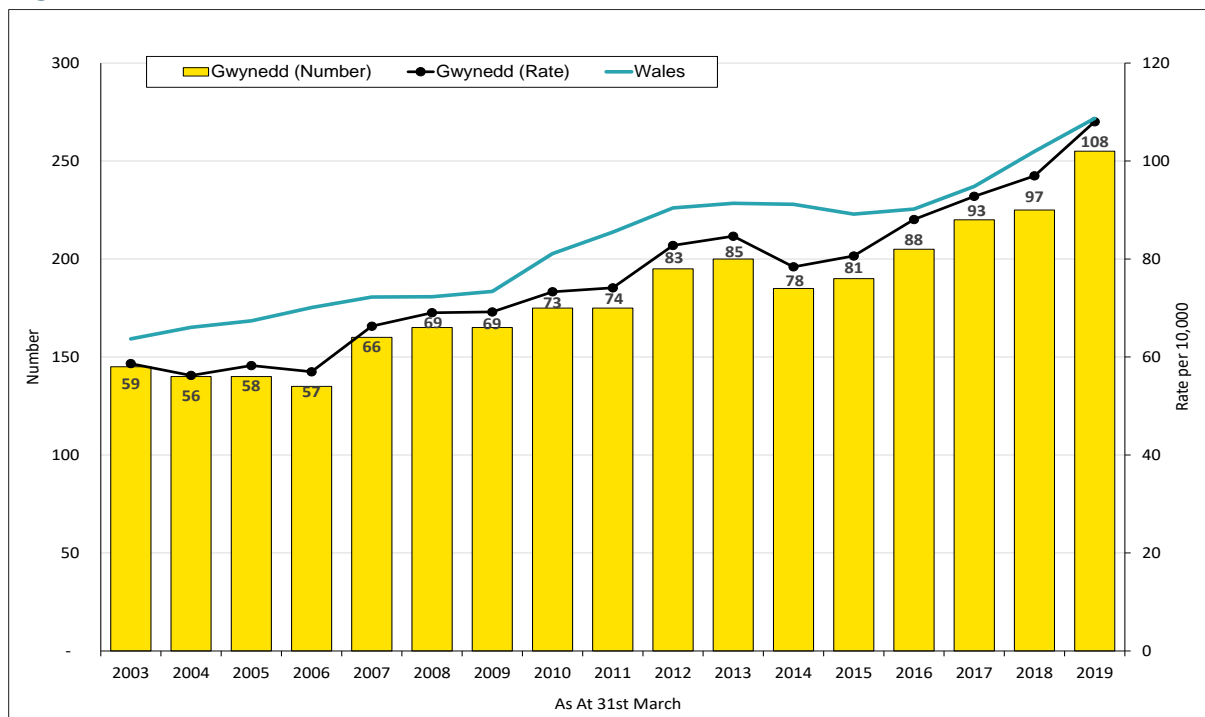
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A3: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Gwynedd



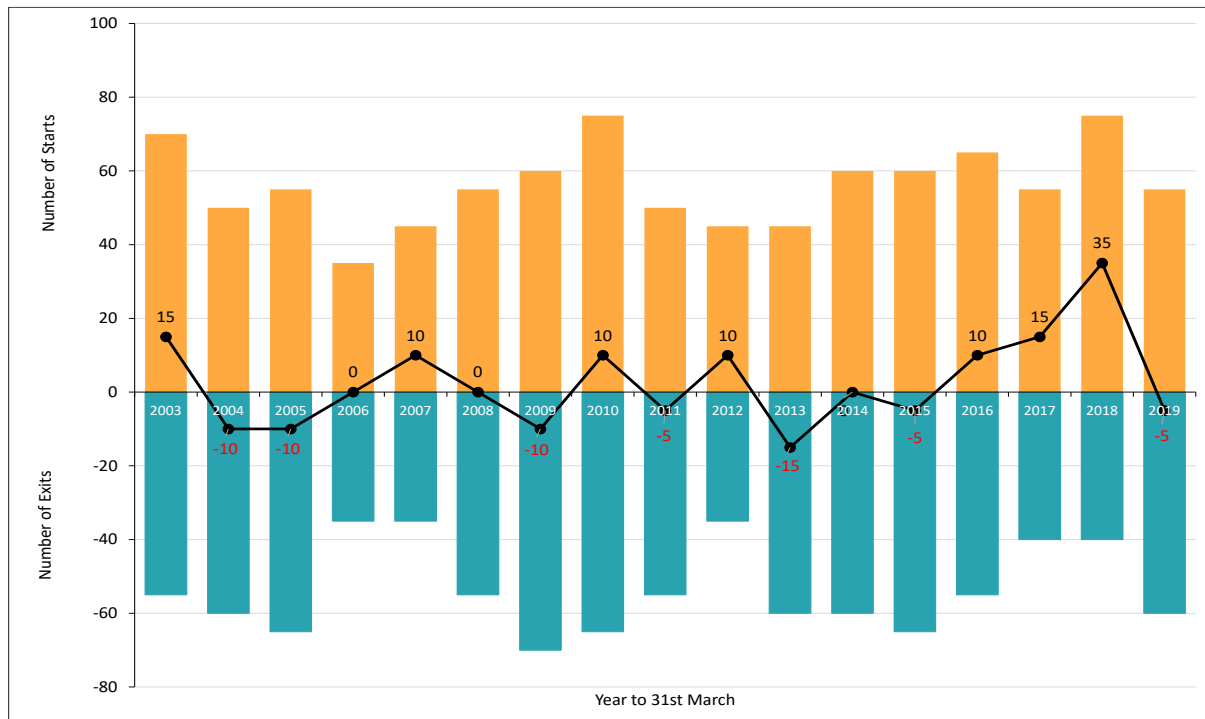
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A4: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Gwynedd



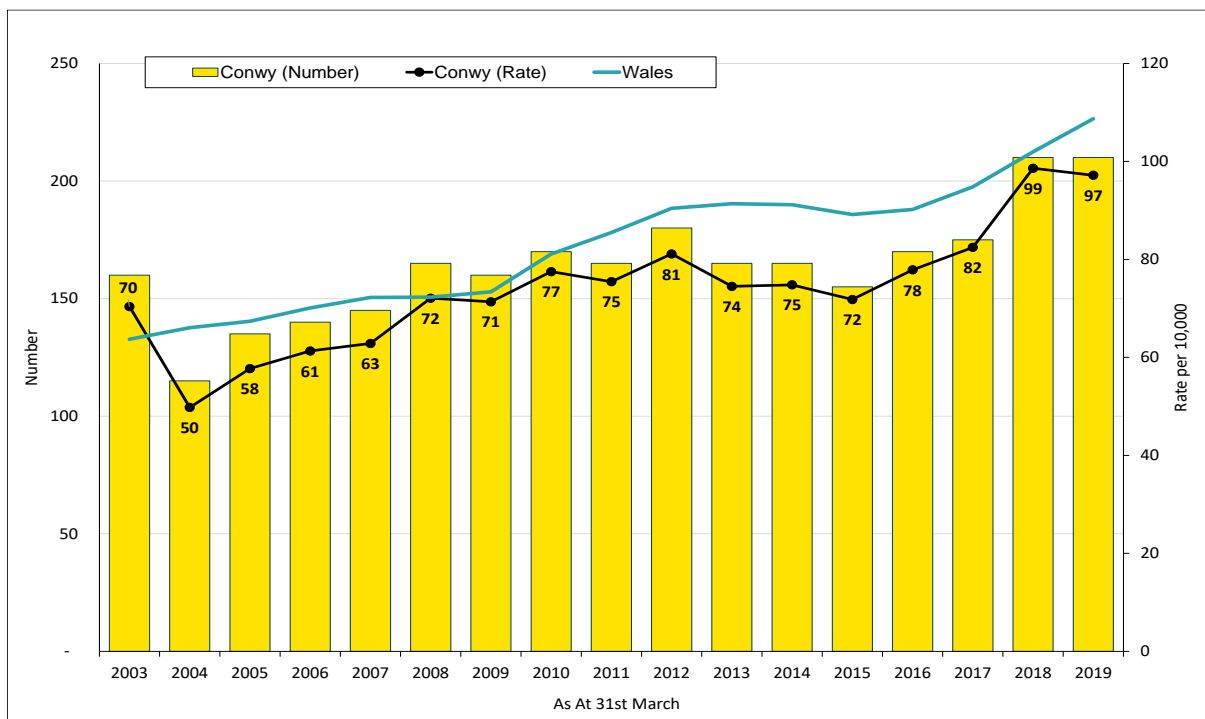
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A5: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Conwy



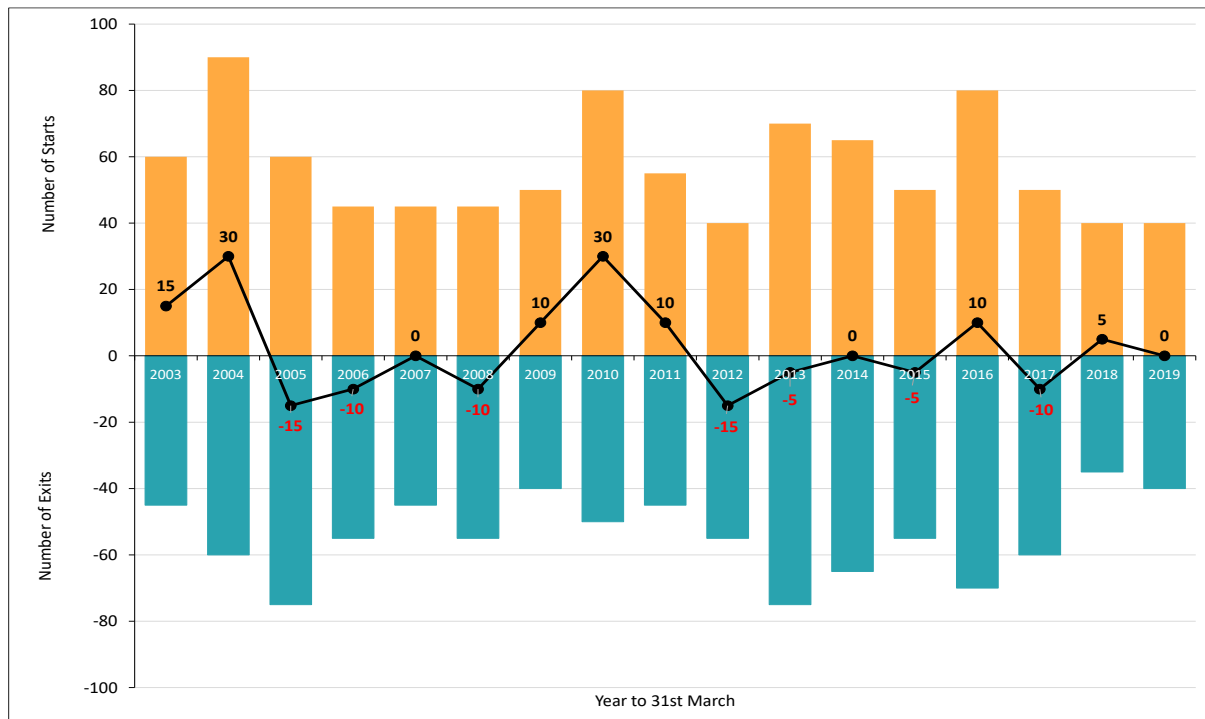
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A6: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Conwy



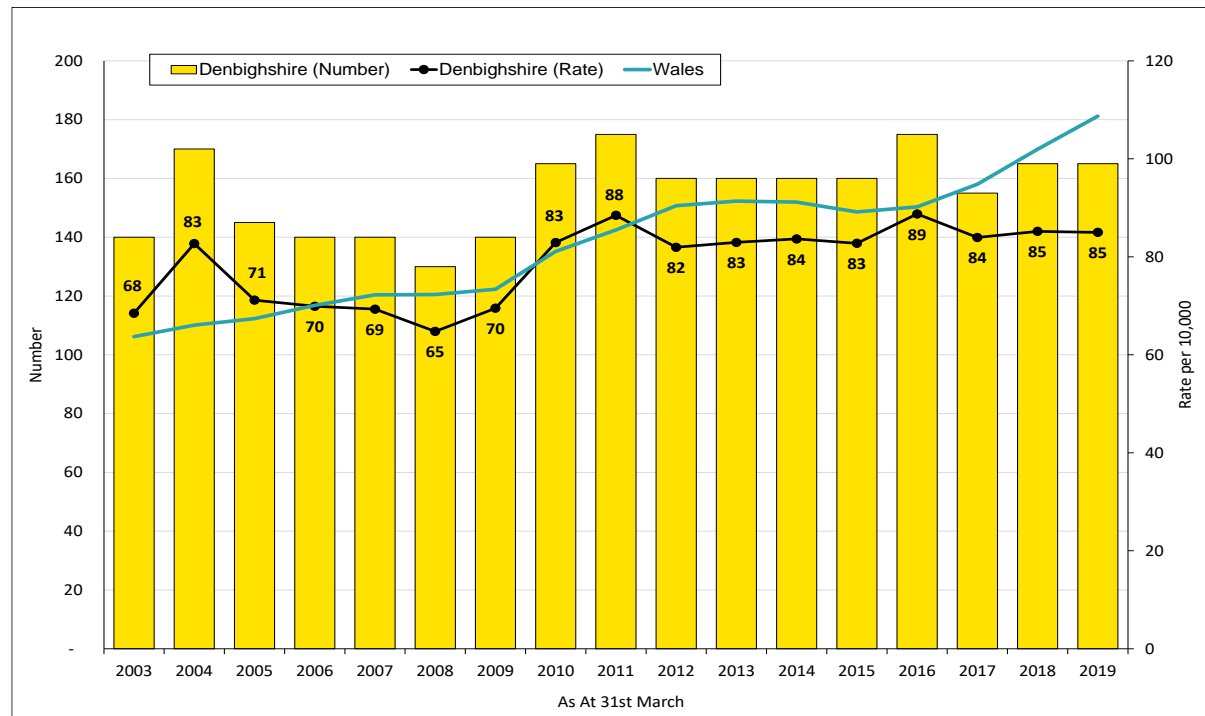
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A7: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Denbighshire



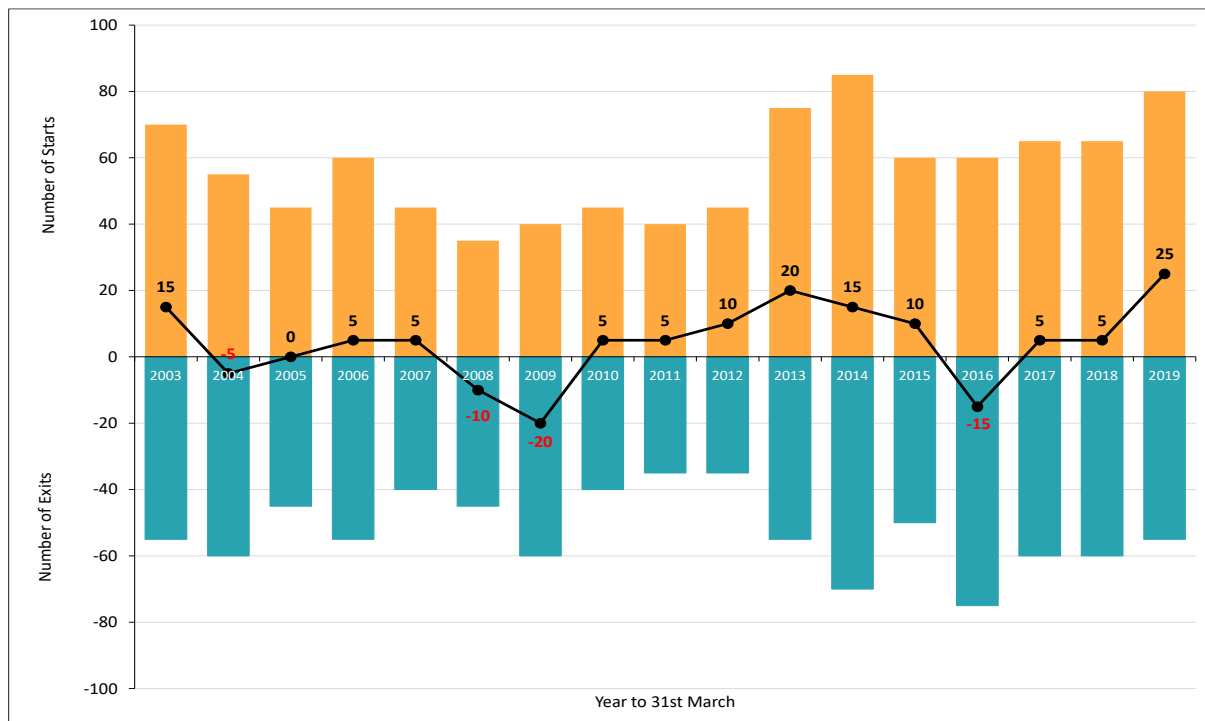
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A8: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Denbighshire



