



PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER

## Adoption case study: Neil, Matt and Joe

Neil and Matt adopted Joe when he was three years old through PACT in February 2016.

They had been thinking about starting a family for a couple of years and so attended a PACT adoption information event in Brighton. They decided to adopt with PACT as they liked its flexible approach and the fact that, unlike local authorities, it can search the country for the right child for its adopters.

The couple was particularly interested in PACT's family finding scheme, which it offers to local authorities for children who have been waiting a long time to be adopted, often because they are older or have additional needs. They were shown three profiles of children PACT were family finding for, including Joe, who has autism and sensory processing disorder.

Neil said: "Joe just stood out for us. Something felt right and we both had a big smile on our faces as we looked at his profile. I think we claimed him as our boy there and then."

Neil, who has worked in social care for 17 years, said they had always been open to the idea of a child with additional needs, and were keen to help a child who might face a longer wait in the care system for a forever family.

The couple said the early stages of adoption were definitely tough, but that they had fantastic support throughout from their PACT social worker.

"We went to the preparation training and we were aware of what it could be like and that it wasn't going to be easy, but I don't think you realise until you are in the process just how tough, tiring and emotional it can be."



Once the placement was approved Joe settled with the couple really well, and was affectionate and attached to them almost from the start. Neil said after just a few weeks Joe was noticeably more confident.

"He is a very confident little boy. This is his home and he has made it his own. He feels very safe and secure here which is what we always wanted for him."

Joe is now five, and attends a school for children with special educational needs, where he is making really good progress, particularly with his communication and social skills.

Neil, who said he still finds it strange but lovely to be called "Daddy", said they are loving life as a family.

He encouraged prospective adopters to consider adopting a child with additional needs.

"Just be open to the possibility – you obviously need to be realistic about what the journey might be like. It is hard and challenging but it is so worth it and the rewards so much greater."



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0300 456 4800  
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