



ADOPTION AGENCY

ANNUAL REPORT

31.03.06 – 01.04.07

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1. Introduction

PACT, also known as the Oxford Diocesan Council for Social Work Inc. has been an adoption agency for 50 years and was engaged in working directly with birth parents to place their infants for adoption until the mid 1990s. The agency's work then changed in focus to recruit, train assess and support prospective adopters to meet the needs of a wide range of children needing placement for adoption by local authorities

In 1991 the agency first undertook home studies for those seeking to adopt from overseas, in agreement with local authorities and became registered as a stand-alone agency to undertake this work in 1998. In 1997 the agency was awarded a Department of health project grant to promote the need for adoptive families from black and minority ethnic groups.

In 2003 the agency's work in finding permanent families for children extended into long term fostering and the agency became a registered fostering service for this purpose.

In 2005 PACT registered as an Adoption Support Agency in order that it might offer Intermediary services to those families who had children placed for adoption by PACT.

PACT's overall aims are to build and strengthen families through adoption, permanence and family support.

2. Provision of Services

- 1 PACT adoption agency aims to provide adoption services within the prevailing legislative framework.
- 2 PACT aims to recruit, train, assess and support adoptive parents to meet the needs of a range of children for whom local authorities are seeking placements. PACT sets out its criteria for this which is reviewed on a regular basis. Where the nature of the enquirer's interest is such that the agency is not in a position to assist, they are given information about other agencies.
- 3 PACT aims to assess, train and support those prospective adopters who are seeking to adopt a child from outside the UK. PACT provides this service under contract with a number of local authorities and in liaison with the Department for Education and Skills.
- 4 PACT aims to provide information, advice and support to those people who were adopted through the agency and are seeking information about their birth history and may be seeking reunion with their birth relatives.
- 5 PACT aims to support birth relatives whose children were adopted through the agency with information, advice, support and intermediary services. There will be charges made for these services.
- 6 PACT aims to provide post-adoption information, advice and support services for all parties to adoption, including letter box services between adopted children and their birth families. It is recognised that these services may be limited by financial and resource constraints within which the agency operates.
- 7 In accordance with statutory requirements, the agency is committed to maintaining effective systems for recording, managing and keeping safe, information about children placed for adoption and about adoptive families.

3. Panels

PACT has three Adoption Panels with one being constituted to consider Permanence (fostering) matters.

Appraisals

Panel member appraisals started during the year with feedback and scoring from each member which was fed into the individual meeting with members and the chair and Panel adviser. There were a number of changes to practice and procedure that were raised for consideration. These included longer time for each item, preparation was required for 'turning couples down' and the type of information provided in the assessments and how prospective applicants were advised of the Panel recommendation. The issues were considered by the Panel chairs and their deputies and advisers and procedural changes and training needs were agreed and set up.

Medical Advisers

Given the agency now has two medical advisers it has become useful to have six monthly meetings with medical advisers and panels advisers and administrative staff to address consistency of service delivery.

Panel training

17th May 2006 – the assessment process and what evidence indicates applicants will be successful adopters – led by Panel Adviser Sarah Pepys.

1st November 2006 – Intercountry Adoption legislation and practice – led by IAC.

21st February 2007 – Assessing Prospective Adopters – led by Panel Members Mike Steen

Membership of the Panels

The membership of all the Panels had to be renewed as of 31st December 2005, in light of the requirements of the Adoption Agency Regulations 2005. The Executive Trustee Committee approved the new membership as listed in the frame work below.

Member number	Initial appointment date	Length of Service	Future appointment	Role on Panel
First Adoption Panel				
1.	01.12.03	2 nd term 01.12.04 – 29.12.05	3 rd term 01.09.06 – 30.8.09	Chair
2.	04.07.01	2 nd term 04.07.04 – 29.12.05	3 rd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Will chair panel until 31.08.06 Resigned in 02.07
3.	01.03.00	On-going		Medical adviser has on-going contract
4.	15.01.03	Until 29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.07	Independent
5.	02.10.02	Until 01.10.05	2 nd term 02.10.05 – 29.12.05 3 rd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Vice chair as of 30.12.05
6.	04.04.07	Until 03.04.10	First Term	Independent
7.	05.05.04	Until 29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Independent Resigned in December 2006
8.	30.12.05	Until 29.12.08		Independent
9.	01.05.01	Until 30.4.04	2 nd term 01.05.04 -	Social worker

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			29.12.05 3 rd term 30.12.05 – 29.06.08	
10.	06.08.03	Until 29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Social worker
Vacancy				Agency Manager
Second Adoption Panel				

2.	19.10.05	29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Social worker – vice chair Resigned April 2006
	30.11.06	29.11.09		
3	19.10.05	On-going		Medical adviser has on-going appointment
4.	19.10.05	29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Independent Vice chair from April 2006
5.	19.10.05	29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Independent
6.	19.10.05	29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Independent
7.	19.10.05	29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Appointed as Chair on 01.04.06
8.	19.10.05	29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.06 3 rd term 30.12.06 – 29.12.09	Independent Agreed to continue to sit at annual appraisal 09.06
9.	01.01.06	31.12.08		Independent member
10.	1.3.06 01.10.06	31.9.06 30.09.09		Social Worker
11.	19.10.05	29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Agency Manager
Adoption and Permanence Panel				
1.	01.08.03	29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	chair

