



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

The Adolescent and Children`s Trust

Century Buildings

18 Tower Street

Brunswick Business Park

Liverpool

L3 4BJ

20th – 28th September 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

0151 707 9968

Address

Century Buildings

18 Tower Street

Brunswick Business Park

Liverpool

L3 4BJ

Fax No

0151 709 5728

Email Address

enquiries@tactfostercare.org.uk

Registered Number of IFA

F020000670

Name of Registered Provider

The Adolescent and Children`s Trust

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Janice Rutherford

Date of first registration

28th August 2003

Date of latest registration certificate

28th August 2003

Registration Conditions Apply ?

YES

Date of last inspection

06/08/03

Date of Inspection Visit		20 th September 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Mr Nick Veysey	124124
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 CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Ms Janice Rutherford	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The Adolescent and Children's Trust, known as TACT, was established in 1993 as charitable independent fostering agency and is managed by a board of trustees. The day to day management is undertaken by a Senior Management Team comprising a chief executive, head of social work, and business manager. Below this team there are three regional Managers responsible for six area offices and nine area managers. The finances and human resources services are centralised at TACT's headquarters in London.

TACT in Liverpool was registered with the Commission in August 2003, and is managed by the regional manager for the East Midlands. At the time of the inspection the team had only recently moved into new office accommodation. The team comprised an area manager, a senior practitioner, a supervising social worker, an administrative officer, and sessional assessing social workers, and support workers. The supervising social worker and administrative officer had only recently started work with the service.

TACT in Liverpool is registered to provide fostering services to children and young people from birth to 17 years of age. At the time of the inspection the service was providing foster placements for seven children between the ages of 3 and 11. The service had eight sets of approved foster carers. A further three sets of prospective foster carers were considered for approval at the Foster Panel on 27th September 2004.

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.)

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was met.

TACT has a written statement of purpose that clearly provides information about the overall aims and objectives of the service, and the services and facilities it provides. It also sets out how it intends to support and provide care for the children placed with the service. Its policies, procedures and guidance for staff and carers accurately reflect the statement of purpose. The children's guide was appropriate to the ages of the children being looked after through the service. It was informative and detailed including a summary of what the service provides for children and information about how to make a complaint.

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

Both of the standards were met.

The registered provider and the registered manager had the necessary experience, knowledge, skills, and competence to run an independent fostering service. The registered manager was exercising effective leadership of the staff, and operation of the service and it was organised, managed and staffed in a way to deliver a good standard of childcare practice. It has a clear and thorough recruitment and selection policy and procedures to ensure that those in the management of the fostering service are suitable to run a business concerned with the safeguarding and promoting of children's welfare.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

1 out of the 2 standards was met.

There was a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of managers and staff, and well established lines of communication and clearly defined lines of accountability. The personnel files showed that each member of staff had a job description, and the carer's files contained a foster carer agreement outlining their tasks and responsibilities. There was a system in place for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. However, the registered person needs to prepare a report about the review of the quality of care provided by the service in accordance with Regulation 42(2). The service needs to make sure that the Commission is informed of all the events and incidents as outlined in Schedule 8.

Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)

7 out of the 9 standards were met including 1 standard was commendable.

The service was providing foster homes that were emotionally warm, adequately furnished, well decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness. Each child had their own bed and accommodation to meet their specific needs and need for privacy. There were policies and procedures in place to make sure that the standard was maintained.

The service has clear and detailed guidance for staff and foster carers on valuing diversity, covering meeting the needs of children in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality.

The service was making sure that children were appropriately placed with foster carers who could meet their needs. The service needs to introduce foster placement agreement in line with Regulation 34(3) and Schedule 6.

There were steps to protect children from abuse and neglect through foster carer training, safe recruitment and approval systems, and the development of safe caring policies. There were many examples of good practice with foster carers actively encouraging and supporting children maintain contact with their families.

All the children the inspector met said that foster carers asked their views and opinions about matters affecting them and were asked their views about living with the foster carers. Children said they knew how to make a complaint if they were unhappy.

The service was promoting the health and development of children placed with foster carers. All the children were registered with a GP, had access to such dental, medical and psychological advice, treatment and services. Children were provided with guidance, support and advice on health, personal care, and health promotion appropriate to their needs. The service needs to develop a separate health record for each child and develop a more detailed medication.

Foster carers were encouraging and supporting children's education and working closely with their schools and educational professionals. Children were making significant progress at school.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers (Standards 15-23)

All of the standards were met and 3 were commendable.

All the social work staff have appropriate qualifications to work with children, their families and foster carers, have a good understanding of foster care, and were organised and managed in a way that delivers an effective foster care service. They receive regular supervision, training and appraisal. The staffing levels were adequate to meet the needs of the service.

