

Sandwell Foster Carers Newsletter

29 MAY 2020

Welcome to your weekly newsletter!

We hope that you are all keeping safe and well and enjoyed the bank holiday weekend. The lovely weather seems set to continue so I hope you manage to get some time to enjoy it safely.

Half term holiday creations

Please remind the children and young people in your care that it's not too late to send us a picture they've painted, a poem that they've written or anything else creative. We would love to hear from them! Please email our [Participation Team](#) and there will definitely be something chocolatey coming their way!

Joint Education update from Balwant Bains and myself

We would like to update you in respect of plans for the return to school of children as outlined in the Government's 'phase one' of its "ambition for all primary school children to return to school before the summer for a month if feasible". The plan is that this would start with reception, year 1 and year 6 pupils going back in "smaller sizes" on 1st June 2020, "though this will be kept under review."

There is a specific expectation that vulnerable children and young people will continue to attend educational provision, where it is appropriate for them to do so.

The decision of whether it is beneficial and appropriate for children and young people to attend school will be based on a discussion between the school, the parent/carer, and others, including social workers and other relevant professionals. The decision will be based on a balance of risk, including health vulnerabilities, family circumstances and the child or young persons assessed special educational needs.

The government guidance document for school's states that:

- Schools should offer some face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of year 10 and year 12 students. This suggest that full reopening of secondary schools won't happen until the new academic year.

- PPE is only needed in “very small” number of cases
- Early Years and primary pupils cannot be expected to follow the social distancing rule of remaining two metres apart from each other.

Therefore, schools will:

- o put in place avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
 - o practice frequent hand cleaning and good respiratory hygiene practices
 - o more frequent and regular cleaning of settings
 - o put in place plans that minimises contact and mixing for adults and children
- Classes should be capped at 15 – and Teaching Assistants can be allocated to lead a group, working under the direction of a teacher.
 - You should walk or cycle wherever possible. If you have to use public transport, you should try and avoid peak times.

You can also read the Government guidance: What parents and carers need to know about schools and other education settings during the coronavirus outbreak using the link below:

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

Schools will provide you with clarity of how they plan to embed the recommendations for the child in the coming weeks and your child’s social worker will be in contact with you to complete the risk assessment in respect of each child returning to school. If you have any specific concerns about the education plans for any child you are caring for, please contact either the child’s social worker or your supervising social worker.

Update on Contact Arrangements for children and families

I wanted to update you on issues in respect of contact. When we made the decision to temporarily suspend all contact arrangements in line with the ongoing Government advice to prevent the spread of coronavirus, we understood that this would be very difficult for families and we promised families that we would keep this under review.

The courts have been clear that they expect us to keep to the spirit of contact orders during this time which is why we have promoted alternative forms of contact. I know that you will agree that contact is very important for children and their families.

On 11 May 2020, the Government published its [staying safe outside your home](#) guidance. This guidance provided a limited number of changes. Whilst the message is still to stay at home as much as possible, it does allow for some limited outdoor activities, such as being able to sit outside in the fresh air and to meet one other person from a different household, following social distancing guidelines.

With this guidance in mind, we are now beginning to look into the possibility of whether some contacts may be able to take place outdoors on a very limited basis. The Government advice is that the risk of infection outside is significantly lower than inside. Contact Supervisors will be starting to make contact with some carers and parents to discuss whether any outdoor socially distanced contact arrangements can be facilitated and risks assessments will be completed where it appears that we may be able to consider this option.

A strict working agreement will be in place for any contacts that will be facilitated in the community which will provide clear and specific guidance in respect of the contact arrangement and the need for social distancing. It is important to recognise that community-based contact will not be possible in all cases, for example where carers or other household members are vulnerable or shielding or where outdoor contact is not appropriate. In these cases, we will continue to promote and facilitate alternative indirect forms of contact. If you have any concerns about this, please contact your supervising social worker.

Fostering Recruitment

Don't forget that we still want to hear your good news stories! Please [email](#) us and we will ensure that your story is featured.

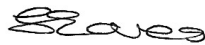
As we said last week we have secured some digital advertising in supermarkets and a couple of roadside boards with Clear Channel. Look out for our adverts on the following dates and don't forget to tell your friends and relatives:

- Sainsburys Blackheath – 24 June 2020 for two weeks
- Sainsburys Oldbury – 24 June 2020 for two weeks
- Asda Oldbury – 22 June 2020 for two weeks
- Asda Great Bridge – 29 June 2020 for two weeks
- Asda Cape Hill – 29 June 2020 for two weeks

Adverts will also be showing on the following two screens from 24 June 2020 for two weeks:

- High Street before Dartmouth Street, West Bromwich
- High Street outside Kaleidoscope (the old West Bromwich Building Society building), West Bromwich.

I hope you have a good week and I look forward to updating you again next week. 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
