



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **The Adolescent and Children`s Trust**

Premier House

209-211 Walsall Road

Perry Barr

Birmingham

B42 1TX

18th,19th,20th,23rd,24th,25th August &  
17thSeptember 2004

## Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

### The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

## Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

### The 4-point scale ranges from:

- 4 - Standard Exceeded (Commendable)
- 3 - Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
- 2 - Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)
- 1 - Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

**FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

**Tel No:**

Address

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

**Name of Agency**

The Adolescent and Children`s Trust

**Tel No**

0121 260 0518

**Address**

Radio House, Aston Road North, Birmingham, West Midlands, B6 4DA

**Fax No**

0121 260 0520

**Email Address**

enquiries@tactfostercare.org.uk

**Registered Number of IFA**

E540002018

**Name of Registered Provider**

The Adolescent and Children`s Trust

**Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)**

Ms Beverley Pickering

**Date of first registration**

20th May 2004

**Date of latest registration certificate**

20th May 2004

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

YES

**Date of last inspection**

23/1/04

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		18th August 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Ann Appleby	135667
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>	Llynn Woods	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Mrs Beverley Pickering	

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**

**Inspection visits**

**Description of Fostering Service**

**Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings**

**Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State**

**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection**

**Statutory Requirements from this Inspection**

**Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection**

**Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings**

**(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)**

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

**Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)**

**Part D: Provider's Response**

**D.1. Provider's comments**

**D.2. Action Plan**

**D.3. Provider's agreement**

## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of The Adolescent and Children`s Trust. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the CSCI in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

## INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The TACT organisation is a not for profit, charitable fostering service and will only take placements where there is an appropriate match of children and carers. The Birmingham branch of TACT is a developing service, providing a range of good quality foster placements for children accommodated or, in the care of local authorities. There are quality assessments and recruitment policies and the organisation promotes a commitment to ongoing training for carers and staff. Children and young people are able to make introductory visits and respect for equality, culture, religion and disability are promoted in policy and practice. There is an expectation children will be listened to and included in decisions and plans. The service provides a group of support workers, who can assist with contact transport, and provide carers with any additional help they may require. The office premises are centrally based in Birmingham and easily accessible by public or private transport. The office premises are accessible for persons with a disability.

## PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

### Inspector's Summary

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

This was the second inspection of TACT fostering services; the service had made a number of changes and improvements based on the verbal feedback from the last inspection. There were ongoing developments of practice and policy at the time of inspection. Despite this staff and foster carers met were welcoming and positive regarding the inspection.

**Statement of Purpose.** There is a clear statement of purpose and a children's guide is in place some minor amendment would benefit the document.

**Fitness to Carry on and Manage the Fostering Service.** Overall the service is managed effectively. The Manager of the service is qualified and experienced and overall provides good strong leadership. The service is monitored in practice, and would benefit by amendment and clarity to the procedure and practice.

**Securing and Promoting Welfare.** Overall the fostering agency provides a good standard of safe care for children placed. Carer's homes were warm, comfortable and nurturing environments for children and young people. The promotion of equality is reflected in policy and practice, which in turn is reflected processes for matching children to carers. There is positive practice in supporting education, leisure, health and contact. Some small amendments are required to the behaviour management, sanctions, complaints policies or practice. A high priority is given to consulting children and involving them in decisions and plans. Age appropriate independence training is provided for all children, policy and practice is being developed for older children.

**Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers.** TACT has effective recruitment and selection procedures in place, with checks and references completed with some minor shortfalls. There is evidence of regular supervision, appraisals and commitment to appropriate training by TACT. Foster carer recruitment, assessments, training and approvals are similarly of a good standard. The Panel's recommendations are rigorous and passed to the Chief Executive, to makes the decision to approve or otherwise. Carers and staff report feeling supported very well by TACT. The weakest areas identified are poor information supplied by placing authorities, and access to local specialist health services.

