



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

The Adolescent and Children`s Trust

Radio House

Aston Road North

Birmingham

West Midlands

B6 4DA

23rd 24th 26th, 27th, 29th, 29th, 30th
January 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

The Adolescent and Children`s Trust

Tel No

0121 260 0518

Address

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

Fax No

0121 260 0520

Email Address

enquiries@tactfostercare.org.uk

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

The Adolescent and Children`s Trust

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Ms Beverley Pickering

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

YES

Date of last inspection

Date of Inspection Visit		26th January 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Ann Appleby	135667
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. 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			

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) 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 NCSC in respect of The Adolescent and Children`s Trust. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

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

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

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

This was the first inspection of TACT Fostering Services against the Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2002. The inspection was organised and Foster Carers understood the service was being inspected. All those involved were open, welcoming and responsive to the inspection. The Care provided to young people was of a good quality, with promotion of the young people's wishes and involvement incorporated into policy and practice. There are some areas of the service which need strengthening to meeting the standards.

Statement of Purpose. There is a clear statement of purpose in place requiring minor amendment. The children's guide would benefit by review to reflect the statement of purpose.

Fitness to Carry on and Manage the Fostering Service. Overall the service is managed effectively. The Manager of the service is qualified and experienced and overall provides good strong leadership. The service is monitored monthly, but some amendment to procedure and practice is required to reflect this.

Securing and Promoting Welfare. Overall the fostering agency provides a good standard of safe care for children placed. Carer's homes were warm, comfortable and nurturing environments for children and young people. TACT promotes equality in all practice matters and this was reflected in matches made for children. There is positive practice in supporting education, leisure, health and contact is. Some small amendments are required to the behaviour management, sanctions, complaints and child protection policies or practice. A high priority is given to consulting children and involving them in decisions and plans. Age appropriate independence training is ongoing for all children, further guidance is required to preparation for older children moving to independence.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers. TACT has effective recruitment and selection procedures in place, with checks and references completed, some small amendment is required to Independent and sessional agency staff employment. There is evidence of regular supervision and appraisals along with appropriate training. Foster carer recruitment, assessments, training and approvals are similarly of a good standard. The Panel's recommendations are rigorous and passed to the Chief Executive, to makes the decision to approve or otherwise. Carers and staff report feeling supported very well by TACT. The weakest areas identified are the availability of information on children placed, and the access to local specialist services of education and health.

Records. Overall records were in place, some small amendments are required to the register of carers, staff and children and foster carer agreements. The process for ensuring Placement agreements and commissioning contracts are in place, needs to be

strengthened, as does the process for monitoring the service.

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

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

Fostering Panels. The Panel was not inspected as the Northampton Panel had been used to approve carers until the service develops.

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

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

If No please list below

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 National Care Standards Commission 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	
The Adolescent and Children`s Trust fostering service is registered to place children and young people 0-17 years of age.		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Placements of children and young people are to include short and long term placements, mother and baby placements and assessments of children within a foster home environment		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Ann Appleby	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	Neil Arculus	Signature	_____
Date	14/12/04		_____

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 and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3(3)& 3(2)(a)	FS1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provider must ensure that information about the services TACT provides are included in the children's guide and ensure details of all staff are included in the statement of purpose. 	30/12/04
2	42(1) & (2)	FS4	The provider must ensure that clear procedures and practice are in place for monitoring the service4	30/12/04
3	8(1) & 40 (5(c))	FS4	The provider should provide a breakdown of fees maintenance and allowances to placing authorities as detailed at NMS 4.4	30/12/04
4	40(2) & 34&17(3)& 35(1)	FS8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The manager must ensure that placing authorities comply with regulatory responsibilities with regard to matching of the child with carers. The manager and provider must ensure that placement agreements are put in place for all children, and ensure placing authorities make regulatory visits to children in placement. 	30/12/04

