

# TACT Fostering

The Adolescent And Children's Trust

TACT Care, PO Box 137, Blyth, NE24 9FJ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This fostering service is a part of The Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT). The trust is a national charity which provides a number of registered fostering services across England, Scotland and Wales. This fostering service operates in East and North London, Hertfordshire and Essex. The agency moved to an entirely home-based service in March 2021.

At the time of inspection, the fostering service had 46 approved fostering households with 43 children living with its foster carers. The independent fostering agency registered with Ofsted in June 2005. The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2022.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### Inspection dates: 14 to 18 March 2022

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 5 February 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children thrive and make good progress from their starting points. This is because they share positive and trusting relationships with their foster carers. The inspector observed affection being shown between children and foster carers. One child informed the inspector, 'My new family always do their best to help me and let me know that they love and care about me.' These positive relationships help children to feel safe and secure.

Children have the opportunity to share their views. They confirm that they feel listened to and are aware of how to make a complaint should they feel the need to. Children are able to add to the development of the agency through this consultation. The inspector observed plans for future fun days being arranged with the children. This helps to improve the service provided to children.

The fostering service makes excellent use of the dedicated education team, who help monitor children's progress in education. The team supports carers by having education meetings and by ensuring that education healthcare plans are reviewed and understood. The team also ensures that children are receiving the support that they are entitled to. The registered manager is provided with termly updates from the team and is aware of each child's individual educational progress. Because of this, children achieve their education targets and go on to further education.

Children's health needs are met well by foster carers and the agency. Leaders and carers effectively work with others as part of a team to support the children that they care for. The agency is proactive in ensuring that children receive any specialist help and support when required. Children are also supported by the agency's therapeutic service, which provides consultation to support with emotional health and well-being.

New foster carers joining the agency state that they feel welcomed into the 'agency family'. Assessments are thorough and consider whether carers are suitable to foster. Foster carers say that their needs are sensitively considered and reviewed by the assessor and the fostering panel. This supportive approach means that foster carers are well equipped and motivated to deliver good care to children.

Foster carers describe receiving 'good' support from their supervising social workers. Foster carers advocate for their children and the supervising social workers support them to challenge placing authorities when needed to do so. This results in children receiving individualised care that leads to the best outcomes for them.

Children's social workers value the support children receive from their foster carers. They recognise the importance of care planning to support children to feel secure in their placements now and in the future. Several children continue to live with their foster carers after their 18th birthday. They receive encouragement while they are studying or training. This helps to support children to prepare for adulthood.

Children are further supported within the agency through the 'TACT connect' scheme. All children receive a birthday card on their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, which includes information and access to 'TACT connect'. This is a membership scheme that provides a community and assistance for all care experienced children and adults, which they can remain a part of throughout their lifetime.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Children are supported to feel safe in their foster homes. Foster carers and agency staff identify, understand and manage risk well. Safer-care plans and risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated. Also, the agency's response to significant incidents involving children is efficient and effective. This helps to ensure that children are kept safe.

Managers, family finding workers and supervising social workers all respond well to identified risks for children. The agency works well with partner agencies to monitor risk. The supervising social workers help to create individualised safer care assessments for foster carers which are regularly reviewed. Foster carers are guided by these plans for each child, and receive specific training which helps them to feel confident in understanding and minimising risk for children. Children living in this agency are safe.

Children rarely go missing from their foster homes. On occasions when children have been missing from home, the foster carers have responded appropriately and acted in line with the child's plans. Also, foster carers ensure that they notify and work with partner agencies. These actions help to promote and maintain children's welfare.

Foster carers are effectively prepared by the agency to support children's behaviour. This means that incidents of physical restraint and the use of consequences are minimal. The agency has taken action where it feels carers have not responded to children's behaviour's in an appropriate manner, and investigations have taken place which have led to further learning and additional training.

Foster carers receive and attend relevant training in line with the agency's required timescales. A large catalogue of training is provided within the agency to support the required level of knowledge and skill to safeguard children and promote the needs of children in its care.

