

[Your name]
[Address inc Postcode]

[Name of MP]

House of Commons
London
SW1 0AA

Xx October 2019

Dear [XXXX MP]

I am writing to you to express my deep concerns as an adoptive parent/special guardian in your constituency.

A permanence disruption is a heart-breaking situation for all involved, especially when a parent or carer just wanted help for the child that was not forthcoming. The rate of permanence disruptions appears to be increasing. A lack of reliable information about children re-entering care from permanence is hampering sound policy decisions and impeding the provision of adequate support, services, benefits and allowances. The problem is there is so much missing data we cannot know if the figures that are reported by the Department of Education are accurate – since data on nearly 4k children is missing (Source SSDA 903 table C1).

Going back into care under Section 20 carries a high risk of destabilising the child's sense of permanence. The relationship between the adoptive parent or special guardian and the child may not be well supported at a difficult time of family separation, when a child re-enters care. There is also no guidance for social workers to help them reunify these children who are hard to care for because of previous trauma, poor mental health or neurodiversity issues. Adoptive parents and carers will have been rigorously assessed and carefully matched (in the case of adopters), with the child, but what seems to happen when times are tough and after family separation, especially in the difficult teenage years, is that help seeking adoptive parents and special guardians may be viewed through a 'prism of risk'¹. This is leading to unsupportive attitudes on the part of professionals and unwanted conflict on the part of agencies at a time of family crisis or difficult family separation. Adoptive parents and special guardians feel undermined and the child begins to feel unsafe. Things get worse instead of better²

Currently, there are twice as many children waiting to be adopted as there are adopters who are approved and wishing to adopt. This adopter shortfall may be indicative of the serious concerns prospective adopters have about inadequate support and a lack of support for wider family members to care for children who cannot live with their birth parents. Kinship care has recently been called 'Dump and Run' by a leading charity.

I feel extremely concerned about what is happening and therefore urge you to ask to review and reform the legislation surrounding adoptive and special guardianship children and families and

¹ <https://www.basw.co.uk/resources/role-social-worker-adoption-ethics-and-human-rights-enquiry>

² Here is an optional sentence to be added if you have experienced inaccurate assessments and reports being written about you: Reading the factually inaccurate assessment reports being written about me, which came as quite a shock, this made me start to question whether my child's birth parents and birth family were fairly treated when they needed help.

please call on the Department for Education to publish accurate and reliable data on children re-entering care from permanence families.

Reforms should not be rushed through without the opportunity for MPs to represent the interests of the people in their constituencies and speak up for our future as families.

I look forward to hearing from you, and I would also very much welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my concerns on a date that is convenient to you.

[Your Name]

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