

LOCAL MP VISITS OAKDALE AND CONTINUES TO STAND UP FOR ADOPTIVE AND SGO FAMILIES AMID GOVERNMENT LETDOWN

Tom Gordon, Liberal Democrat MP for Harrogate and Knaresborough, has reaffirmed his support for adoptive families following damaging cuts to government funding. Last week, he met with the team at Oakdale Centre in Harrogate – a leading independent provider of psychological therapies for children, families, and adults across the North of England.

The meeting focused on Oakdale's adoption support and trauma services, which serve as a vital lifeline for adoptive families. Two adoptive parents also attended the meeting to share firsthand accounts of the challenges they now face.

A key focus of the discussion was the Government's decision, announced on 14th April, to reduce individual support through the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF). While the overall size of the fund remains unchanged, the number of children accessing it has increased—resulting in a 40% cut to the support available per child, from £5,000 to just £3,000 annually.

The ASGSF was established to fund therapeutic support for some of the most vulnerable children in the country, many of whom face complex emotional and psychological trauma. By reducing the financial support available for each child, the Government is directly restricting access to the vital therapies children need to recover from trauma. Staff at the Oakdale Centre, along with the adoptive parents at the meeting, expressed serious concerns about the long-term impact of this decision.

Beyond this meeting, Tom has heard directly from constituents about how vital ASGSF- funded services have been in transforming their families' lives. Evidence from the Government's own evaluation support this as it found that after ASGSF support, the mental health difficulties of school aged children improved to a statistically significant degree.

As well as the ASGSF fund being cut, a separate allocation of £2,500 for specialist assessments has been dropped altogether, as has a match funding arrangement with local authorities for children with the most complex needs.

These cuts came after a period of uncertainty. In March, the Government allowed the fund to expire, only to announce a last-minute extension the following day. The delay caused disruption to ongoing therapy, suspected new applications, and created widespread confusion for providers and families. As of now, there is no confirmed funding beyond March 2026, leaving the team at Oakdale Centre—and providers across the country—deeply concerned about the future.

Tom has long championed the rights of adoptive children and their families. In April, he led a debate in the House of Commons on adoption disruption, where he highlighted the importance of the ASGSF and called for the government to make it permanent. Then, recently, during a Westminster Hall debate on support for children in adoptive and kinship placements, Tom challenged the Minister directly, highlighting the contradiction between her acknowledgment that support like the ASGSF is "critical" and the Government's decision to slash funding.

Tom remains committed to advocating for adoptive families and supporting providers like the Oakdale Centre.

Commenting, Tom said:

'The recent cut to the ASGSF is a betrayal of some of the most vulnerable children in our society. The government's own data shows this fund works – so cutting it is not just short-sighted, it's cruel.'

Visiting the Oakdale Centre and speaking directly with adoptive parents brought home just how critical this support is – and how devastating these cuts will be.

These families are not asking for luxuries – they're asking for the support their children need to have a fair chance in life. I will keep pushing in Parliament until the Government reverses these reckless cuts and delivers the support adoptive and SGO families deserve.'

Jude, Head of Service for Oakdale said:

'Thank you to Tom for visiting, listening and advocating on behalf of Oakdale and the families that access our services. We remain gravely concerned about both the immediate and long-term implications of the recent reduction in funding, as well as the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the future of the fund'