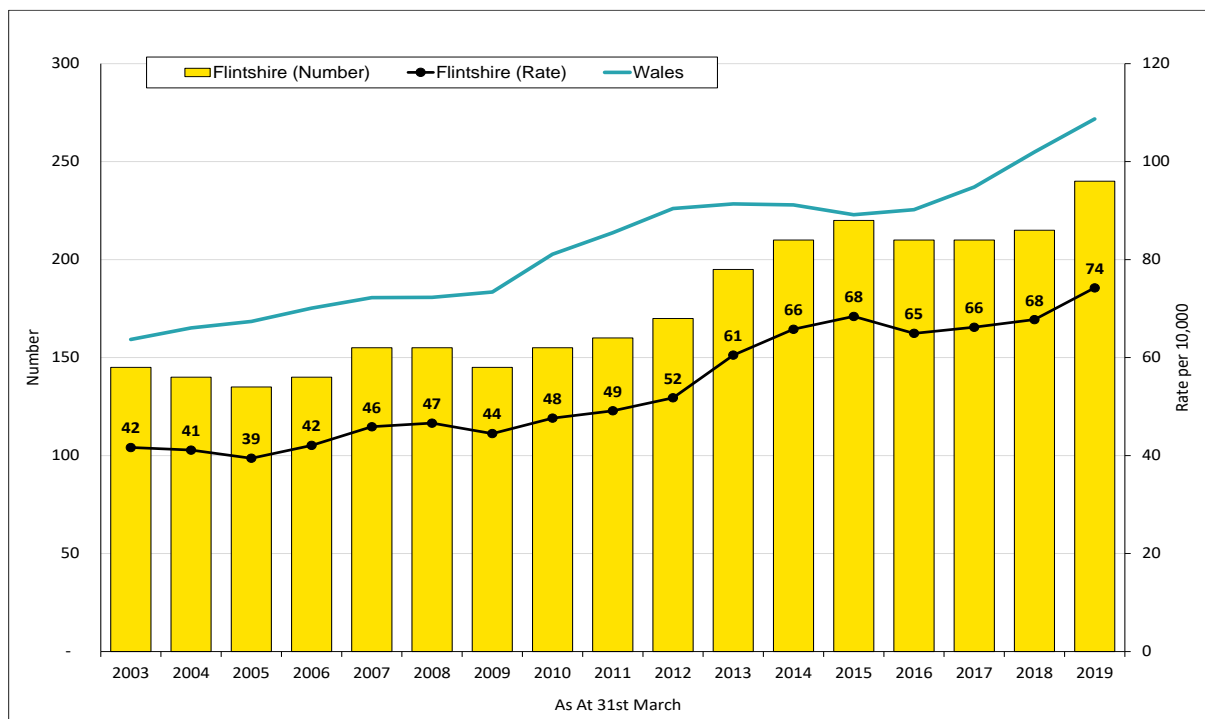
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A9: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Flintshire



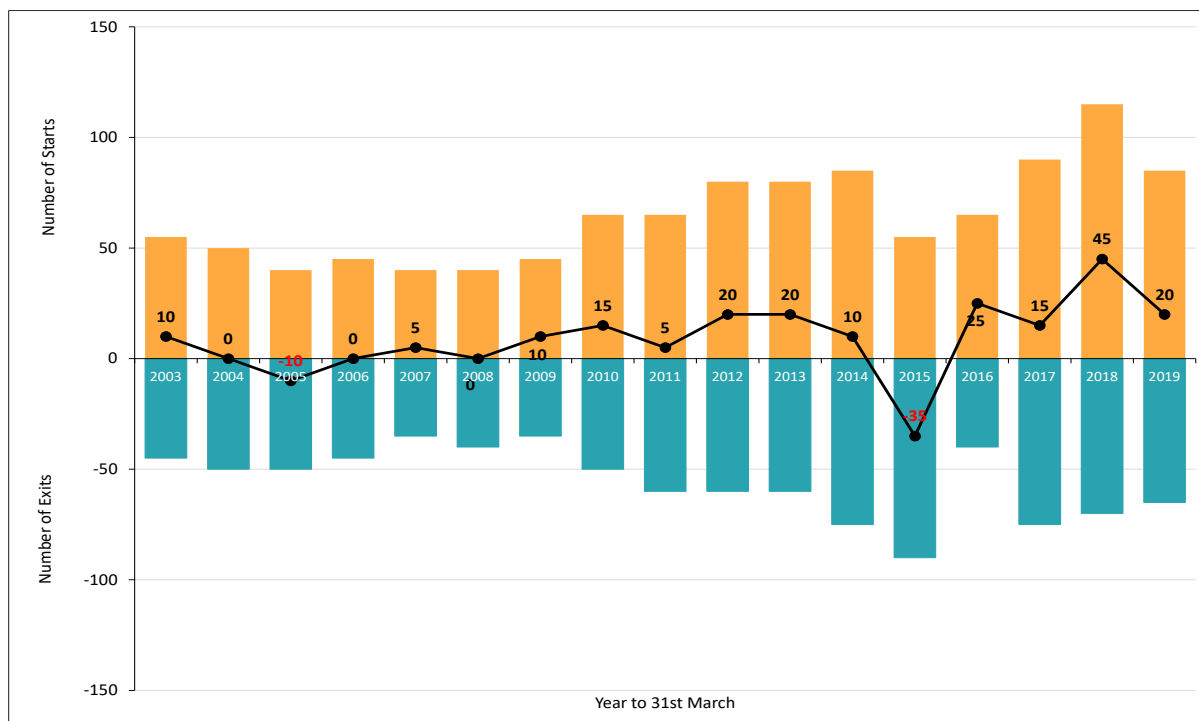
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A10: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Flintshire



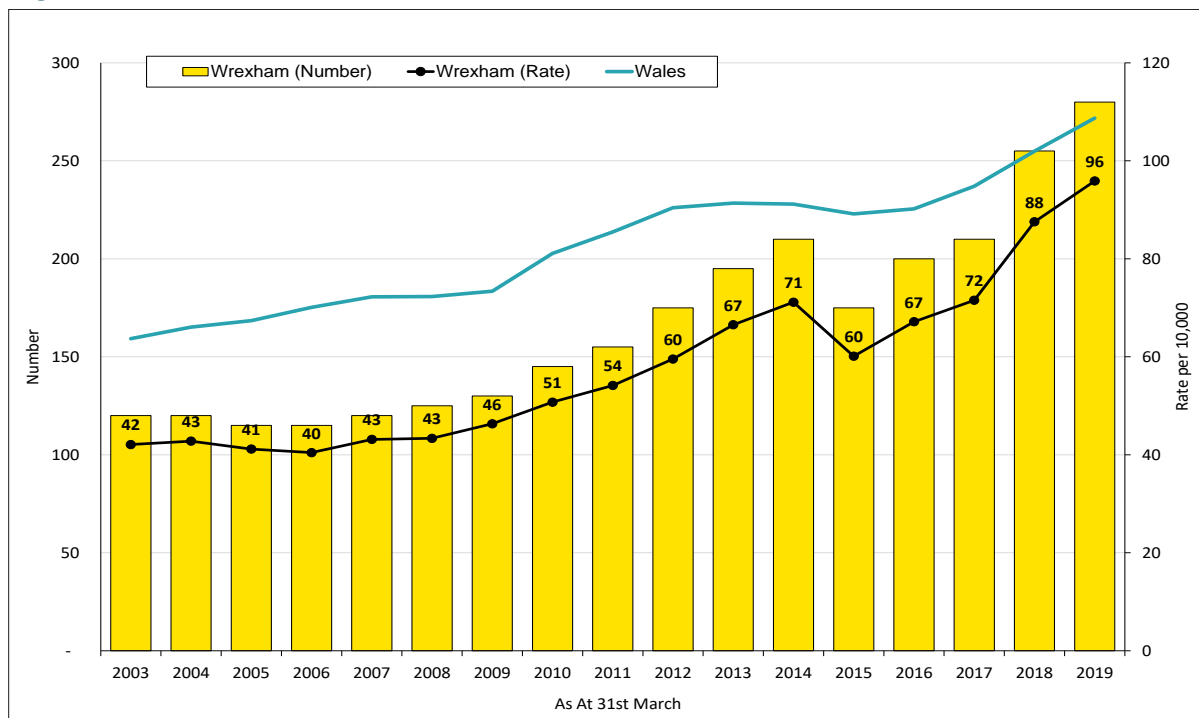
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A11: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Wrexham



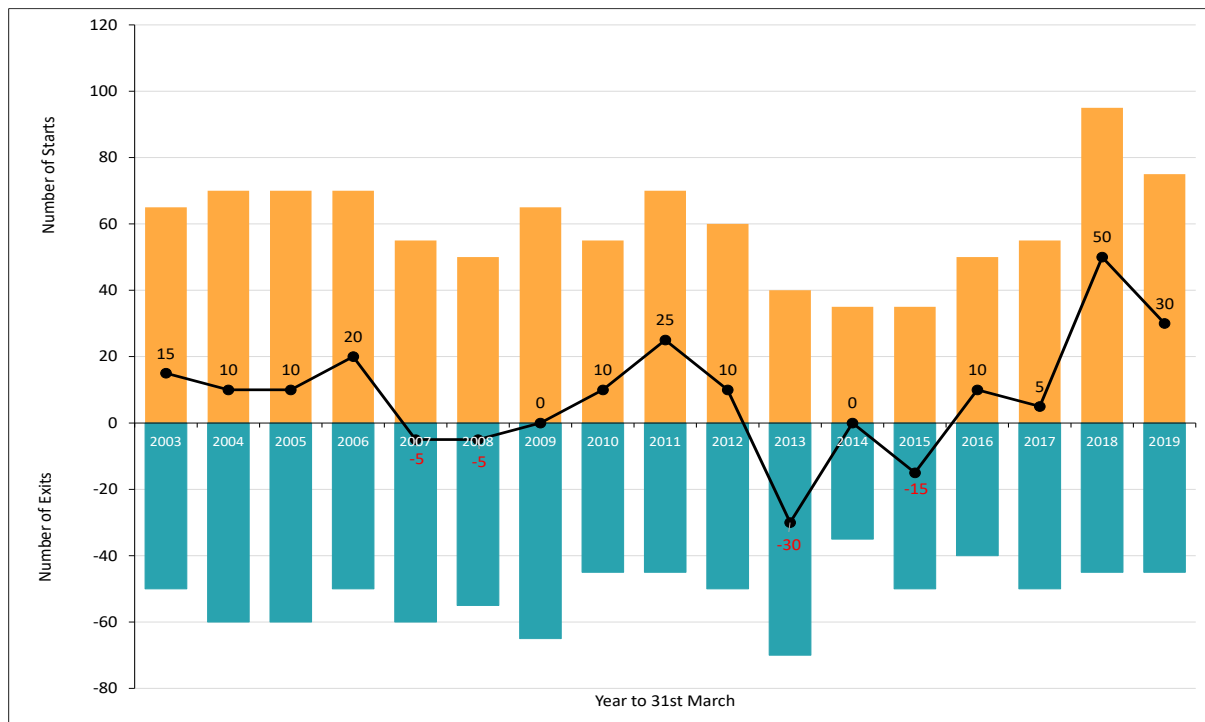
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A12: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Wrexham



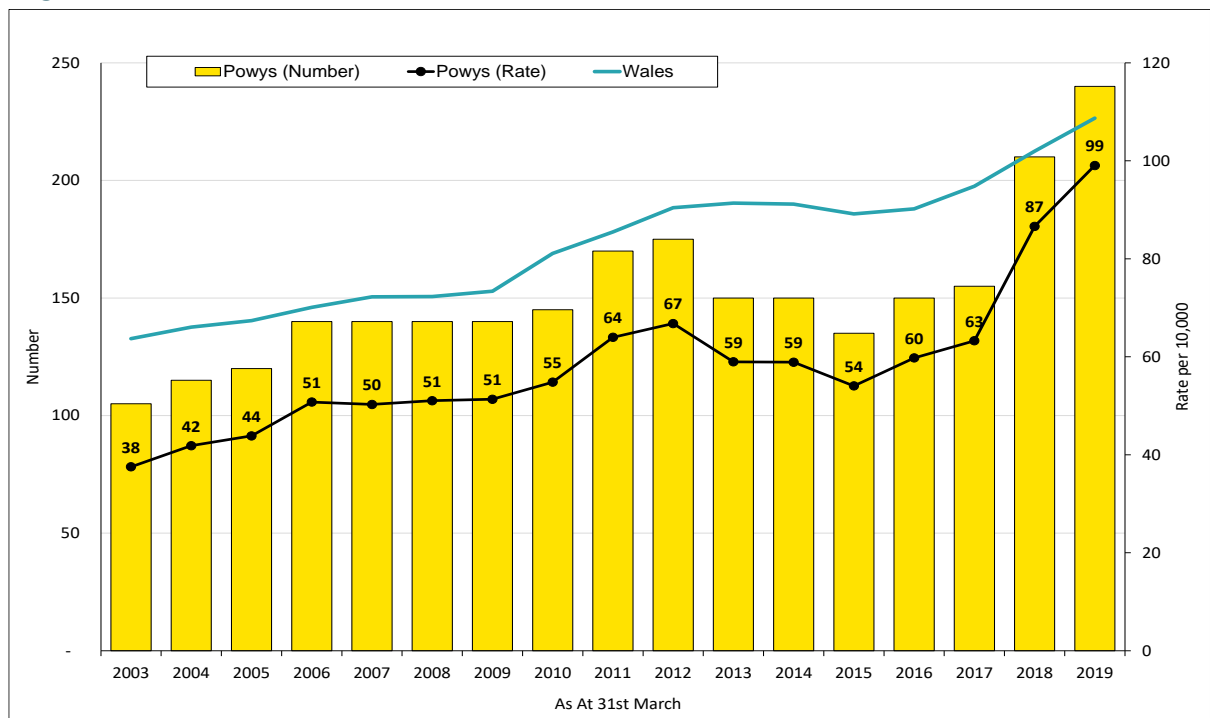
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A13: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Powys



