



Arolygiaeth Gofal a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Cymru  
Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

## Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Care Standards Act 2000

# Inspection Report

The Adolescent and Children`s Trust (TACT Cymru)

Neath

Type of Inspection – Baseline

Date(s) of inspection – Monday, 23, Tuesday 24, Wednesday 25 and Thursday 26  
November 2015

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## Summary

### About the service

The Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT) is a charitable independent fostering agency which has been in operation since 1993. The Wales office known as TACT Cymru was opened in 1998. The office is based in the Neath town area. The Responsible Individual is David Bradley who is the Executive Director for Children's Services and is based in London. The Registered Manager is Michael Anthony, who is also the manager for the west team and is appropriately qualified and experienced as a manager of a fostering agency. The agency provides services which include fostering placements for children/young people aged 0-18 years. The agency also provides placements for children with disabilities and parent and child placements.

TACT have 113 approved foster carers recruited from south, mid and north Wales, who are able to provide 190 placements. 113 children and young people were placed with foster carers at the time of inspection. (Information taken from TACT's self assessment of service statement.)

### What type of inspection was carried out?

A baseline inspection was undertaken as part of CSSIW's schedule of inspections.

The following methodology was used to undertake the inspection:

- Scrutiny of Self Assessment of Service Statement (SASS) and Annual Data Collection (ADC) completed by the registered manager prior to inspection
- Inspection planning meeting with the registered manager
- Discussion with the manager for the east team
- Discussion with the Responsible Individual (via Skype)
- Discussion with the deputy area manager from the west team (via Skype)
- Scrutiny of three previous panel meetings
- Discussions with foster carers at support groups from the east (1) and from the west (12)
- Meetings with staff from the west and east teams
- Discussion with a Life Skills tutor employed by Barnardos
- Attendance at a 'Chill Out' meeting for young people
- Discussion with the children's resource worker for the west team
- Scrutiny of six annual reviews of foster carers
- Examination of three young people's personal files
- Examination provided for the inspection by the registered manager
- Examination of quarterly management performance reports.
- Scrutiny of Updated Statement of Purpose

### What does the service do well?

- TACT has a commitment to learning and investing in public and professional awareness of issues affecting young people and children. The management of the fostering agency is committed to the development of the service for the benefit of children, young people and their foster carers.
- Annual reviews had a focus on children's outcomes, reporting on whether the carers are supporting children sufficiently in each of the outcome areas from Every Child Matters
- TACT encourages the involvement, participation and mutual support of carers and

young people.

- TACT run three therapeutic support groups across Wales facilitated by a child psychologist, strengthening the support for carers who need specialist psychological input.
- TACT had developed collaborative relationships with external bodies. A partnership had been set up with Barnardos to undertake joint training for foster carers
- TACT have joined a consortium of 5 children's charities in Wales and were successful in their bid for funds from the Big Lottery fund to jointly deliver therapeutic training across Wales to Local Authority foster carers (Fostering Changes)
- Two children's resource workers (CRW) support placements particularly around the areas of education, participation and where there is risk of disruption

#### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

- TACT have developed a 'Chill Out' evening for young people aged 12+
- A Life Skills training programme for young people jointly run with Barnardos was provided for young people aged 8-11 and 11-14

#### **What needs to be done to improve the service?**

There were no issues of non-compliance to report.

## Quality Of Life

Overall, we (CSSIW) found that the welfare of children and young people are at the centre of the care provided by TACT, by ensuring that children are placed with foster carers who are able to meet their emotional, health and educational needs.

Children and young people feel listened to and their views are valued. We found that TACT ensured that there were mechanisms in place to enable young people to contribute their views on decisions involving their care. Supervising social workers informed us that they met with the young people as part of their supervision sessions with foster carers and were able to obtain their views of their placement, which was recorded. We also saw that children and young people were able to contribute to their foster carers' annual review and give their views on the placement. We saw some very positive comments on the care that young people received in the files we looked at. One young person said *'I am satisfied with my placement and I love them very much. The best thing about my placement is they like things to be fair and kind between everyone, there is nothing I could ever wish to change.'* There was evidence on files that we viewed that young people had been involved in their LAC reviews and some young people had been provided with an advocate. Advocacy services was promoted and encouraged by TACT, where appropriate, and there were examples of where this had been used to promote children's rights. Foster carers also advocated for the children and young people in their care. We were told that TACT had a good working relationship with advocacy providers such as Tros Gynnal and Voices in Care.

