



9 April 2020

Dear Minister,

Financial support for foster carers

Across the UK, foster carers are currently caring for over 65,000 looked after children under incredibly difficult circumstances. Their role has never been more important as the coronavirus pandemic undermines and disrupts every aspect of family, education and community functioning.

Despite this vital role they undertake, foster carers are facing financial insecurity and because they use Qualifying Care Relief and have no taxable profit, they are not able to access the UK Government's Self Employment Income Support Scheme.

There are three groups of foster carers who are particularly at risk:

- Those foster carers with coronavirus who, temporarily can no longer care for their fostered child(ren):
- Those who have to self-isolate for 12 weeks because they are in the very vulnerable category;
- Respite foster carers who are unable to offer respite placements as a result of the social distancing requirements.

We believe foster carers who fall under these categories should be paid a retainer at this time by their fostering service to ensure consistency of financial support. We believe fostering services should be able to draw down from a central government fund to pay for these retainers.

To ensure continued capacity within the foster care workforce and continuity of care for children the fostering service is best placed to administer the retainers for their foster carers, but it should be funded centrally. The responsibility should not be held by foster carers, who are looking after children on behalf of the state.

Foster families are being put under increasing pressure as respite is cancelled for all but a few, and the vast majority are home schooling their children, in line with the advice to stay at home.

We further believe that, as a matter of urgency, foster carers should be paid an additional allowance to compensate for the additional costs of caring for their children during this time which include activities, subscriptions, home schooling materials including laptops and devices to replace face to face contact.

Fostering is challenging at the best of times. Foster carers now, more than ever, need the recognition and support to continue providing stable and loving homes for these vulnerable children.

Yours sincerely

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