2.	25.11.04	29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Vice chair
3.	01.08.03 01.02.07	29.12.05 30.01.10	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.06	Independent Resigned on 29.12.06
4.	01.08.03 01.02.07	29.12.05 30.01.07	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.06	Independent Resigned on 29.12.06
5	01.01.06	31.12.08		independent member
6.	01.08.03	29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.07	Independent
7.	01.08.03	On-going	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Agency Trustee Resigned 07.02.07 Vacancy
8.	01.08.03	29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Social worker
9.	01.08.03	29.12.05	2 nd term 30.12.05 – 29.12.08	Social worker
10.	01.04.06	29.12.08		Foster carer

Adviser positions

Agency Panel Adviser – Sarah Pepys

Inter Country Social Work Adviser – Carol Lacey Smith

Legal Adviser – Ian Robertson, Griffiths Robertson Solicitors, 48 West Street, Reading RG4 5HX

4. Adoption Consultative Committee

The Adoption Consultative Committee comprises Trustee members: Rev. Derek Spears and Jenny Stillwell; adviser: Stephen Barber, Ann Miles and Carol Roberts, with staff members Yvette Gayford, Sarah Pepys and Lois Williams, supported by administrator Samantha Darley.

The Committee has met regularly throughout 2006 -7 to monitor, advise and support the work of the Adoption and Fostering Services. Agendas have been set reflecting the work and plans for the services and detailed minutes kept of the Committee meetings.

The Committee met on 25th April, 2006, 25th July 2006, 14th November 2006, 27th February, 2007

5. Staffing

Training

There was a range of training taken up by the staff group over the year. Much of it reflected the new Adoption and Children Act 2002 and benefit was gained from joint training arranged by other Voluntary Adoption Agencies, particularly those within the Diocesan Adoption Agency Group.

The Table below identifies training undertaken within the team:

PACT Adoption and Fostering Team Training as of 01.04.06 – 31.03.07

Topic	SP	CLS	AW	ME	LW	JS	CF	SF	CB	NO
Post Adoption Centre AGM 19.05.06							y			
CVAA 29.05.06 Access to Information							y		y	
Safeguarding Children in-house February 2007	y		y	y	y		y	y		
CVAA 24 th March 2007 Child Protection	y				y	y		y		

Complement of staff

- HR left after 18 years with the agency in April 2006.,
- LW left in April 2007 after 5 years with the agency.
- CLS retired after 25 years in April 2007.
- AW was appointed to the post of Inter Country Adoption manager.
- CF was appointed to a Senior Practitioner post in the Domestic team from a social work post.
- Despite a long advertising campaign it was not possible to appoint to the full time Fostering Senior Practitioner post nor to the Domestic Team Manager post which was part of the restructuring of the Teams.
- PACT has been successful in appointing a number of contract workers.
- The domestic team has had a 2nd year social work student in placement from January – June 2007.
- SF and JS remain as permanent staff members within the domestic adoption and fostering service.
- ME and NO remain on the permanent staff of the inter country adoption service.

6. Inter Country developments

This extended year has been one of great activity, some anxiety and also of change for the Inter-country Adoption Team culminating in the retirement of CLS as Pact Inter-country Adoption Manager.

CLS left an enormous legacy to us in the service she had played such an enormous part in developing since ODCSW first became involved in Inter-country Adoption in the early 1990s with the arrival of children from Romania and leaving at the end of the busiest year ever.

573 information packs were sent out (380 in 2006/7) and 97 applications received (60 in 2005/6). Averaging out on a monthly basis this represents an increase of 20.5% increase in enquiries and 29% in applications received over 2005/6.

Enquiries received: 573 (2005/06: 380)

Applications received:

Country	Number of applications:
China	57
Russia	7
India	5
Nepal	2
Guatemala	10
Ethiopia	1
Pakistan	1
Japan	1
Kenya	2
Poland	1
Thailand	5
Uganda	1
USA	3
Algeria	1
Total	97

Withdrawn: 7

Number of children placed: 20

Welfare Supervision:

Authority	Country	Applicants
Cambridgeshire	Russia	2
	Bulgaria	1
Oxfordshire	Ethiopia	1
	USA	1
	Russia	1

Number of Preparation Workshops provided	3	3	3
Interagency Placements (domestic)			
Number of children placed	14	9	3
Number of children placed individually	6	6	1
Number of children placed in groups of 2	8	4	2
Number of children placed in groups of 3	0	0	0
Number of Children in placement	23 dependant on time of placement and adoption order	Ranged between 25 and 27 dependant on the time of year.	Ranged between 25 and 29 dependant on the time of year.
Adoption orders granted (no. of children)	9	10	12
Number of disruptions	0	0	0

