



PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER

Adoption study:

Phil, Gareth and Ben

Phil and Gareth adopted Ben* through PACT in 2019. They initially approached their local authority about adopting but, after being told they might have a longer wait because of where they lived, they decided to explore some other options and booked onto a PACT adoption information event, where they heard a talk from someone who had adopted already.

Phil said: "We really liked PACT's approach. I think what really helped us was listening to the parents speak about their experience of adopting – they were very open about it, it was a real warts and all account. But, actually for us to hear people being so being honest, and PACT being so open about the challenges and the pitfalls of adopting, actually swung it for me."

"We also became more aware of all the additional support that was available afterwards with PACT that perhaps wasn't as readily available with a local authority. Also as we started to progress our inquiry with PACT we really liked the fact that they could get the process moving quicker than local authorities could."

The couple, who both work for the NHS, said the adoption process was intrusive and stressful at times.

Gareth said: "PACT were definitely trying to make sure we were as attractive as possible as adopters. I actually really liked the fact they covered all the bases and I do also think the rigour actually made us better adopters. We have built up a network of adoptive parents as friends over the last two years and we have noticed a real difference in topics covered and training provided, for example, friends and family training and support."

The process took about a year from when they first applied to Ben being placed with them. Phil said the moment they first met him was strange but emotional.

"I think it all seems quite hypothetical until you walk into a room and for the first time meet the little boy who's possibly going to become your son. It was a very surreal experience and quite emotional as well actually."

Ben moved in with Phil and Gareth just before his first birthday and settled in very well.

Phil said: "It all went swimmingly – all the preparation beforehand had gone really well and it was just a really positive experience."



"I think we definitely had a honeymoon period as we did have some separation anxiety issues a couple of months down the line, but this did coincide with a lot of other changes. We'll never really know if it was just a phase in his life he was going through or whether it was because he was adopted."

Ben is now doing very well and is a sociable, busy and curious toddler, who loves exploring and being outside.

Phil said: "The best thing is seeing the progress he's made and just being able to relax and enjoy each other's company as a family."

Gareth added: "We do feel more complete now. There's a real sense of being more of a team. Just seeing him changing every day and knowing we are having such an impact on his life is really lovely."

The family have not needed any post-placement support from PACT to date but say it's nice to know it's there if they do need it.

In terms of advice to anyone considering adoption, Phil recommended doing thorough research into which organisation you proceed with, and Gareth added that having a strong support network was also crucial.

"Knowing there are people you can pick up the phone to after a hard day is really important."

"Also it's really helpful to have other parents around you who can help normalise the situation. And, actually, there is lots of support and resources out there you can access, such as parenting groups and New Family Social which we found really helpful. So even if you don't have the support you might need in your immediate network, there is plenty of support out there you can tap into."

* All names changed in line with confidentiality



PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER

0300 456 4800
www.pactcharity.org