



EVERY CHILD LEAVING CARE MATTERS



Campaign Newsletter - A letter from the Chair

July 2017

EVERY CHILD LEAVING
CARE MATTERS

PLEASE SIGN
THE PETITION

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Politics and stuff!

Who might have guessed at the time of our last Newsletter that by the time of the following issue we would have experienced such utter political turmoil? Few might have predicted a General Election at the start of June and fewer still would have been likely to predict the precise outcome. Interestingly, in the lead up to the Election Date we became aware that two parties had included reference to Staying Put or Staying Close in their manifesto, Labour (thanks I suspect exclusively to our wonderful Patron, Emma Lewell-Buck and her equally admirable 'assistant, Michelle Gribbon) and UKIP. Disappointingly (and despite some notable individual candidates from other parties) that was it. We know that issues concerning children in care and care leavers aren't 'vote winners' but frankly it would have been pleasing if there had been at least some acknowledgement of children in care.

Following the perhaps unexpected outcome Mr Gould has been right on the case of MP's old and new seeking their support and as a consequence of his efforts along with other factors that I will come to later we have already had support from some of the newly elected Parliamentarians. We also note the departure of Mr Edward Timpson from Parliament and hope that his successor, Robert Goodwill, may find time to engage with our campaign unlike his predecessor. He is, I understand, MP for Scarborough and Whitby and could take the opportunity to talk to Sir Martin Narey who I guess is now one of his constituents should he need a reference about us and more particularly seek an insight into Children's residential care in England!

Alan Johnson	Gordon Marsden	Johnny Mercer	Rachael Maskell	Kate Green
Alex Cunningham	Holly Lynch	Jonathan Reynold	Sarah Champion	Maria Eagle
Andrew Gwynne	Ian Mearns	Kerry McCarthy	Sir David Ames	Albert Owens
Andy McDonald	Jeff Smith	Karen Lumley	Stephen Twigg	Louise Haig
Bill Esterson	Jenny Chapman	Khalid Mahmood	Thangam Debbonaire	Ivan Lewis
Cat Smith	Jess Phillips	Liz McInnes	Tom Brake	Bob Blackman
Catherine McKinnel	Karl Turner	Lucy Allen	Tony Perkins	Preet Gill
Craig Whittaker	Kate Osamor	Margot James	Paul Scully	Clive Lewis
Emma Lewell-Buck	Jim Shannon	Mike Wood	Sharon Hodgson	
George Howarth	Jo Johnson	Norman Lamb	Rupa Huq	

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

We are very pleased to say that the Isabelle Trowler, Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, recently accepted an invitation from ECLCM to meet with us. We had previously met with Jim Goddard and David Graham from the Care Leavers Association to discuss Staying Close and suggested to them that as we had previously had contact with Isabelle it might be helpful to ask if she would meet with us all. First, I should say that we had established in our meeting with them in March that ECLCM and CLA are pretty well 'Singing from the same hymn sheet' when it comes to what Staying Close should mean in practice and they had accepted all that we had produced in CARING TEAMS.

We met with Isabelle on 1st June and had what I believe was a very constructive meeting discussing CARING TEAMS and other related topics. Isabelle was extremely receptive and suggested that she may be able to join our scheduled meeting with DfE in early June. As it transpired she did so and whilst Sanctuary House (I suspect like many other Government departmental buildings) was in a slight sense of turmoil so soon after the General Election and subsequent political manoeuvrings we had an interesting afternoon when we were able to look at some of the prospective bids for Staying Close pilots. These were all suitably anonymised and it was, understandably, made absolutely clear to us that whilst our views would be considered we would not be any part of the decision-making process.

We now know that the results of the Innovation Funding Board have been announced and that a number of pilots are approved to proceed so I have included the list below. What I cannot say is which, if any, follow the CARING TEAMS agenda in full or part but we hope to find out in due course. I hope and expect that ECLCM will have the opportunity to play some part in the evaluation of pilots and certainly all of the indications thus far from the DfE is that this will be the case. On the basis of all our previous experience with them I expect what they say to be what they will do.

