

Adoption: building resilient families

An adoption charity recognizes how demanding the adoption process is—and wants to offer extra support to adopters and potential adopters.

PACT (Parents and Children Together) is an adoption charity in the UK. It approves adoptive families to provide permanent homes for children in the care system and provides these families with ongoing therapy and support services.

PACT was the official charity partner of The Myers-Briggs Company 2018–2019 and had already worked with us on two programs. One was leadership recruitment, the other was senior team development. But there was a third area they were keen to focus on, and it was arguably the most important.

The adoption process is, rightly, a rigorous one and can be challenging for some people. It is important that prospective adopters are well prepared for the needs of the children waiting for an adoptive family. Many of these children, such as those who are older or are in sibling groups, have complex needs.

During the process, some people learn that adopting isn't the right path for them. For the benefit of everyone involved, it's better to find this out as early as possible in the process.

Business Challenges

- Preparing adopters for the challenges of adopting
- Helping potential adopters to decide early enough whether adoption is right for them
- Supporting potential adopters during the adoption process

Company Profile

PACT is one of the UK's leading independent adoption and family support charities. Established in 1911, it helps hundreds of families every year and has a clear vision to build and strengthen families through high quality therapeutic support and inspirational community projects.

PACT



Recognizing these points, PACT wanted to develop their support offering and asked if we could assist them as part of our charity partnership. We were eager to get involved because this project went to the heart of what PACT is all about. It had the potential to make a difference to people and their families directly and to create a legacy of our joint work.

Solution

To find out what kind of support adoptive parents needed, PACT surveyed prospective adopters. Resilience came out as a clear need.

Defining resilience

We define psychological resilience as, “The ability for an individual to bounce back to a previous state of normal functioning, after experiencing pressure, without negative effect.”

An NHS survey in 2016 found that one in six adults experience a common mental health problem, such as anxiety and depression, in any given week (NHS, 2016). More than 15.4 million working days are lost each year due to stress, anxiety, or depression (source: HSE Annual Science Review, 2019).

Given the life-changing impact and emotional complexity of adoption, it’s perhaps no surprise that resilience came out as a key need from PACT’s survey.

So, our consultants designed a Building Resilient Families workshop. It was split into two half-day sessions. PACT invited prospective adopters and people who’d already become adopters to attend a pilot of the training.

Participants were asked to complete the MBTI® assessment in preparation for the workshop. The first session introduced everyone to MBTI personality type. This helped people recognize their

Solution

- Design a Building Resilience workshop based on MBTI principles
- Deliver to adopters and prospective adopters
- Train PACT social workers to deliver the workshop
- Hand over a full workshop kit so PACT could be self-sufficient going forward

PACT



personal strengths, learn where their strengths served them well, and see where those same strengths can become a challenge.

The second session was *Resilience: What is it and why is it important?*

In this session, people explored what happens to them under pressure. They learned key stress triggers and energizers for themselves and others, and got action plans for handling stress in the moment.

Taking resilience further

However, building the resilience of adopters wasn't the only goal of the workshop.

To help adopters as fully as possible, PACT needed flexibility with their resilience training. They needed to be able to deliver this workshop themselves, which was something they specified when we began working together.

So, we trained two of PACT's own social workers to deliver this workshop. Both became MBTI certified, and one of them was involved in the delivery of the pilot workshop. This gave PACT the skills and experience to:

- Run and deliver the group workshop without being dependent on us.
- Use their resilience and MBTI self-awareness training in one-on-one meetings with parents.

PACT now had the tools to offer resilience training to as many adopters and potential adopters as possible.



This tailored program has the potential to help adopters to develop their self-awareness and resilience to be able to transform the lives of these children in care.

PACT CEO



PACT

Results

"I could have done with this 18 months ago," said one workshop participant. "The one main area I struggled in was managing the change in my environment and how I react to certain situations. This input would have helped to plug the gap in my learning." He added, "[the event was] enjoyable, informative and linked to a topic close to my heart. Thank you!"

Other feedback from workshop participants included:

“ I operate differently to what I thought I did.

“ This makes sense of the reactions I get from people. This means I can adjust my responses

“ Lots of ideas to take away to improve own resilience and support others who may be stressed.

There's another important outcome in all this.

Resilience training helps prospective adopters decide early enough in the process whether adoption is right for them. And, given the investment made by parents, children, and PACT with every application—both emotionally and financially—this kind of insight is invaluable.

PACT's CEO said, "Together with The Myers-Briggs Company, we have identified that by using MBTI insights in a radical way we can make a difference in the adoption sector. This tailored program has the potential to help adopters to develop their self-awareness and resilience to be able to transform the lives of these children in care."

Results

- Adopters and prospective adopters with PACT have a better understanding of their stress points, other people's stress points, and how to bounce back
- PACT's self-sufficiency means they can offer resilience training and use their skills to help people at any stage of the adoption process

Resilience training helps prospective adopters decide early enough whether adoption is right for them.

One of PACT's Social Workers, who became an MBTI certified practitioner, said, "The experience of becoming a certified MBTI practitioner and delivering the resilience workshop has been one of the highlights in my work. I've been able to help those who have done the course to reflect and learn how to support each other better knowing their personality type.

"[It's] made a difference to my own practice as a certified MBTI practitioner ... thinking in ways of working with adults and their personality type, in order to secure the best outcomes for adopted children."



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