Katrina and Tam are a lesbian couple who adopted two boys through PACT. They brought their first son, Jake*, home in 2014 when he was 20 months old and their second son, Oli*, in 2017 when he was six months old, completing their family of four.

They decided to adopt because they were unsuccessful with fertility treatment and they really wanted to have children. They said: “We knew we had infinite love to give and adoption seemed the obvious way for us to have a family.” Tam and Katrina chose PACT as their adoption agency because of the many positive stories they read about PACT. They felt that, with the support of PACT’s social workers and staff, their adoption journey would be the best it could be.

Throughout the adoption process, Katrina and Tam felt supported by PACT. They said: “It can sometimes feel stressful, emotional and invasive but any organisation dealing with vulnerable children has a duty to investigate potential parents fully and responsibly. At every step of the way we had brilliant support, advice and help.” Being a same sex couple did not affect their experience at all and they felt they were treated in just the same way as the couples and single people on their preparation courses.

Tam and Katrina said that meeting Jake for the first time felt different for each of them. “It was a dream come true to be meeting our future child, but we also felt we had all the weight of the world on our shoulders. We really wanted it to go well and to make a good first impression. Again, the support during this time by the social workers, our families and close friends was wonderful.” After Jake moved in with them, Katrina and Tam stayed within their home and garden for the first few weeks to help him feel safe and grounded. They slowly expanded their trips out to go to the park, and after a few months they introduced him to their extended family, beginning with video calls and then meeting them in person.

“We were learning his ways and he was learning ours - it was an exciting, yet exhausting, settling-in period as we were trying so hard to help him feel safe, loved and secure.”

Their experience was different with Oli. They felt more at ease when they first met him because they knew the process and he was just six months old. The learning curve was also different when he moved in with them because he was just a baby and they had to learn how to take care of his day-to-day needs.

What have been the biggest challenges?
“Being thrown into parenthood with a toddler!
And sometimes worrying that certain behaviours are because of their adoption journey instead of just being patient and dealing with it.”

When it was time for Jake to start school, Tam and Katrina came needed some support from PACT. Jake has some speech and language delay and his birthday is late in August so they were keen to defer his school place for a year. They felt this was absolutely the right decision to take and it has really benefitted Jake, who is now meeting or approaching all his targets in the curriculum, but at the time it proved to be a huge challenge to get a deferral. “Without the support of Clare [a Senior Social Worker at PACT], I don’t think we would have been successful. Her support was incredible.”

Clare also helped them with some behavioural issues over the telephone, giving them ideas of ways to calm Jake down by naming his feelings for him and suggesting games and activities to deflect physical signs of frustration.

To anyone considering adoption, Katrina and Tam say:

“It has been, and continues to be, a wonderful way of being a family for us. Matching you with your child is carried out sensitively and carefully. We have been matched with two beautiful boys and we feel like we struck gold! You will be guided and supported through the entire adoption process and we think the preparation for adoption has helped us to be better parents.”

*Names changed in line with confidentiality

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