



Parents And Children Together

A brief guide to Adopting with PACT

Updated September 2025



*"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 dedicated to creating and supporting adoptive families for life. A member of the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA) and registered with the Department for Education (DfE), PACT has been rated as outstanding by Ofsted in the last three inspections.

With over 100 years of experience, PACT is one of the UK's leading adoption charities, known for its caring professionalism and commitment to families and children.

Thinking about adoption?

If you're considering becoming a parent through adoption, you have the option to adopt with a local authority, regional adoption agency, or an independent adoption agency like PACT.

Children waiting for adoption are under the care of their local authority. While local authorities recruit adoptive parents for children in their care, they may not always find the right family within their own pool of adopters. Independent adoption agencies, such as PACT, recruit, assess, and approve adoptive parents, matching them with children from local authorities across England, Scotland, and Wales.

Adopting with PACT



PACT is dedicated to finding families for a diverse range of children waiting for adoption. Currently, there are children of all ages in the UK in need of adoptive parents.

We are particularly interested in hearing from individuals willing to adopt children who might otherwise miss out on a permanent family. This includes sibling groups, children of black and mixed ethnicity, older children (aged three years and over), and children with additional needs or disabilities. We also seek parents for children whose physical or emotional wellbeing has been affected by parental drug or alcohol abuse, or neglect.

Why choose PACT?

PACT is an independent adoption agency offering the same high quality service to prospective adopters as local authorities and regional adoption agencies while adhering to the same government guidelines and regulations. However we are not limited to local authority boundaries, allowing us to provide a more flexible and comprehensive service.

Charitable support: As a charity, PACT fundraises to provide additional projects and services that support children and families, including therapeutic support and training for adopters.

Nationwide reach: The children adopted by PACT families come from all over England, Scotland, and Wales. We can search nationwide to find the right child to fit your family and circumstances.

Comprehensive support: PACT offers a specialist package of support for adopters, available for as long as needed. This includes:

- A **Strengthening Families Team** of therapeutically trained social workers.
- An **education lead**.
- **Adopter champions** - experienced adoptive parents.
- **FACTS** therapeutic support service.
- Online support through **CATCH** (Children And Trauma Community Hub).

Experienced workforce: PACT has a well-established team with years of collective experience, ensuring that our services are run and developed by knowledgeable professionals.

Dedicated social workers: Our social workers focus exclusively on adoption cases, allowing them to prioritise contact, assessment, matching, and placement 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 2,200 children with a placement order and waiting to be adopted in the UK.

Early Permanence

Early permanence placements are considered for babies and children where the local authority believes 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 while 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 while 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, the assessment process is exactly the same but there will be extra discussion such as whether you are available to care for a child at short notice and whether you are able to accept that it is not certain a child will definitely be able to remain in your care if the courts decide it will be safe for them to return to live with their birth family. Once approved to adopt, you and your social worker would then be able to consider children via early permanence 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 years 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 or over. 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**, the **south** and **central England**. Our teams are located in Reading, Brighton, Milton Keynes 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. Please note that applicants will need to travel to PACT's London office for training.

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 welcomes people who are LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and other identities). You do not have to be heterosexual to adopt. PACT subscribes to New Family Social to support our LGBTQ+ applicants.

Children: People with and without birth or step children can adopt. If you are already a parent, there needs to be a considerable age difference (at least two years) between an adopted child and any children already in the family. This 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 behavioural needs. Adopted children will usually 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 strongly recommend all prospective adopters commit to gaining substantial experience with children through volunteering and spending time with children in their network.

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. You will need to think about what space a child will need now and also when they get older.

Fertility treatment/childlessness: If you are undergoing fertility treatment or investigations 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 have a good chance of being there for them into adulthood. Having a diagnosed medical condition does not necessarily bar you from adoption. You will need to have a medical with your GP as part of your application. We would expect you to lead a healthy and active lifestyle and that any medical condition is well managed and controlled.



Smoking: 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 Barring Service (DBS) check. 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 that you and your social worker are confident they can safely live with children. 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. Parents need to be able to take up to 12 months off work when the 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, one of you will need to take this time off work, or for you to share the adoption leave. Applicants should check their employer's policy about entitlement 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 when you get to know your child or children.

Quick reference guide to the adoption process

Enquiry stage

- Gather information
- Attend a PACT adoption information event
- Choose an adoption agency
- Initial Information Call with a PACT Enquiries Officer
- Information sharing meeting with a PACT social worker
- Appropriate voluntary work with children arranged by enquirers

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, written personal references)
- 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 CATCH - Children And Trauma Community Hub



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; half day moving onto placement course
- Additional training for your support network; family and friends workshop

Family finding

- Registering a profile on LinkMaker - an online family finding search tool
- Linking you with a child(ren)
- Matching panel approval
- Introductions – visits 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 (6–12 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 CATCH - Children And Trauma Community Hub

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 adoptive parent) or help on our stands at publicity events
- Help raise awareness by following @PACTcharity on social media
- Consider supporting PACT through fundraising or regular giving by becoming a Friend of PACT

Ongoing adoption placement support

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

PACT also has an online platform The **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. PACT families have free access to CATCH.



Some families may require specialist therapeutic support to help their children come to terms with traumatic experiences, feelings of loss or to understand their life story. PACT's specialist **FACTS service (Family And Children Therapeutic Support)** is provided by experienced therapists who understand the needs of children who have suffered from trauma and loss. 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 funded by the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF).

PACT also has an ongoing programme of **training courses**, which are free to PACT adopters, on topics such as talking to children about adoption and sensory processing. More details can be found at: 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, activity sessions** for children and young people and PACT's annual **family fun days**.

PACT's fundraising team raises money for PACT to be able to offer this enhanced programme of support services to all its families free of charge for as long as they need it.

Useful resources

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



CATCH - Children And Trauma Community Hub
www.catchconnect.org

FIRST 4 ADOPTION

First 4 Adoption
0300 222 0022

first4adoption.org.uk



Adoption England
adoptionengland.co.uk



Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAAs)
cvaa.org.uk



New Family Social
Supporting LGBTQ+ adopters and foster carers
newfamilysocial.org.uk



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



Public Services
Search 'adoption' for further information
gov.uk



CoramBAAF Adoption & Fostering Academy
020 7520 0300

Contact us

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.

Telephone: 0300 456 4800

Website: www.pactcharity.org

Email: info@pactcharity.org

Offices: **Reading**
7 Southern Court
South Street
Reading RG1 4QS

London - Vauxhall

The Foundry
17 Oval Way
London SE11 5RR

Brighton

Projects The Lanes
Nile House, Nile Lane
Brighton BN1 1HW

Milton Keynes

Harben House, Tickford Street
Newport Pagnell MK16 9EY



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/feedback. If you have any queries about this process, please contact Lorna Hunt, Adoption Service Director, 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



Parents And Children Together

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

The Oxford Diocesan Council for Social Work Inc., (trading as PACT) is a Company limited by guarantee, registered in England (No. 1636098) and a Registered Charity (No. 285214), whose Registered Office is 7 Southern Court, South Street, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 4QS.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission in writing from Parents And Children Together.



Updated September 2025