



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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Welsh Government  
Consultation – summary of response

## Improving support for vulnerable children and their families across Wales

Proposed changes to improve adoption, fostering and kinship services in Wales, supporting our work to transform children's social care.

January 2026

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd / This document is also available in Welsh  
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg / We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh

## **Overview**

This document provides a summary of responses to the consultation on proposed changes to improve adoption, fostering and kinship services in Wales, supporting our work to transform children's social care. We would like to thank all respondents for sharing their views with us.

## **Action Required**

This document is for information only.

## **Further information and related documents**

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

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## **Additional copies**

This summary of response and copies of all the consultation documentation are published in electronic form only and can be accessed on the Welsh Government's website.

Link to the consultation documentation: [Improving adoption, fostering and kinship services | GOV.WALES](#)

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## Introduction

The Welsh Government is committed to improving outcomes for vulnerable children and their families across Wales. This consultation formed part of our wider programme to transform children's social care, ensuring that services for looked after children, care leavers, adoptive families, and kinship carers are effective, accessible, and responsive to need.

The consultation sought views on a range of proposed amendments to secondary legislation and Codes of Practice under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. These changes aim to simplify regulatory frameworks, improve adoption and fostering processes, enhance support for kinship care and special guardianship arrangements, and explore the feasibility of introducing a national register of foster carers.

## About the Consultation

On 4<sup>th</sup> August 2025 the Minister for Children and Social Care launched a public consultation on proposed changes to improve adoption, fostering and kinship services in Wales. The public consultation closed on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2025 and asked **thirty-seven** questions relating to the following key areas:

1. **Adoption Support Services** – proposals to simplify registration requirements and improve access to adoption-related support.
2. **Counselling and Therapeutic Services for Adults** – removing barriers to adoption-related counselling for adults.
3. **Care Planning and Review for Adoption** – strengthening guidance within the Part 6 Code of Practice.
4. **Kinship Care** – introducing a more flexible assessment framework and review process for kinship foster carers.
5. **Transfer of Foster Carers** – embedding good practice into legislation to streamline transfers between providers.
6. **Enhanced Fostering Allowance** – clarifying eligibility for different types of foster carers.
7. **Independent Review Mechanism** – updating regulations to reflect current practice and improve clarity.
8. **Register of Foster Carers** – seeking views on the benefits and challenges of a national register.
9. **Special Guardianship Support Plans** – introducing a statutory requirement for consistent use of support plan templates.

Notification of the consultation was sent via email to a range of stakeholders with an interest in the proposals and the Minister for Children and Social Care announced the start of the consultation via a [Written Statement](#).

Stakeholders could respond via an online form or download and return the form via email or post. All responses were accepted, including those where questions were answered partially, and those that were submitted in a different format to the consultation response document.

## **The Responses**

A total of twenty-eight consultation responses were received, with only one submitted from outside of Wales. Of these, nineteen responses were submitted online and nine via email. Responses represented a range of sectors, including eight local authorities, one local health board and five third sector organisations. Other contributors included three private sector or social enterprises, two public or representative bodies, two universities, and two care givers. Five responses did not specify an organisation. One response was provided bilingually in English and Welsh, while the remaining twenty-seven were in English only. Not all consultees addressed every chapter of the consultation.

## **Summary of Responses**

### **Adoption Support Agencies - Proposed Regulatory Changes**

**Question 1: Do you agree that the CIW registration requirement for providers of adoption support services, where those providers are delivering adoption support services exclusively under a contract with one or more local authority adoption services, should be removed?**

Thirteen responses were received to the consultation question. Of these, nine respondents supported the removal of the CIW registration requirement, four opposed the proposal.

Supporters of the proposal highlighted several benefits, including increased flexibility in commissioning, which would allow local authorities to access a broader range of providers. They also pointed to the potential reduction in monopolistic practices, which could help lower the cost of specialist therapeutic interventions. Many felt that removing the registration requirement would eliminate administrative barriers that currently prevent smaller, specialist, or trauma-informed providers from participating. Importantly, these respondents expressed confidence in existing safeguards, noting that local authority commissioning frameworks already include robust checks and quality assurance mechanisms. Overall, they believed the change would enhance service delivery, particularly in areas with limited specialist support, and enable more personalised and timely interventions for adoptive families.

In contrast, four opposed the proposal and raised concerns about the loss of independent oversight and accountability that CIW registration provides. They feared that relaxing regulation could lead to inconsistent standards and variable quality across Wales. For these respondents, CIW registration was seen as a vital

safeguard rather than a bureaucratic hurdle, essential for ensuring safe, consistent, and high-quality care.

Some respondents, including those in favour of the proposal, suggested a balanced approach. They recommended developing clear guidance or checklists to help adoption services select appropriate providers, maintaining a strong focus on quality assurance, care planning, and early identification of support needs. Consolidating good practice guidance and statutory frameworks was also suggested to support decision-making and reduce confusion.

## **Welsh Government response**

The Welsh Government acknowledges the broad support for removing the CIW registration requirement in cases where adoption support services are delivered exclusively under contract with local authority adoption services. The feedback suggests that such a change could unlock greater flexibility in commissioning and improve access to specialist support, particularly from smaller or trauma-informed providers.

We also recognise the confidence expressed by many respondents in the safeguards already embedded within local authority commissioning frameworks. These mechanisms are seen as effective in ensuring quality and accountability, and we agree that they play a crucial role in protecting the interests of adoptive families.

At the same time, we take seriously the concerns raised about the potential loss of independent oversight and the risk of inconsistent standards. We understand the value placed on CIW registration as a means of maintaining transparency and quality across Wales.

The Welsh Government will take forward an approach that balances flexibility with assurance. We will implement measures to streamline regulatory requirements where appropriate, while maintaining essential safeguards. Alongside this, we will strengthen support for adoption services to make informed decisions about provider selection and uphold high standards of care. These actions will be shaped by engagement with stakeholders to ensure that any changes are proportionate, evidence-based, and responsive to the needs of adoptive families.

## **Question 2: Do you think the checks provided through commissioning arrangements are sufficient to avoid a drop in standards?**

Out of the fifteen responses received to the question, views were mixed. Seven respondents expressed confidence in current processes, suggesting that existing checks are adequate to maintain service quality. Five respondents disagreed, raising concerns about gaps in oversight and the potential for inconsistent standards across regions. The remaining four responses did not directly answer the question but offered useful reflections and experiences that contributed to the broader discussion.

Three respondents did not express disagreement with the proposed changes but instead offered constructive suggestions to support effective implementation.

Some respondents cautioned that relying solely on local commissioning could lead to fragmented standards without the oversight of a central regulatory body like CIW. They highlighted risks such as inconsistent monitoring, conflicts of interest, and variable quality of care. Others, while supportive of commissioning arrangements, stressed the importance of robust vetting processes, including DBS checks, qualifications, references, and the use of standardised checklists. Maintaining preferred provider lists and conducting regular reviews were also seen as key to ensuring quality.

Suggestions to strengthen consistency included centralising provider information through the National Adoption Service, encouraging collaborative vetting across regions, and promoting regular consultation between local authorities and adoption services. These approaches were seen as ways to reduce variability and support continuity of care. Some respondents also noted positive outcomes from commissioning, such as improved access to therapeutic services and alignment with Ofsted guidance, while others shared personal experiences that underscored the importance of direct monitoring and long-term support.

Overall, the fifteen responses reflect both confidence in and caution about the sufficiency of commissioning arrangements, pointing to a need for further consideration of how consistency and quality assurance can be strengthened across Wales.

## **Welsh Government response**

The Welsh Government appreciates the range of perspectives shared in response to the question on the sufficiency of checks within commissioning arrangements. The feedback reflects both confidence in existing local processes and a recognition of the need to ensure consistency and quality across Wales.

We acknowledge the value placed on commissioning frameworks and the role they play in enabling access to specialist support. At the same time, we are mindful of the concerns raised about potential variability in standards and oversight. These insights reinforce the importance of maintaining a balanced approach - one that supports flexibility in service delivery while ensuring robust and consistent safeguards.

In light of the feedback, we will consider how best to support adoption services in strengthening commissioning practices. This includes exploring opportunities for greater collaboration, improved information sharing, and clearer expectations around provider vetting and monitoring. We remain committed to working with stakeholders to ensure that commissioning arrangements continue to deliver high-quality, safe, and equitable support for adoptive families across Wales.

**Question 3: Do you think this change will increase the number of providers willing to provide adoption support services to children and families and therefore improve access to them?**

The responses revealed a generally positive outlook among stakeholders, with many expressing confidence that the proposed change could encourage more providers to deliver adoption support services. Out of the twelve responses received, nine respondents explicitly agreed that the change would likely increase provider participation and improve access to services. The majority of these supportive responses suggested that a more inclusive or flexible framework could lower barriers to entry and make it easier for organisations, particularly those in the charitable sectors to get involved. This was seen as a step toward broader sector engagement and better support for children and families.

However, three respondents disagreed, raising concerns about whether the change would genuinely incentivise providers or risk adding complexity without adequate resources or clarity. These concerns highlighted the need for clearer communication about how the change would be implemented and supported in practice.

While views varied, the consultation responses highlighted both optimism about expanding adoption support and a clear demand for greater clarity and practical detail in how the proposed change would be delivered.

**Welsh Government response**

We welcome the constructive feedback received in response to this question and are encouraged by the broad support for the proposed change. The responses have reinforced the importance of creating a framework that is both inclusive and practical, enabling a wider range of organisations to contribute to adoption support. We acknowledge the concerns raised around implementation and clarity and will take these into account as we refine the policy. Further engagement with stakeholders will be prioritised to ensure that the final approach is well understood, appropriately resourced, and responsive to the needs of children and families. Our aim remains to strengthen the adoption support landscape and ensure equitable access to high-quality services across Wales.

**Question 4: What impact (including any costs and/or benefits) do you think the proposed changes to the regulations might have on different organisations or sectors within social care?**

Twelve responses were received, reflecting a range of perspectives on the proposed regulatory changes. While views varied, the overall tone was cautiously optimistic. Eight respondents recognised potential benefits in removing the requirement for CIW registration for providers working exclusively under local authority contracts. Many felt this could open the market to a broader range of providers, including smaller organisations and sole practitioners, which in turn could reduce costs and improve access to services, particularly in areas where specialist support is currently limited.



