

TACT Fostering Yorkshire

The Adolescent And Children's Trust (TACT)
Unit 4 Killingbeck Court, Killingbeck Drive, Leeds LS14 6FD
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

TACT Fostering (Yorkshire) is a charity and an independent fostering agency. The head office is in London and there are regional offices across England, Scotland and Wales. The Leeds branch covers Yorkshire and Humberside. The agency provides emergency, parent and child, short-term and permanent placements for children and young people. There are currently 27 approved carers looking after a total of 30 children and young people.

Inspection dates: 12 to 16 March 2018

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: 15 November 2013

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- The children build good, secure relationships with their foster carers; this helps to ensure stable and positive placements.
- The children also have good relationships with the agency staff.
- There is good matching of the children with foster carers.
- The children make good progress in their health and education. Their foster carers support them in this.
- Some children can stay with their foster carers after they reach 18 years of age. This allows them to prepare for independence at a pace that is right for them.
- The children become safer and show less risk-taking behaviour during their time with the foster carers.
- The foster carers respond well when children go missing from care.
- The foster carers help children to take age-appropriate risks and learn about keeping themselves safe.
- The foster carers help the children to understand and manage their behaviour.
- The agency provides a good level of support for the foster carers.
- The agency is managed well.
- The registered manager and staff know the carers and the children well.
- The children get good opportunities to take part in a range of activities, including some provided by the agency.
- The registered manager, staff and foster carers put children at the centre of their practice and have high aspirations for them.
- The agency has good and effective relationships with other agencies working with the children.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- There has not been specific training for the foster panel members.
- The use of risk assessment is inconsistent.
- The reviews of the quality of care do not include the views of foster carers or placing authorities.
- Some issues had not been picked up through monitoring.
- There was a nine-month delay in getting a copy of the gas safety certificate for one set of foster carers.

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
The system for monitoring and reviewing the quality of care must provide for consultation with foster parents and children's placing authorities. (Regulation 35(3))	30/06/2018

Recommendations

- Ensure that the service implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. (National Minimum Standards 4.5) In particular, this relates to ensuring that risks for children are identified and assessed to provide clear guidance on how to manage and reduce the risks.
- Ensure that avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a family home. (National Minimum Standards 10.3) In particular, this relates to ensuring that any issues identified during health and safety checks are followed through and completed.
- Ensure that the management of the service ensures that all staff's work and all fostering activity is consistent with the 2011 Regulations and NMS and with the service's policies and procedures. (National Minimum Standards 25.3)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The agency and the foster carers provide good care and support for the children who use this service. The children build trusted and secure relationships with their foster carers. Many of them have long and stable foster placements. This stability is achieved due to good matching of the children with their foster carers. It allows the children, including those who live outside of their home areas, to make good progress in areas such as health and education. The children also build strong relationships with the supervising social workers from TACT. One child spoke about how the worker from TACT had supported her more than her local authority social worker. She said, 'I have nothing bad to say about TACT. I have been in foster care since I was six years old and TACT are better than anywhere else I have lived.'

The foster carers support the children in their education and help them to overcome difficulties. One child, who had 16 placements before being fostered with TACT, has been in her current placement for four years. She has achieved good GCSE results, is now in further education and has clear views on her future education and career. The stability of her placement has helped her to do well in education. Furthermore, she has struggled with the move to less structured further education, with more emphasis on private study. Her foster carer has helped her find ways to manage this successfully so that she is now enjoying it more than school. A child who has been struggling with school spoke about the help that she is receiving from her foster carer and the agency's children's resources worker. Another child said that she had fallen out with her friends at school, but her foster carer sorted it out for her. This is the sort of issue that if not addressed could have had an ongoing negative effect on the child's education and shows how the foster carers help children to sort out the things that are important to them.

The foster carers help the children to be healthy and develop an understanding of their health. This includes for some children supporting them to make progress in their emotional and mental health, including ensuring that they get the specialist help that they need. In some cases, this has needed the foster carers to advocate for the children. The foster carers and the children's resources worker help the children to develop the skills and understanding that they will need to live independently. Many children know that they will have the opportunity to stay with their foster carers after they reach 18 years of age if that is what they want. This allows them time to develop and prepare for independence. One child, who has stayed with his previous foster carers for over a year beyond his 18th birthday, said that he is on the point of moving out now as he has a job and is able to provide for himself. He was able to stay until he was ready to move. He speaks of the experience he had with TACT (being involved in interviews of staff and training) in helping him develop the confidence for successful employment. A child who is approaching 18 spoke of the increased responsibility that her foster carer allows her. She said that the foster carer 'has trust in me and has trusted me more and given me more freedom as I have grown'. This is allowing her to develop her independence with the support of the foster carer if she needs it.

The children are provided with information on their foster placements before they move in. The foster carers welcome them into their placements and help them to settle. The placing social worker for one child who has recently moved to a TACT foster carer said that 'so far, it has exceeded my expectations'. The agency listens to the children's views by ensuring that supervising social workers see them regularly, getting their views on their placements for the foster carers' annual reviews and involving them in local and national participation groups. This allows the children the opportunity to influence their day-to-day care and their plans. The agency welcomes prospective carers; some said that this is the reason that they chose TACT, describing a warm and family-like environment.

The children have opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities with their foster carers, such as going on holiday with them. They also join clubs and take part in activities in the community. The agency runs activity days for the foster carers and the children. These include things such as ice skating, a trip to a wildlife park and a Halloween-themed event. In addition to this, the agency and the wider organisation arrange short holidays. Children have been to a local activity centre and on a trip to France with the organisation. The wide range of opportunities that the children can take part in allow them to have enjoyable experiences of childhood similar to those of their peers.

