

Government to examine deaths of vulnerable care leavers

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Review into deaths of young people leaving the care system to be published later this year, led by Ashley John-Baptiste and Clare Chamberlain.

Vulnerable young people leaving the care system will be better supported following a review launched by the government today into the deaths of care leavers.

This is in response to the horrifying fact that a disproportionate number of young people who have been in care die young, often in complex circumstances and without support from social workers and others. The government is determined to change this as part of wider efforts to improve the lives of young people, breaking down barriers to opportunity and enabling them to succeed.

Data published in May 2025 showed 91 notifications of care leaver deaths in 2024-25, with the majority aged between 16 and 21. This number is unacceptably high and a serious problem which impacts wider society.

The review into some of these cases will be led by experienced social worker Clare Chamberlain and care-experienced author and broadcaster Ashley John-Baptiste.

Together, they bring a wealth of experience and expertise about the huge challenges which young people face both in and out of the care system.

The review will focus on young people's experiences, who and what mattered to them, and identify what more could have been done to support them.

It forms part of wider action to strengthen support for care leavers, including through the landmark Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to enable them to thrive in adult life..

The Bill will introduce new duties on local authorities to provide "Staying Close" support up to age 25, helping care leavers find places to live, get jobs and access vital services including for health, education, training and relationships advice.

The Bill will also introduce new corporate parenting responsibilities for public sector bodies to ensure they take support care leavers and take their needs into account when designing policies and delivering services.

Minister for Children and Families, Josh MacAlister, said:

Far too many young people who have been in care face massive challenges in adult life. The fact that many have died far too early is truly shocking and must change.

This review will help us understand what is going wrong and, crucially, what more we can do to protect and support young people as they leave care. We owe it to every child in our care system to ensure they have the network of loving relationships they need to thrive.

The independent experts will begin their work immediately, with findings and recommendations to be shared later this year. Lessons will be embedded into the government's forthcoming Enduring Relationships Programme, which will put the need to support enduring relationships for children in care at the heart of government policy.

Ashley John-Baptiste said:

As someone who grew up in care, it troubles me deeply that so many care experienced people have died so early.

I can't overstate how important this work is. I hope our efforts will provide the critical insights and learning needed - so that we can do better for our precious care experienced young people.

Clare Chamberlain said:

In undertaking this work we hope to hear not just from professionals, but from family and friends who were close to the young person, so that we can get a good understanding of what mattered most in their lives and what could have been different.

The Department for Education has already taken steps to improve understanding of care leaver mortality. Since December 2023, local authorities have been expected to report the deaths of care leavers through the Serious Incident Notification system.

The next annual data release is expected in Spring 2026, with further work underway to improve the quality and consistency of reporting.

Alongside these reviews, the government is strengthening mental health support for children in care. A three-year pilot announced in December 2025 will bring together social workers and NHS professionals to provide earlier, more joined-up mental health support to children and families.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-examine-deaths-of-vulnerable-care-leavers>