About PACT

Parents And Children Together (PACT) is a registered charity committed to building and strengthening families. PACT is a member of the CVAA (Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies) and is registered with the Department for Education (DfE) and rated as Outstanding by OFSTED.

Due to the caring professionalism, experience and dedication of our teams, PACT is one of the UK’s leading adoption charities and has been working with families and children for more than 100 years.

Thinking about adoption?

If you want to adopt, you can choose whether you do this with a local authority or with an independent adoption agency, like PACT.

Children who are available for adoption are the responsibility of their local authority. Local authorities recruit adoptive parents for the children in their care, and for whom the care plan is adoption, but they aren’t always able to find the right family for a child from within their own adopters. Independent adoption agencies recruit, assess and approve adoptive parents and then find a child or children for them from local authorities across Great Britain.

Adopting with PACT

PACT’s focus is to find parents for a wide range of children waiting for adoption. There are currently children of all ages waiting, from very young babies to children up to the age of eight.

PACT is particularly keen to hear from people who would consider becoming parents to children who may otherwise miss out on a permanent family. These include children needing to stay with their brothers and sisters (sibling groups), children of black and minority ethnic backgrounds, older children; aged four years and over and children with additional needs or disabilities e.g. Downs Syndrome, and those where their health has been impacted because of parental drug, alcohol abuse and/or abuse or neglect.
Why PACT?

PACT is an independent adoption agency. We offer the same service to prospective adopters, and operate within the same government guidelines and regulations as local authorities. However we are not restricted to working within local authority boundaries.

Here are some other key differences:

- PACT is a charity and invests all its income into projects and services to support children and families, including therapeutic support and training for adopters.
- The children whom our families adopt come from all over Great Britain. PACT isn’t responsible for any children in care, therefore we can search across the country for the right child to fit into your family and circumstance.
- PACT offers its adopters a unique and extensive package of support for as long as they need it. This includes a Strengthening Families Team, online support through The Adopter Hub and its award-winning therapeutic support service FACTS.
- PACT fundraises for all its support services provided for PACT families.
- PACT has an established workforce where we can offer PACT families a service run and developed with years of collective experience.
- PACT’s well-staffed teams provide efficient specialisation. Our social workers only work on adoption cases and can prioritise contact, assessment matching and placing with their families.

What is Adoption?

Adoption is a way to provide a new family for a child when living with their birth family is not possible. It is a legal process by which all parental responsibility is transferred to the adoptive parent(s) at point of the adoption order) as if the child had been born to them. There are up to 3,000 children on a placement order and waiting to be adopted in the UK.
Can you adopt?

There are many myths about who can or cannot adopt. Here are some of the factors which can help you to decide whether you would be eligible to apply to adopt.

REMEMBER: there is no such thing as a typical adopter. We are all different and so are the children waiting to be adopted.

Age: You have to be a minimum of 21 years old. There is no legal upper age limit, and as caring for children is demanding, you need to be able to demonstrate the energy, and emotional and physical health necessary to care for a child throughout childhood and to adulthood.

Catchment area: PACT works with families across London and the South East. Applicants will need to travel to one of PACT’s offices for training and meetings. These are located in Reading, Brighton and London. If you live further than 50 miles from one of our offices please get in touch to find out whether we have a social worker available in your area.

Marital status: You may be single, married, in a civil partnership, separated, widowed or divorced. If you apply as a couple you need to have been living together for at least two years and to have a relationship that is loving and enduring.

Sexuality: PACT actively recruits LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) adopters. You do not have to be heterosexual to apply. PACT subscribes to New Family Social to support our LGBT applicants.

Children: People with and without birth or step children can adopt. We will discuss your experiences of childcare with you and if this is limited you will be asked to gain relevant voluntary experience with children. If you are already parents, there needs to be a considerable age difference (at least two years) between an adopted child and any children already in the family. This age gap is to ensure that children already in your family have a secure position and will be happy to welcome a new member of the family. Adopted children may be more demanding than birth children at the same age and have significant emotional and behavioral needs. Adopted children should be younger than any birth or step children in your family as they may have negative memories of early parenting and may not cope well with a younger sibling.

Spare room: You would ideally have a spare bedroom available for each child that you wish to adopt. Adopted children including siblings need their own space and a bedroom each. However, in certain circumstances this might not be necessary.
Can you adopt? (continued)

**Fertility treatment/childlessness:** Adoption is an option that can be considered at any stage, and we encourage you to get in touch to discuss whether it could be right for you. If you are undergoing fertility treatment we will ask you to allow six months to elapse between ceasing any fertility treatment and applying to adopt.

**Health:** You need to be medically fit to care for a child through childhood into adulthood and you will need to have a medical with your GP as part of your application. PACT encourages applicants to have a max BMI of 40 and are open to discussing this aspect of health further. If you smoke, we will expect you to have stopped smoking for at least a year before a child is placed.

**Criminal offences:** Every applicant will have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. This service replaces the Criminal Records Bureau check (CRB). You will not be able to adopt if you have any criminal offences against children. Other serious criminal offences may also disqualify you. However, having a criminal record of other offences should be discussed with us at the earliest opportunity as this is not an automatic barrier to adoption.

**Pets:** Many PACT families have animals. However, it is important that they are child-friendly and have an appropriate status within the home. A pet evaluation is completed as part of the assessment process.