Children and young people are encouraged to achieve educationally. Clear expectations are given to foster carers on the importance of young people maximising their educational achievements and their responsibilities in promoting their educational needs. Foster carers we met with showed a keen interest in the academic progress of the children in placement and gave some examples of positive outcomes for young people in achieving educationally. One set of carers described how the young person had improved attendance at school dramatically since being placed which was directly linked to the improvement in educational attainment. The young person was applying to go to university which they were fully supportive of and the foster carers were going to offer supported lodgings to ensure that they could still support her during the holidays. We saw in feedback from one young person that she had been helped by the foster carers through her GCSE's and problem with her peers. She said *'They always seem to know how to make me feel better.'* Another young person had achieved eight GCSE's which included an A and B grade and five C grades and was now undertaking her A levels. A tutoring scheme to support young people taking GCSE's had been held to support young people in improving their chances of obtaining higher grades. One social worker in a consultation document said that the foster carer had gone above and beyond to advocate that a young person had appropriate support in school and provided a great home environment for additional learning.

Children remain healthy because the wellbeing of children and young people is promoted and protected by the agency. We saw evidence that foster carers were provided with good information on the health needs of the children and were supported to contact professional health services such as doctors, dentists and opticians as well as specialist health services if required. A Life Skills course run jointly with Barnardos' in the west and TACT had been developed working with children 8-11 years and young people 11-14 which informed all aspects of healthy living and informed young people of the supports available in their area. A commitment of attending for 10 weeks was required for younger children and 18 weeks for older young people. We were told that fourteen young people had engaged really well with the project. A similar group for young people had been set up and run with Voices

from Care with young people from east Wales.

Children remain in control because they are supported with difficult feelings and are helped to develop coping strategies. Therapeutic support groups run by Contatus Psychological Services had been introduced to further improve access to specialist support. All the children placed with TACT foster carers were able to access training and one to one support. TACT also employed a play therapist.

Children and young people are active, positively occupied and stimulated. We saw several examples of young people being involved in activities as part of living in a foster family and through activity groups provided by TACT. We saw examples of young people attending activities such as Girls Brigade, dance clubs and ballet and sport activities and trips to theme parks etc. We also saw that young people were encouraged to join groups organised by TACT e.g. 'Chill Out' evening, art groups, residential weekends and a Life Skills programme. One young person said *'TACT events are really cool to go to and meet new friends.'*

## Quality Of Staffing

Overall we found that children and young people and foster carers are supported by competent, experienced and motivated staff that are committed to make a positive difference to the lives of looked after children and young people.

Foster carers feel confident in the advice and support they receive because staff are experienced and knowledgeable and know the foster carers and children and young people in placement very well. Staff said because of the difficulties within Local Authority child care teams, with a lot of changes of social workers, they often took on the role of the children's social worker and sometimes knew the children better. Staff had a professional development plan and were able to access internal and external training, which enabled them to have an informed and up to date knowledge of current practice. Staff said that they received regular supervision from managers and described supervision as being informative and clear. They also said that supervision gave them an opportunity to discuss the foster carers and the young people in placement and felt that they were listened to and that managers were pragmatic and made good decisions. All staff had received an annual appraisal and six month probation meetings, as appropriate. Staff within the agency described good relationships with their colleagues and good support from the management team, through regular team meetings and they said that the managers operated an open door policy and were easily accessible. Foster carers also said that the managers were easily accessible and approachable. Staff said that the best thing about working for TACT was that they were an agency which was child focussed and supportive from top to bottom and were able to work in an environment where people were open to ideas and listened.