Interagency Placements (fostering)			
Number of children placed	0	0	4
Number of children in placement	4	4	4
Number of registered carers	9	6	6
Number of disruptions	0	0	0
Overseas Adoption			
Number of enquiries	574	490	277
Number of preliminary references	8	12	N/A
Number of applications	72	60	44
Number of applicants to Panel	68	51	32
Number of applications withdrawn	12 (1 prelim withdrew)	2	0
Number of new welfare supervisions provided for local authorities	10	13	4

8. Post Adoption Services

Birth Relative Service

Following the change in legislation in December 2005 which allows birth relatives for the first time to seek contact with adopted adults, PACT's birth relative service was launched on 1st April 2006. Although there had been a number of enquiries made before the service started, between Jan – March 2006, what has been noticeable is that there have not been large numbers of birth relatives seeking a service.

In all 19 enquiries have been received of which 14 were from birth mothers, 2 from birth fathers and three from other relatives. 7 people attended initial interviews. Two people received a tracing service. Both adult adoptees were located; however, in neither case, did the adoptee wish for contact although in both cases it was possible to share some information about the adoptees' welfare with the birth relative.

5 people were being dealt with by other agencies or elected to approach another agency after initial interview/discussion with PACT. One reason for this is that PACT has to make a charge for the service and some enquirers were able to access a free service through their local authority. PACT now has a small hardship fund, which it is envisaged will be used in the future to help birth relatives whose financial circumstances make them unable to meet the cost of the service.

5 people (all birth parents) enquired about adopted adults who were aged under 25. PACT has an agreed policy that it would not be appropriate to approach a young person under this age. They were therefore informed that no service could be offered at this stage. During the second year of operation, it is hoped to be able to offer initial interviews to all birth relatives who have enquired about under 25s.

A full range of procedures/forms/leaflets for use with the new service was devised and a tracing package trialled, which is being reviewed for the second year of operation.

Post Adoption Service Overview:

PACT received 84 enquiries regarding post adoption services (including the Birth Relative Service) during the year April 2006 – March 2007. The largest group of requests (32) was for information to be sent to other agencies, mainly on behalf of adult adoptees. 20 adoptees approached PACT direct for information from their adoption records. 5 adoptive parents sought support from PACT and there were 5 letterbox contacts and a number of miscellaneous enquiries.

Conclusion

Post adoption has had a busy year, with the establishment of the new Birth Relative service. It has been a steep learning experience for all concerned as

there have been a number of issues/procedural points which have been addressed. Following approval by PACT's Trustees, later in 2007, it is planned to extend the Birth Relative Service to non-PACT adopters.

The busiest area of work, however, remains the counselling of adopted adults/sharing of records with other agencies and it is likely that this will remain the core of the post adoption service for the foreseeable future.

9. Adoption Support Services

PACT works hard to keeping contact with all its adopters and offer a range of support services. These include twice yearly newsletters, an annual picnic, post approval workshops, specialist services including homeopathy, regular support groups including the group for Dads, the FACTS – Fostering and Adoption Consultation and therapy service and the telephone support and out of hours service.

Consideration is being given to how to cost and charge for services to intercountry adopters who are welcome to access any service provided.

10. Strategic Objectives for 2007/8

- To explore new ways of undertaking adoption and fostering work in the face of the difficulties in recruiting permanent staff. Consideration to be given to using contract staff in flexible ways.
- To monitor the changes in the uptake of Inter Country assessments, which have presently taken a dip in numbers and consider new ways of working in partnerships with partner local authorities.
- To investigate the potential of working in partnership with another agency to offer linking facilities for inter-country adopters.
- To explore the recruitment styles worked to in USA and consider implementing any effective new strategies.
- To continue to provide a responsive domestic adoption service focussing on the needs of children requiring placements within the UK.
- To explore the cost/benefit of working more closely/merging with other Voluntary Agencies.
- To explore further the potential of Adoption Support Services including FACT's (Fostering and Adoption Consultation and Therapy Service) and Post adoption on-line Service.
- To investigate the potential of IT solutions for archive storage to reduce the space required for record storage.
- To upgrade our publicity to ensure it matches that provided by other VAAs and is effective.
- To contribute to research, policy and practice development through participation in national and regional consortia.

11. Complaints

The recording of complaints is in the process of being upgraded to ensure that all staff understand how the process works and ensure that it is fully complied with.

12. Summary

It has been a busy year, although the number of domestic placements remained low, in keeping with the position of other adoption agencies. The intercountry assessment work flourished although the numbers of children arriving in the UK, particularly from China was much reduced in the second half of the year. The pressures on the domestic team, driven largely by staff leaving and difficulties in recruitment has meant that the commitment and flexibility on staff has been, at times, considerable. Thanks go to all those within the agency, both Trustees and staff who have supported the team's work over the past year.

Sarah Pepys
Adoption Services Manager

01.06.2007