



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

The Adolescent and Children`s Trust

**Century Buildings
18 Tower Street
Brunswick Business Park
Liverpool
L3 4BJ**

Lead Inspector
Mrs Lynn Paterson

Announced Inspection
30th October 2006 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	The Adolescent and Children`s Trust
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Telephone number	0151 707 9968
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Email address	north.west@tactfostercare.org.uk
Provider Web address	www.tactfostercare.org.uk
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	The Adolescent and Children`s Trust
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mrs Janice Rutherford
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

1. The Manager completes, by 2005, a qualification at NVQ Level 4 in management or another qualification which matches the competencies required by NVQ Level 4. This condition has now been met.

Date of last inspection 2nd February 2006.

Brief Description of the Service:

The Adolescent and Children's Trust, known as TACT, is an independent fostering agency. It is a limited company with a charitable status managed by a senior management team based in London, which reports to a Board Of Trustees. Its fostering services are based in London, the South East, South West, East Midlands, West Midlands, North West, and Wales.

Tact's main objective is to recruit, approve and support foster carers for children needing a substitute family. It aims to provide planned and emergency placements for children looked after by local authorities, permanent foster placements and an outreach support for children using the service.

TACT North West is based in Liverpool and provides fostering services for children from birth up to the age of 17. At the time of the inspection the service was caring for 23 children between the ages of 1 and 14. It had eighteen sets of approved foster carers.

More information about TACT may be found at www.tactfostercare.org.uk.

SUMMARY

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

The inspection of TACT Fostering Service commenced on 30th October 2006 and was carried out over a five -day period. Prior to the inspection discussions had been held with the manager and a timetable had been arranged as to how the visit would be organised.

The first day was spent meeting with the team manager and staff and reading files. The following days involved discussions with agency staff, supervising social workers attending a fostering panel and visits to foster carers and young people.

Six foster carers and young people looked after files were examined in detail. Agency staff files records were verified, 8 panel files were looked at and panel records viewed.

Seven carers had been contacted by telephone for discussion about their perception of the agency and letters had been sent to all foster carers and young people in placement to gain insight into how they viewed the level of support provided to them from the agency.

Pre inspection questionnaires were also sent to placing social workers, which they completed and returned before the inspection commenced.

Policies and procedures were also looked at during the site visit and a tour of the premises was undertaken.

Fieldwork also included discussions with placing social workers and safeguarding officers.

Over thirty completed questionnaires were returned from foster carer's, social workers and young people.

What the service does well:

Information gained from discussions with foster carers and comments recorded on questionnaires identified that the service was well respected for its management, organisation and support.

Foster carers comments included-:

"TACT provide me with help and support on all aspects of foster care"

"TACT promote professionalism with extensive ongoing training"

"They encourage team building and support by arranging social outings and opportunities for foster carers to meet".

"TACT support the child and the foster carer to minimise disruptions"

Children and young people revealed they feel very much involved in the running of the service and comments from young people included-:

"We are always asked for our views about the service and we get questionnaires to fill in about what we think",

"We have been with our foster carers for a long time now and we are asked about how we feel about TACT and if things could be made better. We don't think they could though"

"Our foster carers social worker asks us questions and supports us too".

"TACT listen to us and ask us questionnaires to make sure we know what they do".

The staff of the agency are qualified and experienced to carry out their respective roles and present as totally committed to the provision of positive outcomes for young people looked after. Foster carers comments included-:

"Staff are caring and professional in their approach and support children and carers equally".

Foster carers said they were provided with extensive and on-going training to ensure carers have the level of expertise to look after the assessed needs of the children/young people placed in their homes. Comments included-:

"TACT take a holistic approach to the care of looked after children and this is reflected in the training and support we receive",

"TACT train and support us to do our job the very best we can".

