



Champions for  
Social Care  
Improvement

# inspection report

Fostering Services

**Adolescent and Children`s Trust, The**

The Courtyard

303 Hither Green Lane

London

SE13 6TJ

6-10th and 20th October 2003

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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

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

### **The role of CSCI is to:**

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

## **Inspection Methods & Findings**

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

### **The 4-point scale ranges from:**

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

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

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

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

**FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

NO

**Name of Authority**

**Address**

**Local Authority Manager**

**Tel No:**

**Address**

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

YES

**Name of Agency**

Adolescent and Children`s Trust, The

**Tel No**

020 8695 8111

**Address**

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

**Fax No**

020 8697 8828

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

G020000385

**Name of Registered Provider**

The Adolescent and Children`s Trust

**Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)**

Ms Mary Elizabeth Griffith-Jones

**Date of first registration**

26th March 2003

**Date of latest registration certificate**

26th March 2003

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

NO

**Date of last inspection**

17.12. 02

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		6th October 2003	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		10:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Sue Nott	105781
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>			

**Introduction to Report and Inspection**

**Inspection visits**

**Description of Fostering Service**

**Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings**

**Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State**

**Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection**

**Statutory Requirements from this Inspection**

**Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection**

**Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings**

**(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)**

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

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

**Part D: Provider's Response**

**D.1. Provider's comments**

**D.2. Action Plan**

**D.3. Provider's agreement**

## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

## INSPECTION VISITS

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

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

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

The agency's main aim is to recruit, approve and support foster carers for looked after children needing substitute family care. At the time of inspection, it had seven branches nationwide. The Hither Green office deals with the central administration of the organisation, and is the premises for the London (South East) branch of the operation. TACT also has regional branches in North London, Wales, Liverpool, Bristol, Birmingham and the East Midlands. However, the North London office was shortly to close, and join with the south London branch. The South London branch had 53 placements provided by 45 carers.

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

## **PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **Inspector's Summary**

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



This inspection was carried out 10 months after the previous inspection. The agency was still in the process of working on some of the requirements and recommendations from the last inspection, and the timescale between inspections was taken into account by the inspector. It was found that many of the National Minimum Standards had been met or partially met. Interviews with carers and young people indicated that the quality of foster care provided was of a good standard.

**Statement of Purpose** (Standard 1)

The agency has recently revised the statement of purpose, and it now meets the areas required of this standard.

The children's guide had just been finished, and was informative and user friendly.

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

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

**Management of the fostering service** (Standards 4-5)

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

**Securing and promoting welfare** (Standards 6-14)

The fostering agency was thorough in their approval procedures, ensuring carers who provided safe, healthy and nurturing environments for the foster children and young people. The agency was reviewing its policy around recruitment, and planned to widen its carer base. Although it was clear that there was a basic strategy for recruiting carers to meet the demands on the agency, this was now being more targeted to ensure that families would be recruited that would best meet the needs of the range of children requiring substitute families.

There was an emphasis on valuing and promoting equality, and efforts were being made to reflect this in its service. However, there was a need for the service to provide literature in a variety of languages and to develop appropriate communication systems to meet the special needs of children or young people using the service.

TACT recognised the importance of the matching process for the foster child and carer. However, this process was impaired by the difficulties in obtaining all the necessary relevant information, and documentation about a child or young person from the placing authority. It aimed to protect each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation through appropriate checks and providing appropriate training to carers of looked after children and dealing with issues of child protection.

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

Overall there were good recruitment and selection procedures to ensure the employment of appropriately qualified and experienced staff. Staff were supported by their managers, and generally reported that communication had improved, and this needed to continue.

Support to carers was particularly good, and carers were without exception extremely positive about the service they and the children placed with them received from the agency.

**Records** (Standards 24-25)

These standards were only partially met due to the lack of background information on the children and young people from local authorities on some files. Efforts were, however, being made to address this. Otherwise records seen and the quality of recording was satisfactory. Files were secured and stored appropriately.

**Fitness of premises** (Standard 26)

The offices were appropriately laid out for the space available. There was a satisfactory level of security provided. However, the first floor of the building was not accessible to service

users and staff who are wheel chair users. It was fully insured.

