



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

TACT East London

**2a Thorpe Road
East Ham
London
E6 2HS**

Lead Inspector
Jane Ray

Announced Inspection
29th January 2007 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	TACT East London
Address	2a Thorpe Road East Ham London E6 2HS
Telephone number	020 8470 2088
Fax number	020 8472 2858
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)	*** Post Vacant ***
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

None

Date of last inspection 8 March 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

The Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT) was formed in 1993 as a company limited by guarantee and also obtained charitable status. TACT is therefore described as an "incorporated" charity. The charity's governing body is a Board of Trustees, which comprises of eleven members who meet at least six times a year. The board members have a range of backgrounds including law, finance, social work and education. In January 2005 TACT merged with another charity called ELF, which was a fostering agency based at the current East London office. This resulted in the current TACT East London service being registered. TACT is a national organisation with services based in three regions, which are London, the Midlands and Wales. The head office of the charity is based at Hither Green in London and this is the base for the corporate functions such as finance and human resources. TACT is also a registered adoption agency.

TACT has a Responsible Individual, Hugh Pelham who is the Development Manager. Angie Hanson is the Area Manager for TACT East London and she came into post in November 2006. She is currently applying to be the Registered Manager. TACT East London has a staff team that consists of three senior supervising social workers, a young peoples resource officer and two administrative staff.

At the time of the inspection there were a total of 42 foster carers supporting 37 children and young people through TACT East London. The carers live mainly in North and East London.

The agencies foster carers provide short and long term care. The agency can also provide outreach support services to children and families, parent and child placements and support with contact arrangements.

East London has an independent panel that is in the process of being reconfigured.

The agency office is based in the high street in East Ham and is accessible by public transport. The office provides staff accommodation and also has rooms for meetings, training and contact arrangements.

The stated aim of the organisation is to “help children of all ages and ethnic groups to grow and develop as unique individuals through the provision of appropriate, creative, child centred services and to attempt to meet new areas of need”.

The fees range from £669 – £949 a week depending on the type of service being purchased and this is agreed on an individual basis.

The provider must make information available about the service, including inspection reports to service users and other stakeholders.

SUMMARY

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

This is the second inspection of TACT East London. The inspection looked at how the agency was performing in relation to the National Minimum Standards for fostering services.

The inspection was undertaken by Jane Ray and took place between the 29th January and 1st February 2007. The inspector wishes to acknowledge the courteous and professional response from the centre manager and staff working for the agency. The inspector would also like to thank the foster carers, children and young people who were visited or spoken to for their time and assistance in carrying out the inspection.

The inspector visited the agency offices and spoke to a number of staff about their work. The inspector read a number of essential records and documents. The inspector also visited four families who care for five of the children and young people currently placed by the agency.

The inspector received written questionnaires from three foster carers and five foster children. These questionnaires raised no concerns about the service.

What the service does well:

The inspector was impressed by the work of the agency and felt it demonstrated an ability to provide a high quality service to children and young people through the provision of fostering services as follows:

- The staff working for the agency and the foster carers were all focused on meeting the individual needs of each young person
- The agency has robust procedures for the recruitment and selection of foster carers
- The agency offers a stimulating programme of training to foster carers.
- The agency offers responsive support to the foster carers so they feel they can access the support they need to undertake their role
- The agency provides support groups, meetings and activities for foster carers and young people to allow them to network with each other.
- The agency works closely with the children and young people to allow them to express their views on the services they receive
- The agency employs experienced and capable staff who are given the supervision and training to perform their role to a high standard

- The agency has systems in place to monitor performance and is constantly looking at potential areas for improvement
- The agency is looking at new ways of meeting unmet need such as the new service for teenage mothers

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the previous inspection the following improvements have taken place:

- The staff have a written record of their induction training
- The complaints procedure includes details of how to contact the regulatory body
- Foster carers and the supervising social worker both sign copies of the records of the visit
- The agency has already started the process of recruiting more foster carers
- Contact is being made with foster carers who do not have placements at present
- Written records of visits between the supervising social workers and the foster carers are maintained in a professional manner
- The office is clean and tidy
- Foster carers are satisfied that they are receiving the correct payments

What they could do better:

There are four requirements made as a result of this inspection and these largely reflect work that is underway by the agency but need to be completed. They are also as a result of the management and staff changes that have taken place in the agency. The requirements are to complete the registration of the area manager, catch up on the annual reviews of foster carers, maintain a stable and consistent staff team and to complete the work to have a fully operating panel for the agency.