Records show that foster carers are actively encouraged to support the educational achievement of children/young people and foster carers comments included-:

"TACT encourages carers to be supportive to children placed by involvement in attending P.E.P meetings at school, obtaining reports and ensuring homework is completed. The use of library/ books/ internet for reference, and for foster carers to ensure 100% attendance (where possible) at school".

Documentation examined shows the service have a clear system in place for monitoring fostering activity which was seen to impact most positively upon placement stability and consistency of agency staff and foster carers.

All staff were seen to work well as a team and utilised their many skills collectively to the benefit of carers and children. Comments from foster carers included-:

"It does not matter who you speak with in the agency, they are all helpful and know what they are doing",

"If you ring the office whoever answers can give clear information",

"We get full support from all the staff, they all know their jobs".

Discussions with local authorities who use TACT services identified that the agency is seen to provide good quality placements for children looked after.

What has improved since the last inspection?

As a result of a children's consultation day the service arranged a residential weekend for foster carers and children young people. The venue activity and other arrangements were carried out in full consultation with the children young people and comments from foster carers and children/young people were most positive about the overall benefits of the day.

The agency have continued to build upon their equality and diversity policies and procedures and have arranged more carer support groups locally to reflect differing needs.

Examination of children's files show the agency have introduced mediation logs that are now included in the health section of the document. Foster carers said that this was a most useful addition to the file as it enabled them to clearly record all health related issues in a clear and consistent way.

The agency continue to update the foster carers information packs and foster carers said they were provided with updated information on a regular basis. It was noted that carers had recently been provided with Dfes documents for children in public care and young people had received "next steps" packs which focus on them preparing for independence.

Management systems have been updated and the agency has introduced clear systems for recording information to include-: Identity checklist, health and safety update safe care policy.

A child file is now provided, which is held by the foster carer.

Foster panel members have been provided with panel training and a foster member appraisal system has been introduced to enable members to identify strengths, weakness and any extra training needs.

What they could do better:

The agency has an excellent reputation with its foster carers, young people and others who are associated with the service and no shortfalls were identified at this time.

However discussions with the manager and staff revealed that access to quality staff training is limited. Whilst this is not seen to impact unfavourably upon the quality of the service provision it is recommended that staff be provided with development opportunities to assist with their continuous personal development.

In conclusion it was noted the foster carers returned questionnaires contained detailed information about their overall perceptions of the service and comments included-:

"TACT pride themselves on their high standards and I am pleased to say I cannot fault them".

"TACT staff are approachable, understanding, quick acting, available 24/7. I personally give them a glowing reference for their performances all round and cannot fault their service".

"I would recommend any potential new carers to TACT who I know will look after them and their foster children".

A most positive inspection.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The fostering service promotes children's health and development.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers spoken with said they were trained and supported to promote the health of children placed in their homes. Foster carers said all children and young people were registered with a Doctor, Dentist, Optician and any other relevant health care service. Foster carers said they were actively encouraged to escort the children/young people to appointments. Foster carers comments included-:

"Doctor and dentist check ups are a requirement of TACT as soon as the child is placed. Healthy eating is encouraged and regular mealtimes. Exercise and activities are also encouraged for all the family."

"TACT take a holistic approach to the care of looked after children which includes helping them to be healthy and have healthy lifestyles. We as foster carers receive ongoing training and advice to ensure this happens"

Foster carers said they had been provided with a file for each child/young person, which included a medication log. Foster carers said they found this document to be very useful as it enabled them to record all necessary information in a structured and consistent manner.

Young people said they were encouraged to eat healthy meals and were given advice and support to enable them to have awareness of the bad effects drugs and alcohol can have upon health and well-being. Comments included:-

"My foster carer helps me to have a healthy diet and eat lots of fruit and vegetables."

"I had not eaten fruit before I came here but now I eat lots, I love fruit".

"I am encouraged to eat fruit and vegetables and encouraged to be healthy"

"I have been given lots of advice about the harm drugs and alcohol can do to your body".

Agency staff said they provided training and support for foster carers to enable them to promote the health and development of children/ young people.

