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#### Partners in Adoption Services: Nick's Story

Nick: I can't really pinpoint a time when I realised it because in all of my memory I was a boy.

Narrator: Nick and Marie are married and have two adopted girls. He has chosen to remain anonymous in order to protect his family.

Nick: When I was born I was a seven pound, twelve ounce baby girl and I was given the ungodly name of Emma Jane. I was two and a half and my mum spoke to me and I told her that she had to call by a different name and that was that really. It wasn't that I didn't like being a girl, it was that I didn't understand why they were calling me a girl. I didn't ... to me that was just crazy, it was confusing.

Narrator: Nick was diagnosed with a condition called Gender Dysphoria.

Nick: Roughly translated means there's a difference between body and mind and she said to me that you cannot fix your mind because you have the brain of a boy, all you can do is fix your body.

Narrator: By 2000 Nick had started on the long journey of gender reassignment to become a man. He met Marie and in 2006 they married.

Nick: Because of the condition you automatically think you can't have children so I didn't have any kind of aspirations to have children because, to me, it was always something that wasn't possible but we kind of fell into parenthood, circumstances made us fall into parenthood.

Narrator: Since the Gender Recognition Act was passed in 2004 people with Gender Dysphoria and transsexuals are legally recognised in their acquired agenda and don't have to reveal their past.

Nick: Legally I knew I didn't have to reveal it to the adoption services. I knew that because I had full gender recognition I didn't have to say anything. However, I decided just to be honest from the first phone call and when I phoned the children's social worker I told her it was literally the first thing I said to her. Our social worker that did our assessment was excellent and I couldn't speak more highly of her but there were other social workers that were difficult and did have ... did not understand the condition at all. With one particular social worker I think there was a religious issue that kind of impacted on the way I was viewed and although nothing was explicitly said it appeared to me that it wasn't something that was approved of and was something that needed to be relentlessly spoken about and it because almost like the Gender Dysphoria show. It was no longer about my parenting ability, it was no longer about ... it was all about the condition and what is the condition and what surgery are you going to have and when are you going to have it and how much time are you going to need to recover and then what are you going to tell the kids and how are you going to explain to the kids if you ... if we pursue this assessment. It became ... it was a big strain, it was a huge strain to have to bear information about yourself, asking questions from my childhood and when I knew and how I knew and there was some absolutely ridiculous questions asked. I was actually ... by one social worker I was actually asked, after my surgery, could I father children and when it was said I almost felt that it was a joke, I didn't really take her seriously but I could tell by her demeanour that it was ... she was serious, she didn't know. And, at that point I knew that I was dealing with ignorance and not discrimination.

Narrator: But one social worker was determined not to let discrimination or ignorance get in the way of assessing Nick and Marie's suitability to adopt.

Nick: She didn't make an issue of it. It was more a case of, okay, I know that, I know all I need to know about that, now let's look at what kind of parent you're going to be, now let's look at your views and attitudes towards food, towards diversity, towards schooling and education. I felt that I was being assessed as a parent and not as a transgender person and that is the key because these children need a parent. What they care about is can they be loved and looked after now and that's what, to me, an adoption assessment should be about and the social worker, her assessment absolutely did that.

Narrator: In 2007 Nick and Marie were finally successful in adopting their two children. Nick is now supporting other transgender people who wish to adopt. He is also developing a training package on transgender issues for local authorities.

Nick: If we could get better training for adoptive services and help adopters to understand that there are laws that protect and they don't have to do things that compromise them or make them uncomfortable in any way. There could be a lot more transgender adopters offering excellent homes to young children.

Narrator: The success of partnerships with people like Nick is encouraging more and more adoption agencies to recognise the benefits of equal esteem for those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

Nick: All the children that need homes have come from problematic backgrounds and they are usually very confused and upset and being a transgender person and being a child that was confused and upset for many, many years it helps me to relate to my kids and helps me to understand how they feel. I've got two beautiful children and I've got two well adjusted children who have come from a horrible background who can now enjoy life and if nothing more in my life I have accomplished giving those children a second chance at a normal life which they've now got.

[End of Recording]