

Annual membership survey 2025

To ensure that NAFP continues to meet the expectations of its member independent fostering agencies (IFA) across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, an online survey was sent out to members at the end of 2025, where their views were sought on the campaigns undertaken on their behalf during the year. We also ask for their ideas about what NAFP should focus on next year and feed these suggestions into planning for the coming year. This report summarises the key messages from NAFP's members.

Return rates (2018-24)

2018	77	10%
2019	60	7%
2020	67	8%
2021	69	12%
2022	81	12%
2023	89	9%
2024	87	10%
2025	76	8%

Respondents

The survey is sent to every contact held by NAFP for our member IFAs across the UK, almost 1,000 contacts. Hence, there can be some variation in return rates. Within IFA members, NAFP most frequently interacts with registered managers, service managers, contracting teams and directors. Respondents to this annual survey nevertheless came from a wide range of roles, including:

- Agency decision maker
- Business development
- Business support
- Chief executive
- Contracting
- Director of quality
- Family finding
- Finance
- Fostering panel member
- Managing director
- Operations
- Panel chair

- Placements
- Practice manager
- Quality assurance lead
- Recruitment
- Registered manager
- Responsible individual
- Senior social worker
- Service manager

Q1. Which of NAFP's successes this year have been the most important for you (choose one)?

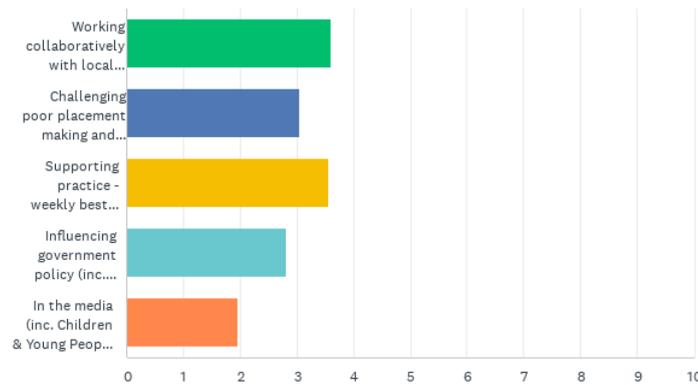
The most popular choice, as it was for the past three years, at 39% (38% in 2023; 39% in 2024), was:

Supporting practice - briefings (inc. placement ending info, independent support for foster carers), peer support/email groups (inc. registered managers, panel chairs), weekly best practice group, seminars

This was followed by:

- *Working collaboratively with local authorities to improve commissioning (inc. national contract, monitoring, NAFP database), **up from 20% to 30% since last year***
- *Influencing government policy (inc. inspection, Stable Homes Built on Love (England), remove profit (Wales), national policy (Scotland), general election, needs/progress of children in foster care study), **down from 25% to 17%***
- *Challenging poor placement making and commissioning practice (inc. price-capping, monitoring, comparative costs, referral information, negative marketing) **down from 13% to 5% although 60% of respondents put it as their second and third choices***
- *In the media (inc. Children & Young People Now, Community Care, The Lead, local news) on the role of IFAs, commissioning, foster carer shortages, government reviews, **up from 3% to 8%***

Q1 Which of NAFP's successes this year have been the most important for you (rank in order of importance)?



These priorities will inform the overarching aims in NAFP's annual plan for 2026-27.

Q2. How does NAFP membership help you?

Q2 How does NAFP membership help you?



Members provided over 200 responses for this question and identified the broad range of work that NAFP undertakes for members as helpful as summarised by the word cloud. This included general support and guidance whether it is the email groups or the Friday practice sessions to specific campaigning work around the eliminating profit programme and partnership building.

Members feel that NAFP provides up to date information on the fostering sector, both regionally and nationally. *'Aligns us to the national and local political agenda'*.



Members recognised the positive role that NAFP has in influencing government and by engaging with the wider sectors. *'Keeps me in the loop' 'Influencing and advocating'*

Members find it helpful to be able to approach NAFP in regarding to policy, practice, commissioning and overwhelming positive response to the advice, guidance and support that NAFP provides. *'A helpful professional outlet to offer advice and support'*

It is notable that many members commented on the collaborative, community, networking environment that NAFP *'provides opportunity for collaborative working'*

Q3. What will be the most important issues for you over the coming year that you would like NAFP to campaign on?

Members provided over 190 ideas around the work they would like to see NAFP support them over the next year, with an overall acknowledgement to continue all that is happening now.

