



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Adolescent and Childrens Trust

The Courtyard

303 Hither Green Lane

London

SE13 6TJ

13th-15th, 18th and 28th October 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

Adolescent and Children`s Trust, The

Tel No

020 8695 8111

Address

The Courtyard, 303 Hither Green Lane, London, SE13
6TJ

Fax No

020 8697 8828

Email Address

enquiries@tactfostercare.org.uk

Registered Number of IFA

G020000385

Name of Registered Provider

The Adolescent and Children`s Trust

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Ms Mary Elizabeth Griffith-Jones

Date of first registration

26th March 2003

Date of latest registration certificate

26th March 2003

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

06.10.03

Date of Inspection Visit		13th October 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Sue Nott	105781
Name of Inspector	2	Rossella Volpi	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) 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.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection			

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Inspection visits

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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)

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

Part D: Provider's Response

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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 Adolescent and Children's Trust, The. 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 Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT) is an independent fostering agency. It is a Limited Company with charitable status. TACT is managed by a senior management team, which reports to a Board of Trustees. The board is led by the chief executive, *who is the designated decision maker for the agency.*

The agency's main aim is to recruit, approve and support foster carers for looked after children needing substitute family care. At the time of inspection, it had six branches nationwide. The Hither Green office deals with the central administration of the organisation, and is the premises for the London (South East) branch of the operation. TACT also has regional branches in Wales, Liverpool, Bristol, Birmingham and the East Midlands. The North London office closed in December 2003, and joined with the south London branch. At the time of inspection, the South London branch had 63 placements provided by 58 carers. It was also in negotiations to merge with two other fostering agencies, one based in East London, and one in Kent.

TACT aims to provide planned and emergency placements for children and young people looked after by local authorities, permanent foster placements, outreach support services for carers and children and young people using the service, and a supervised contact service. TACT endeavours to ensure that everybody who comes into contact with the fostered child or young person promotes their welfare and safeguards their interests. It aims to work closely with the child or young person's family and the placing authorities.

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.)

The agency had taken action on all of the requirements and recommendations from the last inspection. It was found, during this inspection, that the National Minimum Standards had all been met, except for one, which was partially met and that four standards were exceeded. It was a positive inspection, and inspectors confirmed that the organisation continued to be well managed, and that the quality of foster care provided was, on the whole, of a very good standard.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was met. The agency has reviewed its Statement of Purpose in line with regulations.

The children's guide was informative and user friendly.

The agency should ensure that the children's guide includes up to date title of the commission.

Policies and procedures had been updated, and were impressive.

Fitness to Provide or manage a fostering service (Standards 2-3)

These standards were met. The managers were all appropriately qualified and had relevant professional child care experience to manage the fostering service. They demonstrated good leadership and lines of accountability were clear. The organisation had a detailed selection and recruitment system.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

Both standards were met. There was evidence of clear and commendable procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering agency through the panel, and management information systems to ensure quality performance. The fostering service was managed effectively and efficiently.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

These standards were all met. The fostering agency was, on the whole, very thorough in its approval procedures, ensuring carers who provided safe, healthy and nurturing environments for the foster children and young people. It was constantly reviewing its policy around recruitment, in order to widen its carer base, and target publicity to ensure that families would be recruited that would best meet the needs of the range of children requiring substitute families.

There was an emphasis on valuing and promoting equality, and efforts were being made to reflect this in its service. TACT recognised the importance of the matching process for the foster child and carer. Although, this process has at times been impaired by the difficulties in obtaining all the necessary relevant information, and documentation about a child or young person from the placing authority, this practice has improved through the agency's consistent message to the referring local authorities on their requirements before agreeing placements.

TACT aimed to protect each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation through appropriate checks and providing appropriate training to carers of looked after children on safe caring.

The inspectors have commended the agency this year for their work to improve and promote the educational achievements of the children and young people placed, and in their efforts to consult and listen to these young people.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers

(Standards 15-23)

Seven standards were met; one was exceeded and one was partially met. Overall there were good recruitment and selection procedures to ensure the employment of appropriately qualified and experienced staff. However, new panel member files did not have all the information required.

Staff were supported by their managers, and generally reported that communication had improved, and this needed to continue.

Support to carers was particularly good, and carers were without exception extremely

positive about the service they and the children placed with them received from the agency.