**Records.** Overall records were in place, some small amendments are required to the register of carers, staff and children and foster carer agreements. The process for ensuring Placement agreements and commissioning contracts are in place. These need to be strengthened, as does the process for monitoring the service.

**Fitness of premises for use as a fostering service.** The premises and equipment are robust and able to support the service. The premises are easily accessible by public and private transport.



**Financial Requirements.** The service is financially viable and the manager monitors the budgets, which are audited by an accountant. Clarity of fees and allowances paid is required for purchasers of the service.

**Fostering Panels.** The Birmingham branch of TACT had recruited and trained their own Panel, since the last inspection of service. This was reported as a positive improvement and membership and expertise reflected the need of local recruitment within a culturally diverse population, and awareness of local resources. There are some small areas, which require clarity regarding membership and procedure, otherwise the panel functions well with a good monitoring overview.

**Short-term breaks are not provided or Family and Friends placements.**

## **Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State**

**(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)**

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service satisfies the regulatory requirements:

NO

Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their fostering service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a Local Authority fostering service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority fostering service:

NO

**The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:**

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

**If No please list below**

**At the time of this inspection the provider had not received a copy of the report from the previous inspection. Therefore the provider is not required to respond to requirements from the previous inspection of service.**

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report, which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

**Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.**

**COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)**

**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

**Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.**

Condition	Compliance	YES
The Adolescent and Children's Trust Fostering Service is registered to place children and young people 0-17 years of age.		
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	YES
Placements of children and young people are to include mother and baby placements and, Assessments of children within a family environment.		
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

Condition	Compliance	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Lead Inspector</b>	<u>Ann Appleby</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Second Inspector</b>	<u>Lynn Woods</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Locality Manager</b>	<u>Neil Arculus</u>	<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Date</b>	<u>29/03/05</u>		

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3(1)(b) & 3(3)(b)&(c)	FS1	The Provider and manager must include details of the qualifications of staff in the statement of purpose NMS 1.4 and,  Produce the children's guide in formats to reflect the range of ability and communications needs of children, including telephone contact numbers for children wishing to complain.	30/4/05
2	34(3) & 40(4)&(5) & Schedule 6	FS8	The Provider and Manager must ensure that placement agreements are put in place for all service users and include all information and permissions to enable the care of children placed.	30-4-05
3	13(1) & (2)	FS9	The Manager must ensure that care plans incorporate all details of agreed constraints or restraints to keep children safe, and  The policies and procedures include this practice and identify all non-permissible forms of restraint.	13-5-05
4	15(2) & 15(2)(b) & Schedule 6 (1)(c), (f), (3)	FS12	The Manager must ensure medical permissions and health care records are provided for children.	13-5-05

5	22 Schedule 2 &31(1&2)	FS25	The Manager must ensure the registers of children, foster carers and staff, comply with regulations.	30-4-05
6	24(3)(b)(ii) &(4)	FS30	The Provider must ensure the Panel membership is appropriate, and clarify attendance of regional managers.	30-4-05

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION**

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS4	In order to clarify fees it was agreed that the service provides a breakdown of the costs for the services provided to purchasers and others as identified in NMS 4

\* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g. FS10 refers to Standard 10.

**PART B****INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	11
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	NO
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	NO
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	18/8/04
Time of Inspection	9.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	89

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

- |                         |                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 4 - Standard Exceeded   | (Commendable)      |
| 3 - Standard Met        | (No Shortfalls)    |
| 2 - Standard Almost Met | (Minor Shortfalls) |
| 1 - Standard Not Met    | (Major Shortfalls) |

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.



## Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

2

The Statement of Purpose reflects the services provided and had recently been updated to reflect the changes in staffing and numbers of carers. However the qualifications of staff were not included in the statement. A Children's Guide is also in place and provided to children and young people. The organisation is positively pursuing development of the guide, to meet the varying range abilities and communication needs of children and young people. The complaints procedure would be improved by including contact telephone numbers for children making complaints.

## Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

### Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and have the necessary knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to do so in a professional manner.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The TACT organisation headquarters are based in London and registered in Southwark. Skilled individuals, who have extensive experience in work with children and families and in fostering, provide the management of the fostering service. There are appropriate systems in place to provide for the business management and financial expertise required to run the charity professionally.

The Manager of the Birmingham regional office has extensive experience of work with children and families including fostering services, and is a qualified social worker. The manager is completing a management qualification. The information gained from staff, carers met and returned questionnaires, confirm the manager provides good supportive leadership. The service is monitored and managed in an organised way, delivering good care for children.

### Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

All the checks and references were in place for the manager of the fostering service. The Manager confirmed that CRB checks are completed every three years.

## Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

2

The procedures for monitoring and controlling the service are still developing. Records viewed show that audits are taking place of files, and systems are in place for monitoring. More recently the Organisation had completed a review of a number of areas for the whole service.

The regional manager confirmed that information was provided to the Responsible Individual by three monthly summaries. In addition, both herself and the Responsible individual were kept apprised of any issues arising on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, the lines of communication were clear.

Tact has proper financial procedures in place and the manager confirmed she is regularly updated on the finances. TACT uses the Fostering network guidance to identify the breakdown of fees and allowances. The costs for the services provided to purchasers and others would benefit by this breakdown being included as identified at NMS 4.4. (Refer to NMS 28)

A conflicts of interest policy was available at the time of the inspection.

**Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI in last 12 months:**

2

**Death of a child placed with foster parents.**

0

**Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.**

0

**Serious illness or accident of a child.**

0

**Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.**

0

**Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.**

0

**Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.**

0

**Serious complaint about a foster parent.**

1

**Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.**

1

**Number of complaints made to CSCI about the agency in the past 12 months:**

0

**Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:**

0

**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)****The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The Birmingham branch is still a developing service and there have been a number of staff changes during the past year. These and the extra workload produced by developments to meeting the National Minimum Standards for the whole organisation have produced an extensive workload for the Manager. Despite these pressures, the fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently, within the resources available and development has continued since the last inspection. The manager has a clear job description, with lines of accountability defined. The range of responsibilities of Regional manager for monitoring of the service and reported additional extension to that role is wide.

## Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

### Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The evidence from this inspection through records, questionnaires returned, foster carers and children met, suggests that foster carers homes are warm safe nurturing environments. The pre approval health and safety checks and checks during supervision and for annual reviews of carers ensure the standards are maintained, including transport. The referral and matching process consider the needs of children who have been abused or abuse others and the safe care needs of all children within the placement. Foster carer training prior to approval and post approval cover health and safety issues, and these are addressed in relation to placements made. Extra support or equipment are considered and put in place when required, to meet the needs of children in placement. Foster carers were aware they might be interviewed as part of the inspection process.

### Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

TACT has a policy in place, which promotes equality and this is integrated into all practice areas, and is covered in the training of carers and staff. The pre and post approval training is in place, covering the areas of race, culture, ethnic origin, religion, disability and language and. The manager confirmed these areas are considered as part of the matching process based on the information provided at the point of referral. Placements are not made if there is no appropriate match in these areas or with the skills and experience of carers. The Manager confirmed they were at the point of endeavouring to recruit more carers to reflect the needs of the diverse cultures of the area.

Carers, social workers, and staff met, and records inspected confirmed there is good strong advocacy promoted by the service, to respect equality issues for children. Additional support is available when children with disability are placed to help the carers, to promote children's inclusion in appropriate community activity. Children met identified support provided in their choice of educational establishments, efforts to develop their cultural identities and pursue activities or interests of their choice. Carers and staff were able to demonstrate advocacy on behalf of children placed, when placing authorities were not consulting with children in these areas.