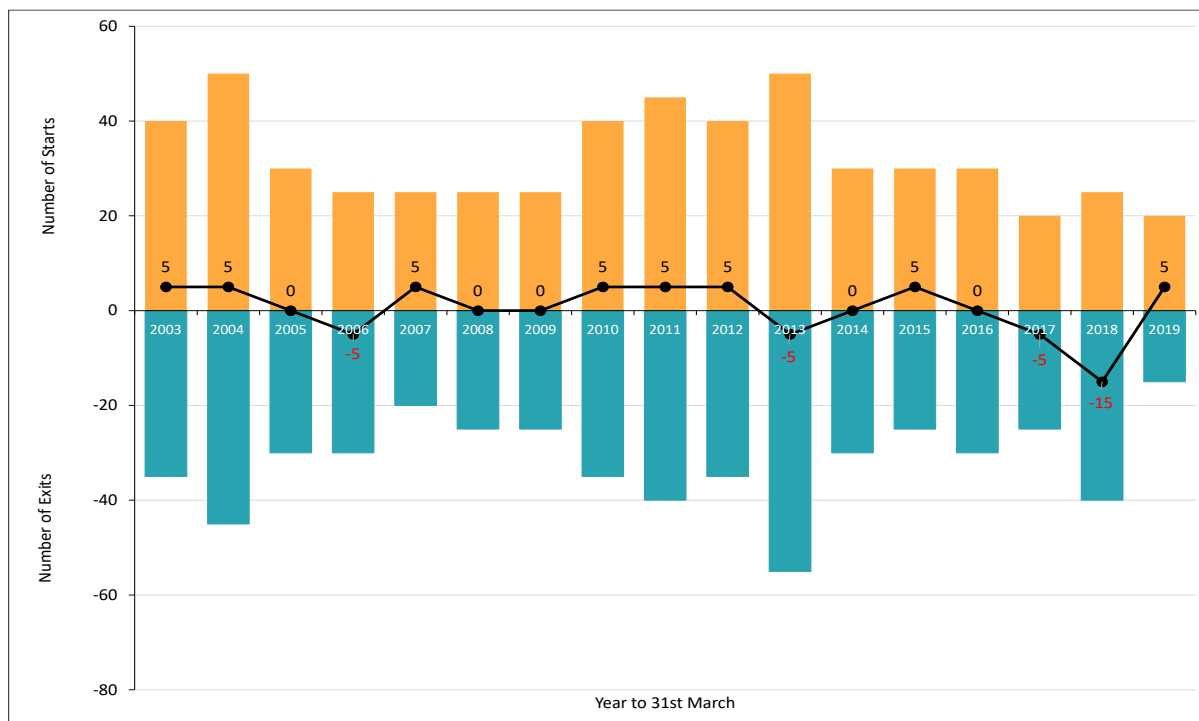
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A14: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Powys



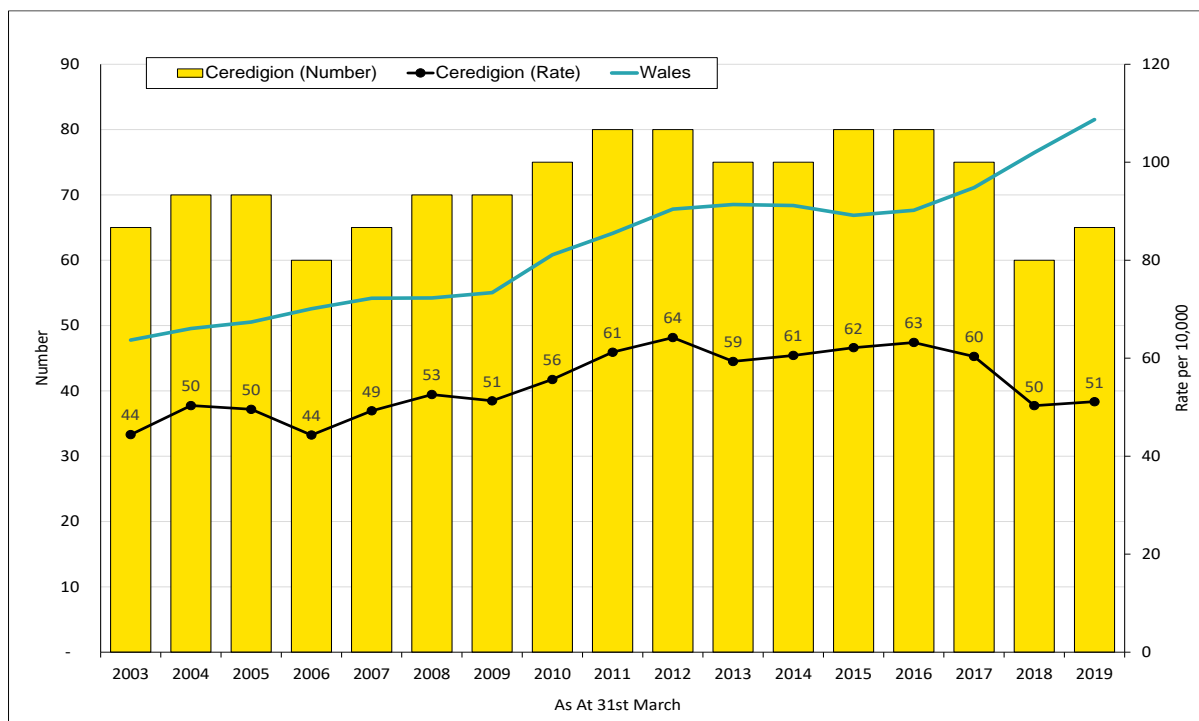
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A15: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Ceredigion



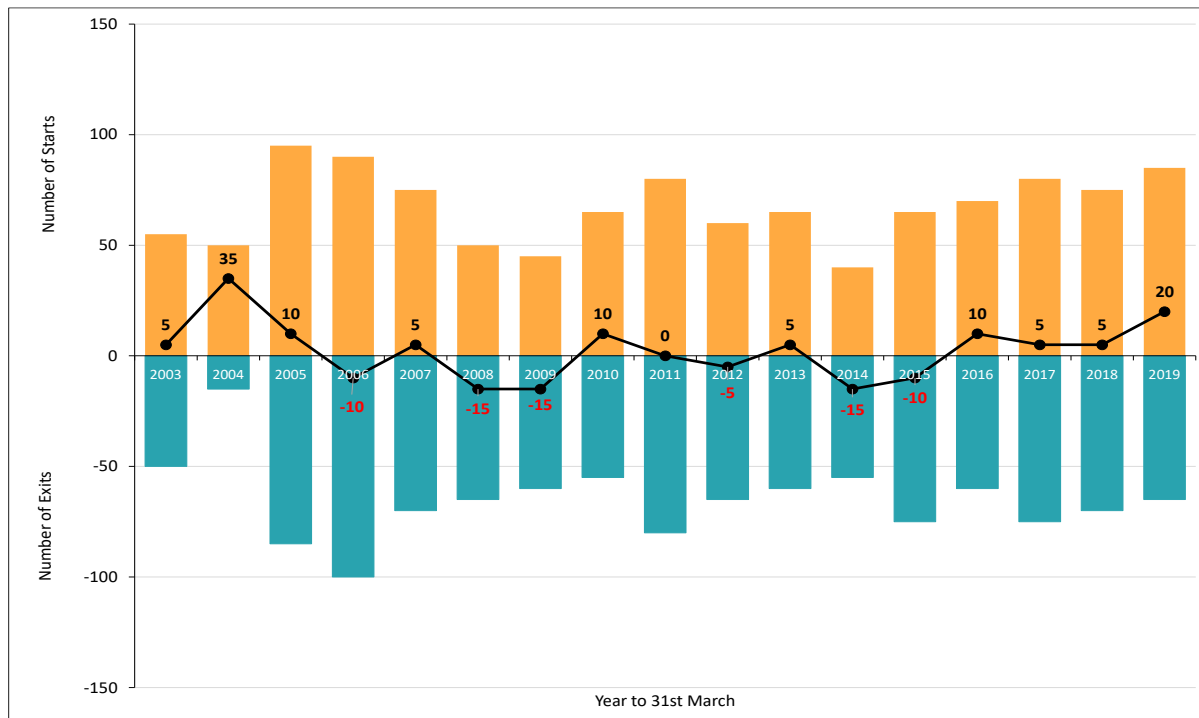
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e)

Figure A16: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Ceredigion



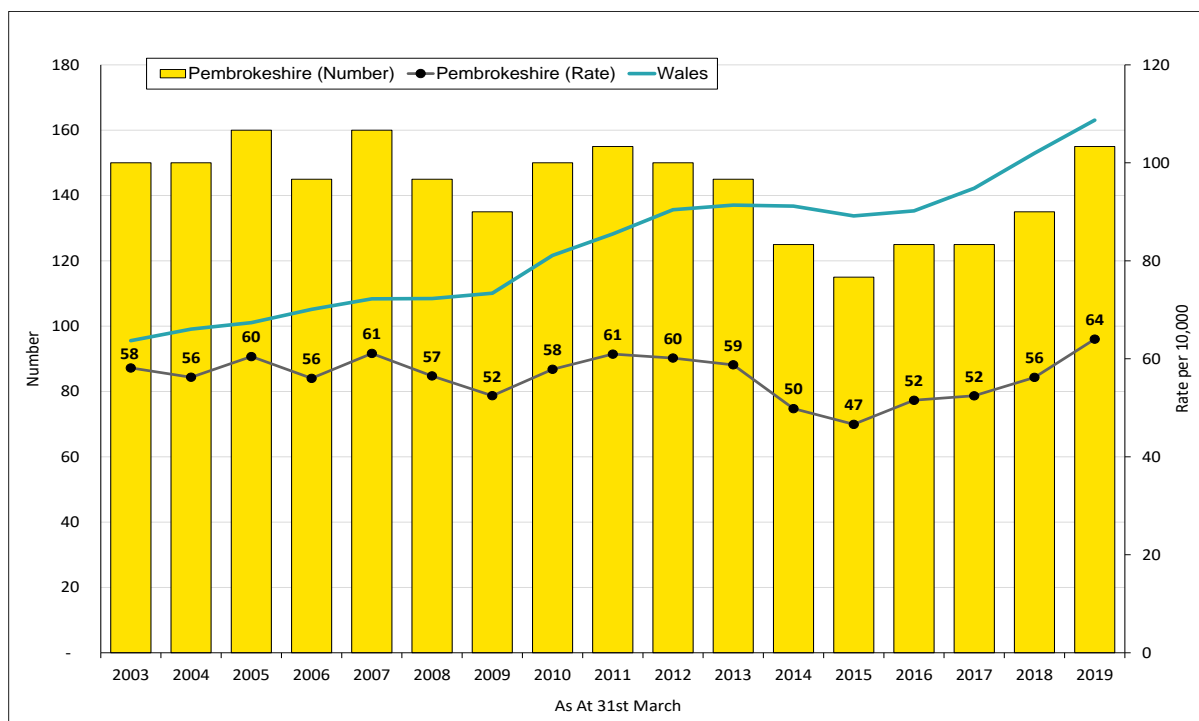
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A17: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Pembrokeshire



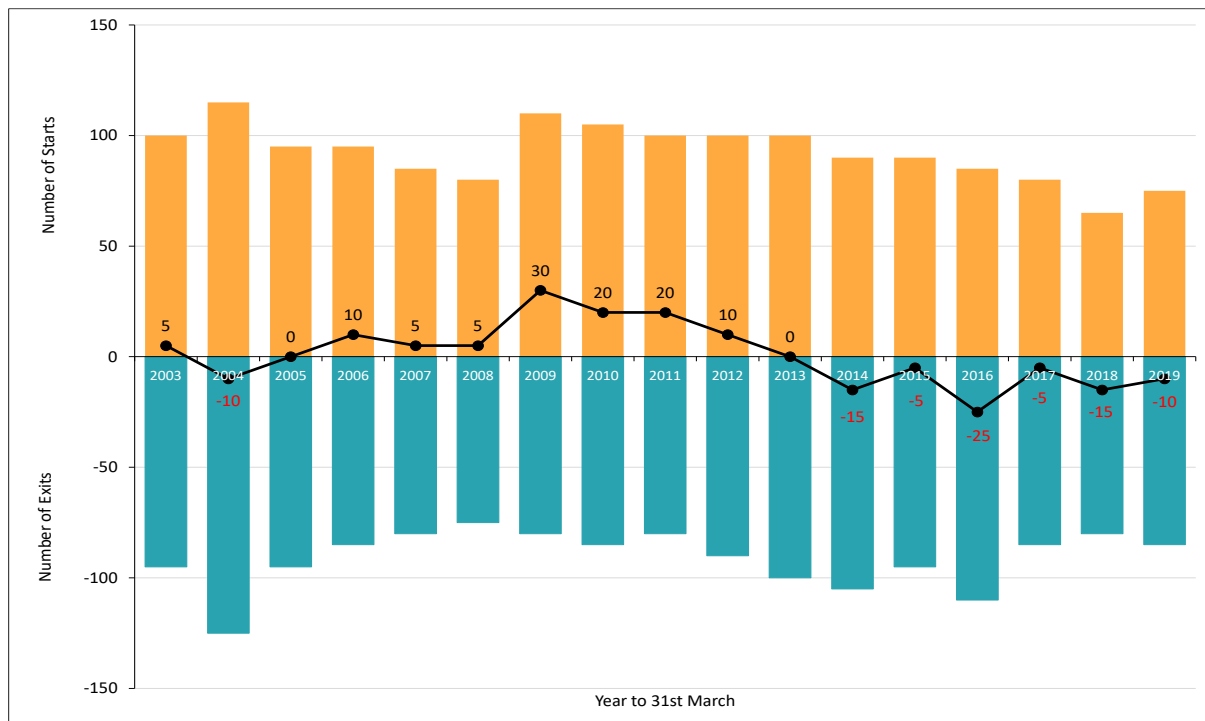
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A18: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Pembrokeshire



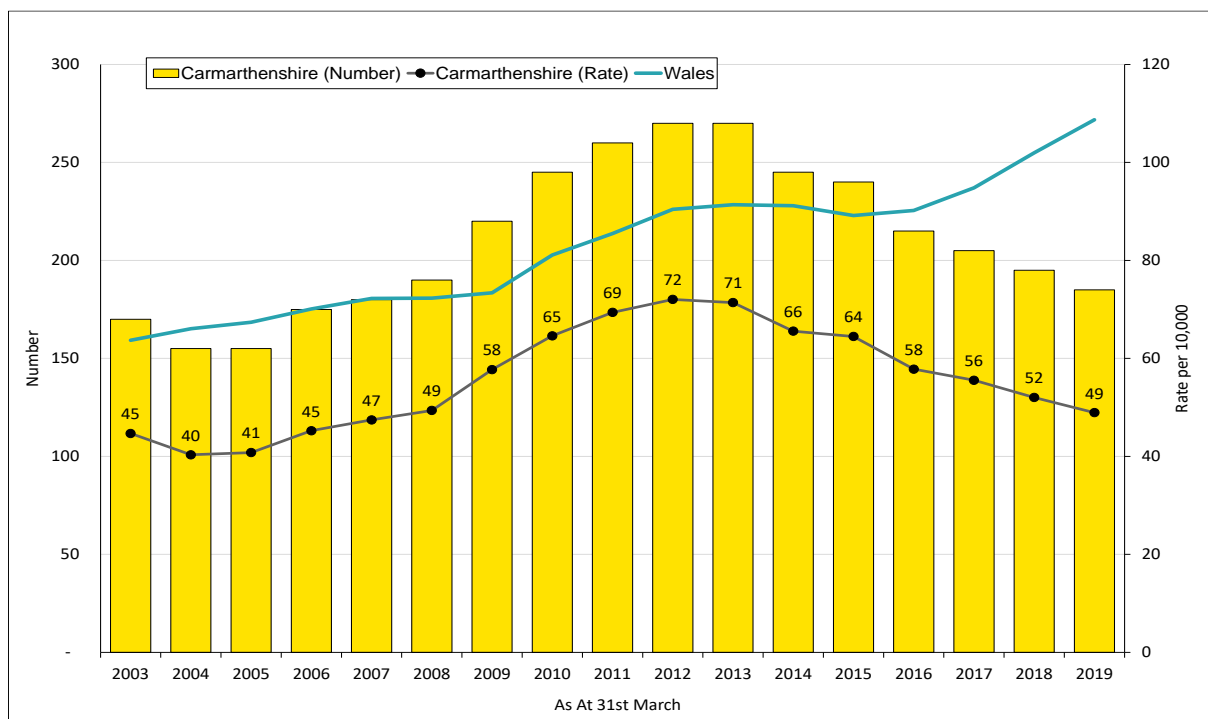
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A19: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Carmarthenshire



