



EVERY CHILD LEAVING CARE MATTERS



Campaign Newsletter - A letter from the Chair

April 2017

EVERY CHILD LEAVING
CARE MATTERS

PLEASE SIGN
THE PETITION

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Our Board

We have struggled a little of late to maintain our social media presence at the previous level. Ian Dickson who formerly 'managed' the Twitter and Facebook accounts has, for personal reasons, stepped back from this. Whilst Paula Doherty has tried to maintain Facebook we have had a nightmare with Passwords and the like so have struggled (If anyone has a direct line to Mark Zuckerberg please let me know – we seem to have tried everything else!) I have taken over the Twitter account but frankly I struggle to devote the time that this requires to be fully up to speed given other commitments. We'll keep trying and in the interim please do try to take the time to 're-cycle' posts on Twitter and Facebook using #ECLCM. @rescareto21 and, or #stayingclose please do so.

Politics and stuff!

We continue (well to be frank it's almost exclusively down to Mr Ian Gould) to add to the list of Members of Parliament who are openly supporting our campaign (Please see below) . Of course there are still some 600 plus who don't which makes me wonder "WHY?" I am all for MP's making their decisions on the basis of their conscience; I can even live with them feeling that they must follow a Party Whip. Well there is not any particular party line on Every Child Leaving Care Matters and our campaign so there can't be a whip. This leaves the matter of their conscience then. I'll just leave that thought with you, but if anyone reading this decides to contact their MP and ask why they are not supporting us then we'd be really interested to know the answer.

On a matter we raised last issue concerning the Children and Social Work Bill. Can we simply say a whole-hearted congratulations to Carolyn Willow and all of those behind Article 39 (Twitter @article_39)

"That's how to run a campaign – truly inspirational"

On an entirely more sombre note I feel it would be massively disrespectful for us not to comment on the despicable actions leading to the events of 22nd March in Westminster. This was not an attack on politicians – though that would have been equally deplorable – but on many very ordinary people. No doubt there are injustices or perceived injustices in this country but thank goodness that we have a tradition of resolving these through a representative democracy not violence. May all those who died have found their god if they have one and may all those who survived and have been impacted by that day recover. There is no room for hatred in these islands.

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|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Alan Johnson | 23. Kerry McCarthy |
| 2. Alex Cunningham | 24. Khalid Mahmood |
| 3. Andrew Gwynne | 25. Liz McInnes |
| 4. Andy McDonald | 26. Lucy Allen |
| 5. Bill Esterson | 27. Margot James |
| 6. Cat Smith | 28. Mike Wood |
| 7. Catherine McKinnel | 29. Norman Lamb |
| 8. Craig Whittaker | 30. Rachael Maskell |
| 9. Emma Lewell-Buck | 31. Sarah Champion |
| 10. George Howarth | 32. Simon Danczuk |
| 11. Gordon Marsden | 33. Sir David Ames |
| 12. Holly Lynch | 34. Tracey Brabin |
| 13. Ian Mearns | 35. Stephen Twigg |
| 14. Jeff Smith | 36. Thangam Debbonaire |
| 15. Jenny Chapman | 37. Tom Brake |
| 16. Jess Phillips | 38. Tony Perkins |
| 17. Jim Shannon | 39. Paul Scully |
| 18. Jo Johnson | 40. Flick Drummond |
| 19. Johnny Mercer | 41. Sharon Hodgson |
| 20. Jonathan Reynolds | 42. Rupa Huq |
| 21. Karl Turner, | 43. Kate Green |
| 22. Kate Osamor | |

As ever we have not identified all those above by their political party – not least because this isn't and shouldn't be a Party-Political Issue

Staying Close

I hope that many if not all of you will have had the chance to read the letter that was dedicated to the issue of the apparent transition of our campaign from the option for children to remain in their residential placements up to the age of twenty-one to supporting Staying Close. I will not seek to offer the same explanation all over again here but I do want to spend a little time on Staying Close. Before I do, though, I would like to tell you something that came up in a meeting that I attended with two very senior OfSTED inspectors in Manchester today. (I will discuss the meeting in slightly more detail later). The most relevant part at this point, however, is that when I was offering a brief résumé of the campaign and mentioned that among the things that Staying Close would mean is that for some children there would be a strong argument for them to stay in their children's home beyond their 18th birthday they both nodded their agreement that this is precisely what can and does happen now if the child's plan supports it.

