

## INTERMEDIARY SERVICES PROCEDURES

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## **1 These procedures arise from**

The Adoption and Children Act 2002, Section 98, Schedule 2 (Access to Birth Record Information), The Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005, Regulations 13, 18-21, and the National Minimum Standards for Adoption, Standards 15, 16; Oct 2014 rules to make provision for intermediary service for 'persons with a prescribed relationship'

## **2 Eligibility for PAC-UK Intermediary Services**

The following procedures specify the process to be followed dependent upon whether the enquirer is an adopted adult or a birth relative.

1. When taking a referral, the worker needs to establish that the enquirer is a resident of a local authority that has commissioned PAC-UK's services or their Local Authority will agree to pay for the provision of an Intermediary Service.
2. If neither of these two funding streams is available, the enquirer will need to be told that they will have to pay for the service themselves.

## **3 Taking a Referral**

Referrals for Intermediary Services generally come via the Advice Line by telephone, letter or email.

- 3.1 A referral will be completed as fully as possible by the Advice Line Counsellor and entered onto the database. Where appropriate the Advice Line Counsellor will advise the enquirer about the website [www.nidirect.gov.uk/gro](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/gro), where more information and application forms for 'Access to Birth Records': and entry onto the 'National Adoption Contact Register' can be obtained. All forms relevant to accessing information about birth records and the National Adoption Contact Register can be downloaded from this website or through www.gov.uk Identity and Passport office.

Telephone number is 0151 4714830

- 3.2 The enquirer, if appropriate, will be sent (by email preferably), the PAC-UK publication resource list as well as information on PAC-UK services, training events and other relevant websites.
- 3.3 The enquirer(adopted adults and birth relatives) must be informed that they will need to bring identifying information to the first meeting, i.e. (their valid passport or driver's license). In the event that these documents are not available, two further documents must be produced, one of which must be a Council Tax bill (less than one year old), and the other, a Bank or Building Society statement, Household Insurance or utility bill (less than 3 months old).
- 3.4 In addition (both adopted adults and birth relatives) must be told that they need to bring supporting documentation to prove their relationship with the person being sought. A copy will be taken and kept on the file. Supporting evidence includes original birth certificates or in the case of any name changes will require supporting evidence, such as marriage certificates etc.

- 3.5 Every telephone call and email 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 The new referrals will be checked by the manager of the advice line (London) the Director of Service Delivery in their absence, or Team Manager (North) on a weekly basis. 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).
- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 At the initial assessment interview, the service user's need for an adoption support service will be assessed by the counsellor either at PAC-UK premises in North London or Leeds, through telephone counselling or in an Outreach Surgery, using the PAC-UK Initial Assessment form and CORE Questionnaire. 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. The CORE Questionnaire may be completed by the service user at the first session and will provide some basic information for an assessment of need. To standardise PAC-UK practice, the CORE questionnaire and 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).

## **4 Provision of Intermediary Services for Adopted Adults and Birth Relatives**

4.1 The PAC-UK counsellor will ensure that, in order to comply with Regulation 13 (2005), adoption support services provided to any party to adoption are appropriate to their need. The PAC-UK counsellor will consider:

- the client's wishes and feelings;
- the client's physical and mental capacity to engage in intermediary services counselling;
- the welfare and safety of all parties involved in the adoption;
- the legal and financial implications (e.g. tracing costs) of intermediary services provision in each case.

### **Birth Relatives**

1. Enquirers will be clearly informed that no contact with an adopted child under the age of 18 can legally be made by birth relatives or intermediary services.
2. Enquirers will be informed that they have a right to request a service but that after an assessment a decision could be made that PAC-UK will not be able to provide a service for them.
3. Enquirers will be informed that the decision regarding contact remains with the adopted adult.
4. Approach by birth relatives: PAC-UK has the discretion to decide that contact may be more appropriately sought with a young Adopted Adult (aged between 18 and 21) through the adoptive parents in the first instance.
5. Such a decision can only be reached by the intermediary service counsellor after s/he has had access to information from the adoption records and views of the Appropriate Adoption Agency (AAA) about contact; and has confirmed that a Veto or 'No Contact' request has not been registered by the Adopted Adult. A similar check with the National Adoption Contact Register (NCR) has to be made about registration for 'No Contact'.
6. Protected information: PAC-UK will operate a Non-Disclosure Agreement relating to "protected information" shared by an AAA in response to a request by PAC-UK or another adoption support agency to allow a search to be conducted on behalf of a birth relative. Such "protected information" may be disclosed by the AAA at its discretion to the intermediary service counsellor and may include background information on the adopted person, or the adoptive family or indeed the birth relative.
7. The Non-Disclosure Agreement will be signed by PAC-UK and the AAA providing such protected information. Any professional disclosing such information outside the terms of such an agreement may be found guilty of a criminal offence and, on conviction, fined.
8. The counsellor will need to ensure that any person seeking an Intermediary Service from PAC-UK requests the AAA to send their birth records to PAC-UK. This is usually accompanied by the AAA's non-disclosure agreement, which needs to be signed by PAC-UK counsellor and returned.

## **Adopted Adults**

Approach by adopted adult: The intermediary service counsellor will ensure that:

1. The client is over 18 and has a copy of their original birth record as identification.
2. A 'No Contact' request by the birth relative sought has not been registered with the AAA or National Adoption Contact Register (administered by the General Register Office).
3. Where an assessment of need has been made, and PAC-UK intermediary services are not deemed to be suitable, the client will be clearly informed and directed to another agency or to the AAA or local adoption support services as appropriate. The intermediary service counsellor has no obligation to proceed if, in her/his view, this is not likely to be in the parties' best interests. This has to be a decision made in conjunction with discussion with PAC-UK management.
4. Reasons for not providing PAC-UK services will be recorded, dated and signed off by a manager, and a copy placed on the client's file. Severe health issues or learning difficulties with communication problems might be a reason for not being able to provide an intermediary service, but this decision must be made taking account of any wider available support for the client.

## **Descendants and other Relatives of Adopted People with a Prescribed Relationship**

New legislation on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 extended the right to an intermediary service for the above group of people. The current guidance is still emerging and staff should refer to the link below for the most up to date guidance for practice in this area of work. There are guides available for: prescribed relatives of adopted people, adopted adults and agencies.

<https://www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk/search/dap/>

## **5 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review of Intermediary Services**

PAC-UK's Intermediary Service provision will be regularly monitored and feedback sought from users through electronic service evaluation forms issued upon completion of work. Paper version available if preferred.