

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary people, and here at Team Derby we're overflowing with them!

From our key worker colleagues going over and above to help the most vulnerable in our city, to those taking on new roles to keep essential services running – and everything in between. There are so many shining examples of truly excellent work.

These people are the focus of our #HereForDerby campaign. This week we talked to **Children's Social Worker, Maryum Farouq**, about how she and her colleagues have been adapting during lockdown to make sure the city's children and young people are safe.



"Working as a Social Worker in uncertain times has been the upmost challenging and strenuous period of my career," said Maryum.

"A key part of our work is the ability to form and maintain relationships, which has been difficult during this lockdown period. And I miss what is one of the most enjoyable and important parts of our role – working directly with the children."

As for social workers up and down the country, being unable to carry out as many face-to-face meetings and home visits during the pandemic has presented challenges.

It's meant that Maryum and her colleagues haven't been able to work in the way they usually would. This has proved a professional and personal struggle, but they've remained as thorough and vigilant as they can.

"Doorstep visits can be really challenging," she added. "If we were practising in normal

circumstances, I would be going in, checking the home to make sure that the kids have got a safe place to sleep and it's clean and tidy. We've not been able to do that as thoroughly in a lot on my cases due to the pandemic."

Despite having to shield herself because of vulnerable family members, Maryum has adapted her ways of working – for example, keeping in frequent telephone contact with the families that she has been supporting during lockdown to make sure plans are on track.

"I discussed shielding with my manager, and she agreed that I would work from home to keep my family safe.

"It was really difficult as when we'd just gone into lockdown I'd been working with a mother who was pregnant and we'd made a plan for her next steps. I followed up with the mother and had conversations with her every day to make sure she was OK, but it was challenging to have to deal with sensitive issues and relationships with less contact than we'd usually have."

While new technology has helped us all to work at home more easily than ever before, like many colleagues, Maryum has been missing the team spirit and morale of physically being in the office.

"Once a week I'm back in the office and that feels good," she said. "I really miss the team support at times as it can be quite isolating at home. When we have difficult calls or difficult meetings, we could discuss that as a team in a safe environment, but we've not got that quite in the same way at the minute."

Thinking about her role at DCC, Maryum added: "I'm most proud of my job when I feel like I've made a difference and when the children feel happy and safe at home.

"It's the best when we've got an outcome that the children can remain with their families, and cases where the families have turned it around. They're my proudest moments, and I've had a couple of real success stories."