This optimism was tempered by concerns raised by six respondents, particularly around safeguarding and consistency. Without CIW oversight, the responsibility for monitoring and quality assurance would shift to commissioning bodies, prompting questions about how standards would be maintained across different regions. Four respondents specifically warned that this could increase risks for vulnerable children and families if not carefully managed.

A recurring suggestion was the introduction of a mandatory training module focused on adoption, ideally delivered online. This was seen as a way to ensure providers are equipped to meet the holistic needs of adoptive families, with an emphasis on supporting the parent-child relationship and working with families as integrated units.

Several responses also highlighted that current service models often fall short in meeting the complex needs of adoptive families. Greater flexibility in commissioning was seen as a way for local authorities to offer more tailored and therapeutic support. Reducing administrative burdens was viewed as a practical advantage, especially for smaller providers who may currently be excluded due to regulatory complexity.

Despite these potential benefits, some respondents remained cautious. Two questioned whether the proposed changes would lead to meaningful market expansion, noting that procurement and regulatory frameworks may still pose challenges for new entrants. One response suggested that provider lists could include cost comparisons to help maintain affordability and quality.

## **Welsh Government response**

The insights provided have been invaluable in shaping our understanding of the potential implications for the social care sector.

The responses highlight a clear appetite for reform that enables greater flexibility and responsiveness in service delivery, particularly in the context of adoption support. We recognise the importance of ensuring that any changes to the regulatory framework maintain a strong focus on safeguarding, quality assurance, and equitable access to services.

In light of the feedback, we will explore mechanisms to support commissioning bodies in maintaining consistent standards across regions. This includes considering enhanced guidance, shared tools, and collaborative approaches to oversight. We also acknowledge the value placed on workforce development and will assess the feasibility of introducing training to support providers in delivering adoption services that reflect best practice and holistic family support.

**Question 5: What are your views on extending the exemption to register under Part 1 of RISCA to partnerships and corporate body adoption support service providers, who exclusively provide those services under a contract with a registered adoption service?**

There were twelve responses to this question. Out of twelve responses received, seven explicitly supported the proposal to extend the exemption from registration under Part 1 of RISCA to partnerships and corporate body adoption support service providers working exclusively under contract with a registered adoption service. Supporters viewed the exemption as a fair and practical extension of the current framework, noting that individual providers are already exempt under certain conditions. Extending this to other provider types was seen as a way to promote consistency and reduce barriers to collaborative service delivery, enabling more tailored support for families.

Several of those in favour highlighted the potential for increased flexibility, particularly in accessing specialist therapeutic or counselling services. They felt that, with strong contract management and oversight by the commissioning adoption service, high standards of care and safeguarding could be maintained without requiring formal registration.

However, some respondents raised concerns about removing the registration requirement. These concerns focused on the risk of inconsistent service quality and increased pressure on commissioning bodies. The importance of maintaining a strong, independent regulatory framework was emphasised, with warnings that vulnerable children and families could be exposed to uneven standards of care if safeguards were not applied consistently. Respondents stressed the need for clear accountability and robust safeguarding mechanisms, especially in the absence of direct regulatory oversight.

A number of respondents requested further evidence to support the proposed change, including examples from other parts of the UK where similar exemptions may have been introduced. They felt that comparative insights could help inform decision-making and reassure stakeholders about potential risks and benefits.

There was also a strong call for clear guidance to be issued. Respondents noted that without this, confusion could arise about which providers are subject to oversight, and which are not, particularly in cases involving mixed arrangements with both exempt and non-exempt providers.

**Welsh Government response**

The feedback received reflects a broad range of perspectives on the proposal, highlighting both the potential benefits and the areas requiring careful consideration. There is recognition of the value in promoting consistency and flexibility in service delivery, particularly where specialist support is needed. At the same time, the importance of maintaining strong safeguards and clear oversight arrangements was emphasised.

The responses also point to the need for clarity around roles and responsibilities, especially in complex commissioning arrangements. Insights from other jurisdictions and further exploration of quality assurance mechanisms were suggested as helpful in informing future decisions.

As this work progresses, there is a clear intention to continue engaging with the sector to ensure any changes are developed collaboratively, with a shared focus on maintaining high standards of care and safeguarding for children and families.

Overall, the consultation has provided a valuable evidence base to support ongoing discussions and considerations around the regulatory framework for adoption support services.

### **Adoption-related counselling and therapeutic services to adults - proposed regulatory changes**

#### **Question 6: Do you agree that the CIW registration requirement for providers of adoption related counselling and therapeutic services for adults should be removed?**

Of the fourteen responses received, eight expressed agreement with the proposal, five opposed it, and one respondent did not express a clear view for or against the proposal but offered practical suggestions to support effective implementation.

Those in favour of the change pointed to existing professional regulation and oversight as sufficient safeguards, suggesting that additional registration may be unnecessary. It was noted that current commissioning arrangements already include checks such as qualifications, references, and criminal record screenings. Some felt that the registration requirement could act as a barrier, discouraging qualified professionals from offering support, and that removing it might improve access to trauma-informed, tailored services. The principle of autonomy under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 was also cited, with the view that adults should be empowered to make informed choices about their care. Even among supporters, there was a consistent call for clear guidance to help individuals identify safe and appropriate support options in the absence of CIW oversight.

Those who opposed the removal raised concerns about the loss of independent regulation and the potential for inconsistent service quality. There were fears that without CIW registration, individuals might mistakenly assume they are accessing regulated services, which could undermine public trust. The safeguarding of vulnerable adults was a recurring theme, with several responses emphasising that therapeutic support for adoption-related trauma should always be subject to formal regulation to ensure appropriate standards are met. Some also stressed that therapeutic provision is essential and must be delivered to recognised standards.

The consultation revealed a complex picture, with significant concerns around safeguarding, quality assurance, and public confidence. The responses suggest that any policy change should be accompanied by robust guidance and safeguards to ensure individuals can access safe, high-quality support.

## **Welsh Government response**

The feedback received reflects a wide range of perspectives and has provided valuable insight into the complexities surrounding this issue.

The Welsh Government recognises the importance of ensuring that adults affected by adoption have access to safe, high-quality therapeutic support. We also acknowledge the concerns raised about safeguarding, public confidence, and the consistency of service provision. At the same time, we are mindful of the arguments presented regarding professional regulation, commissioning safeguards, and the potential for improved access to specialist services.

As we move forward, we will apply a balanced approach that reflects the diversity of views shared. The updated regulatory framework will safeguard the safety and wellbeing of those seeking support, while ensuring proportionate requirements. In addition, we will strengthen guidance and information for individuals accessing therapeutic services, with a clear focus on transparency, quality assurance, and informed choice.

Our aim is to ensure that all adults affected by adoption can access the support they need in a way that is safe, respectful, and responsive to their individual circumstances. Further engagement with stakeholders will be undertaken as part of this process, and we remain committed to working collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes for those affected.

### **Question 7: Do you think these changes will improve access to necessary counselling and therapeutic services for adopted adults?**

Based on the twelve responses, views on whether the proposed changes would improve access to counselling and therapeutic services for adopted adults were mixed but leaned toward cautious optimism. Of the total responses, seven agreed that the changes would likely enhance access, while four disagreed. One remaining response did not clearly address the question but still offered valuable reflections on related aspects of the proposal and broader sector context.

Supporters of the changes highlighted several key benefits. Many felt that removing the CIW registration requirement could expand the pool of available providers, particularly those already regulated by professional bodies. This was seen as a way to reduce long waiting times and improve continuity of care, especially for individuals dealing with trauma. Respondents also noted that the changes align with the principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, which supports autonomy and informed choice in care decisions. However, even among those who agreed, there was recognition that improved access would depend on supporting infrastructure such as clear guidance, quality assurance frameworks, and cross-authority collaboration.

Those who disagreed raised concerns about practical barriers. Funding and affordability were recurring themes, with several respondents noting that without

financial support, increased provider availability might not translate into equitable access. Others worried that removing CIW oversight could compromise service quality and safeguarding. One response questioned whether providers would enter the market without guaranteed returns, casting doubt on whether deregulation alone would lead to meaningful improvements.

Overall, the responses suggest that while the proposed changes have the potential to improve access, their success will depend on addressing key issues such as funding, quality assurance, and transparency. These considerations are essential to ensure that adopted adults can benefit from timely, safe, and effective therapeutic support.

### **Welsh Government response**

We acknowledge the thoughtful and diverse perspectives shared and recognise the importance of ensuring adopted adults can access timely, appropriate, and high-quality therapeutic support. The proposed removal of CIW registration for providers of adoption-related counselling and therapeutic services for adults is intended to reduce barriers and improve flexibility in service provision.

We are committed to ensuring that any changes are implemented alongside measures that uphold service quality, safeguard users, and promote equitable access. This includes working with stakeholders to develop clear guidance and strengthen oversight mechanisms. We will continue to engage with partners across Wales to ensure that adopted adults receive the support they need in a way that is safe, responsive, and aligned with their rights under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

### **Question 8: What impact on quality do you think these changes will have on adoption-related counselling and therapeutic services for adults?**

Thirteen responses were received which revealed a broad spectrum of views on the potential impact of proposed changes to adoption-related counselling and therapeutic services for adults. Of the thirteen responses received, six expressed a positive or neutral stance, suggesting that increased flexibility and choice could enhance service delivery. These respondents felt that removing formal registration requirements might open the market to a wider range of providers, potentially reducing waiting times and improving access to more tailored and specialised support. This was seen as a way to empower service users, giving them greater control over their therapeutic care and fostering more responsive and personalised services.

However, two responses raised concerns about the implications of reduced regulatory oversight. These contributors worried that without formal checks, service quality could become inconsistent and that vulnerable adults might be exposed to practitioners lacking the necessary qualifications or experience. Safeguarding was a key issue, with fears that some providers may not be adequately trained to address the complex emotional and psychological challenges often associated with adoption.

A recurring theme across the consultation was the importance of specialised training and professional standards. Many respondents emphasised that, regardless of regulatory changes, therapists and counsellors working in adoption contexts should be affiliated with professional bodies that uphold ethical standards and support ongoing professional development. This was seen as essential to ensuring practitioners are equipped to address issues such as identity, trauma, and attachment difficulties with sensitivity and competence.

Some participants also noted that clearer background information would have supported more meaningful engagement with the consultation. A few felt that greater clarity around the rationale, risks, and benefits of the proposed changes would have helped them assess the potential impact more confidently. These reflections point to an opportunity to strengthen future consultations by ensuring stakeholders are well-informed and supported to contribute fully, encouraging a more inclusive and constructive policy development process.

