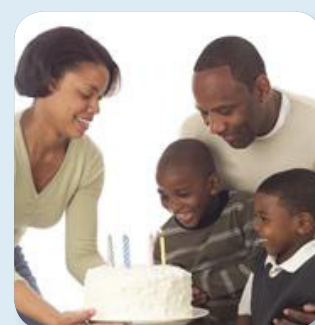
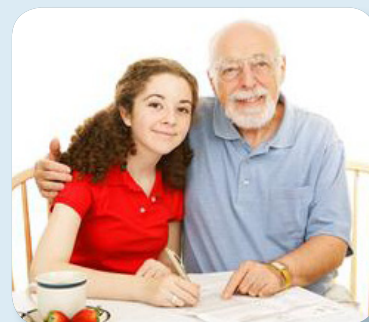




Pre-adoption  
Post-adoption  
Permanency  
Advice &  
Counselling



## annual review 2012/2013



## *How PAC made a difference to me*

In 2003, at the grand old age of fifty one, I decided to find out who I was.

Adopted at birth, I had been told a few snippets by my adoptive mother, and I had never felt the need to know anything else. My adoption had worked very well all round, I was happy, with a grown family of my own. But suddenly, I felt the need to know more.

With the support of an adoption social worker I discovered who my birth parents were, went to court to obtain access to my papers, and was then able to start the painstaking research which would lead to the family tree where I once belonged. But there was also a surprise to come - my birth mother and birth father had married each other, some years after having me - and had gone on to have four more daughters. Somewhere, I had four sisters. I decided that was enough information to cope with at once, put all the paperwork away, and got on with my life.

At least, that was the message I allowed myself to believe. Looking back, the new knowledge was less easily assimilated than I thought. And when, a few years later, I took further steps on my own, without any support, things got less simple. The discovery that my birth parents were now dead was no surprise - after all, I was no spring chicken myself. But when I found out that my birth mother had committed suicide in the same year I got married, I took the decision to try to contact my siblings, who would have been only young teenagers when they lost their mother.

Aided and abetted by the Internet I

managed to make contact. But I had been motivated to do so by projecting myself into the role of 'big sister' - feeling in some way that I ought to have been there - and afterwards, wondered whether this was a healthy thing. I knew I needed to look after myself in this process and also to know how best to approach the series of meetings that would follow. Four siblings - what about them, as well as me?

The social workers were too stretched to help, and another meeting with them would take months to schedule. But they told me about PAC and their outreach counselling programme: I might be able to benefit from this service, and it would cost me nothing.

It was easy. A phone call, a call back, a quiet conversation, and I was on the list for the outreach counsellor. I must admit to being nervous - after all, I hadn't done things by the book - but I needn't have worried. My counsellor, Rose Dagoo, was just lovely. In the course of our meetings, sometimes months apart, I was able to listen to myself explaining how I felt, in response to gentle exploratory questions - thus straightening out my thoughts. I was able to set my meetings with my siblings, and their reactions to me, in context. Able to consider how my family - husband, sons, very elderly father - were reacting. And why. I was able to stand back and see the bigger picture. This was not just about me any more.



Rose Dagoo

But then, prompted by something my counsellor said, I began to look at it

from my birth mother's point of view. Or at least, to try to. And for the first time in over fifty years, I was able to acknowledge my very real, deep-seated and complex feelings towards her: Including anger. Maybe my adoption had not been all roses, as I thought. Maybe I had buried those feelings, and had lived with them below the surface all this time.

The meetings with my siblings went fine. I was prepared, thanks entirely to my conversations with the PAC counsellor; for reactions I would never have expected had I blundered into this sensitive area on my own.

Some time later, I was offered the chance to attend a PAC group. Half the participants would be adopted adults, like me. The other half, mothers who had given up their children for adoption many years ago. (None were related.) I learned a lot both from the leaders and my fellow participants.

I'm still learning, still processing the discoveries of the last few years. It's a long journey. But it's a journey that has been made easier by my contact with PAC. I now understand things a little better, and am very grateful.

PAC's mission is "to provide high quality, innovative services that support and make a difference to all affected by adoption and permanency: children and families, adults who were adopted/placed as children, birth family members and professionals." It is immensely comforting to know that PAC is there.