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

The children feel safe in their foster placements and become safer during their time with the agency. The foster carers have a good understanding of safeguarding issues and take part in training on subjects such as radicalisation, child sexual exploitation, caring for sexually abused children and internet safety. This helps them to identify concerns, to protect children and to reduce risk-taking behaviour. One foster carer spoke about the steps that she had taken to safeguard a child who used the internet in a risky way. This child has since stopped her unsafe internet use and her self-harming. The children can speak to their foster carers, the supervising social workers and the children's resource worker and this provides important safeguards for them.

The foster carers take appropriate action in response to concerns such as children going missing from care and attempts to self-harm. The quick response from one foster carer in going out to look for the child helped the placing authority to identify where the child had gone. However, the use of risk assessments to help assess risk and provide clear guidance on how to reduce and manage risk is variable. While carers are able to use their training and knowledge to help them respond appropriately, the lack of clear written plans leaves the potential for inconsistent responses that do not safeguard children as much as possible. The agency works with other agencies to help ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed in order to protect the children. The agency investigates complaints effectively to help ensure that the standard of care for the children remains high and that the children are safe in their foster homes.

The foster carers help the children to take age-appropriate risks throughout their

childhoods. This helps them to develop their self-confidence and learn about keeping themselves safe. Examples of this include:

- A child who could not climb trees and take part in other unstructured adventurous activities because of a medical condition being given the chance to go climbing at a club.
- A foster carer spending six weeks helping a child to use public transport on her own.

The foster carers help the children to understand and manage their behaviour. In one case, this has involved working with the child's therapist and family to ensure a consistent and effective approach. The placing social worker said that the child 'has done remarkably well and foster carers have done unbelievably well'. The foster carers are backed up by the therapist who is giving them advice; they have put in place the suggested strategies and routines. The social worker said that the therapist is impressed how well the foster carers have taken on board her advice and strategies to manage the child's behaviours. Another child spoke of how she had learned to manage her behaviour. She said that 'I used to behave really badly and say nasty things to [the foster carer]'. She said that this had changed because she has been to see a counsellor and can speak to the foster carer about how she is feeling.

The agency undertakes appropriate employment checks on its staff. In addition to this, the assessments of prospective carers are thorough and the foster panel is effective in reviewing the assessments and considering the prospective carers' suitability to look after children. These factors help to protect children from contact with or being looked after by adults who may pose a risk to them.

The agency ensures that the foster carers are visited regularly, including at least one unannounced visit a year. In addition to this, there are annual health and safety reviews of the foster carers' homes and any pets. This all helps to ensure that the homes in which children live are safe. However, in one case an action point from a foster carer's annual review was not followed up. Consequently, there was nine-month delay in getting a copy of the gas safety certificate. While the system generally works well, such oversights can reduce its overall effectiveness.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The agency has a permanent registered manager who is suitably experienced and qualified. Staff describe her as 'amazing'. They say that she is very knowledgeable about fostering and will challenge them in a kind way. She has good rapport with staff and knows her carers really well. Due to the small size of the agency, the registered manager and staff all know the carers and the children well, not just the ones they are working with. The foster carers say that this is really helpful and reassuring as whenever they phone up, even in an emergency or out of hours, they know the person they speak to and they will know them and the children.

The staff like working for the agency, in particular they value the clear, child-focused

approach. They feel supported through good induction, training and management. One supervising social worker said, 'I thought I was good at teamwork, but did not realise what it meant until I came here. I feel valued and accepted.' This helps to create an environment where staff can develop and maintain high aspirations for the children. The managers and staff put the needs of the children at the top of their agendas and meet their aims and objectives, as set out in the agency's statement of purpose. Managers, staff and foster carers promote equality and diversity for the children so that they can develop and maintain their knowledge of their backgrounds and their self-awareness. Where necessary, they challenge the views of other agencies working with the children but at the same time maintain effective working relationships so that they work together to meet the children's needs. Placing authorities describe the agency as open, transparent and responsive. One commissioner said that the long-term placements that the children have speak for themselves.

Leaders and managers have a good knowledge of the strengths and areas for development in the agency. This is helped in part by the small size of the agency, but also by regular monitoring. The registered manager completes three-monthly audits and reports for senior managers and the trustees. They help to identify areas to improve the quality of care for the children, but do not take account of the views of foster carers and placing social workers. Consequently, they are not based on as wide an area of evidence as they could be. Some issues have not been identified through monitoring and while they are generally isolated, collectively they do limit some areas of progress. Examples of this include the gas safety certificate referred to above, a set of carers whose Training, Support and Development Standards had been completed, but not signed off, and not pulling through some actions from annual foster carer reviews.

The supervising social workers visit the foster carers regularly and complete supervisions at appropriate intervals. The foster carers are very appreciative of the high levels of support that they get and the very quick responses from supervising social workers when necessary. This helps the carers to feel confident and to maintain placements for the children, even at times of stress and challenge. The foster carers get the training that they need to provide high-quality care for the children. Some foster carers said that they have needed specialist training and the agency has been very ready and willing to fund this. The agency's staff also receive appropriate training, but the foster panel members have not had annual training as the agency's policy says they will. While the panel members are individually knowledgeable and experienced, and they have the opportunity to attend foster carer training, not providing collective training does miss the opportunity to ensure that they are all fully up to date with important developments and issues.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people

and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the independent fostering agency knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC448336

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