

Sandwell Foster Carers

24 JULY 2020

Welcome to your newsletter!

I can't believe that it's been a month since I wrote to you all! I hope that you are all continuing to keep safe and well and that you are managing to enjoy some of the intermittent sunny weather that we are experiencing.

As the school holidays are already upon us, I want to start with a message from **Balwant Bains, Executive Head of the Virtual School for LAC:**

This has been an extremely challenging period in your child's education journey, thank you for your patience and resilience in maintaining some form of schooling for them. You will be aware that the Government has announced that all schools, including special schools, will reopen in September. Schools are planning on how this will look for your child; it will be different from school to school. The Government have made it clear that they feel it is now safe enough to reopen all pupils in September. This means that education is once again compulsory and that parents and carers will be expected to send their children to school.

Your child's school will write to you shortly to explain how they will manage the reopening in September, and if there will be any changes to normal routines in line with the Government's guidance. These changes may be a different start and finish times, using different entrances, changing the number of weekly sessions a school is open for, how they will operate bubbles of children and any other special adjustments which are designed to keep children and staff safe. Please encourage your children to respect the new way of working.

If your child has Special Educational Needs or Disabilities and is currently receiving travel assistance, then the council will reinstate the usual transport arrangements. However, if you would prefer not to use the transport then it may be possible to access a personal budget which you can use to make your own transport arrangements. Please contact SEN_transportOfficer@sandwell.gov.uk and leave your name and phone number together with the name of the young person being transported, someone will contact you to discuss the offer. If you would like to explore this option please contact us as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made for the start of the Autumn term.

Enjoy a safe summer.

Balwant Bains

Brook – Healthy lives for young people

You're all probably aware but I wanted to highlight the excellent support that Brook can provide to young people. Their [website](#) contains some really good information regarding where to access advice and guidance regarding sexual health services within the local area.

Holidays – 'staycation' or 'vacation'

As we continue to receive updated advice from the government, I didn't want to overload you with information that may become quickly out of date. However, if you're having a 'staycation' this year, I thought it would be helpful to mention the current advice. As you are probably aware, face coverings become compulsory in shops and supermarkets on Friday 24 July (along with public transport). Just a general reminder that these don't need to be 'face masks' you can consider using scarves, bandanas etc. It might also be worth keeping some hand sanitizer with you when you're out and about to help reduce the risk of infection spreading.

If you are going on 'vacation' abroad, we have developed a 'Covid-19 Holiday Abroad Checklist' that will be completed with you by the child's allocated Social Worker. We hope that you find this helpful as it will assist in us ensuring everyone's safety whilst enjoying a well-earned break.

Changes to Initial Health Assessments – a message from Debbie Locke, Named Nurse.

Initial Health Assessments (IHA) for children and young people coming into care, undertaken by the Doctor at Sandwell General Hospital, are now returning to face-to-face appointments with some restrictions in place. Only one carer, per child/young person will be allowed to attend the appointment (there is no space for additional children or adults in the examination room or waiting area). The social worker will be available via telephone at the time of the appointment. Birth parents are currently not able to attend but the Doctor will be able to contact them by telephone if necessary. We ask that if the child/young person or someone in the household has any symptoms or is self-isolating that they let the social worker know as soon as possible. A Covid-19 screening questionnaire will be completed by outpatient staff on arrival to the department. For any children or young people that have had an IHA completed virtually a further appointment will be made in the near future to complete a physical examination.

If there are any queries, contact the team on 0121 507 2624 or 0121 507 3810.

Fostering Forum

We have now held two virtual fostering forums, and these have been really well attended by LAC Health, the Virtual School and the Fostering Service. Tanya Evans is currently our only foster carer representative at the forum and she is bringing lots of creative ideas for how we can improve and develop the fostering service for carers. One of the first areas that Tanya has been involved in has been the recruitment process for our Fostering Panel Chair. She has been involved in shortlisting and will be interviewing the applicants with myself and the Panel Advisor. It really would be great to have more carers involved so if you're available, our next virtual forum is scheduled to take place on Friday 14 August 2020 between 10:00 and 12:00. We would love you to join us! Please drop us an [email](#) and we'll send you an invitation!



Enjoy the rest of the summer and I'll be in touch with your next newsletter at the end of August. In the meantime, 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](mailto:Info@sandwellchildrenstrust.org)
