

NAFP Practice Group

Open session / check-ins

Date	21 August 2026
Chair	Mark Owers
Purpose	Open practice check-in, sharing live operational issues and exploring how NAFP can help members prepare for the proposed new fostering standards.

1. Welcome and context

Mark Owers led the open practice session in Catherine Lockett's absence. Members were invited to bring current practice and regulatory issues for collective discussion.

2. Employment legislation query

A question was raised about new employment protections relating to bullying and harassment and whether these would apply to foster carers who are not employees. The initial view was that the provisions were likely to apply to employees rather than self-employed foster carers, but NAFP agreed to clarify the position before advising members.

3. Legal status of a child living with newly approved foster carers

A member described a situation in which a child had moved into the home of a family while their fostering assessment was still underway. The local authority was aware but had not progressed the arrangement as kinship care, creating uncertainty about the child's legal status and the effect on the family's newly approved fostering capacity.

Members agreed that responsibility for clarifying the child's legal status rests with the local authority. The agency was advised to formalise its request for clarity in writing and, if necessary, escalate the matter and seek a legal planning discussion so that the child's status and future plan are explicit.

4. Preparing for the new fostering standards

The group discussed the proposed refreshed national fostering standards and the challenge of implementation alongside inspection. Members welcomed the direction of travel but noted the risk that less prescriptive standards may lead to inconsistent interpretation unless Ofsted and the sector have a shared understanding of what good practice looks like.

Mark outlined an emerging idea for a current-versus-proposed self-assessment tool that would allow agencies to baseline their current practice, understand the gap to the new expectations and identify improvement priorities. Members supported developing this as a practical aid rather than another compliance checklist.

5. Safer caring, bedroom sharing and intimate relationships

The group explored a sensitive practice issue involving babies or very young children sharing a foster carer's bedroom and the implications for privacy and sexual intimacy between carers.

Members considered that this is a legitimate safer-caring issue that should be discussed openly rather than treated as taboo. The emerging view was that safer caring agreements and assessment conversations should make space for proportionate discussion of privacy, intimacy and household arrangements, with these matters revisited as circumstances change.

6. Evidence, quality assurance and inspection preparation

Members discussed how agencies demonstrate practice quality to inspectors without creating excessive administrative burden. Examples included evidence packs and visual trackers showing progress against identified areas of practice.

The discussion emphasised that quality assurance should not rely solely on compliance data. Audits, dip sampling, reflective discussion, observation, feedback and evidence of impact all contribute to a fuller understanding of whether practice is genuinely strong.

The group also discussed the careful use of generative AI for administrative tasks such as producing trackers or spreadsheets, provided confidential or sensitive information about children and carers is not entered into public AI systems.

7. Recording for children and continuous improvement

Mark emphasised that records should be written first and foremost with the child or young person in mind, not simply for regulatory scrutiny. Case records should be clear, compassionate and capable of helping children understand their own history without causing unnecessary harm when read later in life.

The discussion linked this to a wider improvement cycle: services need to understand where practice is now, test the evidence, identify priorities, take action and review whether change has improved children's and foster families' experiences.

8. Key themes

- NAFPP should help members prepare early for the new standards, with a focus on self-assessment and improvement rather than compliance alone.
- Less prescriptive standards will require clarity about how strong practice is evidenced and how inspection consistency will be achieved.
- Sensitive aspects of family life, including privacy and intimacy, should be addressed proportionately within safer caring conversations.
- Quality assurance should triangulate data, audit, experience and outcomes.
- Recording should remain child-centred and support children's understanding of their own life story.

Actions

Action	Lead
Clarify whether the new anti-bullying/harassment employment provisions apply to foster carers who are not employees.	Mark Owers

Write formally to the local authority seeking clarity on the child's legal status and escalate if required.	Stanley Chima
Share the previous guide on evidencing outstanding practice with Mark.	Richard Norwood
Discuss privacy/intimacy and safer caring within the agency team and consider whether policies or safer caring agreements need updating.	Sasha Dickson
Continue testing and refining the proposed standards self-assessment / improvement tool with members.	Mark Owers / NAFP