



To the House of Lords

The UK's young people are living at home longer than ever, with the average age of leaving home now over 24.

Yet many children in foster care – arguably among the most vulnerable in society – are required to leave their foster home aged just 17. Those who get to stay past their 18th birthday are either the lucky few funded by their local authority or fortunate enough to have foster carers who can afford to offer them a home for free, and support them out of their own pockets.

This makes no sense. Care leavers are sadly more likely to be unemployed, young single parents, mental health service users, homeless or in prison than those who grew up within their own families.

Research shows that the longer a young person can stay with a foster family, the more successful they are in later life. It is an own goal to force them out at 17 – savings now are outweighed by state spending on these young adults in the future.

But there is a chance for change. An amendment to the Children and Families Bill, currently in the House of Lords, would ensure that all young people in England can stay with their foster carers until the age of 21, if both parties agree. At an estimated national cost of £2.6 million, this makes financial and moral sense.

We urge peers to support this once-a-generation opportunity to ensure that care leavers get a better start to adult life.

Yours sincerely

Robert Tapsfield  
Chief Executive  
The Fostering Network

On behalf of:

Peter Wanless, Chief Executive, NSPCC  
Peter Brook, Chief Executive, Barnardo's  
Matthew Downie, Head of Campaigns and Public Affairs, Action for Children  
Matthew Reed, Chief Executive, the Children's Society  
Dr Hilary Emery, Chief Executive, National Children's Bureau  
Dr Carol Homden CBE, Chief Executive, Coram  
Cathy Ashley, Chief Executive, FRG  
Andrew Radford, Chief Executive, Voice  
Harvey Gallagher, Chief Executive, Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers  
Sue Kent, Professional Officer, BASW  
Dez Holmes, Director, Research in Practice  
Hugh Thornbery, Chief Executive, Adoption UK

Chris Wright, Chief Executive, Catch22  
Janet Rich, Trustee, The Care Leavers' Foundation.  
Christine Renouf, Chief Executive Officer, National Youth Advocacy Service.  
David Graham, National Director, The Care Leavers' Association  
Delma Hughes, Director, Siblings Together  
John Simmonds, Director of Policy, Research and Development, British Association for Adoption and Fostering  
Christine Renouf, Chief Executive, NYAS  
Deborah Cowley, Director, Action for Prisoners' Families  
Jon Fayle, Chair, National Association of Independent Reviewing Officers  
Sally Bartolo, Founder, the Tope Project  
Lynn Chesterman, Chief Executive, Grandparents' Association  
Tor Docherty, Director, New Family Social  
Natasha Finlayson, Chief Executive, The Who Cares? Trust  
David Bradley, Interim CEO, TACT  
Dr Samantha Callan, Associate Director for Families and Mental Health, Centre for Social Justice  
John Hemming MP, Executive, Care Leavers Voice  
Marion Layberry, Managing Director, Safehouses  
Linda Croft, Managing Director, Moments Fostering Agency  
Debi Atkin, Registered Manager, Ethelbert Fostering Services  
Gregory Nicholls, Managing Director & Responsible Individual, Credo Care Ltd  
Alan Fisher, Chair, Fostering Through Social Enterprise  
Mark Lee, Chief Executive, Together Trust  
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Professor Harriet Ward CBE, Director of Centre for Child and Family Research, Loughborough University  
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