

# The Adolescent & Children's Trust Fostering Service

T A C T Scotland  
PO Box 30031  
GLASGOW  
G67 9GJ

Telephone: 0141 2120330

**Type of inspection:**  
Announced (short notice)

**Completed on:**  
23 September 2024

**Service provided by:**  
The Adolescent And Children's Trust

**Service provider number:**  
SP2007009362

**Service no:**  
CS2007162713

## About the service

The Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT) is an independent, charity-based fostering service. The service provides foster care to children and young people from birth to 18 years old. TACT recruit and support carer families to provide foster care across Scotland. This requires close working with local authorities, who require fostering services from TACT for children or young people in their area.

TACT Scotland are part of a larger UK-wide organisation with bases in England and Wales. The service is managed by an area manager and is supported by two deputy area managers. The service is also supported by departments within the national organisation based in England.

## About the inspection

This was an short notice inspection which took place on 26 August 2024 until 23 September 2024. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with four people using the service and 12 responded to our survey
- spoke with four foster carers and 24 responded to our survey
- met with 15 foster carers as part of a carers' focus group
- spoke with seven staff and management and 11 responded to our survey
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with three external professionals and 14 responded to our survey.

During our inspection year 2024-2025, we are inspecting against a focus area which looks at how regulated services use legislation and guidance to promote children's rights to continuing care and how children and young people are being helped to understand what their right to continuing care means for them. Any requirements or areas for improvement will be highlighted in this report.

TACT's continuing care service was inspected at the same time as this inspection and a separate report is available.

## Key messages

Children and young people were thriving as a result of high quality care. They had developed meaningful relationships characterised by security, predictability and love.

Caregivers provided nurturing, trauma informed care. This was very well supported by staff who were highly skilled, knowledgeable and responsible.

The role of the service's specialist education service has helped to achieve excellent educational outcomes for children and young people and has created a culture of ambition.

Positive outcomes were supported by high quality assessments of caregivers and in the high-level support provided, following the arrival of children to their fostering family.

Young people's rights to continuing care were consistently upheld by confident and knowledgeable staff and caregivers. There was a strong service culture and commitment towards continuing care.

The quality of children's multi-agency plans were variable in quality. This was mitigated by service-led actions and planning.

## From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

## How well do we support people's wellbeing?

**5 - Very Good**

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children and their families, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Children and young people living with TACT caregivers were thriving as a result of meaningful, compassionate and secure relationships with their caregiver families. Children benefitted from trusting and enduring relationships because caregivers were well supported and skilled in offering high quality care that was characterised by love, fun, predictability and trust. Children were fully embraced and claimed as part of their caregiving families.

Caregivers had awareness of the impact of trauma on children's development and cared for them in a way that was sensitive and responsive to these experiences. Children and fostering families benefited from a variety of support groups and activities.

We saw children's voices being valued through participation and inclusion activities. One young person told us;

'I am included fully as part of our family and live a normal family life getting to make age appropriate decisions within our family.'

Caregivers experienced incredibly positive and established relationships with their supervising social workers and greatly valued staff knowledge, skills, commitment, and responsiveness. We were encouraged to hear about the high level of emotional support caregivers experienced from staff, particularly during times of difficulty. We concluded that the skills and commitment of the staff team, combined with enduring relationships, was integral in enabling caregivers to provide therapeutic and individual care. One foster carer explained;

'They are helpful, supportive and everyone knows each other and TACT Scotland is one big family.'

Caregiving families were enabled to support children to understand and exercise their legal and human rights. This was of upmost priority within the service. We saw examples of children being proactively supported to seek independent advocacy or legal representation that ensured their views were robustly represented in decision-making forums.

Children who wanted or needed to spend time away from their caregiver family developed a range of relationships out-with the family. Children benefitted from short breaks that were well planned and with adults who they enjoyed established and positive relationships. The role of natural family supports and designated, consistent short break carers ensured that children and their fostering families benefitted from natural breaks and support.

Children were living with their siblings, unless this had been assessed as not appropriate. Caregivers embraced their role in supporting children's ongoing relationships with siblings, family and other people who were important to them. This support was crucial in enabling children to maintain links with their birth families and, in some cases, help repair fractured relationships.

Children were very well supported to be fully engaged in their learning and development. This area of practice within the service was considered to be sector-leading. We saw many powerful examples of caregivers and staff successfully championing children's right to a high quality and inclusive education.

We were greatly impressed by the service's specialist education service and the role of the designated education advisor. This proactive and aspirational approach has helped achieve excellent outcomes for children within education. Indeed, it has inspired confidence and created a culture of ambition. This has 'raised the bar' in terms of the expectations on all agencies to develop robust individualised educational plans to allow children to achieve and overcome disadvantage in their learning.

