



Parents And Children Together

# PACT Statement of Purpose

## 2023-2024



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

Stephen, PACT Adopter

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## Introduction to PACT

Parents And Children Together, PACT, also known as the 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 an adoption charity and family support provider helping hundreds of families every year through outstanding adoption services, specialist therapeutic support and inspirational community projects across London and the South-East of England.

Established in 1911, PACT is now one of the UK's leading charities in its field and is dedicated to the placement of children with secure and loving families and continued support through therapeutic services. Our adoption support services include our online Children And Trauma Community Hub (CATCH), our Strengthening Families team of therapeutically trained social workers, our Adopter Champion team of 'experts by experience', our education support service and our FACTS service which provides therapeutic support to help children overcome difficulties in childhood, adolescence and early adulthood resulting from early trauma and neglect.

The focus of the charity is to support families and provide services not available locally. The reputation and experience of the organisation has grown over the years and PACT now has strong partnerships with many different sectors, faith organisations, statutory bodies, corporate organisations and charities, promoting an inclusive and supportive culture. PACT continues to respond to unmet need by listening to its service users, supporters and stakeholders and developing innovative services that deliver high quality.

The adoption and adoption support services provided by PACT have been rated outstanding by Ofsted for the third successive inspection.

At an inspection in March 2023, PACT was found to be outstanding across all areas and provided "highly effective services".



The inspectors said that the actions of PACT "contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children, young people and adults."

This statement provides an overview of PACT's values, aims, objectives, the services it provides as well as the structure of the organisation.

## PACT's values, aims and objectives

PACT is a supportive and respectful place where people are genuinely passionate about what we do. At PACT we share a purpose of empowering service users and strengthening families through the quality services we provide. Our energy and professionalism deliver excellence.

At PACT we are open to new opportunities and are continuously looking to progress as an organisation. Our innovation and creativity drive our commitment to make a positive difference to the lives of the people with whom we work. As an organisation we are working to ensure that our staff and services reflect the communities in which we serve. Through this we aim to create families and bring people together.

Our shared values drive everything that we do:



We are **PROFESSIONAL** in our service delivery. This is demonstrated by the results delivered for the children and families we support and for our partner organisations. We show respect to our service users and to our internal and external colleagues, irrespective of differences.



We are committed to maintaining a **POSITIVE ATTITUDE**. We keep an open mind and choose to see the good possibilities of a situation. We accept change as vital to our efficiency and growth. We commit to doing what we say we will do and supporting each other with care and with confidence.



We are **INNOVATIVE** in the way we approach our work. We continuously work to ensure all staff and volunteers play an important part in influencing the culture and practice of PACT, valuing input from diverse backgrounds and communities. We consistently take actions that ensure PACT remains a pioneering organisation, always at the forefront in our areas of expertise.



We genuinely **DESIRE TO HELP OTHERS**. We strive to make a positive difference for the people whose lives we influence. We seek to place children in safe and caring family environments through our adoption service. We work closely with our adopters to provide lifelong support. We work in partnership with those who use our services and we are honest and open in all we do. We listen and respond flexibly to the individual needs of service users and colleagues.



PACT believes the child's needs are our primary concern and therefore our adoption process places the child at the centre of everything we do.

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.
- Work closely with Local Authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies and keep up with national adoption trends in regards to placement need which then informs our recruitment activity and assessment priorities. We currently sit on the following boards: Aspire, Adopt Thames Valley, Adopt South, Adoption Partnership South East and Adoption Connects. We are also members of the South West Adoption consortium.
- 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 maintain confidentiality and security of adoption records.
- Ensure service users are fully involved and consulted on service delivery and service development. One of the most crucial aspects of our work is to ensure we hear the voice of the child and that we are responding appropriately.
- 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. We look to recruit families for children that wait the longest:
  - Young children with additional needs
  - Single children aged four years and older
  - Sibling pairs of all ages
  - Sibling groups of three or more children of all ages
  - Children placed under a foster to adopt arrangement, whose care plans are not yet certain
  - Children with complex histories e.g. parents who have abused alcohol/drugs or who have mental health issues
- 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, Milton Keynes 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

As a learning organisation, 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.
- Obtaining feedback on service quality and effectiveness 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 which regularly gives feedback to the agency.
- An internal auditing process which 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, 2017 and 2023 the PACT adoption agency was awarded an outstanding rating by Ofsted.