Records (Standards 24-25)

These standards were met. Efforts had been made to ensure sufficient background information on the children and young people from local authorities on some files, and this should continue. Records seen and the quality of recording was generally satisfactory, but file audits should now ensure all records are signed and dated. Files were secured and stored appropriately.

Fitness of premises (Standard 26)

These standards were met. The offices were appropriately laid out for the space available. There was a satisfactory level of security provided. However, the first floor of the building was not accessible to service users and staff who are wheel chair users. It was fully insured.

Financial requirements (Standard 27-29)

These standards were met. There was evidence of clear financial systems for the control and supervision of the agency's financial affairs.

Fostering panel (Standard 30)

This standard was met. The panel was properly constituted with an independent chair. Meetings were held regularly. Panel members received papers sufficiently in advance. Training for the panel was planned, and prospective carers were encouraged to attend panel. The panel was effective and thorough in its discussions.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

Not applicable to this service.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

Not applicable to this service.

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:

NA

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

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	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector _____
Second Inspector _____
Locality Manager _____
Date _____

Signature _____
Signature _____
Signature _____

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	FSR.2002.20	FS15	<p>The provider must ensure that all statutory checks to assess suitability are carried out on members of the fostering panel.</p> <p>To this end existing files must be reviewed and any gaps in the recruitment process rectified.</p>	31.05.05

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	FS1	The agency should ensure that the children's guide includes the up to title of the commission.
2	FS6	More emphasis should be given to writing clear descriptions of the rooms and space provided in new assessments of carers.

3	FS6	There should be a clear date for action to be achieved by on the health and safety form completed during the assessment process.
4	FS9	The agency should ensure that all relevant information from statutory checks obtained is shared with panel.
5		Managers should ensure that sessional staff carrying out assessments have the same level of consistent supervision as permanent staff.
6		A consistent approach should be pursued in ensuring that all carers attend training identified in their annual reviews.
7		The agency should ensure that they continue to provide good support to carers in North London, who are geographically scattered, and where there is no longer an office base.
8		The agency should ensure that all file notes and reports are signed and dated, and that recording should clearly distinguish between fact and supposition.
9		Any decision to terminate an assessment should be put in writing to the prospective carer.

* 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	9
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• 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	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	13/10/04
Time of Inspection	10.00AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	50

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?

3

TACT had recently reviewed its Statement of Purpose. It covers all the areas required, and provides a clear picture of the services provided. It provides information relevant to the individual branch, gives details of staff employed regionally, and up to date statistics relating to the numbers of approved carers, children placed and complaints made.

The agency has a well laid out and informative children's guide, which contains all the necessary details. It is user friendly, and gives space to be tailored to meet the varied needs of individual children. It has been issued to all carers and children. It is planned to continue to develop this guide, and explore printing it in formats to make it inclusive for all children placed. The agency should ensure that the children's guide includes the up to date title of the commission.

Policies, procedures and written guidance are available for staff and carers. These are up to date, and accurately reflected the Statement of Purpose. The policies and procedures had been linked directly to the National Minimum Standards, resulting in very comprehensive and detailed documents. They had also been standardised across the different branches, and provided good quality assurance tools for the organisation.

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 competence of senior management staff was evidenced during interviews, discussions with staff, and examination of personnel files, written systems and documentation. The nominated manager is the Regional Manager. She is suitably qualified and experienced to manage the fostering service. She has professional qualifications in social work, and had worked in the fostering and adoption field for twenty-five years. She has previous experience of management, and has completed a Diploma in Management Studies. The Regional Manager continued to demonstrate a commitment to developing a quality service to meet the needs of a diverse group of children. There was effective leadership of staff in operating the service, and evidence of a consistent management approach amongst the management team. There was a strong team building approach throughout the agency.

The Responsible Individual had been employed in the social care field for twenty-eight years. The Head of Social Work holds a relevant social work qualification. Since 1987, she has held a variety of middle and senior managerial positions in childcare services. In 2002, she took up her post with TACT as Corporate Service Manager. With the recent reorganisation of the management structure, she has become Head of Social Work in the organisation.

All managers are encouraged to develop their skills, and are given training and support to manage the fostering service in an efficient and effective manner. The two area managers appointed to posts under the new structure were studying for Diplomas in Management Studies.

