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DADS CHRIS AND ADAM REVEAL WHAT IT'S REALLY LIKE HAVING A BABY VIA A SURROGATE

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As Families Through Surrogacy's consumer-led seminar series returns to the UK in October, Sam Everingham follows up with London couple Chris and Adam Dreyfus-Gibson about their surrogacy journey.

The last time I'd seen Adam was at Families Through Surrogacy's March 2017 London conference 18 months earlier. By then they had created embryos, matched with a surrogate, and a double embryo transfer had taken place. They were expecting boy-girl twins in six months' time.

Things didn't quite work out that way.

*

Chris, a Londoner, and Adam, from just outside Glasgow, met online four and a half years ago. On their second date the question of children was discussed. Both Adam and Chris were keen but had different starting points, with one thinking about adoption and the other on surrogacy.

As something of a 'warm-up', they tested their commitment by getting a dog, Charlie, who remains a much loved member of the family.

The cost of surrogacy was always going to be an issue. Despite discussing re-mortgaging their home, a full US surrogacy arrangement still seemed out of reach.

Their solution rested in a hybrid journey. The pair were reassured by the high success rates of some US clinics; whereas the cost of a surrogacy is significantly less in Canada than the US.

So they created their embryos in a leading West Coast IVF clinic and engaged with a Canadian surrogate agency which focused on excellent surrogate support.

The week I talked to them, their Canadian surrogate, Crystal, and her son, Nathaniel, are staying with them in London.

Crystal is a 35-year-old single mum from a small town in Alberta. She had seen surrogacy portrayed on television a decade before and thought how amazing it was.

Crystal realised she wanted to help a couple create a family, so when an advertisement for surrogates appeared on her Facebook feed years later it seemed it was her time.



Once introduced to Crystal, Chris and Adam had two weeks to decide whether or not to progress. They emailed back and forth, sent each other pictures and set up WhatsApp calls.

Crystal said: "They were easy to talk to... I knew right away it would be an easy relationship." Without meeting in person, Chris and Adam decided Crystal was right for them.

Meanwhile they agonised over the choice of an egg donor – doing weeks of research and trawling through dozens of online profiles from Canadian and US agencies. "You get super critical," Chris recalls. "You are judging people on such intricate criteria. As well as physical attributes we were looking for a high number of eggs."

Having created their embryos in a Las Vegas clinic, they organised for Crystal to fly down from Canada for the transfer.

Adam and Chris flew out from London and they met for the first time. Chris remembers thinking, 'We are going to kill you with kindness'. They spent an amazing five days as the boys tried to create a relationship based on more than just a business transaction.

The transfer worked first time and 20 weeks later Chris and Adam flew to Canada to be at Crystal's milestone scan. But there was a problem.

The ultrasound showed their unborn son had stopped growing 4 weeks earlier. Adam and Chris were counselled that there was now just one viable foetus. The feelings of grief and loss were overwhelming, but there was nothing they could do but focus on the future.

The remainder of the pregnancy was complication free, though the birth itself was stressful, scary and chaotic.

The baby needed to be induced. Crystal needed an epidural, but there were no trained staff at the local hospital given it was a public holiday, so they drove three hours to the main city for the delivery. Everyone was involved in the birth process; including 12-year-old Nathaniel who was by his mum's side helping her count the contractions.



Chris recalls, when Beatrice emerged: "She was all mashed up and she was blue ... (but)...we were very blessed we had a surrogate who was welcoming and wanted us to be with her in delivery. It was an incredible experience."

While there were things they would certainly do differently, with embryos still 'on ice' Adam and Chris are already discussing another journey.

Chris is one of four gay dads sharing their lived experience of surrogacy to help others prepare for these complex journeys at FTS seminar series next month in Dublin, Edinburgh and London.

These sessions will include advice and short talks from surrogates, surrogacy professionals and legal experts. Details can be found [here](#).

Images by Mark Wheeler at www.markwheelerphotography.com

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