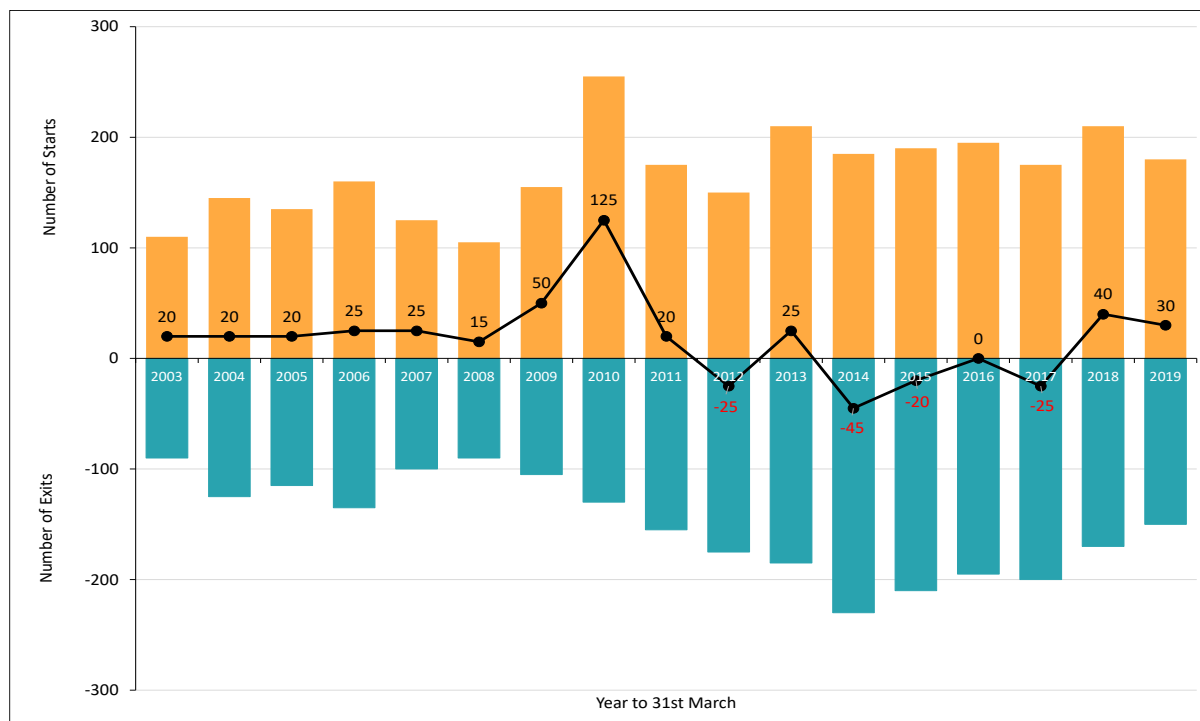
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e)

Figure A20: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Carmarthenshire



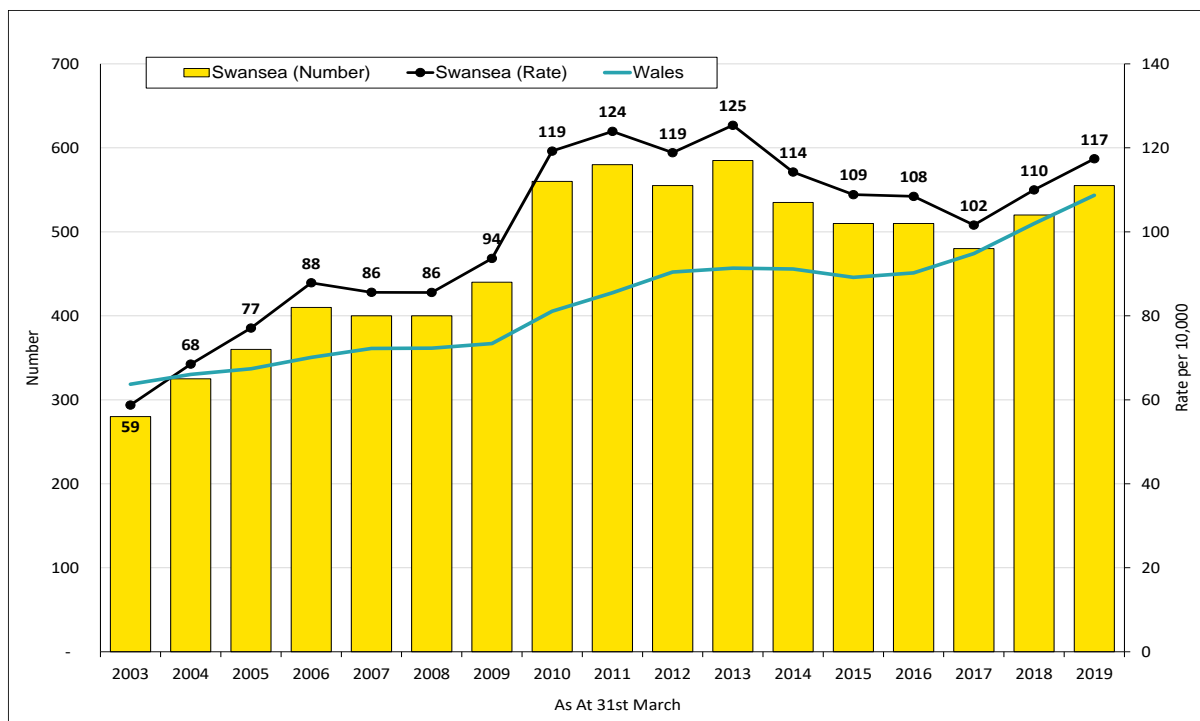
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A21: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Swansea



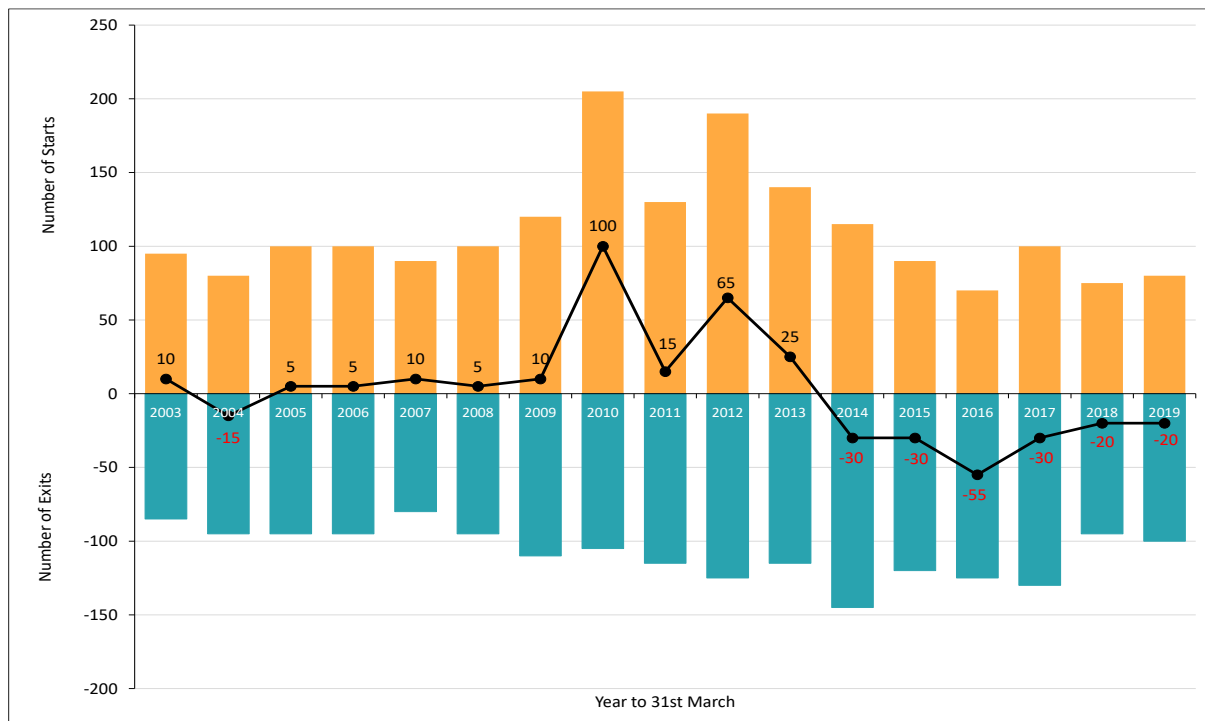
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A22: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Swansea



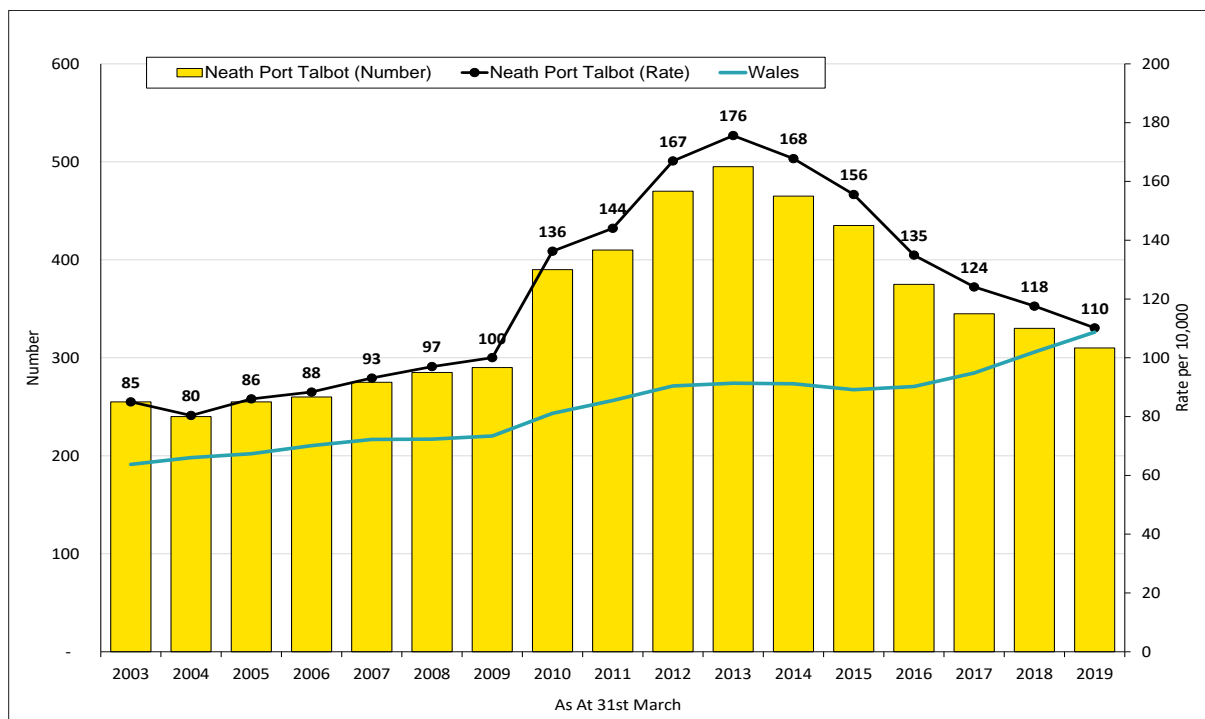
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A23: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Neath Port Talbot



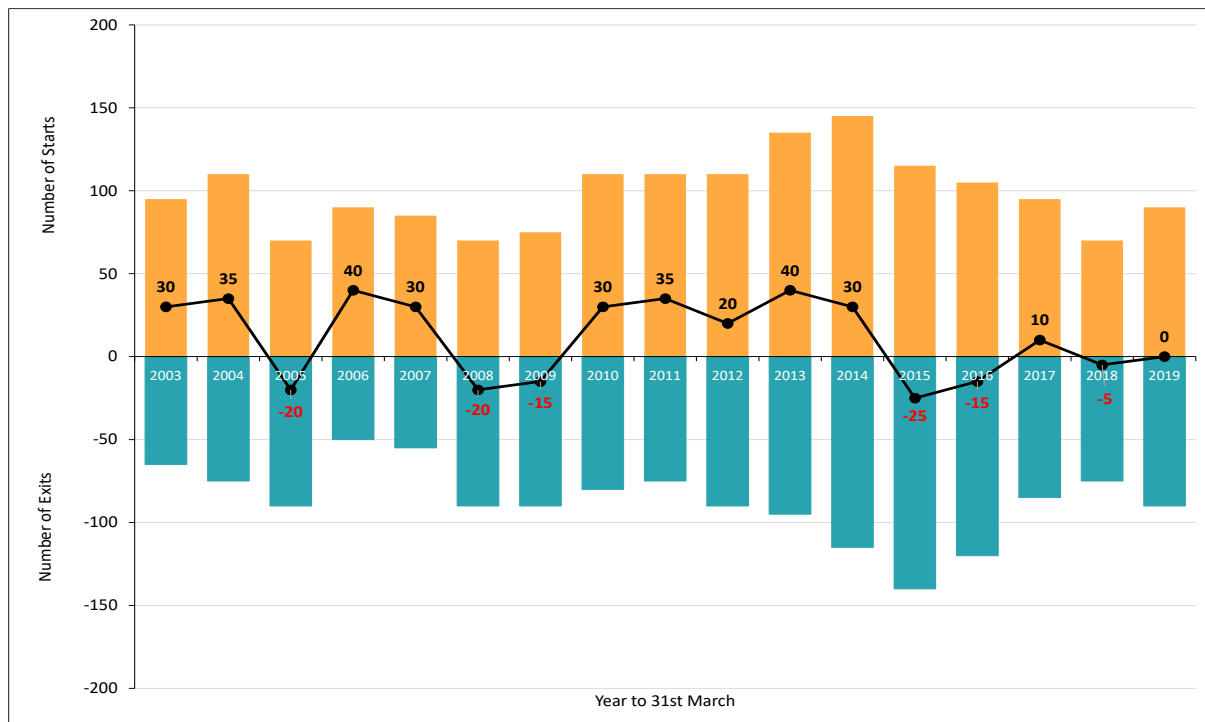
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A24: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Neath Port Talbot



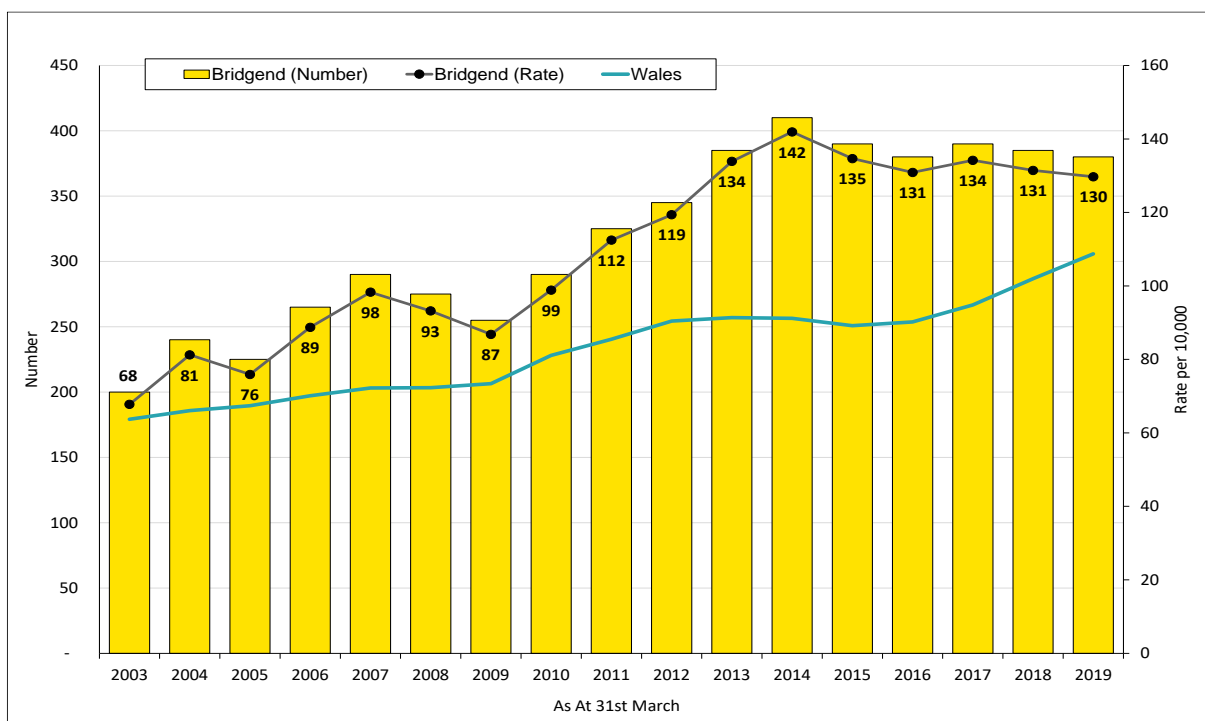
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A25: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Bridgend



