



Membership survey 2024 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 2024.

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%

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 matching
- Finance
- Fostering panel member

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- Managing director
- Operations
- Panel manager
- Placements
- Practice manager
- 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 in 2022 and 2023, and up slightly from 38% to 39% since last year, 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:

- 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), **up from 20% to 25% since last year**
- Working collaboratively with local authorities to improve commissioning (inc. national contract, monitoring, NAFP database), **down from 26% to 20%**
- Challenging poor placement making and commissioning practice (inc. price-capping, monitoring, comparative costs, referral information, negative marketing) **up from 11% to 13%**
- 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 1% to 3%**

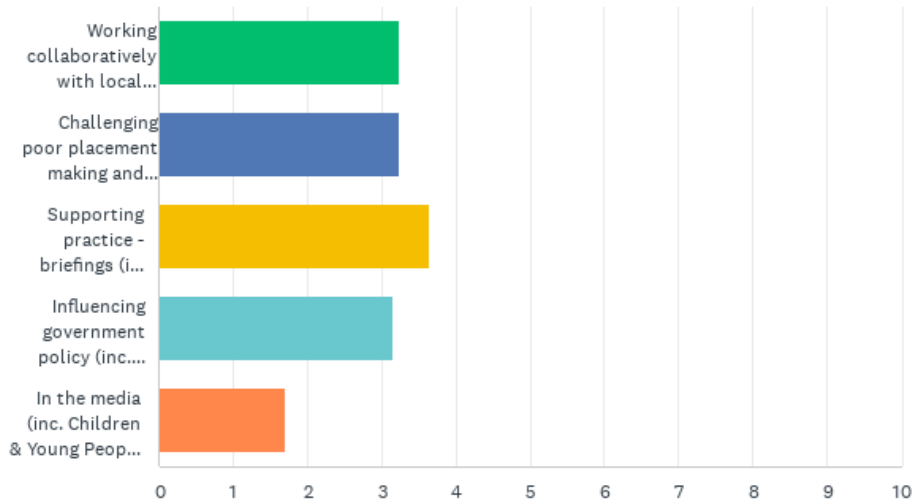
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Q1 Which of NAFP's successes this year have been the most important for you (rank in order of importance)?



These priorities will inform the overarching aims in NAFP's annual plan for 2025-26.

Q2. How does NAFP membership help you?



'Holds an expertise and able to challenge at a senior level. Are in touch with key developments and able to provide advice and support, advocating on behalf of the sector while keeping children's best interests at the centre.'

'The support and guidance has been invaluable over the last year! Challenging local authorities regarding contract and quality monitoring requests has been a huge support, and has resulted in some LAs not pursuing their original request'

'Communication is excellent, challenging Welsh Government and offering a central voice for fostering agencies and children'

'Co- ordination & representation of the collective voice to challenge poor commissioning e.g. Scotland allowances'

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:

- Importance of IFA sector
- Improving commissioning
- Inspection
- National policies (esp remove profit in Wales)
- Placement fees
- Quality of referrals
- Recruitment
- Stability
- Status/role of foster carers
- Staying Put/leaving care
- Working with local authorities

commissioning profit wales care profit LA carers Recruitment
foster carers support placement working sector
fostering better IFA Wales fees policy continue payments
children children young people around
inspections foster care using seen impact agencies Continue change
LA commissioning work needs children us Ofsted
contracts making practice
children information sharing IFA Continue practice commissioning LA changes
issues Impact work frameworks people

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?

89% (compared with 88% in 2023 and 91% in 2022) of respondents indicated:

Nothing else, happy with the current membership offer

Additional comments included (NAFP response in purple):

