



Membership survey 2023 Summary of findings

Every autumn, NAFP invites its member independent fostering agencies (IFA) across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to complete an online survey where we seek their view on the campaigns we have undertaken on their behalf each year. We also ask for their ideas about what we should focus on next year and feed these suggestions into our plan for the coming year. This report summarises the key messages from our members in the survey that took place at the end of 2023.

Return rates (2018-23)

2018	77	10%
2019	60	7%
2020	67	8%
2021	69	12%
2022	81	12%
2023	88	9%

Respondents

Within IFA members, NAFP most frequently interacts with registered managers, contracting teams and directors. Respondents to this annual survey nevertheless came from a wide range of roles, including:

- Accounts
- Agency decision maker
- Advanced social work practitioner
- Assessment manager
- Assistant director
- Business manager
- CEO
- Commercial manager
- Contracts manager
- Deputy manager
- Director
- Executive support lead
- Family matching manager

Facebook LinkedIn

contactus@nafp.co.uk www.nafp.co.uk

Registered as a company in England & Wales no. 06717310

Registered office: Unit 2A, The Old Bakery Yard, Princes Street, Corbridge, Northumberland NE45 5AD

- Fostering manager
- Fostering panel member
- Head of carer recruitment
- Head of fostering
- Head of service development
- Managing director
- Operations manager
- Panel manager
- Quality assurance lead
- Referrals/business manager
- Regional manager
- Registered manager
- Responsible individual
- Senior practitioner
- Service manager
- Supervising social worker
- Team 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 in 2022, was *Supporting practice - briefings (inc. assessing partners, safer caring, standards of care), peer support/email groups (inc. registered managers, panel chairs), weekly practice calls, seminars*, though down from 42% to 38%.

This was followed by *Working collaboratively with local authorities to improve commissioning (inc. terms/conditions, uplifts, monitoring, NAFP database)*, up from 21% to 26%; and *Influencing government policy (inc. inspection, Independent Care Review (England), remove profit (Wales), Continuing Care (Scotland))*, up from 11% to 20%, the latter boosted by members from Wales.

These three areas will inform the overarching aims in NAFP's annual plan for 2024-25.

Interestingly, *Challenging poor placement and commissioning practice (inc. price-capping, monitoring, comparative costs, referral information, negative marketing)* was down from 21% to 11%, offset by a similar percentage increase in *Working collaboratively with local authorities*, above. That could be interpreted as a reflection of the positive progress of independent sector relations with local authorities.

Facebook LinkedIn

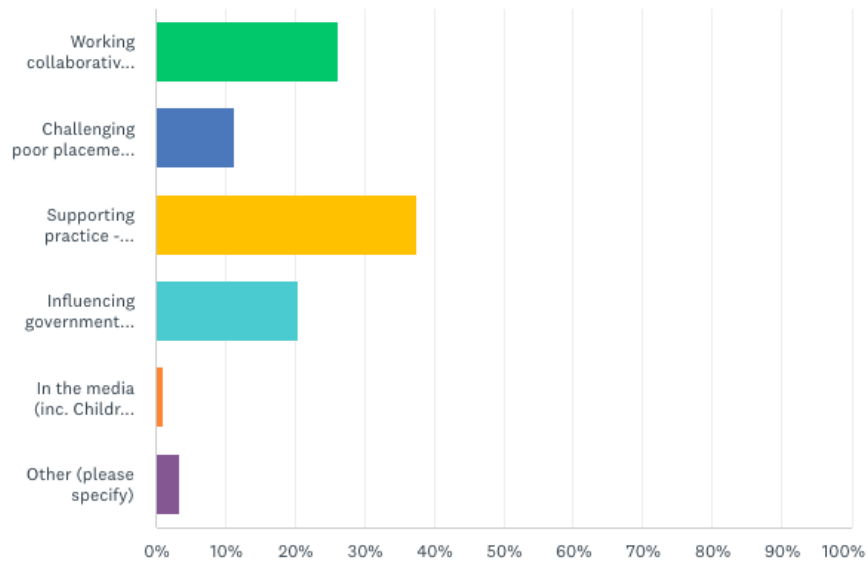
contactus@nafp.co.uk www.nafp.co.uk

Registered as a company in England & Wales no. 06717310

Registered office: Unit 2A, The Old Bakery Yard, Princes Street, Corbridge, Northumberland NE45 5AD

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

Answered: 88 Skipped: 0



Q2. How does NAFP membership help you?