5	13(1)& 13(2)(b)&1 2(2)(b)	FS9	The manager should ensure that all care plans incorporate details of agreed restraints and constraints as identified by TACT policies.	30/12/04
			The Provider should ensure that all non-permissible sanctions are identified within the behaviour management policy.	13/12/04
			The manager must ensure that child protection issues are referred to the area authority immediately.	6/12/04
6	11(b)(1) &14	FS10	The manager should ensure risk assessments for contact are completed or, that files clearly document why this is unnecessary.	30/12/04
7	18(2)(e)	FS11	The provider must ensure the complaints process is made known and available to parents.	30/12/04
8	15(2) & Schedule 6 & 15(2)(b)	FS12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The manager must ensure that medical permissions and health care records are in place for all children. 	13/12/04
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The manager must ensure local links are made with specialist health care services. 	20/2/04
9	16(1) Schedule 6(1)(e)&(4)	FS13	The manager must ensure placing authorities provide information and support to the educational needs of children and relevant permissions for educational trips.	13/12/04
10	11(a)	FS14	The manager must ensure that foster carers are provided with clear guidance and training to prepare young people for independence.	19/1/04
11	20 Schedule 1 & 21(4)	FS15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provider and manager must ensure that the relevant checks and information are available for all persons employed or completing work for the foster service. 	6/12/04
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The manager must ensure all persons employed receive appropriate supervision. 	
12	8(b)	FS16	The provider should provide clear guidance to staff on reporting, when placing authorities are not meeting regulatory requirements.	30/12/04

13	15(b)	FS21	The Manager must ensure appropriate links are developed with specialist health care and educational services	20/2/04
14	28(5)(b)	FS22	The provider and manager must ensure foster carer agreements comply with Schedule 5.	30/12/04
15	40(5)	FS24	The provider and manager must ensure that placing authorities comply with their obligations in discharging functions to the foster service.	30/12/04
16	22 Schedule 2(1) & (2) &31(2)	FS25	The manager must ensure the foster children's register contains all details identified by schedule 2, and the staff record contains all details as specified. The register of foster carers contains all details required	6/12/04

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	FS3	The development of the children's guide in different formats, to suite the range of differing needs and abilities of the children, would be of benefit to children.
2	FS5	Consideration should be given to what additional organisational systems are available, to support the manager develop the service.
4	FS11	Consideration should be given to including timescales to the complaints process and provision of information to parents and others for making complaints.
5	FS12	The foster service should consider the provision of separate records of medication, bruises, accidents to assist with the monitoring process and integration of records with the local authority..
6	FS15	The manager should consider inclusion of sessional workers in staff meetings to facilitate their awareness of the services development and practice.

* 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	7
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	NA
• 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	NO
Interview with panel chair	NO
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	23/1/04
Time of Inspection	9.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	55.5

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There is a clear statement of purpose in place, which sets out the aims of the fostering service and the services provided. The statement would benefit by inclusion of the details of support staff team members and, their role in provision of services to children and foster carers.

There is a children's guide in place, which includes information about being in foster care, but does not give full information about The Adolescent and Children's Trust, (hereafter TACT), and the services provided. Positively, the guide makes provision to write the names of key people with whom the child will come into contact, when they move into a placement. The complaints process is referred to as problem solving and information is included on advocacy services and alternative organisations. The complaints process is contained in a separate guide to be provided with the children's guide, (refer to NMS11). The Children's guide would benefit by development in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children.

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
<p>The TACT Organisation is based in London and registered in Southwark. The management structure for the business, financial expertise, and personnel department, provides support to the branches of the organisation from the headquarters. The Manager of the Birmingham branch is qualified and has some management qualifications and is completing a further management qualification. She has extensive experience of work with children and families in a variety of settings including fostering. Information from this inspection gained through interview, records and returned questionnaires, supports the view that the manager provides good strong and supportive leadership to the team, within the available resources.</p>		

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
<p>The manager confirmed that the police checks are completed every 3 years and the checks and references were in place for the manager of the service. There are some issues in relation to other checks please refer to NMS 15.</p>		

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?

1

The procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service, are not clearly identifiable within policy and practice procedures. The manager was clear that regular monthly supervision took place with the regional manager, and that the Directors of the organisation made themselves accessible at any time for consultation. Through discussion, it was clear that there was an oversight of the progress of the Birmingham branch. However, there was no evidence available to inspectors, that the responsible person was completing the monitoring functions.

There are clear lines of accountability between the manager staff and carers. The manager has oversight of the budgets and receives regular monthly updates with an overview of the projected annual budgets. The fees structure would benefit by incorporating an itemised breakdown of the fees to placing authorities, as identified in NMS 4.4. A conflicts of interest policy is included in the Link worker guidance.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

Number of complaints made to NCSC 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?****2**

The Manager has a job description in place and does not hold a similar position in any other organisation. The level of delegation of responsibility and accountability are clearly defined. However, this is a developing service and there is an impact on the manager brought about by the small staffing group. The level of responsibilities and time to dedicate to developing the service, do produced some conflict for the manager. Administrative support had only recently been acquired to assist with manning the office. The manager would benefit by an increased level of support from centralised resources, including, senior managers and organisational administrative systems, to facilitate developments in Birmingham. The regional manager deputises in the absence of the manager.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The information gained during this inspection through questionnaires, carers and children met, indicates that overall the fostering agency provides a good standard of care for children placed. Carer's homes were warm comfortable and safe nurturing environments for children and young people. Carers training covers health and safety responsibilities and all carers have safety checks completed as part of the initial assessments and again at annual reviews. Foster carers documents are checked to ensure transport is safely maintained and insured. Carers were aware an inspection was to take place, and made inspectors feel welcome during visits. However this was the first inspection of the foster service and carers would benefit by further information about the commissions role during inspection.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

TACT has a policy in place, which promotes equality and this is integrated into all practice areas, and is covered in training of carers and staff. The areas of religion and culture, ethnic origin and disability are considered as part of the matching process. The manager confirmed that the organisation is a charity and not for profit organisation. Therefore, she does not feel obliged or under any pressure to place children, if there is no appropriate match of culture, language, or religion. Or, if carers skills and homes are not suitable to support children with a disability. Inspectors evidenced where considerable resources and support systems were put in place for children with disability, to ensure their needs were met. This was so despite the fact that the placing authority had not identified the level of need and without the support the child's life could have been placed at risk. Children and young people are positively supported and actively encouraged to develop self-confidence, develop their talents and, pursue opportunities and experiences, which may lead to new interests or skills.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

There is very little evidence available from this inspection that responsible authorities take into account the matching of children with carers responsibly. Where Looked After Children's documents (hereafter LAC), were in place, none referred to the matching process. TACT carefully considers information made available to them and collated on the referral form, in order to provide appropriate matches for children. There were no written foster placement agreements in place, which provided full information and identified where there were additional needs of support to children and carers. Similarly, visits by placing social workers were not made for all children. TACT does monitor and prompt visits. However, this is not always effective and leaves some children without any visitor into the placement, independent of TACT staff.

Wherever possible, TACT does allow for introductions to take place and positively supports contact with parents where appropriate. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of children retaining contact with previous carers and for gradual introduction of new carers or others when children move on.

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?**

1

Overall the fostering service does provide protection for children and young people from all forms of abuse. Foster carers met confirmed they receive pre approval training, which covers the areas of safe caring, managing behaviour and child protection concerns. In addition where placements require carers to have further training to cope with children's behaviour or, support the level of need, this is provided on an individual basis. TACT makes carers fully aware that a no corporal punishment policy is operated and a behaviour management policy is in place. The post approval training will also provide more in depth training in these areas.

There are areas of practice and policy, which do need strengthening; these include the sanctions, behavioural management, and child protection practice and policies. This inspection, identified concerns where, physical restraint e.g. holding or, constraints were used e.g. window locks and locked doors, to ensure children's safety. This was not written up as agreed action and contained in care plans, despite approval by placing social workers. Similarly, all forms of non-permissible sanctions are not contained in the behaviour management and sanctions policy guidance.

The child protection policy is in place and TACT ensures area authorities are notified when children are placed in their area. However, the policy and practice requires that placing social workers are notified of child protection concerns, but does not include immediate referral to the area authority.

TACT ensures that carers are fully apprised of all information made available to TACT, regarding child protection concerns for children placed.

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

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

100

%

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?

2

TACT has policies and practices in place, which ensure that children and young people are fully supported to maintain contact with family and friends where possible. Support workers are provided to transport children to and from contact where appropriate, and carers are encouraged to facilitate contact if possible. The support workers are expected to ring in and confirm how the contact appears to have gone and to keep a record of the child's behaviour prior to and after contact. Foster carers receive pre approval training on contact and working with families. The training also covers issues faced by young people separated from family and significant others. The training is supported by additional guidance in the foster carer guidelines, and expectations of recording.

The manager confirmed that checks are made regarding concerns or, issues about contact for children. However, there were no risk assessments or contact agreements evidenced on file. Not all LAC documentation was in place to clarify the contact arrangements agreed.

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?

2

There is a strong emphasis on listening to children and ensuring their views are listened to and taken into account. Pre approval training for foster carers covers the importance of involving young people in decisions made about their daily lives and planning arrangements for their future. Children are seen during the visits to carers for supervision and their views sought about how their care is being provided and any concerns they may have. There is active involvement of TACT social workers, in representing children's wishes and feelings to placing authorities. The fostering service makes known to children the process for making complaints at the time of placement. A separate information leaflet is provided with the children's guide, on the complaints process. This valuably contains an envelope and post card requesting help, which can be posted to the TACT Children's Officer when children are unable to discuss concerns with carers or others. However there were no clear timescales for resolution of problems and complaints, or moving on to the formal stage. Time limits for resolution could be valuably incorporated into the process for children, foster carers and staff. There does not appear to be information for parents and other significant persons on the complaints process.

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?	1
----------------------------------	----------------------	----------

Pre approval training is in place for foster carers on the health care of children and health and safety issues. Post approval training in first aid is in place. The information is supported with more guidance, within the foster carer handbook. The availability of relevant records and information on children’s health care provided to TACT is variable, despite the referral process and policy relating to provision of information. It is to the credit of TACT staff and carers that information and support, are obtained to meet children’s needs.

Medical permissions were not in place for all children. None of the carers met had health care records for children including ‘red books’, where information is recorded. There was evidence of substantial and ongoing delay, up to 5 months, where children were unable to be formally registered with a GP or, dentist. The lack of full medical information has placed children and the carers in some serious difficulty.

The recording of health care issues and medication given, is completed by the carer’s and monitored during supervision. The establishment of a separate record for all medication and treatment, bruises or accidents, should be considered. This would ensure information is monitored accurately and can be integrated into placing authority records.

Links with specialist health care services in the carer’s home areas need to be established, to ensure a service is provided to children in placement.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)
The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

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

The fostering service gives a high priority to children’s educational needs being met and there is an expectation that children will attend school or college. TACT employs an educational consultant and sessional worker who is a qualified teacher. Both are able with permission of Local Authorities, become involved in supporting educational placements. Foster carer training and policies and procedures, place emphasis on the importance of carer’s involvement with schools, and supporting children at home. All carers met during the inspection were very positive about the work they had done with children to support their school and educational attainment. TACT and the carers made considerable efforts to ensure additional support was put in place where necessary.

Carers reported that the information passed by placing authorities and the referral for statements of educational need or, additional support was variable. Placement agreements were not in place. The LAC documentation available on files inspected, did not clarify permissions for participation in school trips, or confirmation of financial support for school. It is not the agencies responsibility to provide this information, however they do have a responsibility to ensure it is made available by placing authorities.

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?

2

There is an expectation that foster carers will actively encourage children to develop their independence skills age appropriately as they move towards adulthood. The foster cares handbook includes some guidance for preparation for semi- independence and independent living. The guidance would benefit by more specific information and training to cover pathway planning and ensuring relevant documents are provided to young people. E.g. birth certificates, National insurance numbers, bank accounts etc.
The guidance available is clear about the importance of young people being actively involved in meetings and planning about their future.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There are clear written recruitment and selection procedures. The personnel department for the organisation is based in London and has involvement and oversight of all staff recruitment. All staff involved with children were appropriately qualified and had relevant experience. Records of checks and references were retained on most personnel files. CRB checks were confirmed to have been applied for on files, but were not provided to inspectors to verify. The manager confirmed police checks would be completed every 3 years. Employment contracts were in place for staff. Inspectors found no evidence that checks were completed on agency Form F assessors, with reliance placed on the employment agency for ensuring these checks were completed. Full employment histories, evidence of qualifications, photographs, were not evidenced for all staff. There was good regular supervision in place for all full time social work staff. There was no formal supervision for sessional workers, who were contacted or, reported to the manager over the telephone. The manager confirmed that with the developing service, there would be more face-to-face contact, as the role of sessional staff increased. Staff meetings were held on a monthly basis. The agency should consider the involvement of sessional support staff and form F assessors in the meetings, to facilitate their awareness of the services developments and practice.

Total number of staff of the agency:

4

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

0

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?

2

Overall the team of staff appear to work effectively together. The recent appointment of an administrator with a background and knowledge of the fostering task, was reported to have considerably enhanced the effectiveness of the team. Similarly, the appointment of a second support social worker. The small staff compliment prior to this, had clearly had an impact on the opportunities to develop practice, to meet the needs of the Birmingham area. Carers reported efficient responses to initial inquiries, but some delays in the process of assessment to arrive at Panel. The manager confirmed this had been problematic with the initial recruitment and affected by staffing levels. There are clear lines of responsibility and supervision was valued by all staff and carers met.

The Manager confirmed besides the day-to-day supervision requirements, carers and staff have regular monthly supervision.

The manager confirmed that supervision did occur where agency staff completed form F assessments, and sessional workers confirmed telephone supervision and information was provided to them(Refer to NMS 15). Sessional staff reported they had not been provided with copies of health and safety, grievance and disciplinary, whistle blowing policies and procedures manuals NMS 16.6.

Appropriate professional advice is available to children and carers through TACT. The foster carer's and link workers guidance on the roles of TACT social workers and those of placing social workers is clear. This information would benefit by clearer guidance when senior managers should be contacted, were placing authorities are not meeting regulatory requirements, which impacts on children's welfare.

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

At the time of inspection TACT had an appropriate number of suitably qualified staff and recruits foster carers from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. There is regular supervision in place for carers and appropriate opportunities for training for individuals. Staff and carers met and returning questionnaires expressed some concern about the wide geographical spread of carers. This has an impact on both staff and the carers in relation to supervision, support and training. The manager reported this had been recognised and recruitment of more local carers was anticipated. Additionally, the manager had identified the need to recruit carer's from more diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, to represent the local population.

Assessments are completed on Form F and include competencies, which are linked to training needs. The reviews process for carers identifies training completed and further training to be provided. There were some issues raise by initial form F assessments and the inclusion of information relating to checks and references. Positively these were raised at Panel, recorded and followed through by the Manager. Equally the agency decision maker at Director level was clear that decisions on approval would not be considered, until all recommendations from the panel were addressed. Consideration was being given to the timescales from recruitment to approval, which had been delayed due to the small staffing group.

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

There are sound employment practices in TACT Fostering. There are effective systems to support both foster carers and workers, including regular supervision and support for professional development and appraisals. The weakness in this area is the provision of regular supervision for sessional workers, although training is provided to encourage personal and professional development, (Refer to NMS15).

There were certificates of insurance in place and all carers are registered with fostering Network at approval.

The handbooks for staff and carers, include the 'whistle-blowing' policy, and provides for complaints to be raised. Carers met by inspectors and those returning questionnaires made particular comment on the level of support they received. This included 'out of hours'

support, either by telephone contact or by personal visits, at points of real crisis. In addition carers reported they valued the efforts made by TACT to develop a forum for carers to meet with Directors. The forum was used to present their views on the organisational practices, which affect them and discuss possible solutions.

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>Staff reported that they had been provided with induction and that TACT responds positively to requests for training, which are discussed during supervision. Staff appraisals are apparently planned to occur annually. These had been delayed due to other conflicting pressures of the developing service.</p> <p>Joint training between foster carers and staff has not been part of the training programme. The manager confirmed that this development and more locally based training for carers including NVQ level 3, were areas she had identified to be considered for the programme of training next year. Carer's are encouraged to take up training opportunities and to maintain training portfolios.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The staff met generally felt very well supported and this was reflected during interviews. Staff considered that job descriptions generally reflected the work undertaken, although not all staff were aware of or, provided with policies and procedures.</p> <p>There was an absence of face-to-face supervision for sessional support staff as previously noted. Although, the manager confirmed that this was now planned as part of the development of the service, and the increase in work of the sessional workers. Similarly, this group of staff and Form F assessors were not included in the staff meetings, which were attended by all other staff and recorded.</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?****2**

Carers met and questionnaires returned, confirmed that foster carers felt valued and very well supported. The Foster carer guidelines provide valuable information on training opportunities, supervision, guidance on education and health and on the LAC documentation, out of hours support, and reviews.

The weakest area was that of the provision of information by placing authorities. Also, access to locally based services in relation to educational and specialist health services. This was particularly of concern where children were experiencing difficulties requiring serious assessment and professional input.

The roles of TACT social workers and placing social workers is made clear in the foster carer guidance. Once again the greatest area of concern expressed by staff and carers, was the lack of information provided by placing social workers. This had an impact on children's welfare and the ability of carers to meet children's needs. There is guidance for seeking assistance from senior managers, where difficulties are experienced with Local Authorities. This would benefit by a clearer indication at what point their assistance is sought, (Refer to NMS 24).

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?****2**

The systems put in place by TACT to manage the fostering service appear to be generally effective although some areas would benefit by strengthening. Foster carer agreements are in place but not on all files and not all were signed. Changes to approval did not appear to generate new agreements, particularly when changes occurred due to exemptions.

Agreements did not fulfil the requirements of Schedule 5 including the provision for making representations, compliance with child protection procedures and behaviour management policies and to comply reasonably with the NCSC. The foster carers handbook is in place, and is currently in the process of revision.

The visits and supervision of carers is recorded on file and the guidance for workers identifies the need for at least one unannounced visit each year. Carers reported that payments were made regularly. The manager had put in place a process for monitoring of allegations and complaints, but there was no process evidenced that these were monitored and evaluated, (Refer to NMS 4).

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

Foster carer pre and post approval training is in place and experienced carers are included in the pre approval training. There is a strong culture of anti-discriminatory practice, which is supported by training and incorporated into policies, procedures and practice. The manager was aware of the difficulties experienced by carers in travelling to training and support groups. At the time of inspection the arrangements were being reviewed with consideration given to the time and venues. There is good support for carers in relation to expenses and child care costs. The support workers assist in foster children's care, to enable training and attendance at support groups. Post approval training for men in foster care is provided. Training for those caring for disabled children is an area, which requires some consideration, although individual training can be accessed if required. The children of foster carers are provided with opportunity to meet with support workers when they visit placements, to check if there are any issues. Safe caring is considered with all family members.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

TACT works to ensure all information provided on children placed is shared with foster carers and appropriately with children. The LAC documentation provided by placing social workers evidenced at this inspection was not comprehensive for all children. Despite these deficits foster carers and young people, were working well together and had a shared understanding of what they were trying to aim for within the placement.

A stronger system needs to be in place for ensuring children's plans are provided by placing authorities, and complies with their responsibility to ensure effective integration of records.

A placement agreement was not available on any of the files seen in line with regulations.

The policy on the structure of case files and recording policy was being updated with the intention of clearer access to information.

Foster carers receive training on the importance of daily recording and further guidance is contained in the handbook. All carers met were able to confirm an understanding and practice of assisting children to understand their past and contribute to life story work. All carers met were aware of the importance of safe storage of information.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Separate records are kept for carer's children and staff and a separate monitoring system is in place for allegations and complaints. Records were stored securely at all times in locking filing cabinets and policy guidance is in place to clarify the process for children, staff and carers to access their own records. Children are encouraged to have access to their own records and make additional comments.

The manager confirmed that she does review case files to monitor the quality and adequacy of the information, and this was evidenced during the inspection. The written entries in records were legible and distinguished between fact and opinion.

The system for keeping records would benefit by review, to make information easier to trace and pass on when children move. Children's records would benefit by the provision of LAC documentation by placing authorities. Foster carer files would benefit by divisions and an index to confirm where to find specific information. The manager confirmed that a review of the file formats and recording policies was due to be reviewed and that part of this process was now out for consultation. The register of children requires some amendment to comply

with schedule 2 including the address prior to and post placement. The register of foster carers similarly needs amendment to include, reviews of approval and current approval. The record of staff needs to include status and the average hours per week.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:				4
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:				9
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:				5
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:				7
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:				1
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £		X	Maximum £	X

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The premises of the fostering service are easily accessible by public or private transport and have access for those with a disability. The office systems are robust and sufficient for the service including IT equipment, telephones and fax machine. There are appropriate security systems and all offices lock, as do the office premises. Facilities for meal breaks, conference rooms for meetings and training, are available and the premises are insured.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

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

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service has clear guidelines in place for the financial procedures of the fostering service, a registered accountant audits the accounts. TACT needs to put in place a breakdown of the fees and expenses and maintenance allowances for placing authorities and those needing to know, Refer to NMS3.

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

All foster carer's met during the course of this inspection confirmed that payments in relation to fees and allowances, were paid regularly to carers. The fees and allowances are reviewed annually.

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?
---------------------------	---------------

The Panel was not inspected on this occasion as the service had used the Panel in Northampton to approve carers, pending development of the service and the provision of a Panel for the Birmingham Branch of the service.	0
--	---

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?
---------------------------	---------------

This service is not provided at this time.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
---------------------------	---------------	---

This service was not provided.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

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 in January 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Action taken by the NCSC 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 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: Due to delay in the provision of the report and a further inspection completed, the provider was advised to respond to requirements of the second inspection report.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Public reports

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

Commission for Social Care Inspection
33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF

Telephone: 020 7979 2000
Fax: 020 7979 2111

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120
www.csci.org.uk

S0000056442.V113504.R01

© This report may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection



The paper used in this document is supplied from a sustainable source