Is this an achievement for the campaign? Yes, I believe it is – though others might well differ in this view. Would what has happened in relation to Staying Close have happened without this campaign – who knows but I strongly suggest that it wouldn't? Sir Martin Narey received the submissions of the campaign in his review of Children's Homes and was good enough to arrange meetings and maintain an extended correspondence with us that he certainly appeared to value given his reference to our campaign in his final report and recommendation that we be asked to assist and or advise DfE on the development of a Staying Close offering to all residential care leavers. It does feel that we are making progress but the job is a very long way from 'being done'.

Break Charity: Up to £1.3m, to offer 70 young people who are care leavers across Norfolk and Cambridgeshire, the option to stay close by living together in two to three bed 'moving on' accommodation.

Bristol City Council: Up to £567k to strengthen and develop Bristol's core offer to children living in and leaving its children's homes through a range of different staying close options.

Fair Ways: Up to £483k to provide a secure, four year accommodation pathway with support for young people making the transition from residential care. This will start with an initial placement in semi-independent accommodation followed by a move into an independent tenancy, whilst maintaining key relationships throughout the whole process.

North East Lincolnshire Council: Up to £887k to offer all young people in North East Lincolnshire's local authority children's homes the option to 'Stay Close', providing a holistic, coherent and integrated pathway for the 18+ cohort.

North Tyneside Council: Up to £837k to provide a provision for six young people who are leaving care, in co-located semi-independent accommodation.

Portsmouth City Council: Up to £649k to develop accommodation adjacent to an existing residential unit, and a separate five bed house to accommodate care leavers. This will involve a key worker structure supporting transition from residential to independent living, offering continuity of care, practical and emotional support and sustained relationships.

St Christopher's Fellowship: Up to £585k to provide semi-independent accommodation for six young people who are leaving care; plus 'pop-home' opportunities for young people to return to their former children's home at crisis points. It includes specific support to help young people experience improved emotional health and well-being, plus peer support programmes to help young people develop the knowledge and skills for independent living.

Suffolk County Council: Up to £787k to offer a Staying Close support package to young people in four of Suffolk's local authority residential care homes and three private sector care homes.

Our Board

I am delighted to say that we have welcomed two former Board Members back to join us. Ben Ashcroft and Delyth Edwards. The strength of the campaign will undoubtedly be enhanced by their presence and with every respect to Delyth I have to say that Ben hasn't so much 'hit the ground running' as 'hit the ground with a super-charger'.

On the other hand I need to report that Ian Dickson left the Board some months ago. At Ian's request we did not make an issue of this because he wanted the focus to remain on the campaign not him. He had a number of exciting things going on in his personal life but also wanted to continue his relentless support for care leavers without the potential conflict that the corporate responsibility of belonging to a Board brings. He remains a staunch supporter of the principles of ECLCM as espoused in CARING TEAMS.

There is an additional change but I will cover that after outlining the most recent meeting of the Board on 11th July was really positive and will be reported in the next section

Going Forward

The most recent Board Meeting was held on 11th July and as ever was productive if, on this occasion rather long given we had some much business to consider. A key part, if one of the shorter items, of the meeting was us welcoming back Ben and Delyth to our membership. Both will add an enormous contribution to the campaign as it goes forward.

We spent some time discussing the transition made by the campaign from an exclusive demand for @rescaredo21 to a current focus on Staying Close – as described in our blueprint CARING TEAMS. We have shared our reasons for this previously but we don't want any of our supporters to understand that we think Staying Close is a final solution – but it will be (if adequately and fully funded by Central Government and incorporating the CARING TEAMS features) a major step forward and perhaps like climbing a mountain it is something that we will intend to use as a camp along the route that has been firmly established and a point from which the summit can be reached.

