

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE PROCEDURES

Document Control Panel			
File Reference Number		SER-PRO-02	
File Name		Child & Family Service	
Owner		Head of Child & Family Service	
Approver		CEO	
History			
Date	Author's Name	Changes	Approved by Name
30/4/10	SG	Reformatted	
06/01/11	FB	Amendments made	PS
13/01/11			Board of Trustees
03/10/11	FB	Amendments made	PS
01/11/11			Board of Trustees
Oct 2013	FB	Updated	LM/PS
12/11/13			Board of Trustees
21/11/14	FB	Updated. No substantial changes	
13/04/16	FB	Reviewed and updated	
18/08/16	FB	Reviewed and updated	
01/11/16		Approved at Nov. Board Meeting	Board of Trustees
Next Review Date		08/2017	

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1 These Procedures arise from

The National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2011 and the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005:

- Regulation 13 – Provision of Services and the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Support

2 Aims

- 2.1 PAC-UK's Child and Family Service (hereafter C&FS) advertises itself as providing a specialist therapeutic service for families who are struggling with matters relating to adoption, long term fostering, special guardianship and other permanent placements, whereby early life trauma, multiple previous placements, attachment, adoptive, cultural and racial identity, contact with birth relatives and therapeutic parenting stand central.
- 2.2 The C&FS accepts referrals relating to families who already have children living with them, as well as families who are considering having children placed with them in the future. Some of the latter may be undergoing a formal assessment by a LA or Voluntary (Adoption) Agency to be approved as adoptive parents/ other permanent carers. Work undertaken by the C&FS with parents may contribute to this assessment. The decision making with regard to approval remains with the assessing agency/local authority.
- 2.3 Contact Assessments and Contact and Mediation Work between adoptive/other permanent placement family and birth family members take place involving all parties concerned: child/ren, adoptive parent /permanent carer/s and the relevant birth family members. A Contact Assessment, or Contact and Mediation Work, usually takes place when the adoptive/permanent placement family and the birth family members have already agreed to have contact but where difficulties have arisen. When birth family members wish to initiate contact with their birth children without the adoptive/permanent placement family's awareness /agreement, birth family members are referred to PAC-UK's Adult Counselling Service.
- 2.4 The C&FS therapists and counsellors are user focused and use a range of leaflets to welcome families and explain our services to them. Two of the leaflets are specifically devised for children. All leaflets reflect the C&FS' expertise in working with BME families.
- 2.5 C&FS' therapists and counsellors have expertise in, and focus their assessment and interventions on issues specific to adoptive/other permanent placement families, such as the child's early history, the trauma they may have suffered, the

subsequent post-traumatic stress and attachment difficulties they may struggle with, their behavioural and emotional difficulties, their understanding of adoption/permanent placement, their cultural and racial identity, their adoptive identity, their questions/wishes around contact with birth relatives. The parents' responses to all of these issues in terms of their understanding, their parenting and their own issues are equally focussed on.

- 2.6 The C&FS therapists and counsellors offer services to parents or to parents and children together. The C&FS does not offer an individual counselling service for children. However, when parents and children attend sessions together, there will usually be two therapists and counsellors for the family which allows some separate time for the parent/s and the child so the child and parent/s are given some individual space. When the child is becoming an adolescent and/or has already attended therapeutic family work with their parents, some individual follow-up sessions for the child with a much reduced involvement can be considered. The parents of these children will always be kept informed with regard to the young person's progress and all issues that directly concern the parents; this can take place through regular meetings with the parents at the end of the child's sessions. In families with two parents, individual sessions with one of the parents may be undertaken where this is considered necessary and appropriate.
- 2.7 The C&FS therapists and counsellors use a creative combination of therapeutic methods, such as Theraplay informed practice, DDP informed practice, art therapy, drama therapy, play therapy, , EMDR, NVR and other therapeutic methods that are appropriate in any one case. The C&FS advises parents about conventional parenting strategies, as well as therapeutic parenting strategies for previously traumatised and adopted/permanently placed children.
- 2.8 The C&FS therapists and /counsellors carry out an initial assessment of need with regard to each individual family by means of careful listening, observation and interview. When this is followed by further assessments and interventions, an array of (psycho-) diagnostic methods and intervention techniques are matched to the family's individual needs and characteristics.
- 2.9 All families are treated with consideration, respect and transparency. All families are clearly informed of the C&FS' ways of working. This happens by means of verbal communication, flyers, letters, contracts and includes information on PAC-UK's 'Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare' as well as 'Complaints and Confidentiality' Policy and Procedures.
- 2.10 The C&FS team members are required to attend regular internal and external supervision from their line manager or other appropriately qualified and experienced adoption professional, as well as training days that extend their