**Financial requirements** (Standard 27-29)

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

**Fostering panel** (Standard 30)

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

**Short-term breaks** (Standard 31)

Not applicable to this service.

**Family and friends as carers** (Standard 32)

Not applicable to this service.

## **Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State**

**(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)**

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

**The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:**

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

**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	
1	FSR 2002 11	FS8	The provider must ensure that each child, or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting his/her assessed needs. Appropriate and sufficient information must be received about each child from the placing authority.	30. 05. 03.

**Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.**

**COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)**

**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

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

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	
<b>Comments</b>		

**Lead Inspector**      **Sue Nott**      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Second Inspector**      \_\_\_\_\_      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Locality Manager**      **Peter Nunn**      **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**      \_\_\_\_\_

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	FSR 2002 11a	FS6	The provider must ensure that all foster carers providing transport for children placed do so in a safe and appropriate manner.	Immediate
2	FSR 2002 11	FS8	The provider must ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting their assessed needs. Appropriate and sufficient information, therefore, must be received from the placing authority.	31.03.04
3	FSR 2002 15.1	FS12	Full details of the health needs of a child to be placed must be provided to carers either before placement, or as soon as possible after placement.	31. 03.04
4	FSR 2002 20.3	FS15	The provider must ensure that records are kept of all staff and panel members' checks, CV's and references.	31.01.04

### 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	FS66	The agency should obtain a copy of the carer's household insurers' written confirmation of notification of fostering activity to keep on the carers file.
2	FS77	Although progress had been made on evidencing recognition of diversity issues, the agency should ensure that the staff group and panel are working together on this area, and provide joint training to provide an opportunity for this.
3	FS1616	Management should ensure that staff are consulted in good time on practice and staffing issues, and where possible staff and carers contribute to any relevant working parties.
4	FS2424	Summaries of assessment visits should be recorded on files.

\* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

## **PART B                      INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

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

Number of Inspector days spent	7
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	29/09/03
Time of Inspection	10 A.M.
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	48



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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

## Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

### Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

TACT had recently expanded and revised its general statement of purpose to cover all the areas required. It now provides a much clear picture of the services provided, such as its outreach and contact services, as well as including a copy of its national organisational structure. Additional sheets, relevant to the individual branches, give details of staff employed regionally, and up to date statistics relating to the numbers of approved carers, children placed and complaints made. The ongoing developments in services provided, such as the appointment of an educational consultant, will need to be incorporated at the next review. The inspector was also provided with copies of the policies, procedures and written guidance that are available for staff and carers regarding the functions of the service. These were up to date, and accurately reflected the statement of purpose.

The agency had developed a children's guide, which was newly printed, and was well laid out, informative, and contained all the necessary details to meet this standard. It was user friendly, and gave space for it to be tailored to meet the varied needs of individual children. It was planned to continue to develop this guide, and explore printing it in different languages and formats to make it inclusive for all children placed.

## 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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The competence of senior management staff was evidenced during interviews, discussions with staff, and examination of personnel files, written systems and documentation. The manager was suitably experienced and qualified to manage the fostering service. She had professional qualifications in social work, and had worked in the fostering and adoption field for twenty five years. She had previous experience of management, and was in the process of completing a Diploma in Management Studies. The manager demonstrated a commitment to developing a quality service to meet the needs of a diverse group of children, and there was evidence of efforts to recruit qualified and knowledgeable staff. There was effective leadership of staff in operating the service, and evidence of a consistent management approach being developed amongst the management team, and a recognition of the need to continue with a team building approach.

The responsible individual had been employed in the social care field for twenty eight years. She held a relevant social work qualification, and since 1987 held a variety of middle and senior managerial positions in childcare services. In 2002, she took up her present post with TACT as Corporate Service Manager.

The inspector was advised that managers are encouraged to develop their skills, and are given training and support to manage the fostering service in an efficient and effective manner. The present management structure was being reviewed in light of the continued expansion of the agency, and a need to focus resources in areas of highest demand. It was evident from examination of the personnel files, discussion with staff and direct observation made by the inspector, that all the members of staff, employed within the fostering team, held appropriate qualifications relevant to their positions. There was relevant managerial, childcare and fostering experience within the staff group. Staff advised the inspector that their managers supported them in continuing their professional development.

**Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)**

**Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.**

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

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

## Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

**Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)**

**There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

In discussion with managers, staff and carers, and on examination of procedures, it was evident that managers and staff were clear of their roles and lines of accountability. Most staff felt that communication between management and workers had improved since there had been greater stability in the staff group. Information was generally shared, but some staff said that there was a still a need for earlier consultation of staff views, before agency decisions were made.

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

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

A system of auditing foster carers files had been implemented. From the sample of files seen by the inspector, there was evidence confirming this system was operational. The form contained space for an action plan to be completed within an agreed timescale.

The financial systems were well organised with a reviewing procedure to ensure systems are kept up-to-date. The agency provides information regarding the charges for each of its fostering services, which were clear and detailed, and which were available to purchasers of the services. The corporate service manager was provided with monthly financial management reports. An unannounced annual financial audit was carried out by head office, in addition to regular financial auditing by an independent accountancy firm.

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

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

**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.**

X

**Serious complaint about a foster parent.**

3

**Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.**

0

**Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:**

0

**Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:**

0

**Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)****The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

All members of the management team were new in post at the last inspection, and had needed time to address the outstanding issues in the agency, and to establish appropriate systems for themselves and staff.

There were clear job descriptions for the area manager and social work team manager that outlined their respective duties and responsibilities. Discussion with both managers, as well as with staff, confirmed that managerial responsibility, levels of delegation, and lines of accountability were clearly well defined. There were also clear arrangements to identify who would deputise in the absence of the manager of the service, and all staff spoken to were fully aware of this arrangement.

From interviews with managers and staff, examination of a variety of documentation, as well as the financial and management information systems in place, the inspector was of the opinion that the TACT fostering service was managed effectively and efficiently.

## 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?

2

There was evidence from carers visited, and children's and placing officer questionnaires, and examination of files that accommodation provided was suitable, and that carers provided safe and healthy environments. A comprehensive health and safety form was completed during the assessment process, and this was followed up at panel consideration.

The inspector was advised that training was provided on promoting and safeguarding the welfare of the child during the Choosing to Foster course.

The agency did not complete an individualised risk assessment form when a child was placed, but this was being developed.

All documentation relating to the foster carer's vehicles and insurance should be seen and checked by the supervising social worker. It was not always clear that this had been done, and there was evidence that not all foster carers ensured that the children travelling in their cars wore seat belts.

In the foster carer agreement, the agency requests that the foster carer notifies their household insurance company of their fostering activity, and receives written confirmation from the insurance company that the fostered child or children will be considered members of their household. The inspector would recommend that TACT obtains a copy of the insurers' written confirmation to keep on the carers file.

### 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

The agency was keen to show that this was an issue they took seriously, and the manager provided a summary of work to demonstrate how TACT aims to meet this standard. This included incorporating these issues as integral to the training of carers and staff recruitment of an ethnically and culturally diverse group of carers, recruitment of an ethnically mixed social work team, provision of food on courses reflected the culture of those attending, and the provision of toys and posters in the crèche, which reflected a multiracial environment.

There was also regular use of interpreters for the children placed, and attempts to establish links with cultural centres and churches.

The fostering service has an equal opportunities policy, which promotes diversity and anti – discriminatory practice. From discussion with the managers of the service and staff, there was evidence of a commitment to ensure that children are provided with a service that values diversity. There is also an acknowledgement that black and dual heritage children are over represented in the care system locally.

The inspector was informed that the service is making efforts to recruit carers from white European, and Asian communities.

The service should provide literature in a variety of languages to meet the needs of those children and young people using the service.

The service provides information about community activities for children and carers, and financial support to allow children to pursue interests and talents.

However, there had been no joint training with staff and panel members around diversity issues.

#### **Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)**

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

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
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The inspector was concerned at the agency's continuing difficulty with obtaining relevant background information from placing authorities, in spite of evidence on some files examined that efforts were being made to pursue the paperwork. There was a resignation amongst some social work staff that they could not affect any real change to improve this situation. The issue was raised by carers during a support group, observed by the inspector. A carer said that information regarding a known medical risk to a child in her care had not been provided by the local authority social worker. The carer suggested that supervising social workers could arrange to read the child or young person's file at Social Services. Although this was not thought to be appropriate by staff facilitating the group, the inspector felt this would be valid practice for the agency where children are already in placement, and where fuller paperwork is not forthcoming. Many of the agency's placements are of a much longer length than originally forecast, and this information is vital to the carers.