*Vanessa Gebbie is a novelist, short story writer and poet*

Rita Cleary



Monica Bradley



## Birth Mother Gathering

*"More days like this please. It is so helpful."*

*"Long may the gatherings last!"*

*"May we have a gathering every six months please?"*

*"More days like this and more feedback going to people who don't know enough about us."*

*"Completely satisfied but not long enough!"*

*"Please do it again next year."*

In March 2013, ten women attended PAC's annual Birth Mother Gathering; ten women completed evaluation forms; ten women rated it five out of five, and the comments above reflect how strongly this event is valued by those who attend. Some of the participants have been returning year after year; for others it was their first visit.

Whatever the reasons and events that lead to a child's adoption or permanent placement, the loss of their child often affects birth parents, and in particular birth mothers, in an intense and ongoing way. Where a reunion or contact with an adopted child is a possibility, some additional and complex matters may arise.

Birth mothers can feel very isolated with these emotions, and, owing to feelings of shame and guilt, unwilling to discuss them with others.

PAC's Birth Mother Gathering is a unique opportunity for these women to come together. As one participant put it, 'the 'sisterhood' and the understanding create affirmation'. Facilitated by two experienced PAC therapists, Rita Cleary and Monica Bradley, the women are able to share their experiences in a structured way and, if they attend regularly, to pass on news or update the group on their situations. Participants are also free simply to listen, if that's what feels right on the day.

PAC provides nurturing hot drinks and biscuits throughout the day, and, to increase the sense of friendship, participants are invited to bring a contribution of food for a shared lunch.

### What do the women get out of it?

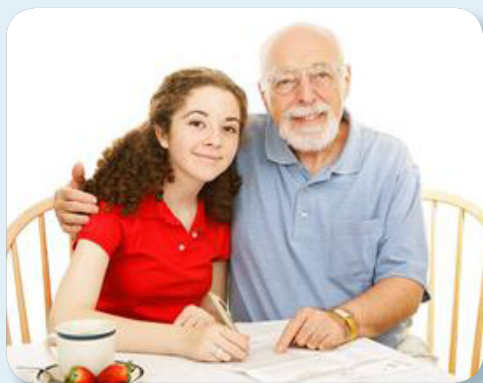
*"Hearing so many different stories and learning from them"*

*"The circle and friendship"*

*"No-one else knows how it feels"*

*"Understanding my experiences are not unique to me"*

*"Grounding. Normalising – not alone"*



## Kinship Care

No one doubts that children should remain within their own families and social networks if at all possible. In accordance with good practice, backed by legislation, family and friends care - or kinship care, as it is more frequently known - has to be the first option to explore for all children who cannot live with their birth parents.

Outcomes for children in kinship care compare favourably with adoption outcomes. However, when children live with extended family members or with family friends, problems may arise that are specific to kinship care.

Relationships change as grandparents, aunts and uncles become parent figures. Embedded family conflicts, alliances and rivalries can complicate kinship placements and children may be forced to play "piggy in the middle". Contact with uncooperative parents may be hard to control; the carer may become involved in the family crisis that precipitated the child's removal from home in the first place.

Family and friends may be approved as foster carers by their local authority, they may be granted a Residence Order or a Special Guardianship Order by the courts or they may be informal carers. Whatever option best suits the child and them, they will probably require access to skilled help at some point.

### What children in kinship care say

*"She doesn't understand teenagers today. She goes to bed early, so I have to – she embarrasses me sometimes".*

*"It's better getting to school on time. We didn't know it was wrong to be late. It was a big change. It's good to be normal".*

*"My nan isn't really old – she looks a bit old, but she isn't".*

*"I could always talk to my grandma and sometimes we'd cry together over my mum. I was never worried about finding a skeleton in the cupboard".*

PAC can offer advice and consultation to local authorities around kinship care issues, as well as family work with all kinship carers and the children they look after and individual and couple counselling for kinship carers.

Following our attendance at a major kinship care conference hosted by Grandparents Plus in June 2013, PAC became a member of the Kinship Care Alliance.

### The alliance's aims are to:

- Prevent children from being unnecessarily raised outside the family
- Enhance outcomes for children who cannot live with their parents and who are living with relatives
- Secure improved recognition and support for family and friends carers.