## Panels



PACT's central list of panel members receives training twice a year 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 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 and assistant service director attend trustee board meetings and PACT has a lead trustee for adoption on the board. Staff may report any issues to the service director to be raised with the board.

Staff one-to-one supervisions, appraisals 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 (PARs) are considered by PACT's approval panel, which sits at least monthly. The PAR is completed by a qualified social worker and the report follows the CoramBAAF format. 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.

## Matching and placement

Once adopters are approved, we have a dedicated Placements team that will assist adopters in the family finding process. The Placements team will work cooperatively with the adopter(s) and their social worker. Adopters will be helped to make a profile and guidance will be given regarding registering with Linkmaker, the online platform that features children waiting to be placed for adoption and approved adopters waiting to be matched.

Adopters will be supported and encouraged to attend exchange days and activity days where children are profiled.



Once a link is identified, in order to fully prepare and support PACT adopters to meet the needs of their children, and to ensure transparency, PACT social workers will always request access to the following documents prior to going to panel: child permanence reports, medicals, and any other reports available such as foster carer, nursery and school reports and psychological assessments. PACT also requests access to the children's files in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Adoption. Additionally, PACT ensures that prospective adopters have the opportunity to meet with foster carers, the local authority medical advisor and any other relevant professionals as well as meeting with birth parents after a match has been agreed.

Once a placement is made, PACT social workers will undertake regular visits and provide guidance, advice and support to families until the making of the adoption order and beyond if necessary.

## Adoption support

PACT recognises the life-long nature of adoption and therefore aims to provide comprehensive support packages to families and support them to achieve stable and successful placements.

Our adoption support provides a range of quality services which can promote best outcomes for children who need permanent placement.

We offer services for children, adopters, birth relatives and adopted adults in respect of adoption support services in conjunction with other agencies.

Our adoption support starts from the very beginning of the adopter's journey and carries on through placement, adoption order and beyond. 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 for government funding through the Adoption Support Fund when appropriate).

Our adoption support offers the following services:

- **Children And Trauma Community Hub (CATCH):** all PACT adopters are able to access CATCH (PACT's online adoption support platform) from the point they start stage one of the adoption process. CATCH provides information and support to adopters through webinars, eLearning, forums and one-to-one web chat with adoptive parents.



- **Adopter champions (peer-to-peer support):**

Adopter champions support families at any stage of their adoptive journey as a peer. Having adopted themselves, their expertise and lived experience can be of great benefit to families who need support.

- **Strengthening Families Team (SFT):** the SFT is a team of therapeutically trained social workers who work alongside the family's social worker when additional support is needed. The team also works with families post adoption order, at any time up until the child reaches the age of 18 years old.



- **FACTS (Family And Children Therapeutic Support):** the FACTS service is a consultation and therapeutic service providing access to trained therapists with extensive adoption experience. Services provided include (but are not limited to) clinical psychology, family therapy, Dyadic Developmental Psychology (DDP), Theraplay, therapeutic life journey work and many creative therapies including play, drama and music. Services are commissioned by the responsible local authority (who may recover the cost from the Adoption Support Fund).

- **Specialist education service:** the specialist education lead at PACT can provide 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 role also includes working directly with educational professionals and schools with tailored training and advice regarding adopted children's needs.