There are also nine good practice recommendations that the inspector is confident the agency will be able to complete. These are as follows:

- To provide individual safe care guidelines for each young person
- To provide ongoing support to the foster carers to enable the young persons specialist educational needs to be addressed
- To support young people who are preparing to leave care to have a copy of their pathway plan
- To ensure foster carer meetings continue to take place on a regular basis
- To monitor and clearly record the unannounced visits to foster carers
- To ensure foster carers have an accurate record of the training they have completed
- To offer training to foster carers on how to appropriately support young people when they are being aggressive or challenging
- To look at providing training to the North London carers in a more accessible location
- To consider the preparation for each young person of a life events document

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

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

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

Standard 12 was inspected.

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Children and young people benefit from living in foster homes where their health and development is promoted.

EVIDENCE:

NMS 12

Four children and young peoples files were inspected. Their individual healthcare needs were initially made available as part of their LAC assessments.

The records were inspected for four children and young people and they all had records of accessing the GP and of having dental and optical checks. In addition the foster carers have recently been given files to record all relevant information about the young people and this includes a section where they can keep a record of the healthcare appointments.

The four foster carers spoken to as part of the inspection all said they had received comprehensive information about the children and young people, including their health care needs prior to their placement. They were also able to describe how they are supporting the young people to access healthcare appointments. One foster carer was able to tell the inspector how she had identified additional emotional healthcare needs for a young person after the

placement had commenced and how she was waiting for access to local psychological health support.

The questionnaires returned from the children and young people all said that they were being supported to maintain their health and several gave the examples that they are being encouraged to eat a healthy diet “no junk food” by their foster carers.

The agency also has a children’s resource worker and she explained that in conjunction with similar staff in other offices she provides training to young people on healthy living as part of preparing the young people for independent living. In addition she can also do individual work with young people to support them to follow a healthy lifestyle. Also foster carers are offered training on food hygiene and healthy eating and supporting children with mental health issues as part of the TACT training programme.

TACT, through it’s quality assurance systems, monitors the children and young peoples’ access to primary and specialist healthcare input and whether they have a healthy lifestyle.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

Standards 3,6,8,9,15 and 30 were inspected.

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

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The safety of children and young people is safeguarded by the agencies recruitment and selection procedures for carers and staff, which ensures that they are cared for by suitable foster carers, who are in turn supported by appropriately trained and experienced staff. Children and young people live in safe foster homes. The foster panel is in the process of being re-established and once this is done the agency will benefit from the oversight of an experienced and effective foster panel that monitors the quality of the service they provide.

EVIDENCE:

NMS 3

Examination of four staff records held in the agency demonstrated that recruitment checks required under Regulations 5 and 7 Schedule 1 to demonstrate the fitness of the staff of the agency are appropriately kept and up to date. All the staff had in their staff file completed application forms giving an employment history, proof of identification, two written references checked by telephone and a CRB disclosure.

NMS 6

The foster carers who were visited as part of this inspection were aware of the inspection process and were welcoming and very helpful to the inspector.

The homes were all comfortable and homely. With the exception of two brothers all the children and young people had their own single bedroom.

The foster carers confirmed that their homes were given a health and safety inspection as part of their assessment, and then inspected on an annual basis by the agency's supervising social worker as part of the review process. The inspector saw written reports of these inspections, which provided evidence that the homes were safe as appropriate to the needs of the children to be placed.