Children and young people are positively supported and actively encouraged to develop self-confidence, develop their talents and, pursue opportunities and experiences, which may lead to new interests or skills.

**Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)**

**Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.**

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

TACT carefully considers information made available to them and collated on the referral form, in order to provide appropriate matches for children. TACT does allow for introductions to take place and positively supports contact with parents where appropriate. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of children retaining contact with previous carers and for gradual introduction of new carers or, others when children move on. The service uses all information gathered from referring agencies to inform the matching process and is in a process of developing its own internal pre-placement assessments.

Examinations of sampled service user files highlighted that a number of Foster Placement agreements appeared to be missing. However, the service is fully aware of this factor.

The Agency does have difficulty at times gaining all the required information from placing social services but has processes to ensure these are chased up.

TACT monitor and prompt placing social workers to visit children and this is seen as proactive practice.

The manager and Responsible Individual confirmed the organisation was considering ways to strengthen the referral process, and commitment of placing authorities to statutory duties.

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**

**The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.**

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Overall the fostering service does provide protection for children and young people from all forms of abuse. Foster carers met confirmed they receive pre approval training, which covers the areas of safe caring, managing behaviour and child protection concerns. In addition, individual carers are provided with further training, to cope with the behaviour of children placed if required.

TACT makes carers fully aware that a no corporal punishment policy is operated and a behaviour management policy is in place.

The child protection policy is in place and TACT is pro-active in notifying area authorities when children are placed in their area. The manager had improved practice since the last inspection and both placing social workers and the area authority are notified of child protection concerns immediately. This process is not always met with a timely response by are and placing authorities. There was clear evidence, of the Manager and social workers, making formal representations when not provided with a service. TACT have revised the process for referral of similar inactions, to senior managers of the organisation, with the intention of monitoring and addressing Local Authorities responses, at an earlier stage. TACT ensures all information made available to them regarding any child protection concerns for children placed, is passed immediately to foster carers.

TACT has clear policies and procedures in place for reporting children missing from home. Management systems are in place for collation of information on child protection concerns

and allegations. There is good evidence of foster carers and social workers addressing issues of bullying for children, and children met confirmed the support was provided to resolve matters. The bullying policy provides little practical guidance and is currently being revised.

**Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:**

75

%

**Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)**

**The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

TACT has policies and practices in place, which ensure that children and young people are fully supported to maintain contact with family, friends and previous carers where possible. Support workers are provided to transport children to and from contact where appropriate, and carers are encouraged to facilitate contact if possible. Foster carers receive pre approval training on contact and working with families. The training also covers issues faced by young people separated from family and significant others. The training is supported by additional guidance in the foster carer guidelines, and expectations of recording. This inspection evidenced through carers and children met, strong advocacy by foster carers and TACT social workers for contact to be put in place, when children requested and would benefit by it.

The manager confirmed that checks are made regarding concerns or, issues about contact for children. The agency risk assesses any contact arrangements that are within a foster carers own home or where the foster carer is involved in contact supervision.

**Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)**

**The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

There is a strong emphasis on listening to children and ensuring they are consulted regularly about their lives and plans. Pre approval training for foster carers covers the importance of involving young people in decisions made about their daily lives and planning arrangements for their future. Children are seen during the visits to carers for supervision, and their views sought about how their care is being provided and any concerns they may have. This inspection has evidenced through records, foster carers and children met, the TACT social workers representation of children's wishes and feelings to placing authorities.

The fostering service makes known to children the process for making complaints at the time of placement. A separate information leaflet is provided with the children's guide, on the complaints process. This valuably contains an envelope and post card requesting help, which can be posted to the TACT Children's Officer. The complaints leaflet, would be strengthened by providing telephone contact numbers for independent support to children and in a variety of formats to meet children's communication and ability needs. (Refer to NMS 1).

**Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)**

The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?**

2

The records and information on children's health care needed some areas of improvement. Whilst there was evidence of substantial and ongoing delays in providing medical cards or details of previous GP's the service is in a process of developing records to be maintained by foster carers.