It was evident from examination of the personnel files, discussion with staff and direct observation made by the inspector, that all the members of staff, employed within the fostering team, held appropriate qualifications relevant to their positions. There was relevant managerial, childcare and fostering experience within the staff group. Staff advised the inspector that their managers supported them in continuing their professional development.

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**

There was evidence that the senior management team were suitable people to run a childcare service, and this was demonstrated by examination of personnel files. The agency has a clear, detailed recruitment and selection policy, designed to ensure that those involved in the running and management of the fostering service are suitable individuals to carry out the necessary tasks. There was evidence that recruitment procedures included the making of telephone enquiries to follow up written references, and that this was being carried out in the appointment of new staff. Records were kept appropriately, and personnel files examined showed up to date CRB checks, copies of qualifications achieved, CV's, copies of identification documents and photographs of staff.

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?

4

Although there had been structural changes to the management team, staff members were well established, and provided consistency and continuity to the staff group. From discussion with managers, staff and carers, and on examination of procedures, it was evident that managers and staff were clear of their new roles and lines of accountability. Managers confirmed that a period of consolidation was needed for all the changes to bed down, but work had been done on improving lines of communication between management and workers, and the changes in management roles had been handled well.

From the inspector's examination of a sample of personnel files, all contained relevant job descriptions.

The agency had completed a study of areas affecting the children in its care in a document entitled "Child Care Performance Indicators for 2003-2004". This covered numbers of placement moves, education, health, and after school activities, and was a commendable method of monitoring where improvements in its service could be targeted.

The Chief Executive was also involved in a number of national working parties regarding services to look after children, and kept staff informed and up to date on developments in good child care practice.

All carers files seen, contained the foster carers agreement form, which outlined the tasks and responsibilities of a carer's role.

A system of auditing foster carers files was in operation. From the sample of files seen by the inspector, there was evidence confirming this system was operational.

The financial systems were well organised with a reviewing procedure to ensure systems are kept up-to-date. The Head of Social Work was provided with monthly financial management reports. An unannounced annual financial audit was carried out by head office, in addition to regular financial auditing by an independent accountancy firm.

The agency provides information regarding the charges for each of its fostering services, which were clear and detailed, and which were available to purchasers of the services.

Staff confirmed that a "conflicts of interests" statement was given to all staff.

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

8

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.

1

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. Serious complaint about a foster parent. Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	<table border="1"> <tr><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td></tr> </table>	0	5	3
0				
5				
3				
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
<p>The management team members were well established, although roles had changed. They had taken action on all the requirements from the last inspection.</p> <p>There were clear job descriptions for the regional manager and the two area managers that outlined their new duties and responsibilities. Discussion with managers, as well as with staff, confirmed that managerial responsibility, levels of delegation, and lines of accountability were well defined. There were clear arrangements to identify who would deputise in the absence of the manager of the service, and staff spoken to were aware of this arrangement.</p> <p>The merger with two other fostering agencies was being handled well, with sensible timescales and well thought out planning through a complicated process.</p> <p>From interviews with managers and staff, examination of a variety of documentation, as well as the financial and management information systems in place, the inspectors were of the opinion that the TACT fostering service continued to be managed effectively and efficiently.</p>		

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
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There was evidence from carers visited, and children's and placing officer questionnaires, and examination of files that accommodation provided was suitable, and that carers provided safe and healthy environments. However, it is recommended that more emphasis is given to writing clear descriptions of the rooms and space provided in new assessments.

A comprehensive health and safety form was completed during the assessment process, and this was followed up at panel consideration. However, there should be a clear date for action on this form.

Training was provided on promoting and safeguarding the welfare of the child during the Skills to Foster course. There were also additional courses on Health and Safety issues, child protection and safe caring in the training programme.

Staff completed a newly developed individualised risk assessment form when a child was referred. This needed to be signed off by a manager before a placement could go ahead.

There was evidence that documentation relating to the foster carer's vehicles and insurance was seen and checked by the supervising social worker. Carers were told of their responsibility to ensure that the children travelling in their cars wore seat belts.

In the foster carer agreement, the agency requests that the foster carer notifies their household insurance company of their fostering activity, and evidence was seen of insurers' written confirmation of this on carers' files.

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?	3
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Managers saw diversity and equality issues, as integral to the training and recruitment of an ethnically and culturally diverse group of carers and staff. TACT has an equal opportunities policy, which promotes diversity and anti – discriminatory practice. From discussion with the managers of the service and staff, there was evidence of a commitment to ensure that children placed with TACT carers are provided with a service that values diversity.

