

Removal of profit lunch and learn webinar summary – 22 June 2026

1. Introduction and overview

Sarah Day, ADSS Cymru Business Unit Lead, opened the fourth removal of profit lunch and learn webinar, welcoming attendees and outlining the session.

She reflected that it has been one year since the first webinar, with previous sessions focusing on the policy rationale. Today's focus is on fostering; programme update and current priorities; sharing national and local practice insight.

Speakers included:

- **Tom Cleaver** – Welsh Government
- **Craig Macleod** – ADSS Cymru / Flintshire County Council
- **Alastair Cope** – Foster Wales
- **Keith Walters and Vicky Baldam** – Ynys Mon County Council's fostering service

Sarah emphasised the importance of collaboration across Wales and keeping children's outcomes central.

2. Programme update and Welsh Government perspective (Tom Cleaver)

Policy and implementation progress

The Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025 provides the legislative basis for removing profit. Implementation began 1 April 2026, including:

- No new for-profit providers registering
- Existing providers unable to expand provision

The recent election created uncertainty, but government support for the programme has been reaffirmed, with a formal statement expected shortly.

Funding and support

- Approximately £144 million (2022–2028) allocated to support implementation
- Funding includes:
 - Local authority grants
 - ADSS Cymru coordination support
 - Support for providers transitioning to not-for-profit (via Cwmpas)

Fostering investment

- Over £12 million invested in Foster Wales since 2021
- Focus on recruitment, retention and a consistent national offer

Key message

- The programme is now firmly in the implementation phase, with continued emphasis on partnership, clarity, and sector support

3. Local authority capacity and system pressures (Craig Macleod)

Overall approach

- Strong local authority collaboration
- Focus on:
 - Child-centred care
 - Right placements, right time
 - Building a sustainable not-for-profit system

Progress to date

- 200+ residential beds developed or underway across Wales
- Growing use of local authority-owned assets
- Evidence of momentum and innovation

Key challenges

- Increasing complexity of children's needs
- Fewer fostering placements available
- Rising costs across both private and public provision
- Workforce recruitment and retention pressures

Fostering-specific risks

- Uncertainty about independent fostering agency (IFA) transitions
- Need to significantly grow local authority fostering capacity

Key message

- Significant progress, but system pressure remains high
- Continued investment and long-term focus are essential

4. Foster Wales national perspective (Alastair Cope)

Trends and data insights

- Increased enquiries
- Increased assessments
- Increased approvals
- Interest in transferring carers has more than doubled over five years
- More carers move from IFAs to local authorities than the reverse

Why carers transfer to local authorities

- Four main drivers:
 - Proximity – keeping children local reduces travel burden
 - Matching gaps – fewer delays between placements
 - Integrated support – direct access to social workers
 - Community – stronger peer support networks

Strengths of local authority fostering

- Strong team integration and communication
- Stable and experienced workforce
- Structured learning and development offer
- Greater sense of belonging and community

Challenges and barriers

- Perception that IFAs offer:
 - Better pay
 - Better support
 - Better training

Key clarification

- These perceptions are often not accurate overall, particularly when considering:
 - Total financial package
 - Stability and continuity
 - Support networks

Transfer barriers

- Perceived requirement for reassessment (Form F)
- Concerns about pay differences

Mitigation includes

- Streamlined transfer processes
- Pay-matching frameworks
- National guidance and tools

5. Local practice example – Ynys Mon (Keith Walters and Vicky Baldam)

Context and challenges

- Previously high reliance on IFAs
- Significant cost pressures
- Difficulties sourcing local placements

Key changes implemented

- Core offer for foster carers
- 100% council tax reduction
- Free parking permits
- Free leisure centre membership
- Discount schemes (e.g., local attractions)

Enhanced support

- Dedicated fostering support workers
- Regular holiday activities for children
- Coffee and cake sessions for informal engagement
- Flexible out-of-hours support

Leadership support

- Strong backing from councillors and senior management
- Investment framed as invest-to-save

Impact

- Reduction in IFA use (from 36 in 2019/20 to 23 placements in 2025/26)
- Significant financial savings (approximately £1 million reduction in spend)
- Increased in-house fostering capacity
- Improved staff wellbeing and reduced stress
- Better outcomes for children (more local placements)

Key message

- A clear strategy + investment + strong leadership = measurable system change

6. Q&A highlights

Provider transition support

- Transition support via Cwmpas is confidential, with around 40 enquiries last year

Financial offer and consistency

- Strong discussion around developing a nationally consistent offer (eg, council tax support)

Cost vs savings

- Evidence suggests that:
 - Local authority placements are significantly cheaper overall
 - Investment in foster carers delivers long-term savings

Key theme

Balancing cost, quality and availability remains central

7. Close

Sarah Day closed the session, reflecting on:

- Strong collaboration across Wales
- Evidence of real progress and innovation
- Ongoing challenges, but increasing optimism

Speakers highlighted:

- Continued government backing
- Importance of growing local authority fostering
- Focus on keeping children closer to home

Opportunity

- ADSS Cymru removal of profit communications reference group made up of people who work in social care teams across Wales
- Seeking new members to help us understand and fill the gaps in communications
- Meets quarterly
- For more information or to join, email: removalofprofit@adss.cymru

Next webinar

- Tuesday 8 September, 12noon
- Focus: residential care