

Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

CC: Janet Daby MP, Minister for Children and Families

17 April 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

As organisations that work with adoptive and kinship families who are raising children facing some of the biggest barriers to opportunity in this country, we are deeply concerned and dismayed about the government's recent announcement to reduce the support available to them through the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF). The decision taken to cut the individual support available to each child by 40% will have a direct impact on the futures of thousands of children and young adults, has caused widespread distress and anger amongst affected families, and appears economically short-sighted.

Around 3,000 children in England are placed in adoptive families each year, and around 5,000 leave the care system each year when a special guardianship or child arrangements order is made. Adopted children and this group of kinship children are almost all care experienced and share a childhood overshadowed by trauma, loss and disruption. The need for lifelong support is very common. These children have the same potential and deserve the same chance to thrive as every other child.

In your election manifesto, this government acknowledged that "every child should have a loving, secure home" and promised to "work with local Government to support children in care, including through kinship, foster care, and adoption..." Despite this, and despite committing to "...breaking the pernicious link between background and success", the government's approach to these children on this issue has so far been marked by delay and disappointment.

This incoherence is illustrated by the letter from your department to Adoption England just this month calling for sector action and improvements in adopter recruitment, matching and support. This ambition was undermined days later by these cuts to support, which will impact each step of the adopter journey. Further, despite welcome decisions to extend and rename the Fund to include kinship families in recent years, the funding available per child is now being reduced because of increased demand. This was entirely foreseeable. This comes on top of a freeze on funds available per child for well over a decade and rising demand for support.

New provisions in the government's own Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill which seek to improve the signposting of therapeutic support to kinship families through a kinship local offer are now, in effect, being undermined. Meanwhile, the national adoption strategy which sets out the framework for improvements in the system, including adoption support, is

overdue for review. The statutory guidance on adoption is 12 years old. Yet adoption was not even mentioned in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

Reducing the level of funded therapeutic support through the ASGSF will not solve the financial challenges caused by the foreseeable increased demand. Instead, this short-sighted decision will simply act to increase the pressure on other already-overstretched services within the NHS and elsewhere. It risks significant consequences for individual children who need this vital support, especially children with the most complex needs who experience the greatest barriers to opportunity, and risks increasing the number of families reaching breaking point. This decision may lead to placement disruptions and a resultant impact on local authority children's services if children return to the care system. It also risks undermining the government funded adopter recruitment campaign and efforts to increase the number of children looked after in kinship arrangements.

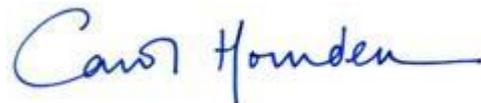
We urge you to reconsider this decision, made without consultation with sector organisations or adoptive and kinship families, including your department's own national reference groups for adoptive parents and kinship carers.

We understand the challenges the government faces, and we work every day to address the challenges faced by adoptive and kinship families. As we head towards the Spending Review, we urge you as Secretary of State to take immediate action to convene organisations like ours to start to work through these challenges together and establish a long-term plan for the future of the ASGSF beyond this year.

Yours sincerely,



Emily Frith
Chief Executive Officer, Adoption UK



Dr Carol Homden CBE
Chief Executive, Coram



Satwinder Sandhu
Chief Executive Officer, CVAA



Dr Lucy Peake
Chief Executive, Kinship