

Accessing Key Resources: Foster carers are priority social care workers

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The Covid-19/coronavirus pandemic has created a significant challenge in accessing sufficient supplies of food, equipment and health products. This has become a serious issue for foster carers in accessing essential items that are needed to enable them to provide for the children in their care. There are reported difficulties in accessing baby formula, nappies, and infant/children paracetamol pain relief (such as Calpol). There may be similar issues for carers of some older children who have special needs and/or specific dietary or other health requirements. Children in care are recognised as “vulnerable” in the Government’s identification of priority groups in the Covid-19 guidance.

Foster carers must be given information, support and access to the resources they need that does not require them to expose either themselves or their children to the risk of infection through travel outside of their home, or to be deprived of those resources because of difficulties in accessing them.

The Government has recognised that specific arrangements need to be in place for health and social care workers, and the largest supermarkets have arranged for these workers to have additional early morning access to shopping. Details are available on the supermarket websites. The Government has defined social care workers as follows:

This includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK’s health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

Foster carers come within this definition, so there is nothing to stop carers from making use of these provisions. They would be advised to take formal identification with them, provided by the local authority responsible for the child for whom they are caring or the independent fostering service. It may also be helpful to make direct contact with a local supermarket or other shops stocking essential items in order to make specific arrangements. Fostering services themselves may have an important role in setting up these arrangements. Foster carers may also find it helpful to make contact with local foster carer contacts, local community groups or support networks.

Some manufacturers of key baby products are offering customers the opportunity to make online purchases. Foster carers might wish to use these opportunities and should be prioritised in doing so.