

NAFP Practice Group

Open session / check-ins

Date	24 July 2026
Chair	Mark Owers
Purpose	Open practice check-in, sharing current practice issues and informing NAFP's response to the national fostering standards consultation.

1. Welcome and context

Mark Owers facilitated the session in the absence of Catherine Lockett and Harvey Gallagher. The session was run as an open check-in, with members invited to raise current practice issues and contribute to discussion on the proposed new fostering standards.

2. National fostering standards consultation

The group discussed the proposed refresh of the National Minimum Standards and foster carer development standards. Members broadly welcomed the stronger emphasis on relationships and outcomes, while questioning how consistently a less prescriptive framework would be interpreted through inspection.

Members emphasised that a relational approach needs to be visible in everyday practice and organisational culture, not simply described in policies. Examples were shared of using conflict, challenge and resolution as evidence of healthy and transparent practice.

3. Allegations, proportionality and LADO processes

A substantial discussion focused on allegations and standards-of-care concerns. Members welcomed the intention to distinguish more clearly between serious safeguarding concerns and matters that can be addressed through supervision and support, but highlighted the continuing impact of delays within LADO and police processes.

The group discussed the financial and emotional consequences for foster carers when investigations are prolonged. Members supported clearer expectations on investigation timescales and stronger accountability where delays by local authorities or partner agencies create avoidable instability for carers and children.

- The proposed section 47 threshold for formal allegations was discussed as a potentially more proportionate gateway.
- Members highlighted the importance of continued practical and emotional support to carers during investigations.
- There was support for clearer expectations around payment arrangements and timely decision-making.
- Members noted that post-allegation reflection and repair need to be considered carefully alongside ongoing trust and safeguarding.

4. Placement decisions, sufficiency and regulatory scrutiny

Members raised concerns that placement decisions can at times be influenced by available capacity or financial considerations rather than solely by the child's needs. Examples were discussed where changes in placement appeared to coincide with the availability of alternative in-house provision.

The group considered that placement decision-making should be transparent and capable of scrutiny. It was suggested that regulators should look not only at provider practice but also at whether local authority placement decisions are genuinely child-centred and consistent with sufficiency duties.

5. Expectations and support for foster carers

Members agreed that foster carers undertake an exceptionally demanding role and should be held to appropriately high standards. At the same time, the system must recognise that carers are human and require high-quality preparation, training, reflective supervision and practical support.

The discussion returned to the importance of professional systems enabling ordinary people to undertake extraordinary caring roles with kindness, compassion and sustained support.

6. Key themes

- Relational practice should be evidenced through lived organisational culture, not simply compliance documentation.
- Allegation processes need to be proportionate, fair and timely.
- Financial and emotional support to foster carers during investigations requires greater clarity.
- Placement decision-making should be transparent and centred on children's welfare rather than availability or cost.
- High expectations of foster carers must be matched by high-quality support and supervision.

Actions

Action	Lead
Incorporate member feedback on allegations, investigation timescales and accountability into NAFP's consultation response.	Mark Owers
Continue to encourage members to respond individually to the national standards consultation as well as contributing to the NAFP response.	NAFP / members
Consider how concerns about placement decision-making and sufficiency can be reflected in NAFP's wider influencing work.	NAFP