



By Rachel W (LinkedIn)

Dear Josh,

Every child deserves love.
Every child deserves belonging.
Every child deserves safety.

But safety must come before everything else.

This letter is not just for you.

It is for the residential workers you refuse to see.
The ones who sit through the night with children in crisis.
The ones who search for missing children.
The ones who hold fear, grief, trauma and hope.
The ones who save lives every single day.

And it is for the care-experienced people across the ages and miles whose voices continue to be ignored when these conversations take place.

Because children in care are not one story.
We are thousands of stories.

You speak of family.
Some of us were harmed by ours.
You speak of contact.
Whilst professionals were trying to facilitate my contact with family, I was being raped.
Whilst adults were discussing my need for connection, I was living with the reality of exploitation and abuse.
The risk in my life was not a lack of family.
The risk was family.
Thirteen foster homes could not keep me safe.
Not because foster carers failed.
Not because professionals did not care.
But because the people abusing me were determined to find me.

The first place I truly became safe was residential care.
Residential care saved my life.

Yet too often it is spoken about as a failure rather than what it can be: a lifeline.
A place of protection.
A place where some children finally stop looking over their shoulder.

And if you truly want transformation, stop looking for a single solution.
Invest in the workforce.
Invest in residential care.
Invest in training.

Because children communicate distress long before they disclose it.
Too often we miss it.
Too often we misunderstand it.
Too often we respond when it is already too late.

My Communication Under Distress training challenges that thinking.
It teaches adults to recognise what is already in plain sight.
Because safeguarding does not begin with disclosure.
It begins with understanding.

The most dangerous thing we can do is build policy around a single narrative.
Some children need foster care.
Some need kinship care.
Some need adoption.
Some need residential care.
Some need specialist therapeutic environments.
The answer is not choosing one form of care over another.
The answer is listening to those who have lived it.

All of it.

Not just the stories that fit a campaign.

Because when we erase complexity, children and the adults we become pay the price.
Children do not need ideology.
They need safety.

And safety starts with telling the whole truth.

Yours sincerely

Rachel W