It is to the credit of TACT staff and carers that information and support, are obtained to meet children's needs. Children are registered with local GP's and dental and eyesight tests are booked. Pre approval training is in place for foster carers on the health care of children and health and safety issues. Post approval training in first aid is in place. The training is supported with more guidance, within the foster carer handbook.

Following the last inspection the Manager had established a separate record to be completed by carers of all medication and treatment, bruises or accidents. The recording of health care issues and medication are completed by the carer's and monitored during supervision by support social workers.

TACT can provide some support for specialist health care services if the need is agreed. Links with specialist health care services in the carer's home areas are actively pursued to ensure an ongoing service is provided to children in placement.

**Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)**

The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?**

3

TACT foster carers and social workers put considerable effort into identifying appropriate education for children and young people. There was good evidence of carers visiting schools and colleges and supporting children to be positively involved with their education. Homework and participation in extra curricular activities are encouraged and uniforms and equipment are provided with children involved in the purchases. Additional support is available through TACT if required to support attainment by young people. A recent survey throughout the TACT Organisation indicates an excellent record for children's educational attendance, with few exclusions occurring. Provision is made for carers to access extra funds to support activities of children not attending educational provision.

Children met confirmed they are encouraged to take up interests and hobbies and involved in a range of trips and activities.



**Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)**

**The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

There is an expectation that foster carers will actively encourage children to develop their independence skills age appropriately as they move towards adulthood. The foster cares handbook includes some guidance for preparation for semi- independence and independent living. The Manager confirmed the guidance was currently being reviewed, with all the policy and practice documentation.

The guidance available is clear about the importance of young people being actively involved in meetings and planning about their future.

## Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Manager confirmed that appropriate checks and references are carried out on all staff and that telephone enquiries are completed on references. When agency workers are employed, the Manager has a protocol in place with the agency, to personally verify the checks have been completed and are currently in place. Personnel files inspected demonstrated an improved recording and checking system since the last inspection. The procedures for recruitment of staff are generally robust and thorough. Although, 2 files did not include photographs of the personnel, and one had no check completed on the MOT and insurance details of a car user. Staff in post had appropriate qualifications, the manager confirmed that further training in fostering support and form F assessments had been required for most staff employed. Support workers appointed, were supervised by the manager regularly.

Total number of staff of the agency:

8

Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:

2

### Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The staff are managed to deliver an effective service and there are clear lines of accountability, with appropriate supervision and monitoring in place. The service is developing still and the changes in staff have had an effect on the workloads for TACT social workers and the manager. Form F assessments have been commissioned to sessional assessors to complete, supervised by the Manager. Sessional staff including support workers or, assessing social workers have job descriptions, contracts and conditions of service in place. Reviews of carers are completed annually, and first reviews returned to the Panel. There was good support for further ongoing training for staff and carers. Discussions were taking place with carers, with regard to more appropriate local venues for support groups and training, to facilitate easier access. Staff are provided with information to comply with NMS 16.6. The administrative support is in place to cover the current demands and plans are in place to recruit more staff to meet the anticipated demands with the next recruitment of carers.

<b>Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)</b>		
The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
The service has had changes in staffing and has needed to use agency staff to fill the gaps prior to recruiting new staff. At the time of inspection one agency staff was in post and two new social workers were due to commence shortly. The recruitment of carers was ongoing and the manager confirmed the next recruitment was aimed at attracting more carers from different ethnic origins and cultures, to meet the needs of the service. There are clearly set out assessment processes for carers, which meet the requirements of NMS17.6 &17.7.		

