



David Johnston OBE MP

Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing

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19 September 2023

Dear children and young people,

I am the new Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing and am really looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible in the next few months. I wanted to write to you to update you on what government is doing to help families, keep children safe and give care and a home to children and young people who need it.

In February 2023, the government published 'Stable Homes, Built on Love'. This strategy is the government's plan for how we will make children's social care work better. Alongside this we shared a consultation. A consultation includes questions people can answer to tell us what they think of the strategy. We knew how important it was to hear from children and young people as part of this.

We asked 9 questions of children and young people. We heard directly from children currently in care, care leavers and some adults and organisations who responded on behalf of children. We have read all your responses and listened to your views and feedback at different events.

We set out six ambitions in the government's plan. Our six ambitions are:

Ambition 1: Family Help

Ambition 2: Keeping children safe

Ambition 3: Supporting families to help children

Ambition 4: Making care better for children in care and care leavers

Ambition 5: Children have great social workers

Ambition 6: Improving the whole system for children and families

We wanted you to tell us if our plans and ambitions would make children's social care better for children and families.

Half of you told us you think the ambitions will make a positive difference. A quarter of you said it was too soon to tell if they will make a positive difference. We are taking action to show that we are committed to making sure these ambitions become a reality and help children and families for many years to come.

Some of you told us how we could make things better by providing more money for families, more support for carers, and offering better mental wellbeing support for children, young people and carers. We hear you. We are working with the Department of Health and Social Care, and in schools to strengthen support for those suffering from mental ill-health, as well as addressing the root causes.

You shared with us which trusted adults you would speak to if you needed help and support and many of you mentioned teachers or other staff at school, doctors, youth workers and charities. Many of you also talked about the importance of your wider family and friends. We are working with lots of other government departments to ensure you are well supported when you ask for help or support from a professional.

To our children in care and care leavers, most of you said our missions were the right things to focus on to help improve life for you. This included opportunities to spend time with the people you love, having corporate parents, having a home when you leave care, doing well in school or a job and having health support.

I agree with your responses that social workers should be kind, caring, helpful, supportive and should listen to you. You also said it was important, wherever possible, to keep the same social worker to allow you to build trust and see them and contact them regularly. We are working to get more social workers, give them even better training and support them to stay in the same job for longer, so they can give you the long-term support you need.

Lots of you told us that more money for families would support children, young people, care leavers and carers. We are spending more money to help more children and families, including helping families manage the increased costs of living.

You told us there are better ways for the government to talk to you and ask you questions. We are working with charities such as Barnardo's and Coram Voice to make sure we keep listening to you, and to help us do it better. It is so important that you are given the chance to be heard on areas of the government's work you can change and that we then feedback on what we are doing and how things are improving as a result.

We are also developing a Children and Young People's Advisory Board for children's social care who will help us ensure we continue to hear your voices in work taking place to transform children's social care throughout 2024 and beyond. I'll share further details about this work later in the Autumn including how you could get involved.

We are also continuing to develop guidance for people working with children and young people which sets out the outcomes we think children's social care should achieve. You can read what we heard from those working with you in [our response](#). This guidance will be called the National Framework and we will write a version for children, young people and families and publish this in December 2023.

I would like to finish by again saying huge thanks to all of you who responded to this consultation and others we have published in recent years. Having heard your feedback and experiences, I am more determined than ever to do all that we can to improve children's social care services now and in the future.

I look forward to hearing lots more of your views – they are really important to me. We want you to help us shape children's social care and have a say in work that impacts you so we can make sure that any changes we make lead to a positive

difference to children and young people's lives.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Johnston', written in a cursive style.

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