

Covid-19 adoption support fund scheme to help vulnerable families

Adoptive families will be offered emergency support including online counselling and couples therapy as the Government expands the scope of the Adoption Support Fund to meet needs arising from the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Education Secretary has today (Friday 10 April) announced that up to £8 million will be available to pay for different types of therapeutic support for families whose adopted children may have already suffered trauma and be made more anxious owing to the uncertainty of the effects of the virus.

It comes as the Department for Education confirms it has spent more than £150 million on the Adoption Support Fund since it was launched in 2015, helping more than 45,000 adoptive and special guardianship order families across the country.

The £8 million fund can be used by local authorities and regional adoption agencies to pay for activities such as virtual peer to peer support, access to helplines, couples therapy and online counselling, given the social distancing measures that have been brought in by the Government to protect the NHS and save lives.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We are taking urgent action to protect the country from the spread of coronavirus, meaning many of us have seen changes in our daily lives as we practice social distancing and stay at home. For adoptive families, often still adjusting to their new environments, this may create additional strain.

That is why today I am freeing up £8 million from our Adoption Support Fund to pay for therapies that will help families to cope in this uncertain time.

The therapies available through the COVID-19 Adoption Support Fund will be delivered alongside those already offered by the Fund, such as music activities, play therapy and family support sessions. The Fund will be flexible so that local authorities and regional adoption agencies have discretion to spend their share of the money on the support that adoptive families in their areas need most at this time. The funding aims to help fill gaps in provision caused by the impact of COVID-19, including where local authority staff are unable to attend work due to sickness or self-isolation.

It adds to advice and [guidance](#) published by the Department for Education for professionals working in children's social care to help them meet the needs of their families safety and effectively during the COVID-19 outbreak. The

guidance outlines that adoption can still take place, with Regional Adoption Agencies utilising communication technology to continue with the process.

Feedback from the sector shows that adoptive families have been experiencing greater stress due to children with attachment and trauma needs being isolated at home and having their routine disrupted, which can lead to an increase in adoption breakdown and child to parent violence.

Andrew Christie, Chair of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board, said:

I wholeheartedly welcome this news. Many adopters and special guardians are struggling during the current crisis and this funding will help provide much needed support for them and their families during these difficult times.

The £8 million, which comes from the £45 million 2020-21 budget that was announced by the Education Secretary in December, will fund the temporary COVID-19 scheme.

The funding comes after the Government announced that it would make £1.6 billion available for local authorities to manage the impact of COVID-19, including on children's services.