Michelle* and Phil are caring for Charlie who is just over two, through PACT’s Foster for Adoption initiative. These arrangements enable young babies or children to be placed with potential adopters who are also approved as temporary foster carers while decisions are made about the child’s future. Ideally this means that the child benefits from stability and continuity of care from the earliest possible stage in their lives.

Charlie was 21 months old when he was placed with Michelle and Phil, who are now applying to adopt him. The couple, who also have a five-year-old adopted daughter Mia, first heard about Foster for Adoption around the time they were being matched with their daughter.

Michelle said: “We thought this seemed like a good idea considering the aim was to place children as soon as possible to minimise the amount of moves they might have to make. When we decided to adopt another child, we found out that Foster for Adoption was a possibility for us, so we were keen to try it.

“The main reason we decided to go down this route was that we saw it as a chance to have a child placed with us sooner, so they would be younger, and also we thought being dual approved carers (approved to both foster and adopt) would make us more attractive to local authorities and hopefully increase the number of profiles we could consider.”

Michelle said they had been well supported throughout the process so far by social workers from both PACT and the local authority for Charlie.

She said the main challenge they had faced initially was around helping Mia to adjust to another child joining the family, although said the two have a lovely relationship now.

“With regard to Foster for Adoption, initially I found it hard to get my head around the fostering paperwork which needed completing regularly, but once I’d got to grips with it, it wasn’t too bad.

“We were fortunate in that in our case Charlie’s Placement Order was granted before introductions started, so although there were no guarantees, there was less chance that things wouldn’t eventually proceed to adoption.”

Michelle added that the best thing so far about Foster for Adoption was how quickly Charlie had been placed with them, with introductory sessions starting six weeks after the initial interview. She said they were also paid while fostering, which while wasn’t a lot, had helped.

Her best advice to someone considering Foster for Adoption is to keep an open mind.

“When we were first approached about our little one, there was information on his profile which initially made us think he wasn’t for us (we shudder at that thought now!). There were initial plans for weekly contact with his birth family which we would have had to facilitate in the early weeks, and as he was from quite a distance away this could have been quite disruptive for Mia so initially we were hesitant.

“However as it turned out most of these contact sessions took place before the Placement Order and the others were managed before introductions.

“Our PACT family finder encouraged us to pursue him anyway as often things are worked out through the process - and we’re so glad she did!”

*All names have been changed in line with confidentiality

Benefits of Foster for Adoption include:

- Potentially it allows for a permanent home to be found for a child as early as possible, with research showing that risks of developmental and behavioural difficulties lessening the earlier a child is placed with permanent carers.

- It also allows for early attachment needs to be met and early bonding to begin, avoiding the damage of terminating a child’s relationship with birth parents, then foster carers before going on to be placed for adoption.