Most responses fell into these categories:

- AI
- Commissioning
- Impact of fostering reforms
- Inspection
- Legislation and guidance
- National policies
- Partnership work with local authorities
- Placement fees
- Quality of referrals
- Recruitment of foster carers
- Regional care cooperatives
- Retention of foster carers
- Stability
- Status/role of foster carers
- Staying Put/leaving care
- Training
- Transfer protocol
- Working with local authorities

Q3 What will be the most important issues for you over the coming year that you would like NAFP to campaign on?

new Regional Care Co-operatives IFAS practice Recruitment Continuing profit Government children foster
foster carers impact LA ensuring support services IFA care work changes legislation
need Commissioning

frameworks young people foster carers work children across support government fostering AI
impact care LA IFAs carers policy families

practice Retention Foster Carers commissioning new fees placement recruitment frameworks
foster carers Wales fostering children LAs Local Supporting National Working

Alongside the three areas identified as overarching aims in answers to Q1, these areas will also inform the objectives in NAFPs annual plan for 2024-25.

Q4. What else would you like from NAFP that we aren't currently offering? 83% (compared with 89% in 2025 and 91% in 2022) of respondents indicated:

Nothing else, happy with the current membership offer

Additional comments included (NAFP response in purple):

- Sharing cost of government work with all members
- The online training is really helpful but quite expensive (the training is reasonable in comparison to other organisations)
- Ongoing training opportunities (this will be reflected in our annual plan)
- Better political insights and support in Scotland (we now have an NAFP associate in Scotland)
- More focus on Welsh regulations within weekly best practice meetings.
- Ideas and support for the recruitment and retention of foster carers
- Keeping kids safe - especially regarding social media, AI and radicalisation and racism (this will form part of our training programme for the year ahead)
- Positive stories about fostering
- Access to services for agencies that we can all collaborate and pay for such as deals on insurance, loans and services at discount prices
- Support for Panel advisors
- Taking more of a lead on best practice guides, so we have something to refer to
- More info on work with the government around the children's bill
- More local engagement (we will ascertain more information from this member)
- Establish dedicated groups for members other than Registered

Managers, such as HR professionals, placement coordinators, and administrative assessors to facilitate sector wide knowledge sharing and collaborative discussions on common challenges and barriers

- A (say) two-day national conference would be good. Maybe one day for all parties and one for IFAs only.

Q5. Do you have any other comments about NAFP?

- Only good things, can't think of anything else
- The Friday morning best practice group is valuable. I also appreciate the training offer.
- I have always held NAFP in high regard.
- Excellent service and support offered throughout our time with NAFP - we are very happy with the service being provided, Harvey is always on hand to answer all of our questions.
- I appreciate being able to tap into developments in the wider fostering landscape via NAFP
- The meetings that NAFP facilitates are very informative. I was very pleased with their attempts to explore off framework contracts/models (similar to England). It was disappointing that NAFPs progress was impeded by 4Cs who were clearly encouraging local authorities not to engage in the progress, which is not helpful to providers. I would be keen for NAFP to reintroduce regular meetings with 4Cs as there has to be a dialogue between the two agencies, and a willingness for collaborative working which will ultimately benefit all providers. Feedback from these meetings back to members will be important, as members can advise NAFP of any further issues that have been identified. I think NAFP will be better placed to advocate for their members if they are able to establish an amicable working relationship.
- I value the advice and guidance I receive from the team. Everyone is approachable, friendly and responsive.
- Great team of people and great to be part of a wider network
- Very supportive when help needed
- Always found everyone to be very knowledgeable and helpful about any issue put forward
- Effective leadership, and communication with members
- The discussions are helpful and improve our practice, especially the provision of guidance which is accessible
- Overall a very good value-for-money industry association
- As a small service we have valued the input, resources and support received by the team.
- Brilliant source of information and ensuring child's voice is heard
- The members are very supportive of one another, and share good practice.
- Your weekly bulletins are really helpful, in this role we often dedicate so much time to managing crises. It is a battle to keep on top of changes in the wider sector which influence us so having this brought to us weekly is really helpful to enable us to ensure our teams are kept up to date. Thank you also for the support you give to the independent sector of the escalating challenges working with poor practice of some of our placing authorities.

