

Foster Carers' Noticeboard Updated

Last update: 4 Feb 2021

Previous Bulletins

COVID-19 VACCINATION



Posted on: 12 January 2021

Sarah Owen MP submitted a question to Parliament on 1st December 2020 asking whether foster carers would be included in the priority list for the vaccine. Government have still yet to respond. GMB will continue to call for the prioritisation of the vaccination for all our key worker members, including foster carers.

NEW SURVEY: KINSHIP CARERS

The Family Rights Group have launched a new survey on behalf of the Parliamentary Taskforce on Kinship Care. The purpose of the survey is to assess how Kinship Carers have been affected by this most recent lockdown and understand what government and local authorities could do to be offering more support.

It should take no more than 15 minutes for you to complete.

The survey can be accessed at:

COMPLETE THE SURVEY!

Not a GMB member? [Join today!](#)

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END OF YEAR ROUND UP

Date: 18/12/2020

As the year comes to an end, GMB Union wants to thank all of our Foster Carer members for their hard work and efforts during the year and for their continued membership with GMB.

This year has been extremely difficult for everyone, but especially for all those who continued to work throughout the Coronavirus Pandemic (Covid-19) providing essential services within our care system. Foster carers have without doubt been the forgotten key workers throughout.

GMB has made several representations on behalf of our members during the Pandemic to raise concerns and try to get the recognition that providing such a vital role deserves. We contacted the Minister for Children and the Department of Health & Social Care to enquire as to what provisions were being put in place for Foster Carers. We also requested that they were included in the Covid-19 Life Assurance Scheme which has been provided for all health and social care workers. We contacted all of the main supermarket providers asking them to afford priority shopping hours to you all as key workers. All requests were denied, except for foster carers in Wales who were included in the Social Care Workers Card benefits.

The responses have identified that we still have so much work left to do to improve the rights of foster carers; kinship carers and special guardians.

GMB's priority remains in keeping our members safe at work which is why throughout the Pandemic we have been regularly updating our Coronavirus Hub with all the information you need to keep yourself safe. You can check it out at:

[The Coronavirus Hub](#)

At a recent GMB National meeting for Foster Carers we enquired about what the main issues had been during Covid-19. Some of the responses we received were:

- Lack of support from local authorities and fostering providers in terms of health and safety, risk assessments and Personal Protective Equipment.
- Inconsistent advice in terms of how to protect yourselves – visitors into the home and access visits with family.



- Support for children withdrawn.
- Isolated.

Mental health was also raised as an issue and if you have been affected by this you can check out the GMB Mental Health Support Hub

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Covid-19 Vaccination

It is with great relief that some of our elderly population have now been vaccinated. It will take many months for people in the prioritised categories to be vaccinated but we hope to see the vaccination programme roll out speedily and efficiently over the coming months. Health and social care workers have been identified as a priority group of workers to be vaccinated. GMB believes that foster carers should also be included and asked for a question on this to be asked in Parliament.

Sarah Owen MP, Labour, Luton North asked:

“What assessment has [the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care] made of whether foster carers should be prioritised to receive the Covid-19 vaccine.”

To date the department of Health and Social Care have not provided a response. They have issued a holding statement to say a response is being prepared and will be issued as soon as it is available.

[Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)

Spare Room Subsidy (Bedroom Tax)

The Bedroom Tax remains an issue for many GMB members and we continue to support Sarah Owen MP, Labour, Luton North who is campaigning in this area.

This year Sarah submitted the below question to Parliament:



“To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many foster carers are subject to the spare room subsidy in England & Wales.”

The response received was very poor from a Government who have no understanding of just how many foster carers are affected by the Bedroom Tax.

“The removal of the Spare Room Subsidy Policy allows one additional bedroom for approved foster carers, who have a child placed with them or are between placements. This is provided the period in which they don't have a child or young person placed with them does not exceed 12 months. Information on how many foster carers are subject to the spare room subsidy in England and Wales is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.”

Sarah Owen MP also did an Early Day Motion on the effects of the bedroom tax on Foster Carers. 31 MPs have so far signed it.

