

**Comms to Carers**

We are aware that there have been many requests from our foster carers for respite in recent weeks. We acknowledge that these have been very challenging and difficult times and that your role as foster carers has been crucial to the well-being of children at this time.

Until now these arrangements could not be considered due to Covid-19. This was owing to the clear risks of bringing members of two households together. Whilst we are clear that this risk still exists and needs to be taken seriously it is recognised that it needs to be balanced with the needs of our carer community who have worked tirelessly to meet the needs of our looked after children under exceptionally difficult circumstances.

We have also taken into account recent guidance from CoramBAAF in relation to respite. CoramBAAF are clear that:

“Respite care can be a crucial part of an approach that supports relationships and enhances family well-being, especially where a child or young person brings particular issues resulting from their special needs”.

They are also clear that:

“all respite care arrangements should be child-centred and relationship-based. The risk and protective factors associated with making such arrangements must be identified and explicitly addressed. Of equal importance is the identification of the risks associated with not arranging respite care – for the child, the carer and the placement”.

The guidance from CoramBAAF can be found in the link:

<https://corambaaf.org.uk/coronavirus/fostering/respite-care-and-covid-19>

Therefore, respite arrangements as requested by our carers will be assessed on a case by case basis from now on and accommodated wherever possible. Given the demand for respite at this time and the limited availability of carers able to offer respite priority will be given to carer households deemed to be under particular stress or hardship as a result of the Covid 19 Lockdown – single carers for example may need to be prioritised but it is appreciated that we have many carers that have found the last few months particularly difficult.

Requests will need to be signed off as soon as this is possible by the respective Fostering Practice Manager before they can commence. This process will involve the completion of a risk assessment by the Supervising Social Worker which will be used by the PM to inform the decision and among other things, will require confirmation that the child/dren’s SW is satisfied with the arrangement.

It is possible that it will take a few days to complete this process and therefore is it necessary that foster carers inform their Supervising Social Worker know as far in advance as possible of any respite request.

Please do contact your SSW’s Practice Manager if any of the above is not clear.

The latest government guidance on staying overnight in other people’s houses can be found in the below link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-people-from-outside-your-household-from-4-july>

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued hard work and commitment to meeting the needs of our looked after children at this difficult time and to wish each of you an enjoyable summer.

Best Wishes,