



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

The Adolescent and Children`s Trust

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

Lead Inspector
Mr Nick Veysey

Announced Inspection
24th –28th October 2005 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	The Adolescent and Children`s Trust
Address	Century Buildings 18 Tower Street Brunswick Business Park Liverpool L3 4BJ
Telephone number	020 869 58111
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	www.tactfostercare.org.uk
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	The Adolescent and Children`s Trust
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mrs Janice Rutherford
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies
No. of places registered (if applicable)	0
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

1. The Manager completes, by 2005, a qualification at NVQ Level 4 in management or another qualification which matches the competencies required by NVQ Level 4.

Date of last inspection 20th September 2004

Brief Description of the Service:

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

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

TACT North West is based in Liverpool and provides fostering services for children from birth up to the age of 17. At the time of the inspection the service was caring for 15 children between the ages of 1 and 14. It had twelve sets of approved foster carers. In addition, the Fostering Panel recently recommended that a further two sets of foster carers are approved.

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

SUMMARY

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

The inspection took place over six days in October 2005, and a total of thirty hours. The inspector spoke with seven children being cared for by the service, six foster carers, including the representative of the foster carer group, the regional manager, area manager, three supervising social workers, the administrative officer, and two local authority social workers who have children using the service. The inspector visited four foster carer's homes, and also read questionnaires filled in by children and foster carers. In addition, the inspector examined records and policies, and attended the Fostering Panel.

What the service does well:

This is a fostering service that works really hard to make sure that children live with foster carers who are capable of meeting their needs and keeping them safe from harm. Children were very positive about their foster carers and the support they were receiving. One said 'it's sound' and another said 'I don't have one thing about living here I like the best because I like everything'.

Children live in warm and friendly homes with caring and dedicated foster carers. There were many examples of children making pleasing progress in their health and development, and also achieving in school.

The fostering service is managed efficiently by people with suitable skills and experiences, and delivers a high level of support to foster carers and the children living with them. Foster carers said that supervising social workers were friendly and helpful, and there was always someone available when they needed them.

What has improved since the last inspection?

A great deal of planning takes place before children move to live with foster carers to make sure they have the relevant information about children and their needs, and are clear about the arrangements for caring for them.

Children have the opportunity to meet foster carers before they go to live with them. Giving children the chance to become familiar with the foster carers and their family, neighbourhood, and family pets before moving in.

What they could do better:

There are management systems in place for reviewing and monitoring the running of the service and the quality of the care provided. Records show that the service reviews its practice and looks at ways to improve. But the service needs to make sure that it monitors all the relevant issues set out in the regulations.

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

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

12

Children's welfare is closely monitored and their health needs are well met. The promotion of healthy lifestyles is taken seriously.

EVIDENCE:

Children said that foster carers give them advice about staying healthy and how to look after themselves. One young person said that the foster carers 'encourage me to eat healthily'.

Children's records and individual placement agreements clearly describe their health needs and who has responsibility to make sure that good health is maintained. Children are registered with a GP, dentist and optician. They have health checks at appropriate intervals and ongoing appointments for specialist treatment were being kept and the outcomes recorded. Foster carers keep detailed records about children's health and development.

There are clear arrangements for written consents for emergency medical treatment and foster carers are clear about the arrangements for giving children medicines. Foster carers have had training in first aid and health issues. They are clear about their role in maintaining and promoting healthy lifestyles and have good links with health workers such health visitors, community paediatricians, and psychologists.

Foster carers described how they are discouraging young people from smoking, monitoring their diets and encouraging them to take part in physical activity. One of the young people's social workers said that the foster carers managed health issues in a sensitive way and this has led to improvements in the young person's health and feeling of well-being. There was evidence from health professional's recordings on children's files that show children were making excellent progress in their health and development.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, and 15 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 & 30.

Children live with suitable foster carers capable of meeting their needs and making sure they are protected from harm.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carer's provide children with warm and nurturing homes. The accommodation is comfortable, and decorated and maintained to a good standard. Younger children have suitable safety equipment. Children said that they had chosen how they had their rooms. Their bedrooms are decorated and furnished to meet young people's individual tastes and characteristics. There was sufficient space to provide them with personal space and privacy. Records show that supervising social workers carry out regular health and safety checks of foster carer's homes to make sure they are free of hazards and continue to meet the children's needs.

Supervising social workers described the procedure for matching children with foster carers. This included getting relevant information about children to enable them to identify suitable foster carers capable of meeting their needs. Records showed that they get written details about children's health, education, and cultural needs. Also, their care plans, assessments about them and their families, arrangements for contact with the children's family, and any risky behaviour.

Foster carers said that they usually get a lot of information about the child before they meet them, and if they need more details the supervising social workers were very good at making sure they get it.

Records showed that planning meetings take place and written foster placement agreements are completed before children moved to live with foster carers. These agreements were detailed and contained information about children's needs and the arrangements for meeting them. This included, for example, practical arrangements for pocket money, contact, supporting children's education, consents for medical treatment, school trips, and staying overnight with friends.