Although the service does not provide out of hours placements, it does provide emergency placements during office hours, and in these situations, information can be limited in the early stages. The service, nevertheless, endeavoured to obtain as much information as possible, in respect of the child or young person at the point of referral, and had developed a detailed and comprehensive referral form.

The inspector was informed that the service aims to provide well matched, quality placements, but without relevant information this would be difficult to achieve in practice.

The agency requested that the referring local authority provided a care plan, all relevant "looked after children" documentation, and any other records concerning the child considered necessary to enable a foster carer to care for a child.

In matching a child to foster carers, there was evidence of a verbal sharing of information between the relevant professionals, and potential carers. Consideration was also given to the child's racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs, but there was recognition that these could not always be met. The inspector was informed that where carers are unable to reflect some of these needs, additional training and support was given.

Any additional training and support that is provided to carers should be identified in the written foster placement agreement.

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



During the inspection, a sample of the agency's carers' and children's files were examined, and interviews took place with those carers and children. There was evidence that the agency tried to appropriately match the children to the carers. However, their ability to do so was restricted by the lack of information provided by the placing authority. This was discussed with the managers of the service, who acknowledged that not all the necessary documentation was received, prior to children being matched to carers. The inspector was informed that the service would continue to try and improve their practice in this area.

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**

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

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>There was evidence of suitable policies and procedures being carried out appropriately. The panel observed was thorough in its discussion of approvals and reviews of carers. The work presented was of a good standard, and checks were carefully monitored. File reading showed regular contact and visits from supervising social workers, and an ongoing programme of training provided to carers, including courses on child protection, sexual abuse, and safe caring. Children spoken to knew how to make complaints, and were confident in their ability to do so.</p> <p>The agency had fully cooperated with the small number of child protection investigations carried out during the year. Child protection officers from the local authorities involved reported cooperation from the agency.</p> <p>All carers, adult household members, and frequent visitors had enhanced CRB checks on the files examined.</p> <p>It was made clear in the foster carer agreement that corporal punishment was not acceptable.</p> <p>The agency had developed a policy on bullying, and one on children missing from home. It also had a system for recording allegations of abuse, and was continuing to develop the management information system to help collate and evaluate information about allegations of abuse.</p> <p>Tact had devised a statement of intent, indicating that the service will not place a child, without receiving all the appropriate information from the placement authority, except in emergency situations, where seven days is given.</p>		
<p><b>Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:</b></p>	X	%

**Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)**

The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

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

3

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

**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

The agency was still in the process of considering the best ways to ensure that young people's views were sought. The review of carers gave some opportunity for feedback, and likewise children's reviews facilitated the chance to discuss their daily life and future. There was some evidence of a commitment to listen to children and involve them in decisions affecting their lives. The importance of this is addressed in carers' training. Children's views are sought by supervising social workers, and the aim was to see each child alone, on every third visit to carers. The children's comments are recorded and incorporated in the carers' annual reviews.

The inspector was informed that carer's children are consulted and offered support. The agency is planning to establish children's groups, and to develop links to advocacy services. It was also hoped that the development of children's groups would result in the children or young people becoming involved in reviewing the children's guide in the future.

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

The complaints leaflet included information that a complainant can contact the National Care Standards Commission and gave the relevant contact details on an additional sheet.

**Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)**

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

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

2

There was evidence that the physical health and wellbeing of the children and young people placed was given priority. However, weak care planning by some placing authorities, and the lack of specialist therapeutic services in the local vicinity, in some cases influenced the agency's ability to meet the emotional health needs of some children and young people. From discussion with staff, carers and children, and examination of files all children were registered with a G.P.

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

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

The managers were trying to address the need for carers to receive full health information regarding a child from the start of the placement. They need to ensure that a written health record is provided to the carer. This record must be up dated during the child's placement, and move with the child.

**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

The agency is committed to achieving high educational standards for the children in placement, and was in the process of developing their practice in this area. A freelance education consultant has recently been appointed to offer consultation and support to foster carers, with particular emphasis on school placements and exclusions. He was also developing the agency's website to include a section on education. The issue of education is covered in supervising social workers visits, and carers and workers will also attend PEP meetings. There was evidence that one child had been out of school for almost a year, but had recently obtained a place locally. The foster carer, with support from the agency, had worked hard to get the child back into school.

