

NAFP practice group (open session/check-ins) 7 August 2026

The session addressed union misinformation, discussed artificial intelligence usage, and evaluated fostering standards and recruitment policies.

Meeting opening and purpose: Harvey welcomed the attendees to the open session. The participants engaged in informal conversation regarding summer plans and holidays. Harvey noted that the meeting was an open session intended for mutual support and discussion, emphasising that participants should avoid sharing identifiable information about children or colleagues.

National Union of Professional Foster Carers (NUPFC): Participant 2 raised concerns about being contacted by the NUPFC regarding two different family situations. The union had allegedly advised foster carers not to attend local authority meetings and had attempted to intervene in "standards of care" processes without full information, claiming it is a legal requirement for foster carers to have union representation.

- Legal standing of foster carers and unions: Participant 3 and Harvey discussed that foster carers are not employees; therefore, current trade union legislation regarding mandatory union recognition and access does not apply to them. Harvey noted that the core issue stems from long-term attempts to change the legal status of foster carers to "Limb B" workers, a goal that has not been achieved.
- Spread of misinformation: Participants shared experiences where the NUPFC used alarmist language, such as warning of £70,000 fines for not informing carers of their right to join a union. Participant 4 noted that these groups seem to recruit disgruntled carers, firing them up with inaccurate information that contradicts existing regulations.
- Foster Wiki: Participant 5 asked about "Foster Wiki," which is led by a former union member. Harvey explained that this individual was previously with the Foster Care Workers Union before forming this group, which presents itself as an independent source of support.

Risks of using ai for legal guidance: Participant 2 and Harvey discussed the dangers of using ChatGPT for legal advice. Participant 2 noted that staff may use AI to draft responses without fully understanding the legislative remit, leading to incorrect or misleading information. Participant 3 emphasised that policies must be strictly followed, as AI-generated advice is not a valid substitute for professional assessment.

- Organisational AI policies: Participant 5 and other participants discussed the need for clear organisational policies regarding the use of AI, such as Co-pilot, to ensure data security and compliance. Participant 3 argued that staff should be prohibited from using unauthorised AI tools, as these lack the enterprise-level security necessary for protected data.
- Usage of Magic Notes: Participant 2 and Harvey discussed the use of "Magic Notes," an AI tool for summarising meetings. While users find it helpful for efficiency and consistency, participants noted that it requires human oversight to ensure poignant points are captured and that the context of the visit is understood by the AI.

Facebook LinkedIn

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

Registered as a company in England & Wales no. 06717310

Registered office: Windsor House, Bayshill Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 3AT

New proposed regulations and standards: Participant 5 initiated a discussion on upcoming changes to regulations, standards, and the Ofsted inspection framework. Harvey confirmed that meetings are planned for late August and late September to discuss these changes, as the current proposals are viewed as overly brief and potentially lacking a deep understanding of the sector.

- Consultation and Information for Families: Participant 2 highlighted the importance of making government consultation documents accessible and "snappy" for foster parents, rather than using standard, complex government formats. Harvey confirmed that simplified versions for both foster parents and children were in progress.
- Ofsted Frameworks and Leadership: Harvey noted that Ofsted is rewriting inspection frameworks before finalising standards, which he considered a suboptimal sequence. Participants expressed scepticism regarding the evidence base for these changes, noting that a recent review appeared influenced by a small number of strongly held voices.

Policy on vaping: Harvey opened a discussion on vaping policies, specifically whether they should differ from smoking policies. Participant 3 stated that their organisation allows vaping outside the house as it does not carry the same chemical risks as cigarette smoke, unlike smoking which is prohibited. Participant 5 noted that her organisation is currently reviewing its policies to be more realistic regarding daily living while maintaining safety.

- Recruitment and Life Experience: Participant 4 emphasised the need to look beyond surface-level disqualifiers, such as vaping or lack of formal academic qualifications, to find resilient foster carers with a natural affinity for children. Harvey agreed, noting that the goal is to find rounded human beings with life experience rather than untarnished individuals.
- Inquiries into sexual relationships: Participant 2 and Participant 5 discussed the discomfort and inappropriateness of invasive questioning regarding foster carers' sexual relationships during assessments. Participant 4 shared an anecdote about an assessment where a couple disclosed unnecessary personal details, highlighting that these lines of inquiry often feel invasive and unnecessary for determining fostering suitability.