

ADVICE LINE, ADULT COUNSELLING, TELEPHONE COUNSELLING AND OUTREACH SERVICES PROCEDURES

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INDEX

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | These procedures arise from | 3 |
| 2 | Aims and Objectives | 3 |
| 3 | Staffing..... | 3 |
| 4 | Assessment of need for adoption support | 4 |
| 5 | Advice Line and Adult Counselling Service at PAC-UK Premises | 6 |
| 6 | Telephone Counselling Service..... | 7 |
| 7 | Outreach Surgery Counselling Service | 8 |
| 8 | User-Focused Advice Line, Adult Counselling, Telephone Counselling and Outreach Services | 10 |
| 9 | Monitoring and Review of PAC-UK Advice Line, Adult Counselling, Telephone Counselling and Outreach Services | 10 |

1 These procedures arise from

The Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005, Regulations 13, 15 and the National Minimum Standards for Adoption, NMS 15

2 Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures relating to PAC's provision of the:
- Advice Line and Adult Counselling Service
 - Outreach Counselling Service
 - Telephone Counselling
 - Counselling via the Internet

3 Staffing

- 3.1 All counselling staff must have the minimum professional qualifications outlined in PAC-UK's Overarching Policies and Procedures and National Minimum Standards for Adoption Standard 23. Newly appointed counsellors are required to undergo a full induction programme. For Advice Line Counsellors, this will include sitting in with an experienced counsellor during Advice Line hours. New Outreach Counsellors will be paired with an experienced PAC-UK counsellor for work in outreach surgeries.
- 3.2 Volunteer Placement Counsellors who are fully trained, qualified and have specialist adoption experience with all parties to adoption/permanency may be appointed to Outreach surgeries to co-work with experienced Outreach Counsellors.
- 3.3 All PAC-UK counsellors and volunteers are required to have enhanced DBS checks, updated every 3 years to ensure their suitability for work with children and vulnerable adults (Standard 21).
- 3.4 Where counselling staff have personal experience of adoption which, while generally enhancing their knowledge and practice, through counter-transference may sometimes raise painful issues for themselves, both the counsellor and line management need to be alert to this possibility and create a structure to support their work in a sensitive way. This may include, in addition to supervision, the counsellor seeking appropriate therapy for her/himself.
- 3.5 All PAC-UK Advice Line and Outreach Counsellors will be supported with regular individual/group supervision from their line manager or other appropriately

qualified and experienced adoption counsellor. Group Supervision will be provided at least six times a year; individual supervision every four weeks for full-time workers; every six weeks for part-time permanent staff, and a minimum of every 8 – 10 weeks for sessional workers and volunteers, to be agreed with PAC-UK management. It is the responsibility of both supervisor and supervisee to ensure that regular supervision does take place, as contracted. Permanent and sessional staff will attend group supervision at least three times a year.

- 3.6 Informal supervision conducted either face to face or by telephone outside of those formally arranged by PAC-UK is encouraged, if needed, to supplement scheduled supervisions. Important decisions emerging from informal discussion should be documented.

4 Assessment of need for adoption support

- 4.1 Eligibility for services: In order to comply with Regulation 13 (2005), PAC-UK staff will ensure that all adoption support is based on a formal assessment of need carried out either by the local authority* or a PAC-UK counsellor, having taken into account the following:

- a need for any particular assistance to enable them to access our counselling service, i.e., disability access, interpreter service, etc.
- the service user's mental capacity to engage in adoption counselling; if the service user is severely mentally incapacitated, the counsellor would signpost her/him elsewhere or ensure the engagement of an appropriate community support worker with the service user whilst adoption /permanency work is undertaken
- any issues of welfare and safety that might arise would be fully discussed
- funding provisions.

* Prospective service users must be made aware that they may be entitled to request an assessment of their needs for adoption support services from their local authority in accordance with the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and associated regulations.

Before accepting a telephone referral for counselling, the Advice Line Counsellor will, firstly, check that the service user can either pay for the service independently or is from a local authority that has commissioned face-to-face counselling services either at PAC-UK's main premises or at a local outreach surgery; or will pay for the service as a 'spot purchase'.