knowledge, understanding, assessment and intervention methods. Group supervision will be provided at least 21 times a year; individual supervision will be provided regularly, aiming at a minimum of every four to six weeks for full-time workers, every six weeks to eight weeks for part-time permanent staff, and a minimum of every 8 – 12 weeks for sessional workers and volunteers and to be agreed with PAC-UK management. In addition to formal supervision, all C+FS staff can seek case supervision on a daily basis from the Head of Service and the Practice Manager; staff can also make use of and offer peer supervision as needed. It is the responsibility of both supervisor and supervisee to ensure that regular supervision takes place. .

- 2.11 All therapists and counsellors are required to work strictly in line with PAC-UK's 'Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare' and 'Confidentiality' Policy and Procedures and thus pay due regard to service users' safety and welfare at any time. Touch, as part of therapeutic work with families, can be used by therapists and counsellors (for example in Theraplay informed play) but explanations must be given and verbal consent of families must be sought.

3 Objectives

- 3.1 All family members are listened to with interest, empathy and respect.
- 3.2 Usually parents attend a 'Parent Consultation' first, that is a session without the child/ren, during which an initial assessment is made of the family's difficulties. Any session that follows this initial session will further inform the initial assessment of which notes are taken, but no formal report is written. An in-depth, formal assessment including a report may be commissioned after this initial assessment (see below 5. and 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6.)
- 3.3 Information on adoption/other permanent placements, early trauma, attachment difficulties, behavioural and emotional difficulties, cultural/racial identity, and contact is given to families verbally during sessions, and where appropriate via handouts, book lists, , websites.
- 3.4 Parenting advice is tailored to the individual family's needs by means of verbal communication, and again through recommendations of books, articles, websites.
- 3.5 The C&FS therapists and counsellors inform the parents that their family is entitled to an adoption support assessment (or where appropriate other permanent placement support assessment) by their or their child's LA; the 3 year rule is explained to them. The family is, in the first instance, encouraged to refer themselves to the Adoption Support Service (or where appropriate other permanent placement support service) in the appropriate local authority (LA). With the family's consent the C&FS usually follows this up with a letter to the LA,

supporting the family's request and informing them of assessment and therapeutic services available from the C&FS.

- 3.6 The C&FS can be commissioned by the family/the child's LA - or sometimes by their health authority, private health care insurer or personal funds - to undertake (part of) an adoption /permanent placement support assessment by carrying out one or more of their Parent and/or Family and/or Contact assessments. The C&FS liaises with the commissioning party by giving written information on the assessment that is to be undertaken and the fee that will be charged. Written confirmation with regard to payment of fees is expected from the commissioning party before the work can begin.
- 3.7 The C&FS can be commissioned by the family's LA - or sometimes by their health authority, private health care insurer or personal funds - to undertake various forms of Therapeutic Parent/Family/Contact Work. The C&FS liaises with the commissioning party by giving written information on the Therapeutic Intervention Work that is to be undertaken and the fee that will be charged. Written confirmation with regard to payment of fees is expected from the commissioning party before the work can begin.
- 3.8 The family's LA can apply to the Adoption Support Fund to receive funding for assessment and/or intervention provided by PAC-UK.
- 3.9 Written and verbal contact is maintained with all relevant professionals involved in supporting any one family. The C&FS usually includes a network meeting with all relevant professionals involved in a commissioned piece of assessment/therapeutic work, and this meeting can take place before and/or after, and or during the assessment/ therapeutic work. In addition feedback regarding progress made by the parents/the family during any therapeutic work, can be given verbally to the commissioning verbally over the telephone.
- 3.10 Follow-up sessions to any assessment or therapeutic work are provided where needed and funding is made available.
- 3.11 Disruption support is provided by offering sessions to help all family members come to terms with a placement breakdown. More attention may be given to separate sessions for the various family members - though joint sessions will take place too - as the focus will be on separating from each other rather than on increasing attachment and family cohesion.
- 3.12 Professional Consultations are provided to professionals who seek advice, information and discussion relating to adoption support for children and families in their care or caseload.