The service has a thorough assessment process for prospective foster carers and a clear strategy and procedures for working with foster carers. Foster carers were very satisfied with the support they received from the service. Communication between the fostering service social workers and the child's social worker was good. Foster Carer Agreements were in line with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2001 and outlined comprehensively the information that foster carers need to know to carry out their duties effectively. Each approved foster carer was supervised by an appropriately qualified social worker.

The fostering service offers foster carers a comprehensive training programme covering a wide range of relevant issues including child protection, child development, communicating with children, child sexual abuse, safe care, challenging behaviour and recording skills.

Records (Standards 24-25)

Both the standards were met.

The service kept all the required records. They were up to date well maintained and organised, and securely kept. There were robust administration systems and procedures including an access to records policy.

Fitness of premises (Standard 26)

This standard was met.

The premises were suitable to meet the needs of the service.

Financial requirements (Standard 27-29)

All these standards were met.

The service was financially viable and had robust financial systems in place. Foster carers received their allowances in an efficient manner.

Fostering panel (Standard 30)

This standard was met.

The Fostering Panel was well managed and operated in an effective manner. The Panel was extremely thorough and rigorous in its consideration of each application, and raised issues and asked questions in a sensitive manner. The Panel performed a quality assurance role in relation to the assessment process.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

The service does not provide a short-term break service at present, but was keen to develop such a service and had received inquiries from prospective carers who were interested in this type of fostering. This standard was not assessed on this occasion.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

This standard is not applicable to the fostering service.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	YES
The registered manager completes by 2005, a qualification at NVQ Level 4 in management or another qualification, which matches the competencies required by NVQ Level 4.		
Comments		
The registered manager was working towards the Diploma in Management Studies.		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Nick Veysey	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Locality Manager	Paula Ross	Signature	_____
Date	22/10/04		_____

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 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	42	FS4	The registered provider must make sure that prepare a report in respect of any review of the quality of care provided by the service, and any steps taken to improve the quality of foster care provided by the service, and make the report available to the Commission.	01/12/04
2	43	FS4	The registered manager must make sure that the agency informs the Commission of all the events and incidents as outlined in Schedule 8 of the Fostering Regulations 2002.	20/09/04
3	34(3) & Schedule 6	FS8	The registered provider must make sure that before making a placement the service, placing authority, and foster carers complete a written foster placement agreement relating to the child covering all the matters outlined in Schedule 6.	01/12/04

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	FS8	The registered provider should send a copy of the finalised foster placement agreement form to the Commission as soon as it is completed.
2	FS8	The registered manager should make sure, wherever possible, that pre-placement meetings take place between the foster carer, the agency, the child's social worker, and relevant professionals to share information about the child's needs and how best to meet them.
3	FS8	The registered manager should make sure that, where possible, the child has a period of introduction to proposed foster carers so they can express an informed view of the placement, and become familiar with the foster carer and their family, other children in placement, and the neighbourhood
4	FS10	The registered manager must make sure that they receive written copies of any risk assessments and agreements in relation to contact in foster homes, and that the copies are kept on the children's and foster carer's files.
5	FS11	The registered provider should send a copy of the Children's Survey to the Commission once it is completed.
6	FS12	The registered provider should make sure that foster carers are provided with a specific written health record for each child to document all their health information that is updated during the placement and moves with the child in line with NMS 12.4. This health record should include details of the child's medical history, immunisations, medication, medical examinations and treatment, and advice given on health promotion in terms of personal care, emotional well being, sexual health, diet and exercise, smoking and awareness of drugs and alcohol.
7	FS12	The registered provider should develop the service's guidance for foster carers on the administration, recording, safekeeping, and disposal of medication.
8	FS30	The registered manager should make sure that all relevant medical information and comments about prospective foster carers are included in the applications brought to the Fostering Panel.

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

Number of Inspector days spent	6
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NA
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	20/09/04
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	40.20

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

TACT has a written statement of purpose that clearly provides information about the overall aims and objectives of the service, and the services and facilities it provides. It also sets out how it intends to support and provide care for the children placed with the service. The statement includes all the information detailed in NMS 1.4. It was reviewed in August 2004 and accurately reflects the running of the service.

The inspector examined the service's policies, procedures and guidance for staff and carers and found that they accurately reflect the statement of purpose.

The children's guide was appropriate to the ages of the children being looked after through the service. It was informative and detailed including a summary of what the service provides for children, information about how to make a complaint and contact numbers for organisations such as Child Line, the NSPCC Child Protection Line and the Commission. There was evidence from discussion with the children that they received a copy of the guide when they first moved to live with their carers. The registered manager told the inspector that the guide could be produced in different languages and formats, if necessary, 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
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There was evidence found during the inspection and from the registration process that the registered manager was able to demonstrate that they had the necessary experience, knowledge, skills, and competence to be approved as a registered manager of an independent fostering service.

