

Adoption Service

Statement of purpose 2022-23



Parents And Children Together

Introduction

Parents And Children Together, PACT, also known as Oxford Diocesan Council for Social Work Inc, is a Company limited by guarantee, registered in England (No. 1636098) and a Registered Charity (No. 285214).

PACT is registered as a voluntary adoption agency and restricted to providing domestic adoption, therapeutic support and post adoption services within the requirements of:

- The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020
- Working Together 2020
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Adoption: National Minimum Standards 2014
- Children and Families Act 2014
- The Adoption and Children Act (Register Regulations 2014)
- The Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Statutory Guidance on Adoption – update 2013
- The Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012
- The Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Adoption Support Agencies (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005
- The Adoption Support Service Regulations 2005
- The Adoptions with a Foreign Element Regulations 2005
- The Adoption Information and Intermediary Services (Pre-Commencement Adoptions) Regulations 2005
- The Disclosure of Adoption Information (Post Commencement Adoptions) Regulations 2005
- The Restriction on the Preparation of Adoption reports Regulations 2005
- The Suitability of Adopters Regulations 2005
- The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002

Contents

PACT's aims and objectives	4
Principles and standards of care	5
Registered provider and managers	5
Monitoring systems and quality assurance	6
- Panels	6
- Staff	7
Recruitment, approval and training of prospective adopters	7
Adoption support	8
Support for intercountry adopters	8
Compliments and complaints	8
Independent Review Mechanism	9
Review of statement of purpose and children's guide	9
Sustainability	9
Children's guide to adoption support	10
Response to the Covid-19 pandemic	10
Registration authority	10
Feedback	11
Appendix one - staff	12
Appendix two - organisation chart	14
Appendix three – concerns and complaints procedure	15



PACT's aims and objectives

PACT's aim is to build and strengthen families through adoption and by our community work. The adoption service aims to work within the legislative framework, comply with the National Minimum Standards, regulatory requirements and best practice guidance for adoption services.

The main objectives of PACT's adoption service are to:

- Provide a range of quality services which can promote best outcomes for children who need permanent placement.
- Recruit, prepare and support sufficient adopters from diverse backgrounds to provide permanent family care for children where their individual needs and history will be understood, valued and respected.
- Adhere to permanency planning timescales as set out in adoption legislation, in order to avoid delay and maximise each child's opportunity to experience a stable and secure family life.
- Provide effective and efficient adoption panels to enable prospective adopters' assessments to be progressed without delay.
- Provide a comprehensive support package to achieve stable and successful placements.
- Provide an efficient and responsive assessment service for children, adopters and adopted adults in respect of adoption support services in conjunction with other agencies.
- Maintain effective partnership with other adoption agencies.
- Ensure that cost effective services are provided and commissioned which maximise available resources.
- Ensure that accurate and up to date records and management information is kept in relation to adoptive parents and services and to maintain confidentiality and security of adoption records.
- Ensure service users are fully involved and consulted on service delivery and service development.
- Treat all service users with respect and without prejudice or discrimination.
- Ensure all staff are appropriately recruited, supervised and trained to fulfil PACT's functions.

Principles and standards of care

- The child's welfare and safety will be the paramount consideration and will be at the centre of PACT's adoption process.
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a stable and loving family, which can meet their needs through childhood and beyond.
- All children will have the same opportunities irrespective of gender, ethnic origin, disability, culture, religion, language and sexual orientation.
- The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account.
- Delay in the adoption process can have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of children and must be kept to the minimum necessary to achieve the child's best interests.
- Adoption has lifelong implications for all involved. Children and young people who have been adopted, and their adoptive families have access to a range of services and support to meet their assessed needs.
- Children have the right to be listened to, express their wishes and feelings and participate in decisions about their future. They will be encouraged and enabled to do this at all stages of the adoption process and in a way that is appropriate to their age and understanding.
- A sense of identity is important to a child's well-being. To help children develop this, their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language and sexuality need to be recognised and positively valued and promoted.
- All efforts are made to minimise waiting times for children to be matched with families.
- Children's birth parents/guardians and families and adoptive parents and families will be valued and respected.