To the more general discussion. We have continued to meet and engage with DfE colleagues on the progress of their plans and we were happy to be invited to an event in Manchester that took place on 22nd February with providers (primarily Local Authorities but including some from the independent sector all of whom had been included on a shortlist for the receipt of Innovation Funding to deliver the Staying Close pilots. Also in attendance were representatives from OfSTED, a disappointingly small representation of Care Leavers (Janine from Pure Insight and ourselves. The day was presented by the Spring Consortium

who have been contracted by DfE to support those selected to develop bids and ourselves (Ian Dickson, Ian Gould and myself). We were part of the 'round-table' discussion with potential providers and it was clear that the range of offers was diverse. Frankly, some seemed to have engaged in little or no discussion with children in care and care leavers whilst for others their bid was strongly informed by such groups. We were allowed to offer and distribute our vision of Staying Close as represented by our paper 'CARING TEAMS' – which is presented at the end of this Newsletter (we would very much welcome you sharing any views / criticisms of this document please). At this stage, each of the 'bidders' will be allocated an advisor from 'Spring' to develop their bid prior to a final short-listing. I'm not sure what if any part we might have in influencing the decision-making process but we would hope that successful bidders will have incorporated what we see as being essential for Staying Close to be effective. We do appreciate that the purpose of pilots is, in part, to look at different models of delivery but would add that regardless of the model the interests of care leavers must be at it's heart

We have already shared our paper with several people who have requested a copy and thus far the feedback has been positive. Significantly among those we have shared it with are Elaine Scott-Pearson (CEO of AIVCCS), Sharon Martin who is the chair of NAIRO, John Diamond who is the Head of Mulberry Bush School and the Editor of 'The Therapeutic Care Journal', two of the key OfSTED inspectors Matthew Brazier and Helen Humphreys (respectively the Leads for Looked After Children and Specialist Advisor for Residential Care), Isabelle Trowler – the Chief Social Worker and David Graham together with Jim Goddard who are respectively the CEO and Chair of the Care Leavers Association.

I would now like to take a little time putting these names into context.

As you will know (or you will by the end of this Newsletter) Staying Close as we see it identifies key roles and responsibilities for Independent Reviewing Officers, Regulation 44 Visitors and OfSTED. It's all very well us saying this but we have to seek to demonstrate that it can be done. As such we have had a long-term engagement with both Elaine and Sharon who we know support Staying Close and have no issues with CARING TEAMS. I referred earlier to a meeting that I attended with OfSTED yesterday. It was scheduled to include both me and Ian Dickson but Ian's attempts to get there were thwarted by the public transport system which left him stranded not far from home. Nonetheless the meeting went ahead and was extremely helpful; whilst we recognise that what we are asking of them requires a considerable resource allocation – at a time when they too are struggling to meet the demands that Government places on them – I was left in no doubt that in principle ECLCM and OfSTED are very much on the same page in respect of listening to children and ensuring that Staying Close when it happens must be properly monitored and regulated to eliminate the possibility of unscrupulous providers (and there are some in all sectors) effectively exploiting young people by not delivering on their commitments. John Diamond and 'his' journal have been long term supporters of the campaign and have published a copy of our last Newsletter in this month's edition of their journal which will be followed up by the publication of CARING TEAMS in June. Isabelle Trowler – with whom we have met previously in the early days of the campaign has accepted an invitation to participate in a discussion of Staying Close and CARING TEAMS next month. The meeting will also be attended by Elaine and Sharon (we hope) and representation from CLA with either or both of David and Jim attending. Indeed, it was at a meeting with David and Jim that the idea was initially discussed and we agreed that given our respective positions on Staying Close were so similar in thought and principle we should wherever possible work together to achieve a shared goal. This meeting will be important but we hope it could lead to a more significant event – possibly on a conference scale later in the year. We know that's ambitious for ECLCM but thanks to CLA we know we can facilitate the first meeting and may be able to find funding for a larger scale event.