The registered manager has over twenty years experience of working in a social care setting with children and their families. This has included experience of child protection and direct work with families in the community, court work and working with other professionals and agencies. In addition, they have considerable experience as a social work manager with a local authority. This has included chairing and participating in the area family placement panel, liaising with foster carers and regularly chairing reviews for Looked After Children. In addition, they have experience of delivering and designing training in social work.

They are suitably qualified having obtained a degree in a social care discipline and the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW). They have undertaken a variety of training courses relevant to the role and responsibilities of a registered manager of a fostering service. They are currently working towards the Diploma in Management Studies.

The registered provider has the appropriate experience skills, knowledge, experience and competence to manage the operation of the service.

The inspector found evidence from discussions with staff and carers, and from the written records that the registered manager was exercising effective leadership of the staff and operation of the service. The inspector found that the service was organised, managed and staffed in a way to deliver a good standard of childcare practice.

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
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TACT has a clear and thorough recruitment and selection policy. The organisation has designed procedures to ensure that those involved in the management of the fostering service are suitable to run a business concerned with the safeguarding and promoting of children's welfare. This includes a policy of renewing checks with the Criminal Records Bureau every three years.

The inspector examined a sample of six personnel files, including sessional support staff and a worker currently employed through a recruitment agency. All the files contained the evidence of the information required in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. There was evidence on the files showing the steps taken to verify references provided as part of the recruitment process.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)
There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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There was evidence from discussions with the registered provider, the regional manager, the registered manager, staff and carers, and from the written records that there was a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of managers and staff, and well established lines of communication and clearly defined lines of accountability. The personnel files showed that each member of staff had a job description, and the carer's files contained a foster carer agreement outlining their tasks and responsibilities.

There was evidence that the agency was reviewing its performance. The registered provider gave the inspector a copy of a report into Child Care Performance Indicators 2003-2004, dated 31st August 2004. It was based on questionnaires completed by supervising social workers in respect of a sample of 160 children, and focused on placement stability, education, health, and savings.

The inspector found that a system of auditing written records including carers' files was in operation. There was evidence that the registered manager, regional manager and the registered provider were monitored and signing the records on a regular basis.

There was a clear system in place for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. However, the registered person needs to prepare a report about the review of the quality of care provided by the service and any steps taken to improve the quality of foster care services in accordance with Regulation 42(2) and make any such report available to the Commission. Since the inspection the registered provider has informed the inspector of the steps they are taking to comply with Regulation 42(2).

The service was undertaking consultation with foster carers and children placed with foster carers in line with Regulation 42(2). Representatives of foster carers met regularly with the organisation's chief executive, and the inspector found examples of how the agency's practice had changed as a result of suggestions made by foster carers at these meetings. The registered provider informed the inspector that they had recently completed a survey of the children they looked after. The inspector was provided with a copy of the results of the survey and was told that the organisation was in the process of analysing the findings of the survey.

The service has clear financial procedures and there was a reviewing and auditing procedure in place in order to make sure they are up-to-date. There was a system in place to provide placing authorities with information about the service including charges and payments to foster carers.

The service has a policy and guidance for staff and carers relating to any possible conflicts of interest.

Discussions with the registered manager showed that they were fully aware of the need to inform the Commission of all the events and incidents as outlined in Schedule 8, of the Fostering Regulations, 2002. However, the inspector found in the records an incidence where the service had failed to notify the Commission of a child having a serious accident. This incident had been reported to the child's social worker and appropriate action had been taken. The registered manager must make sure that the service informs the Commission of all the events and incidents as outlined in Schedule 8.

Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI in last 12 months:	0
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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 CSCI about the agency in the past 12 months:	0
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Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:	0
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Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

There was evidence to show that the service was been managed in an effective manner. The registered manager has a clear job description setting out the duties and responsibilities. The organisation has a clear structure with clear lines of delegation and accountability. There are clear arrangements in place for the management of the service in the registered manager's absence.

Given the geographical distances between the office in Liverpool, the regional manager's base in Northampton, and the headquarters in London the organisation was able to demonstrate how they have developed good lines of communication and effective oversight of the operation.

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
<p>The inspector examined the foster carers and children's records. The inspector found evidence that foster home's had been assessed in respect of health and safety as part of the approval process, and any deficiencies had been rectified. Also, there was evidence that supervising social workers undertook health and safety checks to make sure that the environment continued to meet the needs of the children as part of the annual reviews of foster carers. Copies of these assessments were available on the foster carer's files. The health and safety checklists were comprehensive covering all the areas outlined in the standards, and were completed in detailed.</p>		
<p>The foster carer's training and preparation covered health and safety issues, and the foster carers had been provided with written guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities. A number of foster carers provide transport for children and there was evidence that the agency had taken steps to ensure that this was safe and appropriate to the child's needs. There were copies of foster care driving licences and insurance documents kept on their files. The inspector also examined safe caring policies for the foster homes and these also addressed providing a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment.</p>		
<p>The inspector visited three foster carer households and inspected the accommodation provided for the children looked after by the service. The inspector found in every case the foster home could comfortably accommodate all who live there; the accommodation was warm, adequately furnished, and decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness; and each child place had their own bed and accommodation to meet their specific needs and need for privacy. None of the children visited by the inspector shared a bedroom. The inspector observed that the foster homes were free of avoidable hazards that may expose a child to risk of injury or harm. Most of the foster homes had pets and there was evidence in the written records that this had been taken into account when considering placing a child in the homes.</p>		
<p>All the foster carers visited by the inspector were aware that they might be interviewed and visited as part of the inspection process.</p>		