Sharon Martin and IRO's

As you may be aware Sharon is the Chair of National IRO Managers and a valued, active and long-time supporter of the campaign. We have engaged with Sharon and she has agreed to broadcast among her colleagues and membership a paper from ECLCM that explains the features of and reasons behind CARING TEAMS on the understanding that this will be shared with children and young people to assist their understanding of a model of Staying Close in an attempt to elicit their views and approval – equivocal or otherwise. One of our team Nikki Leddingham has taken responsibility for this and has now completed the paper which has received Board approval. We now intend to draft a series of potential (and hopefully helpful) questions that may help us to better understand and perhaps even quantify children and young people's view about Staying Close and what it should look like. This exercise will be completed by the end of this month and will be offered to Sharon for her consideration. Whilst we have previously (on multiple occasions) attempted to establish partnerships with other larger organisations who have direct contact with prospective and or actual care leavers we have by and large not received any tangible responses – though our door will always be open. As such and given our commitment to seeking the views of children, young adult and more mature care leavers we will, as our mantra goes "Do what we can, when we can" and this opportunity – for which we are very grateful to Sharon may at least allow us to gain better and at least slightly wider feedback that we can get from the direct contact with what we appreciate is a tiny minority of all care leavers currently living in the UK of whatever age.

UNISON

I'm very happy to report that in our efforts to reach our aims we now have the backing of UNISON which, as you will know, is one of the country's largest Trade Unions with more than 1.3 million members. This is in large part thanks to their National Officer, Matthew Egan who was kind enough to engage with us on Twitter several months ago and who has negotiated the Union's official backing, support (not financial support) and promotion within their membership of the ECLCM Campaign. I imagine that perhaps many of our supporters will be UNISON members and I would urge you to speak with Branch officials to see what they can do to raise awareness of and provide vocal or written backing for the campaign at a local level.

However, and perhaps we have been remiss in this, we must be more clear about the Campaign's petition. This is a monument to our supporters that will never lose its value but will no longer be a key focus. It will remain 'up there' and we hope it will continue to grow but it was addressed to a Minister in a Government where he no longer serves and it has expired to be replaced by Mrs May's current incarnation.

For the future we will be seeking to employ the #ECLCM hashtag on as much of our activity on social media as possible as opposed to @rescaredo21. It would be really helpful if our followers and supporters could do this too please. Obviously the more generic Every Child Leaving Care Matters will always apply so we shouldn't have to change this in the foreseeable future.

Talk of media ties in nicely with what we hope will soon be a fully reactivated Facebook account which we have not been able to use as effectively as we might for some time as a result of password difficulties but which we think we can resolve imminently. One of the decisions made at the Board was that Ben will act as our media coordinator (pretty much as he has been in recent weeks) for Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and no doubt other things that I don't fully understand.

Ben's walk from Halifax to London

I'm not going to diminish this with limited reporting here as we will be putting out something dedicated to it in August and will remind people in September too. I hope many if not most of you will have picked up on this already but in essence it is all about Ben raising awareness on behalf of the campaign to the plight of all care leavers. The walk will be (obviously) made in various stages calling in many towns and cities (Manchester, Liverpool, Chester, Nantwich, Eccleshall, Cannock, Dorden, Lutterworth, Northampton, Milton Keynes, Dunstable, St Albans and obviously he starts in Halifax and ends up in London and a visit to Parliament for the team) along the way and in some of which he has been invited to make presentations about the campaign and care leavers difficulties. On arrival, and after he's caught his breath Ben and as many Board members who can be there will be holding a meeting in Committee Room 19 at Portcullis House on 11th October 2017 at 3.00 p.m.

We had a long and as yet not entirely resolved discussion about offers of funding to support the walk. He will accept items of equipment that he will need and these are now all sorted but you may have seen some badges that have been produced promoting ECLCM and we are contemplating setting up a Just Giving page EXCLUSIVELY to purchase some of these a T shirts with the ECLCM logo on to GIVE AWAY along the route. We are known for not having taken the many offers of financial support that we have had over the years so we would need to find an absolutely transparent way to demonstrate that any money raised will not be for the benefit of any individual member of the campaign or to 'funds'. If we can find one we will explain how we have done it in the interests of transparency.

