Dear Francis,

First, let me thank you for the considered contributions you made to the debates during the first day of Report stage of the Children and Social Work Bill. We discussed a range of important issues and I am grateful for your input.

Thank you also for your letter of 1 November regarding the National Offer. During the debate, we discussed the National Offer amendment at length. I recognise and agree that the issues you raise are really important for care leavers. In Keep on Caring one of the five outcomes that we want to achieve for care leavers is that they are able to achieve financial stability.

We understand that this is important and since Report stage, my officials have been working closely with DWP and DCLG to explore any action that we may be able to take to offer further financial support to care leavers. Discussions are ongoing and I know you will appreciate there are wider issues that we need to ensure are aligned with other parts of Government. I am therefore not able to report anything further at this time.

While I am writing I will also respond to the question you raised around what percentage of care leavers are in suitable accommodation.

As at 31 March 2015, 81% of care leavers aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation. As you rightly pointed out, this is different to the figure quoted in the care leaver strategy which says ‘during the year ending March 2015, our data show that over 90% of care leavers for whom information was provided were in suitable accommodation’. The difference between the figures is that the care leaver strategy percentage only refers to those care leavers for whom information was returned, whereas the Statistical First Release percentage refers to all care leavers.

I thought you might also want to be aware that we recently published new data on care leavers’ accommodation and activity for the year ending March 2016. It shows that 83% of care leavers aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation. In addition,
The officials have conducted some further analysis which shows that 92% of care leavers for whom information was provided were in suitable accommodation. The full data is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2015-to-2016

Finally, during the debate many noble Lords spoke about Jack and his experiences of care. I responded to say that the Department for Education had organised a work experience placement for Jack, and this happened over the summer. Jack spent two days with officials and had the opportunity to experience how Private Office works, learn about the civil service, and input to how the strategy for looked after children and care leavers will be presented to young people.

[Signature]

LORD NASH