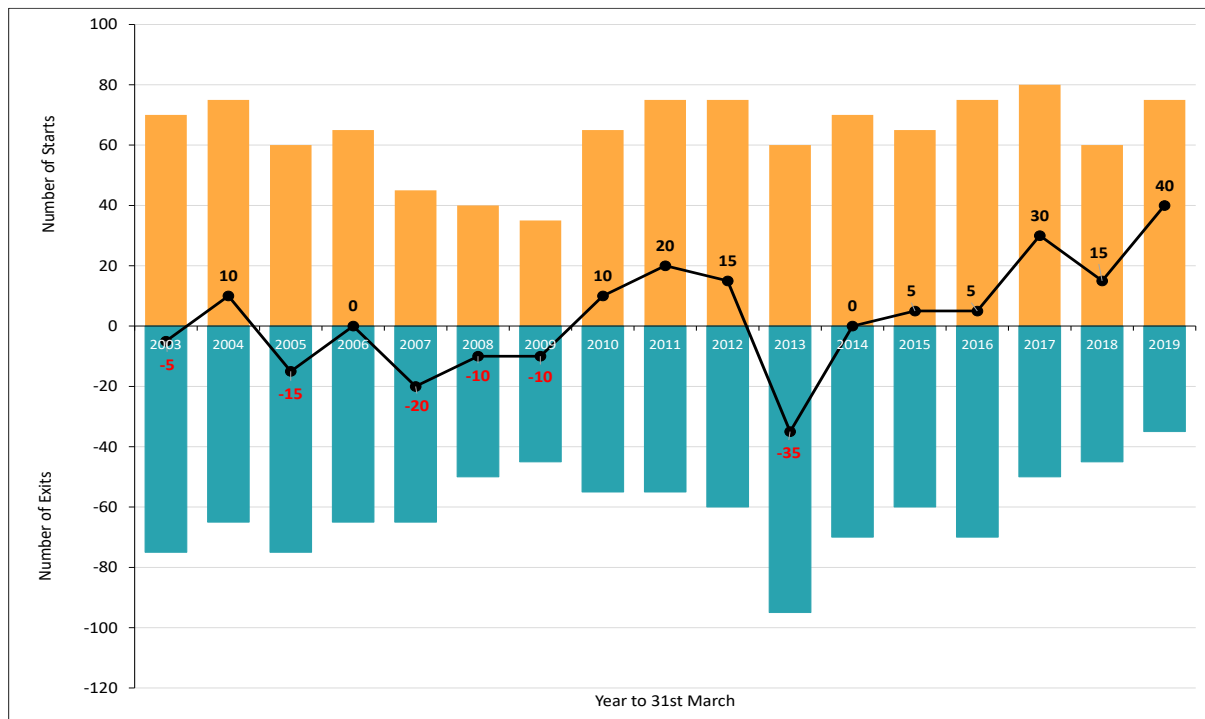
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A26: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Bridgend



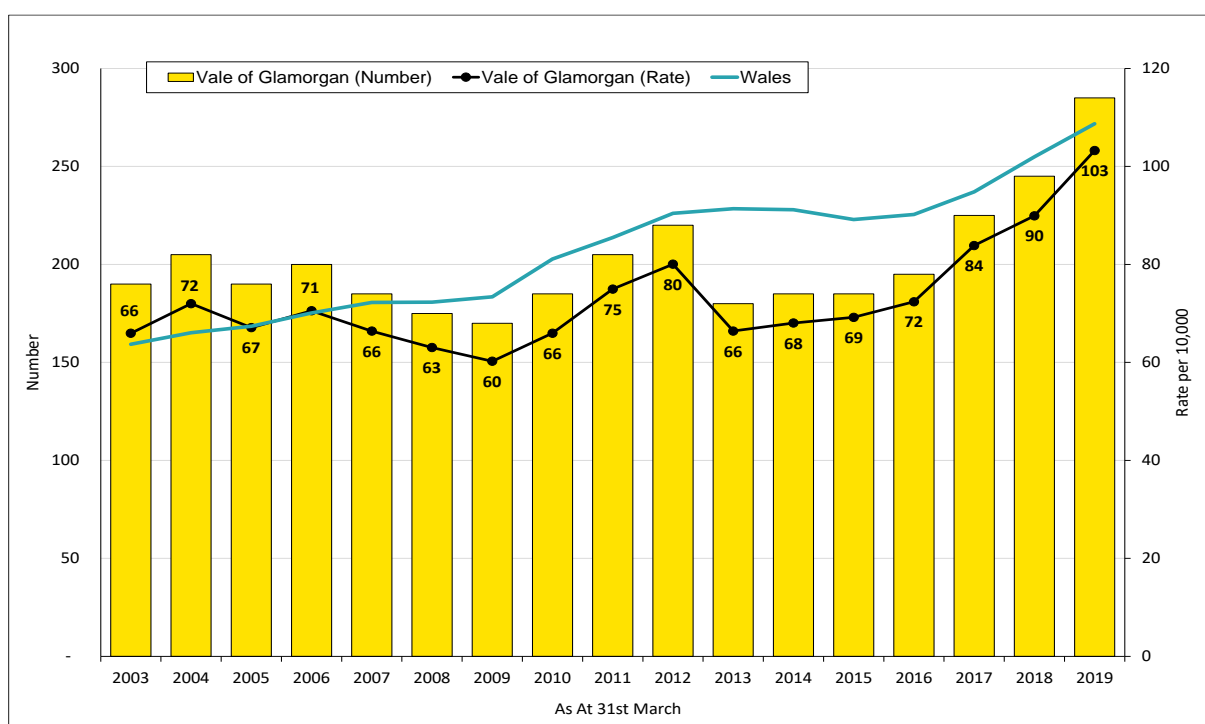
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A27: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Vale of Glamorgan



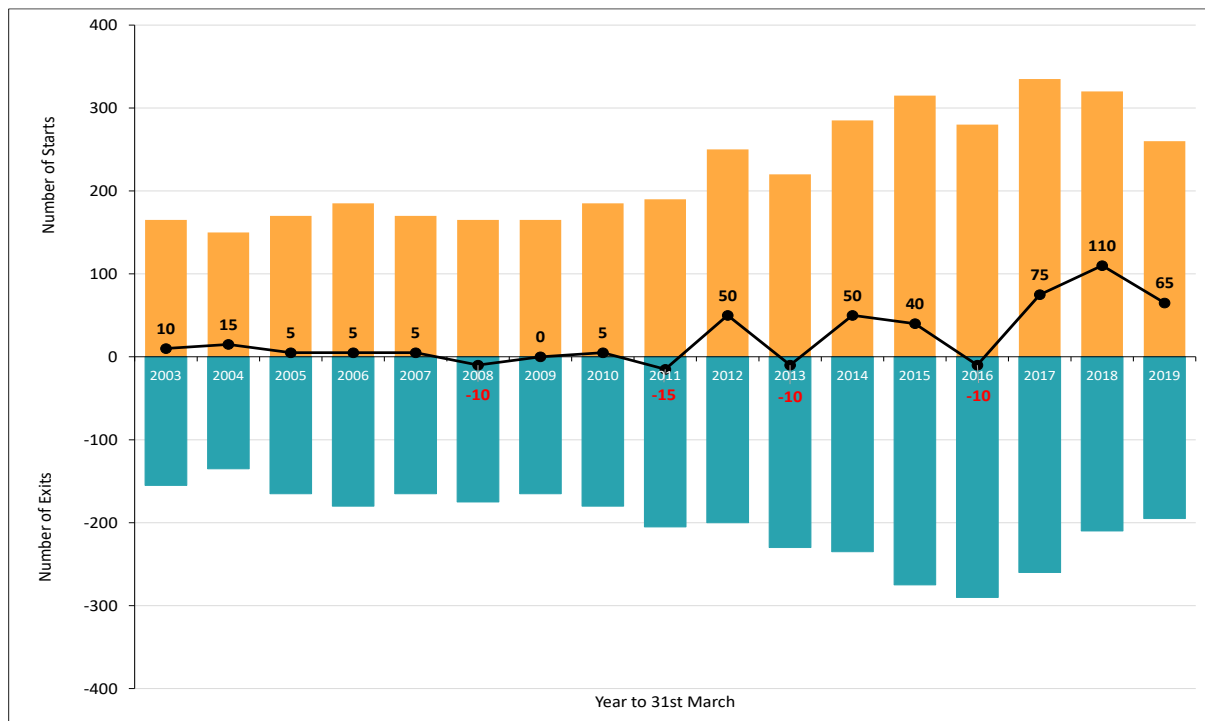
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A28: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Vale of Glamorgan



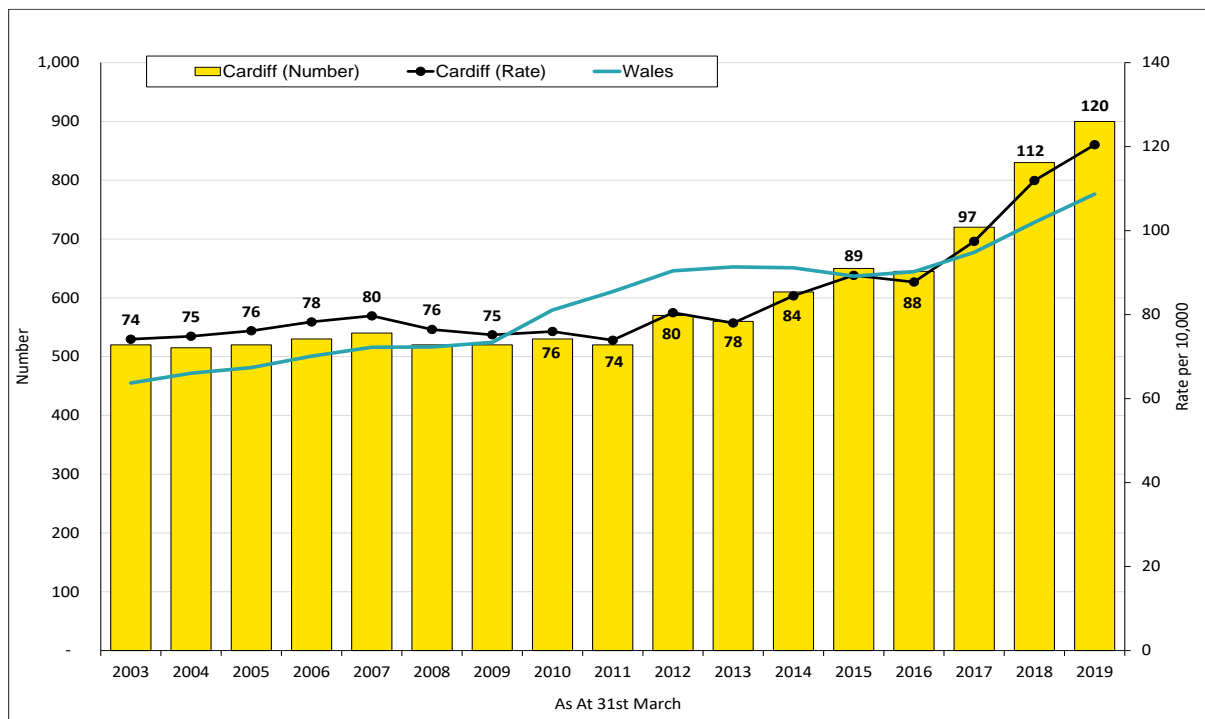
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A29: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Cardiff



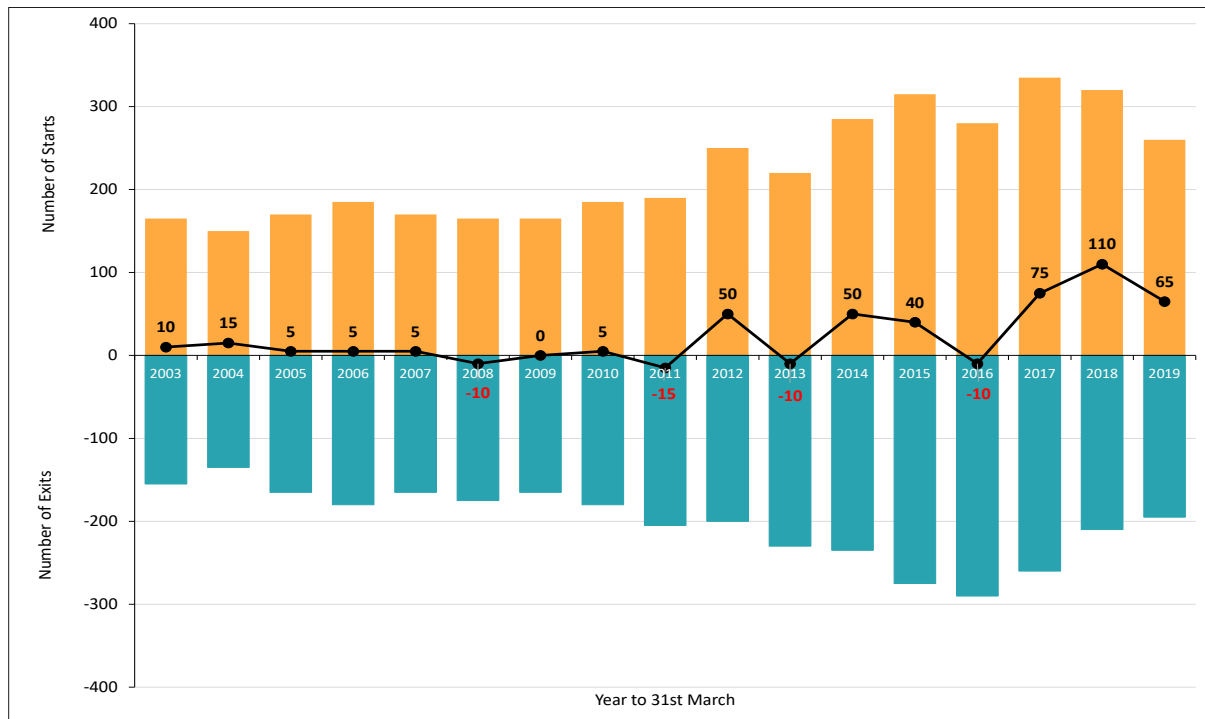
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A30: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Cardiff



