



Parents And Children Together

Adopting with PACT: A brief guide



"We found PACT to be the most professional, responsive, flexible and informed agency we have come across."

Stephen, PACT Adopter



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 regional adoption agency or with an independent adoption agency, like PACT.

Children who are available for adoption are the responsibility of their local authority or regional adoption agency. 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 England, Scotland and Wales.

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 in the UK.

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 three years and over and children with additional needs or disabilities e.g. Downs Syndrome, and those where their physical or emotional wellbeing 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 England, Scotland and Wales. 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 of therapeutically trained social workers, an educational lead, adopter champions, online support through the Children And Trauma Community Hub and its specialist therapeutic support service FACTS.
- PACT fundraises for all its support services provided for PACT families.
- PACT has an established work force where we can offer PACT families a service run and developed with years of collective experience.
- PACT's 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 around 2,000 children on a placement order and waiting to be adopted in the UK.

Foster for Adoption

Foster for Adoption placements are considered for babies and children where the regional adoption agency (RAA) or local authority (LA) believe there is a strong chance that a child will be adopted. This allows the child to live with potential adopters under a temporary 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.

This scheme is not a separate route to adoption. If you are open to considering adopting a child in this way you would be assessed as suitable to adopt with additional elements for this scheme, such as having the ability to be available to care for a child at short notice. Once approved to adopt you and your social worker would then be able to consider children via Foster for Adoption as well as adoption.

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.

You *do* have to be; 21 year of age or over, domiciled in the UK, and you or any member of your household must not have a criminal conviction or caution for offences against children.

Age: You have to be 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 their minority and into 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.

Inclusivity: PACT actively recruits adopters who are LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other identities). 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.

Childcare experience: 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.

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, for example for a same sex sibling group or for children who have previously shared a room.

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 throughout their childhood and into adulthood and you will need to have a medical with your GP as part of your application. PACT encourages applicants to have a BMI of below 40 and are open to discussing this aspect of health further.



We are looking to recruit non-smokers, so that children can be placed in smoke-free households. We would expect you to have ceased smoking six months prior to making an application as we will expect you to have stopped smoking for at least a year before you attend the adoption approval panel.

Criminal offences: Every applicant will have an Enhanced Disclosure and Baring 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.

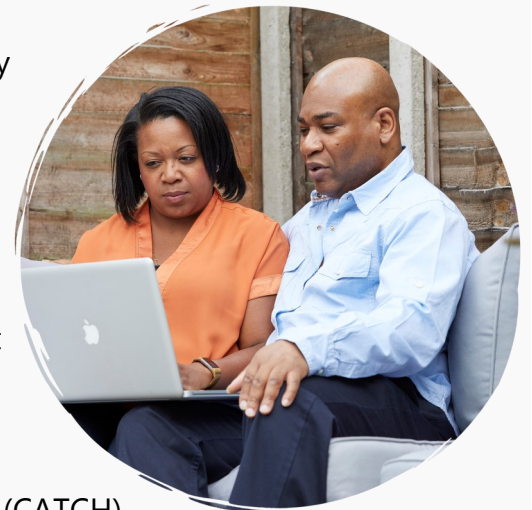
The adoption process

Enquiry stage

- Gather information
- Attend a PACT adoption information event
- Choose an agency
- Information sharing meeting with a PACT social worker
- Appropriate voluntary work with children arranged by applicants

Stage One - to be completed within two months

- Submit a completed registration of interest form. This will be accepted or declined by PACT within five working days
- Statutory checks made (including DBS, local authority and medicals, personal referee interviews)
- Other references obtained, for example employment
- Attend a four day adoption preparation course
- Applicants to complete and return the necessary templates, such as chronologies, eco map of support network, family trees
- Undertake some initial preparation and reading
- Access to the Children And Trauma Community Hub (CATCH)



Stage Two - to be completed within four months

- Home study assessment with your allocated social worker
- Home study report (known as a prospective adopters report, or PAR) presented to the adoption panel
- Further training for you; one day moving onto placement course
- Additional training for your support network; family and friends workshop

Family finding

- Registering a profile on Link Maker
- 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
- Social worker support and statutory reviews for child/ren
- Submit application to adopt (child/ren must have lived with you for minimum of 10 weeks)
- Legal adoption order granted and celebration hearing (4–12 months after placement)

Ongoing adoption placement support

- Continuing training
- Support groups and PACT family fun days
- Access to strengthening families team, adopter champions, PACT's education specialist, FACTS therapeutic services and the Children And Trauma Community Hub (CATCH)

Post Adoption Services for adopted adults

- Counselling and support for adult adoptees and their families

Consider opportunities to support PACT

- Speak at future information evenings (as an adopter), or help at publicity events
- Help raise awareness by following @PACTcharity on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- Consider supporting PACT through fundraising or regular giving

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 **Children And Trauma Community Hub (CATCH)** offering one-to-one peer support via webchat, adopter forums, e-learning and a programme of webinars. You can visit CATCH at www.catchconnect.org.



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 specialist **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. You can find out more at www.pactcharity.org/facts.

PACT is able to provide assessments and therapeutic support covered by the Adoption Support Fund (ASF).



PACT also runs an ongoing programme of **training courses** which are free to PACT adopters. These include Talking to Children About Adoption (continuing the life story journey), Becoming a Blended Family (for parents with existing children) and an Attachment Focused Parenting course. These can be found on the training section of PACT's website: www.pactcharity.org/training.

Other services available to PACT families include PACT's **education specialist** who can provide support to families and schools, the **adopter champions** team of experienced adopters, **regular parent support groups, therapeutic activity sessions** for children and PACT's annual **family fun days**.

PACT's fundraising team also raises money for PACT to be able to offer parenting courses for PACT families, family fun days and CATCH.

Useful resources

FIRST 4 ADOPTION

First 4 Adoption

0300 222 0022

www.first4adoption.org.uk



CoramBAAF Adoption & Fostering Academy

020 7520 0300

<http://corambaaf.org.uk>



New Family Social

Supporting LGBT Adopters & Foster Carers

www.newfamilysocial.org.uk



Home For Good

Supporting Christian adopters and churches

www.homeforgood.org.uk



Adoption UK

0844 848 7900 (10am to 4pm, Mon-Fri)

www.adoptionuk.org



Public Services

Search 'adoption' for further information

www.gov.uk



Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAAs)

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 call **0300 456 4800** or visit www.pactcharity.org/enquiry

You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [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. You can find our full complaints procedure here on our website: www.pactcharity.org/about-us/your-feedback. If you have any queries about this process, please contact the adoption service director Lorna Hunt by email: lorna.hunt@pactcharity.org or visit our website www.pactcharity.org.



"PACT has been on hand at every stage to help with any query we had. Even now that the adoption order has been granted we are still able to contact them for help and support, which is tremendously reassuring for the future."

Emily and Ben, PACT adopters



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0300 456 4800 | www.pactcharity.org | @PACTcharity   

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