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

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

The fostering service did not have a management information system to demonstrate the educational attainment of those children or young people fostered by the service.

**Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)**

**The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

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

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

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

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

However, panel members' files were limited, and full CV's are needed of their relevant background skills.

From all other files inspected, together with interviews with staff, there was evidence that the qualifications experience, knowledge and skills of staff employed to work within the fostering service, met the National Minimum Standards.

The service was planning to take students on placement. Any assessments of foster carers undertaken by students would need to be under the supervision of a qualified worker, who would take responsibility for their work.

**Total number of staff of the agency:**

12

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

0

**Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

There was clear management structure with clear lines of accountability within the agency. The manager and staff interviewed by the inspector had a good understanding of the levels of delegation and responsibility, and in the absence of the manager were fully aware of who deputises in the service. Supervision was provided to staff monthly, and on a more informal basis, as and when the need arose. A format for recording supervision meetings was being considered, and a copy of this would be given to the member of staff. Some staff said that there was more emphasis in supervision on accountability than personnel development, but confirmed sessions were regular and more structured than previously. Team meetings took place regularly, and staff confirmed that communication by management with the staff group had improved, although consultation on some issues had sometimes been perceived as being late in the process.

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

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

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

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

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

All staff were provided with a copy of the staff handbook, which set out the terms and conditions of employment, and the agency's staffing procedures

<b>Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The organisation was taking steps to improve the range and quality of carers. The staff group was now more stable, and there was more opportunity to concentrate on targeting particular communities. Most enquiries from prospective carers had come from personal recommendation, but there was some local advertising in the press, and staff had recently manned stalls to publicise the agency and recruit new carers at various community events and festivals. Carers seen and questionnaires received confirmed staff gave an efficient and welcoming response to their initial enquiries.</p> <p>The fostering service has a clear assessment process for carers, which defines the fostering task, the qualities, competencies and aptitudes required from prospective applicants. The stages, content and timescales of the selection process, are made clear and the carers interviewed, indicated that they had understood what was entailed in the selection process. The inspector examined a number of assessments of foster carers. The completed competency based assessment reports were detailed and indicated that the assessment process covers all the issues outlined in the National Minimum Standards.</p> <p>There was evidence, from the records inspected and staff interviewed, that the experience, skills and qualifications of the staff, employed to work within the fostering service, meets the National Minimum Standards.</p>		

<b>Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)</b>		
The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>Relevant policies and interviews with staff indicated that this standard was met. TACT had clear, comprehensive and sound employment practices in relation to both staff and carers. The service also had a satisfactory health and safety policy for carers, children and staff, as well as a whistle blowing policy.</p> <p>The agency has management systems in place in respect of carer supervision, appraisal and support. These were evidenced through examination of carers' files.</p> <p>There is an "out of hours" support service available for carers provided by staff and management, and carers spoken to valued access to this service.</p> <p>TACT has public liability and professional indemnity insurance, which covers all staff and carers.</p>		

**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**

Training opportunities were provided for staff. One member of staff had the PQ2 award and another had started the course. The inspector was informed that TACT places value on realising individuals' potential. A training programme is provided to all staff, which provided opportunities to ensure that they were kept up to date with professional and legal developments.

TACT has an induction programme for all new staff, which takes place within an agreed timescale. The manager confirmed that new staff had undertaken this, and examination of staff files, and interviews with staff confirmed this.

Training needs are identified via the supervisory and appraisal systems, and this links with the agency's training and development plan. Currently, both staff and carers are able to undertake a variety of in house and external training. Joint training between staff and carers also takes place.

The inspector was informed that both the area and team manager were studying for the Diploma in Management Studies by a correspondence course, and both aim to have completed this qualification by 2005.

The agency was also encouraging carers to undertake the NVQ, level 2 and 3, and ten carers started the programme in February 2003. On obtaining this qualification, foster carers will receive an additional financial payment.

Part of a training session on identity issues was observed, and from examination of the training programme provided to staff and carers, it was evident that carers and staff were given the opportunity to be kept informed of changes in legislation and guidance, and this was reflected in the policies of the fostering agency.