Are we making progress? Yes, I think we are. It is at times painfully slow and I think we really appreciate just how difficult it is for a small organisation like ours to succeed without an infrastructure, funding or employees. Even simple things like trying to get a consultation going is beyond us. We have asked others if they can help but so far no offers have been forthcoming. We would love to find a way of consulting and

demonstrating that we have done so with Care Leavers particularly on Staying Close. We don't speak for or represent Care Leavers and arguably nor can anyone – for care leavers are as diverse a group of people as is any other but it would be good if we could find a way of knowing if Staying Close would help now, would have helped in the past or may help in the future. It's been great to have some responses on Twitter from Care Leavers who express their support but frankly if someone can suggest any viable way for us to solicit the views of as many care leavers (of all ages) as is possible please get in touch.

The Petition

Our Petition continues to grow slowly and although this is by no means our primary focus these days it does remain vitally important to us as it represents a tangible expression of support and to an extent gives us a mandate when we go into discussions with those in power to make things happen. We would be grateful therefore if you can all remember to talk, tweet, or otherwise get the message out there for us that Every Child Leaving Care Matters.

The key elements required to comply with the ECLCM vision of an acceptable STAYING CLOSE placement

Caring Teams

ECLCM believe that for a Staying Close placement to have a realistic chance of being successful and to mirror as far as is possible the security and support offered by a good Staying Put placement, there are 11 key areas that have to be addressed. These may be remembered by the use of the acronym “Caring Teams”. The acronym represents:

C**entrality of the young person** - Each young person’s plans must be individual, bespoke to that young person and addressing their specific needs, wishes and aspirations. They should not be part of a ‘one size fits all’ template.

A**ge to 21** – The placement should be able to offer the young person a supported home until s/he has attained at least the age of 21, and ideally longer as required.

R**evaluations and planning (Role of the IRO?)** - It is vital if the Staying Close plan is to remain focused and to be implemented as planned for it to be reviewed. It is suggested that formal six monthly reviews might be held for the duration of the placement that are chaired by someone independent but recognised by each of the agencies, who would be responsible for interviewing the young person to seek their views before each review and producing a written report following each review. An Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is an obvious candidate to fulfil such a role.

I**nspection** - In order for the placement to be seen to be safe, appropriate and meeting the young person’s needs and agreed plans, it is vital that it should be inspected and monitored. The placement should be inspected at prior to admission and at least once annually by Ofsted or an agreed inspection agency to ensure it meets agreed standards. It might then be monitored at monthly intervals via “Regulation 44” visits that would feed into Ofsted and advise the provider, young person and Ofsted of their findings.

N**ear** enough to the children’s home to walk there in 15 minutes in an emergency at any time of the day or night or merely to facilitate regular and on-going contact as agreed in their care planning. This is consistent with the principle of “Staying Close”, and mirrors the accessibility of carers in “Staying Put”.

G**overnment** funded to ensure that the availability of Staying Close is not a post code lottery and that funding is provided to meet the agreed plans and the young person’s assessed needs, and not be totally dependent upon benefit levels or any other form of financial support from other agencies.

T**eam around the child** – The placement must be supported by a multi-agency team representing the support in place as part of the Staying Close plan. – Social work, Housing, Health, Employment/Education, Residential provider, etc. Care planning decisions should be made by this team and the young person

Early planning towards independent living – It is not sufficient or appropriate to offer training or teach young people independent living skills when they reach the age of 16 years old. This must not be left until young people enter in to a Staying close plan. Training towards independent living should be offered according to age, understanding and ability from the day a child is first admitted into care, and where possible, they should have these basic skills prior to their “Staying Close” placement.

Accountability of each party - Each and all of the agencies or individuals comprising the ‘team around the child should have clearly outlined areas of responsibility and tasks included in the care plan, for which they will be accountable and held to review

Maintains the relationships formed between the young person and the residential team with whom they have been living. The placement and care planning, protects and promotes the maintenance and development of relationships significant to the young person – perhaps the key worker (or other member(s) of the residential team), a youth worker, teacher, social worker or other identified person

Staying Close - A clear definition of what constitutes ‘Close’ agreed in each individual case. The principle behind staying Close is that a young person might ‘Stay Close’ to the residential home that they lived in prior to their being discharged from care at 18 years of age or before. Staying Close should mean exactly that, not that a young person is decanted at 18 into a house retained in an area for the purpose with a group of other young people in similar situations, and visited occasionally – Supported lodgings with visits. The appropriate Staying Close placement should be agreed as appropriate and suitable with the young people and the team in each individual case. This would mirror the spirit of Staying Put as introduced for young people who were being discharged from foster care.