



Quick recap

NAFP introduced the session by asking that this protected space was an opportunity to think through our own values and lack of knowledge and understanding in this area. That people should be encouraged to share if they felt vulnerable, or uncomfortable about the subject area and there should be no judgement, but an acceptance of the internal conflicts of some of the subject areas we discuss. The starting point for all subjects is one of openness and willingness to challenge our own perceptions and thoughts, and only this way will we learn and be open minded.

The group discussed the challenges and considerations involved in assessing and supporting foster carers in non-monogamous relationships, including relationship stability, household dynamics, and the need for more training and resources.

Various experiences and perspectives were shared regarding different family structures and fostering arrangements, highlighting the importance of individual assessments and maintaining consistent processes for ensuring child safety. The discussion emphasised the need to adapt assessment approaches to accommodate diverse family structures while focusing on stability and the welfare of children, with participants agreeing to continue exploring these challenges in future meetings.

Next steps

- Suggestions to access training and resources from New Family Social on non-monogamous relationships in fostering
- Marie : Attend ELA Managers Commissioning meetings to discuss non-monogamous relationships topic and gauge commissioners' thoughts
- Catherine/NAFP: Contact inspectorates in each UK region to get their thoughts and understanding on non-monogamous relationships in fostering
- Catherine/NAFP: Consider scheduling a part two session on non-monogamous relationships in fostering
- All participants: Send Catherine any examples or challenging topics they want to discuss in future Friday sessions



Summary

Supporting Foster Carers in Diverse Relationships

The group discussed the challenges of assessing and supporting foster carers in non-monogamous relationships. A member outlined key considerations for assessment, including relationship stability, conflict resolution, and household dynamics. The discussion explored the lack of specific guidance on this topic and the need for more training and resources. Participants shared personal experiences and concerns, with some expressing discomfort about the concept while others emphasised the importance of remaining open-minded and prepared to address such situations. The conversation highlighted the need for further exploration and development of policies to support diverse family structures in fostering.

Family Foster Dynamics Discussion

A member discussed a fostering arrangement where children live primarily with one parent while spending time at the other parent's home, explaining that this arrangement works well for the family involved. A member asked about the children's questions regarding this arrangement, to which they responded that the children understand the family dynamics and that it functions similarly to a blended family. Another member shared a previous experience with a married couple who fostered a child between their two homes, highlighting that different family structures can be effective. The discussion also touched on the potential challenges and questions that could arise when assessing non-monogamous families for fostering, emphasising the importance of individual assessments rather than assuming inability based on relationship structure.

Foster Carer Assessment Process Review

Catherine discussed the importance of maintaining consistent processes for assessing and supervising foster carers, regardless of the number of people in the household. She emphasised the need for evidence of stability and the importance of unannounced visits to ensure the safety of children. A member shared their perspective on handling assessments for non-traditional family structures, highlighting the need for individualised approaches and support from psychology services. The discussion also touched on the limitations of current assessment forms, which are not designed to accommodate more than two applicants.



Child Welfare Assessment Challenges

It was discussed regarding the importance of assessing the welfare of children in various family structures, emphasising the need to focus on how the world is rather than how it ought to be. Members highlighted the role of social workers in adapting to societal changes and acknowledged the need to address the comfort levels of those involved in assessments. Catherine agreed and emphasised the value of having quality assessors and supervisors to help workers remain balanced and open-minded during assessments, ensuring that personal biases do not influence their work.

Fostering Households Stability Assessment

The discussion focused on the assessment and approval process for fostering households with more than two adults, emphasising the importance of stability and the needs of children. It was highlighted that while societal norms are changing, fostering agencies must ensure robust assessments to guarantee stability, particularly in complex or intimate relationships. They acknowledged that while more adults might benefit some children, the nature of relationships and potential volatility are crucial factors. The conversation also touched on the challenges of matching children with households that may face parental opposition due to cultural or personal reasons.

Same-Sex and Non-Monogamous Foster Assessments

The group discussed the challenges of assessing and supporting fostering arrangements involving same-sex and non-monogamous relationships, with sharing experiences of same-sex couples and the complexities of assessing relationship stability. Catherine emphasised the need to focus on stability rather than the number of people involved, and mentioned that Marie would present the discussion outcomes at the LA Managers Commissioning meetings, to gauge the commissioners thoughts on how non monogamous families would be received by a child's own family and possible resistance. The group also discussed concerns about single carers and relationships formed online, with Catherine noting that NAFP will consult with inspectorates across the UK to understand their perspectives and regulations regarding this area, the regulations do not specify numbers of foster carers and refer to "a fostering household" so there is no regulatory guidance around this currently.



Foster Care and Family Dynamics

The group discussed the challenges of placing children in foster homes with multiple adults, particularly focusing on the potential confusion and societal messages this could convey. A member expressed concerns about accommodating children in emergency situations, while another shared personal experiences of a successful three-person family dynamic. A member raised questions about the implications of multiple intimate partners living together, particularly in a patriarchal society. The discussion concluded with highlighting the importance of carefully exploring relationship dynamics before placing children in such environments, and it was agreed that this was a good opening session on a relatively unknown area, NAFP will consider next steps to support members in clear policy, process and assessment expectations.