



Department for Education

████████████████████
Minister for Children and Families

Marilyn Whittle
Assistant Coroner for the Coroner Area of South Yorkshire (West)
South Yorkshire (West) Coroner's Service
Medico-Legal Centre
Watery Street
Sheffield
S3 7ES

25 November 2025

Dear Ms Whittle,

RESPONSE TO REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS

This is the Department for Education's (the Department) response to your report made under paragraph 7, Schedule 5, of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and Regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, dated 2 September 2025, following the tragic death of Marcia Grant on 5 April 2023. I am responding as the Minister for Children and Families, and have responsibility for foster care.

Thank you for your conduct of the inquest and for your identification of matters of concern, which are set out in the Report.

Marcia's passing deeply shocked and saddened everyone across the Department and our thoughts are with her family and friends. I recently met with Marcia's family to discuss their experience, alongside ██████████, their MP. As a dedicated and skilled foster carer, Marcia was a pillar of the fostering community. Her compassion, commitment, and tireless efforts transformed the lives of countless children and young people. She was deeply respected and will be remembered with warmth and admiration by all who had the privilege of knowing her.

I want to set out my heartfelt admiration more broadly for the huge contribution made by foster carers. Foster carers provide loving homes to most children in care and form the backbone of the children's social care system. Fostering is an incredibly challenging role which requires skills and unwavering dedication from those who volunteer to give vulnerable children a home.

We will shortly be announcing comprehensive measures to reform the fostering system, and are considering the voices and experiences raised that Marcia's family raised as part of these reforms.

These reforms will significantly increase the number of foster carers and improve the experience of fostering. The Department remains committed to improving recruitment and retention to ensure that every child in care is able to have a stable, loving foster home, where this is the most appropriate option. Our goal is for local authorities to have improved placement sufficiency, enabling better matching where children can have a choice of placement. We believe that this will help to avoid issues such as those identified in Marcia's case.

While our response focuses on the lack of placements, as requested, I will briefly set out our position on the wider themes you raised about this tragic case. Our statutory guidance sets that fostering services must provide carers with the information necessary to fulfil their role effectively. In emergency placements, where full information may not be immediately available, local authorities must make the most appropriate decision based on the information at hand and in the child's best interests. Any outstanding information should be provided to the foster carer at the earliest opportunity.

The National Minimum Standards for fostering services, which inform Ofsted inspections, affirm that foster carers are entitled to full and timely disclosure of a child's circumstances, including recent significant events. This enables carers to understand and respond appropriately to the child's needs and behaviours. Data protection legislation does not prevent the sharing of such information where there is a valid legal basis and a risk of serious harm.

The National Minimum Standards also set out that children should only be matched to places that can meet their needs. These standards also set out that the impact of the placement on household members should be considered before placements are made. This type of activity is central to any effective matching practice.

Matter of concern 1 – Lack of placements

The lack of foster placements placed significant strain on the Local Authority to consider creative solutions to try and avoid an unauthorised placement. This led to an unsuitable placement being accepted. I was informed the shortage of placements is a both a local and a national issue and therefore both Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Minister for the Department for Education are asked to consider this concern.

We recognise there are too few fostering placements, causing sufficiency challenges for local authorities across the country. This places pressure on local authorities and results in a lack of choice on placements, which can lead to unsuitable matches, as well as placement instability and children being placed out-of-area.

We have already made progress on this issue through our investments in recruitment and retention within local authorities. The Department has been supporting over 60% of local authorities across England in 10 regional recruitment support hubs, most of which launched in the spring and summer of 2024. These hubs, backed by regional communications campaigns in each area, support

prospective foster carers from their first enquiry to ensure that they carers are properly supported through the application process. Most recruitment support hubs are surpassing the Department's expectations for foster carer approvals, compared to what we expect they would have achieved without the programme. These highlight the impact of collaborative working in driving recruitment success.

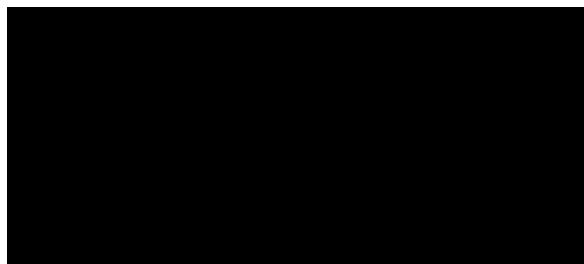
We have also invested in rolling out a foster care retention model called Mockingbird, an innovative evidence-based approach involving six to ten families grouped into a constellation around a hub home carer. Mockingbird includes peer support, respite and training. It was found to substantially improve retention by an independent evaluation, which showed that participating households were 82% less likely to deregister than households who did not participate.

Despite this progress, we know we need to go further and faster in significantly increasing foster care numbers. We will set out our plans for doing this in comprehensive new measures over the coming months.

This work is being backed by the Chancellor's Transformation Fund, announced in the Spring Statement, which will provide an additional £25m over 2 years (beginning in 2026/27 and 2027/28). This is additional to the £15m of fostering investment that was announced in the Autumn Budget, to cover investment taking place in 2025/26. The Spending Review also set out funding to renovate and expand foster carer homes, so that approved carers can look after more children.

Once again, we would like to take the opportunity to thank you for highlighting these matters of concern, and for giving us the opportunity to respond.

Yours sincerely



Minister for Children and Families