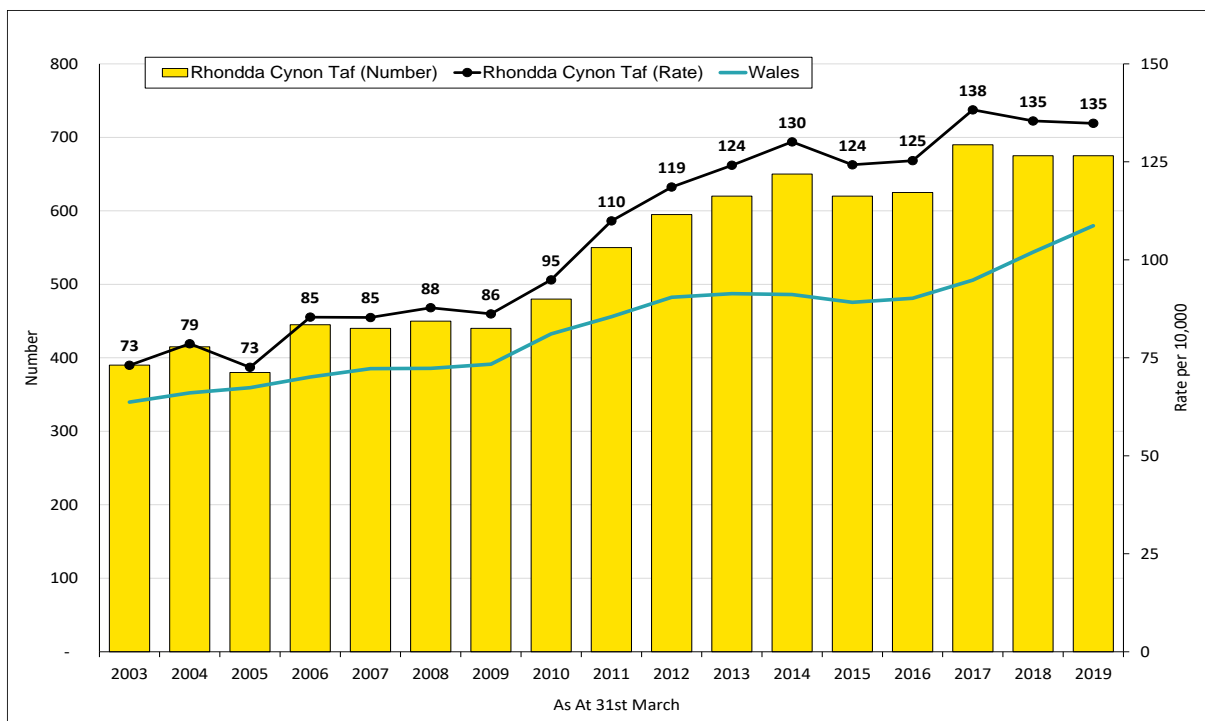
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A31: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Rhondda Cynon Taf



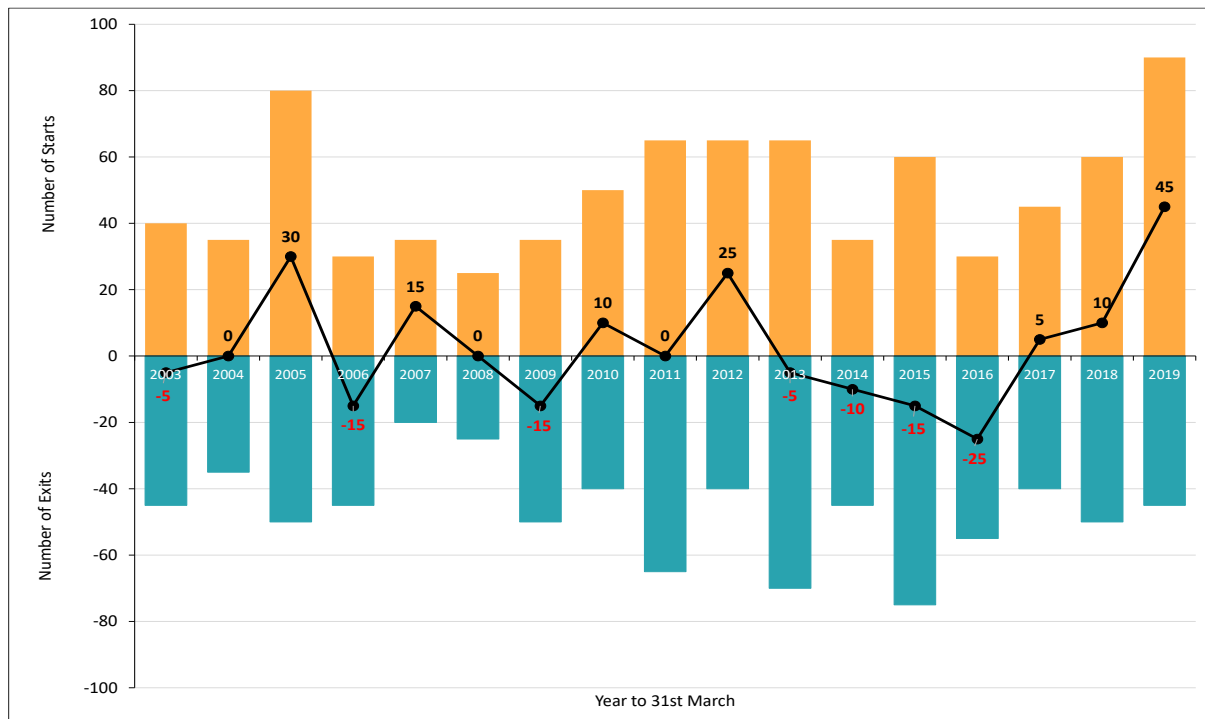
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A32: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Rhondda Cynon Taf



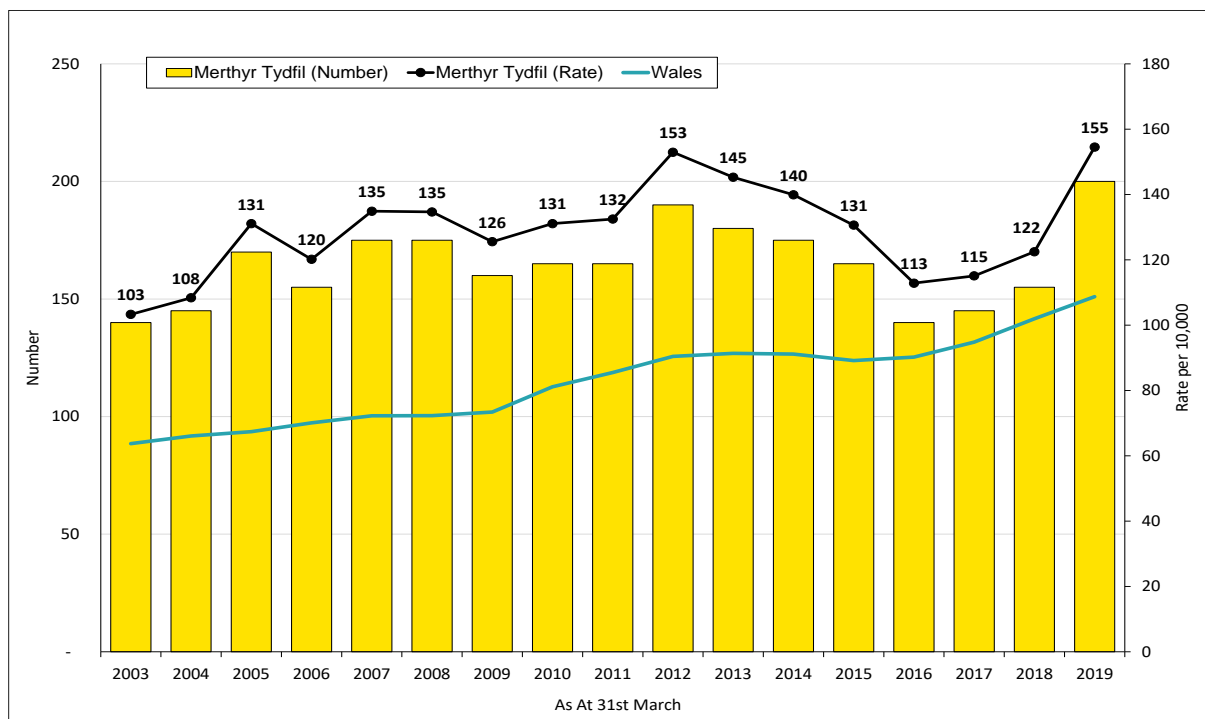
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A33: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Merthyr Tydfil



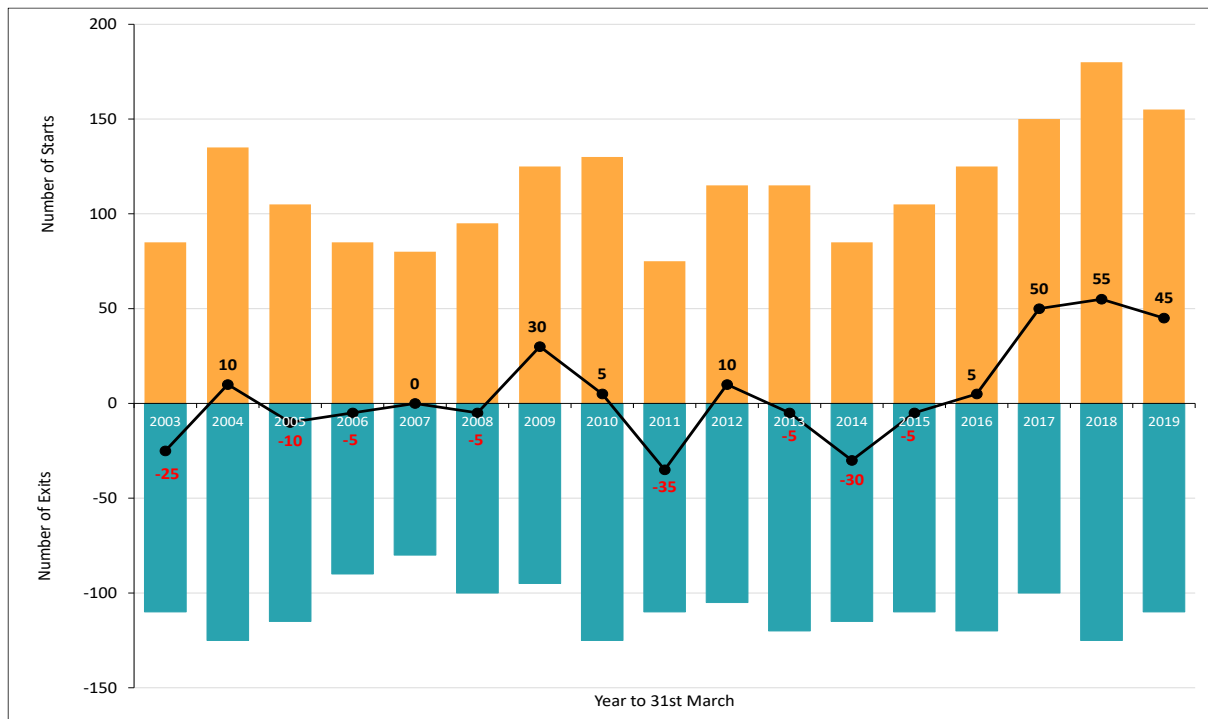
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A34: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Merthyr Tydfil



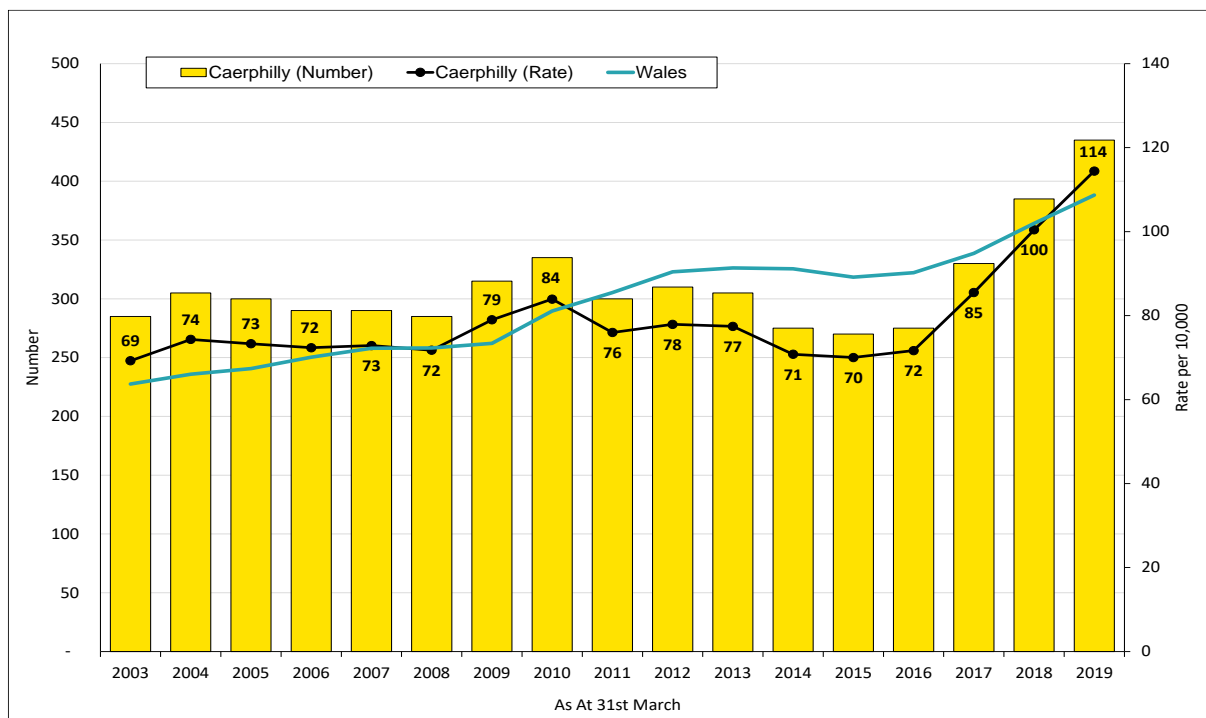
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A35: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Caerphilly



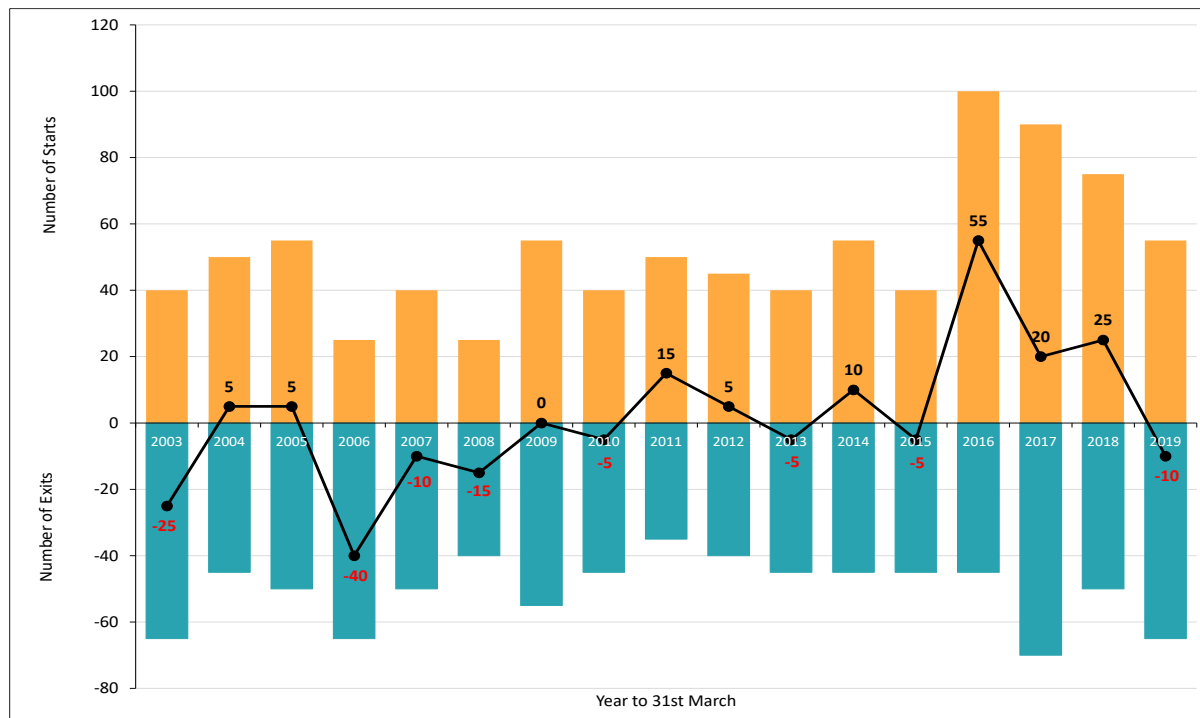
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A36: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Caerphilly