### **Welsh Government response**

We remain committed to ensuring that all individuals affected by adoption have access to high-quality, safe, and effective therapeutic support.

Our intention is to improve accessibility and responsiveness within the system, while maintaining appropriate safeguards and professional standards. We recognise the importance of ensuring that practitioners working in this sensitive area are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge, and we will continue to explore mechanisms that promote accountability and uphold service quality.

As we move forward, we will consider how best to balance flexibility with the need for robust oversight. This includes working with stakeholders to identify opportunities for strengthening professional development, ethical practice, and service user empowerment. We also recognise the importance of clear communication and transparency in policy development and will seek to enhance future consultations to support informed and meaningful engagement.

The feedback received will play a vital role in shaping our next steps, and we thank all respondents for their contributions.

### **Question 9: What impact (including any costs and/or benefits) do you think the proposed changes to the regulations might have on different organisations or sectors within social care?**

The consultation question received eleven responses. A common theme across the responses was the anticipated benefit of expanding the pool of service providers. This was mentioned in at least five of the substantive responses, which suggested that increased availability and diversity of services could reduce delays in commissioning and foster a more competitive environment. Respondents noted that such competition might lead to improved service quality and potentially lower costs.

However, concerns were raised in several responses about the implications of shifting responsibility for monitoring and safeguarding solely to commissioning bodies. It was suggested that removing independent oversight could result in inconsistent standards across different areas, potentially compromising the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable individuals. This shift was also seen as placing additional pressure on already stretched local resources and could affect public confidence in the system.

Issues of equity were highlighted in two responses, which pointed out that while more providers may become available, access to services could still depend on an individual's ability to pay. Without strategic commissioning and equitable funding models, the benefits of regulatory changes may not be fully realised by those most in need.

One response emphasised the importance of aligning the proposed changes with existing legislative duties, suggesting that integrating responsibilities such as post-adoption counselling into commissioning strategies could improve outcomes. The principles of choice, control, and wellbeing were seen as a more modern framework that should guide future developments.

Overall, while there was cautious optimism about the potential for improved service delivery and access, the responses highlighted the need for careful implementation, robust oversight, and equitable funding to ensure that the changes benefit all individuals involved in social care.

## **Welsh Government response**

The responses have highlighted important considerations for implementation, particularly around ensuring consistency, safeguarding, and equitable access. We recognise the importance of maintaining public confidence in the system and are committed to ensuring that any changes are underpinned by robust oversight and clear accountability.

We will take forward the points raised in the consultation responses as part of our ongoing work to refine the regulatory framework. This includes exploring mechanisms to support fair access to services, ensuring alignment with existing legislative duties, and considering how best to support commissioning bodies in delivering high-quality care.

The feedback received has helped shape the policy now being implemented, and we remain committed to ongoing engagement with stakeholders to ensure its delivery continues to reflect the needs of individuals and organisations across the sector.

## **Adoption Care Planning, Placement and Review – proposed regulatory changes**

### **Question 10: Do you agree there is a need to provide more detail within the Part 6 Code of Practice to effectively support local authority social workers where a child has a care plan for adoption or is being considered for support services post adoption?**

A total of fourteen responses were received, with twelve respondents clearly supporting the need for more detailed guidance in the Part 6 Code of Practice. They felt that current provisions lack the clarity required to support social workers in managing complex care planning, particularly in adoption cases. One respondent disagreed, cautioning that the proposed changes could unintentionally prioritise adoption over other permanence options such as Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) or kinship care, and stressed the importance of exploring all alternatives. The remaining nine responses were either non-committal or unclear, though many still offered valuable insights. One response focused on commentary around Family Group Conferencing and broader sector needs but did not clearly indicate agreement or disagreement with the proposal.

Across the responses, there was strong support for clearer guidance that aligns with existing legislation and clarifies professional roles, helping to ensure consistency across local authorities. A consistent theme was the importance of child-centred practice, with calls to ensure the child's voice is central throughout the adoption and post-adoption process. Concerns were also raised about the ambiguity of adoption support plans, with respondents noting that improvements would be limited without sufficient funding and infrastructure. Some highlighted the need to avoid premature adoption decisions and advocated for Family Group Conferencing (FGC) to ensure all permanence options are considered fairly. Finally, several respondents identified gaps in post-adoption therapeutic services, calling for more tailored, long-term support to meet the evolving needs of children and families.

### **Welsh Government response**

The Welsh Government acknowledges the key themes raised through the consultation responses. These include the importance of ensuring that the child's voice is central to all decision-making processes, the value of Family Group Conferencing in exploring a full range of permanence options, and the need to strengthen access to therapeutic services following adoption.

In response to this feedback, the Welsh Government will take all comments into careful consideration as part of its ongoing review of the Part 6 Code of Practice. The insights provided will directly inform the development of clearer, more comprehensive guidance that supports social workers in delivering consistent, child-centred practice across Wales. Our aim is to ensure that the revised Code not only aligns with legislative requirements but also reflects the realities of practice and the needs of children and families.



**Question 11: Do you agree that the additional areas that Welsh Government is proposing to include within the Code of Practice, will provide additional clarity for practitioners, where a child has a care plan or is being considered for support services post adoption?**

Out of a total of fourteen responses, twelve respondents explicitly agreed that the proposed additions would be beneficial. The remaining two responses disagreed with the proposal

Among those who agreed, there was a strong consensus that the proposed changes would enhance clarity and consistency across Wales. Respondents welcomed the inclusion of more detailed guidance around care planning, the roles of different plans (such as the Part 6 care and support plan and the adoption support plan), and the regulatory framework at key stages of the adoption process. These additions were seen as essential for helping practitioners navigate complex situations and make informed decisions.

Several responses highlighted the value of referencing good practice guides and frameworks, such as the Wales Early Permanence Framework, which were viewed as practical tools to support decision-making and promote uniformity in service delivery.

A recurring theme was the need for clearer guidance on post-adoption support. Respondents noted that current arrangements can be inconsistent, and that more robust, age-appropriate support plans are needed, particularly in areas such as therapeutic life story work and trauma-informed care. There was also concern that some services, like Family Group Conferences, are not always offered proactively, which could limit opportunities for families to receive the support they need.

For the responses that indicated disagreement, no further explanation was provided to help us understand the reasons behind their position.

Overall, the feedback suggests strong support for the Welsh Government's proposed additions to the Code of Practice, with respondents emphasising the importance of clarity, consistency, and comprehensive support planning in improving outcomes for children and families involved in adoption.

### **Welsh Government response**

In response to this feedback, Welsh Government will continue to refine the proposed additions to the Code of Practice. We are committed to ensuring that the final version provides clear, practical and comprehensive guidance that supports practitioners in delivering high-quality, consistent services. Our aim is to improve outcomes for children and families involved in adoption by embedding clarity, accountability and best practice throughout the care and support planning process.

This feedback has been invaluable in shaping the next steps of our work, and we remain grateful for the continued engagement of stakeholders across the sector.

**Question 12: Do you agree that adding references to the Wales Early Permanence Framework, will remove any confusion amongst practitioners?**

Of the fourteen responses received, eleven supported referencing the Wales Early Permanence (WEP) Framework within the Code of Practice. Respondents felt that doing so would improve clarity for practitioners, particularly by better defining the role of WEP carers - foster carers who are also approved as prospective adopters. This dual role was seen as a way to reduce placement changes and minimise trauma for children, while also promoting greater consistency across local authorities.

There was strong endorsement for embedding WEP within the Code to align expectations and processes across the sector. Respondents viewed this as a positive step toward improving practitioner confidence and understanding of the care pathway. While the overall feedback was supportive, a few responses noted that the number of adopters currently willing to engage in WEP remains limited. They emphasised the importance of a measured and sustainable approach to implementation; one that reflects current capacity while supporting future growth. Overall, the feedback highlights a clear appetite for greater clarity and consistency in early permanence practice, with careful consideration needed to ensure any changes are both practical and future focused.

Of the three responses that indicated disagreement, none provided commentary to explain their reasoning, making it difficult to understand the basis of their views.

**Welsh Government response**

The Welsh Government acknowledges the feedback received and welcomes the broad support for referencing the WEP Framework within the Code of Practice. We recognise the potential of this inclusion to enhance clarity for practitioners and promote greater consistency in care planning across Wales.

As we consider how best to incorporate references to the WEP Framework, we will ensure that any guidance developed is clear, accessible, and reflective of current practice. We are also mindful of the need to implement changes in a way that is proportionate and sustainable - taking into account current capacity and supporting the continued development of early permanence approaches.

Our commitment remains firmly focused on improving outcomes for children through effective, compassionate, and well-informed care planning.

**Question 13: What impact do you think the proposed changes outlined within this proposal might have on different organisations or sectors within social care?**

A total of twelve responses were received. Overall, the feedback reflects a broadly positive view of the proposed changes, with several key themes emerging.

Respondents welcomed the prospect of improved clarity and guidance, particularly around roles, responsibilities, and statutory expectations. This was seen as a way to support more effective care planning, reduce confusion, and strengthen collaboration between agencies. Many also felt the changes would contribute to better outcomes for children and families, by promoting child-centred approaches, improving placement stability, and ensuring timely, appropriate support throughout the adoption process.

The proposals were also viewed as a means of empowering practitioners, with enhanced guidance and best practice references expected to support more consistent, high-quality service delivery and reduce the risk of errors. Aligning legislation and guidance was highlighted as essential for achieving system-wide consistency and supporting the broader transformation of children's social care in Wales.

While the overall tone was supportive, a few respondents raised cautions and considerations, including concerns about resource limitations potentially leading to service-led rather than needs-led decisions.

Some respondents also emphasised the need for stronger coordination across policy areas within Welsh Government, particularly in light of the number of consultations currently underway. This was seen as important to avoid overlapping engagement and to support a more coherent and streamlined approach to implementation.

In summary, the responses indicate strong support for the proposed changes, with a clear emphasis on ensuring that reforms are well-integrated, clearly communicated, and grounded in the practical realities of service delivery.

## **Welsh Government response**

We welcome the thoughtful and constructive feedback provided by stakeholders. The responses demonstrate strong support for the direction of the proposed changes and reinforce the importance of clarity, consistency, and child-centred practice in adoption care planning.

