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Edward Timpson MP
Minister of State for Children and Families

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Kevin Williams
By email: kevin.williams@fostering.net

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Hi Kevin,

Thank you for your email of 22 April, enclosing the findings of The Fostering Network's recent survey, 'Cuts - the view from foster carers'.

We greatly value the important contribution that foster carers make to the lives of many children and young people who cannot live with their own parents and are committed to ensuring they receive the recognition, support and development opportunities they need. Foster carers are in an unrivalled position to build strong, loving and stable relationships that can endure into adulthood, and help a child address difficulties resulting from their experiences before entering care.

I read with interest the report's findings about how the government's austerity programme is perceived to have affected fostering services. Despite the need for savings, we have implemented a number of measures to support the fostering system. We have invested £44 million so that children can stay with their foster parents until age 21, and changed the rules so that for the first time long-term fostering is recognised as an important placement in its own right. More foster carers from a wide range of backgrounds are being recruited to care for children who are traditionally harder to place, and we have invested over £100 million through the Innovation Programme to support vulnerable children, including programmes to support foster families. We are giving local authorities almost £200 billion to spend on local services by 2020, and we know that the vast majority are protecting frontline children's social care budgets.

The government is also seeking new ways to support the foster placements, for both carers and the young people concerned. Through the Children's Services Innovation Programme, we continue to support the roll out of interventions such as KEEP (Keeping Foster and Kinship Carers Supported) and the Mockingbird Project. Both projects aim to increase the positive parenting skills of foster and kinship carers in responding to children's difficulties. They seek to build resilience, improve placement stability and enable young people to thrive as children and adults. New projects, focused particularly in the areas of rethinking children's social care, and supporting the transition of adolescents through the social care

system into adulthood, will also receive funding. In addition, the government has recently announced that we will be committing nearly £200 million to drive innovation and improvement in children's social care over the next three years.

Thank you for bringing this report and its findings to my attention. I hope my response allays the concerns raised by foster carers.

Yours sincerely,

Edward

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