Interpreters were used for children placed where English was not their first language, and attempts had been made to establish links with relevant cultural centres and churches.

Information about community activities was sought for children and carers, and financial support was provided, where appropriate, to allow children to pursue interests and talents.

The provision of toys and posters in the crèche reflected a multiracial environment, and efforts were made to ensure that the food provided on training courses reflected the culture of those attending.

The inspectors were informed that the agency was making efforts to recruit carers from white European, and Asian communities, as referrals from local authorities had shown a demand for more placements in these communities.

There had been joint training with staff and panel members around diversity issues.

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?

3

There was evidence on files examined that the agency endeavoured to obtain as much information as possible, in respect of the child or young person at the point of referral. A detailed and comprehensive referral form was completed. The agency requested that the referring local authority provided a care plan, all relevant “looked after children” documentation, and any other records concerning the child considered necessary to enable a foster carer to care for a child. Although TACT does not provide out of hours placements, it does provide emergency placements during office hours, and in these situations, information can be limited in the early stages. Efforts were made to pursue all the necessary documentation on children being placed as soon as possible. It was recognised that this information is vital to carers. The agency had improved their practice in this area since the last inspection, but need to be vigilant that this is maintained.

In matching a child to foster carers, there was also evidence of a verbal sharing of information between the relevant professionals, and potential carers. Consideration was also given to the child’s racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs, but there was recognition that these could not always be met. The inspectors were informed that where carers are unable to reflect some of these needs, additional training and support was given. Any additional training and support that is provided to carers would be identified in the written foster placement agreement.

With the exception of emergency placements, the agency ensured there was a period of introduction between child and carer. The timing of the child or young person’s placement with the carer was carefully considered, and would only take place, when all concerned were happy to proceed.

During the inspection, a sample of the agency’s carers’ and children’s files were examined, and interviews took place with those carers and children. There was evidence that the agency tried to appropriately match the children to the carers.

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
<p>There was evidence of suitable policies and procedures being carried out appropriately. The panel observed was thorough in its discussion of approvals and reviews of carers. The work presented was of a good standard, and checks were carefully monitored. However, information regarding a CRB check for one family member did not go to panel. The agency should ensure that all relevant information is shared with panel.</p> <p>File reading showed regular contact and visits from supervising social workers, and an ongoing programme of training provided to carers, including courses on child protection, sexual abuse, and safe caring. Children spoken to knew how to make complaints, and were confident in their ability to do so.</p> <p>The agency had fully cooperated with the child protection investigations carried out during the year, and had notified CSCI as required. The organisation had systems for recording allegations of abuse, and complaints, and collated and evaluated information, which might identify any changes needed in practice, or training.</p> <p>All carers, adult household members, and frequent visitors had enhanced CRB checks on the files examined.</p> <p>It was made clear in the foster carer agreement that corporal punishment was not acceptable.</p> <p>The agency had a policy on bullying, and one on children missing from home.</p> <p>Tact had devised a statement of intent, indicating that the service will not place a child, without receiving all the appropriate information from the placement authority, except in emergency situations, where seven days is given.</p>		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%

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
<p>The inspector was advised that maintaining family contact is integral to the service provided by TACT. This was confirmed by the carers and children visited by the inspectors. Returned questionnaires from placing officers also gave positive feedback on this issue. Sessions on the management and promotion of contact were provided in the carers training programme. There was evidence on files that contact was addressed and recorded during the care planning process, including the development of the care plan at "looked after children" reviews, during the matching process, and at foster panels. Efforts were made to ascertain the views and wishes of the child or young person in relation to contact with their family.</p>		

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?**

4

There was evidence of a commitment to listen to children and encourage their involvement in decisions affecting their lives. The agency had sent out a questionnaire to all children placed over ten years old earlier in the year to seek young people's views on the service provided. The agency had held a Young People's Consultation Group since the last inspection, and further groups were to be convened by an independent provider. It was hoped that the development of children's groups would result in the children or young people becoming involved in reviewing the children's guide in the future.

Children's reviews also facilitated the chance to discuss their daily life and future.

Children's views were sought by supervising social workers, and the aim was to see each child alone, on every third visit to carers. The children's comments are recorded and incorporated in the carers' annual reviews. The importance of this is addressed in carers' training.