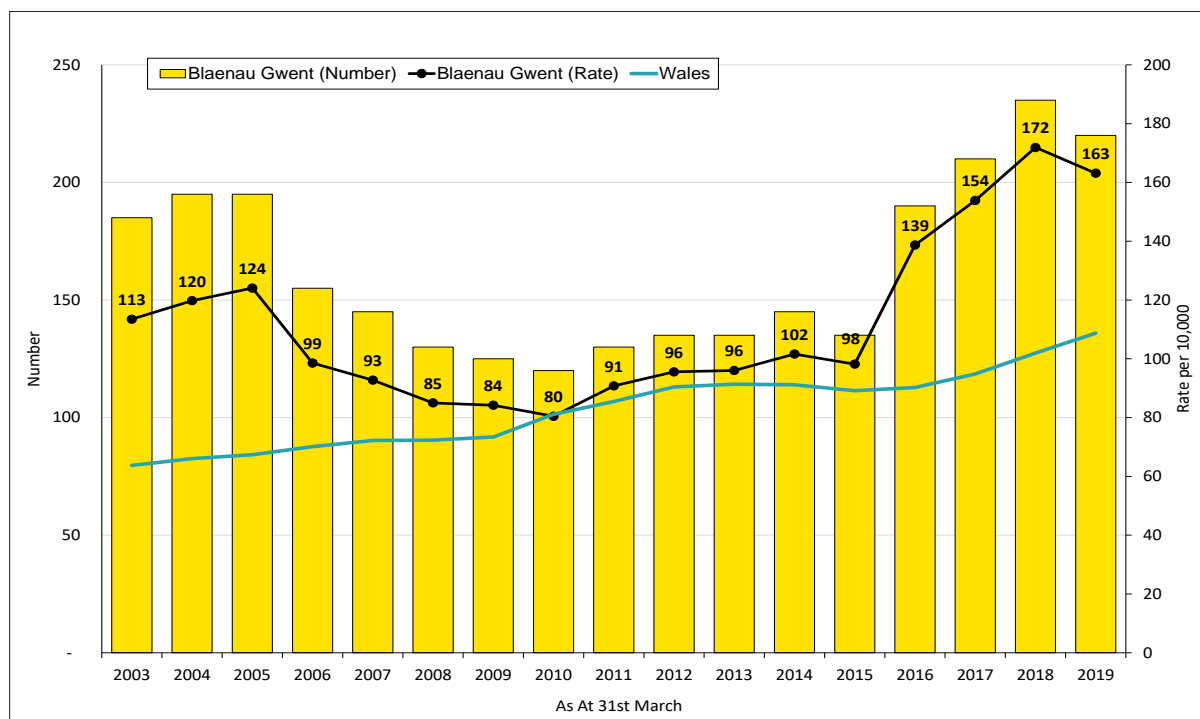
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A37: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Blaenau Gwent



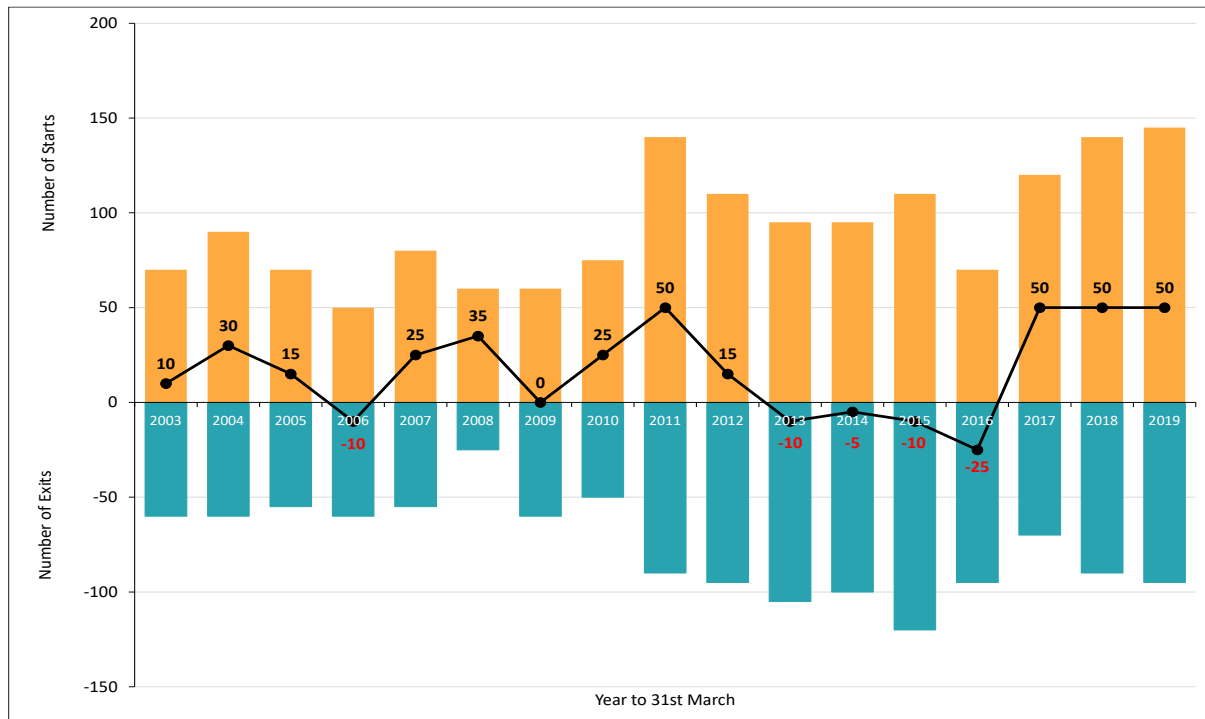
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A38: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Blaenau Gwent



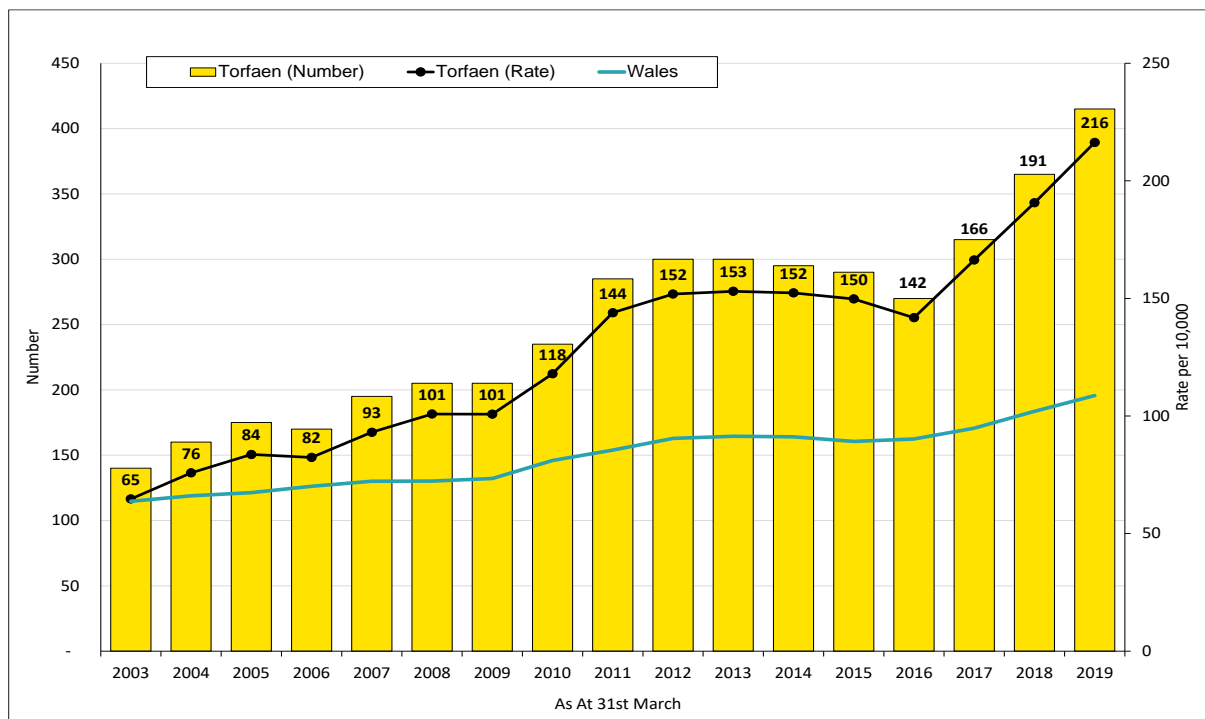
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A39: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Torfaen



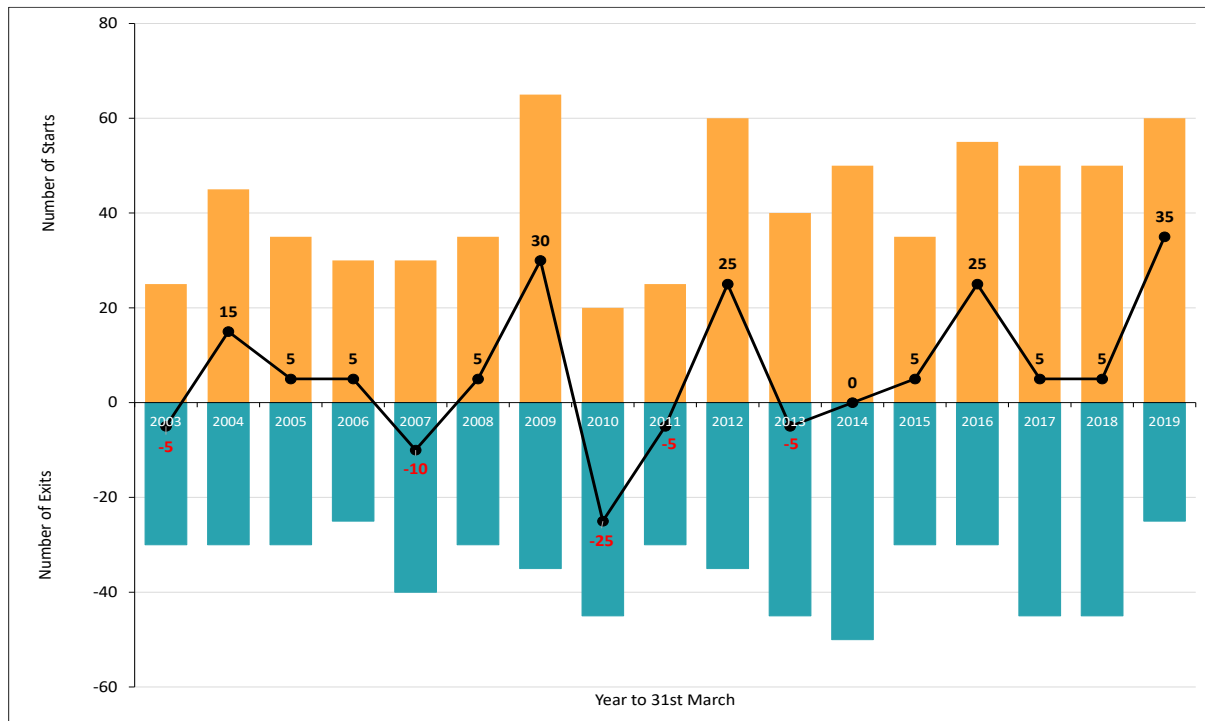
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A40: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Torfaen



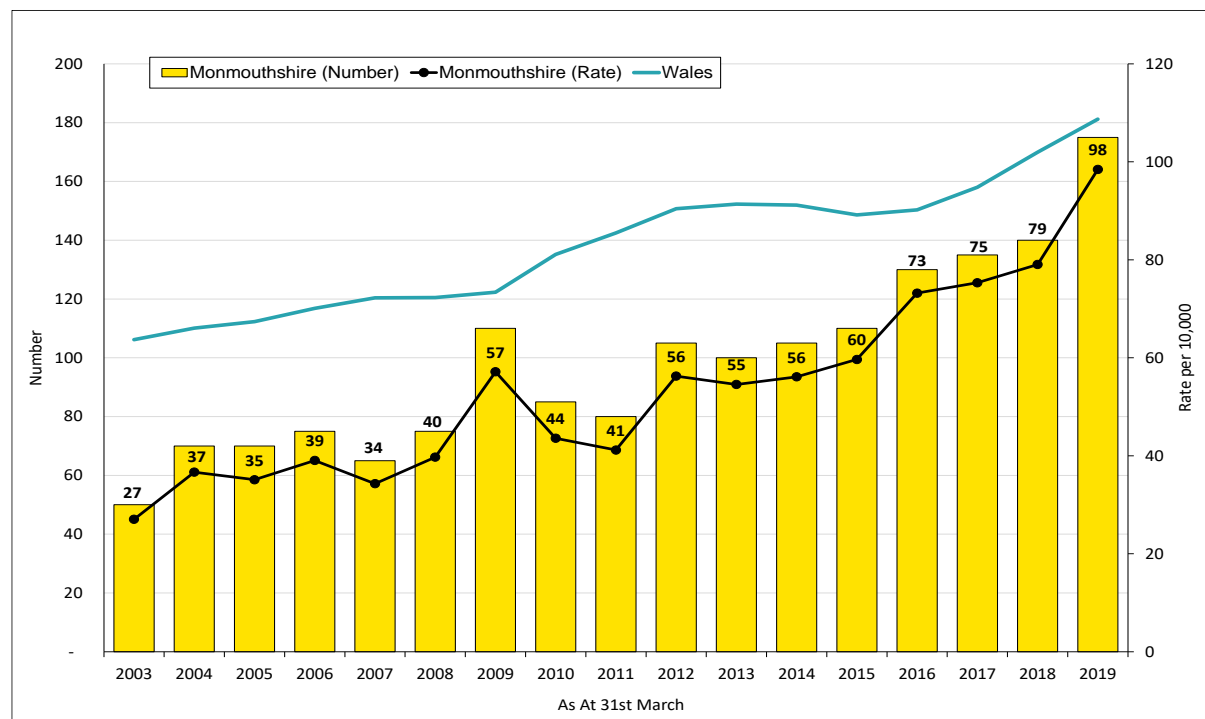
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A41: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Monmouthshire



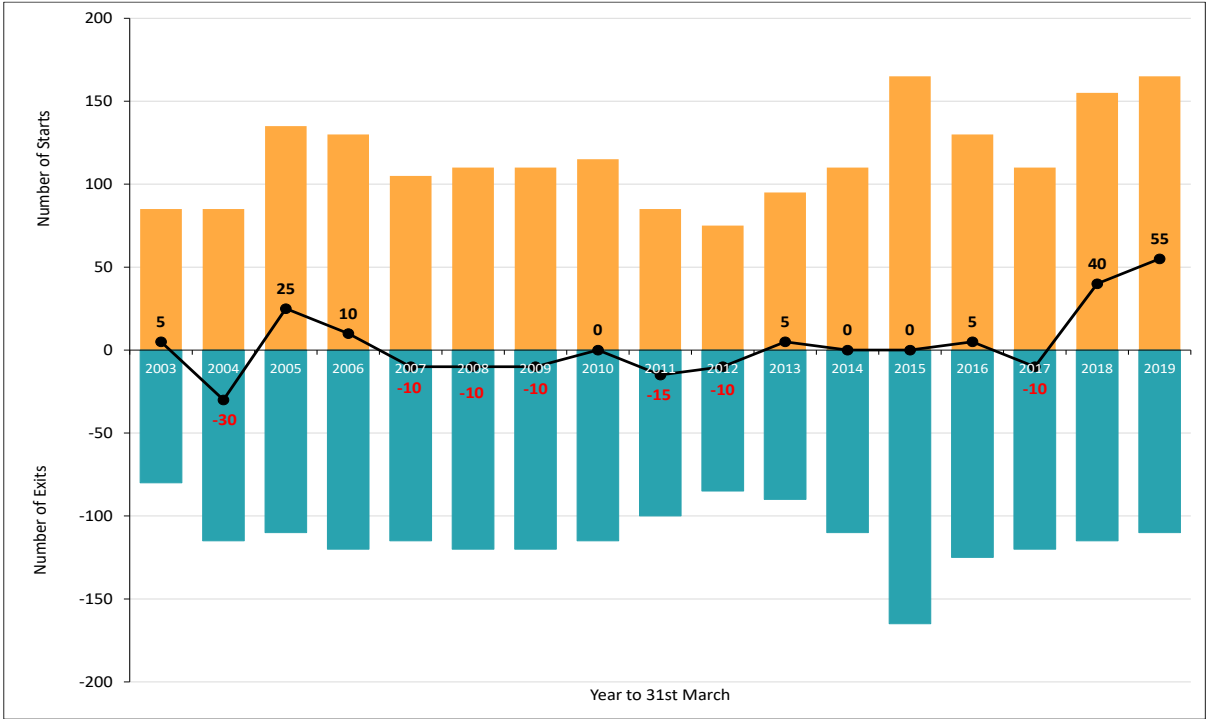
Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A42: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Monmouthshire



