

CHARGING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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1 These procedures arise from:

The Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005, Regulation 25, and the National Minimum Standards for Adoption, Standard 20.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 PAC-UK is a registered charity whose aims are to provide high quality counselling and support services to anyone affected by adoption and other permanent placements - to relieve distress, strengthen family relationships and inform and improve professional practice. PAC-UK is committed to and has a tradition of open access to services.
- 2.2 In order to fund its services and ensure consistent high quality, PAC-UK has pursued a mixed funding stream in order to maximise its income and prevent over-dependence on any single funding source. As a result, PAC-UK is funded through a combination of Service Level Agreements (SLAs), Contracts, grant funding (from foundations, trusts and public sources), private donations, and fees.
- 2.3 Service Level Agreements and Contracts with local authorities ensure free access to specific services for residents of the local authorities who subscribe. This generation of fees underpins PAC-UK's national telephone Advice Line and ensures its ability to plan from year to year and to maintain a range of services.
- 2.4 Grant funding is used for restricted projects where a need has been identified. This enables PAC-UK to develop new and innovative services which have traditionally become best practice in the field.
- 2.5 Fees are charged to service users, or agencies on their behalf, for specific services not offered under an existing Service Level Agreement, Contract or Special Contract. As much as possible PAC-UK endeavours to ensure that its fees do not exclude users from accessing a service.

3 Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Contracts

- 3.1 PAC-UK provides services to local authority residents under SLAs, Contracts ranging from one-year to three agreements or contracts. The SLAs fall under three service level categories: Basic Service Level I, Standard Service Level II and Comprehensive Service Level III. The type of services provided under each service category is outlined in the specific SLAs. The cost of these services is also published annually in PAC-UK's Services & Fees brochure, which is publicly available.

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- 3.2 Local authorities subscribing to Service Level II or Service Level III have the option of also contracting local counselling surgeries within their SLA. PAC-UK provides locally based counselling surgeries at a venue convenient to the local authority's residents. These surgeries are run by one/two counsellors and are available for a full or half day. Charges relating to these surgeries are published in PAC-UK's Services and Fees Brochure.
- 3.3 PAC-UK now delivers services through Contracts that have been awarded to PAC-UK through a competitive tendering process. These contracts will be specific to the requirements of the individual Local Authority concerned. They will be subject to rigorous quality assurance by the Commissioner to ensure services are delivered by PAC-UK to a high standard and in line with the requirements of the Contract.

4 Spot Purchase

- 4.1 There are service users and commissioners who may wish to access PAC-UK's services through spot purchase:
- Service users who are not residents of a subscribing local authority
 - Service users who are residents of a subscribing local authority who have received their maximum number of "free" counselling sessions prescribed by the SLA and now wish to purchase additional services
 - Other voluntary adoption agencies who do not have a SLA with PAC-UK but wish to purchase a service on behalf of one or more of their clients.
- 4.2 All spot purchase fees are published on the Additional Services & Costs page of the annual Services & Fees brochure. Price discounts are available to service users living in subscribing local authorities and are clearly stipulated in the Additional Services & Costs part of the pricing brochure.

5 Special Contracts

- 5.1 Special Contracts may be negotiated to purchase services that are either not covered in the SLA or are additional to the maximum number of cases allowed under the SLA. These services include the following:
- Commissioned Training
 - Local Counselling Surgeries
 - Intermediary Services for Adopted Adults and Birth Relatives
 - Comprehensive Family Assessments

- Intensive Therapeutic Programme
- Assessment of Contact Needs and Arrangements
- Education services
- Birth Parent services
- Services for permanent placements including Foster Care, SGOs and Kinship

5.2 Details of these services are provided in the relevant service area policies. Charges for these services are presented in PAC-UK's Services & Fees brochure. Discounts are offered to subscribing local authorities for the above services and are clearly identifiable in the PAC-UK Services & Fees brochure.

6 Unit Charging for Subscribing Local Authorities

6.1 Practice work is charged through a uniting system and recorded on to the PAC-UK's database for further processing and data analysis. All standard units are in ½ hour increments and are charged to the case according to a pre-determined charging structure, as detailed on the "intake forms". These charges are based on an average amount of time needed to complete the specific task(s).

6.2 Each ½ hour unit is priced according to the cost of providing the service (see section below) including overheads. Local Authorities that receive services under a SLA receive bi-annually a "Local Authority Report" summarising the services they have received. These reports, in the main, itemise for each case the date, type of contact, name of the PAC-UK worker, presenting concern and a unit charge for the service. These unit charges are totalled providing the "value" of the services provided under the SLA. In this way, the subscribing local authority is able to compare the value of services they are receiving under subscription with the amount they have paid under the SLA. In cases where the value of the services received is significantly less than the amount paid under the SLA, PAC-UK will convene with a representative from the local authority to mutually agree on a plan of action to make up the shortfall. Likewise, in cases where the value of the services received is significantly more than the amount paid under the SLA, PAC-UK may suggest upgrading the level of the SLA or contract to include a local counselling surgery to meet demand.

7 Fees

7.1 Fees are determined after careful consideration of the following factors:

- Actual cost of providing the service, based on expected number of staff hours required to perform the service multiplied by an average hourly rate which

- includes overhead costs
- Historical prices
- Market factors (demand and competition)
- Inflation

7.2 Fees are reviewed annually and revised, as required. The three year SLAs currently stipulate an inflationary year on year increase to the annual fee.

8 Grants

8.1 Grant funding has always been vital to PAC-UK's ability to develop new services and these new services have traditionally become part of PAC-UK's mainstream services.

8.2 New applications for funding are made on the basis of identified need for services, the costs of which are based on staffing, management, supervision and overhead costs of delivering the proposed service. Once funded, PAC-UK complies with reporting requirements of funders and all grants are accounted for through PAC-UK's audited accounts.

8.3 Grant funding has enabled PAC-UK to: offer services (e.g. Child & Family Services, Parenting Training) where the standard fees do not cover the cost of providing the service; provide services on a no-fee basis (e.g. counselling in HMP Holloway and birth mothers' drop-in group); and pilot new services to potential users (e.g. services for BME clients).

9 Contracts

9.1 PAC-UK have a number of contracts awarded through competitive tendering. These contracts are more likely to be based on an hourly rate for service delivery rather than through the Unit pricing process.

Local Authorities/Agencies that receive services under a tendered contract receive a minimum of a bi-annual "Local Authority Report" summarising the services they have received. These reports, in the main, itemise for each case the date, type of contact, name of the PAC-UK worker, presenting concern and outcome when the case is closed.