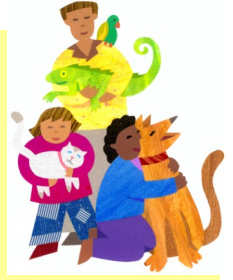


## Three couples who have adopted through Kingston share their stories.

We have changed all names to protect everyone's confidentiality.

### Marie and Guy

Marie and Guy discovered they couldn't conceive when they were both in their early 20s. Guy's infertility tested their relationship but the couple stayed together and eventually decided to adopt. Then when a new job brought the couple to the UK from their native France, their quest to become parents took a new turn.....



"We were astonished to discover that in England there were so many children in need. But our local borough told us they were looking for black or mixed race couples and they could not help us. You do not find a lot of French children in England! We felt that people were looking only at our background and not considering us as parents.

Eventually we were accepted by the Team at Kingston, who were open-minded and prepared to listen to us.

It took a year to be approved as adopters and then another year to find a match. Our social worker was in touch with the other agencies but we looked as well.

At first we were looking for the perfect children but we soon realised we needed to make some compromises. We first saw our three children in Adoption UK magazine. They looked so cute but at 3 ¼, 4 and 5 years they seemed so grown up!

The girls were mixed race – their birth mother was White British and their father was Black Jamaican. We both have black hair and an olive skin so are not so different. They had no one else to take them. We felt that we were their last chance.

After we were matched with the girls we had 10 days of daily contact before taking them home. When we met them the little one told us 'You are our new mum and dad.' But the middle one said: 'There's a mistake – you can keep my sisters but I need to go back to my mum.'

We thought it would be the best moment in the world to bring the girls back home but it was stressful. The children questioned us about everything and it was also very disorientating for us as a couple. We were deeply affected by them.

It helped us to go to a post-adoption meeting. We discovered that we didn't have to pretend we were the perfect parents.

The girls attached to us one at a time. The middle one only started the attachment process two years after she was placed with us. It took nearly four years for the girls to properly settle in. As adoptive parents you feel they are yours when they have stayed with you longer than they stayed with their birth parents or foster family.

As a couple we both have a lot of hope. You do need to keep hope throughout the process. Now we hope we will give the girls the tools they need to understand what happened to them and to deal with any crisis. As adopters you can't change their past but you can impact on their future."





## *Sally and Robert*

**Sally and Robert were both in their 40s when they began the adoption process. Two years ago they became parents of three siblings, who are now ten, six and four years old. Sally says she feels blessed to have them:**

“We had been married for three years when we discovered that something was wrong and I would be extremely unlikely to conceive, even with IVF. My husband and I both had a positive sense of adoption and neither of us had worries about blood lines.

We contacted a few adoption agencies locally and eventually went to an Information Evening at Kingston and started the process. It took us just a year to be approved as adopters for two children but matching us was more difficult.

There were lots of children we were interested in but they were not similar enough to us for a good match and we seemed to be getting nowhere. We concluded that we would have more of a chance if we took on three rather than two children as there were fewer applicants for three siblings.

To show that we could manage three, we looked after our friend’s and my sister’s children and wrote about the experience. It was not totally realistic but it was necessary. Taking on children who are half grown is a shock to the system. You need to be able to hit the ground running.

Eventually we were told about a sibling group of three who might be suitable for us. What clinched it for us was a video they showed us of the children.

When it came to meeting the children for the first time, everybody was keen to get going and it was a bit of a scramble. But the foster carers had prepared the children really well for us and the children seemed to be strong little characters - outgoing, friendly and resilient.

The reality is you don’t know what the impact is going to be when the children arrive. No-one can teach you how to be a parent - it is a unique experience.

We had support from friends but initially it was a big strain and I was so exhausted that I asked a professional childminder to advise us on the practicalities. Even now there are some days I don’t think I am on top of things although it’s much more manageable now they are getting older and have settled in well.

With adopted children there are issues and unknowns. It took a long time for our youngest to attach to us and that was really hard work. Our son had learning difficulties and he might be dyslexic. But even with birth children there’s always some uncertainty.

When we adopted three children some people treated us like heroes and others thought we were mad. Both were wrong. We did it because we wanted children like anybody else. It’s really worth it because in the end the children are fabulous.



We feel very blessed to have these children. Three times blessed.”



## *Judy and Bob*

**Judy and Bob were in their early 30s when they decided to adopt. Judy was unable to conceive naturally and had endured six unsuccessful attempts at IVF before they approached Kingston Council's Adoption Team. She says:**

"By the time I'd got to 30 we'd been married for a few years and I had expected to be a mum but it hadn't happened. I did take some convincing about adoption but Bob was keen, so we decided to find out about it.

Kingston Council invited us along to an adoption information evening and we were accepted for assessment. It took more than a year before we were approved to adopt and longer to be matched with a child. We were told not to hope for a baby because there aren't many babies available for adoption these days. This came as a bit of a shock to me at first.

Eventually we heard about Daniel, who was four. There was something about him that just clicked with us and we were over the moon when the adoption was approved. Before we met him there were meetings with professionals and his foster carers and we made him a video and a scrap book so he would know about our family, including our pet cats.

Just six months later we were preparing to meet him and bring him home. The handover period took nine days and was very intense. It involved a lot of travelling as Daniel was living with foster carers quite a way away from us and we took him on outings while we got to know him.



When we brought him back home I became an instant mum, although we didn't legally adopt him until sixteen months later. At first it felt a little like being on holiday and then after six weeks we all relaxed and reality kicked in.

We didn't know then that Daniel had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and he's since also been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. This means that he can be quite a handful! While academically he is bright, he has behavioural difficulties and can be challenging when he's out of his comfort zone.

But although it wasn't always easy, we loved being parents and by the time Daniel was seven we decided we were ready to adopt another child. Second time around we were very lucky to be matched with Daniel's younger half brother, Steven. Daniel was so pleased to have his younger brother living with us!

We've been parents now for seven years. Bob is delighted to have two boys. He enjoys the rough and tumble and boys things like playing cars and going to the football. We are so glad that we adopted. The procedure is time-consuming but I think that if you really want to be a family you just get on with it.

I love being a mum. For me the best bit is when one of the boys comes to me for a cuddle. There's no other feeling like it."