- 4.2 Those service users who do not live in an authority which has commissioned counselling services may still receive advice during Advice Line hours (see PAC-UK's Subscribers' list and Schedule of Service Level Provision). They may also

purchase a telephone/or face to face advice and support service outside of the Advice Line Service hours.

- 4.3 Every telephone call and e mail that comes through to the advice line is registered on the database in the 'Advice line log'. Any response from a counsellor is also noted in the log.
- 4.4 If this becomes a referral for a service at PAC-UK the advice line counsellor will fill in the 'front sheet on the database which is the electronic intake form. This front sheet needs to be completed as fully as possible during the initial telephone enquiry or referral, including the chargeable Local Authority, even if the caller is from a non-subscribing authority. A new ID number will automatically be generated by the database for the service user. This front sheet should indicate whether the client has cultural or other needs that may require additional resources or special consideration by the subscribing authority, before PAC-UK services are offered.
- 4.5 The Advice Line Worker will then put this referral 'on hold' to the respective manager of the advice line whose role it is to go through all the new referrals and the Advice Line Log to check procedures have been followed and appropriate advice has been offered.
- 4.6 The new referrals will be checked by the managers of the advice lines in London and in Leeds on a weekly basis. In their absence this task will be allocated to a member of the Adult Services team as acting manager or the Director of Service Delivery. Any referrals for the Child and Family Team, the Education Team and Training will be passed onto the heads of those services if this has not already happened. The managers of the Child and Family Service are responsible for the allocation of new cases to their team members, usually after discussion at team meetings. If there is a waiting list for allocation, a letter will be sent by the manager of that service to the client within 7 working days to explain this (see PAC-UK Policy and Procedures for Child and Family Service).
- 4.7 The manager of the Advice Line will make a note on the database that the referral has been checked and whom the case will be allocated to. They will then change the name of the case worker and the status of the case on the database to reflect this. Outreach surgery appointments can usually be made via the Advice Line Counsellor and confirmation of these appointments given at the time of taking the referral. (Advice Line Counsellors need to check the SLA list for exceptions to this). The Advice Line Counsellor (London) or the Outreach Worker (Leeds) will put these appointments straight onto the electronic outreach calendars and make a note on the database as to who the allocated worker is and if a welcome pack has been sent.

- 4.8 Making appointments for service users is dependent on current contractual arrangements with the Local Authority and these will be made known to the Advice Line Counsellors by the manager of the Advice Line. Advice Line counsellors are expected to acquaint themselves on a regular basis with these exceptions. Relevant PAC-UK information and reading lists will also be made available to the service user by the Advice Line Counsellor or allocated counsellor.
- 4.9 At the initial assessment interview, the service user's need for service will be assessed by the counsellor either at PAC premises in North London or Leeds, through telephone counselling or in an Outreach Surgery, using the PAC-UK Initial Assessment form. The contents of the initial contact pack will be shared with the service user, including confidentiality and the exceptions to this in relation to safeguarding of self or others. To standardise PAC-UK practice, the initial assessment form should be completed for each new adult client, even if a referring local authority has completed its own assessment of need. (These particular forms do not apply to the Child and Family Service. See their Intake Procedures).

5 Advice Line and Adult Counselling Service at PAC-UK Premises

- 5.1 The Advice Line is usually the first point of contact with PAC-UK. All Advice Line contacts will be entered onto the database in the Advice Line Log. Advice Line contacts can be via the telephone, post, email or website. If the service user's needs cannot be met at PAC-UK, they will be signposted to the appropriate agency. Some referrals are dealt with only through telephone contact (e.g. advice and information) and counselling.
- 5.2 The manager of the Advice Line or the Dis responsible for allocating cases from the Advice Line based on the information on the electronic intake form and will ensure either a) that the service can be provided within the local authority's existing subscription, or b) that there is agreement to a 'spot purchase' by the individual or Social Services to pay for counselling sessions at current PAC-UK rates (see PAC-UK's Schedule of Charges).
- 5.3 The Adult Counselling Service is provided by PAC-UK permanent, sessional and placement counsellors on a weekly, fortnightly and monthly basis.
- 5.4 If there is a waiting list for allocation of counselling, the service user will be contacted either by letter, e mail or by telephone within 7 working days to inform them that there will be a delay in offering them an initial appointment.
- 5.5 Once a referral is allocated to a member of the Adult Services team, the Counsellor needs to arrange an appointment with the service user within 7 working days and

send a Welcome Pack, to include a letter of confirmation and directions to PAC-UK's offices in Kentish Town/Leeds or appropriate Outreach base.