Responsible Individual and managers

PACT's adoption service director is the Responsible Individual and the Agency's Decision Maker (ADM), making decisions following recommendations from the adoption panel. If the Service Director is unavailable the agency has an additional Agency Decision Maker who is the Assistant Service Director

The service director holds strategic responsibility and accountability for the service and the assistant service director is the registered manager. The adoption team managers hold day-to-day operational responsibility for the management of the service.

There are no branches of PACT at the present time. There are adoption teams working from Reading, London and Brighton, managed from the head office in Reading.

There are no conditions in place relating to the registration of the agency.

Monitoring systems and quality assurance

PACT welcomes feedback from service users and has a well-advertised complaints procedure. PACT continually monitors and evaluates its service at every stage of the adoption process to ensure quality and effectiveness. This includes:

- Internal tracking systems to measure the timescales for providing services and minimise delay.
- Monthly social worker meetings in each adoption team and regular whole organisation meetings to consider and analyse performance across the service and for staff to take part in practice development sessions.
- Feedback on service quality and effectiveness is obtained at various stages along the adopters' journey, including after training, after the adoption panel and following the making of an adoption order.
- An adopter reference group regularly gives feedback to the agency.
- An internal auditing process informs the agency's ongoing service development plans.



As part of the Consortium for Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA), membership of the (local) ASGLB and as a member of CoramBAAF's regional adoption groups, PACT's adoption service actively considers and shares good practice and policy development.

The adoption service is inspected on a three-yearly basis by Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills). In 2014 and in 2017 the PACT adoption agency was awarded an outstanding rating by Ofsted.

Panels

PACT's central list of panel members receive regular training and update reports of the work of the adoption service including adoptive applicants awaiting placement, progress of the cases it has considered and the outcome of reviews.

The central list of panel members will be informed of any allegations made against prospective adopters or members of their household and the outcome of the investigation into the allegation.

The adoption panel will provide feedback to PACT every six months on the quality of reports being presented to panel. The panel chair will produce a brief annual report (to include information such as membership, statistics, an account of activities and information on key issues of interest/concern) which will help to integrate the work of the panel into PACT's wider work.

Applicants and social workers are invited to give feedback after panel. This feedback is given to the panel to inform their practice.

All disruptions are reported to the panel, and disruption meeting minutes are shared with panel members and discussed.

Panel members are appraised annually. There is an induction programme for new adoption panel members and annual appraisals for all members, including the independent chair, to monitor performance.

Staff

The service director attends trustee board meetings and reports to the lead trustee for adoption. Staff may report any issues to the service director to be raised with the board.

Staff one-to-one supervision, appraisal and the audit process enable the monitoring and evaluation of staff performance. Objectives are set annually and reviewed regularly. Staff learning and development needs are assessed and form the basis of the learning and development plan.

See appendix one and two for details of adoption staff.



Recruitment, approval and training of prospective adopters

The adoption service recruits, prepares, assesses and provides training for adoptive families for children for whom adoption is the plan.

The adoption service is open and inclusive. It welcomes prospective adoptive parents irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, culture, religion and disability. It recognises that children need adopters from all kinds of backgrounds, both single and couples, and that the ability and willingness to meet a child's needs is the most important factor.

Prospective adoptive parents are given training and support to help them understand the backgrounds and needs of children with plans for adoption and to see the situation from the child's point of view.

PACT offers prospective adopters the opportunity to consider becoming carers via foster for adoption where the plan for the children is adoption but they are initially placed on a fostering basis while decisions are being made through the court.

All completed prospective adopter reports are considered by PACT's approval panel, which sits at least monthly. The panel makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker about their suitability to adopt and gives advice as appropriate. Prospective adopters are invited and welcomed to panel and are informed of the recommendation that same day.



