

1. Adoption & Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020

- 1.1 [The Adoption & Children \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) Regulations](#) which came into force on 24 April 2020 will temporarily amend 10 sets of regulations relating to children's social care during the Covid-19 outbreak to try to manage the increased pressure on children's services practitioners. The amendments will expire on 25 September 2020, unless the government decides to extend the provision.
- 1.2 This guidance note includes details about the key changes to the regulations and Warwickshire County Council's response.

2. What does this mean for the Children & Families Service in Warwickshire?

- 2.1 In brief, there will be no real changes for children, their families and practitioners. WCC are committed to continuing to adhere to normal statutory regulations and to maintaining high levels of children's social care practice. In most situations there will be no immediate changes.
- 2.2 Where in exceptional circumstances there is a need to use the new regulations, this will have management oversight, and WCC have published internal procedures setting out the arrangements for how this will be obtained.

3. Key regulation changes which impact on the Warwickshire County Council.

3.1 Adoption

3.1.1 **Headline change**

- Adoption Panels and adoption reviews are not obligatory during this period.

3.1.2 **WCC response**

- As host of [Adoption Central England \(ACE\)](#) for the five local authorities WCC have already arranged for their adoption panels to be held via Microsoft Teams. WCC will continue where possible for adoption reviews to take place using digital technology.
- WCC are making arrangements to complete DBS and medical checks later in the assessment process than usual, and no adopter will be approved without the relevant checks having been completed.

3.2 Private fostering

3.2.1 Headline change

- Timescales for private fostering visits relaxed.

3.2.2 WCC response

- WCC will continue to meet the statutory timescales for visits to private fostering households. The general expectation is that children in private fostering arrangements must be physically seen and the household visited in line with the usual regulations. For all but the initial visit, if a physical visit to the child and household needs to be delayed a digital visit may be made, followed by a physical visit as soon as possible.

3.3 Care planning (children in care) and foster care

3.3.1 Headline change - there are a number of changes to regulations which include:

- Statutory visits can be completed virtually (video conference or telephone) as well as in person;
- Any person successfully assessed can be approved temporarily as a foster carer under Regulation 22 or 24 of the Care Planning Regulations. This removes the need to be a connected person;
- Relaxation of the timescales for completion of placement plan when placed with parents or in a long-term placement;
- Decision to place in foster to adopt can be made by the local authority generally not the nominated decision maker;
- Child can be placed with foster carers outside their approval category for up to 24 weeks;
- Pathway plans do not need to consider links to connected others;
- Statutory reviews timescales have been relaxed;
- Short breaks can be longer than 17 consecutive days.

3.3.2 WCC response

- WCC have RAG rated all children in care and where the child is safe and stable, video and telephone statutory visits have started with manager agreement.
- Warwickshire will continue to provide a placement plan on the day the placement starts and complete an updated plan within the normal five days of a placement, virtually if required.
- WCC envisage the relaxation to Regs 22 and 24 to be rarely used but it will allow approved adopters waiting to be matched to be foster carers and will allow other people with no connection to care for a child.
- WCC may place children for up to 24 weeks with foster carers outside their approval category and have agreed arrangements for Fostering Panel oversight of these placements.

- Warwickshire have made more extensive contingency arrangements for agreement to place children in foster to adopt placements, but service managers will not be agreeing placements in their own service.
- Warwickshire will continue to expect Pathway Plans to consider the links the child/young person has to connected others. It is vital at this time that from a physical distance that our care leavers feel connected to their family, previous carers and ourselves.
- Warwickshire believe there would be very exceptional circumstances where a short break is longer than 17 days. Usually only in circumstances where a child with an underlying health condition cannot return home due to the household having developed covid-19 symptoms or a carer is ill and unable to care. WCC expect to maintain frequency of visits, although they may be electronic.
- WCC expect to maintain review timescales, but reviews are being convened over Microsoft Teams.

3.4 Fostering Services

3.4.1 Headline change

- Fostering Panels and Foster Carer Reviews are not obligatory during this period.

3.4.2 WCC response

- Warwickshire have already moved to virtual fostering panels via Microsoft Teams.
- Warwickshire will not approve a foster carer without reference to the fostering panel.
- No foster carer will be approved without DBS and medical checks.
- Warwickshire will continue to refer people not suitable to foster to panel and inform the person of this within ten days.
- Warwickshire will continue to complete foster carer's reviews within the usual regulation timescales.

3.5 Children's social care complaints

3.5.1 Headline change

- Timescales for stage three complaints relaxed

3.5.2 WCC response

- WCC will continue to meet the statutory timescales for complaints. Where this is not possible operations managers will record the reasons for not meeting the usual statutory requirements. This approach has been agreed with the Customer Relations Team.

3.6 Further information

- [The Adoption & Children \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) Regulations](#)
- [Explanatory Memorandum No 445](#)