



PRESS RELEASE

Adoption Week Scotland 2021 shines a light on The Current Face of Adoption

Kayden, ten, shows how changes in adoption have benefitted families

When ten-year-old Kayden was adopted, his new parents told him that his family was growing bigger, not smaller.

Kayden had been in the care of foster parents in Midlothian as his birth mother was unable to provide the care he needed. When Lee Robertshaw and Dale Briggs adopted him in 2016, they knew how important it was that his existing relationships were maintained – even though they live in Yorkshire.

So ever since the adoption, Lee and Dale have made sure that Kayden stays in touch with his foster family and his brother, who still lives with his gran in Scotland. The families exchange birthday and Christmas gifts, catch up on Facetime, and regularly spend holidays together – and the benefits to Kayden have been obvious.

“I think the most important thing has been that Kayden knows those people who he knew and loved in Scotland are still a part of his life,” Lee explained. “We tell him ‘your family got bigger, not smaller’, which has been really important to him.”

The family also stays in contact with Kayden’s mother, seeing her once a year with hopes that this might become more regular in the future.

Lee said: “It was important for us that Kayden saw his mum and his dads were not in conflict with each other, giving Kayden permission to secure his attachment to us. This has been very positive for Kayden, and just shows how important life story work is in giving children a window to understanding their past.”

Contact with birth families and previous carers such as this would have been rare, if not impossible just a few decades ago, but has become increasingly common in recent years as adoption services have recognised how important prior relationships are to adopted children. That’s why the theme of this year’s Adoption Week Scotland is ‘The Current Face of Adoption’, as organisers Adoption UK Scotland and Adoption and Fostering Alliance (AFA) Scotland aim to challenge misconceptions about adoption and celebrate how things have improved for adoptive families.

With a host of events and webinars covering topics such as staying in contact with birth families and siblings, understanding early-years trauma, and current developments in therapeutic parenting, Adoption Week Scotland offers something for anyone involved in adoption, whether they’re adoptive parents, adopted people, or professionals working in family care.

Fiona Aitken, Adoption UK Scotland Director, said: “We want to highlight the current issues and areas of importance for today’s adoptive families. Areas covered this year include the value of therapeutic parenting and engaging with children and families in a trauma-informed way, the importance of adoption support and services such as our TESSA and FASD Hub, and a focus on the importance of maintaining relationships.

“It’s crucial to recognise that adoption comes with the need to consider the life story of children and individuals involved, including the wider family relationships that child may have. Recent legislation ensuring that brothers’ and sisters’ rights of contact are ensured should have a significant impact on the way we support adoptive families to keep their children’s sibling relationships in mind, and there is more to be done to explore the best way to manage contact arrangements with other birth family members. This year’s programme of events will include conversations on these important topics and more.”

Robin Duncan, AFA Scotland Director, said: “Adoption week is a great opportunity to highlight the way adoption now works and to challenge some of the misconceptions that hark back to practice from previous eras where adoption was often seen as demanding a clean break with the child’s past.

“There will be opportunities to hear about good examples of practice where children can maintain relationships with people who remain important to them. The week will also highlight the potential of therapeutic parenting and the need for trauma-informed practice as part of an approach that insists that support needs to be available to adoptive families to manage the predictable challenges they will face.”

Clare Haughey, Minister for Children and Young People, said: “Adoption Week Scotland is our chance to say ‘thank you’ to all those involved and to celebrate the difference adoption is making to thousands of young people across Scotland.

“The themes that are being looked at over the week are all very relevant and important and we are working hard in partnership with the care sector and care experienced young people to make further improvements in these areas in line with our commitment to The Promise.”

Adoption Week Scotland 2021 runs from 15-19 November. To find out what’s on, visit the full programme of events at <https://adoption.scot/adoption-week-2021>

CASE STUDY – LEE ROBERTSHAW

Lee is 38, partner Dale Briggs is 37, their son Kayden is ten. They live in Yorkshire; Kayden was adopted from Midlothian in 2016.

In 2015, Dale and I were looking to start a family and decided adoption was the right way to go. We were matched with Kayden in 2016. He had been staying with a foster family in Midlothian; his mum was unable provide the care a child needs.

During the adoption process, we were introduced to Kayden’s foster family and developed a close relationship with them over the course of several meetings. We always saw a benefit in supporting Kayden’s existing relationships and nurturing positive ties with his past. So we’ve stayed in touch with them ever since, and now Kayden sees them in a grandparents’ role.

Since we adopted Kayden, we’ve been to visit his foster family regularly, as well as exchanging birthday and Christmas gifts and catching up on Facetime. We also visit Kayden’s brother, who still lives in Scotland with his gran, and whenever we can we book a week away in a cottage or caravan so everyone can get together to enjoy one another’s company.

Keeping in touch with his old life has been a massive benefit to Kayden. I think the most important thing has been that Kayden knows those people who he knew and loved in Scotland

are still a part of his life. We tell him 'your family got bigger, not smaller', which has been really important to him.

Dale and I spent a lot of time on Kayden's life story and he's now starting to understand more about his early life – how nothing that happened was his fault, and how his dads are now his forever family. Of course, things haven't always been easy. There was a time when Kayden went through a phase when he thought he'd been taken from his mum, but that became a way to open a new conversation and correct the narrative.

We've had amazing support from social workers since the day we began the adoption process. Kayden's social worker in Midlothian did an amazing job preparing him for adoption. He knew where he'd been and where he was going, all because of the life story work that had been done. And when we needed therapeutic support as we grew together as a family, we were able to reach out to our social worker for help. It was also really encouraging that they dispelled the 'old narrative' of adoption – that Kayden would not be deprived of his past or feel like he had some huge secret that he would have to keep hidden.

We do keep contact with Kayden's birth mum. We see her once a year, and hope this might become more regular in the future. It was important for us that Kayden saw his mum and his dads were not in conflict with each other, giving Kayden permission to secure his attachment to us. This has been very positive for Kayden, and just shows how important life story work is in giving children a window to understanding their past.