Adoption support

PACT recognises the life-long nature of adoption. The Strengthening Families Team, the Family And Children Therapeutic Support service (FACTS), the team of adopter champions and the specialist education lead work alongside the adoption teams to support and assist the creation of secure and stable families.

PACT works closely with the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies and with local authorities and regional adoption agencies nationwide with the aim of finding adopters who are the right match for the children waiting to be adopted. The placements team works alongside the adoption teams and the adopters to secure the match; support is also available from the FACTS service, as needed.

Adopters are provided with a range of information and support following approval and/or placement. Training, workshops, support groups, social events and individual therapy and support from the adoption support team is available to all PACT families. All PACT adopters are able to access The Adopter Hub (PACT's online adoption support platform). The Adopter Hub provides information and support to adopters through webinars, eLearning, forums and one-to-one web chat to adoptive parents.

Upon the making of an adoption order, the social worker will undertake a final visit and complete a closing summary. Adopters will be advised of how to contact PACT for support in the future and how to request an assessment of need for adoption support services from the relevant local authority (PACT will assist the local authority with applications to the Adoption Support Fund when appropriate). Adopters will receive regular newsletters and details about social events, ongoing training and support services as well as ongoing access to The Adopter Hub.

Support for intercountry adopters

PACT has, in the past, recruited, prepared, approved and supported adopters who adopted a child from abroad. Whilst this is a service no longer offered by PACT, we remain committed to providing support to inter-country adopters who adopted through PACT. If the family needs help they may contact PACT and after an assessment, receive services from the adoption support team. If more intensive therapeutic support is needed, support can be given through FACTS or their local authority.

Compliments and complaints

PACT wishes to improve and develop its services and welcomes feedback, verbally or in writing, at all times. PACT is particularly grateful for observations and feedback by those who consider that our services could be improved, and acts on any constructive suggestions on how improvements might be made at any stage. Positive and constructive observations are also welcome. Feedback evaluation forms are used by all services.

If you wish to make a formal complaint about PACT's services, or you are a child or person acting on behalf of a child, the leaflet *We value your feedback* explains the process and is available on our website. The concerns and complaints process is also detailed in appendix three. If you have any queries about this process, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Adopters will also be provided with information about how to access the complaints procedures of the local authority responsible for the child concerned, where the concerns relate to the work of that agency.

Independent Review Mechanism

The Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) can consider applications from potential and approved adopters where the agency has decided not to approve them, or to terminate or change their terms of approval. Prospective adopters are given written information about the role of the IRM as part of their preparation process; they are also provided with information about the IRM when being prepared for presentation to panel.



Review of statement of purpose and children's guide

This document and the *Children's Guide to Adoption Support Services* have been formally approved by PACT's Senior Management Team and will be reviewed annually and, if necessary, revised.

Sustainability

The agency operates in a financially prudent manner, employing robust strategies and undertaking due diligence in all of its decision making. We monitor accounts regularly with oversight from the board of trustees and the agency's accountant, making decisions and taking appropriate measures in a timely manner to ensure the continued operation and stability of our services and staff team. Certified annual accounts indicate that the adoption service is financially viable and is likely to have sufficient funding to continue to fulfil its statement of purpose for the next 12 months.



Children's guide to adoption support

All children will be given a *Guide to PACT's adoption support services* on placement. The guide is appropriate to the child's age and understanding and will inform them of the services PACT offers, what it means to come to PACT for a service and how they can make their views known about the services they receive.

The children's guide also contains information on how a child can find out their rights, how they can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Commissioner, Ofsted, if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate.

Response to the Covid-19 pandemic

Due to the global coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic, PACT had to transition from face-to-face working to developing methods of remote working, which would enable us to continue to carry out our role of recruitment and assessment of adopters, approving adopters, linking them with children, carrying out introductions and supporting families. Without delay we moved our information events, training and panel online and the majority of our support was offered virtually.