You can access the EDM at: [Effect of the bedroom tax on foster carers - Early Day Motions - UK Parliament](#)

If your MP hasn't signed it – contact them today and ask them to sign it to support you and other foster carers:

[Find your MP](#)

Kinship Carers

This year has seen GMB working more closely with many organisations to campaign for improvements to rights, terms and conditions for Kinship Carers. GMB is now a member of Kinship Alliance alongside other organisations such as: Grandparents Plus; TACT Care; Fostering network; and many others.

GMB submitted evidence into the Cross Party Taskforce on Kinship Care and have also been supporting the work of the All Party Parliamentary Group.



GMB has also recently endorsed the Kinship Alliance submission into the Education Select Committee inquiry on the impact of Covid-19 on education and children's services.

Get involved!

Whilst we wait for the Governments latest review into Foster Care, real change will only be achieved through local collective campaigns being led by our Foster Carer members.

Do you want to get involved and campaign for change?

Email PublicServices@gmb.org.uk

GMB – Member Benefits

Don't forget as a GMB member you have access to a wide range of benefits and services.

These include:

Legal Services

- **UnionLine:** GMB owned law firm, working for GMB members
- Free legal advice on contact issues.
- Free advice on permanency options – Fostering v Adoption or Special Guardianship Orders
- Free Will service.
- 100% of damages awarded in accident or injury compensation claims for themselves or a family member.
- Preferential rates on Power of Attorney.
- Free legal advice on non-employment related issues e.g., neighbour disputes, motoring offences, holiday or consumer disputes, immigration, family disputes.
- Preferential rates on conveyancing.
- Free motor claims service.



EXTRA Member Benefits

Your GMB membership means that you always have someone on your side in the workplace, but there are lots more member benefits too!

We hope that you get some time over the Christmas holidays to rest and spend time with your families and loved ones. We wish you and your families a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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COVID-19 VACCINATION



Posted on: 4 February 2021

MPs continue to ask questions in Parliament about the prioritisation of foster carers for the Covid-19 vaccination.

Alex Cunningham MP, Shadow Minister for Justice on 21st January 2021 asked whether foster parents would be made a priority group. The response received stated: “The Department of Health & Social Care has indicated that it will not be possible to answer this question within the usual time period. An answer is being prepared and will be provided as soon as possible.”

Mike Amesbury MP, Shadow Minister for Housing, Communities & Local Government on 22nd January 2021 asked what assessment had been made of the potential merits of prioritising Covid-19 vaccines for foster carers of clinically extremely vulnerable children. The response received stated: “The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, people aged over 80 years old and frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors. Those who are in receipt of a carer’s allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill, should also be offered vaccination in priority group six.”

GMB has received reports from members that some local authorities have taken the decision to prioritise foster carers for vaccination alongside their social care workforce and we support this approach. GMB is calling on Government to prioritise all of our key workers after the immediate prioritised groups have been vaccinated.



REPORT ON THE EXPERIENCES OF KINSHIP CARERS DURING THE LATEST LOCKDOWN

The report from the recent survey conducted by The Family Rights Group as part of the Kinship Care Parliament Taskforce has revealed severe strains on kinship carers.

- The three biggest worries during the latest stage of the pandemic are the children's emotional and mental wellbeing (71%), concern for what will happen to them if the carer gets the virus (65%), and the child/children's education (58%).
- A third of carers had received no support during the course of the pandemic.
- Almost four in ten are facing financial hardship.
- A third (32%) of kinship families indicated they would find support with equipment for remote learning helpful but had not been offered it. 37% expressed the same wish for help with access to broadband / data for remote learning.

The Taskforce have put forward proposals to Government for urgent support to help kinship carers through the latest stage of the pandemic. They include:

- Educational Support.
- Access to therapeutic support.
- Flexible welfare support and employment leave.
- Extension of legal aid.
- Vaccine priority list.

You can read a copy of the full report at frg.org.uk

LIFELONG LEARNING

Don't forget that a part of your GMB membership includes access to lifelong learning opportunities.

Check out the most up to date offers at [GMB Lifelong Learning](#)

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