<b>Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)</b>		
The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
<p>There are sound employment practices in TACT Fostering. There are effective systems to support foster carers, support workers, social workers and the sessional form F assessors, including regular supervision, appraisals and training for professional development. There were certificates of insurance in place and all carers are registered with fostering Network at approval.</p> <p>The handbooks for staff and carers, include the 'whistle-blowing' policy, and provides for complaints to be raised. Carers met by inspectors and those returning questionnaires made particular comment on the level of support they received. This included 'out of hours' support, either by telephone contact or by personal visits, at points of real crisis. The only difficulty expressed by carers was the changes in support workers due to staff leaving. They clearly valued having someone whom they knew and could relate to. In addition carers are able to attend Forums to meet with TACT Directors, to present their views on the organisational practices.</p>		

<b>Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)</b>		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
Staff met confirmed they had good access to training to develop their skills and knowledge and that requests were supported fully. The staff confirmed the Manager was also good at advising when possible training events or conferences were advertised, and supporting training development identified in supervision. There are good induction and in-service training opportunities available, staff met confirmed induction had taken place. Joint training between foster carers and staff does take place when possible and all new social workers and, form F assessors attend at least one pre approval training with the carers.		

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)****All staff are properly accountable and supported.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

All staff met reported they felt very well supported and that their duties and responsibilities were clear. Policies and procedures were being developed continuously due to the review of policies and practice to ensure compliance with national minimum standards. The manager confirmed there had been a lot of extra work generated this year due to the inspections and revision of policy and practice. All new information implemented was being reviewed during supervision to ensure it was put in place. Supervision records were in place and supervisions were regular and planned. All permanent and sessional support staff, were now included in the regular staff meetings.

**Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)****The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Carers met confirmed that foster carers felt valued and supported. The main difficulties experienced were the access to venues for training and support groups and the changes to support social workers. These areas were being addressed, as was the provision of NVQ 3 training for more experienced carers. The policies and procedures were being revised and the documents identified in NMS 21.2 were in place. The particular concerns raised by foster carers were outside the control of the agency. Matters included access to professional specialist health support via psychiatrists and psychological support, as this affected their ability to care for children. These areas of concern are taken up and pursued by the agency.

**Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)****The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The fostering service is managed and promotes a high standard of care for children and young people.

Due to staff turnover the service underwent a period of change and difficulties. However, the service ensured that carer's support continued as required.

Qualified social workers provide supervision of foster carers. Supervision for carer has occurred regularly, with monitoring of compliance with the policy and practice of the service. The service had at the time of the inspection a rolling programme for renewing and updating foster carer agreements. The foster carer handbook was in place, but was currently being revised, as was the complaints procedure. Monitoring of complaints, allegations and child protection was completed by the manager and incorporated into considering policy and practice for the whole organisation.

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.

**Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?**

4

The evidence from this inspection identified that the Foster carers are trained to good standards and the development of post approval training has been positively received. Foster carer pre and post approval training is in place and experienced carers are included in the pre approval training. The annual appraisals of carers consider the ongoing training needs and evaluation is completed after each training session. There is a strong culture of anti-discriminatory practice, which is incorporated into policies, procedures and practice. The support workers are able to assist in foster children's care, to enable attendance at training or for support groups. There is also extra funding available for baby-sitting costs, and expenses for travel. Post approval training for men in foster care, and individual training can be accessed if required for carers, to help with specific areas of knowledge or skill. The children of foster carers are provided with opportunity to meet with support workers when they visit placements, to check if there are any issues. More recently a support group for children of foster carers has commenced, with a support worker. It is hoped that a newsletter will be a regular feature for carer's children and the group will develop to regular meetings and activity groups. Safe caring is considered with all family members.

## Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

### Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care, which details the nature, and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The policy and practices for recording of information were undergoing a review in line with the policies and procedures of TACT. The new policy for case recording and file content had made some considerable improvement since the previous inspection. The Manager and social workers work hard to ensure there is integration of records with the local authorities placing children. There was clear evidence on files of written requests to provide information, which was not always responded to. The manager confirmed that this was a very difficult area to progress, and the organisation was now looking at how to move forward in this area.

