



Adoption Central England

OUR STORIES A COLLECTION OF ADOPTERS OF SIBLINGS EXPERIENCES





What made you decide to adopt siblings rather than a single child?

We decided to adopt siblings as we are both siblings and couldn't imagine not having them around; we didn't like the thought of any siblings that have always known each other being split up.

We were aware that sibling groups were harder to place so we considered them from the start.

Our ages played a role; we are not spring chickens and adopting twice would be a lengthy process. When we were at the family finding stage we expressed interest in single children and siblings, but our 2 were the ones where the doors opened.

We saw our family with more than one child and discussed the benefits of siblings - them having each other as support through their story, growing up with biological links living with them, having the same birth parents (or one at least) so elements of the story would potentially be the same for them.

If we adopted one child and then down the line were to add another, how would that dynamic be - we didn't know as we didn't know who we would be adopting, whereas, if we adopted siblings, the sibling assessments would have happened and they would have been determined as safe and positive to be living together.

We knew we were in a position to adopt two children and for us, it always felt right.



What were the challenges you faced in parenting siblings?

Splitting your time between two that both want your attention can be difficult as can finding time to do anything around the house!

The early days of the children moving in were exhausting and a blur. Nothing can prepare you for the exhaustion after transitions and becoming parents.

Two of our three children were exceptionally emotionally dysregulated which resulted in them constantly seeking attachment by crawling all over us and clinging on to various body parts with force. The third child rejected all our attempts at getting to know her and was clinging to the foster carer. We understood that all these behaviours were because of the children's coping mechanisms, but we found the rollercoaster of behaviour and emotions extremely difficult and even questioned if we were doing the right thing.

It can be difficult, but not impossible, to meet the individual needs of each child. I sometimes feel guilty when I think of how different life could be if we only had one child: emotionally, mentally, and financially. One of our children experienced more trauma than their sibling. This is played out in their behaviour, and it is really painful to see the comparison between the two children.

There are the financial implications of 2 children to consider.

During the transitions period, this was hard. This was mainly to do with the relationship with the foster carer and having a different approach to parenting (that wasn't therapeutic).

When the girls moved in, it was very intense, and it was very hard. I found that my little girl was very scared and confused and for about 5 months was attached to me - literally. Only I could carry her, and she had her cheek on my cheek constantly - she would scream if I was in the shower and not holding her, she didn't play with toys, she was very poorly with eczema (heightened by her stress) and this was very difficult to manage with her. As we worked to ensure she felt safe and building her relationship with her Dad (and men in general), I felt extremely guilty that I wasn't able to give the same amount of attention to my older daughter, who was still very young, and just as confused.

There is a lack of alone time as a couple and finding time to have 1:1 time with individual children is also a challenge.

Our support network has shrunk slightly since adopting. Some of our family members were supportive of adoption on the surface, but they didn't really get it and didn't try to understand it either.

It took around six months for our child to seek us out when he was upset and it was clear we were not his people, and he would have gone with anyone up until that point.

It really is hard at the start so be prepared that one of you may feel like you are doing all of the hands on with the children so make sure the other parent stays alongside. and the small things matter SO much!



What were the positives you found in parenting siblings?

Having 2 children at once meant that we felt 'settled' and 'finished' immediately. Our family is complete, we aren't waiting for anyone else.

Honestly, it is the best thing we have ever done, we love our little family and adopting them together is just so special to watch as parents, but also we really believe that they as adoptees have an extra person of support in their lives - they have each other and they have that person next to them that lived their story.

The love they have for each other and then for you. It is so lovely to see them interacting and playing together.

Seeing their relationship now that they are a year older is amazing. They ask for each other when they first wake up, or if one of them is somewhere else. We are still seeing the positives of adopting siblings, they are inseparable at nursery but also both make friends. I really believe their confidence in themselves, and their life so far, is not only dependent on us as parents, but also on having each other.

There is a pre-made family for all of us, with a readymade set of playmates who can support each other, with a shared identity and life story.

The positives far outweigh the negatives! We certainly could invest more in every way in one child, however, the bond that they have as siblings is so precious. To see them laughing and playing together, the love they have for each other, nothing can replace that, it's priceless.

Practically, I find it easier in some respects because they play with each other. I'm not necessarily the entertainment!

It sometimes feels like a long uphill battle, but all the small steps add up and mean so much to the girls and the bond now is AMAZING.

It is easier to have contact with only one birth family. I hope this will make things less complicated in the future too.

They have had, and will always have, each other. Through all of their confusion and being scared, they had the consistency of each other.

The methods we put in place, we may have taken longer if we had one child but as we had two, we needed to tag team and put the time in with both girls so that we were giving what we needed to, to the other child. Bonding games and activities could be played with all of us and so my younger daughter would follow the lead of her older sister as she trusted her and so they have supported each other just by having each other. This helped include my older daughter in play, even though the little one would not leave my side.

What advice or tips would you have for others thinking about adopting a sibling group?

Advice I would give anyone looking to adopt siblings is - go for it, it is amazing.

Don't put too much pressure on yourself to do housework!

Put boundaries into place as soon as you can when it comes to sharing your time, involve the older ones when possible, and don't be afraid to ask for help.

Don't be scared of sibling groups. We were really daunted at the beginning and wondered if we would cope. It was hard and the first 5 months were rough, but parenting is hard anyway so I'm not sure it makes that much difference parenting one or two or more!

There are things about siblings that make it easier, and some things are harder. But in reality, I think they actually balance each other out. The most precious thing is being able to keep the children with their biological siblings and nurture those bonds that will last long after we've gone.

Don't underestimate how much you may have to advocate on behalf of your children. Everyone is involved in their lives, and they descend into your home, and they have a lot to say about everything, and sometimes it can feel like you haven't got a voice, and there will be a point where you know those children better than anyone else -so it is up to you to be their best advocate.

Getting a 7-seater car so that the children have more space to sit separately, rather than sitting 3 in a row and bickering, has proved helpful during longer car journeys!

It was and is all worth it. Seeing how the work we put in as a family, and how the girls have developed over the past 15 months has been fantastic, it is now very different to those early days.

We will tell the children the order in which we will do things in and that they will need to be patient until it is their turn.

I would say go for it - because being a parent is hard anyway and you really see the benefits as time passes. For us, we don't know what one is like, two children at once is our normal!

We used to all do bathtime and bedtime together as parents in the early days. Even though the children wouldn't let their Daddy do anything, he was there, passing me shampoo, books, etc. so that they began to see Daddy as safe and there to look after them.



I stay organised and get up earlier than the children, as well as ensuring some exercise and reading for self-care.

It can sometimes feel like a lonely battle that only other adoptive parents can relate to - so finding as much peer support as possible is important.

There were times my youngest daughter was highlighted as 'delayed' by professionals (like the health visitor) who were not giving time for her to settle. Remember that not everyone has experience in adoption, and you need to advocate what you know is best.

Don't underestimate the impact of early attachment trauma. It has taken years to truly see and feel that our eldest son now feels in his gut that he is safe and secure, that we are not going anywhere, and that we love him no matter what. This peace has come after lots of rejection towards us, volatile behaviour, a need to control, create chaos, an inability to wait and to accept comfort when he's distressed. There have been some really tough times. However, we have made huge positive changes in creating a secure attachment by always meeting his needs, always being consistent, stable, providing a predictable routine and advance notice, descriptions and repetition of any changes or new experiences that are going to happen.

We feel so privileged to be their parents and have never once doubted our decision - don't let doubts of 'can we do it with two' allow you to change your decision if it is the road you do want to go down because it is really so special to have siblings and watch that relationship develop.