



Open letter to Vicky Ford MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families
Department for Education

By email

18 March 2020
(first sent 11 March 2020)

Dear Minister

CONSULTATION ON UNREGULATED PROVISION – CHILDREN IN CARE

We write to urge you to publish accessible versions of your department's proposals for regulating semi-independent and independent accommodation for children in care, and ask that you make public your plans to hear from those most directly affected – care experienced children and young people – during the consultation process. The consultation period is shorter than usual (8 weeks), and we request that you extend this so that, once accessible versions are available, there is a further 12-week period to allow for meaningful and direct engagement with children and young people who are currently looked after by local authorities, or who are seeking and/or eligible to be looked after.

The proposals in the consultation document mark a radical shift in the care system, for the first time regulating the absence of care for potentially thousands of looked after 16 and 17 year-olds. It is vital that children and young people's perspectives and experiences are understood and given due weight in this very significant policy development.

We further call on you to suspend the elements of Sir Alan Wood's Task and Finish Group which directly relate to the outcomes of the consultation, that is helping to draft new standards for semi-independent and independent accommodation and providing advice to your department on what should be taken account of when considering the implementation of the consultation proposals. These are tasks properly undertaken once the consultation process has concluded.

All good wishes

- Carolyn Willow, Director, Article 39
- Amanda Boorman, charity founder and trustee, The Open Nest Charity
- Andree Frieze, Richmond councillor
- Dr Andy Bilson, Emeritus Professor of Social Work, University of Central Lancashire
- Andy Elvin, Chief Executive Officer, TACT
- Andy Gill, Chair of BASW England
- Professor Anna Gupta, Department of Social Work, Royal Holloway University of London
- Annie, Founder of Surviving Safeguarding: A Parent's Guide to the Child Protection Process
- Association of Professors of Social Work
- Baker & Joy advocacy service
- Brid Featherstone, Professor of Social Work, University of Huddersfield
- Brigid Robinson, Managing Director, Coram Voice
- Caroline Fonjock, Director, FEVACA
- Cathy Ashley, Chief Executive Officer, Family Rights Group
- Chris Wild, campaigner for young people in care
- Clare Hyde MBE, Director, The Foundation for Families
- Clarissa Stevens, parent/relational activist
- Dave Palmer, Lecturer in Criminal Justice Services, University of Northampton
- David Graham, National Director, The Care Leavers' Association
- Delma Hughes, Director, Siblings Together (care experienced)
- Denise McDowell, Chief Executive, Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit
- Denise Smalley, social worker
- Dr Donna Peach, Lecturer in Social Work and Integrated Practice, University of Salford
- Ed Nixon, Chair of Every Child Leaving Care Matters (ECLCM)
- Enver Solomon, Chief Executive Officer, Just for Kids Law
- Ffion Evans, Programme Lead BA Social Work, Manchester Metropolitan University
- Frances Crook, Chief Executive, Howard League for Penal Reform
- Gill Black, independent advocate
- Ian Dickson, Chair of the first Conference for Care Experienced People (2019) and children's rights campaigner
- Ian Gould, ECLCM Ambassador and retired probation manager (care experienced)
- Jacki Rothwell, former Chair of National Association of Independent Reviewing Officers (NAIRO)
- Jamie Crabb and Cat Hugman, Care Experienced Conference
- Jane Chevous, Director, Reshapers CIC
- Jane Tunstill, Emeritus Professor of Social Work, Royal Holloway, London University
- Jenni Randall, Kinder Shores Arts
- Jenny Molloy, author, adviser, trainer and care leaver
- Jill Sheldrake MBE, Together Trust
- Jill Thorburn and Yvonne Anderson - Mind Of My Own

- Jo Cobley, Director, Young Roots
- John McGowan, General Secretary, Social Workers Union
- John Radoux, child & adolescent psychotherapeutic counsellor, residential care worker and care experienced
- John Weightman MBE, former Vice President and Juvenile Lead, National Council for Independent Monitoring Boards
- Jon Fayle and Paul Smart, Co-Chairs, NAIRO
- Jonathan Stanley, National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care
- Joy Bradley, Beanstalk Leadership
- Julie Prior, independent children's services consultant
- Julie Taylor, Professor of Child Protection and Director of Research, School of Nursing, University of Birmingham
- June Leat, Chair of Parents of Traumatized Adopted Teens Organisation (The Potato Group)
- June Thoburn CBE, Emeritus Professor of Social Work, University of East Anglia
- Katharine Sacks-Jones, Chief Executive Officer, Become
- Kathy Evans, Chief Executive, Children England
- Lisa Cherry, author, speaker and trainer
- Dr Lisa Morriss, Sociology Department, Lancaster University
- Dr Lynn Brady, freelance advocate, researcher and trainer
- Dr Maggie Atkinson, Children's Commissioner for England 2010-2015
- Dr Mark Kerr, Chief Executive Officer, The Centre for Outcomes of Care
- Matthew Purves, children and families social worker
- Professor Mike Stein, University of York
- Mohamed Mohamed, Article 39 (care experienced)
- Migrant and Refugee Children's Legal Unit
- Nagalro – Professional Association for Children's Guardians and Family Court Advisers
- National IRO Managers Partnership (NIROMP)
- NSPCC
- Nigel Patrick Thomas, Emeritus Professor of Childhood and Youth, University of Central Lancashire
- Nikki Ledingham, independent social worker and care experienced
- Pam Hibbert OBE
- Professor Priscilla Alderson, University College London
- Ray Jones, Emeritus Professor of Social Work, Kingston University and St George's, University of London
- Simon Haworth, social work academic, University of Birmingham, and registered social worker
- Stephen Gray, Chief Executive Officer, Young Lives Foundation
- Steven Westney, care experienced social worker
- Tim Bateman, Chair, National Association for Youth Justice
- Yasmine Khan, care experienced and trustee of The Care Leavers' Association

Additional signatures (18 March 2020)

- Anne-Marie Douglas, Founder, Peer Power Youth
- Dr Charlotte Kingston, care experienced
- Deirdre Fottrell QC and Hannah Perry, Co-Chairs, Association of Lawyers for Children
- Diana Harris, independent social worker
- ECPAT UK
- Hannah Kirkbride, Director and Founder of Career Matters
- Henrietta Delalu, group manager, children's social care
- Kevin Williams, Chief Executive Officer, The Fostering Network
- Nuala Mole, Founder and Senior Lawyer, The AIRE Centre
- Nushra Mansuri, Assistant Professor in Social Work Coventry University
- Pat Leeson, NAIRO
- Robyn Kemp, consultant in social pedagogy and social care
- Riyaz Raj, Managing Director, RRC
- Rosie Canning, Research Assistant, University of Oxford
- Ruth Scotten, social worker / therapeutic Life Story Work practitioner
- Sheila Melzak, Director, Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile
- Southwark Law Centre
- Zoe Martin, social worker