NMS 8

The inspector could see that the organisation tried to carefully match the foster carers and the children and young people. All the placing authorities, on behalf of the young people referred to the agency, have to provide information needed for the matching process. The centre manager and supervising social workers explained that as part of their role they look at matching the children and young people with the carers. The decision on matching is complex and considers a wide number of factors including the child's assessed racial, religious and cultural needs, the foster carers experience in supporting the young person's specific complex behavioural or health needs, the other people living in the foster carers home, the location of the carers home etc. The inspector could see when visiting the foster carers and the children and young people that the matching process had been carefully thought through. The foster carers spoken to during the inspection were also clear why they had been matched with the young people in their care. The manager explained that where the carers and child are not matched in a particular area such as the young person's religion, then the carers are supported to have extra information so they can meet the young persons needs. The agency is also in the process of producing profiles of the foster carers who are able to provide a service to give to placing authorities.

NMS 9

The agency has a written policy and systems in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse as set out in national minimum standard 9.5. Child protection procedures are covered as part of the compulsory foster carer training and are included in the foster carers agreement. There is a clear written procedure in place to guide foster carers on the appropriate action to take if a child goes missing from the placement, and foster carers spoken to as part of this inspection were aware of what action they were required to take if this was to occur.

The inspector saw the records of all the significant events raised during the last year. The response to these events by the agency has been prompt and in accordance with the agencies procedures. Three of the incidents needed to be addressed through the child protection procedures. The inspector looked in detail at one of these incidents and felt it had been addressed in an appropriate manner and that through the use of support and training the outcome had been positive for the young person and foster carer.

Four of the five returned children's questionnaires stated that they were not being bullied and all the questionnaires said that the young person knew who to talk to if they had a personal problem. The manager was able to discuss the case of one young person who felt he was being bullied at school and explained that the supervising social worker was working with the carer and school to address this issue. The agency through its quality assurance systems monitor the numbers of young people who raise concerns about bullying.

The foster carers spoken to during the inspection said that they had received adequate information about the young people to enable them to know how to care safely for them and to have information about their individual needs. One foster carer was able to talk about her understanding of the significant harm previously experienced by the young person in her care and the actions that needed to be taken to support the young person to feel safe. Four young persons records were inspected. These did not include individual safe caring guidelines specific to each young person.

NMS 15

The agency has clearly set out policies and procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff. Staff files contain evidence of interview, two references (one from the previous employer), and a medical information form.

All social work staff employed by the agency are well qualified and experienced practitioners. Discussion with social workers over the course of this inspection demonstrated this practical experience and knowledge of professional social work with children and families. In addition the children's resource worker has completed an NVQ level 3 in the care of children and young people.

NMS 30

The inspector read the minutes of two previous panel meetings, which took place in June and December 2006 and looked at the operational procedures for the panel. The inspector also spoke to the foster carers about their experience of going to the panel meeting.

The TACT panels operate under clearly set out policies and procedures with respect to its function, and operation, which includes the minimum number and make up of the panel, and the procedure for decision making when all the members of the panel are not in agreement. The current membership of the East London panel was being addressed at the time of the inspection with previous panel members being asked if they wanted to continue in the role and new members being sought including someone with educational experience. This work needs to be completed in order for the agency to operate effectively.

Examination of records showed appropriate recording of panel discussions and decisions.

The foster carers spoken to during the inspection all explained how they had attended panel meetings and had found this process very helpful. TACT has a leaflet that is given to carers prior to a meeting to explain the role and process of the panel. This leaflet was seen to be very clear and easy to understand.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

Standards 7,13 and 31 were inspected.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**

This judgement has been made from evidence gathered during the visit to this service.

Children and young people know that they will be consulted on matters that affect their lives, and benefit from the maintenance of their important relationships through appropriate contact.

EVIDENCE:

NMS 7

From discussions with staff working in the agency and foster carers it could be seen that the agency is working to ensure that the children and young people supported by TACT East London have their individual needs met in terms of their gender, religion, ethnic origin, culture and disability. At the time of the inspection the manager explained that there is a shortage of carers with a white British ethnic origin. The agency is however aware of the need to continue to recruit people from a range of backgrounds in order to reflect the local community and the children referred to the agency. The agency also monitors as part of its quality assurance work the ethnic origin and religion of the foster carers and young people.

All the foster carers are offered compulsory training on valuing diversity.

The foster carer agreement also outlines the responsibilities of the foster carers to promote the child or young person's ethnic and cultural background.