Due to the vulnerability and the trauma that many of the children placed with our adopters have suffered, we have also recognised that for some there has been a need to visit and see children and families face to face. PACT staff have been working flexibly and, using risk assessments, have enabled direct contact with families when needed.

Moving out of the pandemic, PACT will continue to carry out its full range of work flexibly using a combination of direct and virtual work with prospective adopters, adoptive parents and children until all work that is required can be completed face to face.

Registration authority

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

General helpline: 0300 123 1231

General enquiries can be made by email to enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

PACT's most recent inspection report was completed by Ofsted in January 2017 and the rating given was 'outstanding'. A copy can be downloaded from our website or via the link below. A printed copy will be made available on request.

<http://pactcharity.org/about-us/ofsted-inspection>

Feedback

PACT welcomes feedback about our policies and procedures so if you have any comments about this statement of purpose, please address them to:

Service Director
Parents And Children Together
7 Southern Court
South Street
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 4QS

Signed:



Lorna Hunt, Responsible Individual
29 April 2022



Appendix one: staff

Lorna Hunt

Lorna is the service director and Responsible Individual of the adoption service and is a qualified social worker having worked in children's social care for more than 32 years. Before joining PACT in October 2018, Lorna was Assistant Director of Children's Services for two Berkshire local authorities for more than eight years. Lorna has a MA in social work and a diploma in management.

Sarah Stollard

Sarah is PACT's panel advisor, and quality assurance officer. She has been a social worker for nearly 30 years and has always worked in the field of children and families, firstly as a social worker and then as a manager. She became a children's guardian in 2003 and continues to practice alongside her work as panel advisor and is the lead for quality assurance.

Mandy Davies

Mandy is the assistant service director and Registered Manager of the adoption service and has worked as a social worker in family placement for more than 25 years. She has spent the majority of her career in a local authority working within fostering and adoption, joining PACT in 2013. Mandy is a qualified social worker and also holds the post qualifying award (PQ1).

Adoption Managers

Louise Hartley

Louise has more than 20 years experience working for children's services; firstly working with primary aged children with SEN in the education system and since 2007, working in various social work teams -including pre birth hospital assessments, adult mental health, child protection, early intervention and youth offending and directly in adoption since joining PACT in 2014. Louise has a BA (Hons) in Social Work and The National Certificate in Counselling.

Julie Stolland

Julie joined PACT in September 2013. She has many years experience in child protection, adoption and fostering, most recently in adoption support. Julie is a qualified social worker and holds the post qualifying awards (PQ1 and PQ2) and an NVQ5 in management.

Emma Johnson

Emma qualified as a social worker in 1999 with a MA in social work. She worked in a local authority for 14 years as a social worker and assistant team manager in Child in Need and safeguarding teams and then as an Independent Reviewing Officer for Looked After Children. Emma joined PACT in 2013 as a senior social worker and has been team manager of the Reading team since January 2021.

Lara Rowlinson

Lara qualified in social work in 2006 and has a background in working with children with learning disabilities and mental health issues. She has held a number of roles within fostering and adoption, the most recent being as a panel adviser for an independent fostering agency. Lara joined PACT in 2021 as a team manager.

Appendix one: staff (continued)

Social work staff

PACT has a number of appropriately qualified, registered and experienced staff who work within the adoption service, many of whom have undertaken therapeutic training to support their work with PACT families.

PACT also engages qualified and experienced contract social workers to undertake pieces of adoption work. Each has a personnel file compliant with the regulations. Management oversight and consultation is provided by a permanent member of PACT's staff.

Therapeutic social workers

PACT has therapeutically trained social workers with a broad range of qualifications, experience and skills, including those in Theraplay, Art and Play Therapy, Family Therapy, Therapeutic Life Story Work and DDP.