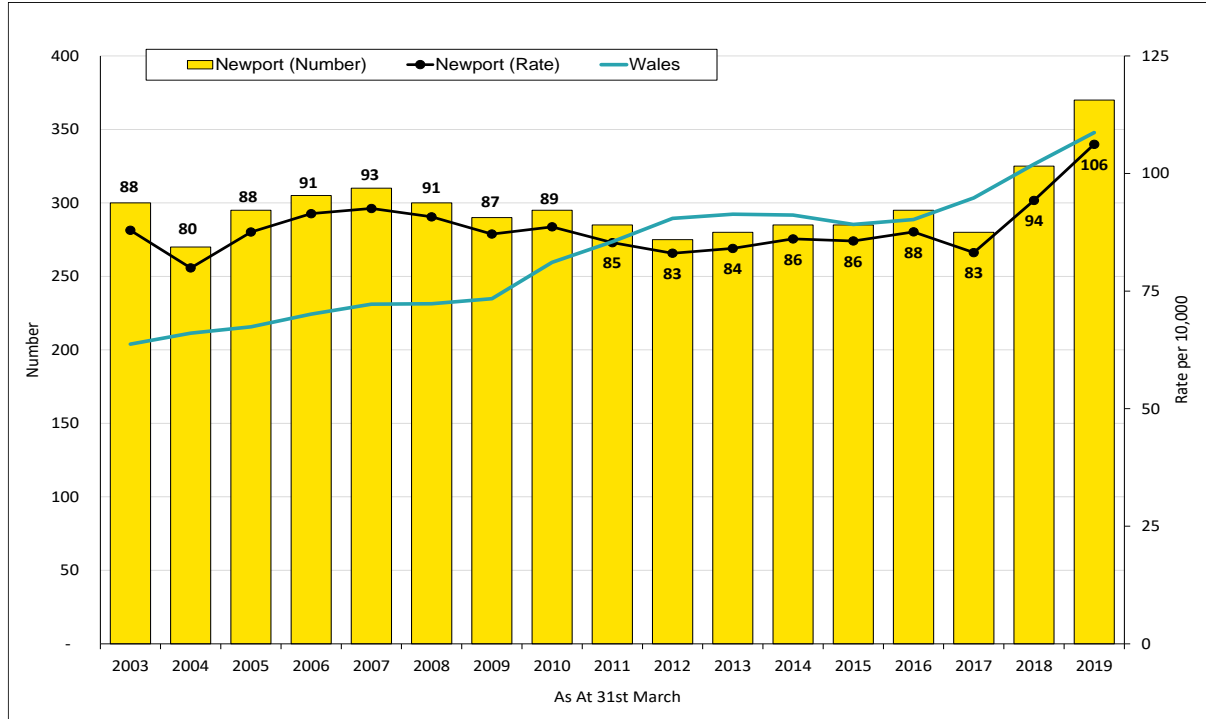
Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Figure A43: The balance between flows into and out of the care system over time, Newport



Source: Stats Wales (2019d, 2019e).

Figure A44: The numbers and rates of children looked after, Newport



Source: Stats Wales (2019b, 2019c)

Data Annex

Table A1: Rate of Children Looked After, by Local Authority

| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Isle of Anglesey | 52 | 53 | 59 | 67 | 59 | 57 | 65 | 80 | 104 | 107 | 109 |
| Gwynedd | 69 | 73 | 74 | 83 | 85 | 78 | 81 | 88 | 93 | 97 | 108 |
| Conwy | 71 | 77 | 75 | 81 | 74 | 75 | 72 | 78 | 82 | 99 | 97 |
| Denbighshire | 70 | 83 | 88 | 82 | 83 | 84 | 83 | 89 | 84 | 85 | 85 |
| Flintshire | 44 | 48 | 49 | 52 | 61 | 66 | 68 | 65 | 66 | 68 | 74 |
| Wrexham | 46 | 51 | 54 | 60 | 67 | 71 | 60 | 67 | 72 | 88 | 96 |
| Powys | 51 | 55 | 64 | 67 | 59 | 59 | 54 | 60 | 63 | 87 | 99 |
| Ceredigion | 51 | 56 | 61 | 64 | 59 | 61 | 62 | 63 | 60 | 50 | 51 |
| Pembrokeshire | 52 | 58 | 61 | 60 | 59 | 50 | 47 | 52 | 52 | 56 | 64 |
| Carmarthenshire | 58 | 65 | 69 | 72 | 71 | 66 | 64 | 58 | 56 | 52 | 49 |
| Swansea | 94 | 119 | 124 | 119 | 125 | 114 | 109 | 108 | 102 | 110 | 117 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 100 | 136 | 144 | 167 | 176 | 168 | 156 | 135 | 124 | 118 | 110 |
| Bridgend | 87 | 99 | 112 | 119 | 134 | 142 | 135 | 131 | 134 | 131 | 130 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 60 | 66 | 75 | 80 | 66 | 68 | 69 | 72 | 84 | 90 | 103 |
| Cardiff | 75 | 76 | 74 | 80 | 78 | 84 | 89 | 88 | 97 | 112 | 120 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 86 | 95 | 110 | 119 | 124 | 130 | 124 | 125 | 138 | 135 | 135 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 126 | 131 | 132 | 153 | 145 | 140 | 131 | 113 | 115 | 122 | 155 |
| Caerphilly | 79 | 84 | 76 | 78 | 77 | 71 | 70 | 72 | 85 | 100 | 114 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 84 | 80 | 91 | 96 | 96 | 102 | 98 | 139 | 154 | 172 | 163 |
| Torfaen | 101 | 118 | 144 | 152 | 153 | 152 | 150 | 142 | 166 | 191 | 216 |
| Monmouthshire | 57 | 44 | 41 | 56 | 55 | 56 | 60 | 73 | 75 | 79 | 98 |
| Newport | 87 | 89 | 85 | 83 | 84 | 86 | 86 | 88 | 83 | 94 | 106 |
| Wales | 73 | 81 | 85 | 90 | 91 | 91 | 89 | 90 | 95 | 102 | 109 |

Source: Stats Wales (2019c)

Table A2: Number of children starting to be looked after during year to 31 March by local authority

| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Isle of Anglesey | 35 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 30 | 30 | 35 | 45 | 65 | 25 | 40 |
| Gwynedd | 50 | 45 | 35 | 55 | 55 | 45 | 60 | 65 | 60 | 50 | 65 |
| Conwy | 60 | 75 | 50 | 45 | 45 | 60 | 60 | 65 | 55 | 75 | 55 |
| Denbighshire | 50 | 80 | 55 | 40 | 70 | 65 | 50 | 80 | 50 | 40 | 40 |
| Flintshire | 40 | 45 | 40 | 45 | 75 | 85 | 60 | 60 | 65 | 65 | 80 |
| Wrexham | 45 | 65 | 65 | 80 | 80 | 85 | 55 | 65 | 90 | 115 | 85 |
| Powys | 65 | 55 | 70 | 60 | 40 | 35 | 35 | 50 | 55 | 95 | 75 |
| Ceredigion | 25 | 40 | 45 | 40 | 50 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 20 | 25 | 20 |
| Pembrokeshire | 45 | 65 | 80 | 60 | 65 | 40 | 65 | 70 | 80 | 75 | 85 |
| Carmarthenshire | 110 | 105 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 90 | 90 | 85 | 80 | 65 | 75 |
| Swansea | 155 | 255 | 175 | 150 | 210 | 185 | 190 | 195 | 175 | 210 | 180 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 120 | 205 | 130 | 190 | 140 | 115 | 90 | 70 | 100 | 75 | 80 |
| Bridgend | 75 | 110 | 110 | 110 | 135 | 145 | 115 | 105 | 95 | 70 | 90 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 35 | 65 | 75 | 75 | 60 | 70 | 65 | 75 | 80 | 60 | 75 |
| Cardiff | 165 | 185 | 190 | 250 | 220 | 285 | 315 | 280 | 335 | 320 | 260 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 130 | 170 | 190 | 170 | 205 | 220 | 215 | 215 | 255 | 150 | 160 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 35 | 50 | 65 | 65 | 65 | 35 | 60 | 30 | 45 | 60 | 90 |
| Caerphilly | 125 | 130 | 75 | 115 | 115 | 85 | 105 | 125 | 150 | 180 | 155 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 55 | 40 | 50 | 45 | 40 | 55 | 40 | 100 | 90 | 75 | 55 |
| Torfaen | 60 | 75 | 140 | 110 | 95 | 95 | 110 | 70 | 120 | 140 | 145 |
| Monmouthshire | 65 | 20 | 25 | 60 | 40 | 50 | 35 | 55 | 50 | 50 | 60 |
| Newport | 110 | 115 | 85 | 75 | 95 | 110 | 165 | 130 | 110 | 155 | 165 |
| Wales | 1,655 | 2,025 | 1,890 | 1,975 | 2,035 | 2,010 | 2,040 | 2,065 | 2,230 | 2,170 | 2,125 |

Source: Stats Wales (2019d)

Table A3: Number of exits from care during year to 31 March by local authority

| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Isle of Anglesey | 80 | 85 | 80 | 90 | 100 | 105 | 95 | 110 | 85 | 80 | 85 |
| Gwynedd | 25 | 35 | 40 | 35 | 55 | 30 | 25 | 30 | 25 | 40 | 15 |
| Conwy | 60 | 55 | 80 | 65 | 60 | 55 | 75 | 60 | 75 | 70 | 65 |
| Denbighshire | 60 | 40 | 35 | 35 | 55 | 70 | 50 | 75 | 60 | 60 | 55 |
| Flintshire | 40 | 50 | 45 | 55 | 75 | 65 | 55 | 70 | 60 | 35 | 40 |
| Wrexham | 35 | 50 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 75 | 90 | 40 | 75 | 70 | 65 |
| Powys | 70 | 65 | 55 | 35 | 60 | 60 | 65 | 55 | 40 | 40 | 60 |
| Ceredigion | 35 | 45 | 30 | 35 | 45 | 50 | 30 | 30 | 45 | 45 | 25 |
| Pembrokeshire | 65 | 45 | 45 | 50 | 70 | 35 | 50 | 40 | 50 | 45 | 45 |
| Carmarthenshire | 45 | 55 | 55 | 60 | 95 | 70 | 60 | 70 | 50 | 45 | 35 |
| Swansea | 120 | 115 | 100 | 85 | 90 | 110 | 165 | 125 | 120 | 115 | 110 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 50 | 40 | 35 | 35 | 50 | 60 | 55 | 50 | 50 | 40 | 40 |
| Bridgend | 40 | 35 | 40 | 35 | 40 | 30 | 25 | 25 | 35 | 20 | 35 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 110 | 105 | 115 | 125 | 115 | 145 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 95 | 100 |
| Cardiff | 95 | 125 | 110 | 105 | 120 | 115 | 110 | 120 | 100 | 125 | 110 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 105 | 130 | 155 | 175 | 185 | 230 | 210 | 195 | 200 | 170 | 150 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 165 | 180 | 205 | 200 | 230 | 235 | 275 | 290 | 260 | 210 | 195 |
| Caerphilly | 90 | 80 | 75 | 90 | 95 | 115 | 140 | 120 | 85 | 75 | 90 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 145 | 125 | 115 | 125 | 175 | 190 | 240 | 215 | 185 | 165 | 160 |
| Torfaen | 50 | 40 | 65 | 40 | 70 | 45 | 75 | 55 | 40 | 50 | 45 |
| Monmouthshire | 55 | 45 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 70 | 50 | 65 |
| Newport | 60 | 50 | 90 | 95 | 105 | 100 | 120 | 95 | 70 | 90 | 95 |
| Wales | 1,610 | 1,600 | 1,650 | 1,665 | 1,985 | 2,035 | 2,190 | 2,020 | 1,910 | 1,730 | 1,690 |

Source: Stats Wales (2019e). The number of exits has been determined by considering the number of episodes ceasing over the course of the year to 31st March and subtracting those where the episode ceased with a new episode beginning the same or next day.

References

Cafcass Cymru. (2020) **Cafcass Cymru section 31 applications: April 2008 to May 2020**. Retrieved from: <https://gov.wales/cafcass-cymru-section-31-applications>.

Elliott M. (2017) **Looked-after children in Wales: An analysis of the backgrounds of children entering public care**. School of Social Sciences,. Cardiff: Cardiff University.

Hodges H and Bristow D. (2019) **Analysis of the Factors Contributing to the High Rates of Care in Wales**. Retrieved from: <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/190715-Analysis-of-Factors-Contributing-to-High-Rates-of-Care-REVISED.pdf>.

Ministry of Justice. (2019) **The Public Law Applications to Orders (PLATO) Tool**. Retrieved from: https://public.tableau.com/profile/moj.analysis#!/vizhome/ChildreninFamilyJusticePublicLawApplicationstoOrdersTool_0/FrontPage.

Moultrie K and Bilous S. (2020) **International approaches to managing placement provision for children and young people looked after**. Cardiff: Wales Centre for Public Policy.

Stats Wales. (2019a) **Children looked after at 31 March by local authority and legal status**. Retrieved from: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/childrenlookedafterat31march-by-localauthority-legalstatus>.

Stats Wales. (2019b) **Children looked after at 31 March by local authority, gender and age**. Retrieved from: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/childrenlookedafterat31march-by-localauthority-gender-age>.

Stats Wales. (2019c) **Children looked after at 31 March per 10,000 population aged under 18 by local authority and year**. Retrieved from: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/childrenlookedafterat31marchper10000population-localauthority-year>.

Stats Wales. (2019d) **Children starting to be looked after during year to 31 March by local authority and need for care**. Retrieved from: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/childrenstartingtobelookedafterduringyearto31march-by-localauthority-needforcare>.

Stats Wales. (2019e) **Episodes finishing for children looked after during year to 31 March by local authority and reason for finishing.** Retrieved from: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/episodesfinishingforchildrenlookedafterduringyearto31march-by-localauthority-reasonforfinishing>.

Stevenson L. (2017) **Do looked-after children statistics suggest a new direction in permanence and care practice?** Retrieved from: <https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2017/10/04/looked-children-statistics-suggest-new-direction-permanence-care-practice/>.

Welsh Government. (2020a) **Average number of children who have been adopted in Wales, April 2014 to March 2019.** Retrieved from: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-02/average-number-of-adoptions-in-wales-by-local-authority-april-2014-to-march-2019.ods>.

Welsh Government. (2020b) **Number of looked after children at 31 March living independently (e.g. in a flat or lodgings with or without formal support staff, or in a bedsit, B&B or with friends, by Age, 2003 to 2019.** Retrieved from: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-06/looked-after-children-living-independently-by-age-at-31-march-2003-to-2019.ods>

Author Details

Dr Helen Hodges is a Research Officer, Wales Centre for Public Policy.

For further information please contact:

Dan Bristow

Wales Centre for Public Policy

+44 (0) 29 2087 5345

info@wcpp.org.uk

OGL This report is licensed under the terms of the Open Government License