The inspector when meeting the foster carers could see that they were supporting the children and young people to access schools and a wide range of leisure activities by providing them with individual support to help them achieve this goal. The young people who spoke to the inspector were able to talk about how they had achieved personal success such as attending college, or playing in a football team or pursuing an individual hobby through the support they received from their foster carers.

NMS 13

At the time of the inspection only two of the children and young people were not attending school or college. One of these young people has just had a baby and the other young person is having home tuition arranged by TACT three times a week. TACT as part of the quality assurance work monitors the young peoples school attendance and additional educational support needs.

Four young peoples records were inspected and they all had a current Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place.

The young peoples questionnaires all stated that the young people all recognised that they were being given the support to be successful in their education apart from one who said he had not been given a dictionary.

The foster carers were able to talk about how they attend meetings at the young persons school and the educational team can also attend to discuss particular issues and to help with the development of personal educational plans. Two of the foster carers mentioned that the young people they care for have some special educational needs such as dyslexia and would like to see the young people receiving more support.

NMS 31

TACT provides a system of back-up carers to support long-term carers to have a break. These carers also have checks and are approved by a panel. The respite carers are often relatives or friends of the long term foster carers and are known to the children and young people.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

Standards 10 and 11 were inspected.

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

This judgement has been made from evidence gathered during the visit to this service.

Children and young people know that they will be consulted on matters that affect their lives, and benefit from the maintenance of their important relationships through appropriate contact.

EVIDENCE:

NMS 10

Foster carers responsibilities for maintaining children and young people's contact with their families is clearly documented in the foster carer agreement. The four children and young people records that were inspected all clearly recorded the individual contact arrangements for each young person and any measures in place to protect the young person.

The foster carers who met the inspector explained that they supported the young people in sometimes-difficult circumstances to maintain regular contact with members of their family. The introductory fostering training offered to potential foster carers helps to provide an introduction to this important role. There is also another training course available on promoting and managing contact for approved foster carers. The foster carers keep diary records for the young people that include details on how the contact visits are progressing. One foster carer said she was finding the travel arrangements for the contact visits difficult and would like some assistance with addressing this issue.

The TACT East London office has a room available where contact meetings can take place. The children's resource worker can assist with contact visits.

NMS 11

The general impression gained from children and young people spoken to during this inspection and from returned questionnaires was that children and young people felt listened to, and that foster carers actively sought their opinions on matters that they felt were important or affected their everyday lives. All the questionnaires apart from one completed by the children and young people said that their carers listen to them. All of children and young people apart from one said they were aware of somebody they could speak to if they were unhappy. The complaints procedure is available in a child friendly format. Children and young people spoken to during this inspection also stated that the agency's supervising social workers regularly make time to talk to them on their own. Young people are also encouraged to participate in their own review meetings and this is monitored as part of the quality assurance system.

The agency has held a number of consultation events with young people that have contributed to the development of the newsletters, DVD children's guide and the organisations mission statement.

In addition to the individual communication with the children and young people, the agency is also providing training to young people on "participation" as a means of enabling the young people to contribute their views on the service they receive. This training which is still in it's formative stages will support the children and young people to participate in the work of the agency such as assisting with staff recruitment and will also provide a means for young people to comment on the agencies policies and procedures.

The agency also provides opportunities for looked after children and children who foster to meet each other and enjoy a number of leisure activities. Last year a group of looked after young people enjoyed an overnight event in Wales and this year a two-day residential event is being planned for about 30 young people. These events also offer an opportunity to consult with the young people.

The organisation also strives to celebrate the young peoples successes and make them feel part of the organisation through a quarterly award scheme where young people are nominated for any special achievements and are presented with a certificate and book token at a special event.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

Standards 14 and 29 were inspected.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Young people know that they will be supported to prepare for independent living. Children and young people benefit from the stability created by the timely payment of allowances and agreed expenses to their carers.