Investigations into allegations are swift and effective. The agency follows up on concerns and safeguarding issues. Strategy meetings are requested and conducted within appropriate timeframes and the health and well-being of children is

paramount. Additional training and support is provided to foster carers to ensure that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to keep children safe.

Managers ensure that new staff and panel members recruited to the agency are safely vetted.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

This agency is led by a registered manager who is ambitious for children and carers and has a clear vision of where the agency is going. This vision is shared by the senior leaders, and they appoint staff who also share these values. The ethos of providing a therapeutic and reflective service is fundamental in driving forward the trauma-informed approach that everyone wants. Because of the way this vision is communicated in all aspects of the agency's work, foster carers are providing good care and support. They are happy, feel supported and feel part of this journey.

Leaders and managers are actively involved in the agency and take a keen interest in obtaining the views of stakeholders and foster carers. Appointed representatives for foster carers meet with the registered manager once per month, and then also with the director, all with the aim to further enhance the lives of children. One foster carer informed the inspector that during the pandemic, the director had a question-and-answer section on the 'portal' to which he would always respond immediately. A carer informed the inspector, 'This is not something we were used to with our previous agency. We are a genuine family.'

The fostering service's statement of purpose is comprehensive and remains up to date. It describes the service's aims and objectives clearly. The two children's guides provide children with creative and clear information in age-appropriate language.

The leadership team knows the strengths and weaknesses of the agency and takes action to maintain its development. The registered manager completes a quarterly management review of the service for senior leaders. Children's progress trackers are incorporated into this to monitor the progress of each child. This results in improved outcomes for children.

Despite this, the monitoring of the electronic recording system fails to highlight that not all of the children's files are uploaded and available for staff and foster carers to access. This is an area that requires improvement in order to improve the efficiency of the service.

Staff and foster carers receive regular supervision. Supervision records show constant and effective challenge, direction and actions. This demonstrates how effective oversight and leadership is improving the agency and its outcomes for children.

Foster carers and staff receive a wide range of training resources that consist of two training programmes. The training programmes are extensive and of a high quality,

equipping foster carers with good-quality skills. This means that foster carers have the skills they need to safeguard children.

Staff complete foster carer assessments thoroughly. The annual reviewing process is robust. This promotes the regular review of foster carers' suitability to continue to care for children.

The agency has an experienced agency decision-maker, who is suitably qualified and provides a clear rationale when approving foster carers. He will challenge the panel when required and offers guidance for further learning. This gives further assurance that foster carers who are recruited have the skills and resilience to care for children and keep them safe.

The fostering panel is suitably diverse and provides effective quality assurance. Fostering panel members prepare for panel meetings by identifying areas of vulnerability to explore with the assessor and prospective foster carers. This provides a thorough consideration and recommendation on the prospective foster carer's suitability to foster.

Leaders have systems in place to audit case files and identify where documents are missing. However, not all children have care planning documents, or have up-to-date local authority care plans. The registered manager does not have a process to escalate when documents are not returned in a timely way. This does not provide foster carers with the information they require when caring for children.

## What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The fostering service provider must ensure that, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child, and in particular that each foster parent is provided with a copy of the most recent version of the child's care plan provided to the fostering service provider under regulation 6(3)(d) of the Care Planning Regulations. (The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 Regulation 17 (3))</p> <p>This is in relation to the registered manager escalating effectively when there are delays in receiving statutory documentation from the child's placing authority.</p>	9 May 2022

### Recommendations

- The registered person should have a system in place to monitor record keeping and take action when required. This specifically relates to ensuring that children's records are uploaded onto the electronic recording system. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', page 52, paragraph 26.2)

### Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards.

## **Independent fostering agency details**

**Unique reference number:** SC063688

**Registered provider:** The Adolescent And Children's Trust

**Registered provider address:** The Adolescent & Children's Trust, 303 The Courtyard, Hither Green Lane, London, Kent SE13 6TJ

**Responsible individual:** Andrew Elvin

**Registered manager:** Tolulope Richard-Paul

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## **Inspector**

Kevin Brammer, Social Care Inspector

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