- More recommendations on excellent trainers/training, particularly around therapeutic parenting/domestic violence/teen mental health (expansion of NAFP online independent consultants list)
- I have not attended any meetings for the year 2024, I do think that if there is non-attendance from members (agency) it would be positive to have some form of communication, i.e. telephone call, emails or it gets highlighted. There could be many reasons for non attendance of members. (NAFP chief executive has contacted)
- Just an idea, to further promote your services. Arrange Team/Zoom meetings with fostering agency staff in order to inform staff of the wide range of services offered and the purpose of NAFP. (in-person meet/talk with CEO/DCEO around the country)
- Having said nothing else. I think the use of a professional lobbying/campaign company makes a big difference - perhaps fees should be adjusted to incorporate the cost of this. (resourced from additional opt-in fee)
- Continue to lobby Welsh Assembly Group for a suitable alternative structure for IFAs to adopt (underway)
- I really welcome Marie's attendance at local authority meetings as Marie can often share objective and constructive ideas in a way which many IFAs don't feel able to
- It would be good to have one face to face meeting - perhaps annual conference in each region? All the other meetings work well though on TEAM and ensure more attendance. (in-person meet/talk with CEO/DCEO around the country)
- Time has not permitted this in 2024, but we are doing work on data security/GDPR issues and we will probably need to see what others in our network are doing. (surgeries scheduled)
- I would like NAFP to do more work around complexities of fostering frameworks and contracts. Local authorities are getting themselves on different frameworks and when it comes to placements they will choose the framework with least fees. (new partnership meetings with IFAs and local authorities)
- Reduced price training courses (for members), that incorporate Scottish statistics/regulations/legislation (in planning)
- I think it would be good to have the odd area face-to-face meeting. I believe that this is being considered, but I would find it really helpful and am always happy to host :) (in-person meet/talk with CEO/DCEO booked)
- More training opportunities to come together and more networking opportunities with other IFAs (partnership meetings, weekly/monthly practice meetings, email networks, monthly seminars)
- A panel advisor forum would be fantastic (to be scoped out)
- Council tax discount for all foster carers (added to government campaigning asks)

Q5. Do you have any other comments about NAFP?

- I always find staff to be responsive and available when contacted. Registered manager discussion group helpful to see issues arising for other agencies and

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- supports service development.
- Very good quality podcasts and training
 - Greatly appreciate NAFP's commitment to foster care and its work and influence in the sector while maintaining the necessary focus on the wider changing environment of children's social care
 - All positive good to have links with NAFP and support all they are doing
 - I value belonging to NAFP
 - I know I don't make the most of my membership and intend to correct this next year by attending more meetings and taking advantage of what NAFP has to offer.
 - NAFP provides a valuable link between our agency and others. The focus on commissioning is what makes this membership organisation impactful and beneficial to our agency.
 - I have been a member since starting role in May this year. I have been so impressed by all it has to offer and feel this is a vital support to my role
 - No thank you, I support with attending the meetings when my colleague is unable to come along and I always feel very welcome and included.
 - Provides a sense of unity, shared purpose and focus to all the IFAs, makes a difference.
 - I do believe that this is an exceptional organisation for fostering agencies to be a part of. There is a lot of current information on current issues, training, relevant issues concerning fostering practice. The joint collaboration with local authorities and government. The monthly emails with compact information are good.
 - Find NAFP informative and knowledgeable
 - This is a fantastic source of support encouraging growth and best practice approaches
 - Not only is there a wealth of knowledge, but very approachable and always get back with answers to any queries really quickly.
 - Great organisation - we are in regular contact on lots of issues
 - I really appreciate continuing an affiliation even though I am now a retired fostering services manager. It helps me maintain an at times alternative perspective from other colleagues on the fostering panel - important to have a balance!
 - I didn't see the point of the amount of time and effort that must have gone into the "model contract" as LAs will still use their own (NAFP to contact and discuss)
 - Thanks for all the support
 - We have really found our membership of great benefit.
 - Thank you all and have a great break over the festive period.
 - The whole package is good value and the team is very responsive and helpful. The practice briefings are also great and we should encourage more attendance by operational staff.
 - NAFP offers valuable support to us and their IFA members. I really appreciate the opportunity to engage with other members on contracting processes. The inclusion of local authority commissioners in future regional meetings will benefit the partnership working arrangements.
 - NAFP have been invaluable when it comes to understanding legislative changes in Wales.
 - We appreciate the work NAFP does on our behalf and in particular the good practice guidance. We have implemented a host of recommendations throughout the year and are looking forward to the outcome of the carer transfer work.
 - Excellent organisation.

