

Dear Mr Gove,

The 'Every Child Leaving Care Matters' campaign does NOT seek to increase the care leaving age for young people in children's homes to 21; it seeks to extend aftercare support for ALL young people leaving care to age 21.

We are not only care leavers. We include:

- social workers;
- tutors and academics;
- child care professionals;
- Residential care providers; and
- foster and adoption services.

Your proposal to support improved after care solely for fostered young people caused widespread concern, such that within two weeks of our raising the petition, 3,500 people had signed.

We welcome the plan to support young people who are placed in a settled supportive foster placement up to 21. However, we cannot agree to this not including young people in residential care. This is discriminatory, divisive and potentially adds to the poor outcomes experienced by many care leavers.

You state that you are 'open minded' about extending after care support to 21 for young people from children's homes in the future, but only when an unspecified number of children's homes meets an indeterminate standard within an unspecified time scale. In the interim, this will create a two tier care system and risk another generation of young care leavers having to face homelessness, poverty, exploitation and physical risk. This cannot be acceptable.

Your insensitive proposal has already caused distress to some children and young people. These children include some of the most vulnerable in the care system

We look forward to meeting you to discuss the way forward towards an equal system to support ALL care leavers up to 21.