- Thank you for being there. Since we have been introduced to NAFP it has provided us with support and guidance. We have a safe place to discuss concerns or issues, and find out more about how others work. It keeps us up to date with practice and provides us with a listening community.
- NAFP support is invaluable! Despite being in the IFA sector for 29 years, I have learned so much over the last few years from working closely with NAFP. In my view, NAFP provides a secure base to IFAs at a time of much turbulence within the sector. NAFP provides balanced, constructive feedback to LAs, and to IFAs where necessary, to ultimately help improve the lives of children and young people. I personally value the input and support NAFP has immensely, and always advocate for NAFP with local authorities about the importance NAFP plays in improving practice, policy and guidance.
- NAFP plays a hugely valuable, regarded and respected role in the independent fostering sector. The world of foster care is complex and challenging and agencies will need NAFP's advocacy, advice, guidance, especially with future changes.
- I always enjoy the meetings and considering others view points
- Love it!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- NAFP is a helpful organisation, when I initially started I reached out a lot to check things out and I still do when I need to clarify any issue.
- Communication from the CEO is excellent in terms of frequency, consistency and content. Regional Partnerships are insightful and informative. The political knowledge, ability and willingness to campaign and advocate for the sector is invaluable.
- I love NAFP's leadership and pioneering spirit.
- I have obtained a greater knowledge in so much due to the practice forums and the registered managers google group. It is great to meet regularly with others who have so much more or other experiences that have benefited me in my role.
- Being a member of such a respected and well managed organisation has continued to be invaluable to the agency in 2025. I would like to thank Harvey, Marie and Hannah for their energy and their support.
- It is good to see Marie present at partnership events to represent the sector holistically.
- I really enjoy being a member of NAFP and working collaboratively to achieve our shared goal of ensuring children are well cared for.
- Great service. So important for those of us working at senior levels with no one internally to turn to for advice and guidance.
- Provides a safe trusting forum for IFAs to raise or discuss any ongoing issues with practice or policy that impact on children, young people and families
- Brilliant organisation wouldn't want to be without my membership.

Q5 Do you have any other comments about NAFP?

issues time US practice sector guidance members will good always support much
NAFP fostering provided great working Harvey meetings service Thank supportive
helpful find

Q6. Can you give an example of how NAFP has helped you over the last year?

64 members responded to this question giving us examples of how their membership to NAFP has helped them over the past 12 months and included positive support in the transition that will be needed to be a non-for-profit provider in Wales, to gaining advice from the team and members on *tricky cases* and introduction to the national contract. NAFP helped members with challenges with inspection experiences, assessment difficulties and contract challenges and positively with preparation for a parent and child placement. There is further positive feedback around the google groups, partnership working and support from members to each other.

Q6 Can you give an example of how NAFP has helped you over the last year?

think forums support attend agency work find sharing helpful better helped advice
NAFP using issues meetings US practice commissioning best practice re
Gave discuss understand training

- Useful to be able to liaise with other RMs on issues.
- Gave advice re cross border placements in England and Wales. Ongoing support re transition to not for profit in Wales
- Google groups have been extremely useful
- The support and weekly meetings are a fantastic way of finding solutions to issues and looking at different ways to work.
- Commissioning and attempting to bring about better and improved communication and partnership working between IFA's and L.A's.
- Our QA manager is the main point of contact with NAFP and she speaks very highly of the support that they continue to provide, especially in relation to the 'not for profit' agenda.
- I was able to attend a very helpful seminar online and benefit from the regular bulletins, newsletters and updates
- General in terms of practice discussions, challenges and bringing agencies together.
- Helped me think about our own policies and practices, and has helped

review and amend some of these

- I think NAFP is a fantastic organisation and links to other agencies/workshops/training are excellent. I truly value the service.
- Partnership meetings really good platform for sharing information
- Advice on using the national contract.
- Just going to the regional members meetings helps with collaboration and sharing different ideas and techniques.
- Over the past year, NAFP has helped our agency maintain placement stability and adapt to sector changes. When new commissioning frameworks were introduced, we relied on NAFP's commissioning to access key deadlines and contacts, ensuring we stayed ahead of compliance requirements. NAFP Friday best practice sessions Zoom calls have given the agency valuable discussion on practice and helped us to strengthen our safeguarding policies and share ideas with other providers.
- It has helped with the ADM role/responsibilities, sharing best practice across the sector, and training opportunities
- Advice given to us with contracts when local authority wanted to reduce notice period as opposed to contract notice period
- The AI research papers and guidance
- Challenging the issues created in Scotland regarding the National Minimum Allowance. Ongoing representing IFAs with the Welsh Government. A determination to ensure collective engagement between IFAs in NI with a view that NAFP can inform and shape future commissioning processes.
- Engagement with technical issues
- Advise and support on tricky cases
- I know that the meetings have been really helpful to Karen and our team. Where we have needed some clarification or where we have a more unusual query, the opportunity to discuss and gain other professionals' experience has been immensely useful.
- Support with understanding the English political landscape for fostering and IFAs in particular
- With a tricky situation around commissioning, some great one to one input in thinking through next steps
- Helped me to positively challenge Ofsted to understand their decision making
- Assessment of applicants suitability in various contexts and risk management during respite placement and holiday break
- Supporting us through not for profit and keeping us up to date with Government decisions etc.
- Knowledge and skills as I am a new registered manager
- I have accessed regional meetings and weekly practice sessions when I have been helpful which have been both informative and encouraging. I have been able to utilise the information that I have gained from this environment to further consider agency development within my own service and deliver informed practice sessions with my entire team.
- Marie has helped with us actually reviewing our agreed uplift where payments were being delayed; Harvey and Catherine were supportive with a

