By Nik Farah
Community content reporter
nk.farah@thegrough.co.uk

"My life has never felt as complete"

Ten babies are in need of loving forever homes

"When we had to take him back to his foster family at the end of his visits, we found we were both tearful, being parted from him was an emotional wrench. "When you get that final piece of paper to say this child is now legally yours, it's overwhelming. We are just so glad we did it." And last year the couple made their family complete, when they went through the whole process again to adopt their daughter, now aged one. "Now we are the proud parents of a two-year-old and a one-year-old and my life has never felt as complete as it does now," says Andrew, aged 32. "We are a proper family." Andrew and Edward decided to speak out about their experience, but say they are not seeking to encourage others to adopt. "This is highly unusual," says Andrew. "The support we have received has been overwhelming." The couple have raised £10,000 to help other adoptive parents, and have set up a Facebook page to raise awareness of the need for more adoptive parents. They have become strong advocates for adoption, and are helping to educate people about the process. "We want to change the perception of adoption, and show that it is a viable option for families who cannot have children of their own," says Andrew. "We want to let people know that adoption is not a last resort, but a life-changing experience."

Andrew Healey-Randerson in his daughter’s bedroom

"These are real children and we’re searching for their potential parents.”

confirmed a spokesman for Rotherham Children and Young People’s Services. "Babies are quite a rarity these days, as local authorities tend to have older children waiting for adoption. "When stigmas over unmarried mothers still exist, there were lots of young babies needing homes. Today, having a baby out of wedlock is much less of an issue, meaning fewer babies coming up for adoption." The ten youngsters currently looking for loving forever homes range from newborn through to several months old and the hunt is now on to find parents for these babies. The local authority has issued an appeal for people in Rotherham and Sheffield to come forward. "The support we have

NEWSPAGE

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ADOPTING TWO CHILDREN WITH HIS PARTNER IN ROTHERHAM

Andrew Heeley-Randerson - of Rotherham - has adopted two children in two years, with his husband Edward

had from Rotherham Council has just been brilliant,” confirms Andrew.

“Certainly we never considered that being gay would be a barrier for us to be able to adopt. But what I would say is it might not be something you have necessarily thought about,

“Some straight people go through the heartache of trying to conceive a baby naturally before they adopt, so they know they want a child, but this isn’t always the same for LGBT people, where adoption is often the first step taken towards parenthood.

“I would just say if you’re thinking about it, do it. It really is amazing. I always thought I would prefer to adopt a slightly older child, but this isn’t always the same for LGBT people, where adoption is often the first step taken towards parenthood.

“We can’t thank Rotherham Council enough for their understanding and support as they helped us to make our family complete.”

Ian Thomas, strategic director of children and young people’s services, said: “We want to encourage as many people as possible to contact us in order for us to be able to match the children we have in our care with forever families.

“Children deserve to be brought up in a loving environment with a secure roof over their heads and be part of a family who puts them first, but sadly this is not always the case for all children.

“It is our duty to make sure the babies and children in our care who haven’t had the best start in life are given the same chance as everyone else, and that is why we are searching for their potential parents.

“The importance of the bond that can be formed with a child is key to them fulfilling their potential and being able to experience a happy and fulfilling life. It is crucial that we ensure the babies and children in our care have the opportunity for the best start in life, so they can reach their full potential.

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“By registering your interest with the council, you can gain further information about the process and arrange a visit from a social worker to help you decide if adoption is for you. After completing your Registration of Interest form, you will be asked to complete some supplemental reading and a one-day preparation training session, designed to develop your awareness of adoption, while necessary checks and references are completed. You will then have regular assessment sessions with your social worker and receive further training before a recommendation is made on your suitability.

THE INITIAL JOURNEY:

If you’re thinking about adoption, you should first gather as much information as possible. By registering your interest with the council, you can gain further information about the process and arrange a visit from a social worker to help you decide if adoption is for you. After completing your Registration of Interest form, you will be asked to complete some supplemental reading and a one-day preparation training session, designed to develop your awareness of adoption, while necessary checks and references are completed. You will then have regular assessment sessions with your social worker and receive further training before a recommendation is made on your suitability.

The battle not to lose myself to the life inside my phone

When did keeping up with your mobile phone become a full time job?

Between text message pings, email dings, news notifications and Twitterly tweets, I feel like I’m always behind on something. You iPhone users will know what I’m talking about. ‘The numbers’ in bright red circles that sit aside your various apps to remind you of all the notifications you’re sitting on; taunting you for your lack of responsiveness.

I had Photostream updates, Instagram and Pinterest notifications, news items that required my attention, a host of Facebook happenings. Tweets coming out of my ears and 88 unread email messages across my three accounts. I had 19 unread messages on one of my WhatsApp threads and four Slack messages. ‘The numbers’ were all clear last night, meaning these were all things that had come in the last eight hours when I’d let pesky sleep get in the way of my iPhone productivity. I also have a system update I’ve been meaning to do for the last two weeks and warning messages I keep ignoring that my memory is full and needs me to go in and delete some stuff. I had Photostream updates, Instagram and Pinterest notifications, news items that required my attention, a host of Facebook happenings. Tweets coming out of my ears and 88 unread email messages across my three accounts. I had 19 unread messages on one of my WhatsApp threads and four Slack messages. ‘The numbers’ were all clear last night, meaning these were all things that had come in the last eight hours when I’d let pesky sleep get in the way of my iPhone productivity. I also have a system update I’ve been meaning to do for the last two weeks and warning messages I keep ignoring that my memory is full and needs me to go in and delete some stuff.

I love what this technology does for us, but I don’t love this need to keep on top of ‘the numbers’ whenever I have a free minute. It would be nice to simply enjoy the sunshine as I walk out to grab a coffee mid-morning, rather than having my head down scanning through WhatsApp, trying to catch up with friends’ messages to see what I’ve missed. I used to enjoy reading a book at lunch occasionally when I had a little free time. Now I seem to spend those valuable minutes replying to texts or emails or uploading photos of my daughter to the family iPhotostream.

‘The numbers’ can take over - if we let them

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Technology is a great thing, but every so often, I’m reminded of the need for balance. I don’t want to miss out on what’s going on around me, because I’m trying to keep up with the world inside my phone.

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