TACT had a complaints policy and procedures that outlined the process and timescales, and all carers, children and young people had been provided with a copy of the relevant leaflet. The carers and young person seen during this inspection clearly understood the complaints system.

The complaints leaflet included information that a complainant can contact the Commission for Social Care Inspection and gives the relevant contact details on an additional sheet.

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?**

3

There was evidence that the physical health and wellbeing of the children and young people placed was given priority. From discussion with staff, carers and children, and examination of files all children were registered with a G.P.

The foster carers training programme included topics covering a variety of health, hygiene and disability issues. Carers were expected to make sure that the child or young person had regular dental and optician check ups, access to a balanced diet, and opportunities for leisure activities. The agency also supported carers in advocating for resources to access any health services the children in their care required.

Foster carers were expected to attend the child or young person's LAC review to provide information regarding the child or young person's health needs, and to contribute to the planning and reviewing process.

There was evidence that staff tried to obtain full health information regarding a child from the start of the placement to give to carers.

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?**

4

The agency is committed to achieving high educational standards for the children in placement, and was in the process of developing their practice in this area. A freelance education consultant was available to offer consultation and support to foster carers, with particular emphasis on school placements and exclusions. He had developed the agency's website to include a section on education, and was running a training course for carers in October 2004 on "Education Rights, Roles and Responsibilities".

The issue of education was covered in supervising social workers visits, and carers and workers will also attend PEP meetings. At the time of inspection, there were no children placed who were not receiving regular education.

It is an expectation, which is reinforced in the foster carer and placement agreement, as well as in the foster care standards and practice guidelines, that foster carers should support their foster child or young person educationally, and contribute to the assessment of the children's educational needs and progress in the planning and review process, and there was evidence from files seen and carers and children seen that they were doing this.

The agency also supports children's educational needs through the foster carers' allowances.

The agency had included education in its study of Child Care Performance Indicators, which represented 68% of the young people placed within TACT. Although there was evidence of much good practice, managers were looking at where they could make improvements to assist the educational achievement of all LAC placed with their carers.

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

The carer's annual review looks at preparation for independence as part of the competencies of caring. A Guide to Young people Leaving Care had been developed, and included basic practical information, on subjects like budgeting, housing, health, and benefits. A training day was provided in February 2004 for carers on helping young people prepare for independence. Carers seen who had teenagers placed were aware of the expectations on them, and understood that they need to provide children with age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning independence skills. The young people spoken to felt they were consulted, and involved in the decision making 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?

2

Relevant checks and systems were in place to ensure that staff and carers employed are suitable people to work with children. TACT has a clearly written recruitment and selection procedures for the appointment of staff, which follows good practice in safeguarding children and young people.

From an examination of a sample of staff files, there was evidence that all individuals working for the agency are interviewed as part of the selection process, and have references checked to assess suitability before taking on responsibilities. The service has records of checks and references that have been obtained, and their outcomes. TACT has a system in place to ensure all staff employed will be CRB checked every three years.

However, there were some gaps on new panel members' files, and these must be rectified. From all other files inspected, together with interviews with staff, there was evidence that the qualifications experience, knowledge and skills of staff employed to work within the fostering service, met the National Minimum Standards.

Total number of staff of the agency:

13

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

4

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**

There was clear management structure with clear lines of accountability within the agency. The managers and staff interviewed by the inspector had a good understanding of the levels of delegation and responsibility, and in the absence of the manager were fully aware of who deputised in the service. Supervision was provided to staff monthly, and on a more informal basis, as and when the need arose. A standard format for recording supervision meetings was operating, and staff confirmed sessions were regular and structured. Team meetings took place regularly, and staff also confirmed that communication by management with the staff group had improved. There were also regular newsletters to staff and carers.

Staff had clearly defined job descriptions, and had a clear understanding of the role of the children's social worker. They understood the importance of working effectively together, to ensure that the child's welfare and best interests were maintained.

The agency has an annual appraisal system for members of staff. During examination of the staff records, it was confirmed that appraisals had taken place at appropriate intervals and were recorded. Staff indicated that there were training opportunities open to them to ensure their professional development.

The management and supervision systems in place determined staff workloads, and helped to ensure that work was prioritised, monitored and tasks delegated appropriately. The agency had appropriate administrative procedures to deal with enquiries from prospective foster carers. There was evidence that enquiries were dealt with promptly.