The concerns raised around implementation risks and policy coherence are noted and will be considered as part of any future policy development. We are committed to ensuring that reforms are well-integrated, clearly communicated, and responsive to the practical realities of service delivery.

The Welsh Government will continue to work closely with stakeholders to refine the proposals and ensure that the final policy framework supports improved outcomes for children, families, and practitioners across Wales.

## **Assessment of kinship carers and support for kinship placements – proposed regulatory changes**

### **Question 14: Do you agree that Part 2 of Schedule 1 to the Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018 should be replaced with a new Part 3 specifically for kinship foster carers?**

There were twenty-two responses to this question. Of these, seventeen respondents agreed with the proposal, four disagreed, and one response did not clearly indicate a position.

The majority of respondents expressed strong support for the change, emphasising that kinship care is fundamentally different from mainstream fostering. Kinship carers often step into their roles during times of family crisis, caring for children they already know and have relationships with. Many felt that the current framework does not adequately reflect these unique circumstances and that a dedicated section would better align the regulations with the realities of kinship care.

Supporters of the proposal highlighted that many local authorities already operate in ways that reflect the principles behind the proposed changes, and formalising these practices would bring consistency across Wales. There was also endorsement for aligning the new regulations with the AFKA Cymru Good Practice Guide and incorporating tools such as the Form K assessment and support plan. Some responses stressed the importance of providing specific guidance and training for panel members and agency decision-makers to ensure appropriate assessments.

Several respondents shared personal or professional experiences that illustrated the financial and practical challenges faced by kinship carers. They noted that kinship carers are often expected to meet the same standards as mainstream foster carers without receiving equivalent support such as legal, emotional, practical or remuneration, which can lead to significant hardship. These views reinforced the need for a more flexible and child-centred approach to assessment and support.

However, not all responses were in favour. A few expressed concerns that the proposed changes might create confusion or inadvertently increase the number of children subject to care orders rather than Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs), which some felt should be more actively promoted. Others questioned whether the new framework would genuinely improve existing processes or might instead complicate safeguarding and review procedures. One response suggested that if radical alternatives are not achievable, then amending the current Part 2 may be less confusing.

One detailed response argued that the proposed change does not go far enough and suggested that more radical reform is needed. This included removing kinship assessments from fostering regulations entirely and focusing instead on strengthening SGO frameworks and developing new interim arrangements for connected persons. The view here was that simply adding a new section to the existing regulations would not address the deeper systemic issues affecting outcomes for children in kinship care.

Overall, while the proposal received broad support, there were nuanced perspectives on its potential impact, with some calling for more comprehensive reform to truly meet the needs of kinship carers and the children they support.

## **Welsh Government response**

The feedback received has provided valuable insight into the experiences and perspectives of those working across the sector, and we will take this feedback into account as we move forward with any changes.

This proposal represents a meaningful development in how kinship foster care is recognised within the regulatory framework. It reflects our intention to better acknowledge the distinct nature of kinship care and to ensure that the systems in place are more responsive to the realities faced by kinship carers and the children they support.

We understand that this is an important step, but not necessarily the final one. There may be opportunities in the future to consider more wide-ranging reforms, particularly if there are interest and support from a future government. This could include exploring alternative legal and policy approaches to permanency and support for kinship carers outside of the fostering system.

For now, this proposal lays a foundation for more tailored and appropriate support, and we remain committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure that any future developments continue to serve the best interests of children and families across Wales.

### **Question 15: Do you agree with the information to be included in the new proposed Part 3?**

Twenty-one responses were received to Question 15 regarding the proposed content for inclusion in the new Part 3 of the kinship foster care framework. Of these, sixteen respondents agreed with the proposed changes, four disagreed, and one response was unclear.

Overall, the majority of respondents welcomed the proposed content, describing it as appropriate, relevant, and more child-focused than current arrangements. Many felt that the changes better reflect the realities of kinship care, particularly the need for assessments to be tailored to the specific child and family context rather than applying a uniform standard. This shift was seen as consistent with feedback from carers and young people who have found the existing system overly rigid and not always proportionate.

Several responses highlighted that the proposals would help improve clarity and consistency in practice, while maintaining robust safeguarding standards. There was a strong sense that the changes would support more stable placements and better outcomes for children cared for within their extended families. Some respondents also noted that the proposed framework acknowledges the unique challenges faced

by kinship carers and promotes a more supportive and meaningful assessment process.

A few respondents raised concerns about the potential implications of the changes. These included fears that the proposals might complicate existing systems, increase the number of children entering care, reduce the use of Special Guardianship Orders and introduce a tier of quality and standards for children that could lead to potentially poor outcomes for children. One response suggested that the current standards applied to kinship carers are not fit for purpose and that the proposed changes would allow for a more flexible and context-sensitive approach, in line with the principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

There was also recognition of the need for accompanying guidance to support implementation, particularly for decision-making panels. In addition, one respondent shared a personal reflection on the importance of early support for kinship carers, noting that better understanding of risks and family dynamics at the outset could have helped reduce stress and improve outcomes

### **Welsh Government response**

We welcome the broad endorsement of the direction being taken and recognise the strong support for a more tailored and proportionate approach to kinship foster care assessments. Respondents highlighted the importance of aligning assessment processes with child-centred and context-sensitive principles, while maintaining robust safeguarding standards.

We also acknowledge the concerns raised by a minority of respondents regarding potential implications for practice and outcomes. These views have been carefully considered in shaping the final content, which reflects a balanced approach to addressing these issues.

The feedback received will help ensure the framework promotes clarity, consistency, and improved outcomes for children and carers. We will also consider the need for further guidance to support effective implementation and decision-making across the sector.

### **Question 16: Are there any elements of Part 2 that would also need to be added to Part 3? If so, which ones?**

There were twenty-one responses. Of these, seven respondents agreed that additions were necessary, thirteen disagreed, and one response was unclear.

Among those who agreed, there was a strong emphasis on the importance of incorporating elements such as safeguarding, quality assurance, and employment history. These contributors felt that such additions would enhance the robustness of the assessment process and ensure consistent standards across all types of foster care. One respondent highlighted the importance of assuring the highest standard of care for children. Another response justified that an assessment of current and past employment can aid demonstration of stability, capacity and experience of carers.

Four responses highlighted the need to assess a carer's capacity to support a child's identity, including aspects related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and cultural or religious background. Of these responses, it was noted that it cannot be assumed that kinship carers will have the same racial, religious or cultural background as the child and called for an understanding of how the child's identity needs will be met, and an assessment of what support may be needed to meet those needs. Others pointed out that past caregiving experience and the carer's skills and competence should be considered essential components of the assessment. One response suggested that the standard of living and leisure activities and interests of prospective carers should be included to provide context and background to aid assessments.

In contrast, two respondents felt that Part 3 was already sufficiently tailored to the specific context of kinship care and did not require elements from Part 2. These responses often stressed the importance of keeping the process focused and not overly complicated, given the unique nature of kinship arrangements. Some felt that the existing framework already captured the necessary information and that adding more could dilute its relevance or create unnecessary burdens.

One response expressed uncertainty, suggesting that the distinction between Part 2 and Part 3 might not be necessary at all. Another suggested that all elements of Part 2 should be included in Part 3, and the only addition required is to consider the needs of the child and the existing relationship with the prospective carers.

### **Welsh Government response**

The feedback has highlighted key considerations for the design and scope of the kinship care assessment process. We recognise the importance of ensuring assessments are proportionate and reflect the unique nature of kinship arrangements, while maintaining consistency and safeguarding standards across fostering contexts. In response to the feedback received, we will also include reference to past and current employment within the new Part 3 of the assessment process, which will be added to Schedule 1

### **Question 17: Do you have suggestions for any additional requirements that should be included in Part 3?**

For this question, sixteen responses were received. Of these, four respondents had no suggestions for any additional requirements to be included in Part 3. In contrast, two responses expressed concerns over the introduction of Part 3 and suggested that the assessment process is already established and has capacity to consider the existing relationships with prospective carers. These concerns also addressed the risk that thresholds for establishing the de registration of foster carers will become blurred resulted in increased IRM referrals and delays. Another risk of concern was that the introduction of Part 3 would increase the preference of care orders over the SGO route implicating an increase of children in care.

For those who provided suggestions for additional requirements, a popular theme was a call for an assessment of the financial, emotional and practical support needs

of the carer. A respondent requested that guidance is issued for this support assessment and for packages to be co-produced with carers. Alongside this, there were suggestions for training and development to include an understanding of the child's history and an assessment of the willingness to engage in kinship tailored training. Coinciding with this some respondents expressed the importance that carers are informed of the expectations of taking on a kinship role including the financial and work life implications and to attend training and meetings. In consideration of these expectations, one response called for flexibility in the monitoring of support, in particular with long term placements.

It was noted that the assessments should capture the voice of the child, including considerations for support to achieve and maintain a personal space for the child within the home.

Four responses discussed the need to assess cultural and relational context including family history, function and dynamics with consideration to how these are shared, recorded and reported. It was also considered that the ability to manage family contact should be explored.

In relation to the applicant's health, it was felt that the carer should be assessed to promote a healthy lifestyle, along with an education, for the child.

A respondent felt that these suggestions should be considered for better alignment between the AFKA Cymru guide and the proposals made by Welsh Government in this consultation.

## **Welsh Government response**

We welcome the feedback received and acknowledge the importance of ensuring the kinship carer assessment process is proportionate, clear, and aligned with best practice. The introduction of Part 3 within Schedule 1 will strengthen the framework by supporting a more comprehensive understanding of carers' circumstances, while maintaining consistency and safeguarding standards.

Our priority is to ensure that the assessment process continues to deliver positive outcomes for children and families, while remaining practical and sustainable for practitioners. We will continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure the approach reflects the unique nature of kinship care and aligns with wider policy objectives.

## **A more flexible approach to Care Planning, Placement and Case Review for kinship arrangements**

### **Question 18: Do you think a more flexible approach to visits and reviews will be effective in meeting the needs of children and kinship foster carers?**

Twenty-two responses to this question were received. Of these, twelve expressed agreements with increased flexibility, eight disagreed, and two were unclear or ambivalent.



Some respondents supported increased flexibility, highlighting benefits such as reduced disruption for children, respect for family stability, and empowerment of kinship carers. They argued that flexibility can be child-centred and tailored to individual circumstances, especially in long-term stable placements, and may help reduce stigma and procedural burdens.