EVIDENCE:

NMS 14

At the time of the inspection TACT East London had a number of young people receiving care who were reaching an age where plans needed to be put into place for their adult lives. The foster carer agreement clearly states that foster carers have a responsibility for supporting the young person to move towards greater independence. One of the foster carers who met with the inspector were able to describe how they had been supported by TACT and the young persons social worker to develop a plan to prepare the young person for more independent living and this included supporting them to develop their domestic skills as well as assisting them to go to university. The one young person who is being supported with this process was also able to tell the inspector about the skills they are developing and the plans to go to university. This young person said she had a pathway plan but a copy of this was not available in her records.

The organisation has prepared a file of information for the foster carers and the young people to access called "next steps". This provides lots of essential information on issues such as employment and training, benefits and money, housing, day to day living, diet and fitness and useful contacts.

The children's resource workers across the different offices are also working together to provide a "skills for life" course for the young people to help them prepare for independence. This again is very practical and is offered through six sessions.

TACT also offers a training course for carers on helping the young people prepare for independence.

NMS 29

Foster carers allowances and expenses are set out in the foster carers guide, and payments are made directly into foster carers accounts by bank transfer. The structure of allowances is very complex but the manager explained that the carers want to maintain the current system of payments. Foster carers spoken to during this inspection indicated that allowances are paid correctly and at the agreed time.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

Standards 1,2,4,5,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28 and 32 were inspected.

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

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Children and young people benefit from being placed by an agency with systems in place for effective leadership and management, which provides foster carers who are well trained and supported by sufficient qualified and experienced social workers. The Agency has come through a slightly difficult period managerially, but whilst this has had some impact on the service, the agency has continued to function safely and effectively. The agency now needs a period of staff stability in order to allow all areas of work to be consolidated.

EVIDENCE:

NMS 1

The inspector read the statement of purpose and the children's guide. The statement of purpose contained all the information as required in the national minimum standards and was clear and easy to follow.

The inspector saw the children's guide used by the organisation prepared for children and young people. This gives a very simple overview of the organisation and allows a record to be made of how to contact key-people such as the young persons care manager. In addition the organisation has prepared a children's guide in the form of a DVD, which the inspector did not view.

NMS 2

The Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT) is an "incorporated" charity. The charity's governing body is a Board of Trustees, which comprises of eleven members who meet at least six times a year. The board members have a range of backgrounds including law, finance, social work and education.

An area manager has operational responsibility for TACT East London. She has started the registration process and submitted an application. She is a qualified social worker and has experience of working with children and fostering. She has completed an NVQ level 4 and has submitted her documentation and is waiting for the certificate.

Throughout the inspection the area manager was observed to be performing her management role to a very high standard, both in offering leadership to the staff and effective support to the foster carers.

NMS 4

The inspector looked at the agencies management structure and spoke to staff and foster carers. The agency has a clear management structure with established lines of communication. Regular staff team meetings take place so that operational issues can be discussed.

The inspector spoke to four foster carers. They stated that due to the staff changes they were still in the process of becoming familiar with the new staff team including the supervising social workers.

NMS 5

The inspector looked at the area manager's job description that clearly states the duties and responsibilities of the post holder. The area manager explained to the inspector that when she is on leave the regional manager covers any urgent work. The area manager is line managed by the regional manager.

NMS16

TACT East London employs a team of staff with clear roles and responsibilities. The key staff are the three supervising fostering social workers who oversee the recruitment and support of carers. There is also the children's resource worker who provides training and support for the young people. Two administrative assistants, one full-time and one part-time provide support throughout the week. This staffing structure is being reviewed to reflect the potentially increasing workload of the agency.

The staff files were inspected for four staff and all staff have a comprehensive job description and a signed contract of employment.

The staff were being supervised by the centre manager. Supervision records were inspected for three staff and the area manager and these supervisions were taking place on a regular basis, were fully recorded and clear action points were available. One member of staff who has been in post for over a year also had a completed annual appraisal. This identified the staff members' individual training needs and how they would be met.

NMS 17

The past year has been very challenging for TACT East London. The area manager has changed with the current manager in post now for three months.

The supervising social workers have also had a number of changes. One has gone on maternity leave and a locum social worker is in place and another vacant post has been filled and the new member of staff is just about to commence. This has impacted on the workload in a few areas, but the agency is operating well considering all the changes.