There were systems in place to ensure assessments, approvals and reviews of carers were managed and implemented effectively. This was evidenced through examination of the administrative systems, carers' files, and staff interviews.

Carers seen by the inspector, and questionnaires returned confirmed the range of training provided through the foster carers' training programme. A portfolio was available for carer's to use to maintain evidence of the training undertaken in preparation for carers' reviews and NVQ courses.

All staff were provided with a copy of a new and comprehensive staff handbook, which set out the terms and conditions of employment, and the agency's staffing procedures including a disciplinary process, and performance review system.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

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.

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

The organisation was monitoring the needs and shortfalls in its range and quality of carers. Most enquiries from prospective carers had come from personal recommendation, but there was some local advertising in the press, and a recent advertisement in the Voice had received a very good response. Recent carers approved included a single man, and carers from the Greek Cypriot and Asian communities, and was evidence that the agency was widening its range of carers to meet the diversity of the referrals received.

The staff group was stable, and there was more opportunity to concentrate on targeting particular communities. Carers seen and questionnaires received, confirmed staff gave an efficient and welcoming response to their initial enquiries.

The fostering service has a clear assessment process for carers, which defines the fostering task, the qualities, and competencies required from prospective applicants. The stages, content and timescales of the selection process, are made clear and the carers interviewed, indicated that they had understood what was entailed in the selection process.

The inspectors examined a number of assessments of foster carers. The completed competency based assessment reports were detailed and indicated that the assessment process covers all the issues outlined in the National Minimum Standards. Managers should, however, ensure that sessional staff carrying out assessments have the same level of consistent supervision as permanent staff, as there was some evidence that this was not happening.

There was evidence that the experience, skills and qualifications of the staff, employed to work within the fostering service, meets the National Minimum Standards.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

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

Relevant policies and interviews with staff indicated that this standard was met. TACT had clear, comprehensive and sound employment practices in relation to both staff and carers. The service also had a satisfactory health and safety policy for carers, children and staff, as well as a whistle blowing policy. A new employee handbook had recently been issued.

The agency has management systems in place in respect of carer supervision, appraisal and support. These were evidenced through examination of carers' files.

There is an "out of hours" support service available for carers provided by staff and management, and carers spoken to valued access to this service.

TACT has public liability and professional indemnity insurance, which covers all staff and carers.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>A training programme was provided for staff. that provided opportunities to ensure that they were kept up to date with professional and legal developments. One member of staff had the Child Care Award and another had started the course. The inspectors were informed that TACT places value on realising individuals' potential.</p> <p>TACT has an induction programme for new staff, which takes place within an agreed timescale. The manager confirmed that new staff had undertaken this, and examination of staff files, and interviews with staff confirmed this.</p> <p>Training needs are identified via the supervisory and appraisal systems, and this links with the agency's training and development plan. Currently, both staff and carers are able to undertake a variety of in house and external training. Joint training between staff and carers also takes place.</p> <p>The inspectors were informed that both the regional manager had just completed the Diploma in Management Studies, and one of the area manager's aimed to complete this qualification during 2005.</p> <p>The agency was also encouraging carers to undertake the NVQ, level 3, and ten carers had either completed or almost completed the programme in the last year. However, there had been some problems around the organisation of the NVQ programme this year, and the outsourcing of this was being kept under review to ensure good quality training. On obtaining this qualification, foster carers receive an additional financial payment.</p> <p>From examination of the training programme provided to staff and carers, it was evident that carers and staff were given the opportunity to be kept informed of changes and developments in practice and guidance, and this was reflected in the policies of the fostering agency.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Evidence from interviews with staff and management confirmed that regular planned supervision sessions took place. A new appraisal system was being implemented. Staff had contracts of employment, and clearly defined job descriptions. A sample of staff contracts and job descriptions were examined, and contained the appropriate information.</p> <p>All staff interviewed reported that they felt supported in their roles. The arrangements for supervision, team meetings and the annual appraisal of staff were discussed in standard 16.</p>		