Others expressed concern that reduced oversight could compromise safeguarding, particularly in the early stages of placement or in less stable arrangements. Several responses cautioned against creating a two-tier system for looked-after children, where those in kinship care receive less support than those in mainstream foster care. There was apprehension that flexibility might be misused to cut costs, leading to inconsistent support and reduced opportunities for children and carers to raise concerns.

Some contributors suggested that flexibility should be guided by clear criteria, robust safeguarding mechanisms, and professional discretion, with reference to lessons learned from similar approaches in England. There was also emphasis on the importance of maintaining statutory visits, especially early in placements, and ensuring that fostering services remain involved. A few responses advocated for greater use of Special Guardianship Orders where appropriate, rather than retaining children under care orders with reduced oversight.

Overall, while flexibility is seen as potentially beneficial, many stressed that it must not come at the expense of child welfare, consistent support, and safeguarding.

## **Welsh Government response**

The Welsh Government acknowledges the range of views expressed in response to the proposal for a more flexible approach to visits and reviews within kinship foster care arrangements. We recognise the importance of ensuring that any changes to statutory processes must continue to uphold the safety, wellbeing, and rights of children, while also respecting the unique dynamics of kinship care.

The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring that care planning and review processes for children in kinship foster care are proportionate, responsive, and centred on the needs of the child. We recognise the importance of evolving our statutory framework to reflect the diversity and stability of kinship arrangements, while maintaining a clear focus on safeguarding and equity.

Our priority is to deliver a coherent and consistent approach that supports professional judgement, promotes stability, and ensures that all children receive the oversight and support they need. We will continue to work with stakeholders to embed this evidence-informed, child-focused policy, aligned with broader ambitions for permanence and wellbeing in care. Our aim is to ensure that children in kinship care receive appropriate, proportionate, and meaningful support that reflects their circumstances and promotes their long-term stability and wellbeing.

**Question 19: What impact (including any costs and/or benefits) do you think the proposed changes to the regulations might have on different organisations or sectors within social care?**

A total of nineteen responses were received, offering a broad spectrum of views on the potential impact of the proposed regulatory changes within the social care sector. Many respondents acknowledged that the changes could lead to operational efficiencies, particularly through a reduction in statutory visits and reviews. This was seen as a way to ease pressure on overstretched services and allow professionals to focus more effectively on children and families who require intensive support.

However, this potential benefit was tempered by concerns about safeguarding. Several contributors warned that reduced oversight might result in missed early warning signs, especially in kinship arrangements where stability can be unpredictable. While some felt that less intrusion could support a more natural family life, others cautioned that it could shift greater responsibility onto local authorities and risk compromising child welfare.

Financial implications were a recurring theme. Respondents noted that kinship care is generally less costly than mainstream fostering, and the proposed changes could bring further savings. Yet, there was a shared understanding that these savings must not come at the expense of quality or safety. Some highlighted the need for investment in staff training and clearer guidance to ensure that practitioners are equipped to manage the new expectations.

The introduction of a distinct category for kinship foster carers was welcomed by some as a way to bring clarity and consistency to practice. Others expressed concern that this could create a two-tier system, potentially leading to confusion and inequity in how carers and children are supported.

A number of responses emphasised the importance of a person-led, flexible approach, aligning with the principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. This was seen as a more humane and responsive way to manage oversight, tailored to individual circumstances rather than rigid structures.

Despite the potential benefits, several respondents raised concerns about the safeguarding implications of reduced statutory expectations. They pointed to risks around care planning, advocacy, and the voice of the child, noting that without robust oversight, children could be left vulnerable. The lack of guaranteed contact during visits and the impact on foster carer reviews were also highlighted as areas needing careful consideration.

Some contributors advocated for broader legislative reform, suggesting that permanency could be better secured through mechanisms such as Special Guardianship Orders. They called for support packages comparable to those offered in mainstream fostering, ensuring that children in kinship care are not disadvantaged.

Overall, the responses reflected a cautious optimism. While many saw the potential for positive change, there was a clear consensus that any reforms must be carefully

implemented, with safeguards, training, and support in place to protect children and uphold the quality of care

## **Welsh Government response**

The feedback reflects a wide range of perspectives and has provided valuable insight into how the proposed changes may be experienced in practice.

It is clear that any regulatory reform in this area must be approached with care, ensuring that the needs of children, families, and professionals are fully considered. The responses underline the importance of maintaining a balance between flexibility and safeguarding, and of ensuring that any changes support the delivery of high-quality, child-centred care.

We remain committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure that future developments are informed by lived experience, professional expertise, and a shared commitment to improving outcomes for children in kinship care.

## **A more effective and efficient process for the transfer of foster carers between fostering service providers – proposed regulatory changes**

**Question 20: Do you agree that bringing the elements of the good practice guidelines set out within the Fostering Network's Transfer Protocol for Wales within a legislative framework, will support a more efficient process for transferring foster carers?**

A total of eighteen responses were received to the question regarding the potential embedding of elements of the Fostering Network's Transfer Protocol for Wales into legislation. Of these, fifteen respondents expressed agreement with the proposal, two disagreed, and one response was unclear.

Overall, the responses indicate strong support for the proposal. Stakeholders generally agreed that embedding the protocol into legislation would enhance the efficiency of foster carer transfers between providers. Many highlighted that while the protocol offers a valuable framework, its current implementation is inconsistent and often hampered by time constraints and limited awareness.

Supporters of the proposal believe that legislative backing could help address delays and inconsistencies in the transfer process. Several respondents stressed the importance of ensuring that full records are transferred during the process and that information sharing should be facilitated without cost.

However, a small number of responses raised concerns. One organisation shared experiences where transfers had resulted in safeguarding and quality assurance issues due to insufficient information being provided by the previous agency. Another noted that while the protocol is beneficial, it does not fully address challenges that arise when agencies cease operations or undergo changes in status.

Additionally, survey data from one fostering organisation revealed a divided view among its respondents: half supported the proposal, while the remainder were either opposed or uncertain. This suggests that while there is broad support for legislative embedding of the protocol, there is also a clear need for more detailed guidance and comprehensive legislative provisions to ensure effective and consistent implementation.

## **Welsh Government response**

The feedback received highlights the value of formalising good practice to reduce delays, improve clarity, and support better outcomes for children and foster families. We acknowledge the concerns raised around implementation challenges, information sharing, and safeguarding, and we are committed to addressing these through clear legislative guidance and supporting materials.

In taking this proposal forward, we will work closely with stakeholders to ensure that the legislative changes are practical, proportionate, and enhance the existing protocol. We will also consider how best to support fostering services in applying the new requirements, including through training, awareness-raising, and monitoring.

Our aim is to strengthen the fostering system in Wales by ensuring that foster carer transfers are managed in a way that prioritises the needs of children, supports carers, and maintains high standards of care across all providers.

## **Question 21: Do you foresee any issues with the suggestions being made?**

A total of sixteen responses were received to this question. Respondents were generally positive about the proposal to embed the Transfer Protocol for Wales into regulation, seeing it as a step toward greater consistency, efficiency, and transparency when foster carers move between services. Many highlighted the potential for smoother processes and improved outcomes for children and carers, which they viewed as a significant strength of the approach.

Alongside these benefits, respondents identified practical challenges that need attention. The most frequent concern was the 15-day timescale for sharing records, which some felt could be difficult for smaller providers and might lead to delays during busy periods. There were also calls for clear guidance on GDPR and consent, to avoid hesitation or inconsistent interpretation of data-sharing rules.

Several respondents stressed the importance of enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance across all providers and asked for clarity on information-sharing formats and the transferability of recent checks (such as DBS, medicals, and references) to prevent duplication and delays. Financial considerations featured prominently, with suggestions to address potential disputes over allowances and fees when carers transfer between sectors. Some proposed transparent financial models to mitigate cost increases and maintain fairness.

While concerns were raised about variation in practice, placement stability, and inter-provider dynamics such as “poaching,” respondents emphasised that the protocol should remain child-centred, safeguarding stability and prioritising the best interests of children. Overall, the feedback reflects strong support for the principle of standardisation, coupled with practical recommendations to make implementation effective and equitable.

## **Welsh Government response**

Welsh Government acknowledges the concerns raised around operational capacity, data protection, and the diversity of service models. These will be carefully considered as we introduce the proposals to ensure they are practical, proportionate, and inclusive of all fostering services. Safeguarding placement stability and ensuring the process remains child-centred will remain central to the changes.

We are committed to providing clear guidance to support implementation, including around record sharing, consent, and enforcement.

This feedback will be instrumental in shaping our approach, and we will continue to work closely with the sector to ensure that any legislative amendments are effective, workable, and focused on delivering the best outcomes for children and carers.

### **Question 22: What impact (including any costs and/or benefits) do you think the proposed changes might have on different organisations or sectors within social care?**

A total of sixteen responses were received to this question, and the feedback reflects a broadly positive outlook, tempered by practical concerns. Many contributors felt the changes would lead to greater efficiency, reducing duplication and delays, and enabling quicker placements for children. This streamlining was seen as beneficial not only for carers and children but also for organisations tasked with managing transitions. A statutory protocol was welcomed for its potential to bring consistency and transparency across Wales, helping to standardise practices and reduce regional disparities.

Foster carers were expected to benefit from increased clarity and reassurance, with some respondents noting that carers who feel undervalued may be more inclined to transfer under a simplified system. This could, in turn, encourage organisations to improve their support and retention efforts. However, there were concerns about the financial implications, particularly for local authorities. Some feared that faster transitions might lead to increased costs for them if carers move to more expensive providers, while others pointed to the need for investment in training, systems, and compliance to meet new regulatory expectations.

Risks were also identified, including potential legal and reputational issues if deadlines or data-sharing requirements are not met. There was a warning that, if not carefully implemented, the changes could deepen tensions between different parts of

the sector, especially during the transition to a not-for-profit model. Some respondents highlighted the importance of monitoring transfer patterns and ensuring equity in carer payments, suggesting that without careful oversight, disparities could emerge.

Overall, the proposed changes were seen as a step toward more effective and child-centred practice, but their success would depend on clear guidance, robust implementation, and ongoing support for all stakeholders involved.

## **Welsh Government response**

The responses indicate broad support for the principles underpinning the proposals, particularly the emphasis on improving efficiency, consistency, and outcomes for children and carers. We recognise the importance of ensuring that any changes are implemented in a way that supports clarity, fairness, and transparency for all stakeholders.