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- I have really enjoyed being part of the registered manager forum and I have appreciated advice and guidance. I like the fact that we can email and seek advice or shared experiences with the NAFP group.
- I really like being part of this group and find Harvey and the members really supportive. It's an invaluable resource to me and my agency.
- Harvey and the team are doing an exceptional job! Good balance of accountability and being pro-active.
- Next few years will be critical with the transition between Harvey and Hannah
- I am really happy that we joined from the get go and would encourage every private agency to join NAFP
- I find NAFP's support incredibly valuable. I can reach out to NAFP to seek guidance and support and receive a response in a timely way. I provide lots of ongoing feedback to NAFP in order to keep NAFP in the loop of ongoing operational developments in each region. I find NAFP's guidance documents which have been created for many areas of our work so helpful, and ensure I incorporate these into discussions with local authorities, and share them on an ongoing basis to encourage local authorities to make reference. I really do value the significant impact and input NAFP has on the sector and look forward to working together over the next year.
- Thanks for all the support in 2024!
- NAFP has been a vital support to providers across Wales, giving an opportunity to share good practice and highlight the quality of provision available. You have also been pivotal in representing the sector to Government as part of the working groups looking at the plan legislative changes to eliminate profit making helping to raise the real concerns and impact on sufficiency likely if the plans go ahead as proposed.
- So glad I joined
- NAFP is a really valuable asset to IFAs. You provide a central point where IFAs can discuss common issues and potential solutions to these, and you are able to challenge local authorities where it becomes commercially difficult for us to do it.
- NAFP has been a great source of support in helping me develop in my role as registered manager, the weekly best practice meetings have been very informative and well facilitated.
- As always, a 5 star service.
- Thank you for what you do.
- The information sent is informative and relevant, practice offering is relevant and whilst it is not always possible to attend when I am able I find these useful.
- Always grateful for the support. Meetings are so useful, communication is excellent and it is invaluable to feel part of a wider 'community'.
- Just a thank you. Responses to queries or advice required always prompt and helpful
- Thank you for the work in representing and challenging on behalf of the sector with a consistent view on improving fostering overall.
- Have been helpful this year, in supporting us, particularly with Scottish Recommended Allowance
- I value the support this brings, regular meetings gives me a sense of stability in working with others in the field, building a community of knowledge
- It's great and I highly value the information that NAFP provide
- Excellent support. I really value it.
- I feel that the practice groups provide a safe and sharing environment and this is something I welcome and appreciate. Some workers in agencies are guarded about

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what they do and I always appreciate those who aren't as I always strive to share anything I know. I believe we are all in this together to make a difference and should work together. Anything that can be done to help translate this feeling of inclusion into work with local authorities would be appreciated!

- No, very happy
- It is wonderful that Harvey and all the associates are so approachable.
- Really useful read, I often share information with my colleagues
- No like being part of the groups.
- The meetings are well attended it appears that the movement in Wales has encouraged joined up working which has been pleasing to see
- I always come away from meetings energised, having new ideas or new information I can use to make our agency practice better. Thank you NAFP
- Enjoy the meetings led by Harvey, always responds to questions as does Catherine. I like the set up of the forums, with concise information and updates given with opportunity to raise questions as needed. Thank you
- I have only been a member for a short time and have to say that the advise and guidance has been invaluable to support me in my role.
- Harvey's visibility and seat at the table is one of the most valuable aspects of NAFP membership He is always present and a professional and measured voice of the sector.
- Our organisation has only recently become a member, and therefore it's too early to comment.

Q5 Do you have any other comments about NAFP?