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?****4**

There was a clear strategy for working with, and supporting carers. This included:
 Access to a "24 hour" telephone support line, provided by staff known to the carer;
 Telephone contact from supervising social workers at least once a week, and visits to carers at least every three weeks.
 Carers were supported in their attendance at placement agreement meetings, LAC reviews, health and educational meetings, and any other meetings, as required.
 A comprehensive training programme.
 Local carer support groups met regularly, and a support group specifically for carers with children with challenging behaviour had been introduced.
 Ongoing support groups for carers' children.
 Outreach support services were provided.
 Weekend and holiday respite was provided to carers where appropriate.
 Social events were held on an annual basis, and a quarterly newsletter was provided to all carers.
 A subscription fee for carers was paid to Fostering Network by TACT.
 Allowances were paid promptly, and reviewed on an annual basis.
 TACT had clear arrangements for foster carers' annual reviews.
 Interviews with staff and carers, and carers' questionnaires confirmed these supports were operating, and working well. Comments included "an excellent organisation, who are always looking at ways of improving their service", and "there is always someone on hand when you need them".
 The range of support provided, particularly the responsive of the agency to specific needs, for example, the support group for carers with children with challenging behaviour, the strong commitment to involving carers and children in developing services, and the very positive feedback from carers provide evidence of the agency exceeding the National Minimum Standards.

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**

All carers were allocated a supervising social worker, and regular visiting was confirmed by file reading and carers interviewed.
 The format of supervisory visits and unannounced visits had recently been revised to ensure a more consistent and clear approach by staff.
 The agency provided a variety of support systems, and carers seen confirmed that they have received good support from the agency, and their individual workers.
 However, the agency should ensure that they continue to provide good support to carers in North London, who are geographically scattered, and where there is no longer an office base.
 The agency provided information regarding the complaints' procedure to carers, and those carers interviewed were aware of how to make a complaint. The agency kept a record of complaints.
 There was evidence from an examination of the child protection policy and procedures, the training programme, and interviews with staff and carers, that all personnel involved were aware of their role and responsibilities in relation to investigations into allegations of abuse.
 The agency kept a record of any allegations of abuse, and had a clear policy outlining the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the foster carer register.

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?****3**

There was evidence that there was a comprehensive programme for the training and development of carers. This included sessions on child protection, contact issues, life story work, safe caring, and sexual abuse. Financial remuneration is provided for carers attending training, and obtaining an NVQ. Experienced carers take part in running training at the pre approval stage, enabling new carers to benefit from their experience and knowledge. The agency provides opportunities for carers to undertake joint training with TACT social workers.

The training on Valuing Difference covered equal opportunities and anti discriminatory practice. Training sessions were planned to give carers the chance to share their own experiences, as well as providing a theoretical learning base.

The agency tried to ensure that training took place at times convenient for the carers. A crèche was provided on the premises for carers who had to make childcare arrangements to attend training.

The agency provided all carers with "safe caring" training. It also provided a support group for the children of carers. A training session aimed specifically for male carers was planned for January 2005.

Each carer's annual review included an appraisal of the carers' training and development needs.

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

Tact had appropriate policies on recording, and access to records. The inspector examined carers and children's files. The files were structured according to the new format for files being piloted, following working party recommendations to standardise the keeping of files across all branches. Training was being provided to social workers in relation to the new structure. A training programme was also being devised for foster carers on recording. Most children's files seen were up-to-date, and where they did not contain all the necessary information from the placing authorities, there was evidence that workers had requested this information from the placing authority, and had followed up these requests, when there was a lack of response. The manager informed the inspector that the system of auditing files three monthly was now in place, and examination of files showed that internal auditing of files had taken place. There were written plans of action on these files to be followed to improve information within set timescales.

Inspectors noted that there was a need to ensure that all file notes and reports are signed and dated. As the manager had already started to take action to remedy this through the file audit system and supervision, this is not imposed as a requirement at this stage, but a recommendation is made to maintain this monitoring to ensure practice continues to improve. Also recording should clearly distinguish between fact and supposition, and any decision to terminate an assessment should be put in writing.

If a child/young person leaves their foster placement, a copy of all relevant records relating to the child would be forwarded to the responsible authority.

Carers record information relating to their foster child or young person in a diary. Interviews with carers confirmed they were aware of the need to ensure that all information relating to the child or young person is treated confidentially and stored in a secure manner.

The administrative team were said by managers to provide excellent support and back up.

