

Sandwell Foster Carers Newsletter

15 MAY 2020

Welcome to your weekly newsletter!

A message from Sue Applegate, Registered Manager.

It's hard to believe that we are on week 8 of lockdown. I hope that you are continuing to keep safe and well and that you all had a good bank holiday weekend.

On Sunday evening we heard the updated message from the Prime Minister. As a Trust, we are still carefully considering the government's roadmap to recovery that was issued on Monday afternoon. No doubt every one of us is reading what we can to find out what it means for us, our families and the children that we care for. It's clear that there is no easy or quick way back to normality and we must all carry on in the measured and patient way that has typified Sandwell's response to the pandemic.

One of the biggest talking points since the weekend is the possible return to school in June for pupils in certain year groups. We hope that the details included in this newsletter from Balwant Bains, Head Teacher for Sandwell's Virtual School will provide some clarity for you.

Thank you for the care that you provide to our children and young people every day and thank you for continuing to keep in touch with your Supervising Social Workers. It's more important than ever that we maintain contact and provide support at this difficult time. I'll talk to you again soon but in the meantime, please stay safe.

A message from Balwant Bains, Head Teacher for Sandwell's Virtual School

As Sue has mentioned above, you will be aware that the government announced, 'phase one' of its 'ambition for all primary school children to return to school before the summer for a month if feasible'.

Schools are currently in the process of planning for this and seeking the relevant guidance. As they do this, I would like to draw your attention to the government guidance: **What parents and carers need to know about schools and other education settings during the coronavirus outbreak:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

Mental Health Support Phone Line

We have uploaded a really useful leaflet to the carers webpage, promoting the new urgent mental health support phone line launched by DWMH which is operating 24 hours a day and is available to Black Country residents of all ages.

The phone line will provide additional support and guidance to people who have mental health needs during this difficult time including existing service users and any other resident of the Black Country. It is not intended to replace other forms of care but will support those who need mental health advice and guidance urgently.

Individuals are now able to call 0345 6460827 and they will be asked which borough they live in to connect to the relevant phone support team.

Foster Care Fortnight 2020

We hope that you have been enjoying our messages on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Don't forget to 'like' and 'share' whenever you can!

Whilst we continue to thank you all for the fabulous job that you do every day, we also want to encourage more people to become foster carers. We are hoping that the fortnight will encourage more people to register their interest, particularly at this most unusual time that we are experiencing.

Fostering Recruitment

Throughout Foster Care Fortnight we will also be sharing good news stories that you send to us. It's not too late to get involved so please [email](#) us and we will ensure that your story is featured.

We are thrilled that Barbara's story has been very successful on Facebook! At the time of writing this it has reached 12,797 people and has received 284 reactions, comments or shares. Fantastic!

Radicalisation, digital support and available support

The risk of radicalisation for vulnerable individuals is still very real. With more time being spent online, there is a possibility of increased exposure to online terrorist content and influences as groomers look to exploit feelings of stress and isolation among vulnerable individuals. Please take

time to read 'digital safety' document that we have uploaded to the carers area of our website where you will find more information about:

- encouraging people to practice digital safety so that vulnerable individuals are less exposed to online harm
- increasing awareness of the signs of radicalisation, enabling people to make informed choices
- signposting parents, carers, family and friends to Prevent or other appropriate safeguarding services.

If you need any further information or support, you can contact [Sarfraz Khan](#), Prevent Officer based in our Youth Offending Service

Fostering Support Groups

We would still love to hear from you with your ideas of how you would like us to run fostering support groups and coffee mornings 'virtually'. Please let your Supervising Social Worker know or send us your ideas via [email](#)

Activities for children and young people

We've been sent this [link](#) produced by Thurrock Council to some really good activities for children and young people that we would like to share with you. It includes arts, crafts, music, exercise, cooking and wellbeing. It's quite good for adults too! We hope you enjoy it.

That's all for this week, as always please take care and 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