Most responses fell into these categories:

- Advocacy and communication with local authorities
- Allows the sector to speak with a collective voice
- Collaborative working with other IFAs
- Commissioning terms & conditions
- Develops, strengthens and supports practice development
- Influencing government policy
- Keeping up to date with developments in fostering
- Professional network of resources



'Amazing opportunity to share information and learn from peers/other services'

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

Most responses fell into these categories:

- Being inspection ready
- Carer recruitment/retention
- Continuing to encourage local authorities to work collaboratively
- Continuing to influence government policy
- Continuing to kept abreast of practice development
- Ensure the positives of independent fostering agencies are heard
- Fair and sustainable funding models
- Foster care as a permanence option
- Improvement of referral information
- Negative media coverage
- Post-18 options
- Remove profit programme (Wales)
- Revision of the fostering minimum standards
- Speaking with a collective voice
- Social work practice in fostering
- Uplifts, pricing and commissioning

Remove Profit Eliminate profit wales
commissioning Continuing
carers profit
fostering LA work uplift
children good practice care
Wales support Ongoing
Influencing information recruitment

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

Q4. What else would you like from NAFP that we aren't currently offering?

88% (down from 91% in 2022) of respondents indicated:

Nothing else, happy with the current membership offer

Additional comments included (NAFP response in green):

- A comprehensive digital platform or resource hub (*this has now been soft launched*)
- Government influence (*follow-up with respondent*)

Facebook LinkedIn

contactus@nafp.co.uk www.nafp.co.uk

Registered as a company in England & Wales no. 06717310

Registered office: Unit 2A, The Old Bakery Yard, Princes Street, Corbridge, Northumberland NE45 5AD

- I think this is impossible now, given the task and membership numbers, but it was useful to have NAFP having the time to give us for individual rather than collective matters (follow-up with respondent)
- Regional meetings - London is often not feasible for a small agency (follow-up with respondent)
- There are practice forums for RMs, Panel Chair etc.. but if there are staff who are not holding these titles but are working closely/ alongside on these and other roles then these forums should be made open for them to attend and share knowledge and experience (not currently NAFP practice, to be given further thought)
- Work on horizon scanning for future government policy changes (especially at the Westminster level) which may have a similar adverse effect as that of the Welsh Government, allowing us to have influence before political decisions are made and announced (this has started in relation to the general election, inform members)
- Develop a media/PR campaign to highlight the positive work that IFAs do and highlight the right that foster parents have to work for an agency which best reflects their need for support, financial reward, and ethos (combined with general election campaign, inform respondent)
- An annual conference which can pull together findings from collaborations, research, practice discussions, etc. (was held earlier in the year with low turnout, feedback to respondent)
- There are issues around fostering which most fostering agencies face in their day to day practice such as poaching, incomplete referrals, delay in arranging the placement planning meeting etc. These issues are needed to be resolved with a concrete solution. I know it is too ambitious but with the support of NAFP a start could be made. (follow-up with respondent on what this would look like)
- More on practice issues affecting fostering agencies to balance things out (follow-up with respondent)
- I think fostering assessments and the materials are outdated and should be looked at including the skills to foster materials which have been dominated by CoramBaaf and tFN (a significant task that needs further thought)
- To help get local authorities to agree more standardisation amongst themselves (we're trying!)
- Additional training relevant to Scottish practice (agreed, has proven difficult, ask respondent for ideas)

Q5. Do you have any other comments about NAFP?