Staff revealed they monitored all health issues by use of the safe care policy and the child medication logs. Staff said they regularly circulated leaflets and information sheets to foster carers to raise their awareness of health issues and held training events for carers and children/young people on healthy lifestyles.

Staff advised that as the agency expands they intend to organise more training for young people over the age of 11 to cover drug awareness and sexual health.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):

3.6.8.9.15.30.

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The management of the service is excellent and policies and procedures are in place to ensure safe care practices are utilised to protect children placed with foster carers

EVIDENCE:

Records viewed and discussions held identified that the manager of the fostering service has extensive experience of working with children and families and is a well qualified and experienced professional. In all discussions the manager demonstrated knowledge and understanding of protection issues, including safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Information provided from TACT central personnel revealed that police checks are carried out on all staff as required and references are obtained in writing with details being held on file. Comments from foster carers and agency staff included: -

"The management of the agency is excellent, TACT have very high standards in place".

"The team are well managed and the agency has a reputation as a good fostering provider who cares".

Records show that new carers are approved through pre approval training, statutory checks and a competency- based assessment. All prospective foster carers are provided with a final pre approval visit to ensure that the assessment process has addressed all the requirements of form F, and a report is then provided for the fostering panel. Prior to approval foster carers homes are subject to a health and safety assessment to ensure that the premises provides a safe nurturing and healthy environment for the young people to live.

Foster carers revealed they receive announced and unannounced visits from their supervising social workers and foster carers files viewed held records of these visits and details about individual safe care policies and procedures. Comments from foster carers included: -

"Staff are all very good. They value the child and the foster carer".

"Staff are very nice people who know their stuff, they have high standards value the child and ensure all policies and procedures are followed to make sure children and young people are safe and happy in their placement".

Foster carers said they had foster carer agreements that set out the expectation of carers regarding providing and maintaining safe care.

The manager said staff safety and good practice regarding safe care is monitored in supervision and by periodic review of file recording.

All foster carers homes visited, presented as warm, well furnished and were clean hygienic and homely at the time of the visit.

The statement of purpose included TACTS mission statement, which states "To help children of all ages and ethnic groups to grow and develop as unique individuals through the provision of appropriate, creative, child centred services and to attempt to meet new areas of need".

Supervising social workers spoken with advised that in making a decision about matching they obtained as much information as they could about a child, considered any existing children/young people in residence and considered carers skills, competence and experience. The agency records showed that all background information and looked after documentation was requested from the placing local authority prior to placement and as an ongoing process until this had been received.

Foster carers spoken with said they understood the matching process and the issues that impacted upon the placement to include the children and young people maintaining regular contact with birth family. Foster carers revealed they were provided with pre - approval and ongoing training to enable them to fully understand the promotion of diversity and anti-discriminatory practice. Records show the service has a system where injuries / accidents etc., are monitored by the agency manager and staff, to identify any patterns / frequency of concern and carers use of babysitters is monitored. All files are regularly audited by the area manager and annually by the Quality Assurance officer.

The service has a child protection policy and procedures in place plus allegations against foster carers, bullying and whistle blowing policies, all of which were provided in the foster carers handbook.

Risk assessments are completed for matching prior to a placement being made. Training programmes show that child protection training is ongoing for foster carers and agency staff and documentation viewed revealed that safe care policies were in place with respect to each foster carers household.

Written recruitment and selection procedures show the agency follows good practice guidelines in safeguarding children and young people and the manager said staff that held responsibility for the recruitment and selection of staff were trained and knowledgeable in this area. The manager advised that a trained foster carer is involved in the interview process for social work staff.

Documentation showed that all staff had provided the relevant police checks and references and were suitably qualified and experienced to undertake their role.

Comments received from young people either verbally or on returned questionnaires included: -

"My foster carer is lovely s/he carers about me and I feel very much at home here",

"I love it here"

"I always feel well cared for because I always have everything that I need, when I need it".

