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To all foster families in Scotland

19 May 2020

Dear foster families

FOSTER CARE FORTNIGHT 2020 - 11-24 May 2020

I write to you all today at the start of a very different Foster Care Fortnight.

We are all living with restrictions on our lives that we could never have anticipated and I know how much additional pressure the Coronavirus pandemic must be putting on all families, far less families who are nurturing children and young people who have experienced trauma or neglect in their lives.

I would firstly like to reassure you that we have been working closely with organisations like [The Fostering Network](#) and [CELCIS](#) who have worked hard to collate as much information as possible to help support you and fostering service providers during the Covid-19 health safety restrictions. These are already well populated links to advice on maintaining family contact, children's hearings and fostering panels and are being updated regularly as issues arise. I have included links above to both sets of guidance.

Also to remind you that you can call [Fosterline Scotland](#) for any other advice or guidance you may need at this time. They have helpfully extended their hours on a Tuesday evening till 9 pm to help with any additional support you may need during the Covid-19 crisis.

You will already hopefully be keeping an eye on the regular televised advice and Scottish Government updates, but it's also worth keeping an eye on the regular Covid-19 publications on our [website](#) as we are continuously assessing how to improve access to testing that's needed and the supply and distribution of PPE equipment.

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Covid-19 – Additional Expenses

We have been hearing that some of you may be experiencing additional costs as a result of having children at home, keeping them up to date with their school work as well as entertained for longer than normal. If this is the case for you, I advise you to claim these from your local authority or agency, who I understand will deal with these on a case by case basis. You will be aware that the Scottish Government has provided a generous package of additional funding to local authorities to assist those who are most affected by the Covid 19 crisis including a [£350 million Communities Support Fund](#).

Foster Care Fortnight 2020

I know the Fostering Network had planned to hold an event to celebrate this year's Foster Care Fortnight that many of you would have been able to attend and meet up with other foster carers to share experiences. Although that will now not happen, I encourage you to participate in the online opportunities to still share stories that will help inspire others to see the rewards of becoming a foster family. See the Fostering Network's website to help you with ideas on how you can go about that: [Foster Care Fortnight 2020](#)

You may be wondering about other work we had planned to improve the Care system pre-Covid 19. Here is a brief update on some of these:

Independent Care Review

The Independent Care Review reports were published on 5 February and you can read them on their website. As part of the Care Review The First Minister listened to over 1000 voices of care experienced children and young people and is determined that these will continue to be at the centre of how Scotland implements the conclusions of the Promise.

The First Minister has committed the Scottish Government to work with all of its energy and focus, along with local authorities, care providers and all relevant stakeholders, to make the changes to the system that the Care Review considers necessary and to deliver that change as quickly and as safely as possible. Discussions are currently ongoing to agree the best approach to take to ensure implementation of 'The Promise' and Scottish Ministers will seek to update Parliament about future plans in due course.

Care Allowances

Many of you will already be aware that we conducted a national review of care allowances for both Foster and Kinship carers which reported its findings in September 2018. We have since then been in regular discussions with CoSLA to discuss and agree the implementation of a fairer and more transparent system across Scotland and we are hopeful that agreement can be reached so that an improved system can be implemented this year.

Continuing Care and After Care

I also want to re-highlight a really useful booklet designed to explain young people's rights to continuing care and after care support. I encourage you to use it to discuss with your young people how they want to be supported as they move into adulthood and further and higher education or employment.

<https://www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/young-peoples-resources/continuing-care-and-aftercare-booklet>

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Support for Care Experienced Young People

For those who may not already be aware care experienced young people are entitled to a council tax exemption and a care-experienced bursary. These measures will support them in their choice to continue into further or higher education or into more independent living.

I do hope I have managed to point you and your families to where you can find helpful support and information during the Covid-19 crisis and also reassured you that we are continuing to listen closely to key stakeholders like the Fostering Network and CELCIS so that we can help address your issues as quickly as possible.

Thank you for selflessly providing caring and loving homes for some of our most needy children and young people. You are an inspiration to the children and young people you care for please help us to also inspire others during Foster Care Fortnight.

Yours sincerely



MAREE TODD

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