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)**

**All staff are properly accountable and supported.**

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

Evidence from interviews with staff and management confirmed that regular planned appraisals and supervision sessions took place. The staff interviewed informed the inspector that they had contracts of employment, and clearly defined job descriptions. A sample of staff contracts and job descriptions were examined, and contained the appropriate information.

All staff interviewed reported that they felt supported in their roles. The arrangements for supervision, team meetings and the annual appraisal of staff were discussed in standard 16.



**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?****3**

There were a number of systems in place for working with, and supporting carers; Carers have access to a “24 hour” telephone support line, provided by staff known to the carer.

The supervising social worker visits carers within 24 hours of a child being placed. Carers also receive telephone contact from their supervising social worker at least once a week, and the supervising social worker visits at least every three weeks.

Carers are supported in their attendance at placement agreement meetings, LAC reviews, health and educational meetings, and any other meetings, as required.

Local support groups meet regularly.

Support groups are provided to carers’ children.

Workshops are held in response to carers’ needs.

Outreach support services are provided.

Weekend and holiday respite is provided to carers where appropriate.

Social events are held on an annual basis, and a quarterly newsletter is provided to all carers.

A subscription fee for carers is paid to Fostering Network by TACT.

Allowances are paid promptly, and reviewed on an annual basis.

TACT had sent out questionnaires, to obtain carers views on the support they require from the agency.

TACT has clear arrangements for foster carers’ reviews, which take place annually.

Interviews with staff and carers, and carers’ questionnaires confirmed these supports were operating, and working well.

**Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)****The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

All carers were allocated a supervising social worker. A “24 hour” service was provided, and regular visiting was confirmed by file reading and carers visited.

Supervision is provided to the carers by their supervising social workers, who are appropriately qualified and experienced. The timescales for undertaking supervisory visits are more frequent than the statutory frequencies laid down in Regulation 35 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

From examination of carers’ files, there was evidence that visits were being made within the agency’s timescales. The format of supervisory visits and unannounced visits had recently been revised to ensure a more consistent and clear approach by staff.

The agency provided a variety of support systems, and carers seen confirmed that they have received good support from the service, and their individual workers. The agency provided information regarding the complaints’ procedure to carers, and those carers interviewed were aware of how to make a complaint. The agency kept a record of complaints.

TACT had comprehensive information about safeguarding and protecting children, which included procedures to deal with investigations into allegations. There was evidence from an examination of the child protection policy and procedures, the training programme, and interviews with staff and carers, that all personnel involved were aware of their role and responsibilities in relation to investigations into allegations of abuse.

The agency kept a record of any allegations of abuse, and has a policy outlining the circumstances in which a carer should be removed from the foster carer register.

**Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)**

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

There was evidence that there was a clear programme for the training and development of carers. This included sessions on child protection, contact issues, life story work, safe caring, and sexual abuse. Financial remuneration is provided for carers attending training, and obtaining an NVQ. Experienced carers take part in running training at the pre approval stage, enabling new carers to benefit from their experience and knowledge. The agency provides opportunities for carers to undertake joint training with TACT social workers. The training observed on Identity, Self Esteem and Valuing Difference covered equal opportunities and anti discriminatory practice. The training session gave carers the chance to share their own experiences, as well as providing a theoretical learning base. The agency tried to ensure that training took place at times convenient for the carers, although only a small number were present on this occasion. A crèche is provided on the premises for carers who have to make childcare arrangements to attend training. The agency provides all carers with “safe caring” training. It also provides a support group for the children of carers. The agency had also planned to provide training targeting particular groups of carers. However, a recent session for male carers had to be cancelled due to a lack of positive responses. Each carer’s annual review now included an appraisal of the carers’ training and development needs.

## Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Tact had appropriate policies on recording, and access to records. The inspector examined carers and children's files. The files were structured according to the format listed in the recording policy. A working party was meeting to look at the structure and content of files with a view to recommending improvements. Whilst most children's files seen were up-to-date, they did not contain all the necessary information from the placing authorities. There was evidence on some files that workers had requested this information from the placing authority, and had followed up these requests, when there was a lack of response, but this was not the case on other files seen. Carer's files did not record details of visits during the assessment process.