Children, where practicable, had the opportunity to meet foster carers before they went to live with them. Giving children the chance to make an informed view about the placement and become familiar with the foster carers and their family, neighbourhood, and any family pets before moving in. There were some good examples of introductions being planned in a thoughtful way. There was evidence that carefully planned introductions had enabled the children to move in a positive way that was sensitive to their needs and feelings. Where introductions can't take place the service tries to make sure that children have information about the people they are going to live with. This includes showing children a photo album of the foster carers, their family, house, and any pets, so at least they are able to picture what the foster carers and their home look like.

Children said foster carers give them advice about keeping safe and telling them if they had any worries. Foster carers were knowledgeable about child protection procedures and described what they do to make sure children are safe. They have had training in child protection, managing behaviour, and caring for children who have been abused. Records showed foster carers have comprehensive safe caring plans that set out the ways how they make sure everyone in the house is protected from harm.

Foster carers are good at sharing any concerns they may have about children with TACT and the children's social workers. One of the children's social workers said 'the foster carers let me know what I need to know about the children.' There were examples of foster carers working well with social services, schools and health workers to make sure children are safe. The service is vigilant about protecting children, making sure that foster carer's concerns are taken seriously, and that foster carers are given all the information about children and their families to enable them to protect the children, their own children and themselves.

Foster carers have clear written guidelines for managing children's behaviour and what are suitable punishments. Children felt the punishments were ok. Comments from foster carers and children showed that foster carers use communication and positive parenting techniques to encourage acceptable

behaviour. They reward positive behaviour and use 'time out' or 'grounding' to help children reflect on any unacceptable behaviour and think about why it wasn't ok. Foster carers said that these methods work really well. They also said they get a lot of advice and support about managing behaviour from their supervising social worker.

The managers, supervising social workers, and social workers carrying out assessments of foster carers are suitably qualified and experienced. They have the knowledge and skills to manage and work in a fostering service. The staff recruitment and selection procedure is thorough. Staff files showed that TACT collects and verifies relevant information about people wishing to work in the home to make sure children are protected. However, TACT have not carried out CRB checks on some admin staff due to the advice they had been given by the CRB. This has now been rectified.

The Fostering Panel is well organised, extremely thorough and effectively run to make sure that good decisions are made about the approval of suitable foster carers, and make sure that children in foster care are well looked after and protected from harm. The Panel is made up of suitably qualified and experienced people who are knowledgeable about foster care and the needs` of vulnerable children.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

7, 13 & 31

Education is actively promoted and children are encouraged and supported to develop their skills and to achieve their full potential.

EVIDENCE:

Comments from foster carers and staff showed that they value diversity and are providing services that reflect and meet children's needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, culture and sexuality. There were examples of foster carers working with children on issues such as identity and social skills to build their confidence and feelings of self-worth.

Foster carers encourage children to develop their talents and interests. Children said that they encouraged to do things they like doing such as playing football, going swimming and dancing. One child said 'the foster carer's have bought me fishing gear so I can go fishing with my friends'. Another child said 'it's good living here because we do fun things.'

Foster carers give a high priority to education. They were clear about their role in supporting the children's education and had established good links with the children's schools. They attend parents' evenings and other school activities, and frequently discuss children's progress with their teachers. Children are encouraged to support and develop their abilities and skills. Children said that they like school. The inspector observed a foster carer helping a child to develop their language skills. One child said 'the foster carers help me with my homework and make sure that I get it done'.

Foster carers spoke positively about children's achievements and progress. One foster carer said 'we are really proud of them for getting a certificate for 100% attendance.' There was evidence from children's records and their social workers that they were making excellent progress in school. A social worker said 'the foster carers work really hard on the children's education. One of the children found school difficult and was struggling, but now has such a positive attitude about school'.

The service is currently not offering any short-term breaks for children, but it is an area where they are trying to recruit suitable foster carers.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

10 & 11

Appropriate contact between children and their families and friends is encouraged to help them maintain relationships. Children's views are sought over matters affecting their daily lives and futures.

EVIDENCE:

All the children the inspector met were having regular contact with their families. One child said the best thing about fostering was 'being part of a family, but also having contact with my birth family'. Foster carers and children were clear about the arrangements for contact. Children's wishes and feelings are listened to. Comments from foster carers and the records showed how they were supporting and encouraging children to see their families. Foster carers kept detailed records about the outcomes of contact, children's feelings about seeing their families, and the impact upon them.

There were examples of foster carers helping children to understand the reasons for changes in contact arrangements, and a foster carer advocating for a child who wished to see a particular family member.

Foster carers were aware of the importance of contact and that it takes place safely in line with the agreed arrangements. They have had training in contact issues and working with children's families. They said that their supervising social workers are very supportive if there are any issues about contact. A social worker said 'the foster carers are calm and reassuring with the children around contact, and want to get everything right for them.'

