

Politician Triggers Parenting Debate after Leaving Son 'Home Alone'

In recent years, Americans seem to fly off the handle every time some parent loosens the leash and allows a child to practice fending for himself. Apparently, those cases are now spreading to Great Britain, with parliamentarian Michael Gove being exhibit A.

According to [news reports](#), Gove and his wife left their 11-year-old son behind in their room at a posh hotel, notified hotel staff of the situation, and then left to attend a nearby party. They stayed later than they intended and missed calls from the hotel porter on behalf of their son.

Such actions caused a number of observers to criticize Gove's parenting as neglectful.

Others however, such as [Rowan Pelling](#), suggest that Gove's actions were those of a father trying to responsibly guide his son from childhood to adulthood – a guidance which most boys of that age would welcome with open arms:

"In my experience, 11-year-old boys are resilient, adaptable and connected to wi-fi 24/7. They own smartphones and are never off Instagram. Several thousand of their intimate friends know where they are at all times. ...

[S]ince children mature at different rates, you might well allow one 11-year-old more leeway than another. My oldest son is 12 and, to the consternation of some of my friends and family, has been walking two miles into the centre of Cambridge on his own since he was nine."

Pelling goes on to say that failure to teach children to be

independent when they're young can result in deep problems later:

*"I know not every parent feels this way. But I'd say to [all those mums and dads who would microchip their children, send drones on their heels and video them while they sleep](#): don't be surprised when little Johnny is living with you aged 52, handing over his washing and hacking the Pentagon. **The biggest gift you can bestow on your offspring, other than unconditional love, is independence.**"*

What do you think? Is Gove an example of parents giving their children too much responsibility at too young an age? Or is Pelling correct in saying that our tendency to keep children on a short leash teaches them to be irresponsible and dependent as adults?

Image Credit: fanart.tv