

# TACT Fostering: East, West and North London, Hertfordshire, and Essex.

The Adolescent and Children's Trust

Innovation House, Coniston Court, 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, West 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 32 approved fostering households with 34 children living with its foster carers. The independent fostering agency registered with Ofsted in June 2005. The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2025.

### Inspection dates: 20 to 24 January 2025

**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:** 14 March 2022

**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 develop close and meaningful relationships with their foster carers. Foster carers help children to feel a strong sense of belonging and being part of the foster family. One child said, 'I like this home, (the foster carers are) nice and kind all the time - no matter what - they don't give up on me, never!' Consequently, children experience security and stability in foster homes with foster carers who know them well.

Children make good progress in all aspects of their development, from their starting points in foster care. Foster carers work collaboratively with children's social workers and therapists to meet children's emotional needs. Children benefit from the input of the fostering agency's dedicated education service. This ensures that children have access to appropriate educational provision and support, whether in or out of education.

Children have access to a wide range of enriching experiences that help them to build their resilience and confidence. Managers arrange an annual residential event, which enables children to take part in activities they may have never tried before, such as archery, raft building, aeroball and street surfing. An Engagement & Activity Practitioner (EAP) takes children out for specific activities, or will undertake focussed one to one work, such as helping children to develop independence skills.

Foster carers, fostering staff and managers celebrate children's achievements. An awards ceremony took place recently, where gold medals and certificates were handed out by the chief executive.

Managers and staff actively seek the views of children about their experiences in foster care. Children have access to the, 'You said, we did' feedback process which identifies actions taken in response to the views of children. Children have independent visitors, and the engagement worker gains the views of children as part of foster carer reviews. Consequently, children can contribute to decisions about their day to day lives in foster care.

Children benefit from the fostering agency's support to care leavers. This service offers older children opportunities to receive lifelong community and access to support as they transition to independence and into adulthood.

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

Children say that their foster carers help them to keep them safe from harm. Foster carers and fostering social workers understand children's vulnerabilities. Effective plans are formulated with children's social workers to reduce any likelihood of harm. When new concerns are identified, fostering social workers update safety plans, with clear strategies for foster carers to follow to keep children safe.

Foster carers talk to children about keeping safe, whether this is in the community or, for example, online safety. Children spoken to know who they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Children say that they are listened to and receive appropriate responses to any concerns they may raise. Children's complaints are not a feature of this agency.

Leaders and managers respond quickly to concerns raised regarding children's safety. There is effective collaboration with police, local authority designated officers and youth justice to provide a clear multi-agency approach to managing risk.

Foster carers help children to manage their behaviours and feelings. Foster carers receive training which helps them to understand how children's past experiences may influence children's present responses. Children benefit from the reflective parenting techniques used by foster carers. This means that foster carers are better prepared to manage children's distress, and this contributes to stability for children.

Allegations are not a feature of this fostering agency. When allegations do occur, there is an effective response from leaders and managers, that clearly considers the safety of children as well as the impact on foster carers.

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

An appropriately qualified, suitably experienced, and registered manager manages the fostering agency. Leaders and managers are nurturing an environment of openness and support, with high aspirations for children, foster carers and staff.

Leaders and managers have appropriate systems in place to monitor the quality of care provided to children. There is a culture of learning from practice and listening to children and foster carers to inform the service offered. Leaders and managers are aware of areas for improvement in the fostering agency and have realistic plans in place to achieve these. An example of this is the successful bid for an additional staff role to increase foster carer recruitment and local support to foster carers.

Leaders and managers are child focussed when considering children coming to live with foster carers. This means that the needs of children already living with foster carers as well as the skills of the foster carer are central to decision making, regardless of whether the proposed foster carer has a vacancy. This tension in respect of capacity is managed well by leaders and managers, with clear communication to foster carers as to why children cannot come to live with them.

Leaders and managers know that case records need to improve to better reflect children's day to day experiences. Foster carer logs vary in quality and content, but there is a positive move to writing to the child in the first person. However, clarity is needed in respect of the frequency that foster carers must provide logs, as practice is not in line with what is stated in the foster carers' handbook.

Staff receive regular supervision with a good balance of case discussion, safeguarding and staff development. Staff report that the training and development opportunities provided to them are good. The use of practice development groups, clinical supervision and reflective sessions ensure that managers and staff keep on top of practice issues. Where staff need additional support in respect of practice, this is made available by managers. Staff overwhelmingly praise the support they receive from managers. However, appraisals of staff reviewed did not show that the views of children had been considered as part of the process.

Foster carers feel valued and supported by leaders and managers. Foster carers receive regular and effective supervision. Leaders and managers offer foster carers an extensive range of training and development opportunities, through online and face to face training, therapeutic sessions, and forums. This helps foster carers to parent from a trauma informed position. However, foster carers personal development plans (PDP) do not provide sufficient information on how they are meeting the skills required of them.

The agency fostering panel provides an effective quality assurance process for the approval and continued approval of foster carers. The fostering panel has an experienced panel chair, and effective oversight is provided by an experienced agency decision maker. Fostering panel processes are reviewed to ensure that practice is in line with agency policy, fostering regulations and national minimum standards.

Leaders and managers ensure that children's plans address children's needs. Leaders and managers work effectively with local authority representatives and challenge where appropriate to ensure that plans can be actioned.

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

### **Recommendations**

- The registered provider should ensure that foster carers maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by the fostering service. ('Fostering services: National minimum standards', 20.4)
- The registered provider should ensure that appraisals of staff who are working with children, takes into account any views of children the service is providing for, and this is recorded as part of the appraisal process. ('Fostering services: National minimum standards', 24.6)
- The registered person implements a written policy that clarifies the purpose, format, and content of information to be kept on the fostering service's files, on the child's files and on case files relating to foster carers. Specifically, this relates to the frequency with which foster care logs are presented to the agency by foster carers. ('Fostering services: National minimum standards', 26.1)
- The registered person should ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. ('Fostering services: National minimum standards', 26.6)

### **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:** Innovation House, Coniston Court, PO Box 137,  
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**Responsible individual:** Andrew Elvin

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## **Inspectors**

Colin Bent, Social Care Inspector.

Amanda Burrows, Social Care Inspector

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