# *Working with Prospective Adopters*

## New Developments in PAC's Child and Family Service

Over the last three years, PAC has seen an increase in requests to work with prospective adopters.

A number of prospective adopters are offered appointments, either in our monthly outreach services, or at PAC's main office, where they benefit from a space that is independent from the formal assessment process. Here they can reflect on some of the thoughts, feelings and questions they may have around particular aspects of the adoption journey that they are, or may be, embarking on.

In addition, PAC's Child and Family team has been commissioned by local authorities to undertake specific pieces of pre-adoption assessment work which have contributed to authorities' formal assessment of prospective adopter/s. Requests have centred on in-depth assessments of a couple's or an individual's ability to access and use support networks, their capacity for 'reflective functioning' and their motivations to adopt.

The team has responded to some of these requests by undertaking the Attachment Style Interview (ASI) – researched and developed in the UK – which measures "adult attachment style" in relation to a person's current ability to access and utilise social-emotional support. This is achieved by assessing the specific context of an individual's support network and the quality of their close relationships.

The ASI also enables assessment (if not measurement) of 'reflective functioning', as the answers to the questions reveal the ease with which a person is able to reflect on the meanings of behaviours, the underlying feelings these expose and the responses they trigger in themselves.

In addition to the ASI, the Child and Family team has used psycho-diagnostic measures which assess basic personality traits as well as the effects of trauma and attachment breaks that prospective adopters may have experienced in their own lives. The team has also employed couple

communication techniques, psycho-education (providing information about the effects of early abuse, neglect and other traumas on a child), as well as creative means (such as painting, miniature figures, film and documentaries) in order to help couples think, feel and express issues that may have been difficult to reach by their assessing social workers.

Although these pieces of assessment work are of course reported back to the commissioning agency, PAC takes an essentially supportive stance towards prospective adopters. We explain to them that we ultimately also want to help them to assess for themselves whether they would be able to offer a permanent family to a child who, more often than not, requires 'therapeutic' parents with a strong and available emotional support network, as well as large doses of reflective functioning and energy!



## *PAC's Work with Gay and Lesbian Adoptive Parents*

PAC celebrates diversity. We are keenly aware of homophobia and 'heteronormativity' (society's lens projecting anything that is outside the heterosexual viewpoint as 'not quite right'). The number of adoptions by gay and lesbian couples is growing and this is reflected in PAC's Intensive Therapeutic Family Work.

Various research studies have looked at the issues faced by gay and lesbian families.

1. A 2010 study (including adopted children) by the Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge found:

- Young children with gay parents tend not to see their families as different;
- Many older children saw their families as special and different, but only because all families are. Some considered their families closer than other people's;
- Children with gay parents like having them and would not want to change, but sometimes wish that other people were more accepting.

2. A study of gay, lesbian and heterosexual adoptive families ('Family relationships, child adjustment and adopters' experiences', Golombok et al, BAAF, 2013) looked at the quality

of parent-child relationships, parental well-being and child psychological development in 134 families. Its findings included:

- Parents had low levels of relationship problems and were functioning well compared with the general population;
- Children with same- sex parents are no more likely to suffer psychological disorders than their peers;
- Children adjusted well to school and didn't experience greater problems than their peers;
- All parents were highly committed to parenting and developing positive relationships with their children.

PAC's client families, whether LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) or heterosexual, all have something in common - they struggle with the impact of complex trauma on their children. Unlike Golombok's findings, these children are having difficulties across the board, at home and in school, with emotional dysregulation, lack of sensory integration, challenging behaviours, hypervigilance, control issues and relationships with parents and peers. The children we work with are also

quickly triggered into shame: shame of being neglected, of being abused, of being abandoned.

All this of course impacts on the well-being of parents, among whom it is not uncommon to find elevated levels of depression. We recognise that adoptive parents may be suffering from secondary trauma which can come about when the ongoing chaos of the traumatised child's inner world is played out in the adoptive family on a daily basis.

Separate to this may be the triggering of early trauma in the parents' own histories. Each LGBT parent has had to build resilience in the face of adversity as they have claimed their sense of self. An adopted child has the same challenge. This parallel can be both a strength and a vulnerability in the family, depending on the feelings being triggered in the parent and how they respond to them. It is crucial to address these issues in the therapeutic work.

