

Jodie Brown statement

I am here today to explain why the proposed changes are causing such serious concern amongst foster carers.

I've been fostering for just under four years. In that time, I've had four different supervising social workers. The child in my care has been with me for just under three years—he has had five.

We keep a light-hearted tally. But recently, he said something that has really stayed with me when he met his newest social worker, he said:

“Please don't leave me. The others have abandoned me.”

Of course, we reassure him, we explain that people change roles, move on, or go on leave. When reality a few were agency workers whose contracts came to an end.

But no amount of explanation stops a vulnerable child from feeling abandoned when the adults in their life keep changing.

Every time a new social worker comes in, trust has to be rebuilt. Relationships start again. And that takes time.

But the reality of caring for vulnerable children continues every single day. There are good days—but there are never easy days.

Yes, the system needs change. Many of us recognise that the system is under pressure and improvements are needed. But change must be done carefully and in a way that actually benefits the children and the people caring for them.

I have been incredibly fortunate to be supported by a team that truly knows us. They don't just care about the child—they care about me, my family, and the wider support network.

That kind of relationship takes time. It takes trust. And it depends on stability.

I've had social workers call me on Sundays, apologising for disturbing me. But I tell them—it's not my time they should worry about. I don't have working hours. They do.

I've spoken to them while they're driving home, I can hear them unlocking their front door, putting the kettle on, then heating their dinner—and still, they stay on the phone to support me.

They know us well. In fact, many members of the team know me so well they can see when I'm struggling before I even recognise it myself. That kind of relationship doesn't happen overnight. It takes time, trust, and stability.

And it makes me ask: when are **their** needs being met?

If our social worker isn't available, we often go to a manager who also knows us and understands the child. If we disagree on something, we can talk it through with people who know our situation. That level of knowledge and continuity is incredibly important.

Reducing those management roles is deeply worrying, because those managers pick up a huge amount of the workload and provide vital support to both carers and social workers. Many of them have taken calls from me late into the evening, well beyond the official out-of-hours period.

So what happens if those roles are reduced or centralised?

Will it become like the emergency duty team—where you speak to whoever is on shift?

Because when people don't know the child, you feel like just another case number. And children feel that too.

If staff are forced to apply for jobs that they don't understand or want, many will leave. They will go to agencies where they can earn more money and work in roles they do want.

If that happens, we will lose experienced, dedicated professionals. And when those professionals leave, it is the children who feel the impact.

Resulting in more children saying exactly what my child has said: "I've been abandoned again."

That will not be because people stopped caring. It will be because the system pushed them out.

So I ask you to reconsider these proposed job cuts. I ask you to reconsider making staff reapply for jobs that are still unclear.

Please think carefully about how overworked social workers and other professionals already are. These are people who care deeply about the children and families they work with, and who are already working far beyond their official hours.

If experienced staff leave because of these changes, it is the children and carers who will feel it most.

We will hear more children say:

“I’ve been abandoned again.”

You will have foster carers leaving

Not because people stopped caring—but because the system pushed them out.

So I ask the local authority to pause.

To think carefully about these decisions.

Because for you, this may be a restructure or a budget decision.

But for the children in our care, this is about trust.

It’s about whether the adults in their lives stay—or disappear.

The child in my care already believes people keep leaving him.

Please don’t make decisions that prove him right.

Because stability is not a luxury.

It is the foundation of their recovery.

And once it’s lost, it is incredibly hard to rebuild.