

## Life as a Lesbian Mum!

My partner and I decided that we wanted to start a family 3 years ago and after 6 months of IVF our beautiful daughter Grace was conceived. Her arrival 9 months ago was the happiest day of our lives, but also like many parents, the start of our worries too! Will I be a good parent? Why is he/she still crying? When should I start weaning?

Deciding to have a baby brings up lots of issues for most people, but when you are a same sex couple there are additional worries that heterosexual couples won't be concerned about. Will we be accepted as a family? Will our child suffer more bullying? Will we have to keep our relationship a secret? Will other Mothers want to be our friends? Will her friends come home to tea? Will her friends be allowed to stay over? How will her school handle homophobia if it's a problem? We don't know the answers to a lot of these questions yet, but some have been answered along our 9-month journey.

We always knew that we would be very open and honest about our relationship as we feel that it's crucial that our daughter sees the confidence that we have about being gay. We felt that if we were to hide it that it would give our daughter a very negative message about being gay, as if it was something to be ashamed of. Our families on both sides are extremely supportive of our relationship and this not only helps us with day to day life but it will also help our daughter in the future.

Have we been accepted as a family? We have generally found that most people have been accepting and welcoming. There have been one or two incidents that have been hurtful but on the whole it's been a good response. One of the best things that we have done is to join the NCT and enroll on a Post-natal and Ante-natal class. The latter was great as we had also moved house by then, and had arrived in a new area feeling overwhelmed at the thought of going out and making new friends. I contacted Sam Hannay from the local NCT branch and explained our situation, and she totally put me at ease and said that this would be a good way to make new friends in a non-judgmental environment. During the course I was made to feel like any other new Mum, I felt comfortable and involved in the discussions and I like to think that I have also made some good friends.

We also thought that it might be important for our daughter to also have friends who have a similar family set up, and so after looking on the internet I found a group called Gay Surrey Parents. This has been a great help to us, as lots of the parents have older children so we've been able to ask them about their experiences. Having peers from the same background will stop her from thinking that she's the only one, and also help us to have support from other Mums facing the same issues as us. Most of the Mums admitted that they felt fearful about joining groups or socialising with other Mums in case they weren't accepted. I have shared my experience of the NCT course with them and how welcome I was made to feel and they were absolutely delighted. I think that although it's hard for gay Mums, we have to be brave and go out there and socialise, our children are relying on it, as it will make it easier for them to make friends.

Lots of the other scenarios we can't possibly know how to deal with yet but I'm sure that with family support, good friends and lots of love we will.

The number of gay families is increasing and the latest research is showing that same sex couples make very good parents. They conclude that the most important factor in any child's upbringing is that they have a stable and loving environment, and that's exactly what we aim to create for our daughter.

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