It is not the sexual orientation of the parent that is the key to family survival but the quality of parenting, which has to be 'therapeutic'. Our work is to help the child believe and feel that, despite all that has gone before, they have strong parents who can keep them safe.



## *PAC Training: Teenagers – Redoing Childhood “in a different way”*

When planning the annual training programme, PAC's Maggie Rogers, consults with PAC's service departments to identify the issues they see emerging. During 2012/13 the Child and Family team highlighted the problems experienced by adoptive families with teenagers.

PAC was founded to address the needs of all those involved in adoption, and a large part of our work has always been with adoptive parents and other permanent carers. But what happens to adopted or permanently placed children as they grow up? Of course they become teenagers and young people and for many that's when the challenges of parenting an adopted child return. With the next step leaving home, how is it possible to continue making “good enough” connections? How can parents and carers help their children through these transitions?

American adoption support practitioner, Holly van Gulden, addressed some of these issues in her March 2013 PAC workshop ‘Preparing the roadmap to leave home: helping

adolescents to leave home and stay connected’. Recalling Anna Freud's observations on adolescents – ‘At times their behaviour to other people is rough and inconsiderate, yet they themselves are extremely touchy. Their moods veer between light-hearted optimism and the blackest pessimism’ – Holly reminded us that adolescence is a time to “redo childhood in a different way”.

How do we traverse this rocky and, at times, turbulent stage in our children's lives, and in the life of our family?

Van Gulden suggests that there are three essential tasks of adolescents: **individuation**, **separation** and **maintaining connection** with parents and family in a new way.

**Individuation** is helping our children ask questions like ‘who am I?’, ‘how am I like and different from my parents and birth parents?’ The search for self will, as for all teenagers, involve exploring talents, interests, traits and habits. For adopted teenagers the search for wholeness may extend to looking for birth family members, or a quest to find more detailed information about their birth parents.

### **Separation and Maintaining Contact:**

Adopted teens will have experienced separation – possibly several times – in the past. They will have an image of leaving based upon these memories.

How can adoptive parents help teenagers realise that this parting can be different, and encourage their teen to take control of their life throughout this process? Holly indicated that parenting tasks which encourage the ‘redoing’ of permanency and constancy are paramount.

Maeja Raicar



## *Group for Transracially Adopted Adults*

This summer PAC ran its first group in several years for transracially adopted adults.

The six participants, from varying racial and cultural backgrounds and aged between 35 and 50, had all previously had counselling at PAC - a prerequisite for joining the group, since it was intended to be experiential and so likely to arouse painful feelings.

The six, weekly sessions were facilitated by two PAC psychotherapists with considerable personal and work experience of multi-cultural and race issues, Maeja Raicar and Anthea Benjamin. For most participants this was their first experience of meeting others who understood their deep existential pain at not only being adopted, but of growing up completely outside their communities and cultures of origin, mostly in white families within openly hostile white communities in Britain, from the 1960s to the 1980s.

Being adopted brings with it not only the intended gain of a new family, but the lifelong loss of birth and extended families, often for generations to come. Adopted adults who do not know the identity of their birth parents, their family history, or whom they resemble, commonly experience identity confusion - what has been referred to as 'genealogical bewilderment'.

This lack of a coherent and positive self-identity is exacerbated for transracially adopted adults. Their repeated exposure as children to personal and institutional racism at school and elsewhere continues to impact on them in adulthood, affecting their core sense of self-worth, ability to trust others, and their capacity for making and sustaining relationships with partners, and, in turn, even their own children. And because of their mixed heritage they still feel outside white, black or Asian groups and very alone.

In the first session participants agreed that developing healthy and satisfactory relationships in adult life was a central and ongoing difficulty for them all. This became the main focus of sessions and the approaches

taken were based on the need for self-care, self-awareness, self-healing and self-acceptance: all particularly difficult tasks for transracially adopted adults, whose self-image has been so distorted by growing up in white communities.

Interventions included inner child work and concepts from Transactional Analysis to help participants identify their deeply wounded 'child' selves and become more aware of which 'parts' of themselves (child/adult/parent) they bring to their adult relationships and interactions.

The facilitators were impressed by the resilience and resourcefulness of the participants, who were articulate and mutually supportive, using humour to cope with painful memories. The main expressed need was for a longer-running group to allow more time to undertake such major life-changing work on themselves.