We are mindful of the concerns raised around financial pressures, administrative demands, and the need for robust guidance and support. These considerations will inform the design of implementation tools and transitional arrangements.

The Welsh Government remains committed to working collaboratively with the sector to ensure that the final approach reflects the needs of children, carers, and providers, and supports the wider ambition to eliminate profit from children's social care in Wales.

## **Accessing the enhanced fostering allowance (fee)**

### **Question 23: Do the suggested additional paragraphs provide clarity on how the different types of foster carers can obtain the enhanced fostering allowance?**

A total of nineteen responses were received to the relevant consultation question. Of these, eleven respondents agreed with the proposed changes, while eight disagreed. Eleven respondents welcomed the inclusion of guidance on enhanced fostering allowances in the Code of Practice, seeing it as a step toward greater transparency and fairness. Several felt the proposed wording offered more clarity and could help carers better understand their entitlements. Some noted that it aligned with existing practice and reinforces well-established models, which they viewed positively.

However, concerns remained about consistency and funding. Respondents highlighted that leaving eligibility criteria to individual local authorities could perpetuate variations and create confusion, particularly for kinship carers. Financial implications were also raised, with some warning that broader eligibility might increase costs without additional support. A few respondents expressed disappointment that the proposal does not introduce a national fee framework, which many believe is essential for equity and sustainability.

Despite these challenges, there was strong support for the principle of providing more clarity about access to enhanced fostering allowances in the Code. Respondents saw this as an opportunity to strengthen support for foster carers and improve retention, consistency, and ensure financial considerations are addressed.

## **Welsh Government response**

We appreciate the range of views shared in response to the consultation and acknowledge the depth of consideration given to the proposed paragraphs on accessing the enhanced fostering allowance. The responses have reinforced the importance of ensuring that foster carers are supported through clear, fair, and transparent arrangements, regardless of their route into fostering.

Welsh Government remains committed to improving consistency in fostering payments while recognising the need for flexibility in how services operate locally. We understand that clarity in terminology and expectations is essential for both carers and services, and we are reflecting carefully on how best to achieve this within the framework of the Code of Practice.

The consultation has provided valuable insight into the practical and financial considerations that underpin fostering arrangements. These contributions will inform our ongoing work to strengthen guidance and support mechanisms, ensuring that the enhanced fostering allowance is applied in a way that is equitable, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of children and carers across Wales.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders as we refine the policy approach, with a view to promoting greater transparency and coherence in fostering support.

### **Question 24: Does the amendment provide a clear framework for the provision of support to temporarily approved kinship foster carers?**

There were seventeen responses to the proposed amendment concerning temporarily approved kinship foster carers. Of these, thirteen respondents agreed, three disagreed, and one response was unclear.

Those in support felt the amendment offered a clear framework for supporting temporarily approved kinship foster carers. They highlighted potential benefits such as promoting consistency across regions, improving clarity for carers and professionals, and enhancing stability for children. Some felt it would encourage commitment from kinship carers and support better administration.

However, several respondents expressed concerns or disagreed. Common themes included the lack of clarity and transparency in the amendment, particularly around eligibility criteria and funding. Many noted that leaving decisions to individual authorities without setting minimum standards could lead to inconsistency and confusion. Financial pressures on local authorities were frequently mentioned, with some suggesting that without additional funding, meaningful change would be difficult. There were also concerns that the amendment might inadvertently shift

carers away from other arrangements, such as special guardianship, which could conflict with broader policy goals.

### **Welsh Government response**

The consultation has provided valuable insights into the proposed amendment concerning temporarily approved kinship foster carers. The feedback received will be carefully considered as we refine the policy and its implementation. We recognise the importance of ensuring clarity, consistency, and fairness across Wales, and will explore how best to address the issues raised in relation to eligibility, funding, and alignment with wider care arrangements.

In parallel, we are undertaking a review of the allowances provided to foster carers. This work is a critical first step and must be completed before any consideration is given to changes related to fees. Establishing a clear and sustainable approach to allowances is essential to ensure that any future developments around fees are built on a fair and coherent foundation.

Further engagement with stakeholders including foster and kinship carers will continue to inform our work as we continue focusing on supporting carers effectively and promoting stability for children.

### **Question 25: What impact (including any costs and/or benefits) do you think the proposed changes to the Code of Practice might have on different organisations or sectors within social care?**

There was a total of sixteen responses to this question. The proposed changes are seen by many as having potentially significant financial implications, particularly for local authorities. Concerns were raised about increased costs if eligibility for enhanced allowances is broadened, especially to include kinship carers. Several responses noted that without additional funding from the Welsh Government, these changes could strain already tight budgets.

Some organisations highlighted the administrative burden that could arise, including the need to revise assessment procedures, update payment systems, train staff, and manage increased panel workloads. Others pointed out that the current wording of the proposal is vague, which may limit its practical impact unless clearer guidance is provided.

### **Welsh Government response**

The feedback reflects a strong commitment across the sector to ensuring that support for carers is both meaningful and sustainable, and it has highlighted a number of important considerations that will inform our ongoing thinking.

It is clear that the proposed changes have prompted reflection on the wider implications for service delivery, particularly in relation to financial pressures and



operational capacity. These are not new challenges, but they are evolving ones, and we recognise the importance of approaching them with care and sensitivity.

We also note the calls for greater clarity in the proposals. While the intention behind the changes is to strengthen support for those caring for children, we understand that the way in which this is articulated and implemented will be critical to its success.

As we move forward, we remain committed to engaging constructively with partners and stakeholders. The insights shared through this process will play a vital role in shaping the direction of future policy development, ensuring that it reflects both the aspirations of the sector and the realities faced on the ground.

## **The Independent Review Mechanism - proposed regulatory changes**

### **Question 26: Do you think there will be any unforeseen consequences of making the proposed changes to The Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering) (Wales) Regulations 2010?**

A total of fourteen responses were received. Of these, one respondent agreed that there will be unforeseen consequences, identifying potential risks, five respondents disagreed and did not think there would be any anticipated impacts, and eight respondents provided detailed narrative comments without clearly stating a position, but raised considerations relevant to the question.

Several respondents expressed concern that allowing access to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) at an earlier stage, specifically after Part 1 of the fostering assessment, could undermine the purpose of early-stage checks. They felt this might compromise professional judgment and increase the burden on services by triggering full assessments unnecessarily.

Others welcomed the proposed changes for improving legal clarity and consistency, particularly the ability for the IRM panel to request a full report when only a brief one has been provided. This was seen as addressing a gap in the current process and aligning the regulations with updated legislative powers.

Some responses highlighted potential unintended consequences such as increased administrative workload, delays in placement decisions, and inconsistencies in review outcomes across regions. There were calls for clearer criteria around when a full assessment should be requested to avoid unnecessary work.

A few contributors noted that the IRM is not widely known among carers, and suggested that statutory requirements to inform individuals about the IRM and its timeframes, would be beneficial.

Concerns were also raised about the complexity of implementing the changes, including the need for updated guidance, training, and systems. There were suggestions to reinforce the role of internal complaints procedures and regulatory oversight before cases reach the IRM.

## Welsh Government response

The consultation has highlighted a range of perspectives and considerations from across the sector. These contributions reflect the complexity of the issues involved and the importance of ensuring that any changes to the regulatory framework are both proportionate and effective.

The Welsh Government will take these views into account as part of its ongoing policy development. We remain committed to ensuring that the Independent Review Mechanism continues to operate in a way that supports fairness, transparency, and consistency, while recognising the operational realities faced by services and individuals.

### **Question 27: What impact (including any costs and/or benefits) do you think the proposed changes to the regulations might have on different organisations or sectors within social care?**

There were thirteen responses received for this question. The proposed changes prompted a range of responses from across the social care sector. Many contributors acknowledged the potential for improved fairness and transparency, particularly in how Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) panels might handle cases. Allowing panels to request full fostering assessments following a Part 1 rejection was seen by some as a way to ensure decisions are based on complete information, which could enhance outcomes for applicants and reduce disputes.

However, this shift also raised concerns about operational and financial implications. Several responses noted that requiring full reports could increase workloads for social workers and legal teams, potentially straining resources and undermining professional judgment. The additional administrative burden was a recurring theme, with some suggesting that the changes might lead to inefficiencies or unnecessary assessments that do not ultimately result in more approved carers.

Others viewed the changes as largely beneficial, citing clearer processes, improved service quality, and a more person-centred approach. These advantages, however, were tempered by the recognition that transitional costs and strategic challenges may arise, requiring careful planning and investment to ensure long-term success.

A few responses considered the changes minor and unlikely to have a significant resource impact, appreciating the added clarity for practitioners.

Some contributors expressed scepticism about the practical value of the changes, noting that existing mechanisms already allow for full reports to be requested. Others felt the impact would be negligible or manageable, with modest administrative adjustments needed.

Overall, while the proposed changes were generally welcomed for their intent to improve fairness and consistency, there was a clear call for thoughtful implementation to balance benefits with the potential costs and pressures on organisations.

## **Welsh Government response**

The intention behind the proposed changes is to improve fairness, transparency, and consistency in decision-making processes, particularly in relation to fostering. We acknowledge that while these changes are broadly welcomed, there are concerns about the potential for increased administrative and operational pressures, particularly where additional assessments may be required.

We recognise the importance of maintaining professional judgement and ensuring that any additional workload is proportionate and manageable. As such, we will consider how best to support organisations in implementing these changes, including through clear guidance and transitional planning.

The Welsh Government remains committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure that the final regulations are both effective and workable in practice.

## **Introduction of a Register of Foster Carers in Wales**

### **Question 28: What are your views on a national register for foster carers in Wales?**

There were twenty-four consultation responses to the proposal for a national register of foster carers in Wales which revealed a broad spectrum of views, reflecting both optimism about its potential and caution regarding its implementation.

Many respondents saw value in the idea of a national register, particularly in its potential to improve transparency and coordination across the fostering system. A centralised record was viewed as a way to support better placement planning, streamline the process of transferring between fostering providers, and enhance the visibility of foster carers within the wider care network.

There was also a strong belief that such a register could contribute to improved safeguarding practices. By providing a mechanism to track approval status and previous de-registrations, it could help ensure safer placements for children. Additionally, some responses highlighted the opportunity to use the register to gather data that could inform future planning and recruitment, especially in areas where specialist foster carers are needed.