- 3.13 Some team members of the C&FS design and deliver training sessions for parents and/or professionals on a number of adoption support topics as suggested by team members, commissioning agencies or PAC-UK's Head of Training. PAC-UK's Training Service negotiates a contract with the requesting agencies/organisations, according to PAC-UK's Staff Training & Development Policy and Procedures. The number of sessions C&FS team members deliver in their salaried time is also detailed in PAC-UK's Staff Training & Development Policy and Procedures.

4 Service users

- 4.1 The C&FS therapists and counsellors are user focused and use a range of leaflets to welcome all families and explain our services to them. Two of the leaflets are specifically devised for children. All leaflets reflect the C&FS' particular expertise in working with BME families. PAC-UK's include references to adoptive, prospective adoptive and other permanent placement families so as to ensure clarity with regard to the types of families that services are provided for.
- 4.2 Professionals wishing to access a professional consultation with the C&FS are alerted of this possibility in PAC-UK's general leaflet.

5 Assessment of Needs

- 5.1 Any family approaching the C&FS is informed, verbally and/ or writing of their right to request an adoption support assessment (and where appropriate other permanent placement support assessment) from either their, or their child's LA. The family is supported in finding out which LA they need to approach, by explaining the 'three-year rule' to them.
- 5.2 Parents who self refer, or social workers who refer a family, usually contact PAC-UK's Telephone Advice Line first, via a telephone call, letter or email. The Advice Line counsellor makes an initial assessment of the family's needs. Families are informed of the 3-year rule, and where applicable of the availability of free of charge initial parent consultation under PAC-UK's service level agreements with certain LAs. For families who are not entitled to free-of-charge sessions, the family is informed of the fees for a parent consultation and encouraged to ask their LA to fund this session (possibly via the Adoption Support Fund). If the family expresses interest in attending a parent consultation the Advice Line Counsellor internally refers the case to the C&FS. A written record of this process is made on PAC-UK's database.
- 5.3 Once referred to the C&FS, the team discusses the referral in a team meeting and allocates the family to one of the team members. The information recorded by the Advice Line Counsellor is considered, and where necessary added to, when

telephoning the parents to arrange an initial parent consultation. During the then following parent consultation the C&FS therapist/counsellor further assesses the family's needs, which is recorded in the family's electronic file. Some of the following are thereby touched upon: early history, life story and possible traumas of the child, past and present attachment behaviours, emotional and behavioural symptoms, previous therapeutic input, the child/ren's awareness of their past and understanding of their adoption/current placement, possible cultural and racial identity issues in the family, past and present matters around contact, current parenting style, couple relationship, parent/s' own personal history/ies, levels of burn out in parents, parents' commitment to the placement and any other issues that the family brings.

- 5.4 The C&FS therapist/counsellor informs the parents once more that their family is entitled to an adoption support assessment (and where appropriate other permanent placement support assessment) by their or their child's LA (explaining the 3 year rule). The family is, in the first instance, encouraged to refer themselves to the Adoption/Permanent Placement Support Service in the appropriate LA. With the family's consent the C&FS usually follows this up with a letter to the LA, supporting the family's request and informing them of assessment and therapeutic services available from the C&FS.
- 5.5 The C&FS can be commissioned by the family's LA - or sometimes by their health authority, private health care insurer or personal funds - to undertake (part of) an adoption/permanent placement support assessment by carrying out a 'Parent' and/or 'Family' and/or 'Contact' assessments. The C&FS liaises with the commissioning party by giving written information on the assessment that is to be undertaken and the fee that will be charged. Written confirmation with regard to payment of fees is expected from the commissioning party before the work can begin.

A Parent assessment is typically indicated when parents are presenting with considerable personal, and/or relationship issues that are affecting their parenting. A Parent assessment always involves both parents in a two parent family (and obviously one parent in a single parent family).