Rose Wallace



## Placement Counselling

The Placement Counselling Service is an invaluable addition to PAC's range of adoption support services, offering longer-term counselling (up to 18 sessions) at low cost to adults affected by adoption or permanency issues, including adopted adults and birth and adoptive parents. The scheme also provides experience to qualified counsellors or those in the process of completing a recognised counselling qualification.

PAC's current placement counsellor Rose Wallace is a qualified social worker with over 20 years' experience in providing adoption support services for adults in a variety of settings. Rose has worked as a research interviewer/

team member on several major adoption research studies and is currently undertaking an Advanced Diploma in Humanistic Integrative Counselling.

*"I have really valued the opportunity of my placement at PAC" says Rose. "Having worked as a social worker in adoption for many years prior to training as a counsellor, I knew this was my particular area of interest and expertise and PAC was therefore my first choice for a placement".*

*"PAC's placement counselling service allows clients, often in great emotional distress, to have support over an extended number of sessions, at concessionary rates. This enables them to develop much-needed trust and greater self-awareness, to explore their adoption issues in more depth, and to put into practice and consolidate their new learning."*

*"I have greatly appreciated the expert guidance of my supervisor, supportive and skilled colleagues and above all the opportunity to deepen my understanding of adoption issues through undertaking longer term therapeutic counselling. I hope my connection with PAC will continue for a long time to come!"*



## *Simon - Case Study: Adopted Adult visiting Placement Counsellor*

Simon is an adopted adult in his mid-40s, a teacher; divorced and with an eleven year old daughter from his marriage. He came to PAC's placement counselling service specifically because of difficulties in his reunion relationship with his birth mother, who he had traced and made contact with two years earlier. Simon also had feelings of depression and questions around what being adopted really meant for him.

Although Simon had previously had counselling for his depression via his GP, this had not touched on his experience of being adopted. He felt that it was a major benefit of the PAC service that there was an understanding right from the start of how adoption had impacted on his life.

Simon attended 18 weekly counselling sessions with Rose, making good use of these to explore his thoughts and emotions, both in terms of his current contact with his birth mother and in reflecting back over his life and other relationships. During the sessions, Simon gradually felt safe enough to talk about his distress and anger arising from his reunion and about his feelings of rejection at being adopted. He felt his birth mother was unable to acknowledge his emotions, triggering painful feelings of loss and rejection.

As the counselling progressed, Simon tentatively moved towards a greater sense of acceptance regarding his relationship with his birth mother and was able to adjust his expectations to more realistic ones. By the end of the sessions Simon felt a new resilience in himself: "I'm amazed at how much stronger I feel about it all. I don't feel so devastated now." Simon expressed appreciation for having felt heard and understood at PAC.

Simon plans to attend a PAC group or workshop in order to continue developing his stronger sense of self by sharing his experience with other adopted adults.

***"Simon" is a composite of a number of clients. For more details of PAC's Placement Counselling Service call PAC's Advice Line on 020 7284 5879.***



## *PAC Hosts Peers at House of Lords Tea*

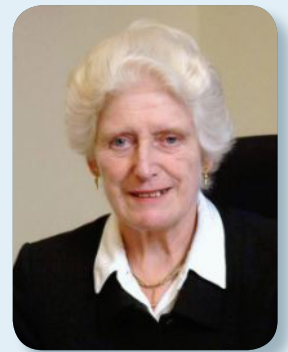
In July 2012, PAC's CEO Peter Sandiford and Head of Child and Family Service Franca Brenninkmeyer were invited to give oral and written evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Adoption Legislation. Chaired by Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss, and with members including PAC patron Baroness Sally Hamwee, the committee was appointed to provide scrutiny of existing statute law on adoption in England and Wales, and to recommend changes.

Fresh from the publication of their main report in March 2013, several members of the Select Committee joined PAC staff, patrons and supporters, local authority adoption team members and delegates from major adoption and fostering agencies for a special afternoon tea event in the Cholmondeley Room of the House of Lords, sponsored by Baroness Sally Hamwee. Seventy people attended, and we are most grateful to PAC's accountants, Crossley & Co, and to trust fund Access 4, which between them sponsored the cost of the delicious tea.

The idea for the event arose out of informal discussions between PAC and a number of the peers, who felt it would be helpful to understand more about the need for adoption support in the context of their review of the draft bill. On the day, US adoption support practitioner, writer and speaker Holly Van Gulden gave a truly moving presentation on the ways in which adoption support can help families to address the legacy of early life trauma. Several guests commented that they had not appreciated the sheer enormity of the issues facing these children and their adoptive families.

"It was great to see so many members of the Select Committee in attendance" said PAC's CEO Peter Sandiford. "PAC made its concerns over the accessibility of adoption support services known when we were invited to give evidence to the Committee and we are heartened to see that the report largely reflects our views."

*We are delighted that, since the tea, Committee Chair Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss has agreed to become a PAC patron.*



Peter Sandiford,  
CEO



Professor Alan Rushton,  
Interim Chair of Trustees



## Looking Ahead

The year April 2012 to March 2013 has been significant for PAC.

As the year commenced PAC was completing the celebration of its 25th birthday, a birthday that coincided with the announcement of major changes to the adoption landscape. The year also brought growth to PAC with an increase in demand for both its Child and Family Service and for training. It is likely that this is linked to the government activity around adoption but it has also been stimulated by PAC raising its profile through active participation in the political agenda as well as developing its public face via its website. We are now looking to embrace social media and have established presences on Facebook and Twitter.

### Two significant events mark out the year for PAC:

1. Being invited to present evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Adoption Legislation;
2. Taking possession of enlarged premises with the opening conducted by the then Children's Minister, Tim Loughton.

The year closed with the resignation of the Chair of Trustees, Steve Lane, following the adoption of two children and his need to focus on his family. The CEO thanks him for all he has brought to PAC, particularly the support he provided through the changes taking place over the last two years, and also wishes to express his appreciation to the previous Chair, Professor Alan Rushton, who has taken over the chairmanship on an interim basis until our AGM in November 2013.

Throughout the year the CEO was involved in consultation with the Department for Education and individual Ministers about the importance of adoption support and its place in the adoption reforms. Messages about the relevance of other forms of permanence were also communicated as was the glaring omission from the change agenda of support for birth parents and adults adopted as children.

Visitors to PAC's newly enlarged premises comment positively on the quality of the environment and staff welcome the opportunity to work together under one roof, thereby allowing more collaboration between the Adult and Child and Family services. Whilst the number

of service users remained fairly static, the number of sessions provided increased dramatically during the year. This was complemented by a strong success rate in applications made to local authorities to fund therapeutic work with individual families.

At a time when greater competition is being encouraged in the provision of adoption services, it is imperative to be able to offer evidence of the relevance, acceptability and effectiveness of all our services. In making greater efforts to review not just the satisfaction levels but also the positive impact of PAC services we are increasing our ability to demonstrate and publicise our worth to all who consider using or commissioning them.

As we move into 2013/14 a number of local authorities are in discussion with PAC about increasing the scope of their contracts and a service level agreement has been agreed with one new authority. Together with work already commissioned and an exciting training programme, the Chair and CEO are looking forward to what the year brings.



# Financial Review 2012 – 2013

## INCOME

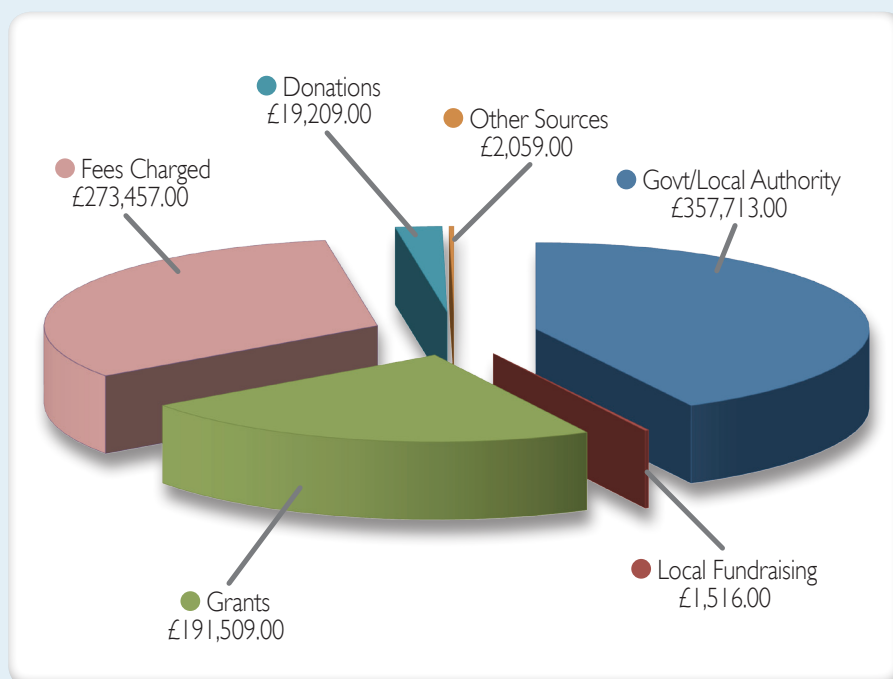
In the year to March 2013 PAC generated 42% of income from local authority subscriptions. These exceeded budget due to new tenders secured by PAC through the financial year.