Foster carers receive timely support and care and are supported by familiar staff as TACT have a stable staff team and an appropriate caseload weighting system which allowed for a high level of support to foster carers and children and young people. Some staff we spoke with said that their caseloads although manageable, could be emotionally draining because of the complexity of some of the young people in placement. There had been some dissent within one of the teams because of a member of staff having been made redundant, which had been a difficult time for some staff, but this had not impacted on the operation of the service. Foster carers we spoke with were very positive about the support they received from TACT as a whole. Foster carers were highly complimentary of the supervising social workers and managers in TACT and said that staff in the agency went the 'extra mile'. Foster carers described the support from their supervising social workers as '*excellent*' and '*supportive*' and '*amazing*'. One foster carer said '*supervision is helpful, supportive and informative*'. Another set of foster carers who had a difficult placement said that if it had not been for the support from TACT and their supervising social worker they would have given up fostering. Foster carers we spoke with said that a particular strength of TACT was that they were very supportive of ensuring placement stability and strived to ensure that children and young people in placements reached their full potential. Foster carers were able to get support from the children's resource workers (CRW) (although one was not in work at the time of inspection and some of the work was being completed by an experienced foster carer on a sessional basis), particularly when a placement was in danger of disruption.

## Quality Of Leadership and Management

Overall we found that children, young people and foster carers benefit from a service that is well managed, clear about its purpose and committed to improving the outcomes for children and young people.

Foster carers and children and young people can be confident that they are safe because the service is well run, with due care and attention to minimum standards and regulations. The agency benefitted from a stable management team with clear lines of accountability. There had not been any changes to the management structure since the last inspection and the Registered Manager had been in post for several years and is very experienced in managing a fostering service. There were two Area Managers for TACT Cymru, one of whom was also the Registered Manager. There were also three Deputy Area Managers. The whole management team and staff working for the service were dedicated to improving outcomes for looked after children.

Foster carers using the service are clear about what the service sets out to provide and provides clear information about the aims and objectives of the fostering service through the Statement of Purpose which is a colourful and informative document which was updated in February 2015. Foster carers we spoke with were aware of the statement of purpose and said it reflected the service provided.

Foster carers experience an improving service because the agency has developed innovative services by working collaboratively and creatively with other agencies to deliver best outcomes for looked after children. TACT had developed with the Centre for Evidence Based Early Intervention at Bangor University and Cardiff City Council, an innovative fostering service called Parallel Parenting, which will involve foster carers playing an important role of working with parents of looked after young people, with a view to them returning home. They were also piloting a new 'Step Down' programme in east Wales for young people in residential placements, who would benefit from either a full time or shared care fostering placement.

TACT takes a wider role and responsibility in influencing practice e.g. through being part of the Fostering Through Social Enterprise consortium. TACT was instrumental in campaigning nationally for services for looked after children post 18 in Wales and England. TACT already had in place the 'Staying Put' scheme before the 'When I am Ready' scheme, which was piloted in Wales. TACT had developed collaborative relationships with external bodies. They have an agreed partnership with Barnardos to deliver joint training for foster carers. They have also been successful with a consortium of five children's charities in Wales in receiving funding from the Lottery to jointly deliver therapeutic training across Wales to local authority foster carers, which are being rolled out from January 2016 until 2020. TACT was also going to be delivering residential courses of Fostering Changes to Local Authority staff across Wales.

Foster carers and children and young people are actively involved in defining and measuring the quality of the fostering service and participation is an area of strength in this agency. However, staff we spoke with were not complacent and were always looking to improve participation of young people. TACT as part of its participation agenda ran a peer mentor scheme, 'Children's Champions', where young people met with other looked after children (LAC), senior managers and Trustees of the agency giving them an opportunity to feed into national consultation. The agency ran a number of young people's residential events and groups, such as the 'Chill Out' group which gave young people the opportunity to provide feedback in an informal way to ensure that

young people had a voice in decisions and processes which affected their lives while placed with foster carers in TACT. One young person we spoke with in the 'Chill Out' group said she was going to be a mentor for other children placed with TACT and had attended meetings representing the views of LAC in Wales. Young people and foster carers spoke positively about and value of having their voice heard and the skills they had developed as a result. Foster carers were able to discuss issues with their supervising social workers and attend support groups, though some carers did not wish to attend groups. Foster carers' representatives were able to meet with senior managers to discuss organisational aims and objectives and to give feedback and raise any issues which were responded to. Foster carers were expected to provide written feedback for annual reviews on the services provided by TACT. The manager provided 'quarterly management performance and quality reports' and continually monitored the quality of the service.