A Family assessment can have two basic formats (see 6.4 and 6.5 below) and is typically advised when one or more children in the family are presenting considerable difficulties that are severely affecting family functioning. A Family assessment usually includes all family members currently living together, though the presenting child/ren in the family may be assessed in more depth.

A Contact assessment is typically indicated when the child has contact with birth relatives that is proving problematic, or when there is an agreement that it is likely

to be in the child's best interest to establish contact with birth family members and complicating factors have arisen and need to be carefully considered. A Contact assessment usually involves the adoptive/permanent placement parents, their child/ren, and the birth family members that are (to be) involved in the contact.

All assessments are carried out by means of gathering as much relevant existing information as possible. This is achieved by firstly asking all adult parties and their social workers, the child's social worker and other professionals involved to provide relevant background reports. Parents will in addition complete some questionnaires devised by the C&FS.

This initial information gathering is followed by interviewing and observing the various parties participating in the assessment during one or more face-to-face assessment appointments. These sessions may involve various art, play, writing, and talking tasks that are selected according to the presenting issues. In addition, standardised psycho-diagnostic measures are used to allow comparison of the presenting difficulties to norms in the general population. The measures used vary according to the presenting problems, and age of the child/ren.

During the assessment appointment/s, there will be some joint time for all parties involved in the assessment, as well as some individual time (for the child and where appropriate for the parents/birth relatives); in Contact Assessment there will be some time for all adults who are supported in reaching an initial Contact Agreement.

All the gathered, observed and analysed information is compiled into a comprehensive assessment report. Conclusions are drawn that include recommendations for future support and possibly therapeutic input. In case of a Contact Assessment a detailed initial Contact Agreement is written out.

In a subsequent network meeting, the assessment report /contact agreement is discussed with the parents, the birth relatives (in Contact assessments), the commissioning LA or any other funding body, and possibly other relevant agencies that may be involved in supporting the family. In Contact Assessments the Contact Agreement is subsequently tried out during an actual Contact meeting between adoptive/permanent placement family and birth relatives, which is usually supervised by the commissioning LA. After this meeting the C&FS seeks feedback from all parties which may lead to adjusting the Contact Agreement; this concludes the Contact Assessment.

- 5.6 Should the C&FS therapist/counsellor consider that a family would not be best served by accessing services available at PAC-UK, the family will be referred to alternative services (such a marital therapy, ADHD assessment centre, other) or to their LA who can then support them in finding an alternative service.

- 5.7 The C&FS is informed through the initial referral about the family's possible special requirements for attending and making use of appointments (physical, sensory impairment, needs for translation, etc.) Where possible the C&FS will make efforts to provide the necessary practical arrangements so that all families can make use of their services. Where this has financial implications, the C&FS will liaise with the appropriate LA or funding body to endeavour to cover these financial costs.

6 Format of Services

The C&FS offers the following format of services, depending on need:

- 6.1 Parent Consultation (usually with one therapist/counsellor): for parents to explore their concerns and for the therapist/counsellor to make an initial assessment of the family's needs, as well as offer support, information and advice. A Parent Consultation can be one-off session, or lead to another PC, or to any of the services below.
- 6.2 Family Consultation (usually with two therapists/counsellors): for parents and child/ren (and possibly other family members who live with the family); to explore some of the family's difficulties. A Family Consultation usually follows a Parent Consultation. A Family Consultation can be a one-off, or follow-up session, or takes place in preparation of further therapeutic family work.
- 6.3 Comprehensive Family Assessment (usually with two therapists/counsellors): a family assessment that includes (parts of) a MIM (see 6.4) where appropriate, as well as case file reading and psycho-diagnostic measures. In addition the parents are sent a number of questionnaires to fill prior to the assessment session. The family is observed during some additional family tasks, and time is made for individual sessions with child/ren and parent/s. Projective and other assessment techniques are used, as well as child questionnaires, to assess the child's internal representations around past traumas, attachment, cultural and racial identity issues, contact issues, and other factors that may impair family functioning. In the parents session interviewing and observation are used to obtain additional information on the family's difficulties. A comprehensive report is prepared and discussed in a network meeting involving the C&FS, the parents and the commissioning LA/agency.
- 6.4 A Comprehensive Family Assessment is typically advised when a family is under great strain due to constant and pervasive difficulties. A Comprehensive Family Assessment can be considered an in-depth adoption support assessment. It identifies emotional distress and behavioural problems, adoption/other permanent placement issues, past traumas, attachment difficulties, levels of parenting stress, risk of disruption, and other.