Children said that foster carers asked them about things affecting them including day to day things such as what they want for tea, what sort of things

they would like to do, and how things are going at school. Also, they said supervising social workers asked them what it was like living with the foster carers. Records showed that the supervising social workers met with children alone on a regular basis to seek their views. Children's views about their foster carers are included in the foster carers annual review. The views and feelings of the foster carer's own children are also sought and recorded.

Children knew how to make a complaint if they were unhappy. One child showed the inspector TACT's children's guide that included information about how to complain and contact numbers for children's help lines and the Commission.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

29

There is a clear and efficient system for paying allowances to foster carers.

EVIDENCE:

There is a written policy on fostering allowances. Foster carers said that they have up to date information about allowances and expenses. They said they were happy with the payments and were paid promptly, and received allowances for holidays and children's birthdays in plenty of time before the actual event.

Management

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

2, 4, 5, 17, 20, 21, 22 & 24

The fostering service is managed efficiently by people with suitable skills and experiences, and delivers a high level of support to foster carers and children living with them

EVIDENCE:

The area manager has the necessary qualifications, experience, knowledge, skills and competence to run the service effectively. They are currently working towards the Diploma in Management, which they are due to complete in June 2006. There is clear leadership and the service is run in a way that delivers good childcare practice. The service is only small and everyone works extremely well together. Staff are supportive of each other and work flexibly to make sure that foster carers and children receive a good service.

Supervising social workers said that they are well supported on a daily basis and by supervision. Records showed that they had regular supervision and annual appraisals. They were aware of their duties and responsibilities and had written guidance on the services policies and procedures. Team meetings take place regularly.

The organisation has a clear structure with lines of delegation and accountability. There are arrangements in place for the running of the service in the manager's absence. The regional manager exercises effective oversight of the running of the service, and there are good lines of communication between the service and the organisation nationally. Social workers said that the senior management team is accessible and is very good at seeking their views about the development of the service.

There is a clear procedure for recruiting and approving suitable foster carers. Assessments of people wishing to become foster carers are thorough and comprehensive. The reports are detailed and methodically consider people's experiences, qualities, competences and aptitudes for caring for vulnerable children.

There are management systems in place for reviewing and monitoring the running of the service and the quality of the care provided. Records show that it reviews its practice and looks at ways to improve the service it provides. But the service needs to make sure that it monitors all the relevant issues and makes available written reports of the outcome of the review of care in all the area offices.

There are clear arrangements for supporting foster carers. The role of the supervising social worker is clear to both the worker and the foster carers. Foster carers are aware of what is expected of them, and they have comprehensive written foster carer agreements, and written guidance on the services policies and procedures. Foster carers knew about the complaints procedure and about the arrangements for dealing with allegations made against foster carers.

Foster carers said that they were very satisfied with the level of support they receive. One said 'there is always somebody on hand to help and guide you, or visit if necessary'. Another said ' TACT provide support on a 24 hour basis which is very reassuring. Knowing that help is available can have a positive effect on how you handle a difficult situation.' Records showed that supervising social workers visit foster carers regularly to provide formal supervision, to make sure they are looking after children in line with the placement agreement and the service's guidance, and to discuss children's progress and any difficulties they may be experiencing. In addition, the records show that supervising social workers are in regular contact with foster carers by telephone.

There are good links between the fostering service and the children's social workers. One of the social workers said 'I've got a good relationship with TACT, they are really helpful and supportive.'

Annual reviews of foster carers are prepared and made available to the Fostering Panels. The reports are detailed and thorough and include the views of the children using the service and their social workers.

Children's records are comprehensive and up to date. The service is good at making sure foster carers have access to relevant information to enable them to know about children's specific needs and care for them appropriately. Foster carers understood why children were living with them, the likely length of the placement, and children's legal status.

Foster carers have guidance about recording information about significant events and children's experiences and feelings while they are living with them. Foster carers keep detailed journals. The service is about to introduce a new method of recording information for foster carers. This is a much more structured way of recording and should help the service collate information about children more efficiently. Foster carers are aware of children's rights to privacy and confidentiality and make sure that information about them is kept safely.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	4

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	4
8	3
9	3
15	2
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	4
31	X

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	4
11	3

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

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

No

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS4	42 & Schedule 7	The registered provider must make sure that they monitor all the matters set out in Schedule 7.	31/12/05
2	FS15	20 & Schedule 1	The registered provider must obtain checks from the Criminal records Bureau in respect of all persons seeking to carry on, manage or work for the purposes of a fostering service.	30/10/05

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS4	The registered provider should make sure that copies of reports showing the outcome of the review of care are available in each area office.
2	FS8	The registered provider should make sure that individual foster placement agreements are signed and dated by the relevant foster carers.
3	FS8	The registered provider should develop the documents it uses to consider matching children with suitable foster

		carers to include a specific section on contact arrangements with children's families and the impact of these arrangements on any prospective placement.
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