Comments from placing social workers include: -

" TACT is supportive to the foster carers and placing social workers. The foster home provides a stable environment and consistency of care".

"The young person feels safe and has been provided with long term care that they value".

"I have a good working relationship with this agency they are professional and good to deal with at all times".

Comments from foster carers included: -

"The agency really try hard to make sure the children are appropriately matched",

"They try to give us information about the child prior to placement and if they don't have all the details they try very hard to get them for us",

"TACT staff, take time to get to know the children and work hard at building up trust which encourages children to speak up".

"I realise that information is not always available to TACT. However they try to obtain as much information as possible."

In discussion with supervising social workers it became apparent that some placing authorities do not provide the full information about the young person looked after and the agency have to constantly contact them to enable full information to be obtained. Staff advised that whilst they have improved systems for obtaining LAC (looked after children) paperwork, at times Local Authority Social Workers are not forthcoming and become irritated when asked for paperwork to be completed fully. The agency have resolved this to a point by using their own IPA but they realise it does replace the need for accurate LAC documentation. This is not seen to be a shortfall of the agency however local authority placing social workers should be contacted to remind them of their responsibilities in this area.

Observations of the fostering panel revealed that it operates by way of clear policies and procedures and that panel members are experienced and committed and the membership reflects diverse values and opinions. The panel is effectively managed and meets monthly, holding emergency panels when required. Panel training is arranged annually. Observations of the October panel evidenced that the panel is well managed and provided a robust quality assurance function. Panel files examined showed they held full details of the panel members and held references and Criminal Records Bureaux (CRB) checks.

Foster carers advised that they are aware that corporal punishment was not to be used in any circumstances. They said guidance had been provided in respect of behaviour management and on the use of sanctions and how to record this information.

The carer's handbook and young peoples guide to the service has clear guidelines on safe care, child protection anti bullying and behaviour management.

Staff advised that child protection procedures have been reviewed and re-written to enable process to be clearer and more effective and all carers have been provided with a copy.

Young peoples returned questionnaire revealed that no bullying had been experienced, however young people knew what to do if this was to occur.

Foster carers and young people spoken with revealed that they fully understood the agency policy and procedures and said the information provided to them by the agency was clear and easy to follow.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

7.13.

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. In meeting individual and diverse needs, the service encourages children to develop self-esteem and reach their potential.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers spoken with and information gained from questionnaires reveal that carers are trained and encouraged to support young people and address individual needs.

Foster carers said they have received training to assist them in their understanding of valuing diversity and revealed they have carers support groups locally to reflect their differing needs.

Foster carer's comments in respect of how the agency addresses issues of equality and diversity included-;

"The agency displays excellent values. They are non judgemental of anyone irrespective of race, colour, disability".

“Understanding of all issues relating to equality / diversity is addressed by training courses, handouts etc.”.

TACT staff advised that they work within their matching policy and guidance at all times. Records show they place trans-racially only when there is a thought out logic that is clearly in the best interest of the child.

In discussion staff identified they respect the individual needs of carers and integrate diversity into all their practice.

Training records show equality and diversity training is an ongoing process of the agency.

Recruitment strategies show the agency target a diverse range of carers to enable TACT to widen their carer base.

Carers advised they were trained and encouraged to actively support the educational achievement for children/young people looked after. Records show this training contains guidance and information on all Educational issues.

Records show all current placements of children and young people placed within the agency of statutory school age are in full time education.

Files looked at show the educational achievement of the children/young people is monitored at the foster care review to identify the carer’s input regarding education.

Children’s/young peoples files held information about education and all educational contacts.

Foster carers said they had received a copy of government guidance on education for looked after children.

Foster carer’s comments about the support they receive from the agency in respect of assisting young people in their educational achievement included-:

“This is high on Tact’s agenda and support is evident in the choice of training courses”.