A significant strength of the service was in their celebration and championing of children and young people. Achievements and success, big or small, were celebrated across the service and we found there to be a great sense of pride and reflection for children at each stage of their lives. Personalised gestures and recognition helped children celebrate milestones and gain confidence for the future.

Children's safety was of the utmost importance. On occasions when there was safeguarding concerns, national guidance and best practice in child protection was fully implemented. Staff and leaders within the service were confident and knowledgeable about this area of practice. Staff worked collaboratively with multi-agency colleagues to appropriately respond to risk and concerns.

Caregivers and staff had a solid understanding of children's health needs and what they require for optimum physical and mental health. Caregivers advocated tirelessly for children to have timely access to appropriate specialist service when this was needed to enable recovery from trauma, abuse and neglect. This included the use of the provider's own psychological support services. We were aware that the provider is working to develop their health service further with the view of widening access to specialist resources. We look forward to seeing this progress at the next inspection.

One young person told us; 'Now I am where I am, I can see it.... can see a massive difference. I had lots of problems and trauma. I've built up a lot of trust. Can talk about it now....I've not recovered but I'm listened to and supported.'

The service's assessments of foster carers were of a consistently high standard. These were evidence based and contained an appropriate balance of strengths, vulnerabilities and analysis. The assessment process was collaborative and transparent and based on positive working relationships between foster carers and their assessing social worker. Foster carers reviews took place well within the legal guidelines and foster carers were appropriately involved in their reviews. Review processes were underpinned by the service and foster carers working in partnership together. We did not consistently see children's involvement in the foster carer review process or their views being formally included. We discussed this with the service during the inspection and this is an area the service intend to work to improve.

The matching of children with caregivers within the service was very strong. This was aided by the quality of foster carer reviews and the strength of relationships between caregivers and their supervising social worker. The service had an intricate knowledge of their foster carers and the mix of skills, abilities and experience they possessed. Staff always intervened at the earliest opportunity to ensure that children and their caregivers were supported in the best possible way.

Times of change or transition for children and young people were managed extremely well. Delays to the plans for children were proactively addressed by staff within the service. The role of a specialist permanency senior practitioner helped to ensure that staff within the service were confident about procedures and were able to advocate on behalf of children. Strong links and communication between the service and local authority colleagues were an important feature in timely decision making. One child's social worker told us 'everything is dealt with proactively.'

Young people's rights to continuing care, beyond the age of 18 years, were consistently upheld by confident and knowledgeable staff and caregivers. This commitment and the use of advocacy or legal advice helped ensure that young people remained in their fostering family for as long as possible and until they felt ready to move on.

On occasions when a child's foster care placement ends in an unplanned way, the service currently undertakes learning reviews of these. We were encouraged that these reviews take place for all endings that have not been in accordance with the child's plan and are not restricted to only long-term or permanent care. We discussed with the service the need for greater consistency around the timing and quality of these to ensure that there is greatest opportunity for reflection and learning. We were encouraged to hear about work being undertaken at a provider level to aid greater understanding of unplanned endings.

Children's views and choices were central to comprehensive assessment of their needs. This was aided by positive networks of support. Children had very strong relationships with their caregivers' supervising social worker and had a good understanding of their role. The role of the children's wellbeing officer helped to ensure children's participation in the service. This helped strengthen relationships that, in turn, allowed for greater communication and ease to identify views and wishes.

## How well is our care and support planned?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children and their families, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Young people were supported to achieve very positive outcomes and led positive, healthy, enjoyable and meaningful lives. The quality of each child's multi-agency plan did not follow SMART principles (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) and varied in quality. However, we recognise the role and remit of the service within these. The service actively sought and supported multi-agency involvement to ensure that plans were relevant, good quality and up-to-date. The service and caregivers provided valuable contributions to the review of children's plans in a multi-agency setting. This proactive approach assisted in driving forward children's plans and highlighting any gaps or unmet need. We saw creative thinking and the use of service resources when this was required.

Children received full support to communicate what their outcomes should be and this included the use of advocacy services when appropriate.

All children had personalised safer caring plans that informed levels of risk and risk management. These were complemented by a more general 'family plan' that informed how the caregiving family work to ensure safe care. We discussed with the service that these plans would benefit from greater input from caregivers' supervising social workers to ensure a more robust and collaborative approach to risk management. This is all the more pertinent if multi-agency plans are lacking in quality.

## Complaints

## Detailed evaluations

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families experience compassion, dignity and respect	5 - Very Good
1.2 Children, young people and adults get the most out of life	6 - Excellent
1.3 Children, young people and adults' health and wellbeing benefits from the care and support they experience	5 - Very Good
1.4 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families get the service that is right for them	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	5 - Very Good
5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects the outcomes and wishes of children, young people and adults	5 - Very Good

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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

0345 600 9527

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