

## Appendix 2

Dear A,

I hope you and J are well and you are enjoying being in year 10. I really enjoyed spending the day with you in Longleat in August, it was great fun, but I must say my favourite part was our sing-a-long to the radio on the way home!

Before the Summer you kindly agreed to work with myself and a lady called Mary who is a Councillor for Wiltshire on one of the things (there are 8 in total) we want to make better for you and all our children in care is

### ***A loving home where I have good relationships, respect, and the opportunity to see my family.***

I thought I would write to you to tell you about all the things we are doing to improve the care we give you.

**A loving home** – We are spending a lot of money on a project called ‘Fostering Excellence’ which is finding lots of new foster carers in Wiltshire. We are working hard to make sure that they are kind, caring and safe adults who will take great care of our children. We are also making sure they receive a lot of training, so they have a good understanding of what our children need. All our foster carers have their own Social Worker like you do, whose job it is to make sure they continue to be the best carers they can be. Not all our looked after children live with Wiltshire foster carers and some, like you, live with foster carers from independent fostering agencies. This is so that we can have a greater number of foster carers who can care for lots of different children. Because we know that not all children can live in a family, we also have a team called the Commissioning Team, whose job it is to make sure we have a range of different places where children can live including residential children’s homes. For older children and young adults, we also have supported accommodation where they live alone but have support from staff with things like shopping, cooking, and budgeting.

**Good relationships** – It is really important to us that all foster carers and staff who work with children have a good relationship with them so they can talk to them about anything including their wishes and feelings about now and what they want to happen in the future. Foster carers and all of our staff who work with children receive lots of the training and support to help them understand what children need and what they are trying to tell us through their behaviour. There are also lots of meetings to make sure children are doing the best that they can, you will know about some of these as you will also go to them and be asked your views at them. These include children looked after review meetings and PEP meetings (personal education plans) which you will have at school.

**Respect** – We want all carers and staff to listen to children and show them respect. We have introduced something called Mind of My Own. This is an amazing app on a phone, laptop, or other electrical device that you can use to say how you are feeling, what support you need and tell your Social Worker about the things that are important to you including anything that is worrying you or some fantastic news that you can’t wait to share. I hope you already have Mind of My Own but if you don’t, please let me know and I can make sure that you get it. We also have a Children in Care Council that you are already a member of. It meets to do fun things as well as to talk about what it is like living where you do, what is going well, what is not going so well and what we can do to make things better. Some children also have an Independent Visitor who visits them monthly. They do not work for the council but are ordinary people who are an adult friend who you can have fun with and talk to about any worries or problems. If you would like an Independent Visitor, please talk to Ashlynn your Social Worker, or let me know.

**Opportunity to see my family** – We know this is very important to most children in care and we have a duty to make sure there is family time between them and their loved ones. Sometimes contact with family and friends cannot happen for some of the children we care for, when this happens the reason why will be explained to them. We regularly talk to children about who is important to them to stay in touch with and who to see. Sometimes a child spending time with family will need to have a worker present, sometimes their foster carer can go with them and sometimes children can spend time with family alone. We also have a Specialist assessment, Intervention and Family Time team (SAIFT) which has Family Time workers who support children to see their family in one of our three resource centres in Devizes, Salisbury, and Trowbridge. We will always try to make sure that children see their family as often as possible and at times to suit them and that they speak to them in between these times. We will also regularly check with children what their wishes and feelings are about how family time is going for example is it too often, too long, not often enough, not long enough.

From your involvement with the CICC, I hope that you already know how important it is that we hear what you and our children in care think about what we do with them. Thank you so much for reading this letter A, I would now really like to hear your thoughts and feelings about what I have said. It is up to you how you would like to respond to me and do this. You could write back to me; we could do a Zoom call, or I could come and see you at home if you prefer. I will leave it with you to think about and when you have decided if you could tell J she will let me know and we can make the arrangements.

Take care and thanks again

*Michele.*

## **Response from A received 5.1.22**

*In my opinion I think it's good for young people in care to see as much of their biological family (if their social worker thinks that it is safe to do so and the young person wants to) and loved ones as you never know how much time you have left with them. I also think that MoMo [Mind of My Own] is a good way for social workers or carers to see what is going through their young person or foster child's mind. I think that it is kind that carers give their young people money to buy what they want when they are out with their friends. It's also a good thing for the young people to know that they have a family that will help them with their homework and seeing their own family and loved ones.*

*In my experience of being in foster care for almost 3 years, my forever placement carers have been very good at making sure I have regular contact with my family and friends and welcoming me into their own families and helping me with my school work and making sure I have somewhere that I can relax and focus on my homework and any extra revision for any upcoming exams and tests. They have also been making sure that I have everything that I need and healthy food in my diet because before I moved in with (names of carers) I would live of burgers and any other junk food you can think of.*

*Thanks for reading my reply*

*Yours sincerely,*

A 😊