“TACT encourages carers to be supportive of children placed, by involvement in attending P.E.P (personal education plans) meetings at school, obtaining reports and ensuring homework is completed. The use of library books / Internet, for reference and for the foster carer to ensure 100% attendance (where possible) at school.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

10.11.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Children are enabled to make a positive contribution to their own lives and to the lives of others.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers said that contact arrangements are identified at the start of a placement and are monitored and reviewed as appropriate. Most foster carers spoken with said they were in some way involved with escorting the children/young people to/from their contact venue. Foster carers said that in the main they were provided with full details of times and places for contact.

TACT demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that children are supported to maintain contact with their birth families in line with their placement plan.

The foster carers spoken with said that detailed plans were made at the time of placement which addressed contact arrangements and they were received training and support from their supervising social workers to enable them to assist the young people with their contact arrangements. Foster carers said they were generally given information about changes to contact prior to the changes taking place.

Supervising social workers said they had good communication systems in place between the agency social workers, placing social workers and foster carers and they all worked together to ensure that all children and young people had suitable contact with their birth families and other people who had significance to their lives.

Young people said that contact is maintained through letters, phone calls and visits and all young people spoken with said they were happy with their individual contact arrangements.

Foster carers revealed they maintain a record of the outcomes of contact arrangements and the reactions of the child. They said that if a child/young person appeared unhappy upon their return from contact or expressed a wish not to have contact then this would be discussed with the supervising social worker, the young persons social worker and the young person with a view to resolving any difficulties.

Records show that a children's / young persons consultation day was held to enable them to "have a voice" and be included in the decision making process of the agency. This culminated in the agency arranging a residential week end for children/ young people, consultations about venue and activity for days out and pursuing Local Authorities in respect of changing the times and venues for reviews.

The agency arrange a children who foster group for the birth children of the foster carers and 2 young people who are in a settled long term foster placement advised that "when another child comes to be fostered in their home they will then be **children who foster**". This statement indicates how valued they feel within their foster home.

All children placed with foster carers spoken with said they had received the children's guide, which they said was good and contained information regarding how to complain. None of the young people spoken with had made a complaint but said they would know what to do if they needed to complain.

Foster carers said social workers observe children and young people in their foster homes and ask their views and opinions. Observation of a supervising social work visit identified that foster carers and young people are encouraged to express opinions about the placement or other significant issues.

Young people said they were asked their views at their own "Looked After Children" reviews, which they could pass on by attending the review meeting or passing on information either verbally or in writing.

Discussions with the management team and supervising social workers revealed that TACT have worked hard to implement good clear communication

systems to enable young people to express their views. These systems include establishing a youth parliament, TACT social workers meeting with LAC children separately from their foster carers, obtaining written feedback form children to be provided at the foster carers review, children being encouraged to attend their statutory reviews and to talk with the independent reviewing officer.

The agency also provides support workers to undertake I to I sessions with children / young people if they are experiencing difficulties.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

14.29.

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Staff of the service support children to achieve economic wellbeing by the provision of sufficient finance for their care and through training foster carers to have the knowledge and skills involved to prepare young people for adulthood.

EVIDENCE:

The agency has developed a “next steps” pack for young people and carers. This pack focuses on preparing for independence, managing relationships, change, budgets and finances etc.

Records show all young people have savings account in which carers save for the child’s/young persons future.

Agency staff said they utilised various community groups or training providers to give extra support to the young person if this was seen to be necessary.

Foster carers said they encouraged the young people to have a positive attitude towards their own well-being and make them aware of the financial aspects of independent living.

The finance section of the foster carers handbook viewed held clear details about payments.

Information in the handbook indicated that each foster carer is paid an allowance and agreed expenses and foster carers advised that the allowances are paid promptly and at the agreed time. TACT staff said that allowances and fees are reviewed annually and made known to all carers.

