

TACT Fostering - North West

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

TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust) is a charitable organisation which operates across England, Scotland and Wales.

The agency offers short-term, long-term, respite and emergency care. The agency can care for children with disabilities, sibling groups, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and parents and children.

At the time of the inspection, the agency had 37 approved fostering households, caring for 42 children.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 2016 and is currently on a sabbatical. The deputy manager is acting as interim manager for the service in his absence.

Inspection dates: 15 to 19 June 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 11 December 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Summary of findings

Children experience exceptional care in stable, nurturing foster homes where they develop trust, confidence and a strong sense of belonging. Foster carers understand children's previous lived experiences and provide consistent and thoughtful care that helps them to manage their emotions, build resilience and achieve educational success.

Safeguarding practice is strong and proactive, with regular visits from supervising social workers, who are effective in their risk management and swift responses to concerns.

Leadership is ambitious and highly effective, with experienced managers maintaining a child-centred culture and clear strategic direction.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children experience exceptional care that enables them to make strong and sustained progress. They are welcomed into stable, nurturing foster families where they develop trust and confidence. One local authority social worker stated that their child 'is thriving in a stable and nurturing [foster home]'. Children consistently describe feeling safe, valued and part of the family and carers speak with warmth and pride about the children they care for.

Foster carers provide thoughtful, consistent care that meets children's individual needs, including those with additional or complex needs. Carers understand children's backgrounds and lived experiences and respond with patience, structure and reassurance. This helps children to manage their emotions more effectively and build positive relationships.

Children benefit from a warm family environment where they are included in daily routines, celebrations and shared experiences. Carers support children to develop close relationships with their birth children, which helps children to feel part of family life, and strengthens their sense of identity and belonging.

Children's social and emotional wellbeing are promoted through a wide range of activities and opportunities to build friendships. Carers encourage children to try new things, develop hobbies and take part in community events, which helps them to broaden their experiences.

The agency demonstrates exceptional care in supporting children's cultural and faith needs. Carers show genuine curiosity and respect, ensuring children's backgrounds are understood, celebrated and integrated into their family life. This helps children to develop a positive sense of who they are and strengthens their emotional wellbeing.

Children's moves into foster homes are exceptionally well supported. Matching is thoughtful and considers carers' family dynamics, skills and capacity. Children benefit from clear introductions, practical preparation and ongoing support that helps them to settle well.

Education support is a clear strength of the agency. All children are supported to engage in learning and when mainstream education is not possible, the agency works with carers and professionals to put in place wraparound support.

Children's voices are central to the agency's work. They have regular, meaningful opportunities to share their views through participation events, direct work and a range of communication tools. Their feedback directly shapes services, and they consistently see the impact of what they say. Recent examples include a residential trip, designed in response to children's suggestions and adapted so that children with disabilities could fully participate.

Children benefit from strong and enduring relationships. Sibling groups are placed together wherever possible and many young people remain with their carers into adulthood. One young person who is now living independently is still being supported well by his ex-carers despite facing ongoing adversity. This demonstrates the commitment carers have for children well into adulthood. The TACT Connect community provides lifelong connection and support for care-experienced young adults, reflecting the agency's long-term commitment to the children it cares for.

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

Children feel safe with their foster families and develop trusting relationships with carers who understand their vulnerabilities and respond with calm, consistent care. Carers recognise early signs of distress and know how to support children through difficult moments.

The agency works with local authorities in the region to support children in residential care who require a more family-based environment. The success of this approach is being built on to extend placement choice, increase stability and ensure more children benefit from high-quality, nurturing foster homes.

Risk management is effective and well-coordinated. Safer care plans and risk assessments are detailed and tailored to each child's needs. When concerns arise, they are acted on quickly, with clear communication between carers, supervising social workers and placing authorities. Work is underway to review how the plans can be more effective, as they are not always reflective of current concerns.

Carers receive clear guidance and training that helps them respond confidently to safeguarding issues. Children benefit from carers who understand how to respond to issues such as missing episodes, peer risks, emotional dysregulation and

child-to-carer harm. One carer said, 'Training is exceptional, and there are lots of training sessions put on in all diverse areas.'

Supervising social workers visit children regularly, including making unannounced visits, and ensure children have private time to share their views. Children know who they can talk to and feel confident raising worries, which provides an additional layer of safety and reassurance.

Allegations and concerns are rigorously and transparently reviewed. Leaders maintain strong relationships with local authority designated officers and ensure procedures are followed. Learning from incidents is shared across the service and informs improvements in practice.

Direct work with children is purposeful and well planned. Children receive support to understand risks, stay safe online, manage friendships and make informed choices. This helps them develop the skills they need to keep themselves safe.

Recruitment and vetting processes are thorough. All carers, staff and panel members undergo the necessary checks to ensure they are suitable to work with children. This reinforces a strong safeguarding culture across the service.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders are highly qualified, experienced, ambitious and child-centred. Leaders at all levels know children and carers well and maintain a strong presence across the service. They join activities, listen to feedback and model the values they expect from others.

Leaders create a culture where children's experiences and outcomes are at the heart of decision-making. Carers and staff describe the agency as supportive, approachable and 'like a family', reflecting the strong relationships that underpin the service.

The service benefits from a stable, skilled and committed staff team. Supervising social workers have manageable caseloads and provide carers with regular, meaningful support. This contributes to stability and high-quality care for children.

Carer retention is exceptionally strong. Many carers have fostered with the agency for many years and there are few resignations. Carers consistently report feeling valued, respected and professionally supported. They benefit from regular social events, wellbeing support and financial assistance, and have a strong sense of community.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the service's strengths and areas for development. Monitoring systems are robust and ensure that issues are identified. However, some statutory documents such as health assessments and minutes from reviews are not always on file and escalation has not always been effective.

The agency has a strong learning culture. Staff and carers benefit from reflective supervision, practice sessions and opportunities to develop their skills. This is complemented by the skilled advice from the education and health teams within the service. Training is well planned and responsive to emerging needs. Audit activity and learning from placement endings directly inform improvements.

The fostering panel chair and agency decision-maker provide rigorous oversight of prospective carers. Decisions are timely, well-reasoned and focused on children's best interests. Panel members bring a wide range of experience, with panel including care-experienced individuals and professionals from the education, health and social work sectors.

Leaders demonstrate strategic clarity and innovation. Recent developments, including strengthened matching processes, advocacy tools, rights-based work and a renewed focus on stability, show a service that is forward thinking and responsive to the changing needs of children.

This is a service where leadership is inspirational, practice is reflective and children's experiences are consistently prioritised. The agency continues to evolve and improve service provision for children and their carers.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure the fostering service adopts and implements a clear written policy that sets out the purpose, format and required content of all risk assessments and safer care plans. This policy should include the information that must be held on the child's file and the foster carer's file to ensure risks are identified, recorded and reviewed effectively. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.1)
- The registered person should ensure the manager regularly monitors all records, particularly health documents, 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 should be taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.2)

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: SC047548

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