The manager informed the inspector that the system of auditing all files was now in place, and examination of files showed that some internal auditing of files had taken place. There were written plans of action on these files to be followed to improve information within set timescales.

The inspector was advised that should a child/young person leave their foster placement, a copy of all relevant records relating to the child would be forwarded to the responsible authority.

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

### 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 administrative records inspected provided a full and detailed record of information required to run the service. They were all securely kept.

Separate records are kept for staff, carers, children, complaints and allegations. The organisation has a clearly written policy as to the confidential nature of the records, which are secured at all times.

Tact has an "Access to Records" Policy, which provides guidance to staff and carers, as well as the recording requirements to meet the Data Protection Act. Service users are able to see their records in compliance with legal safeguards. In the files examined, the records were legible and met the required standards. The agency's computerised system is networked to the branches. The manual system readily ensures that records can be forwarded, if a child

moves to another placement, ceases to be looked after, or if a reference request is made for a member of staff or a carer.

The system for keeping records about allegations and complaints was appropriate. All information received in respect of allegations and complaints was handled in a confidential manner and was held securely.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>			53
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>			20
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			19
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			5
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>			6
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £</b>	304.50	<b>Maximum £</b>	462.00

## Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

3

The premises are suitable for the agency's purposes, including facilities for training, panel and support groups. Advice had been sought from LEFPA following the previous inspection regarding the size of the doors on the fire escape, and these had been confirmed as safe. The building is, however, not well equipped to meet the needs of disabled children, carers or staff, as there is no lift in the two storey building.

The premises are of a good standard, with adequate space, lighting, ventilation and office furniture. With the restructuring of the London offices, the accommodation will need to be reorganised. Managers should ensure that all staff continue to have suitable space and facilities.

There are efficient and robust administrative systems, IT and communication systems. Safeguards are in place in relation to the security of these systems. The IT system has been developed over the past year, to facilitate better networking between the regional offices. The premises have lockable filing cabinets to secure confidential record keeping. The premises have an appropriate security system in place to prevent illegal access to the building.

TACT has adequate Premises and Contents Insurance to cover any loss of contents, or damage to the building.

## Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

From interviews with managers, and examination of the accounts, there was detailed evidence that the agency was financially viable. The yearly accounts were independently audited. The accounts for 2002-2003 were provided to the inspector.

In the event of a financial crisis emerging to jeopardise this service, TACT is developing procedures to inform the placing authority to ensure the welfare of the children in placement. Tact is a voluntary agency with charitable status, 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

It appeared that the financial systems were properly operated and maintained. The inspector confirmed that TACT has a clearly written set of principles and standards governing its financial management. From an examination of documentation and interviews with the managers there was evidence of clear financial systems for the control and supervision of the agency's financial affairs.

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

**Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)**

**Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.**

**Key Findings and Evidence**

**Standard met?**

**3**

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

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

## Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

3

From observation of the panel, and interview of the chair, it was concluded that the panel was effective and thorough. Its composition was consistent with regulations. The chair was independent of the agency, with relevant background and expertise at a senior level in fostering and adoption services. However, he was not actively involved in identifying training needs for the panel and in reviewing its composition to ensure a balance of skills. The vice-chair was the corporate service manager. Some new independent members had recently joined the panel. The panel included members who had themselves been looked after as children.

There was a legal advisor who was also a full member of the panel. The medical adviser does not attend on a regular basis.

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

The administration of panel was dealt with by the administrative service, and there was a delegated minute taker. However, there was a heavy workload on the administration service, with increased pressure when deadlines were not adhered to. The panel minutes were seen first by the legal adviser, then the chair, and finally to the decision maker. However, efforts were made to ensure the recommendations of the panel were considered by the decision maker, within appropriate timescales.

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

The South London panel also made decisions on approvals, reviews, and de registrations from their branch in Liverpool.



## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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This service was not usually provided by the agency, although does provide weekend and holiday respite care for existing carers.	
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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?
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Referrals to TACT will be made when it has been established by the responsible authority that there are no friends or family able to care for the child. TACT has no kinship carers, and therefore, this standard was not addressed.	
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**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on <enter date(s) of inspection here> and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Note:**

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

**D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.**

**Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:**

Action plan was required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Public reports**

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

**D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT**

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

**D.3.1 I \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.**

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Or**

**D.3.2 I \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:**

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.