

My ref:

Your ref:

Tel No: 0121 569 3101

Date: 17 April 2020

Dear Carer,

I hope you are all continuing to keep safe and well at this very difficult time. As you saw in the news yesterday, the Government provided updated guidance confirming that lockdown will continue for at least another three weeks.

We understand that this is a challenging time for everyone, but we want to reiterate that we will do everything that we can to support you through this period. Please see below message from Rt Hon Jacqui Smith, Chair of Sandwell Children’s Trust and Frances Craven, Chief Executive:

*We’re missing being around the Trust, but like you, we know that ‘staying at home’ is the best way to protect ourselves and others and give us the ability to deliver our vital services at this time. We continue to meet virtually with other members of the Trust Board throughout this lockdown period to discuss the ongoing implications of Covid-19. We appreciate the enormously impressive work that is going into keeping children safe during this unprecedented time. To provide you with reassurance, we review the work to identify and protect our most vulnerable children, on a daily basis. We understand the demands that this is placing on you as carers to work in different ways and in particular, to ensure that children and young people are not only kept busy but also have a sense of normality by continuing to have virtual contact with their parents and families.*

*It is clear that everyone is working exceptionally hard in very difficult circumstances. On behalf of the Board, I wanted to take the opportunity to thank you as carers for dealing with this unusual and challenging situation in such a professional and caring way.*

*Our priority is to keep the service going as well as possible and we will do everything we can to ensure this. However, we also know that we can come through this and we are determined to ensure that the Trust is in the best possible shape when we do. We know that Supervising Social Workers are keeping in touch with you all, but please contact them if you need any additional support.*

*Across the Trust, we can see resilience, innovation and most of all compassion. We can see an organisation that is doing all it can to protect the most vulnerable in our society. This makes us and the rest of the Board incredibly proud.*

*Thank you for everything that you do every day to keep our children and young people safe. Please, keep talking to each other, keep talking to your Supervising Social Workers and stay safe. Thank you.*

We know that one particular area that we must focus on is ensuring that different ways of contact are utilised for children and their families. We recognise that you may be concerned about using your own mobile phone, therefore, we can offer you the following option:

* Purchase a Pay as You Go Sim Card for your network provider (EE, Vodaphone etc) and insert this into your mobile phone to use when contacting parents/family members. Please advise parents/family members that the phone number is not monitored and will be off most of the time. Depending on how many calls you are going to need to make over this period, you can purchase a £10 or £20 pay as you go sim card that can be topped up. Please contact your Supervising Social Worker to reimburse the charge back to the Trust.

We will continue to keep in touch on a weekly basis during this unprecedented time.

Please look after yourself and to reiterate the message from Jacqui and Frances, thank you again for the care and support that you provide each and every day to our children and young people.

Kind regards



**Shanti Eaves**

**Head of Service, Children in Care, Care Leavers and Fostering.**