FACTS therapists

PACT has a number of appropriately qualified, registered and experienced staff from a range of different professional disciplines available to work therapeutically with families. Each has a personnel file compliant with the regulations. Supervision/consultation is provided by a permanent member of PACT's staff.

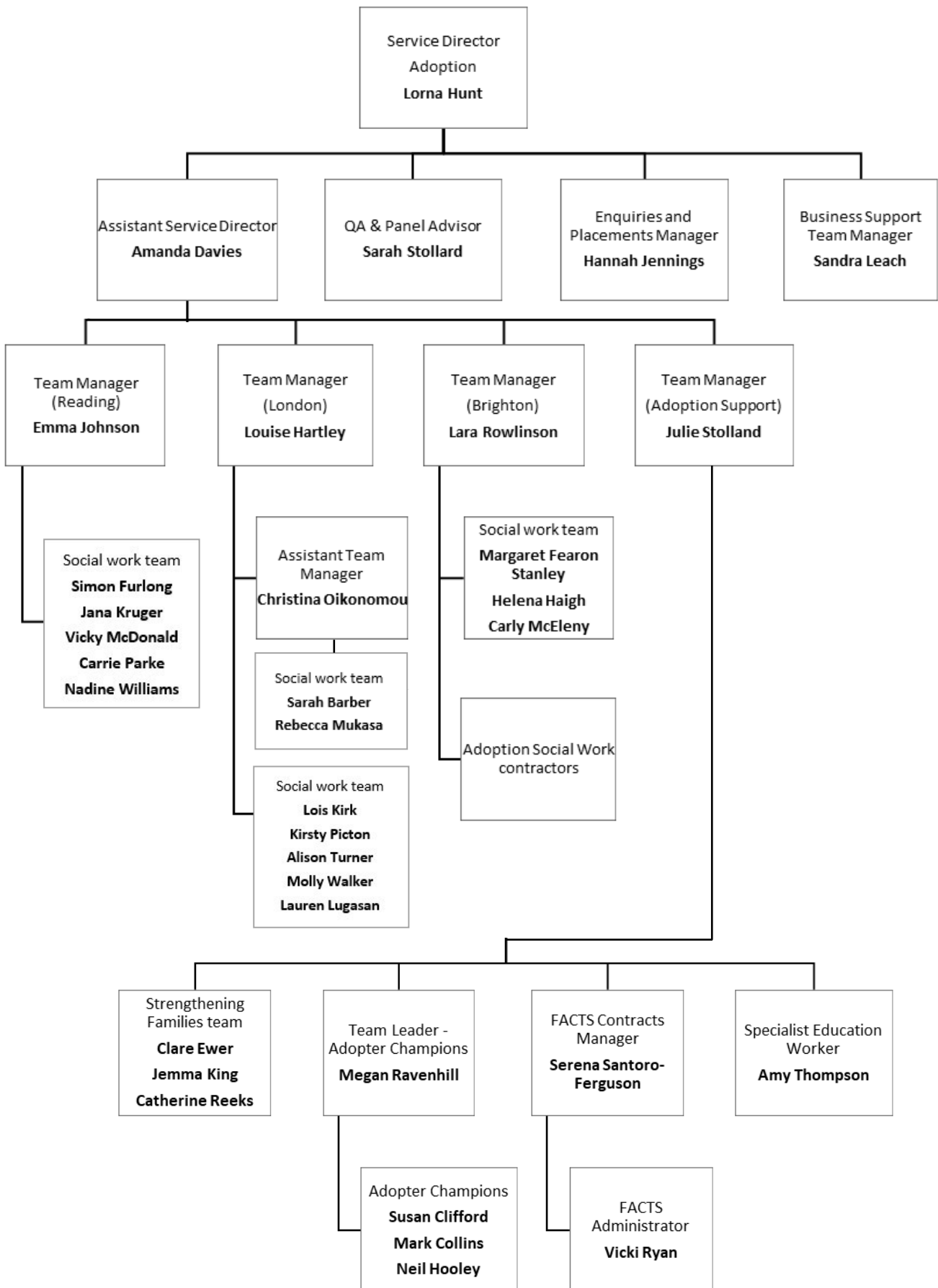
Specialist education lead

The specialist education lead at PACT provides support for adopters and schools in various ways. These include helping to navigate the education system or supporting families when they are embarking on the admissions application process. The specialist role also includes working directly with educational professionals and schools with tailored training and advice regarding adopted children's needs.