Other services available to PACT families include:



- Post approval training and workshops
- Attachment focussed parenting training
- Regular newsletters
- Family fun days
- Support groups for adoptive parents
- Therapeutic activity sessions for adopted children of all ages
- Adoptee Voices support groups for adopted teenagers and young people



## Support for intercountry adopters

PACT has, in the past, recruited, prepared, approved and supported adopters who adopted a child from abroad. While this is a service no longer offered by PACT, we remain committed to providing support to intercountry 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.



## Services for adopted adults

PACT provides access to information from adoption records, and will assist and support people seeking information about their adoption and family history if they were adopted through one of the following adoption agencies:



- Childlink Adoption Society, formerly Church Adoption Society (Please note this is not the Church of England Children's Society)
- Church of the Latter Day Saints
- Oxford Diocesan Council for Moral Welfare
- Oxford Diocesan Council for Social Work
- PACT (Parents And Children Together)

## Services for birth families

Birth Family Matters is a new service within the adoption team at PACT. The service is provided to birth relatives within the Aspire Adoption Services area. The service provides advice, counselling and support to the birth relatives of children who are adopted, or when there may become a plan of adoption.





## 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, this information is available in our leaflet *We value your feedback* or on our website at [www.pactcharity.org/feedback](http://www.pactcharity.org/feedback). 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

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

As a charity, PACT fundraises to deliver enhanced support services. 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

At the time of the global Covid-19 pandemic, PACT had to adapt to continue to deliver their services remotely to carry out the role of recruitment and assessment of adopters, approving adopters, linking them with children, carrying out introductions and supporting families.

Following this, PACT adopted a hybrid working model with teams having a dedicated day in the office. Although some meetings and panels are taking place remotely, we have returned to face-to-face visits with children and families.



## Legal framework

PACT is registered as a voluntary adoption agency and restricted to providing domestic adoption, therapeutic support and post adoption services. PACT's work, including this statement of purpose, is underpinned by the following legal framework:

- 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



## 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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)



PACT's most recent inspection report was completed by Ofsted in March 2023 and the rating given was 'outstanding' across all areas. 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, Service Director

April 2023



## Appendix 1: Staff

**Lorna Hunt** 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** 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** 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 holds the post qualifying award (PQ1), and she completed a Level 5 qualification in Leadership and Management in 2022.

### Adoption managers

**Louise Hartley** 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** 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** 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** 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.

**Ana Billenness** qualified with a social work degree in 1999. Ana holds the post qualifying award (PQ1) and is currently completing a Level 5 Diploma in Children and Young People's Services (Management). Ana has worked in a variety of teams such as referral and assessment teams, leaving care and fostering teams as well as private fostering agencies and began to work in adoption in 2017. Ana joined PACT at the end of January 2023.