TACT provides all information received about the child to foster carers and ensures that information obtained is returned to placing authorities when placements end. Foster carers encourage children to understand their history and collect information to keep for their future understanding. Foster carers met were clear about helping children collect memorabilia and to sort through possessions and records to keep what they wanted to safely. Daily recordings were kept of children in placement and they were encouraged to contribute to these.

### Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Separate records are kept for carer's children and staff and a separate monitoring system is in place for allegations and complaints. The manager confirmed she reviews case files to monitor the quality and adequacy of the information. This was evidenced on records viewed at inspection and the monitoring of progress of agreed actions. The written entries in records were legible and distinguished between fact and opinion. The information recorded allowed tracking of events, communications and actions very well.

Records were stored securely at all times in locking filing cabinets and policy guidance is in place to clarify the process for children, staff and carers to access their own records.

Children's records would benefit by the provision of LAC documentation by placing authorities. The register of children requires some amendment to comply with schedule 2 including the address prior to and post placement. The register of foster carers similarly needs amendment to include, the terms of approval. The record of staff needs to include status and the average hours per week.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>			9
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>			15
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			6
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			4
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>			3
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	637.57	<b>Maximum £</b>	904.05

## Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

The premises of the fostering service are easily accessible by public or private transport and have access for those with a disability. The office systems are robust and sufficient for the service including IT equipment, telephones and fax machine. There are appropriate security systems and all offices lock, as do the office premises. Facilities for meal breaks, conference rooms for meetings and training, are available and the premises are insured. The Manager confirmed alternative premises were being sought for the future, as the developing service would require greater office space to cope with extra staffing and storage of information.



## Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Audited accounts provided at this inspection confirmed the organisation is financially viable. The manager confirmed that she receives regular monthly up-dates on the budgets for the year. She is able to trace if she is within the targets set, but in this area she would benefit by formal training. The manager and area manager confirmed that the organisation had made provision to cover the shortfall in funding due to the developing service.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service has guidelines in place for the financial procedures of the fostering service. A registered accountant audits the accounts. . A breakdown of the fees and expenses for foster carers needs to be put in place for placing authorities and those needing to know. (Refer to NMS 4). TACT advise carers, to use the guidance provided by Fostering Network, to cover costs of children's care.

**Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)**

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

The fostering service has clear guidelines in place for the financial procedures and practice of the fostering service. A registered accountant audits the accounts

## Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.**

### Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

2

This was the first inspection of the fostering Panel, as at the previous inspection carers were subject to recommendation of the Northampton Panel. The fostering Panel policies and procedures would benefit by inclusion of procedures to deal with disagreements by Panel members. The manager and regional manager confirmed the development of the Panel had improved the process of responding to local needs for carers. The make up of the panel reflected the cultural diversity of the area and valuably incorporated knowledge of the area resources. There are clearly identified requirements for ensuring Panel members are suitable and the relevant checks are in place. Medical expertise is available for guidance if required and panel membership includes health, education. The independent membership of a foster carer from another agency and an ex foster child is also in place.

A quality assurance process is built into the roles and tasks of the foster Panel, and the manager has opportunity to provide information about development of the service. Panel members are provided with training prior to becoming full members. The administration for the Panel is well organised and the Panel minutes are full, reflecting the discussion at Panel and the recommendations made.

During the inspection a panel went ahead without being appropriately chaired. On reflection the service agrees it should have been cancelled and would do so in future.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
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This service is not specifically provided.

## Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.

### Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
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This service is not provided.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(Where applicable)**

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**D.1 Registered Person or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.**

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 18/08/04 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

**Action taken by the CSCI in response to the provider's comments:**

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES

**Note:**

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

**D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.**

**Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:**

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Public reports**

It should be noted that all CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI offices.



**D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT**

**Registered Person's or responsible Local Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.**

**D.3.1 I \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.**

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Or**

**D.3.2 I \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:**

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

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