Adopter champions

A small team of PACT adopter champions offer help, advice and reassuring support to families pre or post adoption. They are all experienced adoptive parents who have in-depth knowledge of the adoption process and hands-on experience of raising adopted children.

Appendix two: Adoption Team Organisation Chart



Appendix three: complaints procedure

If you have a concern or a complaint you must start at level 1 and go through the process. We recommend that anyone wanting to raise a concern or a complaint obtains a copy of PACT's complaints policy as the below is only a summary.

<i>Level</i>	<i>Procedure</i>	<i>Response</i>
1	If you are unhappy with the service provided we hope that you will feel able to tell the person who is working with you promptly	We will attempt to resolve any issues or problems at this stage in an open and communicative way.
2	If you would prefer not to speak to the person you are working with or if your concern is about the person you are working with you can contact their manager, either by telephone, letter or email, or by asking to see them. Most problems can be resolved by discussing them with the people who manage the service.	In these instances, and where minimal investigation is required, managers may use an informal resolution process to resolve the situation. To do this we will discuss your concerns with you, keep a written record of the issue, make an effort to resolve the issue within 28 days of hearing your concern and provide you with an outcome either by phone or in writing.
3	If you are unhappy with the responses received at Level 2 and feel your concern/complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily you should write to the chief executive officer (CEO) unless the concern/complaint is about the CEO, in which case your concern/complaint should be addressed to the Chair of the Board of Trustees. Any Level 3 complaint must be made in writing, either by email or letter and must contain full details of your complaint and an outline of why you remain dissatisfied.	Your complaint will be formally acknowledged within five working days, and the CEO/Chair of the Board of Trustees may look into your complaint or arrangements made for a senior member of staff or appropriate person from within PACT to investigate. You will receive the findings within 28 working days of your Level 3 complaint being received by PACT – unless there is a justified reason why this is not possible, in which case you will be alerted to any revised time frames.
4	If you are not satisfied with the response from the CEO/ Chair of the Board of Trustees you have the right to appeal to PACT's board of trustees. You are required to write again to the CEO within 28 working days of receipt of PACT's response to your Level 3 complaint. You are required to explain why you are still not happy with PACT's response and you should highlight what outcome you are looking to achieve.	Within 14 working days, the CEO will appoint an Independent Investigating Officer (IIO) who has six weeks to examine the complaint. You will be invited to a meeting to discuss the IIO's conclusions and final decision. The CEO will consider the recommendations of the IIO and write to you, you will then have the opportunity to submit any final written feedback within 14 days of receipt of the report. If required, a panel of three PACT trustees who will have had no involvement with the complaint will review your final feedback and all documents and provide a written response with a final outcome within 28 working days.

Further Notes

- On points of law, complainants should consult a solicitor
- Appropriate resources will be made available for people with disabilities and for people who need additional support with written or spoken English
- At any level a complainant may be accompanied by a friend/family member but not a legal representative
- Confidentiality agreements regarding PACT's work will be maintained
- If you are unsure who a workers line manager is please contact PACT's offices 7 Southern Court, South Street, Reading, RG1 4QS Telephone 0118 938 7600 - E-mail: info@pactcharity.org
- Concerns and complaints that reach level 3 will be recorded as formal complaints

If having gone through all levels and you remain dissatisfied, you should consider contacting Ofsted:

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

General enquiries: 0300 123 1231. About concerns: 0300 123 4666

Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted. Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk