

## **The Adopter Hub**

### **Safeguarding Procedure**

**Updated 25 June 2018**

#### **The purpose of this procedure is:**

- **To ensure the safety of The Adopter Hub service users and their families**
- **To prevent access to anyone who is not a member of staff, contract social worker or FACTS therapist (registered with PACT)**
- **To prevent access to anyone who is not a registered PACT adopter or a registered adopter with one of our partner agencies.**

#### **Introduction**

In the development of Adopter Hub we have kept the safety of adopters at the top of our priority list. We have worked with our digital partners Dusted to create a site which is compliant with all security guidance. This document explains the measures we have put in place for each part of the service.

#### **Procedure**

##### **Website users**

In order to be given a login to the website, users must either be adopters approved through PACT, FACTS registered therapists, members of PACT staff or adopters approved and registered with the service by one of our partner agencies. Each PACT adopter request for online access is checked with Adoption Business Support. Access for FACTS therapists and staff are checked with HR, and details of adopters requiring access are sent from our partner agencies directly to the Adopter Hub Manager via Egress Switch. Once confirmation has been received the adopter is sent a unique log in to the website.

Website users are asked to provide a completely anonymous username so that they are not identifiable in any way. Any usernames that do not meet these parameters (or if the user names are unsuitable) are returned and adopters are asked to provide an alternative.

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The list of website users containing their username, email address and place of residence is only available to view by people who have access to the Adopter Hub folder in PACTworld. The list is kept in order to track and resolve any issues or problems with users accessing the website.

### **Identifying users**

In the case of a safeguarding concern, either The Adopter Hub Manager or the Digital Lead will pass the user's real name and email address (if needed) to the Adoption Support Manager and Safeguarding Officer, or the relevant person within the partner agency either immediately or as soon as is possible.

### **eLearning**

Users can access the eLearning on the website through their login, and their progress is not accessible to anyone else accessing the site.

### **Adopter forum**

Adopters are asked to confirm that they agree to the rules of the forum before they enter. The forum rules are at Appendix 1 and are designed to ensure that no-one is identifiable and that users and their families are kept safe online. The forum is monitored Monday – Friday by the Adopter Hub team. If an adopter breaches the forum guidelines and behaves inappropriately their posts will be deleted as soon as we are aware of them (this should be within a few hours of posting during work hours or the next working day) and they may be asked to leave the Forum. A flag will be submitted against their name on the master list of website users so that they cannot request access again.

If there is a safeguarding concern within a forum post, then the staff member monitoring the posts will follow the PACT Safeguarding policy and will notify the Adoption Support Manager and PACT's designated Safeguarding Officer immediately.

### **Adopter webinars**

Adopters and staff members can sign up to webinars to watch these live. Any questions they ask over the question facility are typed and are only seen by the webinar host. Adopters' identities are protected and other users cannot see other adopters in the webinar or their names. The webinars are monitored by the Adopter Hub Manager and/or the Digital Lead. If any question or comment posed a safeguarding risk, then the staff member monitoring the forum would follow the PACT Safeguarding Policy and would notify the Adoption Support Manager and PACT's designated Safeguarding Officer immediately.

### **Practitioner webinars**

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Practitioners and staff members can sign up to webinars to watch these live. Any questions they ask over the question facility are typed and are only seen by the webinar host. Therapists identities are protected and other users cannot see other therapists in the webinar or their names. If any question or comment posed a safeguarding risk or if the therapist suggested inappropriate action, then the staff member monitoring the webinar would follow the PACT Safeguarding Policy and would notify the Adoption Support Manager and PACT's designated Safeguarding Officer immediately.

### **One-to-one webchat and Ask The Expert**

Currently all volunteers on the one-to-one webchat service are approved PACT adopters. As part of their recruitment they go through the PACT Safeguarding online training, and also receive training on identifying safeguarding risks online and how to report them as part of their webchat-specific training. All volunteers are recruited according to PACT's safer recruitment procedures. They are able to use anonymous names online so that they are not identifiable to other service users.

Service users are informed of the Safeguarding Policy and relevant Procedures, informing them of how we safeguard them on the webchat page on the website, which is at Appendix 3.

If a volunteer adopter/peer supporter has a safeguarding concern about a service user they will follow the PACT Safeguarding policy to raise their concern immediately. The volunteer/supporter will notify the member of staff managing the service that day and it will be escalated immediately to the Adoption Support Manager and Safeguarding Officer. If it is out of hours, the volunteer will contact PACT's Out Of Hours number (07787 834871) straight away and he/she will also confirm this in writing to PACT via email for instance to confirm this.

These procedures also apply to the Ask the Expert service which is one to one webchat run by PACT adoption team staff and the Adopter Hub Manager.

### **Safeguarding and our partners**

The service is also available to other LAs or VAAs who wish to buy in to the service. As explained above, they register their adopters directly so that we know the request has come from them and that the adopter is approved by those partner agencies. Any Safeguarding concerns regarding partners' service users or comments they may make also will be subject to the PACT Safeguarding Policy and this Procedure document. The partner agency's Designated Safeguarding Officer or Service Manager will also be notified to follow up locally, the same day and PACT will also then confirm this in writing.

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## **Appendix 1 – adopter forum rules**

### **Welcome to the forum**

This is a space for you to talk to other adopters about your experiences, support others and share ideas.

Whether you are starting to think about adopting, or have just had a child placed, or have had your children for many years, we hope that this will be a positive tool for you to use.

In order to keep you and your family safe and to ensure a positive and supportive environment, there are some straightforward rules we ask you to follow when you are posting within the forum. Signing up for this service indicates that you accept these rules.

This forum is for peer to peer support and is not a substitute for professional advice or guidance. If you are looking for professional support you will find helpful information [here](#).

### **Safeguarding**

We take safeguarding very seriously and we may have to take immediate action if you post anything that suggests you or a child is at risk of harm to themselves or others. Please read our safeguarding policy [here](#). (also link to agency safeguarding policies.)

### **Make sure you and your family are anonymous**

Please do not divulge any identifiable details about yourself or your family. Always use your anonymous username created when you registered and give family member's nicknames (rather than using their real names online). Make sure you do not mention where you live, schools, local councils, names of other adopters or social workers, etc. Always be mindful of protecting your adoptive child's privacy and of maintaining his/her/their confidentiality at all times.

### **Respect others' opinions and experiences**

This forum is for adopters to communicate, support and share knowledge from their experiences to help each other. Please therefore always be respectful of other people's experiences and opinions. We do not tolerate any form of verbal abuse, online bullying or deliberate attempts to initiate tension or arguments.

### **Do not post or link to material that is illegal or could offend others**

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Illegal, defamatory, threatening, offensive, abusive, obscene, racially, sexually or otherwise discriminatory, knowingly or potentially inaccurate, libellous, anything that could encourage or constitute a criminal offence. Anything that gives rise to civil liability or causes harm, loss or suffering will be removed, and if appropriate will be reported to the relevant regulatory body.

### **Promotion of organisations, events, and sponsorship**

Please do not use the forum to promote external organisations, events or request sponsorship. Any such posts will be deleted.

### **Spamming and hacking**

You must not partake in any activity which involves spamming, hacking, altering or adding coding, exploiting code bugs or applying automatic scripts. Any activity such as this will be removed and reported to the appropriate regulatory body.

### **Keep to the topic!**

Please try to keep to the topic which is being discussed on one thread and start another new one if you have something else to add.

### **Liability**

It is important to remember that discussion forums are not private communications, and by signing up to this forum you are acknowledging that your posts will be read by others. By contributing to our website you grant us perpetual, royalty-free, non-exclusive rights to publish your entry on any media. You also grant us the right to remove, move to a separate thread or board, modify, adapt, and translate that entry, and make it available to the public worldwide. PACT disclaims any liability with regard to the online discussion forums and blogs and any actions resulting from your participation in either.

It is also important to note that any message posted on this forum reflects only the views of the author of the message and does not necessarily reflect the views of PACT or that of any other person on the forum.

### **Reporting content which doesn't follow these rules**

We will be moderating this forum daily (Monday-Friday), but if you spot any content you want to report outside of these hours, please email [pactadoptionssupport@pactcharity.org](mailto:pactadoptionssupport@pactcharity.org). If you have any immediate concerns please follow PACT's [safeguarding policy](#) and ring the out of hours phone (07787 834871)

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## **And finally...**

Please be aware that if we do find any posts which do not fall within the parameters of these rules, we reserve the right to remove them and take further action if necessary, which could result in de-registering forum users and reporting to appropriate regulatory bodies if their forum use has been deemed to be outside of these rules.

**You will be asked to confirm that you have read and agree to the rules on this page when you click on 'enter' below.**

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## **Appendix 3 – one-to-one webchat**

### **Welcome to one-to-one live peer support webchat**

**To access non-judgmental support from other adopters, click on the box on the bottom right hand corner of the screen.**

We are here to provide you with confidential peer support, guidance and information whatever stage of your adoption journey you are at.

### **We are usually open Monday to Friday, 12-2pm and 8pm-10pm**

However, our service relies on volunteers who are also PACT adopters giving their time, so sometimes we may not be able to open. When we are offline you are very welcome to send us a message and we'll get back to you via email the next time we are open.

### **Our Adopter Peer Supporters are just like you**

Our trained Adopter Peer Supporters are also adopters who may well have experienced similar situations so will 'get it', as well as providing information about potential actions or where to go for further support. No problem is too small - it's ok to contact us even if you think it's not 'big' enough.

This webchat is for peer to peer support and is not a substitute for professional advice or guidance. If you are looking for professional support you will find helpful information [here](#).

### **Confidentiality**

This service is confidential and anything you say will be kept between yourself and PACT. However, we take safeguarding very seriously and may have to take immediate action if you or a child is at risk of harm to themselves or by/to others. Read our [safeguarding policy](#). (Also link to agency safeguarding policies).

All chats will be recorded and securely stored on the PACT system for quality and training purposes for 30 days. After which, they will be deleted unless there is a valid reason to keep them. You can email yourself a transcript of your chat and keep a copy yourself if you wish to. Read our [privacy policy](#).

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