

**Comms to staff**

It is acknowledged that there have been many requests from WSCC foster carers for respite in recent weeks. Until recently, these arrangements could not be considered under the initial Covid-19 public health measures. However, the easing of restrictions means that they can now take place in England, other than in areas subject to local lockdown. Arrangements made between two households are compliant with the Government’s latest public health announcements in relation to Covid-19. Whilst it is clear that 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.

Therefore, respite arrangements as requested by WSCC carers will be assessed on a case by case basis 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 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 completed in conjunction with the foster carer 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. Please do contact your PM’s for any further questions that you may have.