



DRIVE FORWARD

MOMENTUM MADE BY YOU

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Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Cc – Vicky Ford MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families
Thursday 26th March 2020

Care Leavers and COVID-19

Dear Mr Williamson,

We, the undersigned, are calling on the government to ensure that care leavers are properly supported throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis.

COVID-19 poses an unprecedented threat to the well-being of many vulnerable young adults, including care leavers. Though necessary, social distancing exacerbates the loneliness already felt by many of those who do not have the usual family support networks. Sudden changes to working patterns (and increasing staff sick leave) also mean that local authorities and third sector services are struggling to fill this support gap. If the current situation continues without emergency enhanced support, we fear deeply for the mental health and general well-being of many care leavers across the UK.

With this in mind, we are asking the government to cooperate with local authorities to ensure that special provisions are put in place to support one of society's most vulnerable groups. This may include:

- Increased virtual contact from Personal Advisors;
- Arrangements for virtual contact for young care experienced people no longer entitled to statutory support but in need of it at this exceptional time;
- Extra support to leaving care teams from those who have recently left the social work profession;
- Extra support to third sector organisations working on the front line with care leavers, enabling them to provide additional mental health support;
- #Easily accessible information (such as an online portal) for care leavers (up to and beyond the age of 25) on their rights and entitlements as well as advice on

where to find support during this crisis. This should include clear information on how to access support from the Jobcentre;

- And increased public information about care leavers as a vulnerable group to encourage community or mutual aid groups to make them a priority.

We know that around half of care leavers experience mental health issues¹ and that around 40 per cent of care leavers aged 19 – 21 are not in education, employment or training². A crisis that will undoubtedly have a profound effect on our jobs market and social services will be extremely damaging for a large percentage of care leavers.

We urge you and your colleagues, as corporate parents, to do everything in your power to prevent such an impact and to ensure that our care leavers are properly supported during this crisis.

We look forward to receiving your response and would be happy to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,



Martna Wansbrough

CEO of Drive Forward Foundation

Supported by:

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¹ <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/neglected-minds.pdf>

² <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8429/CBP-8429.pdf>

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