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?	3
<p>The administrative records inspected provided a full and detailed record of information required to run the service. They were all securely kept.</p> <p>Separate records are kept for staff, carers, children, complaints and allegations. The organisation has a clearly written policy as to the confidential nature of the records, which are kept securely.</p> <p>Tact has an "Access to Records" Policy, which provides guidance to staff and carers, as well as the recording requirements to meet the Data Protection Act. Service users are able to see their records in compliance with legal safeguards. In the files examined, the records were legible and met the required standards. The agency's computerised system is networked to the branches. The database is now well established.</p> <p>The manual system readily ensures that records can be forwarded, if a child moves to another placement, ceases to be looked after, or if a reference request is made for a member of staff or a carer.</p> <p>The system for keeping records about allegations and complaints was appropriate. All information received in respect of allegations and complaints was handled in a confidential manner and was held securely.</p>			
Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			63
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			X
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			8
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £		304.50	Maximum £ 462.00

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 are suitable for the agency's purposes, including facilities for training, panel and support groups. The building is, however, not well equipped to meet the needs of disabled children, carers or staff, as there is no lift in the two storey building. The premises are of a good standard, with adequate space, lighting, ventilation and office furniture. With the restructuring of the London offices, the accommodation had been reorganised, and managers had ensured that staff had suitable space and facilities. There were efficient and robust administrative systems, IT and communication systems. Safeguards are in place in relation to the security of these systems. The IT system has been developed to facilitate better networking between the regional offices. The premises have lockable filing cabinets to secure confidential record keeping, and an appropriate security system in place to prevent illegal access to the building. TACT has adequate Premises and Contents Insurance to cover any loss of contents, or damage to the building.

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

From interviews with managers, and examination of the accounts, there was detailed evidence that the agency was financially viable. The yearly accounts were independently audited. Up to date accounts, and the agency's business plan for 2004-2006 were provided to the inspectors. These were thorough and detailed documents.

In the event of a financial crisis emerging to jeopardise the service, TACT had relevant procedures to inform placing authorities to ensure the welfare of the children in placement. Tact is a voluntary agency with charitable status, and only the regulations and guidelines in relation to the Income Tax and National Insurance of their employees are applicable.

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

There was evidence from an examination of documentation and interviews with the managers of clear financial systems for the control and supervision of the agency's financial affairs, and that these were properly operated and maintained. There was a written set of principles and standards governing the financial management.

The registered provider receives information on the financial position of the agency on a monthly basis. Posts had been recently temporarily frozen as a result of a small decrease in placement numbers over the organisation. Release of these posts was now being considered, and was evidence of prudent financial management.

A detailed financial statement is, also examined by the senior management team, and the trustees on an annual basis. The financial accounts are audited, on an annual basis, by an independent firm of registered accountants.

The Business manager had led a session for carers on the tax implications of being a carer, and he and the Chief Executive were part of a working party organised by BAAF on the "True Cost of Fostering".

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

From interviews with carers and observation of the financial system, and the policies of the organisation, it was concluded that the standard was met.

Tact has a clear policy on carers' allowances and expenses, which is reviewed on an annual basis. The general view from carers seen and returned questionnaires was that fortnightly allowances continue to be paid promptly and on time, and that it was an efficient payment system.

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?

3

From observation of the panel, and interview of the chair, it was concluded that the panel was effective and thorough. Its composition was consistent with regulations. The chair was independent of the agency, with relevant background and expertise at a senior level in fostering and adoption services. The vice-chair was the regional manager. The chief executive remained the agency decision maker. His workload had increased with the growth of the organisation, and needs to be kept under review. The panel included Independent members who had themselves been looked after as children. Panel members with health and education background were being sought.

The agency legal advisor was also a full member of the panel, and provided clear and informative advice. The medical adviser does not attend panel on a regular basis, but would be available for consultation as needed.

The panel is held monthly, and where necessary will extend from half day to a full day to meet demand. Papers are sent out a week in advance.

The administration of panel was dealt with by the administrative service, and there was a delegated minute taker. The panel minutes were seen first by the legal adviser, then the chair, and finally to the decision maker. Efforts were made to ensure the recommendations of the panel were considered by the decision maker, within appropriate timescales.

There was positive feedback from staff and carers on their experience of attending panel. A joint panel and staff training session was planned for November 2004 on "Working Together".

The panel constitution has been revised, and clarified the process followed when all members of the panel are not in agreement.

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?
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This service is not usually provided by the agency, although it does provide weekend and respite care for existing carers. It is planned to increase this provision.	9
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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?	9
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This standard is not applicable.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

D.1 Registered Person's 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 <enter date(s) of inspection here> 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"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
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"/>

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"/>
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>
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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