- 6.5 A Parent-Child assessment (typically the Marshak Interaction Method Assessment or MIM) with one or two therapists/counsellors: a Theraplay assessment for families who need an assessment of their current interaction with their child, to explore the strength and weaknesses with regard to the 4 Theraplay dimensions in problematic parent-child relationships within the family, and recommend ways of improving these relationships through specific Theraplay games. The child's case file is read and some psycho-diagnostic measures are filled in by the parents. A summary report is prepared.
- 6.6 A Comprehensive Parent Assessment (usually with two therapists/counsellors): for parents with considerable personal, and or relationship issues that are affecting their parenting; to help identify these issues and support the parents in exploring whether and how they can be addressed. A Parent assessment always involves both parents in a two-parent family, and one parent in a single parent family.
- 6.7 An Assessment of Contact needs and arrangements (with at least two but preferably three therapists/counsellors): an assessment of existing or potentially new contact arrangements that are complex and/or causing conflict. A Contact Assessment usually involves the adoptive/permanent placement parents, their child/ren, and the birth family members that are (to be) involved in the contact. Each of the parties meets with a different therapist/counsellor, usually on at least two occasions. The therapists/counsellors then draw up a provisional contact agreement. In a following meeting between the adoptive/permanent placement family and the birth family members, the therapists/counsellors invite both parties to express their hopes and concerns and mediate a first mutually agreed Contact Arrangement. The latter is subsequently tried out during an actual Contact meeting between adoptive/permanent placement family (including the child this time) and birth relatives, which is usually supervised by the commissioning LA. After this meeting the C&FS seeks feedback from all parties which may lead to adjusting the Contact Agreement (in writing); this concludes the Contact Assessment.
- 6.8 Viability Assessments are undertaken when a placement is on the verge of disrupting. The family is assessed with regard to the necessary resources and ability to using these to prevent the family from going through a disruption. The assessment also looks at how the family members could be supported should a disruption be inevitable.
- 6.9 Intensive Therapeutic Family Work (usually two therapists/counsellors): therapeutic sessions with the family, meaning the parents and one child at any one time, to help address and remedy severe and persistent difficulties relating to early life traumas, attachment difficulties, adoption/other permanent placement issues, cultural and racial identity issues, contact issues and other. The family's difficulties are typically severe in that they are having a detrimental effect on everyday family

functioning. Therapeutic parenting strategies are learnt and practiced: conventional and unconventional parenting strategies form an integral part of Intensive Therapeutic Family Work. Case file reading, psycho-diagnostic measures, summary report and network meeting are usually included.

- 6.10 Intensive Therapeutic Parent Work (usually two therapists/counsellors): therapeutic sessions with the parents only, to help them address and remedy personal and relationship difficulties that having a detrimental influence on their parenting. Case file reading, psycho- diagnostic measures, comprehensive report and network meeting are usually included.
- 6.11 Early Intervention (usually one therapist/counsellor): individually tailored therapeutic sessions with the parents only, help them address and remedy parenting challenges in the early stages of the placement. Therapeutic parenting strategies are learnt and practiced. Case file reading and a summary report are usually included.
- 6.12 Standardised home parenting programme 'Enhancing Adoptive Parenting' (one therapist/counsellor): consists of supporting parents in the early stages of placement of primary school aged children, by means of 10 sessions delivered in the family's home according to a manual based on this researched parenting programme. Case file reading is included. The EAP programme is usually provided by PAC-UK's adult counselling team; however the C+F team may be asked to deliver the programme too.
- 6.13 Individual Adolescent Sessions (usually one therapist/counsellor): when the child is becoming an adolescent and/or has already attended therapeutic family work with their parents, some individual follow-up sessions for the child can be considered to support the child in further processing/integrating/letting go of their difficulties. The parents will be kept informed with regard to the young person's progress and all issues that directly concern the parents; this can take place through regular meetings/telephone call with the parents. Summary report and network meeting are usually included. Individual sessions for parents (who have a partner) may also be considered in the context of therapeutic family or parent work.
- 6.14 Contact and Mediation Work (usually two therapists/counsellors): additional sessions in the context of a Contact Assessment. Where the latter presents unforeseen difficulties, one or more parties may need some therapeutic support to be able to engage in Contact in manner that is in the child's best interest. The latter needs to be at the forefront of all considerations with regard to contact eventually taking place/continued (or not). Case file reading, psycho-diagnostic measures, re-negotiating of Contact Agreement, comprehensive report and network meeting are included.

