

An Adopter's Experience of our Stay and Play Groups

I have very strong memories of the fear that overwhelmed me when, as a new adopter my social worker suggested that my daughter and I might benefit from a mums and tots group. I could only imagine that the arrival of a new mum who had never been spotted in the area with a bump (well only one caused by a love of chocolate and takeaway food) and her young child would cause a great deal of interest. I was convinced that there would be an interrogation of me to find out about my birthing experiences, my views on breast feeding, some competitiveness over labour duration and waters breaking at inopportune moments. Steeling myself for all of this and not feeling confident that my toddler would want to return home with me after the singing ended I entered my first playgroup. Looking back I suspect I was so guarded that if anyone did try to talk to me they would have given up pretty quickly. I remember almost hovering over my daughter ready to swoop in and protect her from all the other marauding tots, not appreciating her inherent ability to maraud with the best of them!

Two years later when I adopted my son I was much more adept at fielding those slightly intrusive questions - happy to state I was 41 and 45 when my children were born. Factually this is correct although I cannot say where I was or what I was doing on either date.

Finding the ACE coffee morning / stay and play could not have been further removed from those first forages into the world of Wind the Bobbin Up and Kissinger style peace negotiations over a ride on toy. It was such a breath of fresh air to walk into a room where you are already entitled to be there having fulfilled the criteria for membership by having adopted in the first place. I attend some lovely toddler groups with my son but you do not hear the question 'How long has he / she been with you?' at any of them. Being with fellow adopters who all know the joy of

being matched with their child and appreciate some of the challenges that adoption can bring makes the group a really special and honest place. Whilst the children play or create some masterpiece, parents can give each other genuine support. It's a place where you can speak and laugh about the differences of an adopted family without feeling different. I've taken so much away from these mornings - information on letterbox contact, therapy ideas, a clear head after a stressful morning and an awful lot of laughter. I attend these meetings with my guard down, it is a joy to see happy children playing together and occasionally needing to sort out who had the car first, safe in the knowledge that other adopters are much less likely to judge and that support is available. Five years ago I remember feeling very isolated and exposed, I had expected to feel nothing but overwhelming joy at all times with my daughter so I was confused by the loneliness that I felt. The coffee morning has reinforced friendships I made with people I had met on preparation classes as well as introducing me to many others whose family background is similar to ours.

I'd highly recommend the group to anyone, even those who now have children in education on a Tuesday morning - the biscuits are excellent!

Thank you to our adopter who has shared her experience with us. If you would like to come and join us click [here](#) for details of our Stay and Play Group dates.

