7 MAY 2020

**Sandwell Foster Carers Newsletter**

Welcome to your weekly newsletter!

**A message from Pauline Turner, Director of Operations**

I’m sure that you will agree that it’s hard to believe that we are in week 7 of lockdown. I hope that you are all staying safe and keeping well. We know how difficult it has been for everyone who is trying to make life as normal, interesting and safe for our children and young people whilst also having to adjust to a new ‘normal’ for ourselves.

I know that you have been in contact with your Supervising Social Workers and I would encourage you to continue to stay in touch. It’s more important than ever that we keep talking to each other.

I hope that you agree that it’s great news that foster carer reviews and virtual fostering panels are continuing to take place. We are also holding Looked After Children Reviews via conference calls and we’re proud to say that the pandemic has not resulted in re-scheduling of previously planned meetings. We are very much ‘business as usual’ in the Trust and are continually using technology to meet the needs of our services.

Whilst we are not physically based together, we are certainly working together to ensure consistency and support across all of our services. We are doing everything that we can to ensure that despite the situation we are all currently in, we do not delay decisions and that we serve our purpose of improving the lives of children and young people.

I know that Shanti has kept in touch on a weekly basis and I hope that you find this useful. I also know that Shanti has thanked you for everything that you do to care for our most vulnerable children and young people. However, I just want to re-iterate those ‘thanks’ and say how much we appreciate the work you do, day in, day out. You are all heroes.

**NHS advice for parents and carers**

The NHS have shared an updated guide to make it clear what a parent or carer should do if a child is showing any sort of symptoms of COVID-19. We thought that this would be helpful to share with you. Click [here](https://www.sandwellchildrenstrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Royal-College-covid19_advice_for_parents_when_child_unwell_or_injured_poster-002-1.pdf) to read the guidance.

**Keeping in touch with children and young people**

As Pauline has already mentioned, it’s more important than ever that we keep in touch and keep talking to each other. Please encourage children and young people to contact us via Mind of My Own or [i-Say](https://www.sandwellchildrenstrust.org/feedback/) – we are here to help and support them.

**Fostering Recruitment**

Don’t forget that 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.

This week, we received a lovely story from Shirley Graham:

The boys, (aged 13 and 11) are coping well with being at home. “They’ve been brilliantly behaved, doing the school work they’ve been given.

We’ve also tried to mix it up a bit, with a bit of school work, gardening and baking, online school work and support on the phone from the Boys Brigade.

We all like the outdoors, so we have been to the park, as we don’t have a very big garden and the kids take their bikes or skateboards.

I can’t fault the children’s attitude, we’ve had a few moments, of course, but on the whole, they have been so good that we have said that when this is all over, the children can choose a big holiday for us all. I’m so proud of them and they help keep me young and active.”

**Marketing news**

As always, we will be supporting Foster Care Fortnight which commences this Monday – 11 May. Due to the current social distancing restrictions, our activity will be on social media via Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Give us a ‘like’ or ‘share’ if you can!

As we mentioned last week, we are always looking at different ways to advertise. If you’ve got any ideas that you would like to share with us, please email us.

**Fostering Support Groups**

As we mentioned last week, we have been discussing how we can operate fostering support groups and coffee mornings ‘virtually’. We’ve agreed that it would be great if you could let us know what you would like. What would work best for you at this time? Please let your Supervising Social Worker know or send us your ideas via email

I hope you all have a good bank holiday weekend and I look forward to speaking to you again next week. In the meantime, please stay safe.



**Shanti Eaves**

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

**DON’T FORGET TO 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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