specific matter regarding ADM

- We had a referral for a parent and child where the parent was under 18, but not looked after. We were guided by NAFP on how best to approach this situation, which was appreciated and as a result, attended the P&C workshop provided by NAFP.
- Raising issues via articles that I share with my team and discuss so that we keep informed and up to date.
- There have been numerous occasions where we have funding difficulties with local authorities which are impacting on children's lives. Marie in particular has been so helpful in talking the specific situation through, and providing advice and guidance on how we should move this forward. Marie's wealth of knowledge continues to be invaluable to ourselves as an IFA.
- Have learned a lot from colleagues in other fostering agencies through attending regular weekly meetings and made some changes to policy, procedure and practice as a result. Enjoy and learn from reading the NAFP newsletters/updates. I use the NAFP resources available to members.
- I understand the commissioning aspects much better due to being a member of NAFP and feel confident in discussing these in other forums. Training received in Reg 35 reports was really helpful in producing something which can be used by the organisation, along with producing information required of Ofsted.
- I sent a member of the team to attend training on assessing friends and family and came back saying it was amazing. My finance officer has also found the meetings very helpful
- NAFP is a helpful organisation, when I initially started I reached out a lot to check things out and I still do when I need to clarify any issue.
- Good training for all levels of staff.
- NAFP has enabled us to participate at National and Local Government levels to learn more about, analyse and constructively influence or challenge social care reforms.
- I find most of the topics discussed on Fridays helpful in terms of my learning and improving on practice. One example would be the discussions on using AI in the social care setting.
- Given a regular platform to share and learn (the Friday mornings!). It's a safe space to explore and think creatively without judgement. No topic is off limits and that can only be a positive.
- Many times we have asked questions, and you find the answers
- The registered managers google group has helped me with many things and also raised questions from other RMs that I had not thought about
- Having Harvey so embedded in the Working Parties for the Welsh Government, even though these often felt fruitless, reassured us as an agency that we were doing the right thing for our long term survival.
- DBS links have allowed us to work to ensure an understanding around update checks in terms of what we need as an organisation
- We had an issue with soft information from a DBS not being shared and NAFP were helpful in taking this forward and finding out from others if this was an issue.

- I have become a Panel advisor - so groups relevant to Panel.
- Offering us a voice where it is needed IFA wise
- I find the ADM Group & the practice advice of particular use re: my role
- I attended training re the RM's post as I am new in post - the training was so helpful. It provided me with the necessary tools to think about my role.
- I've really enjoyed the opportunity to be involved in the development of resources for P&C fostering arrangements. I find the meetings with Ofsted very helpful!
- Using best practice suggestions in partnership working with local authorities
- Easy access to the NAFP Framework Listing and LA Contacts Provider Forums to discuss issues with live tender opportunities
- Access to best practice guidance and peer reflection on important topics.
- Generally, just keeping me informed e.g. bulletins, forums, practice sessions.
- Clarity over contract arrangements for D2N2, Hampshire, Haringey, Bexley, etc.
- Guidance re panel paperwork, difficult uncooperative protocol meetings
- provided collective views to present to SG, regarding new Promise Bill
- Assisted in campaigning to LA regarding SRA in Scotland
- Helped my colleagues with commissioning matters. Connected one of our foster carers with panels.
- Primarily in the ADM group and specific advice on live scenarios and policy queries. Have really appreciated the individual advice and guidance for my ADM role and my policy writing role.
- Contact with the new children's minister raising questions ensuring the IFA market is included and recognised in decision making.

January 2026