

The Fostering Network's report to Midlands Fostering Services 20 October 2020

Coronavirus Updates:

1. Government and DfE Guidance: Various guidance (Aug - Oct 2020):

a) [Guidance: Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance for children's social care \(updated 15/10/2020\)](#)

b) **The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendments) (No2) Regulations 2020 (25/09/2020)** - The Department for Education have announced that a small number of flexibilities to the adoption and children regulations will continue until March 2021. The DfE produced some [provisional guidance](#) on children's social care flexibilities from 25 September 2020. This is non-statutory guidance that is provisional until regulatory changes come into force on 25 September 2020 and will remain in force until 31 March 2021.

Also see: **DfE Research Briefing: The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (28/09/2020)** - This briefing describes the laying of the Statutory Instrument, its content, reaction from the sector, and the consultation on extending some its regulations. It can be accessed [here](#)

c) **DfE: Local restrictions: areas with an outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) (12/10/2020)** - A list of areas with additional local restrictions. Includes information for local authorities, residents and workers about what to do and how to manage the outbreak. Access [here](#)

d) **The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Local COVID-19 Alert Level) (England) Regulations 2020** – These new regulations came into force on 14 October 2020 in relation to the new three tier system: tier one is medium, tier two is high and tier three is very high. The regulations all expire at the end of 6 months from the day they come into force.

The three sets of Regulations setting out the tiers of restriction are:

1. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Local COVID-19 Alert Level) (Medium) (England) Regulations 2020 ([SI 2020/1103](#))

2. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Local COVID-19 Alert Level) (High) (England) Regulations 2020 ([SI 2020/1104](#))

3. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Local COVID-19 Alert Level) (Very High) (England) Regulations 2020 ([SI 2020/1105](#))

e) **DfE: Guidance for parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak (updated 15/10/2020)** - Can be accessed [here](#)

f) **DfE: Vulnerable Children and Young People Survey Summary of returns Waves 1 to 8 (Sept 2020)** - The (DfE) has established a survey of local authorities in England to help understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on children's social care. It is accessible [here](#)

g) **House of Commons House of Lords Joint Committee on Human Rights: The Government's response to COVID-19: human rights implications (07/09/2020)** - can be accessed [here](#)

h) **Foster Care: Coronavirus - Question for Department for Education, tabled on 21 September 2020** - Response by Vicky Ford, Secretary of State for Education to a question about The Fostering Network's proposal for an additional payment of £50 a week to foster carers. This can be accessed [here](#)

i) **Ofsted: coronavirus (COVID-19) rolling update** - Ofsted guidance and information relating to coronavirus (COVID-19) for schools, early years, children's social care and further education and skills providers. Latest update available [here](#)

Also see:

- **Article 39: Children Act Contact Principles Continue to Apply during the Pandemic:** can be accessed [here](#) (29/09/2020)
- **Local Government Association: Children's social care referrals fell by a fifth during lockdown.** Article can be accessed [here](#) (07/09/2020)
- **BBC News Online article: Children 'should be banned from unregulated care homes.** Access article [here](#) (09/09/2020)

2. Education and Coronavirus – Various:

a) **House of Commons Library: Research Briefing: Coronavirus and schools FAQ's** (11/09/2020) - can be accessed [here](#)

b) **Buttle Trust: Blog** - schools to face huge challenges as they prepare to open classrooms after 6 months, can be accessed [here](#):

c) **National Foundation for Educational Research: Schools Responses to Covid-19 – The Challenges Facing Schools and Pupils in September 2020** - This research follows an earlier [NFER survey](#) of schools' responses to Covid-19 in May. It focuses on the challenges schools will face from September when they open to all pupils. Jointly funded by Nuffield Foundation and NFER, the study is based on a weighted sample of almost 3,000 school leaders and teachers across over 2,200 mainstream primary and secondary schools in England. The findings were collected between the 8th and 15th July 2020. It can be accessed [here](#).

d) **UK Parliament: The impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services Inquiry:** The inquiry (which is accepting evidence until 20/12/2020) will look at how the

outbreak of COVID-19 is affecting all aspects of the education sector and children's social care system and will scrutinise how the Department for Education is dealing with the situation. It will examine both short term impacts, such as the effects of school closures and exam cancellations, as well as longer-term implications particularly for the most vulnerable children. Evidence can be submitted [here](#)

e) IPSEA update on COVID-19, school re-opening and SEN provision (28/9/2020) - Updated information about how the COVID-19 measures will affect children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities ("SEND"). Link available [here](#)