- I appreciate the role the organisation has played in the field of fostering since being founded in 2008. Well done Harvey et al - you have offered an invaluable service not just to IFAs but to fostering services whilst upholding the commitment to put children at the centre of all activities
- The Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers (NAFP) plays a crucial role in supporting Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). The organisation's efforts in advocacy, sharing best practices, and providing a platform for collaboration are commendable. It is clear that NAFP is instrumental in addressing key challenges faced by IFAs, such as navigating regulatory environments, negotiating with local authorities, and ensuring high standards of care for children.
- I very much enjoy being part of NAFP and the level of collaboration. It's actually quite phenomenal when you look back to where we were 15 years ago. We are genuinely working together to make the sector and our practices better. It is quite

Facebook LinkedIn

contactus@nafp.co.uk www.nafp.co.uk

Registered as a company in England & Wales no. 06717310

Registered office: Unit 2A, The Old Bakery Yard, Princes Street, Corbridge, Northumberland NE45 5AD

- impressive
- Brilliant forum to be part of
 - Really appreciate having NAFP on speed dial to discuss issues or just general items
 - NAFP are the collective voice of IFAs and it is really good to see that local authorities are also welcoming their expertise and asking for their comments/feedback/attendance at meetings et
 - NAFP is a great support to independent fostering agencies, always keeps up to date and shares new developments. Great advocacy and challenge. Good training provided.
 - I find NAFP's support, guidance, advice and constructive, healthy challenge invaluable! NAFP plays a key role in the sector in shaping the commissioning of fostering arrangements for children and young people, and over the last year, I have seen a significant positive shift in how LAs regard NAFP. I value NAFP working alongside IFAs immensely and see NAFP as crucial in the success of our sector.
 - Harvey and his team are all excellent - and provide information and support about practice and commissioning
 - The NAFP has been so helpful to me in supporting my practice and strengthening the quality of the service we provide to children, young people and foster families. Thank you.
 - NAFP is a fantastic support to the fostering sector. The team are approachable, reliable and friendly. The information shared is always informative and delivered in a respectful way. I've learned so much from attending some of the meetings this year and look forward to attending more.
 - Excellent organisation to belong to.
 - I always appreciate the open and honest support offered and the ability to network with others that NAFP provides. It is really useful to gain insight from those who have the experience and knowledge in their set areas of the field.
 - I've been very happy with the consistently high quality service over the years.
 - I really value your work - thank you !
 - This has been our agency's first year with NAFP and the support provided on various levels has been amazing:-)

plays developments meetings challenges
 find group great Harvey agency
 appreciate work NAFP support year various
 team helpful really sector
 service provide good fostering practice
 attend members always sharing useful
 best practices forums

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

Facebook LinkedIn

contactus@nafp.co.uk www.nafp.co.uk

Registered as a company in England & Wales no. 06717310

Registered office: Unit 2A, The Old Bakery Yard, Princes Street, Corbridge, Northumberland NE45 5AD



Members reported that NAFP has played a crucial role in facilitating communication, collaboration, and support among fostering agencies. Participants have highlighted the value of online forums, local meetings, and peer support groups in sharing information and addressing practice issues. NAFP has provided guidance on various topics, including regulations, fee structures, and negotiations with local authorities. The association has been commended for its advocacy, helping agencies navigate challenges, shaping collective viewpoints, and influencing policy.

The support extends to training opportunities, clarifications on contracts, and discussions on relevant issues such as inspections and legislative changes. NAFP has created a network for professionals in the fostering sector, fostering collaboration despite the competitive nature of the field. Participants appreciate the informative newsletters, practice sessions, and opportunities to engage with Ofsted. The association's role in representing independent fostering agencies in dealings with local authorities and the government is emphasised.

Overall, NAFP has been a valuable resource for fostering agencies, providing support, knowledge-sharing, and a platform for collaboration, ultimately contributing to improved practice and outcomes for children and young people.

We know that NAFP are there if we need them

December 2023