- 6.15 The number of sessions needed for each family is usually estimated and agreed prior to commencing the work, and based on the family's adoption/permanent placement support assessment, as well as on available funding.
- 6.16 As any of the therapeutic work progresses, the direction of the work and the number of sessions may need to be reviewed.
- 6.17 Prior to involving the child in any family sessions, the parents usually have at least two extended sessions without the children, to help them explore some of their responses to their children and relate them to their own histories, strengths and vulnerabilities. This work is done to prepare the parents for the joint sessions with their children.
- 6.18 Network Meetings: these are held with all relevant professionals involved in a commissioned piece of assessment/intensive therapeutic work. A network meeting can take place before, after or during the commissioned work. In addition feedback on progress can be given via telephone by the C&FS therapists/counsellors.
- 6.19 Professional Consultation (one or two therapists/counsellors): for professionals involved in supporting adoptive/permanent placement families outside PAC-UK. Professional consultations focus on any issue brought by the professional. When professionals who are involved in supporting families who are currently receiving support from the C&FS, the C&FS would - where appropriate - consider involving the parents of that family in the meeting too, or at least inform the family that the meeting was taking place. Professionals can attend professional consultations on their own, or with one or more colleagues. Case file reading and summary report may be included.

7 Charges

- 7.1 See PAC-UK charges.

8 Staff

- 8.1 All team members are required to be qualified and experienced psychologists, counsellors, or therapists, and registered with their own professional bodies as outlined in NMS 11.5-7.
- 8.2 All C&FS team members are encouraged and can ask to attend relevant training events to extend their knowledge and experience of adoption, other permanent placement, trauma, attachment, identity and Contact issues. In addition the team makes use of the numerous in house training opportunities.

9 Location

- 9.1 Principal assessments, therapeutic work and meetings take place at PAC-UK's premises in Kentish Town and in certain cases in the family's home or locality (using a hired room). Certain parts of the C&FS' work - such as writing reports - may be undertaken in the therapists/counsellors' home after agreement with their line manager.
- 9.2 Where possible the C&FS tries to organise professional or network meetings at PAC-UK to limit travel time. The C&FS team members will attend meetings on other than PAC-UK premises when attendance is requested and funded.
- 9.3 The circumstances that may warrant working with a family in their home are various (example illness or injury in the family, counsellor living close to family home). One-off home visits may also be considered for general diagnostic purposes. Good practice with regard to Safeguarding must be considered carefully before engaging in home visits or regular working with a family in their own home.

10 Evaluation

- 10.1 The C&FS regularly reviews the feedback and evaluation questionnaires given to families who receive services from the C&FS. There are different forms for parents and children.
- 10.2 The C&FS feedback and evaluation questionnaires include 'satisfaction' questions as well as standardised, quantitative checklists for children's behaviours and the parents' sense of parenting competence. Standardised questionnaires are administered both before and after the C&FS interventions, allowing measurement of improvements in the family. In addition short online feedback questionnaire - with regard to satisfaction with our service as well as changes in the family - are sent to parents more or less half way through and at the end of the therapeutic family work.

11 Review

- 11.1 The C&FS will review its Policy and Procedures annually. It will take appropriate action from such a review with regard to the development and changes of their Policy and Practice.
- 11.2 The C&FS will ensure that its Policy and Procedures continue to comply with the requirements of prevailing legislation, regulations, guidance and standards, and that they are consistent with PAC-UK's Statement of Purpose. It will also ensure that all people working for the purposes of PAC-UK are provided with these Policy

and Procedures and that a copy is readily available for any service user who may request one.