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February 25, 2015 Wednesday

LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week

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DATELINE: London

Thurrock Council, UK Government has issued the following news release:

Thurrock, like the rest of the country, is always on the lookout for adopters and foster care families and across the UK, leading charities say they believe the shortfall could be met if just two per cent of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) people choose to adopt or foster.

Thurrock Council's fostering and adoption team is holding an information drop in session on Tuesday, 3 March, between 10am and noon at the Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, RM17 6SL as part of **LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week** - 2nd - 8th March - (www.lgbtadoptfosterweek.org.uk), for prospective foster carers and adoptive parents to come and hear more about the process.

Cllr Bukky Okunade said: "We know from experience that LGBT people often come to adoption and fostering with an open mind and real enthusiasm.

"Many of our children have had a very traumatic start to life, and we have seen them thrive with their new LGBT parents.

"We need people with stability, love and resourcefulness who can help a child with whatever needs they may have."

LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week is organised by New Family Social, a social network run by LGBT adopters and foster carers for families and families-to-be.

Tor Docherty, Director of New Family Social, said: "While more and more LGBT people are choosing to adopt or foster, many are still put off by fears that they won't be welcomed by agencies, or that they might not be able to offer what children need.

"Things have moved on in the last six years within adoption and fostering, and our large community of families across the UK is incredibly welcoming and supportive. It's clear to see how well our children are doing and what a positive and rewarding choice it can be for the parents."

Potential applicants that are unable to attend the drop in session can request an information pack by visiting the fostering or adoption page online at thurrock.gov.uk and filling in the online form.

The next evening drop-in session from the team will be at the Thurrock Adult Community College in Richmond Road, Grays, between 6pm and 8pm on Tuesday, 21 April.

Notes

The comments below are from two same-sex Thurrock foster/adoptive parents whose names are with-held to maintain the anonymity of the children involved.

Paula and Susan say: "When you are a couple and you consider fostering it has to be a joint effort, a shared and common understanding of why you are doing it. Did we have a shared and common understanding when we started the process? Not at the beginning, but we do now."

Susan said: "For us it was me who wanted to foster. It has been an itch that was always with me. I had my own child later aged 39 and to be honest once I had my own child I thought that itch had been scratched.

"What brought it back to the fore for me was becoming a Head at a Special School for children with autism and coming across a small handful of children who needed families.

"So in my bid to scratch my itch I went to work on my other half, Paula. Was she wholeheartedly ready for it? Not really but in partnership we talked through why I wanted to do it, what would be the benefits for the child and what we would gain out of it.

"Paula is the kindest person I know and she did not take much persuading and we entered into the process.

"Our first visit was just before Christmas and we introduced our fostered child to our extended family so that this would not be so overwhelming when she came for Christmas. Christmas was OK, tense at times and emotionally draining. Our child swung between quiet moments and long spells of extreme demand, but we got through it and that was a year ago. We have just had our second Christmas and this was lovely. She is settled, she feels very much part of the family and is finding her place.

"As for being a same sex couple I don't think this has been an issue at any point in time. It has not been the thing that has defined us at any point through the process, which has been great. Our child accepts it at face value and so has not been an issue either. So, if you are thinking about fostering and are a same sex couple, don't let that be an excuse for doing something that you want and give a kid the gift of your time."

Two other Thurrock foster carers/adopters in a same sex relationship said: "Being a same sex couple we had no idea what to expect; some of what we had previously read gave us a sense that if you were gay you would get an older child and would never get a younger child because a heterosexual couple would always be a preference.

"In reality it has never been like this; being two men, never has there been a question of who will fulfil the 'mother' role. Even seemingly scary things like attending panel or meeting the birth family were made easier by the whole Thurrock team who put us at ease and prepared us fully.

"From the first to the last moment that we had contact with our social worker, or the adoption team at Thurrock, we have never felt we have been compared to others, it has been totally about who we are. This ultimately led us to being matched to a fantastic child.

"For the reasons above we fully trusted Thurrock to find a child that we would fit our family and we would be able provide a loving home. They understood our child and we were matched perfectly. Based on our first experience we have approached Thurrock again to expand our family."

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February 25, 2015 Wednesday

Council supports LGBT adoption and fostering week

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Oldham Council, UK Government has issued the following news release:

Oldham Council's Adoption and Fostering Services are calling on members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community to consider becoming adopters and foster carers.

The local authority is supporting LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week, which runs from March 2 to 8, in an effort to raise local awareness and encourage more people to come forward and help provide much needed homes for children and young people in Oldham.

Councillor Jenny Harrison, Cabinet Member for Social Care and Public Health, said: "Oldham Council is proud to support LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week.

"We know from experience that people from the LGBT community make fantastic adoptive parents and foster carers, helping vulnerable children and young people to flourish.

"Sadly some people still think that they cannot foster or adopt because of their sexuality, but this is simply not true and we want to encourage more people from the LGBT community to come forward."

Adopters and foster carers can be single, in a civil partnership, married or unmarried, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or heterosexual.

Foster carers and adopters must be over 21, have space in their home and be able to provide a child/children with a loving, stable home.

For more information call 0161 770 6605 (adoption) or 0161 770 6600 (fostering) or visit www.oldham.gov.uk/adoption_fostering

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