



Department for Education

**Josh MacAlister OBE MP
Minister for Children and Families**

Helen Hayes MP
Chair of the Education Select Committee

By email:
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25 August 2026

Dear Helen,

I am writing to update you on the review into the deaths of care-experienced young people, announced earlier this year and led by Ashley John-Baptiste and Clare Chamberlain.

Today, we will publish Ashley and Clare's report, *'You really are on your own'* (attached). The report shines a light on the shockingly high number of deaths among care-experienced young people. It sets out in detail the stories of young people who did not receive the support they needed at critical moments in their lives. The data presented in the report shows that these are not isolated incidents but part of a much wider picture of young people who are experiencing loneliness – struggling through a system that too often prioritises independence over connection and support – and who are in need of care, guidance and a sense of belonging.

Every one of these young lives mattered. Behind each death is a story of profound loss for families, friends and all those who cared about them.

The report identifies several significant themes. It highlights the profound impact of loneliness and the challenges many young people face as they transition to adulthood, often without the support networks that many of their peers rely on. The report makes clear that services often want to respond to the understandable desire from young people to move into their own place, but this can come with an unexpected level of isolation. Services need to take this message to heart. Care-experienced young adults need a strong social web – a tribe – to surround them as they enter adulthood, yet too much existing practice is driven by reaching independence.

The report also draws attention to young people who feel cast adrift on leaving care, facing a sharp reduction in support at age 18 as they move from services for children in care to those available to care-experienced adults creating a gap in support at a particularly vulnerable stage and compounding the risks of isolation and unmet

needs. It highlights significant variation in the quality, consistency and expertise of support available, raising important questions about whether the workforce is sufficiently equipped to support young people into adulthood and interdependent living.

For my own part in government, we are acting on the report by taking the next step in delivering our Enduring Relationships Strategy. This report underscores the importance of our ambition to build a children's social care system in which every child and young person grows up with trusted, long-lasting relationships that provide stability and belonging throughout their lives and particularly as they move into adulthood.

With the publication of this report, the government has confirmed over £25 million of funding for this financial year alone to continue the rollout of Staying Close. We expect this to provide homes for thousands of care-experienced young adults, to directly tackle isolation and loneliness.

Through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act, we are stepping up support for care leavers. We are placing new duties on local authorities to provide Staying Close support to care leavers up to the age of 25; new duties requiring each local authority to publish information about the support available for care leavers in their transition to adulthood; and new corporate parenting responsibilities for government departments and relevant public bodies.

Alongside this work, we want everyone who works with children in care and care-experienced young people to engage with the report's findings and reflect on what they mean for their own practice. I encourage you to share the report across your networks and use it as an opportunity to foster a national conversation about how we strengthen relationships, improve support into adulthood, and ensure that no young person feels alone as they navigate the transition from care.

Thank you for your commitment to this vital work. I know that, for some, this involvement has drawn upon difficult personal and professional experiences, and I am particularly grateful for your contribution. I look forward to continuing to work with you as we reflect on the report's findings and take forward the action needed to improve outcomes for care-experienced young people.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josh MacAlister', with a stylized, cursive script.

Josh MacAlister OBE MP
Minister for Children and Families