We did not attend panel at this inspection because the previous inspection had evidenced that the panel was robust and thorough and an effective decision making forum. Three panel minutes we examined evidenced that this was still the case. The chair and vice chair of panel were well supported in their role and were able to attend regional meetings for chairs and vice chairs of fostering panels, operated by TACT throughout the UK and were able to attend best practice forums. Foster panel members had a clear induction process and were supervised by the chair and panel members were annually appraised. Panel members had access to online research resources allowing them to keep up to date with developments in childcare practice and the needs of looked after children.



## Quality Of The Carers

Overall, we found children and young people can be confident that they are supported by foster carers who are motivated, competent and promoted the physical, emotional and social development of looked after children.

Children and young people are cared for by motivated foster carers and want to make a difference to the lives of the children in placement. The foster carers we spoke with were passionate about providing the best possible care for the young people they cared for. Files we saw and foster carers we spoke with spoke very positively about the young people they cared for and demonstrated their commitment to make a difference. The young people were very much treated as part of the family. We saw in one file a letter of support from the daughter of a foster carer to the young person's social worker, offering to support the young person in placement and in school, because she wanted the young person to stay as part of her family. We saw many compliments from social workers and other professionals on the care provided in consultation documents. One social worker commented that the placement was excellent while the young person was going through a very difficult time and that no issues had been too big for the foster carer and said '*I could not have wished for more.*' Another described how the foster carer had baked a cake for the first visit of the young person to the home and had been '*superb in helping her settle in and celebrating her birthday and Christmas with the family.*'

Children and young people are cared for by competent and confident carers who are recruited appropriately and receive effective training. We saw that a robust assessment process was undertaken by the agency which was thorough and timely with appropriate statutory checks having been undertaken. The pre-approval training, 'Skills to Foster' is provided during the assessment process. The training was seen to provide a good understanding of the issues associated with fostering and formed an important part of the assessment process. Foster carers we spoke with and files that we looked at evidenced that foster carers were provided with a comprehensive range of training to support them in their day to day role as foster carers. A dedicated Learning and Development practitioner audited the learning needs of foster carers on an annual basis and ensures training available provided the necessary skills needed to enable carers to meet the needs of looked after children with complex needs. Also the 'Fostering Changes' training which included a significant theme of attachment and insight into meeting the essential needs of young people had supported foster carers in understanding the needs of the children placed with them. Foster carers who had attended 'Fostering Changes' training said that this training had been excellent in supporting them with their relationships with the young people they cared for. A buddying system of linking foster carers where possible, allowed mentoring of newer foster carers by experienced and skilled foster carers.

Children are in safe placements because of the support and information provided by the agency. We saw in the files that we looked at that the foster carers had an annual review and minutes of panel. Safe caring policies were updated and individual to the children and young person in placement. We saw that supervision visits to foster carers were regular and as well as offering support to the foster carer was also child focussed. Unannounced visits, telephone support and training attended were recorded in the files. We saw on children's files that delegated authority forms had been completed and LAC review minutes, psychologist reports and SERAF assessments were available to foster carers ensuring that foster carers were able to provide appropriate care for the young people in placement.

## How we inspect and report on services

We conduct two types of inspection; baseline and focused. Both consider the experience of people using services.

- **Baseline inspections** assess whether the registration of a service is justified and whether the conditions of registration are appropriate. For most services, we carry out these inspections every three years. Exceptions are registered child minders, out of school care, sessional care, crèches and open access provision, which are every four years.

At these inspections we check whether the service has a clear, effective Statement of Purpose and whether the service delivers on the commitments set out in its Statement of Purpose. In assessing whether registration is justified inspectors check that the service can demonstrate a history of compliance with regulations.

- **Focused inspections** consider the experience of people using services and we will look at compliance with regulations when poor outcomes for people using services are identified. We carry out these inspections in between baseline inspections. Focused inspections will always consider the quality of life of people using services and may look at other areas.

Baseline and focused inspections may be scheduled or carried out in response to concerns.

Inspectors use a variety of methods to gather information during inspections. These may include;

- Talking with people who use services and their representatives
- Talking to staff and the manager
- Looking at documentation
- Observation of staff interactions with people and of the environment
- Comments made within questionnaires returned from people who use services, staff and health and social care professionals

We inspect and report our findings under 'Quality Themes'. Those relevant to each type of service are referred to within our inspection reports.

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