- 5.6 The date of the service user's first appointment must be entered on the database by the counsellor. This will facilitate a review of PAC-UK service provision as well as data collection at the end of each financial year.
- 5.7 Advice Line counsellors must also respond to enquiries sent by emails or letters within 5 working days. These are logged in the same way as telephone referrals.
- 5.8 Record-keeping: The Adult Services/Outreach Counsellor will complete the Initial Assessment form to provide evidence for the assessment of need. The Therapeutic Contract is also completed and signed by the service user and counsellor at the first session. However, some service users prefer to take away this contract for consideration, returning it at a later date. These should be scanned and put on the database when this function becomes available. These are currently stored electronically.
- 5.9 Subsequent sessions are currently recorded within 7 working days on the database. Telephone calls, emails and letters should be recorded on the database within 3 days.
- 5.10 Any supervision notes on the case should also be recorded on the database by the line manager or the counsellor. Counselling notes should be factual and succinct, avoiding personal judgement or value judgements. Counsellors may wish to keep hand written working notes for use in sessions with the service user these notes, however, do not form part of the permanent file and should be destroyed when the work comes to an end. Counsellors need to be mindful that a service user may request to see the recorded notes and in some situations the notes could be called upon in a Court of Law, especially in cases relating to any form of abuse.

6 Telephone Counselling Service

- 6.1 Referrals for telephone counselling should be received via the Advice Line and recorded as a referral in the same manner as all other referrals.
- 6.2 If the request is from a non-subscribing authority, staff must explain the charges associated with telephone counselling. Requests from subscribing authorities will be eligible for a telephone counselling service in the same manner as if they were to be seen face to face.
- 6.3 Staff must explain the preferred requirement to have at least one to one face to face session, but that this could be via the internet using a secure provider, whereby the counsellor and service user can see each other.

- 6.4 Whilst the service can be provided at PAC-UK offices, it can be undertaken by counsellors from their own premises or home after careful assessment.
- 6.5 Staff undertaking this form of work need to ensure that their personal space is not compromised by undertaking the work at their homes.
- 6.6 It is important to establish very clear boundaries including a start and finish time, to avoid the session being treated too informally.
- 6.7 Staff must ensure that they have a resource bank of information and materials available to them (similar to the Advice Line) to ensure that support services can be made available should the service user require them at the end of a session e.g. Samaritans, Social Services.
- 6.8 Staff will be provided with a mobile phone in order to undertake this service in order that counsellors' personal phone details do not need to be divulged. Alternatively if the counsellor has the facility on their own telephone to block the number being obtained by a service user this can also be used to ensure confidentiality.
- 6.9 Staff must familiarise themselves with the Internet service delivery Policy and Procedure to ensure confidentiality and data protection issues are complied with when offering sessions via the internet.

7 Outreach Surgery Counselling Service

- 7.1 Outreach Appointments: An outreach surgery appointment is offered by the Advice Line Counsellor (see Local Authority list for exceptions) taking the initial telephone referral. The client's name, ID number, telephone number and service user status will all be logged on the database in this initial referral. This information can be accessed by the outreach counsellor electronically by logging on to the database. Some appointments can be confirmed at the time of taking the referral, or the service user may confirm at a later date. In some cases, the Outreach Counsellors will make direct contact with the service user to arrange/confirm their own appointments.
- 7.2 Within 7 working days, a Welcome Pack, together with an appointment letter, with directions to the venue, has to be sent to the service user, by post or e mail. . An information leaflet for that particular Outreach Surgery should be included with the Welcome Pack, as well as information on relevant PAC-UK services and training events and publications lists. Confirmation of the information sent should be logged on the database.
- 7.3 Record-keeping: The Outreach Counsellor will conduct the initial assessment and complete the Initial Assessment Form to provide evidence for the assessment of

need. The Therapeutic Contract is also completed and signed by the service user and counsellor at the first session. However, some service users prefer to take away this Contract for consideration, returning it at a later date. These should then be scanned onto the database when this facility is available.

