1 MAY 2020

**Sandwell Foster Carers Newsletter**

Welcome to your weekly newsletter!

We hope that you are all keeping safe and well during the continued period of lockdown. We appreciate how difficult it is for us all to adjust throughout this period and just wanted to re-iterate our thanks for the continued care and support that you provide to our children and young people each and every day.

**COVID-19 TESTING INFORMATION**

You will have heard in the news that testing is now more widely available for essential keyworkers. If you or a member of your household are displaying symptoms of Covid-19, you can book a test online directly by visiting [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) and clicking on one of the options under ‘Testing for coronavirus (COVID-19)’.

**HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

This week we are sharing a few helpful links to support health and wellbeing of children and young people:

* School Nurse Services: ChatHealth is a confidential text messaging service that enables children and young people (11-year olds plus) to contact their local Public Health nursing (school nursing) team and is available on **07480 635486**
* <https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/> website compliments the role of the School Nurses and increases access to trusted and safe health and wellbeing advice
* <https://www.kooth.com/> is a free, safe and anonymous online support for young people (11-19 years plus) available at all times and includes accessing online counselling support during specific hours
* Sandwell Beam have launched a phone support service for young people, to access the service contact askbeam@childrenssociety.org.uk All face-to-face services have been cancelled
* DECCA: Sandwell Drug and Alcohol Services are still available as and when needed. Please phone **0121 569 2201** or email decca\_team@sandwellchildrenstrust.org.uk
* Brook (Relationship and Sexual Health education and support: (age 11+): Referrals for 1-1 support are still being taken and services are being delivered by phone. Email Midlands.education@brook.org.uk for information

I’m not sure if you’re aware but there are some free activity books available online from a company called Madlug. The books are aimed at 4 to 11-year olds and include puzzles and activities to keep minds and hands busy. Please follow the below link to request your free packs:

<https://share.hsforms.com/1BRCF_soyTFGr-rfpixt5jQ3r5mj>

**KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE ONLINE**

The Home Office have published [guidance for parents and carers to keep children safe online](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-parents-and-carers-to-keep-children-safe-online). This guidance covers a range of online harms including radicalisation.

The advice and guidance on GOV.UK is being regularly updated; this page is likely to become the location for any future guidance on online harms.

**UPDATE FROM LAC HEALTH COLLEAGUES**

The LAC Health Team continue to ensure statutory health assessments are carried out as required. Along with completing health assessments via telephone they will soon be offering virtual health assessments in order for them to see the child/young person via screen. To be able to do this foster carers will need either a smartphone/iPad or similar device and a Wifi connection to limit the use of data. On arranging the health assessment with the foster carer, the nurse will discuss this in further detail to ensure all is suitable to go ahead.

A reminder of the LAC Health Team contact details should you have any general health queries as follows:-

**LAC Health Team** 0121 507 2624 lac.sandwell@nhs.net

**Debbie Lock** Named Nurse for Looked after Children debbie.lock1@nhs.net

**Charlene Plant** Specialist Nurse for LAC charlene.plant@nhs.net

**Gemma Shannon** Specialist Nurse for LAC gemma.shannon1@nhs.net

**FOSTERING PANEL**

We are pleased to let you know that our Fostering Panels have continued to take place throughout lockdown. So far, we have successfully held four virtual panels through Skype video calling. We are committed to ensure that decisions are not delayed during this difficult period.

**FOSTER CARER REVIEWS**

You will also be pleased to know that foster carer reviews are still taking place as planned too. To those of you that have been involved in virtual reviews so far, a massive ‘thank you’ for embracing the new process. We know that it must feel very strange! However, I have been receiving positive updates from the Independent Reviewing Officer's regarding how positive the reviews have been. This is fantastic news and supports our ‘new’ business as usual activities.

**FOSTERING RECRUITMENT**

As always, we are making every effort to recruit more foster carers to come and join us. If you’ve got any good news stories that you would like to share with us that we could use in our recruitment campaign, please let us know. We would love to hear from you! Please email us:

Fostering\_Info@sandwellchildrenstrust.org

Last week, we received this lovely message from Barbara Hale that we have already started using on social media – thank you Barbara!

This year we celebrate 26 years in fostering.
Can't say it's been all rosy but it's rewarding.
My story I am always proud to tell....
My boy was brought to us at the age of 4 years old.
No boundaries. Didn't know how to play.

He could strip a wire for the copper inside and ask to 'weigh it in' to get money.
But he screamed at a furry toy.
There were lots of plans for him.
One was, not to get his name on the blackboard every day.
I could feel his confusion and the bruises on each side of his head explained a lot.
I looked after my boy until he was 16 years old. He left us and entered the Army.
I worried day and night that he wouldn't make it because he was academically weak.
But he got through it.
By this time I was MOM who he proudly invited to his passing out parade.
I was just so thankful he had got through initial training.
Two years later my boy tells me he is promoted to a lance corporal in the Queens Fusiliers.
I'm so glad I fell in love with that 4 years old and helped him along the way.
Now he owns his own house has a beautiful girl and they have their first baby on the way.
To me that is success.
I look at my boy and feel satisfied and proud of my life as a Foster carer.
It is a challenging role to take on but the rewards are much. When I make a child smile my heart lifts.
I love to make them happy.

**MARKETING NEWS**

We are excited to announce that we have been working with West Bromwich Albion Football Club to agree a package of marketing support for the next two seasons. I’m sure that you will agree that this is fantastic news! When the new season commences, we will have advertising on the two score boards, electronic messages around the edge of the pitch, on the televisions on the concourse, an advertisement in every home match program and presence on the West Bromwich Albion website.

We are hoping that this new area of marketing will prove to be lucrative in our efforts to encourage more people to become foster carers.

We are always looking at different ways to advertise so if you’ve got any ideas that you would like to share with us, please let us know at Fostering\_Info@sandwellchildrenstrust.org

**FOSTERING SUPPORT GROUPS**

We are conscious that our usual fostering support groups and coffee mornings are unable to take place at the moment. However, we are hoping to have more news about this for you next week!

I look forward to speaking to you again next week but in the meantime, please stay safe.



**Shanti Eaves**

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

**CONTACT US – IT’S YOUR NEWSLETTER!**

This is your newsletter, so do you know about any great fostering resources, or perhaps just an article or web link you want to share? Anything that could be useful to fellow foster carers – we’ll help you let them know. Or if you have an idea, comment or request about fostering in general or what should be in your newsletter, contact your allocated Supervising Social Worker or email us at Fostering\_Info@sandwellchildrenstrust.org

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