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

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

TACT works on the principle of placing children in foster homes that reflect their culture, language, religion and ethnicity as closely as possible. The fostering agency has clear and detailed guidance for staff and foster carers on valuing diversity, covering meeting the needs of children in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality. This also contains guidance for social workers and foster carers on working together to enhance children's confidence and feelings of self-worth. There was evidence in the training records that issues of diversity and support children to deal with all forms of discrimination were addressed during foster carer's preparation to care.

The inspector found a number of good examples where children were encouraged to pursue their talents, interests, and hobbies.

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 was evidence from discussions with staff, and from the written records that the service's policy and guidance in relation to matching was being followed, and social workers were carefully matching children with foster carers capable of meeting their needs. The written records showed that the fostering service attempts to gather information about the child from the placing authority and takes into account the child's care plan, and recent written assessments of the child and their family. The inspector found standard letters on children's files to the placing authority requesting Looked After Children (LAC) documents and relevant information such as court orders, care plans, personal educational plans, and medical history and written consents for medical treatment. These letters state that the proposed placements will only go ahead once the information has been received.

In the inspector's view it would be good practice to hold pre-placement planning meetings between the child's social worker, the proposed foster carer, the fostering service, and any other professionals involved with the child and their family to allow the relevant information about the child's history and needs and plan how best to meet their needs. However, the inspector does acknowledge that TACT make efforts to hold preplacement meetings but meetings haven't taken place because of the unavailability of other professionals.

The inspector found that the records contained written risk assessments completed by the agency's social workers when considering placing a child with particular carers. This provided clear evidence of the efforts taken in every case to make sure that foster carers would meet the needs of particular children. The risk assessment showed that the child's racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs were closely matched with the ethnic origin, religion, culture, and language of the foster family.

However, the inspector found no evidence in the written records of a written foster placement agreement in line with Regulation 34(3) and Schedule 6. The registered provider

informed the inspector that a draft foster placement agreement has been developed and they anticipated it been finalised in the near future.

The service's policy includes making sure that, where practicable the child should have the opportunity for a period of introduction to the proposed foster carer, but in practice this seldom happens. The registered manager should make sure that, where possible, the child has a period of introduction to proposed foster carers so they can express an informed view of the placement, and become familiar with the foster carer and their family, other children in placement, and the neighbourhood.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>There was evidence that the service was taking steps to protect children from abuse and neglect. Training was available for foster carers in caring for children who had been abused, safe caring skills, managing behaviour, and recognising the signs and symptoms of abuse. The service had a clear written safe caring policy. The inspector found that each foster home had devised in consultation with everyone in the household a safe caring policy. The children the inspector interviewed had a good understanding of their safe caring policy.</p> <p>The fostering service makes it clear to foster carers, in written information and the foster carer agreements, that corporal punishment and all other humiliating forms of treatment and punishment are unacceptable.</p> <p>There are management systems in place to record and evaluate information on the circumstances, numbers, and outcome of all allegations of neglect and abuse of a child in foster care. This information was scrutinised as part of the monitoring of the quality of care under Schedule 7.</p> <p>The foster carers interviewed by the inspector were aware of the vulnerability of looked after children to bullying, and the service's guidelines to recognise, record and address any instance of bullying. They were also aware of the guidelines for what to do if a child goes missing from home.</p> <p>The written records show that the agency takes great efforts to provide foster carers with all the relevant information about the children they care for to enable to protect the child, themselves and their family.</p>		
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?**

4

The fostering service has clear procedures setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child are established, maintained, monitored, and reviewed. The discussions at the foster carers support group showed that the preparation and training of foster carers stresses the importance of them helping a child to maintain appropriate contact and covers the skills needed to encourage and facilitate contact.

The arrangements for contact were recorded on the children's files and the foster carers and the children were aware of these arrangements. There was evidence that the service and foster carers were making considerable efforts to make sure that children's views about contact were sought and given weight in making contact arrangements.

The inspector found many examples of good practice with foster carers actively encouraging and supporting children maintain contact with their families. Some foster carers were able to speak openly about difficulties they had experienced around contact and the impact on them personally. They all felt that the service supported them deal with difficult contact issues. There were examples of foster carers working closely with children's family to try to make sure that contact was a positive and supportive experience for the children. The foster carers kept detailed records of the outcome of contact and the impact on the child. This information was fed back to the child's social worker.