3. Mental Health, Safeguarding and Wellbeing: Various

a) Children's Commissioner: How lockdown affected children's stress and anxiety (30/09/2020) – Blog explores results of survey and can be accessed [here](#)

b) The Association for Child and Adolescent mental Health: COVID19 Resources on Child & Adolescent Mental Health (13/09/2020) - See a range of evidence-based resources, research and advice in relation to COVID19's effect on child and adolescent mental health. Can be accessed [here](#)

c) NSPCC: Making neuroscience more accessible: childhood trauma, the brain and mental health (17/09/20) - An animation, guidebook and set of videos about childhood trauma and brain development have been created by University College London (UCL) in a project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The resources, which are freely available, can be accessed [here](#). The resources are based on research, looking at how children's brains adapt to abusive or neglectful environments in ways that help in the short term but increase risk of mental health problems in the future.

d) UK Trauma Council - Beyond the pandemic: Strategic priorities for responding to childhood Trauma: The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on children and young people's lives. It has increased the experience of trauma for many and compromised the support which children and young people receive from friends, family and public services. The UK Trauma Council considers that without a specific focus and sustained energy from Governments across the UK, the needs of many children and young people will go unmet – with long-term negative consequences for their lives. The focus should now be on understanding the impact of trauma on children's development and wellbeing and responding appropriately. Access report and recommendations [here](#)
Additional UK Trauma Council Resources are available [here](#)

e) Child Accident Prevention Trust: News – Button Batteries - A reminder about the dangers of button batteries and need for safe disposal is [here](#)

f) Social Care Institute for Excellence: Safeguarding children and families during the COVID-19 crisis: quick guide for practitioners working to safeguard children and families during the COVID-19 outbreak, including social workers and those working in social care settings. Link to website content [here](#)

g) MindEd: free educational resource on children and young people's mental health - Funded by the Department of Health and Department for Education. Further details available [here](#)

h) Babies in Lockdown - Listening to parents to build back better (Aug 2020) - Best Beginnings, Home Start and Parent-Infant Foundation commissioned Critical Research to work with them to gain insights into the impact COVID-19 is having on babies and their parents of all backgrounds from across the UK. Findings are available [here](#)

National Developments

1. Kinship Care Parliamentary Taskforce: First Thought Not Afterthought: Report of the Parliamentary Taskforce on Kinship Care (30/9/2020) - The report summarises research and evidence gathered by the Taskforce and makes a series of recommendations for Government, local authorities and other public agencies to help deliver a vision for kinship care. Full Report available [here](#). An Executive Summary is available on The Family Rights Group website accessible [here](#). The report is explored in an article in Community Care and can be accessed [here](#)

2. What Works for Children's Social care: funding for three new projects which a Children and young people with a social worker have, on average, lower educational attainment than their peers (01/09/2020) - These projects, based in Bath and North East Somerset, York and Hartlepool, aim to close this attainment gap by placing an advisory teacher within children's social care teams, helping schools to improve their ability to support students displaying challenging behaviour, and providing support for vulnerable children as they transition into secondary school. To increase educational attainment for children with a social worker announced: further details [here](#)

3. Nuffield Family Justice Observatory: Briefing Paper - Contact between children in care or adopted and their families: six key messages from research (Sept 2020) - Decisions about contact are crucially important for children and families when children are placed for adoption, removed from home through care proceedings, or voluntarily looked after by local authorities. This briefing paper distils and reflects on the key points from three evidence reviews in an eight-minute read. The Briefing Paper can be accessed [here](#)

4. Education Policy Institute: Education in England – Annual Report 2020 (26/08/2020) - The Education Policy Institute (EPI) has published its Annual Report on the state of education in England, including the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. published in partnership with the Fair Education Alliance (FEA) and Unbound Philanthropy, also examines the gap at a local level, across different school subjects, and among different groups of pupils – including by varying levels of disadvantage. Report available [here](#)

5. Coronavirus and the Family Justice System (Survey) - A new study with Dr Mary Baginsky, Kings College London will examine in more detail how practice around child protection conferences has been affected by the pandemic. The insights of all those who have been involved - from families to practitioners - is vital. Click here to [take part in survey](#)

