When Sally and Peter’s baby boy was born with Down’s Syndrome, they made a decision not to have another child of their own but to adopt a little girl with the same condition.

The inspirational couple say their two children have brought them such happiness they wouldn’t have it any other way.

When Sally and Peter married in 1996, they always imagined having a family of their own. After a miscarriage, their second pregnancy was closely monitored but, apart from a diagnosis of clubfoot, scans showed their unborn baby was normal.

Sally fainted a month before her due date and hospital tests revealed a problem with the baby’s heartbeat and she underwent an emergency caesarean. “It was 29th December and I thought I was going to the John Lewis sale but I ended up having my baby!

“When Harry was two hours old the paediatrician said his heart was fine but they were questioning whether other features he had may be down to a genetic condition, for example Down’s Syndrome. They said they would do a blood test and have the answer in a couple of days.

“I remember trying to deal with the news on everyone else’s behalf too. I was worried about how they would feel and how disappointed everyone would be. I worried about how he looked and whether people would be able to tell as soon as they saw him.

“Someone who has become a very good friend, whose baby girl was in the incubator next to Harry in SCBU sat me down when he was just days old and told me “He looks like Harry”. This is a mantra I repeated for months and months whenever I realised someone was staring at him for a bit too long. These days I am always taken aback when someone double-takes, because I just don’t see it anymore!”

Harry had two operations on his feet and suffers from hearing loss. He is now a perfectly healthy and happy ten-year-old who attends a mainstream school and uses sign language to communicate.

“Having had Harry, the thought of being pregnant again filled me with absolute horror. Peter and I knew we wanted more children and we spent a long time trying to rationalise that and work out the answer.”
“From the moment she arrived it has been as if she has been with us forever.”

“We realised that what we actually wanted was another child with Down’s Syndrome because that is what is normal to us. It’s what we know. It also answers that other question about whether a second child would be expected to end up caring for Harry.

“We truly thought everyone would think we were nuts! I tried out our idea on my oldest and closest friend and she just looked at me and beamed.

“We were delighted when we rang PACT and were told that our idea sounded perfectly sensible. We went to an information evening at PACT in May 2008 and met our social worker in the September. We were approved as adoptive parents in February 2009 and received Ellie’s details within a week. Our feet didn’t touch the ground.

“Ellie came to us in June 2008 when she was just a year old and from the moment she arrived it has been as if she has been with us forever.

“Having had a birth child I knew what bonding was like and I was worried what it would be like with Ellie. But in so many ways it is just the same. The overwhelming love and need to protect and care for her was there from the minute I laid eyes on her.

“For several months it felt like I was getting to know her and I felt less inclined to trust my instincts as I did with Harry but after a while I realised that that was exactly what I should do.

“Harry and Ellie love each other to bits. She giggles at him all the time and loves him being around her. When Ellie was in hospital for a week Harry was bereft.

“Adopting Ellie has been the most magical thing and I could not, would not, imagine life without her. The completeness it has given our family is beyond words.

“If anyone had told me before Harry was about two that we would go on to adopt another child with Down’s Syndrome I think I would have thought them mad!

“But once in that world and realising how much we love it here... somehow we don’t want to leave!”

If you’re interested in adoption, contact PACT today:

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