Contact for some children was taking place in the foster carer's home. The registered manager told the inspector that before contact took place they met with the foster carers, the children's social worker and relevant professionals to assess the risks, clarify the arrangements, the level of supervision needed, and what would happen if the arrangements were not kept. This was an example of good practice, but unfortunately there wasn't a written copy of the agreements reached at this meeting in the records. The registered manager told the inspector that they were still waiting for the document from the social worker.

The service provided financial support for foster carers for transport and other costs involved in facilitating contact arrangements.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Through discussions with foster carers the inspector found that the fostering service makes sure that foster carers understand the importance of listening and responding to the views of children. In addition, foster carers had received written information about consultation and children's rights, and the issues had been covered in their preparation to care and training.

All the children the inspector met said that foster carers asked their views and opinions about matters affecting them including day to day things such as food, and activities. They also said that the supervising social worker also asked their views about living with the foster carers. The written records showed that the supervising social worker met with children

alone on a regular basis to seek their views. In addition, the inspector found evidence that the service sought children's views about their foster carers as part of the foster carers annual review.

The children told the inspector that they knew how to make a complaint if they were unhappy and had received information about TACT's complaints procedure, and how to complain to other organisations such as Child Line and the Commission.

The fostering service was taking steps to undertake consultation with children about its operation. The registered provider told the inspector that they had recently undertaken a national survey of the children and young people it looks after, and were in the process of analysing the results.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>There was evidence that the fostering service was promoting the health and development of children placed with foster carers. All the children were registered with a GP, had access to such dental, medical and psychological advice, treatment and services they require. The written records showed that children were provided with guidance, support and advice on health, personal care, and health promotion appropriate to their needs.</p>		
<p>The records showed that the service provides training foster carers to develop their skills and knowledge in supporting young people in relation to health issues. The training programme included training in first aid, sexual health and young people, HIV awareness, mental health and drugs and alcohol awareness.</p>		
<p>The children's records show that the service gathers information about their medical history and health needs, usually from LAC documents, before making a placement. In addition, once a placement had started their health needs and treatment was documented on their records. The registered provider should make sure that foster carers are provided with a specific written health record for each child to document all their health information that is updated during the placement and moves with the child in line with NMS 12.4. This health record should include details of the child's medical history, immunisations, medication, medical examinations, and treatment, and advice given on health promotion in terms of personal care, emotional well being, sexual health, diet and exercise, smoking and awareness of drugs and alcohol.</p>		
<p>The inspector would also recommend that the registered provider should develop the service's guidance for foster carers on the administration, recording, safekeeping, and disposal of medication.</p>		

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)		
The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Discussions with children, foster carers, and staff showed that the fostering service gives a high priority to helping foster carers meet children's educational needs. There was evidence from the children's review minutes that foster carers were encouraging and supporting children's education and working closely with their schools and educational professionals. The written records showed that children had made significant progress in school since being placed with foster carers.</p> <p>In the foster homes the inspector visited there was a clear emphasis on education and learning. The foster carers had an expectation of regular school attendance, children had the necessary school uniform and equipment, they had access to books and educational materials, and the children said they received support and encouragement in completing their homework. There were also examples of children being supported to attend school trips and after school activities.</p>		

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)		
The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>None of the children being cared for by the service at the time of the inspection were of an age where Pathway Plans needed to be made.</p> <p>The fostering service has guidance for foster carers for preparing children for adulthood. The guidance was thorough and appropriate.</p> <p>The inspector found evidence through observations and discussions with children, foster carers and staff that foster carers understand the need to provide children with age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for developing their living and personal care skills.</p>		

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service had a clear written recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff that follows good practice in safeguarding children. The inspector examined a sample of six personnel files including the registered manager, social workers, the administration officer, support workers and agency social workers. There was evidence that all the staff working for the service had been interviewed as part of the selection process. All the files contained photographic proof of identity; an appropriate enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure; at least two references, including one from their last employer, commenting on their suitability; evidence of previous experience in child care; full employment histories; notes taken at their interview; and documentary proof of their qualifications.

All the social work staff have appropriate qualification to work with children, their families and foster carers, and have a good understanding of foster care. Their application forms and notes taken at interview show that they have the appropriate knowledge and skills outlined in NMS 15.5. The social workers involved in the assessment and approval of foster carers were qualified have experience of foster care and have been trained in assessment.

Total number of staff of the agency:

4

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

1

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspector found that staff were organised and managed in a way that delivers an effective foster care service. Although TACT in Liverpool is only a small service overseen by a regional manager who is based at some distance from the city, the service has a sound management structure with clear lines of accountability, and excellent lines of support and communication. The staff are managed and monitored by people who have appropriate skills and qualifications.