.....and finally

This campaign has now been running for three and a half years and if nothing else has helped to raise the profile of care leavers in England and hopefully the rest of the UK too. About two and a half years ago I assumed the Chair albeit with the approval (or maybe it was just acquiescence!) of other Board members. At the time that we started the campaign in December 2013 I was conscious, as were my then colleagues, that I was the only 'non-care leaver' on the, then, Core Group and was privileged to be accepted as such – I think I might have even written a blog about it. People know my background well enough to be aware that in my professional life I have worked in positions where at times compromise is the best way forward but this is not always the case in other settings. I am conscious that both these things can and occasionally have caused some difficulty to others in terms of my position as Chair and I have decided that it will be best if I step aside from the Board. I gave my colleagues three months' notice of this (and technically this has just expired) in order to facilitate as smooth a transition as possible and I thank each of them for having respected my view that it would be best not to 'go public' about this until the deed was done and the future planned.

I'm delighted to say that Ian Gould, a very proud care leaver and most capable person will be taking the Chair on an interim basis (at least in the first instance). He will be supported by an amazing team and this campaign will reach a successful conclusion. I will be writing to one or two folk who have involved me in things as Chair of ECLCM – such as meetings with DfE – to inform them of this change and it is possible that they will receive their letters prior to the publication of this Newsletter so please forgive me that if it happens

I have been both privileged and honoured to have been associated with this campaign from Day One so thank you to all the hundreds of people who I have personally badgered, met or corresponded with over that period.

Will I still be supporting the campaign? Is the Pope a Catholic?!and it's "Goodnight from me."

Ed Nixon

Heartfelt Thanks and Adieu from ECLCM

Over recent months, ECLCM has seen the departure of significant others and in so many different ways their contributions have been invaluable. It is with regret that Ed is now standing down as Chair of the ECLCM Board. We have ALL greatly valued Ed's professionalism, leadership and stoicism and want to express our heartfelt thanks for all his hard work and for being a stalwart from the very beginning of ECLCM's remarkable Journey.

As we enter a new chapter, Ed's and indeed ALL those big hearted volunteers who preceded him, enabled/empowered ECLCM to develop and grow and blossom. From, an awareness raising campaign group via ResCareTo21 and Facebook about inequality experienced by Children in Residential Care to being a real force of influence, hope and change. Positively contributing to Sir Martin Narey's Report. Possibly, the biggest compliment/accolade that could be paid for Ed/Ian's unstinting efforts, was a recommendation to the Government that ECLCM should be invited to take part in a dialogue/discussion with the DfE about what 'Staying Close' might look like. Subsequently, 'Caring Teams' has evolved and their robust efforts have enabled ECLCM to have some ongoing influence in the direction of travel of the future 'Staying Close/Put Pilots and their evaluation.

Whilst, the composition of the Board may have changed overtime its single-minded and resolute approach towards securing a legislative framework and the very best 'Staying Close/Put arrangements possible has become the bedrock of its hopes and aspirations. It's therefore with great joy that Ed has agreed to remain an Ambassador for ECLCM.

Many who follow ResCareTo21 and Face-Book page 'Every Child Leaving Care Matters' will have read of Ben's proposed walk from Halifax to London culminating it is hoped in our 2nd MP Briefing in early October 2017. Meanwhile, we will continue to lobby MP's and await for further opportunities to be involved with the DfE in the evaluation of the successful pilots. So, Ed can feel very rest assured 'business as usual and that it is in safe and passionate hands'. Ed's presence on the Board and his northern sense of humour will be greatly missed but in so many other ways he will also be forever present and assured me at the end a phone.

We ALL to wish Ed the very best for the future.

Ian Gould
ECLCM Chair