The area manager explained that the recruitment of new foster carers has not happened during the past year, but is just starting again. Two road shows have taken place in Hackney and Wood Green and an open day is planned in February for potential carers to find out more about fostering. The agency use a number of campaign methods to attract potential carers but find the most successful recruitment happens through existing foster carers. The agency offers a financial payment to foster carers who successfully identify new carers. The manager explained that the agencies aim is to recruit 7-8 carers in the next year.

The inspector did note that there were a number of carers who are available but do not have placements. The manager explained that this is because some are considering if they wish to continue fostering and others are working which limits the young people they can take.

New carers are recruited using a clearly written assessment process, which includes all the areas as set out in national minimum standard 17.7. There is a written policy on and a strategy for the assessment of carers using the British Association of Adoption and Fostering Form F. Four assessments or annual reviews were inspected and two of these had not been completed in the last year. The agency needs to catch up on outstanding annual reviews.

NMS 18

TACT East London offers an out of hours emergency support service. This is arranged using a rota of supervising social workers from two London offices. Two of the foster carers spoken to had used this service and had found the support satisfactory. The foster carers said they felt very reassured knowing that support was available when required.

The inspector read the agencies health and safety policy and found this was comprehensive. This links with the health and safety assessments of foster carers homes, the children and young peoples individual risk assessments and the health and safety training offered to carers.

The inspector looked at the agencies insurance certificate and this was up to date and satisfactory.

NMS 19

The organisation has an excellent ongoing training programme that is open to staff and carers.

The inspector looked at the induction format prepared for staff joining TACT. The staff records inspected all contained a completed induction record.

The inspector looked at the record of the monthly staff team meetings and these discuss a range of operational issues.

NMS 20

The inspector looked at four staff records and these all included a clear job description giving details of that persons roles and responsibilities. The staff supervision records were also inspected and these showed that staff were receiving regular individual planned supervision sessions.

NMS 21

The foster carers agreement clearly states that foster carers will receive regular support from TACT.

The evidence from meeting four foster carers, inspecting four case notes and from the foster carer questionnaires are that foster carers are having regular contact with the fostering staff and are feeling supported. This contact is appropriately recorded. The foster carers have however found the change in staff difficult as they have had to establish new working relationships. Two carers have commented that they have raised issues with the supervising social workers and have not felt they have been addressed speedily enough. Further discussion did however indicate that this might also be due to the other agencies such as the young persons care manager being involved.

The foster carers also value the six weekly foster carers meetings that take place in North and East London, which allow them to not only meet staff but also have a support network with each other. These have not been taking place regularly in the past year and now need to be maintained on a regular basis. One North London carer said she would prefer an evening meeting as she works during the day.

NMS 22

The foster care agreement was inspected. This clearly states the support foster carers can expect to receive from the agency.

All foster carers are given a comprehensive folder of policies and procedures and these are clearly laid out.

The inspector looked at four foster carer records. These showed when they had a regular visit from a supervising social worker, usually once a month. These visits are recorded and signed by the foster carer and the social worker. It was not possible to tell for all the foster carers if they had received an unannounced visit during the year and these, need to be clearly recorded and monitored to ensure they take place.

From speaking to foster carers and from reading the completed questionnaires it is possible to see that the carers feel well supported by the agency and this includes out of hours support, prompt payment of allowances and access to respite care arrangements.

Any complaints are recorded as a significant event. There have been no complaints in the last year.

NMS 23

The agency provides a comprehensive programme of training for foster carers. The pre-approval and induction training provided by the agency ensures that there are opportunities for new carers to benefit from the experience and knowledge of existing foster carers and young people who have been in foster care.

Examination of foster carers records did not clearly show what training foster carers had received. When the four foster carers were asked what training they had received in the previous year this did not always correlate with their training record. Some carers said they had received training through other jobs but this was not included in their record. This makes it hard to tell with any certainty if foster carers had attended the core training courses.

The inspector looked at the training programme for 2006/7. This provides a summary of the courses and when they are taking place. Training is offered at Kent, South London and East London. The North London carers said they felt the training was too far away. The inspector spoke to four foster carers during the inspection and they all stated that they were very satisfied with the quality of the training they have been offered.