**Religion:** PACT sets no criteria about the religious beliefs of applicants. Children waiting to be adopted come from a range of religious and non-religious backgrounds and we are seeking families to accommodate this variety. Your religion and cultural background may be a positive factor as we can match you with a child who shares them.

**Availability:** You need to have time to give to a child. Caring for children and young people who have been through trauma and loss means being available for them. Adopters need to be able to take up to 12 months off work when the adopted child(ren) comes to live with you, to help them to bond and settle into their new home. For those who adopt as a couple, the primary carer will need to take this time off work, or for you to share the adoption leave. Employed applicants will be entitled to adoption and parental leave.

**Commitment to an intensive preparation and application process over six months:** The adoption process is designed to be completed in six months and we ask that those applying to adopt are able to commit their time to training, meetings and preparation which includes providing completed paperwork within tight deadlines. You will need to take time off work to attend training, meetings in your home and for introductions (from 10 to 14 days) when you get to know your child or children.
The adoption process

**Enquiry stage**
- Gather information
- Attend a PACT Information Event
- Choose an agency
- Initial interview with a PACT social worker
- Appropriate Voluntary work with children arranged by applicants

**Stage One - to be completed within 8 weeks**
- Return a completed a Registration of Interest Form
- Statutory checks made (including DBS, local authority and medicals)
- References obtained
- Attend a four day Preparation Course
- Applicants to complete and return the necessary templates
- Undertake some initial preparation and reading

**Stage Two - to be completed within 16 weeks**
- Home Study Assessment with your allocated Social Worker
- Home Study Report presented to the Adoption Panel
- Further training for you; 2 day Moving Onto Placement course
- Additional training your support network; Family and Friends workshop

**Family finding**
- Linking you with a child(ren)
- Matching Panel Approval
- Introductions – visits (around 10 to 14 days) to enable you get to know your child(ren)
- Placement of child(ren) in your home

**Establishing your family**
- Becoming parents
- Support and reviews
- Legal Adoption Order and Celebration hearing (3–12 months after placement)

**Ongoing adoption placement support**
- Continuing training
- Support groups and PACT family fun days
- Access to FACTS therapeutic services and The Adopter Hub

**Post Adoption Services for adopted adults**
- Birth family searches
- Counselling and support for adult adoptees and their families

**Consider opportunities to support PACT**
- Speak at future information evenings, or help at publicity events
- Help raise awareness by following @PACTcharity on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

www.pactcharity.org    0300 456 4800
Foster for Adoption

Foster For Adoption placements are considered for babies from birth to around two years old where social workers believe there is at least an 80% chance that a child will be adopted. This allows the child to live with potential adopters under a fostering arrangement whilst the court decides whether the baby or young child should be adopted or can return to the birth family. This scheme reduces the number of moves a baby or young child will make whilst their future is being decided.

If you would like to be considered for a child under the Foster For Adoption scheme, please call our Enquiries Team for further information.

Ongoing Adoption Placement Support

PACT supports all its families for life and has a team of experienced therapists in its Strengthening Families Team who are available for advice and support at any time after placement.

PACT also has an online adoption support service The Adopter Hub offering one-to-one peer support via webchat, adopter forums, e-learning and a programme of webinars.

Some families may require specialist therapeutic support to help their children come to terms with traumatic experiences they have endured prior to being adopted. PACT’s award-winning FACTS service (Family And Children Therapeutic Support) is provided by an experienced and stable workforce who understand the issues that children who have suffered from trauma and loss can bring to their new families. They are able to combine their broad range of skills to create a unique service that is tailored to each family’s individual needs.

PACT also runs an ongoing programme of training courses which are free to PACT adopters. These include Building Firm Foundations, Empowering Your Child in education and an Attachment Focused Parenting course.

Other services available to PACT families include Adopter Champions who are PACT adopters who can give advice over the phone, Support Groups, ImPACT workshops for the whole family and annual Family Fun Days.
Useful Resources

First 4 Adoption
0300 222 0022
www.first4adoption.org.uk

CoramBAAF Adoption & Fostering Academy
020 7520 0300
http://corambaaf.org.uk

New Family Social
www.newfamilysocial.org.uk
Supporting LGBT Adopters & Foster Carers

Adoption UK
0844 848 7900 (10am to 4pm, Mon-Fri)
www.adoptionuk.org

Public Services
www.gov.uk
Search ‘adoption’ for further information

Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA)
www.cvaa.org.uk

Please note PACT has no control over the content of the websites listed and therefore cannot accept any responsibility for their content.
Next steps

PACT is here to provide you with all the information you need and answer your questions honestly and clearly. There will be no obligation on you to continue the process.

If you would like more detailed information on adopting with PACT or would like to be contacted by one of our friendly Enquiries Officers who can answer any questions you may have please complete the form at http://pactcharity.org/PACT-Guides.

You can also contact us at 0300 456 4800 and press option 1 or email enquiries@pactcharity.org

There is more information on our website at pactcharity.org. You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

Feedback

PACT welcomes feedback on its services and we are keen to receive suggestions about how our services could be improved. Feedback evaluation forms are used by all services so please do fill these in or email info@pactcharity.org.

If you wish to make a formal complaint about PACT’s services, or you are a child or person representing a child, we have a framework for this. If you have any queries about this process, please contact the Service Director Lorna Hunt by email: lorna.hunt@pactcharity.org or visit our website www.pactcharity.org.