32% came from fees paid for services, comprising training course fees and income from PAC's Child & Family Service as well as Adult Counselling, representing an increase of 3% over budget, due to high take-up of training courses and counselling sessions.

23% was raised from grants and foundations and the remaining 3% from donations and events.

Overall PAC generated 11% more income than originally budgeted for, contributing towards a surplus at the end of the financial year.

## 2012-13 ACTUAL INCOME SPLITS



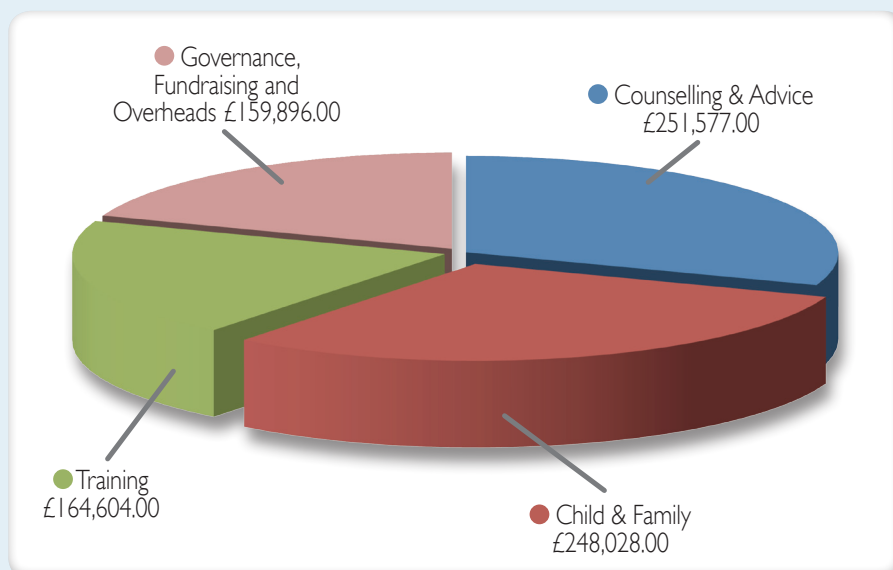
## EXPENDITURE

Expenditure on Child & Family Services and Adult Counselling & Advice Services was in approximately equal share, accounting for 30% and 31% of the total respectively.

A further 20% was spent on running and delivering PAC's Training programme, slightly more than originally budgeted in order to accommodate increased attendance.

Governance, Fundraising and Overheads equated to 19% of the total expenditure, in line with the budget set at the beginning of the financial year.

## 2012-13 ACTUAL EXPENDITURE SPLITS





Pre-adoption  
Post-adoption  
Permanency  
Advice &  
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Mr Peter Sandiford

#### Board of Trustees:

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Dr Mary Isaacs

Mr Steve Lane – Chair (*until Feb 2013*)

Ms Jenny Lord

Mr Barry Morris – Treasurer

Mr Rory O'Reilly

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*A big thank you to our many donors during 2012/13 and to the following charitable trusts which have supported us during the year:*

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The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

The Fitzdale Trust

The John Ellerman Foundation

The Sir Halley Stewart Trust

The Henry Smith Charity

Mrs Smith and Mount Trust

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Models on pages 1, 4, 6, 7 and 10 are used for illustrative purposes only