Thank Thanks support value invaluable information offer feel make
appreciate part agency group meetings practice
support Harvey always great NAFP find really
best practice work None LA helpful good year members lots share
joined fostering find NAFP provide

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

Using practice guidance

relevant always queries different quality service
fostering LA information find agencies advice
around provided able NAFP managers
really share practice helped given
part working issues group useful
joined also contract support used attended
good helpful meetings forums Training improve
sector commissioning interesting NAFP support
practice meetings

- Main reason used over past year has been around contracts. This has been helpful and informative. In addition RM discussion threads continue to support agency development and be up to date around current issues arising in the fostering world.
- Training and networking
- Regular opportunities to share and learn from other managers and practitioners
- ADM forum is very helpful, informative and the sharing of some of the day to day challenges is incredibly useful via the group e-mail.
- Using practice guidance to help our team develop improved practice
- You challenged a local authority over a request for sensitive foster carer information and this resulted in the local authority sending withdrawal emails and apologising.
- Your information around not needing to send full *Form Fs* has been excellent and has really helped us to protect the very sensitive data of our families.
- Sharing information around frameworks , commissioning has been the most helpful
- Harvey provides an important conduit between the sector and government agencies. NAFP offers a method of ensuring that the sector is able to converse and collaborate on key topics.
- I have had quite a busy year so I have only really joined a couple of the online meetings. I hope to attend more in 2025.
- Provided relevant training for our staff that is specific to the sector.
- Discussions in the forum and posing a question on the registered manager email and listening to how other agencies approach a certain area.
- Marie is always on hand to support with any questions or queries and has been very helpful with ensuring a fair approach to contract monitoring information.
- Supported with contact details for a commissioning issue of a late payment
- Accessing policies and articles
- i have been able to be part in a working group for parent and child arrangements with other IFAs where we have been able to share experiences, knowledge and paperwork with a view to all working towards a unified approach
- Used briefing papers to strengthen policy and practice, and the registered manager Google Group has supported me in knowing that when I might be querying things 'in-house' that there are other managers/agencies out there with similar queries and advice given by both NAFP and other managers has been very supportive.
- The national contract has been a fantastic piece of work from IFAs not wanting to

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- sign up to frameworks
- Always giving update on different issues in the sectors - different approaches from different local authorities
- Day to day advice and support
- great practice forums for our teams to attend - really really good quality
- I attended a seminar which was interesting and informative
- See above comment about cascading email content.
- Joined in meetings, and also led on meetings with Scottish Government re: Scottish Recommended Allowance
- Proactive in supporting tender processes
- Providing the opportunity to share experiences and take learning. Working in an IFA, it can be a competitive area of social care, however through NAFP it is nice to see the mutual support amongst IFAs with mutual interest for all to improve and be the best service for the carers and young people we support. Everyone shares tips, and ideas without a need to gatekeep.
- Loads of times - from sharing on the commissioning group and asking Q's where everyone supports each other, to directly intervening such as when Lincolnshire asked for information which it should have like names and addresses of all our carers.
- As mentioned, NAFP has been invaluable when it comes to understanding legislative changes in Wales. They have allowed us to have a stronger united voice and to understand what changes may be possible.
- Advice around Staying Put and extended offer
- Have continually kept us in the loop regarding not for profit.
- It has provided examples of good practice which I have been able to share with my agency.
- The discussion forums have given me more insight in the shared experiences of other IFAs
- I have only been to two workshops so I cannot add much more this year.
- I think being part of a supportive group and having shared ideas.
- Training and briefings are key
- As a new registered manager NAFP has supported my development re knowledge and best practice which in turn has helped develop my self confidence as a manager at this level. Thank you.
- On a number of practical matters in the running of a service NAFP has been really helpful. For example, OOH training and advice. Looking at IPA contracts and negotiating an increase.
- Working on our behalf with troublesome local authorities!
- The training offered has helped my team and they all find it useful and relevant.
- Support with public affairs work
- It has provided a central force in the fight against Welsh Government unnecessary (in my view) proposed legislative changes for IFAs to 'eliminate' profit.
- NAFP have on several occasions challenged local authorities excessive requests for comprehensive contract and quality monitoring information, using the relevant contract as the benchmark in which to measure requests by. Whilst we always provide feedback individually to local authorities when these situations occur, NAFP's support also strengthens the representation and enables other IFAs who may be experiencing difficulties to also share feedback. NAFP's support has resulted in some local authorities reducing the amount of information they request,