Foster carers revealed that they receive clear information about the allowances and expenses payable and how to access them, before a child is placed. They said that any items required by a child which are considered to be extraordinary purchases, would be negotiated at the time of placement or as a child's needs change.

Foster carers advised that they received information and guidance in respect of Inland Revenue issues.

All foster carers advised they were very well supported by TACT to assist young people to move towards adulthood and were in receipt of clear guidance and advice in respect of foster care payments and allowances. Carers said the level of support exceeded their expectations.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

The Commission considers Standards 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

1.16.17.21.24.25.

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. TACT is well managed by people who are qualified and experienced in the child -care arena and staff are trained and motivated to provide a high level of support to foster carers.

EVIDENCE:

The statement of purpose is clear and relevant and details the background of the service, its aims and objectives, management structure and other information about the nature and purpose of the agency.

Previous CSCI reports have highlighted the positive aspects of the management of the agency and it was noted that since the last inspection many policies and procedures have been monitored and reviewed and amended as appropriate.

This update includes review and update of staff/ foster carers handbook and foster carers training programme.

Staffing policies and practices were seen to encourage the retention of staff. All team members spoken with were very positive about their experience of being employed by TACT.

Staff records show that staff supervision is an ongoing process in the agency with supervision being provided as a formal and informal process and team meetings being a regular function of the service.

The manager was enthusiastically praised as being clear thinking and effective in leadership and staff revealed they felt very much supported and part of a team. Staff advised that the manager has clear systems in place to monitor and review the work of the office and the team said they have excellent administrative support.

The agency uses the BAAF Form F assessment format is used in all approvals, which incorporates all of the points under items 17.6 and 17.7 of the National Minimum Standards.

The four case files viewed showed the standard of these assessments was excellent, giving sound evidence of the competencies of the foster carers.

The agency has clear practices when conducting assessments, and maintains all information that contributes to the Form F assessment. All case files were seen to be in order.

The agency has clear systems for monitoring fostering activity and this was seen to enhance the placement stability and staff and foster carer continuity.

The fostering panel presents as effective and cohesive.

Foster carers said agency staff respect them and value their knowledge and expertise in respect of their understanding of the children placed in their homes.

Foster carers said they were provided with training calendars, suitable training venues, encouraged to gain new skills and fully supported with any training needs. Carers revealed they have been greatly assisted with their recording systems by the agency that have introduced a child file, which is held in the carers home and has identified sections to enable information to be recorded in a consistent way.

Foster carers spoken with and information received from questionnaires confirmed they felt very much supported by TACT. They said they were provided with 24-hour information, advice and assistance and gained support, through regular visits and formal supervision in which training needs were identified and any concerns discussed.

Joint events such as foster care support groups and family days out, ensure that children and foster carers develop supportive relationships and meet one another.

Comments received from foster carers in discussion and information gained from returned questionnaires included: -

'The agency is very supportive to us and shows a great commitment to providing good quality care for the young people.'

" TACT offer 24 hour support and give training, advice and provide fun days out together"

" Staff listens to us, guide us support us and offer training courses and give constant information updates."

"They train and support me and my husband to do our job the very best we can",

"I know I am valued By TACT and treated as a professional",

"What an excellent service I would recommend it to anyone".

"The agency is well managed and staff all know what they are doing, they are great".

"The administrator is very good s/he is helpful and very good at his/her job"

All of the feedback received from young people, foster carers, placing social workers and agency staff about the service and the way it conducts its business was most positive, with the overall views being that the service is

very well managed and staffed by professional, knowledgeable people who are reliable and supportive in their role.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	4
6	4
8	3
9	3
15	4
30	4

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	4
13	4
31	X

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	3
11	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	4
29	3

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
2	X
4	X
5	4
16	4
17	4
18	X
19	X
20	X
21	4
22	4
23	X
24	3
25	4
26	X
27	X
28	X
32	X

NO

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS19	It is recommended that the agency provide a range of training to enable all staff access, to ensure they have opportunities for their continuous personal development.

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