

# TACT Fostering – West Midlands

The Adolescent and Children's Trust

Spoooner House, 172 Birmingham Road, West Bromwich, West Midlands B70 6QG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

The Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT) is an incorporated charity and independent fostering agency. The head office is in London, and there are eight registered agencies throughout England and Wales. At the time of this inspection, the Birmingham branch of TACT supports 35 carer households caring for 52 children and young people. The agency caters for children and young people from birth to under 18 years.

**Inspection dates:** 13 to 17 August 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:** 10 July 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement to be good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Children and young people are supported to make good progress in their placements.
- Children and young people are provided with a variety of activities that are bespoke to their individual needs.
- Carers receive support that is tailored to the needs of the children and young people whom they care for. Carers feel supported by the staff and manager.
- Monitoring systems are in place. These allow targeted support to be implemented when needed.
- The manager is improving the service to provide therapeutic support and care to all children and young people.
- Children are well prepared for the future. A number of 'staying put' and long-term placements offer children and young people security.
- Staff are well supported, and have regular supervisions and appraisals.
- Managers and staff are passionate about the service and strive to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Documentation for children and young people, such as the children's guide, is not in a format that they can access and understand.
- Not all foster carers within a household attend training equivalent to that of the main carer.
- Foster carers do not always receive a written record of their supervision.
- Monitoring and review systems need to be developed further to evidence and analyse the progress made.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that support and training is made available to foster carers, including hard to reach carers, to assist them in meeting the specific needs of the children they are caring for or are expected to care for. (NMS 20.8)

This relates to all foster carers in the household attending training, in addition to foster carers being provided with a copy of their supervision notes.

- The fostering service must also compile a children's guide to the fostering service, the details of which are set out in standard 16. It must be produced in a format which is appropriate to the age, understanding and communication needs of children who may be fostered by the service. In practice this means that it may be necessary to produce several versions of the guide, aimed at different age groups and including formats accessible to those with learning or communication difficulties. (Statutory guidance – Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services, paragraph 4.3)
- The manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (National Minimum Standards 25.2)

This relates to ensuring that more analysis around patterns and trends within the service is evidenced, including the progress that children and young people make.

## Inspection judgements

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

Foster carers support children and young people well. Support is individualised and has a positive impact upon the progress that children and young people make and their daily experiences.

Since the last inspection, the agency has started to introduce therapeutic care that provides targeted support to fostering households. This has increased foster carers' knowledge and supported them in developing a therapeutic approach. As such, foster carers are now better equipped to manage challenging behaviours and have a better understanding of the different strategies that they can use.

The manager's vision is to provide a therapeutic service to all children and young people. To support this vision, training is being rolled out to all foster carers and staff. The manager has seen the benefit of the targeted support already in place and wants to develop this approach throughout the service.

Children and young people have positive relationships with their foster families. Since the last inspection, there has been a decrease in placement breakdown. The contributing factor is the support provided to fostering families. The manager and staff closely monitor and tailor support to families before placements are in crisis. This is effective and ensures that children and young people have more stability in their life, with fewer placement moves.

Children and young people are supported to make good progress in education. Additional one-to-one tuition is provided to those who need it. This is funded by the fostering agency, allowing for the pupil premium funding to be utilised in addition. The children's resource worker attends children's and young people's education meetings as further support to children, young people and foster carers.

Foster carers are empowered by staff to promote children's and young people's health and educational needs. Foster carers are provided with specific training to support them in caring for children with particular health needs, such as diabetes. This ensures that they have the skills to meet children's and young people's needs.

Managers listen to children and young people. Their views are sought, and they feel valued by the agency. The responsible individual chairs a children's champion group, where children's and young people's views directly support the development of the service.

Children and young people enjoy an array of activities provided by the agency and their foster families. When the inspector spoke to children and young people, they all spoke positively about these activities. Activities are individualised to each child's and young person's interests and needs. Children and young people are kept up to date through an informative newsletter that is colourful and inviting to read.