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- or change the way in which they do this.
- NAFPP has helped us to develop our small agency, after having been out of the sector for a period. We have been able to get up to speed with current practice and use this to improve our service.
 - When foster carers in our agency were approached by staff in foster Wales stating we would no longer exist as an entity we were able to turn to NAFPP for advice and support on how to manage this. Also you were able to raise this with the Head of Foster Wales in terms of the inappropriateness of carers being poached like this. In a challenging environment it is helpful to feel there is support available through NAFPP.
 - Using your guidances on various subjects
 - The biggest help is the National Fostering contract. As we move to a position of being off contract more frequently, having a widely recognised and accepted contract is hugely important and means that I/we don't have to create one which would be widely disputed by local authorities.
 - Really helpful around White Rose contract and legacy fees
 - Peer supervision sessions have also been helpful to share practice experiences and learning with colleagues.
 - Trainings that I have attended has been excellent and helped me to be OFSTED ready.
 - Support around debts of concern.
 - Keeping me informed.
 - Keeping me connected.
 - Improved practice of completing safer care plan following attendance of the training offered by Catherine Lockett.
 - Keeping abreast of research to support practice, which benefits my entire team and impacts on the agency development in providing quality services to our fostering families and the children they support.
 - All of the meetings I have attended have been useful, providing valuable insight and updates regarding the not-for-profit agenda as well as other issues which are so difficult to keep on top of as a small agency.
 - I have emailed a few times with specific queries and have always found Harvey, Marie and Catherine genuinely keen to help and super approachable.
 - Steered and continue to support wider fostering community through the uncertainty of eliminate profit
 - Challenging Welsh Government and Foster Wales on the negative marketing and communication that was being used.
 - Scotland, challenging local authority decisions not to pass on the allowance up lift to children living with IFA foster carers.
 - Regional and national meetings, ensuring all managers are up to date with local issues e.g. issues with tenders or commissioning processes.
 - Information and updates on appropriate service issues.
 - The Google registered managers groups has been of real benefit and helped with dilemmas that I have faced. It has also given me reassurance that I am working in the same way as others to ensure the best outcomes for the children in our care.
 - I have also been helped considerably by the Friday best practice meetings as they are always very informative and if I cannot attend the notes provided afterwards are always very useful.
 - Many times there with good answers

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- Preparation of our Ofsted inspection and being Ofsted ready
- Virtual sessions on various topics have been great
- Effective fostering assessments
- Campaigning for Scottish Recommended Allowance to be paid to charities.
- Advertising for vacant roles
- Liaise with Care Inspectorate to provide
- Provide forums to share/learn practice from others
- NQW's have really benefited from practice seminars.
- I have found weekly news bulletins useful.
- Assessment of partners briefing paper.
- Using practice guidance on new partners in fostering families
- Training and advice from peers
- References to research papers and enquiry docs.
- When you're working all the time to keep on top of the basics, there is' not the time to look for interesting things, so having more of these 'delivered' makes a difference, and the connections with others has afforded me a couple of these.
- Every session I go to, I learn something new and it helps me to improve Sparks Fostering.
- Having training and guidance for Panel, which has helped us further develop our practice
- Having a space to share some practice issues, with the hope that these can now be considered more widely by NAFP as a practice area
- Building further relationships with peers
- Offering opportunities to consider our practice and to think how to develop and improve this further
- Meeting with Marie to discuss commissioning query.
- Briefing on the National Fostering Model Contract.
- Practice meetings.
- Parent and child forum
- Information sent out via weekly email and in groups.
- Resources on the website.
- Being able to join the practice forums
- Very supportive with regards to local authority/Foster Wales attempting to poach carers. Extremely supportive with regards to the elimination of profit campaign and represented the agencies very well.
- Put us in touch with other IFAs to share practice concerns.
- I find the Friday practice meetings so helpful I have used information gained in these to update policies and practices within our new agency.
- Has continued to inform my own practice as manager, particularly like that the practice part of the meetings has been separated out. have used the practice guidance topics in the library regularly to refer to.
- Clarification on regulations.
- been a reassurance and place to help benchmark performance and experiences. Knowing that everyone is in the same boat is helpful!
- Unannounced visits expectations
- Vale of Glamorgan stated they would not place with us as we were not for profit from this year even though we had said we will transfer to not for profit. NAFP contacted them and they soon replied to change this stance.

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