## 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.

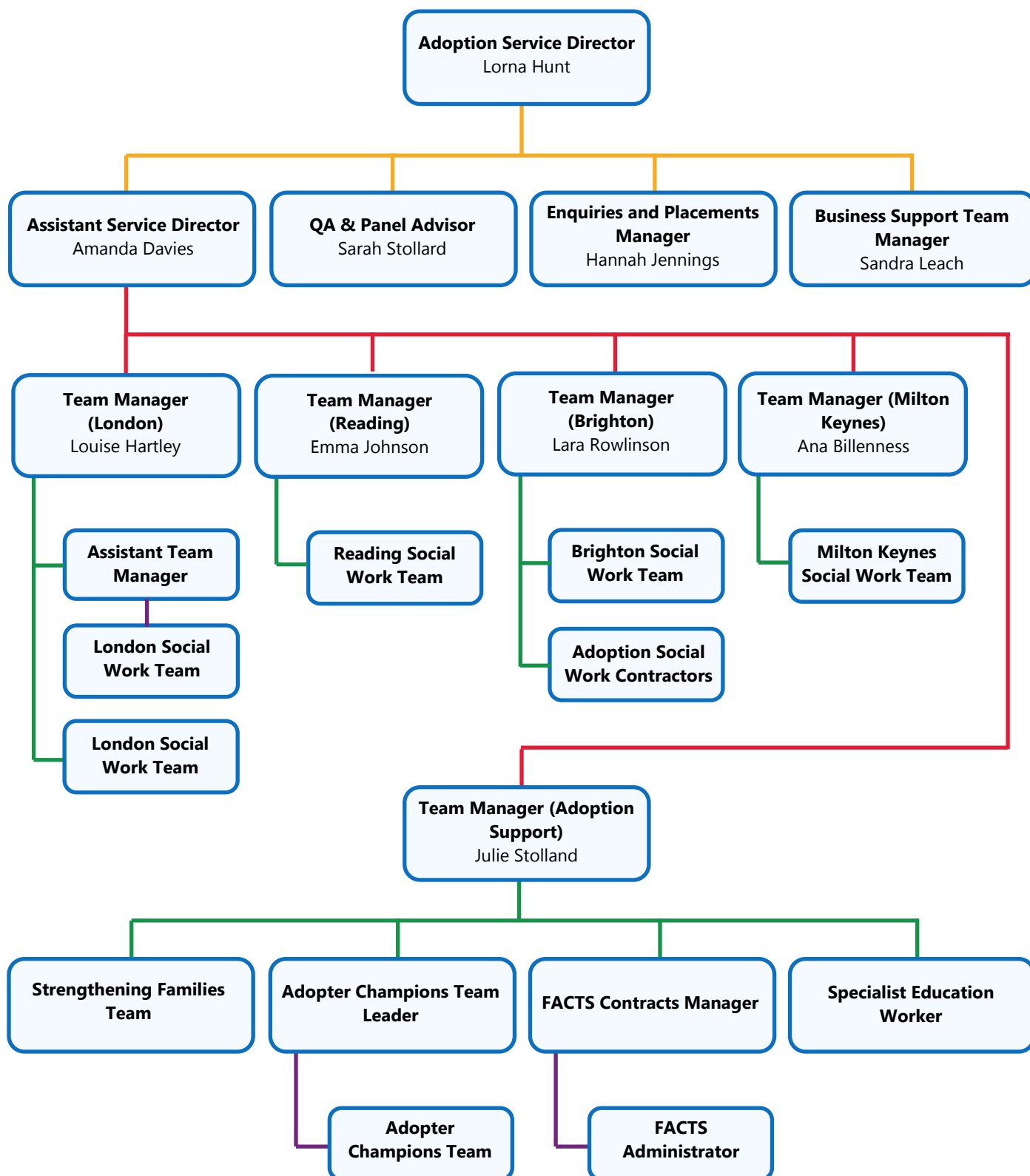
## Specialist education lead

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 2: Organisation chart



## Appendix 3: Concerns and complaints procedure

We realise that despite our best efforts, sometimes things can go wrong and in such instances we want to hear from you so that we can address this. We regard concerns and complaints as an opportunity to turn a negative experience into a positive one, as well as an opportunity for us to learn and to improve how we do things.

### Who can make a complaint using this procedure?

Anyone who is receiving a service, or who has been provided with, or has been refused a service from PACT may complain to us. This includes children, or a person acting on behalf of a child.

### What if I need help to make a complaint?

A friend or representative (although not a legal representative) can act on a complainant's behalf with their permission. PACT also recognises that any member of the public may choose to raise a concern or complaint following news, announcements and updates which may or may not have come directly from PACT.

### How do I make a complaint?

To find out more about making a complaint and view our full complaints procedure, visit:

[www.pactcharity.org/feedback](http://www.pactcharity.org/feedback)



To get in touch, fill in the form on our website or contact us by phone or email:

Tel: **0300 456 4800** | Email: [info@pactcharity.org](mailto:info@pactcharity.org)





## Parents And Children Together

0300 456 4800 | [www.pactcharity.org](http://www.pactcharity.org) | @PACTcharity



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