The service has systems in place to determine, prioritise and monitor caseloads and assign tasks to appropriate staff. The registered provider and regional manager told the inspector that the system was currently being reviewed and developed. There were structures in place

to make sure assessments, approvals, and reviews of foster carers are managed and implemented effectively.

The staff files showed that they all receive professional supervision and consultation by suitably qualified and experienced people. Staff and foster carers have been given the opportunity to undertake on-going training and professional development, for example the senior practitioner was undertaking an introduction to management course.

At the time of the inspection the administration officer had only recently started work at the service and was still in the process of familiarising themselves with the structures and systems. The inspector observed, nevertheless, that the administration officer was extremely helpful and was quickly acclimatising to their duties and responsibilities. The administrative procedures were robust and appropriate for dealing promptly with enquiries from prospective foster carers and new requests for services. Given the size of the service there was adequate administrative support and systems in place to make sure the service was able to carry out its duties in an effective manner.

All the staff have written contracts and job descriptions.

All the staff interviewed by the inspector understood their own role and that of the children's social worker, and how they should work together effectively. The staff told the inspector that they had copies of the services policies and procedures outlined in NMS 16.16.

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
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The current staff team, in terms of numbers, experience and qualifications, was adequate to meet the needs of the fostering service and was in line with its statement of purpose. The service does employ sessional social workers to undertake some assessments of prospective carers. These workers are appropriately qualified and experienced.

The service has a recruitment policy aimed at recruiting a range of carers to meet the needs of children for whom it aims to provide a service. Generally, the service's existing foster carers are approved to provide placements for younger children. The registered manager told the inspector that they want to recruit a range of foster carers able to care for children of all ages, differing cultural needs and undertake different types of fostering such as short-term breaks.

The service has a clear and thorough assessment process for prospective foster carers in line with NMS 17.6. The inspector examined a sample of new foster carer assessments and found that the assessment process was methodically followed and the assessment of qualities, competences and aptitudes for fostering the service considered all the areas outlined in NMS 17.7.

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**

The service has clear, comprehensive and sound employment practices in relation to both staff and foster carers. The service also has a comprehensive staff handbook that includes health and safety policy for foster carers, children and staff, as well as a whistle blowing policy.

The inspector's examination of staff and foster carer's files showed that the service has good management systems in place, in respect of the supervision, appraisal and support of staff and foster carers. Evidence from discussions with foster carers showed that there was a management and support service available for them 24 hours a day. Many of the foster carers said that this service was supportive and felt reassured that they could get advice at any time.

The service has an appropriate level of public liability and professional indemnity insurance.

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**

There was evidence from discussions with staff, staff files, and the training programme that the service provides good quality training events to develop individual skills and knowledge, and to make sure that staff are able to keep up to date with legal and professional developments. The training programme over the next few months included dealing with complaints, sex offenders in the workplace, and adoption and permanency. In addition, social work staff were able to attend courses on the foster carer training programme.

The inspector found that the new member of staff had started their induction programme within seven days of starting work, and was in the process of identifying their training needs with their supervisor.

The staff who had been with the service for over a year all had had an appraisal that identified their training and development needs, and this was documented on their personnel files.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

All the staff interviewed during the course of the inspection said that they felt supported. There was evidence from staff files and discussions that staff have clear written details of their duties and responsibilities, and copies of the service's policies and procedures. They have regular supervision with their line manager, and a record was kept of the content and outcome of the meeting. In addition the service has a staff appraisal system and evidence of this was found on staff files. Staff meetings take place regularly and are recorded.

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

4

The fostering service has a clear strategy and procedures for working with foster carers outlined in the TACT Foster Carer and Supervising Social Worker Standards and Practice Guidance. This document contained all the areas identified in NMS 21.2 including the arrangements for training and development, supervision, support services, information and advice, and out of hours support. In addition the service pays the membership for carers to join the Fostering Network.

The inspector observed a foster carer support group. The meeting was attended by twelve foster carers and facilitated by a social worker. This was only the second occasion that the group had met, and the social worker told the inspector that the plan was for the foster carers to manage the group eventually. The meeting provided an opportunity for the social worker to share information such as the upcoming training programme, for foster carers to raise issues and ask questions, and to discuss their experiences as carers. The group was made up of people already looking after children, those waiting for their first placement, and prospective foster carers. The inspector found the group enthusiastic, open about their experiences, willing to talk about some of the difficulties they have had, and willing to share advice. They were extremely supportive of each other.

The inspector found from discussions with social worker staff and foster carers that they were clear about the role of supervising social worker. Annual review reports were kept on foster carers' files, and the inspector observed an annual review report being presented to the Fostering Panel.

Evidence from inspection questionnaires showed that foster carers were very satisfied with the support they received from the service. The following comments were made by foster carers:

'There is always someone to talk to if you have concerns'

'My social worker phones and visits me regularly. I can phone them anytime day and night if I need to'

'They provide lots of training, always on hand for advice, they show concern for us as carers as well as the children we care for, and keep in regular contact by phone as well as visits'

There was evidence that there was a good system of communication between the fostering service social workers and the child's social worker. The comments that the inspector received from children's social workers about the service were positive. One social worker in their inspection questionnaire said that the service and the foster carers were *'committed to the children, cooperative with plans, and able to work in partnership'*.

Discussions with the service's social workers and evidence from the written records showed that the social workers were able to represent the service with placing authorities in order to ensure that care plans are made and followed through for the children in placement. Some foster carers told the inspector about their frustrations with the placing authorities, in particular not being able to get hold of the child's social worker at times, and they felt that the service was extremely supportive and offered great assistance in dealing with this issue.

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?**

4

The inspector found that the foster carers files contained Foster Carer Agreements in line with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2001 outlining clearly and comprehensively the information that foster carers need to know to carry out their duties effectively. In addition where children are placed with foster carers in an emergency the service makes a supplementary agreement with them in line with Regulation 38. The inspector found from discussions with foster carers that they were aware of what was expected of them, and what they could expect of the fostering service.

The written records showed that each approved foster carer was supervised by an appropriately qualified social worker. The inspector found evidence of commendable practice. The records also showed that the supervising social worker regularly contacted and visited foster carers in line with the service's policy and in line with NMS 22.6. Details of each contact and visit were documented on the foster carers' files. These records were thorough and detailed, and clearly showed how the supervising social worker was providing support to foster carers, as well as monitoring their practice and helping them to develop their skills. This included identifying training needs and advice on dealing with particular issues. Also, the records showed that the supervising social worker meet regularly alone with children to seek their views about the foster home.

The service has a system of practical support for foster carers including all the areas outlined in NMS 22.7 such as out of hours management support, and respite care where necessary. The inspector found that a support worker was regularly providing assistance by taking children out to enable the foster carers a break. This was a good example of the service providing practical support for the foster carers.

The inspector found from the inspection questionnaires and from speaking to foster carers that they had received information that covers policies and procedures, guidance, legal information and insurance details, complaints, and investigations into allegations.

The services has a system for recording and monitoring allegations of abuse and a clear policy outlining the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the register.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

The fostering service offers foster carers a comprehensive training programme covering a wide range of relevant issues including child protection, child development, communicating with children, child sexual abuse, safe care, challenging behaviour and recording skills.

The inspector didn't have the opportunity to observe any training events, but found that comments from foster carers and staff about the quality and relevance of the training was extremely positive. They felt that the training met their needs and helped to develop their caring skills. One foster carer said that the training *'helps prepare you for caring, is relevant, and you always come away feeling you've learnt something.'*

The records showed that foster carers took the opportunity to attend training, and that the service took great efforts to tailor the courses to meet the specific needs of foster carers.

The inspectors found that the foster carer training fits in the framework of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice. The service ensured that training takes place at venues and times convenient for the carers.

Foster carers' annual reviews included an analysis of their training and developmental needs and made recommendations about training.

There was evidence that consideration was given to support the children of foster carers through the supervising social worker, and training and social events. In the past the service has organised a support group for children who foster.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The fostering service had recently introduced a new case file and recording policy. The policy outlined the format and content of the files, clarifies what information should be kept on children's and foster carer's files.

The registered manager informed the inspector that not all the files had been organised using the new policy because of the lack of administration support until very recently. The inspector examined a sample of five children's files and found that the files were well maintained and kept up to date. The files included all the relevant information about the children, including their basic details, legal status, the type of placement, background history, copies of their care plan, reviews and other relevant LAC documents, details about their health, education, the arrangements for contact, records of any incidents involving the children, and records of supervision visits to the foster home and interviews with the children.

In discussions with foster carers the inspector found that they were aware of the reasons why the child is being looked after, the care and placement plans for the child and their legal status. The foster carers felt that the service provided them with all the information they had about the child's history, but on occasions felt that the information didn't provide a full picture to help them understand the child and their behaviour. The registered manager told the inspector that they have had some difficulties receiving all the relevant information about some children. In the cases where some information had not been made available by the placing authority there was evidence, in the form of records of telephone calls and letters, that the service had taken appropriate steps to obtain the information.

The training programmes and responses to inspection questionnaires showed that foster carers had received training in recording skills. Also that training in life story work was planned for 2005. The inspector found that the foster carers were recording significant life events for the child, and that they store information in a secure manner.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

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

The inspector found that the fostering service kept separate records for staff, foster carers, children, complaints and allegations. The service has a clearly written policy in relation to the confidential nature of the records and the requirement to keep records securely at all times. Also, there was an access to records policy in accordance with the principles of The Data Protection Act 1998, which provides guidance for staff and foster carers. There was both an internal and external audit of the service's records and a system in place to remedy any deficiencies found in the recording system.

The service maintained all the records outlined in Schedule 2 including a children's register, permanent and private record for each child, foster carer. These records were kept securely. In addition, it kept all the information about prospective foster carers and their households in line with Schedule 3.

The service has a computerised system, however, in the main, the records of children and foster carers are in a written form. There was a written policy and procedural guidance for staff in the keeping and retention of case files. From the examination of the records and procedures, and through interviews with staff and foster carers, the inspector found evidence that all those involved in the service were aware of the of the procedures, in relation to the storing and management of confidential information.

There was a system for keeping records about allegations and complaints, but at the time of the inspection the service had not received any allegations or complaints.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

7

Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:

7

Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:

0

Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:

9

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:

2

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

At the time of the inspection the service had only recently moved into the premises and was very much still in the process of unpacking and organising the office. The registered manager told the inspector about the plans for the space including a separate office for themselves specifically for supervision and an area for foster carers visiting the office to use. The premises provided considerably more spacious accommodation than the services previous office, and were appropriate to the number of staff and the needs of the service.

The service had efficient and robust administrative systems, including IT and communication systems. The premises had facilities for the secure retention of records in a lockable room, appropriate measures to safeguard IT systems, and a sound security system.

Staff have sufficient appropriate equipment for them to undertake their duties efficiently.

The premises and its contents are adequately 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

The inspector examined TACT's Business Plan 2004-2006. The plan was able to demonstrate the services financial viability and a strategy to develop the services it provides in Liverpool.

TACT is a registered charity consequently only the regulations and guidelines in relation to the income tax and national insurance of their employees are applicable.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspector found that TACT has a clearly written set of principles and standards governing its financial management outlining the roles and responsibilities of particular people including managers in the organisation.

The inspector were able to evidence, through an examination of the fiscal systems, documentation and interviews with the registered manager that there are clear documented financial arrangements for the control and supervision of its financial affairs.

There systems in place to enable to evidence that the registered provider to regularly receive information on the financial state of the service. The senior management team and Trustees, also examine a detailed, financial statement, on an annual basis.

The inspector was told that the financial accounts are audited, on an annual basis, by an independent firm of registered accountants.

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

TACT has a clear policy on foster carer's allowances and expenses, which are reviewed on an annual basis. Each foster carer within the service is provided with a copy of the foster carer allowances and expenses.

The inspector found that service provided an efficient payment system. During the course of the inspection, there was no suggestion that foster carers were experiencing any difficulties with the payment of allowances and expenses. Foster carers said that they were paid promptly.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspector observed the Fostering Panel and interviewed the Panel Chair, and found the Fostering Panel was well managed and operated in an effective manner in line with Regulations 24, 25, and 26, and NMS 30. The Fostering Panel had clear written policies and procedures outlining the make up of the panel membership, its functions and constitution, and decision-making, including when all panel members were not in agreement. The inspector found that the written procedures were implemented in practice.

The Panel membership was made up of representatives from the fostering service including a legal advisor, and independent members including an independent chair, foster carer from another service, independent social worker, adoptive parent, people with expertise in health and education, and a person who had been placed with foster carers as a child. All the panel members had undertaken appropriate checks including CRB disclosure to assess their suitability before been allowed to sit on the Panel, and they all had experience of fostering.

The Panel had access to advice from TACT's medical advisor. However, the inspector noted that the medical advisors comments were not always recorded on the applications. The registered manager should make sure that all relevant medical information and comments about prospective foster carers are included in the applications brought to the Fostering Panel.

The Panel considered the applications of three sets of prospective foster carers, and one foster carer annual review. The Panel was extremely thorough and rigorous in its consideration of each application, and raised issues and asked questions in a sensitive manner. The inspection formed the view that Panel was keen not to approve application without having all the relevant information, and unless members felt that the prospective foster carers were suitable and had demonstrated the skills and competence to care for looked after children. The Panel was equally as rigorous in its consideration of foster carer annual reviews. The inspector observed the Panel providing a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process and the work of assessors, and giving feedback on the quality of assessments.

The inspector also examined TACT's annual report on the work of its Fostering Panels between November 2002 and October 2003 that outlined the performance of the Panels, commented on the range and type of carers approved, and identified areas for development.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The registered manager told the inspector that the service does not provide a short-term break service at present, but was keen to develop such a service and had received inquiries from prospective carers who were interested in this type of fostering. This standard was not assessed on this occasion.	9
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Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
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This standard is not applicable to the fostering service.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 20th – 28th September 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

YES

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

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 22nd November 2004, 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

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I, Kathy Blythe of The Adolescent & Children's Trust, 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 KATHY BLYTHE
Signature _____
Designation HEAD OF SOCIAL WORK
Date 22.11.04.

Or

D.3.2 I, Kathy Blythe of The Adolescent & Children's Trust, 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

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