6. **#YOUCANADOPT:** Is a new nationwide campaign, #YOUCANADOPT, has been launched to dispel myths around who is eligible to adopt and encourage more people to consider adoption. The website can be accessed [here](#)

7. **The First Day of Forever Film:** has been made in partnership by the Centre for Child and Family Justice Research at Lancaster University, Grandparents Plus, and CoramBAAF. In the film, special guardians speak out about how unsupported and isolated they felt. The film aims to improve the journey for special guardians. It can be viewed [here](#)

8. **OFTED Guidance: Various**

a) **Guidance: Inspecting local authority children’s services** (Updated 18 September 2020) can be accessed [here](#)

b) **National Director for Regulation and Social Care, Yvette Stanley, discusses children’s social care regulatory work during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions.** Access [here](#)

c) **Notifying Ofsted of serious incidents – new online form for registered providers:** The new form and relevant guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tell-ofsted-about-an-incident-childrens-social-care-notification>. The new form is only available at this ‘gov.uk’ web address. When accessing the new form through Ofsted online please make sure that you click on the social care serious notification and not an early years serious notification. Your first page should list social care settings. To check you have made a successful submission, you should have received a confirmation email from Ofsted forms (ofsted.forms@notifications.service.gov.uk), with the heading ‘Ofsted received your serious incident report’. If you have not received this email then your form has not been successfully submitted to OFSTED.

9. **National Statistics: Children accommodated in secure children's homes (Sept 2020)** - This release contains statistics on children accommodated in secure children's homes, including numbers of approved and available places availability and occupancy rates children accommodated by gender, age and length of stay. Data is reported for England and Wales. Information is taken from the DfE SA1 data return collected from secure children's homes. Can be accessed [here](#)

10. **Issues of Equality and Diversity: Various**

a) **Black Foster Children – Children Who Belong (Blog) – Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers:** access [here](#)

b) **Coventry University, Penny Appeal and Coram BAAF: Among the last ones to leave? Understanding the Journeys of Muslim Children in the Care System in England (Sept 2020)** - Through interviews with social workers, foster carers, adoptive parents and prospective adoptive parents, this [research](#) presents a research-informed narrative of the complexities in Muslim children’s circumstances and identities, which influence how decisions are made about their lives.

11. Local Government Association: submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review: available [here](#)

The Fostering Network – Developments and Campaigns

- 1. Ongoing updates:** We continue to update our [coronavirus](#) pages on the website please do refer to the support pages, for [foster carers](#) and [fostering services](#)
- 2. Sons and Daughters Month:** Every October, The Fostering Network holds Sons and Daughters Month – a celebration of the vital contribution to fostering by the children of foster carers. The campaign aims to promote activity to recognise, thank and reward children and young people for the important role they play in welcoming fostered children into their families. We have downloadable certificates and thank you letters that can be sent to sons and daughters, and we will also be running a creative competition during October for all young people living in fostering households. Look on our [website](#) for further details.
- 3. Member only content on website:** Here are the steps you need to take to access member-only content on The Fostering Network website:
 - a. Go to www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/user/register or alternatively, click on 'Register' at the top of the page
 - b. Please complete the form with your work email address (you won't be able to register with a personal email). If we have your name and email address already, then you can register straight away. If we don't, your details get sent to our membership team and, once we input your details on our system, we will email you and you can register as normal.
 - c. Once you have filled it all in and clicked "Register for a login", you will be sent an email – click on the link in the email to activate your account (check your junk/spam folder as sometimes this email gets filtered). If you have any problems, you can contact membership@fostering.net or call on 020 7620 6440.
- 4. The Fostering Network Member Helpline** - An exclusive member only service provided by The Fostering Network. Open from 10am – 3pm Monday to Friday, Call: 020 7401 9582 or Email: info@fostering.net

Our [helplines](#) are open as usual and ready to assist with any fostering related queries, including those arising as a result of coronavirus. You foster carers can also phone our confidential [stress support service](#).

We are operating a call back service during the coronavirus outbreak. Please leave us a message clearly and slowly stating your name and your telephone number, if you can repeat your name that is really helpful. We will always return your call and aim to do so within 24 hours, although it's normally a lot quicker than that.

Please also make use of the Government's dedicated coronavirus helpline: 0800 046 8687.

Sab Jagpal: Practice Support Consultant – Midlands
Tel: 0121 554 6591
Mobile: 0791 8684975
Email: sab.jagpal@fostering.net