Training days to help young people to develop their life skills are provided by the fostering agency. When appropriate, children and young people remain in 'staying put' and long-term placements. This provides future security for children and young people.

The agency manages transitions well. Children are welcomed into foster families and provided with information about the family before they move in. While children and young people are given a welcome pack/children's guide, this needs further development to ensure that it is child friendly and accessible to all children and young people to read and understand.

Foster carers support children and young people to see their families. They support children's and young people's cultural needs and promote their identity.

New carers are assessed and prepared well for their fostering role. This is monitored regularly through the panel.

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

Children and young people feel safe in their foster homes. The agency understands and manages risks well. They act accordingly when potential risks are identified, and ensure that children and young people are kept central to the decisions made. The agency follows appropriate processes when concerns arise with foster carers, and managers take decisive action. This includes the deregistration of foster carers or additional monitoring, support and panel reviews, if required. During such processes, foster carers have a full understanding of why action needs to be taken, and feel supported.

Foster carers are provided with training to support them to manage risks such as child exploitation, radicalisation and abuse. Staff also provide additional support and advice to foster carers. There has been a reduction in the number of children and young people who go missing. When children are at high risk of going missing, foster carers and staff work collaboratively with other agencies to secure children's and young people's safety. At times, this is done in a creative way. As a result, children and young people are safer.

Staff are committed to supporting carers to implement consistent boundaries for children and young people. Staff work with the carers to ensure that children and young people have a sense of security and belonging. Carers can access an array of training, which can be tailored to the needs of the fostering household. The manager has several strategies in place to support harder-to-reach carers to attend training. However, this remains an area for development to ensure that children and young people receive consistent care from all of the adults in the household.

The agency has a children's resource worker, who adds an additional layer of safeguarding to the service. The worker has much contact with the children and young people, and shares with the supervising social workers any concerns or worries that children or young people have. This promotes early intervention and prevents situations from escalating.

The recruitment process for new staff is good, and all relevant checks are undertaken to ensure the suitability of new staff joining the agency.

Overall, foster carers have regular supervision. However, this is not always documented in a timely manner, and they do not always receive a copy of their supervision notes that details the discussions and the actions agreed.

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

During this inspection period, the management structure has been stabilised. The manager has been registered with Ofsted since February 2018. She has been promoted from within the company and has many years of experience in the organisation. She is supported by a deputy manager who is also very familiar with the service. The registered manager and deputy manager are passionate, have high expectations and are child focused.

Since the last inspection, the management team has worked hard to address the previous shortfalls and increase staff morale. This has been effective, because managers have a clear understanding of the service's strengths and areas for development. They have ensured that they are meeting the aims and objectives of the setting. The registered manager has a clear vision of how she will continue to move the service forward.

By implementing tailored support, the registered manager ensures that children and young people make continued progress. The manager monitors through weekly meetings and quarterly reports the progress that all children and young people make. However, the progress that children make and the benefit of the support provided are not always analysed and evidenced as well as they could be, and are areas for development. This will allow managers to clearly evidence what has worked well within the service and any areas that have not been as effective.

The staff team is well supported, and staff feel positive about the management structure in place. Staff have regular supervisions and appraisals that are effective and challenge practice. New staff feel positive about the induction process and enjoy their training. Regardless of how long staff have been with the organisation, they feel valued, and their views and ideas are taken on board.

Managers have the full support of the staff and carers. Carers told the inspector that managers are very available and that they always want what is best for the children and young people.

Managers and staff work closely with other organisations, including local authorities. They regularly update other professionals and work in partnership to ensure that the best decisions are made for children and young people.

## **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 difference 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:** SC056442

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

**Registered provider address:** 303 Hither Green Lane, London SE13 6TJ

**Responsible individual:** Andrew Elvin

**Registered manager:** Michelle Patterson

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## **Inspector**

Lisa O'Donovan, social care inspector





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