- 7.4 Subsequent session recordings, telephone and e-mail contact and a closing summary form part of each service user record on the database.
- 7.5 Any supervision notes on the case should be recorded on the database. Counselling notes should be factual and succinct, avoiding personal judgement or value judgements. Counsellors may wish to keep working notes for use in sessions or over the course of a therapeutic assessment, or for the duration of contact with the service user; these notes, however, do not form part of the permanent file. These should be destroyed when the work has ended. Counsellors need to be mindful that service users can request to see the recorded notes.
- 7.6 Outreach Counsellors have access to all information regarding their cases via the database. When the case is closed an electronic closing summary needs to be completed by the counsellor on the database. The Counsellor then needs to change the status of the case to 'closed'. The line manager will check and sign off all closed cases on a monthly basis. The closure of the case on the database will generate an evaluation form being sent to the service user.
- 7.7 PAC-UK does not see children under the age of 17 in the Outreach Surgery, unless an initial assessment has been done first. In particular circumstances, they may be seen alone without parents or an appropriate adult, if an initial assessment has been done and it has been discussed and approved by the Director of Service Delivery or the Head of Adult Services. The exception to this is if a young person has already left home and is living independently, which applies to some adopted adults and young birth parents.
- 7.8 Outreach counsellors may need to receive regular telephone supervision in relation to this work from the Head of Adult Services or the Head of the Child and Family Services. Any child and family work in the Outreach surgeries may be delivered by two counsellors and may require the permission of the local authority.
- 7.9 Providing a report in relation to work in the Outreach Service or the Adult Counselling Service is not part of the service provision. If a local authority or an individual requires a report, this needs to be requested formally in writing before the work begins. The purpose of the report needs to be clearly stated. This may incur an additional cost and the payment of this cost must be agreed in writing before the work can begin. If the report is requested by the local authority, the information shared in the report will be shared with the service user as well as the local authority.

8 User-Focused Advice Line, Adult Counselling, Telephone Counselling and Outreach Services

- 8.1 All PAC-UK Counsellors and Outreach Workers must provide each service user with a clear explanation of what is involved in counselling service provision. They must obtain her/his informed consent to it through a therapeutic contract which should be discussed with the service user at the initial assessment interview, and signed and dated by both service user and counsellor.
- 8.2 The views of all service user groups including Relinquishing or Non-Consenting Birth Parents, Young Adopted Persons or Adults, Transracially Adopted Adults and Adoptive Parents/other Permanent Carers are sought as part of our monitoring of service provision.

9 Monitoring and Review of PAC-UK Advice Line, Adult Counselling, Telephone Counselling and Outreach Services

- 9.1 PAC-UK constantly strives to improve its services, working in partnership with service users and subscribing authorities. Feedback from service users, verbal and written, during and at the end of the service provided should be routinely sought and needs to be carefully considered by PAC-UK counsellors and management, when reviewing service provision.
- 9.2 Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the service is given priority by PAC-UK, and service users' and subscribing authorities' views are taken into account when reviewing its Advice Line, Adult Counselling, Telephone Counselling and Outreach provision. Service users are asked to complete service evaluation forms anonymously after 4 face to face counselling sessions or after closure of their file, in cases where the service user did not take up all available counselling appointments available to him/her. A summary evaluation is made with all responses for dissemination to the Board, CEO, staff, and commissioning agents. Remedial action will be taken to rectify identified weaknesses.
- 9.3 Service User feedback will be gathered electronically using a recognised survey provider with questions designed to evaluate the services delivered by PAC-UK. Feedback from this survey will evaluate user satisfaction and service effectiveness. If service users prefer not to complete the evaluation electronically or do not have an email address or access to the internet, PAC-UK will offer to complete this process on the telephone with them.
- 9.4 These services will be reviewed annually to ensure compliance by PAC-UK staff with prevailing legislation, regulations, standards, guidance and best practice.