The idea of professional recognition was another recurring theme. A register was seen as a way to formally acknowledge the role of foster carers, potentially increasing public confidence and helping carers feel more valued.

Despite the potential benefits, many respondents raised concerns about the practical implications of introducing a register. A common theme was the risk of adding unnecessary bureaucracy to an already stretched system. There were worries that the register might duplicate existing processes and databases, leading to inefficiencies rather than improvements.

Data protection and privacy were also highlighted as critical issues. Respondents stressed the importance of ensuring that any information held on the register is secure and used appropriately. Questions were raised about who would manage the register, how it would be kept up to date, and what level of access different parties would have.

Some responses cautioned that the register could inadvertently lead to more out-of-area placements, potentially disrupting children's connections to their communities. Others expressed concern that mandatory registration could deter individuals from becoming foster carers, especially if it involved additional costs or administrative burdens.

Across the responses, there was a clear call for more detailed information about how the register would operate. Key questions included whether registration would be voluntary or compulsory, what data would be included, and how kinship carers would be treated within the system.

Many felt that a full cost-benefit analysis should be undertaken before any decisions are made, and that further consultation, particularly with foster carers themselves, is essential to ensure the register meets the needs of those it is intended to support.

## **Welsh Government response**

The responses have provided valuable insight into the perceived benefits and potential challenges of a national register. They have highlighted key considerations around transparency, safeguarding, recognition of foster carers, and the practical implications for those working within the fostering system.

Welsh Government recognises the importance of ensuring that any future developments in this area are proportionate, evidence-based, and shaped by the experiences of foster carers and those who support them. We will continue to explore the issues raised through this consultation, including the feasibility, purpose, and potential models for improving information-sharing and support across the fostering community.

Further engagement will be undertaken to ensure that any approach taken aligns with the wider aims of delivering high-quality, child-centred care and supports the sustainability of fostering services in Wales. This includes considering how best to strengthen existing systems and processes to meet the needs identified through the consultation.

We remain committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure that any future decisions are informed by robust analysis and reflect the priorities of those directly involved in fostering.

**Question 29: Do you think a fostering register could deliver the objectives of:**

- **Increased status**
- **Improved portability for foster carers**
- **Robust safeguarding measures**
- **National data and an aid to forecasting the demand for and supply of foster carers.**

There were nineteen responses expressing mixed views on whether a fostering register could deliver the intended objectives. Some felt that while the idea had merit, its success would depend heavily on how it was implemented. There was general agreement that a register could support better data collection and forecasting, particularly if it was kept up to date and used responsibly. However, concerns were raised about duplication with existing systems and the potential for the register to become bureaucratic.

On the question of improving the status of foster carers, some felt that a register could help foster carers be seen more as professionals, especially if linked to learning and development frameworks. Others were sceptical, suggesting that professional status is shaped more by culture, qualifications, and recognition than by registration alone.

Portability was another area of debate. While some believed a register could help foster carers move more easily between services, others pointed out that current legislation requires full reassessments regardless of prior experience. There were concerns that a register might give a false impression that reassessments were no longer necessary, which could lead to misunderstandings and risks.

Safeguarding was generally seen as an area where a register could add value, particularly in identifying individuals who had previously been deregistered or involved in safeguarding concerns. However, some felt that existing checks and processes already provided robust safeguards, and that a register might not significantly enhance these.

The potential for a register to improve national data and forecasting was widely acknowledged. Respondents noted that current data is fragmented and inconsistent, and a centralised system could help identify gaps, improve matching, and support strategic planning. However, there were also practical concerns about the complexity of maintaining accurate and timely data, especially around vacancies and approvals.

Overall, while there was cautious optimism about the potential benefits of a fostering register, many respondents emphasised the need for careful planning, clear legislative alignment, and ongoing stakeholder engagement to ensure it delivers meaningful improvements without unintended consequences.

## **Welsh Government response**

The feedback received highlights both the opportunities and challenges associated with introducing a register. While there is recognition of the potential benefits in

areas such as data collection, safeguarding, and supporting foster carer mobility, it is clear that any future development must be carefully considered to ensure it complements existing systems and does not create unnecessary complexity.

We are committed to exploring how a register could support strategic planning and improve consistency across fostering services, while also recognising the importance of maintaining robust assessment and safeguarding processes. The views shared will inform further policy development, including consideration of legislative, operational, and resource implications.

As we move forward, we will continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure that any proposals are shaped by the experiences and expertise of those working within and alongside the fostering sector. Our aim remains to strengthen support for foster carers and improve outcomes for children and young people in care across Wales.

### **Question 30: What do you see as the disadvantages of introducing a fostering register in Wales?**

Twenty submissions were received in response to this question offering a range of views on the potential drawbacks of establishing a fostering register in Wales. A common concern was that such a register could introduce unnecessary bureaucracy into a sector that is already heavily regulated. Respondents felt it might duplicate existing systems and become a compliance exercise rather than a meaningful tool, with inconsistent data quality and limited practical benefit.

Cost was another significant issue. Questions were raised about who would be responsible for funding the register, and there were worries that the financial burden could fall on foster carers, providers, or local authorities. The setup and ongoing maintenance, including IT infrastructure and staffing, were seen as potentially expensive and resource intensive.

Data protection and privacy were frequently mentioned. There were strong concerns about the risks of holding sensitive personal information in a centralised system, particularly if it were mismanaged or subject to breaches. Some feared that the register could be used inappropriately, such as for targeting foster carers for recruitment, and stressed the importance of safeguarding carers and children's information.

The potential impact on recruitment and retention was also highlighted. Additional layers of regulation might deter people from becoming foster carers or lead existing carers to leave the system. There were worries that the register could undermine current assessment frameworks, which are valued for their depth and understanding of individual carers' circumstances.

Operational complexity was another issue. Questions were raised about who would manage the register, how it would be kept accurate and up to date, and whether the sector was ready for such a change. Without clear legislative backing and sector-wide support, implementation could be inconsistent and problematic.

While some respondents acknowledged possible benefits such as improved oversight and consistency, the overall sentiment was cautious. There were calls for careful planning, phased implementation, and clear communication to ensure that any register introduced would be effective, secure, and not detrimental to the fostering community.

## **Welsh Government response**

Welsh Government recognises the importance of ensuring any future developments in fostering policy are proportionate, well-informed, and sensitive to the realities of practice. We are committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders to explore the feasibility of a fostering register, taking into account the concerns raised and ensuring that any approach is designed to support, not hinder, the fostering sector. Further engagement will be undertaken to ensure that any proposals are shaped by the experiences and expertise of those directly involved in fostering in Wales.

### **Question 31: If a register is introduced, who do you think could hold the register as a central body?**

There were twenty-one responses to this question which indicated a broad consensus around the need for a central body to hold a register, though views varied on who that body should be and how it should operate. Many contributors suggested Social Care Wales as the most appropriate organisation, citing its existing infrastructure, experience with professional registration, and legal expertise. Others proposed Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) or the Welsh Government, highlighting their regulatory roles and capacity for oversight. Additionally, Foster Wales and AFKA Cymru were also suggested, reflecting their sector-specific knowledge and engagement with fostering and adoption services.

A recurring theme was the importance of independence and trust. Respondents stressed that the body must be impartial, not funded by local authorities or private providers, and capable of safeguarding sensitive data. Concerns were raised about potential conflicts of interest and the need for robust data governance and cyber security. Some contributors argued against outsourcing to third-party organisations, particularly those with membership-based funding models.

Several responses emphasised the need for adequate resources to support the register's development and maintenance. There was recognition that existing bodies might lack the capacity to take on this responsibility without additional funding and staffing.

Some foster carers and organisations advocated for a model that elevated the professional status of foster carers, suggesting parallels with healthcare registration systems. Ideas included nationally accredited training, centralised decision-making on deregistration, and representation of foster carers within the governing body to ensure their voices were heard.

While there was no unanimous agreement on a single solution, the narrative pointed to a strong preference for building on existing structures rather than creating a new entity. The overarching considerations were governance, independence, security, and sustainability, with a clear desire to ensure the register served both operational needs and the professional recognition of foster carers.

## **Welsh Government response**

The feedback demonstrates a clear recognition of the importance of establishing a central body to hold such a register, should it be introduced. We note the emphasis placed on ensuring that any body responsible for this function must operate with independence, transparency, and integrity. The need for robust data governance, cyber security, and impartial oversight was consistently highlighted.

We also recognise the concerns raised about capacity and resourcing, and the importance of ensuring that any organisation tasked with this responsibility is adequately supported to deliver it effectively. The potential to build on existing infrastructure and expertise was a recurring consideration, alongside the desire to avoid duplication and unnecessary complexity.

In addition, we are mindful of the aspirations expressed around enhancing the professional status of foster carers. These views will inform further exploration of how a register could contribute to recognition, consistency, and quality across the fostering sector.

The Welsh Government will continue to consider these perspectives carefully as part of the wider policy development process. We remain committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure that any future arrangements are proportionate, sustainable, and in the best interests of children, carers, and services across Wales.

## **Special Guardianship Support Plan – proposed regulatory changes**

### **Question 32: Do you think introducing a statutory requirement for local authorities/services to use the support plan templates will be beneficial and support a consistent approach for families across Wales?**

A total of twenty responses were received to this question. Of these, seventeen supported the proposal, one disagreed, and one response was unclear.

The majority of respondents welcomed the introduction of a statutory requirement for local authorities and services to use the support plan templates for special guardianship. This was seen as a way to promote greater consistency, equity, and clarity in support provision across Wales. Several noted that the templates are already in use and have been developed through broad consultation, including input from practitioners and academics. Their portability between local authorities was highlighted as a key benefit, helping to ensure continuity of care and reduce duplication.



Respondents also identified the potential for statutory templates to improve the structure of plans, strengthen oversight, and ensure minimum standards are met. Consistent use was seen as a way to reduce confusion for families and children, and to support better outcomes. Some emphasised the need for additional resources and staffing to implement the changes effectively.

A small number of respondents raised concerns, including the length and accessibility of the templates, the risk of inconsistent interpretation across authorities, and whether Welsh Government should prescribe the format. One suggestion was to update existing guidance rather than mandate template use.

In addition, carers highlighted concerns about the lack of financial support for special guardians compared to foster carers and called for a more consistent and equitable approach to support.

### **Welsh Government response**

In light of strong stakeholder support, Welsh Government intends to take forward work to establish a statutory requirement for the use of special guardianship support plan templates. This approach is aimed at promoting greater consistency and transparency in how support is planned and delivered for special guardianship arrangements across Wales.

The statutory framework will help ensure that support plans are applied equitably, regardless of local authority boundaries, and will promote improved coordination and continuity for children and carers. Welsh Government recognises the importance of ensuring the templates are accessible, fit for purpose, and supported by appropriate resources.

In taking this forward, Welsh Government also acknowledges the wider concerns raised during the consultation, including the disparity in financial support between special guardians and foster carers. While this proposal does not directly address funding arrangements, the move towards a standardised planning approach will contribute to a more coherent and equitable support system for all families involved in special guardianship.

### **Question 33: Are there any disadvantages to imposing a statutory duty for local authorities to use the templates when undertaking a special guardianship support plan?**

There were fifteen responses to this question. Several contributors raised concerns about reduced flexibility, suggesting that a statutory template might limit professional discretion and hinder the ability to tailor plans to complex or unique family situations. Others highlighted the implementation burden, such as the need for system updates, staff training, and workflow revisions, which could incur additional time and cost.

Some responses warned of the risk of tick-box practice, where templates might encourage superficial completion rather than meaningful engagement with families.

Resource implications were also noted, with concerns that without additional funding or staffing, local authorities could struggle to meet the new statutory requirements effectively.

A few felt that such a duty could limit creativity or lead to resistance from practitioners, especially if imposed without sufficient consultation or support. However, others saw no significant disadvantages, suggesting that templates promote consistency, are already in use in some areas, and could enhance the quality and uniformity of support plans.

A minority emphasised the importance of ensuring the templates are fit for purpose and adaptable to local needs, while some noted the potential benefits to carers and children, despite the administrative challenges.

### **Welsh Government response**

The Welsh Government acknowledges the range of views shared in response to the proposal to impose a statutory duty on local authorities to use the special guardianship support plan templates. The intention behind introducing a statutory requirement is to promote greater consistency and clarity in the development of support plans for special guardianship arrangements across Wales. We recognise the importance of ensuring that any approach adopted is both practical and proportionate, and that it supports meaningful engagement with families.

We will continue to work closely with stakeholders to ensure that the templates are fit for purpose, adaptable to individual circumstances, and supported by appropriate guidance. Consideration will be given to how best to implement any changes in a way that supports professional practice, avoids unnecessary burden, and enhances outcomes for children and their carers.

### **Question 34: What impact (including any costs and/or benefits) do you think the proposed changes to the Code of Practice might have on different organisations or sectors within social care?**

There were fifteen responses to this question. The proposed changes are seen as having both positive and challenging implications across social care sectors. Many respondents highlighted the benefits of increased consistency, equity, and clarity in support planning for special guardianship arrangements. Standardised templates and statutory duties were viewed as tools to improve practice, portability of plans, and continuity of care across local authorities.

However, concerns were raised about the financial and operational impact of implementation. These included training costs, system updates and administrative burdens, particularly for smaller authorities not currently using the proposed templates. Some responses stressed the importance of ensuring adequate funding and flexibility to avoid the changes becoming a burden.

There was recognition that the changes could enhance accountability, improve outcomes for children and families, and support better forecasting and commissioning. Yet, several respondents noted the need for clear guidance from Welsh Government and the importance of listening to the voices of guardians who may prefer less statutory involvement.

## **Welsh Government response**

The responses reflect a shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and families involved in special guardianship arrangements.

There is clear recognition of the potential benefits of greater consistency, transparency, and equity across Wales. The introduction of statutory duties and standardised templates is seen as a positive step toward strengthening support planning and ensuring that all children and carers receive appropriate and timely assistance.

At the same time, we acknowledge the concerns raised regarding implementation, particularly in relation to resource implications, training needs, and administrative capacity. We are mindful of the pressures faced by local authorities and other organisations and will consider these carefully as we move forward.

Welsh Government remains committed to working collaboratively with partners to ensure that any changes are implemented in a way that is both effective and sustainable. We will continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure that guidance is clear, support is available, and the voices of carers and families are reflected throughout the process.

## **Other Questions**

**Question 35: What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of the proposals on the Welsh language?**

**We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.**

- **Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects?**
- **Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?**

Thirteen responses were received to this question. Overall, there was broad agreement that the proposals are unlikely to negatively affect the Welsh language. Several respondents emphasised their existing commitment to bilingual service delivery, including the use of the active offer and the availability of Welsh-speaking staff. Some identified opportunities to strengthen the Welsh language through bilingual templates, support plans, and recruitment materials. A few noted the

importance of ensuring translation processes do not cause delays and that Welsh documentation should be readily accessible. While some felt the proposals were not directly linked to the Welsh language, others saw potential to reinforce bilingual services. There were also suggestions to ensure all guidance and templates are available in Welsh to help mitigate any possible adverse effects.

### **Welsh Government response**

The Welsh Government acknowledges the feedback received in response to this question and welcomes the constructive reflections shared. We remain committed to ensuring that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than English in all aspects of service delivery. The proposals aim to support and strengthen bilingual provision, and we will continue to work with partners to identify and promote opportunities that enhance the use of Welsh.

**Question 36: In your opinion, could the proposals be formulated or changed so as to:**

- **have positive effects or more positive effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English; or**
- **mitigate any negative effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?**

Thirteen responses were received to this question. Among these, several respondents expressed support for enhancing the proposals to better promote the Welsh language and ensure it is not treated less favourably than English. Suggestions included making all statutory templates and guidance available bilingually, ensuring fostering and review panels can operate in Welsh when requested, and incorporating Welsh language proficiency into national registers to support better matching in care placements. Some responses highlighted the need for bilingual training materials and digital systems designed to be bilingual from the outset. Others emphasised the importance of including Welsh language impact assessments in implementation reviews. A few respondents noted that the proposals were currently silent on language matters and called for more active discussions and planning. Overall, the responses reflected a desire for stronger integration of the Welsh language into fostering and adoption services, with practical steps to ensure linguistic equity.

### **Welsh Government response**

We welcome the feedback received regarding the potential impact of the proposals on the Welsh language. The responses have provided valuable insights into how the proposals might be enhanced to support the Welsh language and ensure it is not treated less favourably than English. We recognise the importance of promoting linguistic equity across all aspects of fostering and adoption services in Wales.

The Welsh Government remains committed to upholding the principles of the Welsh Language Standards and ensuring that all services are accessible in both Welsh and English. We will consider the suggestions received as part of our ongoing policy development and implementation planning. This includes exploring opportunities to strengthen bilingual provision, improve accessibility for Welsh-speaking practitioners and service users, and ensure that the Welsh language is embedded meaningfully in all relevant processes and materials.

**Question 37: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.**

Fourteen responses were submitted to this question which invited stakeholders to raise any related issues not specifically addressed elsewhere in the consultation. The feedback highlighted a range of concerns and suggestions across fostering, adoption, and kinship care.

Several respondents stressed the need to include the voices of special guardians in policy development, noting that their lived experiences should inform future support plans and statutory involvement. Others raised concerns about inconsistencies across local authority children's services in Wales, particularly around financial support for foster carers of teenagers, which was seen as inadequate and contributing to placement difficulties.

Some responses pointed out that the consultation questions were difficult to understand, suggesting that clearer language would improve engagement. There were also calls for more tailored delegated authority for kinship carers, with an emphasis on recognising the stability and individuality of each child's family situation rather than applying blanket policies.

The transition to a not-for-profit model in fostering was flagged as needing careful management to avoid destabilising placements. Contributors recommended inclusive recruitment campaigns and collaborative commissioning practices involving independent fostering agencies. A national system to track outcomes for children and young people was proposed, with shared data input to better understand their journeys and progress. Concerns were also expressed about the lack of effective financial systems to ensure young people placed before 2021 receive their savings, with suggestions focused on improving transparency and strengthening accountability.

Digital tools such as online templates and training modules were suggested to support implementation, alongside calls for co-production with care-experienced individuals in future reforms. Overall, the responses reflect a desire for more inclusive, transparent, and equitable approaches to policy and practice across the care system.

## Welsh Government response

We are grateful to all those who took the time to provide additional comments in response to this question. The insights shared have been valuable in highlighting areas that may not have been fully addressed in the main consultation. We acknowledge the range of perspectives offered and recognise the importance of ensuring that future policy development is informed by lived experience, practical challenges, and constructive suggestions.

The feedback will be considered alongside other consultation responses as we continue to refine our approach. We are committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders across the sector to ensure that reforms are inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the needs of children, young people, and those who support them. Where appropriate, we will explore opportunities to strengthen engagement, improve clarity, and support implementation through practical tools and co-produced solutions.

## Next steps

The Welsh Government is committed to taking forward the proposals outlined in this consultation in a way that is proportionate, evidence-based, and responsive to the needs of children, families, and practitioners. The regulations and Codes of Practice are scheduled to be laid before the Senedd in early 2026.

Subject to being agreed by the Senedd they will come into force on 1 April 2026.

All of the draft documents will be available on the Senedd website: [Subordinate Legislation \(senedd.wales\)](https://www.senedd.wales/legislation)

Welsh Government will now focus on implementing the proposals through clear guidance and practical tools, including templates and training resources, to support consistency across services. We will strengthen quality assurance and safeguarding by working collaboratively with stakeholders and exploring improved commissioning and oversight. Further engagement with local authorities, fostering and adoption services, kinship carers, and third sector partners will ensure reforms are co-produced and sustainable. Mechanisms will be established to monitor the impact of changes and gather feedback from practitioners and families.

Our overarching aim is to create a child-centred, consistent, and equitable system that promotes the wellbeing of children and young people across Wales.

## **Annex A: List of consultation respondents**

List of respondents who completed the form and were happy to share their details:

1. Conwy County Borough Council
2. Torfaen County Borough Council
3. Hywel Dda University Health Board
4. Foster Wales & the National Adoption Service
5. TGP Cymru
6. Flintshire County Borough Council
7. Kinship Carer
8. Link Maker
9. Newport County Borough Council
10. Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers
11. Social Care Wales
12. Swansea University
13. CASCADE
14. Cardiff County Borough Council
15. Welsh Local Government Association
16. Barnados Cymru
17. The Fostering Network

Five respondents answered anonymously. Six declining to give permission to share their details.