Darren* is a 43-year-old single father who became a dad to his son Finn* in early 2017 when he was four years old. Finn’s adoption was legalised nine months later and he is now seven years old.

Darren is a social worker and throughout his thirties he increasingly wanted to have a child. Since he was not in a relationship, he felt adoption was the right choice for his situation. “I knew that it would be uncommon to adopt as a single dad but that I needn’t face any barriers.”

He chose PACT because a colleague of his had adopted with PACT and spoke positively about the charity. He explored other agencies and attended different information events before he made his decision but he was most impressed with PACT’s social workers. “PACT struck me as the most professional and prompt in their responses so I decided they were the only agency with which I wanted to proceed.”

From his background in social work, Darren understood the importance of the in-depth assessment that PACT had to carry out before he could be approved as an adopter. “It’s really important to tell the truth to your social worker but more importantly to be clear with yourself about what you think you can handle and what you might struggle with.” He found PACT’s adoption panel very straightforward and felt his social worker had prepared him well.

The linking and matching process was more challenging for him. While the process was, on the whole, pragmatic and efficient, he said the comparing of profiles and looking for matches felt strange and it was often difficult to read about the awful early life experiences these children had gone through. He also felt that it was hard to know for sure whether the match would be right. However, his family finder and social worker reassured him that these thoughts were normal and that they would work together to find a good match.

Before being matched with his son, Darren was linked twice but neither match was quite right. The third time he was linked, something about Finn’s profile felt right to him: “I really liked his picture and everything I read made me think ‘this is it’.”

Darren first met Finn in an informal setting at his nursery, without Finn knowing who he was. “It felt very different to seeing the picture on Finn’s profile and I didn’t feel as much of a connection.” He later met Finn again and was introduced as ‘daddy’. This time, the bond between them was much stronger. “He was really excited. He had seen the book I’d made him about his new home many times and he was really pleased to see me.”

What have been the highlights of your adoption journey so far?

“Despite all of the challenges there hasn’t been a day when I wished I hadn’t adopted my son. To have a funny, curious, loving, playful boy who I have been able to see grow and develop has been wonderful.

He and I love each other, are really close and spend lots of time together. I love my free time when it arises and there are aspects of my life before that I miss but the trade off between the freedom that I had and the life I have now has been worth it.”

After a short introduction period, Finn moved in with him and they began to get used to their new life together. At times, Darren found becoming a new parent to be a challenge. Sometimes Finn’s behaviour was difficult to manage and could turn aggressive so Darren sought support from a member of PACT’s adoption support team. He found the support he received to be professional, empathic and helpful and he said that his life is much easier now, although he still finds that he doubts himself or worries that he could have handled things better.

He has found other parts of his new life with Finn to be great in lots of ways. “Since he moved in, I have enjoyed getting to know him, seeing him settle into his new home, being there to comfort him and growing into feeling like a parent.”

*Names changed in line with confidentiality