The training offered is as follows:

Core training:

- Child protection
- Valuing diversity
- Basic first aid

Additional courses:

- Food hygiene
- Bereavement, separation and loss
- Helping children to move
- Promoting and managing contact
- Men who foster
- Preparing for independence
- Recording for carers
- Disability awareness
- Mental health
- Develop your child

Carers are also encouraged to complete and NVQ. Progress with training is evaluated as part of the annual review. The inspector felt it would be helpful for carers to be offered training on how to appropriately support children and young people who have more aggressive or challenging behaviours.

NMS 24

The agency has a written policy on the keeping of records. The case records were inspected for four children and young people and they included the necessary information. The young persons case records each follow the same format to ensure all the documentation is complete and can be readily located. It is difficult from the records to get an understanding of the child's life events and it would be a helpful addition to prepare a record for the young people.

TACT have recently introduced a child's information file to be maintained by each foster carer that will go with the young person when they leave the foster carer. This includes details of the young person, diary sheets, health records, education records, emotional and behavioural needs, family and social relationships and self-care and safe care issues. The foster carers spoken to said they had received training on how to complete the record and felt able to complete the necessary documentation.

The four foster carers spoken to and the returned questionnaires from foster carers all said that they felt they had been provided with adequate information about the child prior to their placement.

The inspector could see that case records are regularly audited to ensure all the documentation is in place. The inspector saw the completed audit record.

NMS 25

During the inspection the inspector looked at the records for staff, carers, children and incidents. These were all separately recorded and confidential

records were kept securely in locked cupboards. There is a clear staff policy on the keeping and retention of records. Where records are handwritten the inspector found them to be legible.

NMS 26

The inspector did a tour of the offices used by the agency and found the accommodation to be of an adequate standard. The offices are secured by an entry phone system. There is ample space for all the activities that take place in the office including office space, meeting rooms and accommodation for contact arrangements. The decoration is poor in places but the manager explained that the agency is looking for alternative accommodation. The office has adequate IT systems for the work it undertakes.

NMS 27

As part of the inspection process TACT provided the inspector with a copy of the annual audited accounts. These demonstrated that the organisation and agency are financially viable.

NMS 28

The inspector could see from discussions with the manager and foster carers and from looking at the policies and procedures that the agency has clear financial procedures to ensure that all the necessary financial systems operate appropriately.

NMS 32

At the time of the inspection TACT East London did not have any kinship carers and so this standard was not inspected.

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	3
8	4
9	3
15	3
30	2

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

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

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

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
2	2
4	3
5	3
16	3
17	2
18	3
19	3
20	3
21	3
22	3
23	2
24	3
25	3
26	3
27	3
28	3
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.	FS2	6(1)	The registered person must ensure the manager completes the registration process.	30/04/07
2.	FS17	19	The registered person must continue to monitor the staffing in the agency to ensure improved continuity and consistency.	30/04/07
3.	FS17	29(1)	The registered person must ensure the annual reviews of foster carers take place.	31/05/07
4.	FS30	24	The registered person must ensure the fostering panel is reconfigured and is fully operational.	30/04/07

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.	FS9	The registered person should prepare individual safe care guidelines for each young person.
2.	FS13	The registered person should ensure that the foster carers are supported by the agency to enable the young persons specialist educational needs to be met.
3.	FS14	The registered person should liaise with the placing care manager to obtain a copy of the young persons pathway plan where appropriate.
4.	FS21	The registered person should ensure that foster carer meetings continue to take place on a regular basis.
5.	FS22	The registered person should monitor the number of unannounced visits to foster carers and ensure they are clearly recorded.
6.	FS23	The registered person should ensure that all foster carers have a clear and accurate record of the training they have undertaken.
7.	FS23	The registered person should ensure foster carers are offered training on how to support young people with aggressive or challenging behaviours.
8.	FS23	The registered person should look at the provision of training in a location that is accessible to the carers based in North London.
9.	FS24	The registered person should consider the preparation of a life events document for each young person.

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