



Every Child Leaving Care Matters



Information Pack

EVERY CHILD LEAVING CARE MATTERS

'Every Child Leaving Care Matters' (ECLCM) Campaign Information

Please find relevant campaign links below including a link to the ECLCM blog page this page includes 'blogs' by members and supporters of the ECLCM team. We consist of a group of unpaid volunteers, all highly experienced in the care system. Our team includes care leavers, care providers and social workers with two things in common – a deep knowledge and passion to improve the care system for vulnerable children and a firm belief that the Children and Families Act 2014 need amending to allow a fully funded 'Staying Put' option for ALL care leavers – irrespective of where they are placed.

Petition - <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/equality-of-leaving-age-for-all-children-in-care> Website (under development) - <http://eclcm.org/>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/Every-Child-Leaving-Care-Matters-1382306015352596/> Twitter - <https://twitter.com/ResCareTo21>

Blog spot - <http://everychildleavingcarematters.blogspot.co.uk>

A brief history of the campaign

The ECLCM campaign was created in December 2013 in response to the announcement of the government that it planned to introduce legislation to enable children in care to remain in their placements until the age of 21. This of course was the most welcome announcement excepting the rather important fact that it did not include all children in care, merely those in foster placements - this excluding approximately 12% of all of those young people in care who were placed in residential homes.

At the time there appeared to be no response from any of the many organisations established to promote and advocate for children in care and care leavers. This was a major omission which, frankly offended those who came together to form the campaign.

The original group, who were not known to each other at the time we came together via social media used the only means available to us – social media to try to promote the needs of children in residential care and to fight for equality with their counterparts in foster care. The campaign was launched through a petition (on Campaigns for you - <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/equality-of-leaving-age-for-all-children-in-care>) on Twitter (@rescareto21) and through the Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/Every-Child-Leaving-Care-Matters-1382306015352596/info/?tab=page_info created for the purpose.

Whilst only one, Ben Ashcroft, of the original group of five individuals remain on the board of ECLCM each and all of our former 'core group' members remain fully supportive of the campaign and the board has been supplemented by the addition of a number of committed individuals and now enjoys the patronage of Emma Lewell-Buck, MP and Kriss Akabusi.

In this information pack we have included some of the work which has been undertaken and provided links to other reports that we have written.

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We have always been and remain politically unaffiliated, unfunded and comprised of individuals who work on an entirely voluntary basis. However a little over three years since we formed we believe that we have made some considerable inroads towards achieving our aims and therefore equality for all care leavers.

We are pleased to say that despite what seemed like an initial reluctance to recognise the legitimacy of the Every Child Leaving Care Matters we are now considered more than worthy of consultation and have in fact had two formal meetings with Sir Martin Narey as part of his National review of residential children's homes.

Whilst some in the field may still consider us imposters others have come to embrace us and we are particularly pleased to have accepted an invitation from the Care Leavers Association to create a formal affiliation. Many other groups also stand shoulder to shoulder with us including the National Association of Independent Children's Homes Association, The National Association of Independent Fostering Providers and the National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care. Groups such as the Association of Directors of Children's Services have passed motions supporting the principle of Staying Put for all care leavers.

To offer but a few examples of acceptance as a force to be reckoned with we will refer to just a few of our more formal activities in the last two years. We have been invited to and accepted a number of invitations to attend national debates in the two years of our existence. The first was when we submitted a report to and appeared before the Education Select Committee¹, *Into independence, not out of care: 16 plus care options* in 2013. Despite ours and others recommendations leading to that committee recommending that the 'Staying Put Option' should be available to all children leaving care the government ignored their Select Committee.

We have participated in 'Round Table' discussions held under Chatham House rules to discuss the leaving care options but are, naturally, precluded from detailing how that meeting concluded that, minimally, the option of 'Staying Put' should be further explored.

We submitted a report to the Laming Committee '*Keeping children in care out of trouble: an independent review*' in August 2015² and await the report's publication in due course.

We can cite, by virtue of our attendance at and the record of, the APPG on Looked After Children in December 2015 that there was overwhelming support for the extension of the right to 'stay put' to all looked after children as well as a call for more funding to be allocated to supporting those (fostered) children already enabled to in law but not in reality to 'stay put'.

More recently our engagement with Sir Martin Narey in his 'Children's Residential Care Review' has been particularly encouraging. Our 'group' submission to this review is reproduced in this information pack whilst some members' personal submissions can be read on our website. Sir Martin generously arranged his first meeting with representatives of the group at Ian's home and we then met subsequently at the D(f)E in what we consider to have been most helpful, cordial, constructive and mutually respectful meetings where differing views were aired but much common ground was identified in seeking a way forward.

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Whilst our petition continues to grow and is manifestly evidence of our support (at the time of writing, July 2017, we have approaching 12,154 signatories) it is no longer the primary focus of the campaign. We fully appreciate that this is a political matter and to succeed we must engage with and reach agreement with politicians. Westminster is a challenge although a number of MP's openly support the campaign notably Bill Esterson, Emma Lewell-Buck, Sarah Champion, Alan Johnson, Craig Whittaker and George Howarth. Emma, who is also a patron of the campaign has recently undertaken to try to coordinate and mobilise this support in Westminster for which we are most grateful.

It is locally however where we have been concentrating our efforts in the last few months in some part thanks to Councillor Jean Carter of Warrington. Jean decided that she should take the matter to her council and in September 2015 we were present when the council unanimously passed what has become known as 'the ECLCM Motion' it is reproduced below but please note that each council has quite reasonably made minor changes to reflect their area:

"This Council calls on the Government to amend the Children and Families Act 2014 to enable all children in care to stay under the care of the local authority until 21 years of age. Currently cared-for children who are with foster carers can "stay put" until the age of 21 but children in residential care must leave by the age of 18 and sometimes leave at 16 or 17. These vulnerable children and young people in our residential care homes can have complex needs, and compared to those fortunate enough to have been placed in foster care are being discriminated against by Government. As Corporate parents we have a moral obligation to ensure that all children have the best services and support that we as a local authority can give. Staying put in residential care until the age of 21 should be acted on urgently and funded by Government."

Thus far (July 2017) the motion has been passed in:

- Warrington
- Sefton
- Bradford
- Blackburn and Darwen
- Lancashire CC

There have been NO dissenting voices at any of the council meetings.

There are many more Councils waiting – our greatest enemy is time to address new councils but we are confident that we can continue to apply an increasing level of pressure to Westminster via 'City, County or Borough Halls'

We have been on an interesting journey and who knows how long it will take us to complete it – but complete it we will.

¹ Our report to the Education Select Committee is available to view on our website

² Also available on the website

Meet the ECLCM team

PATRONS

Emma Lewell-Buck

Emma Lewell-Buck is the Labour Member of Parliament for South Shields. Before entering the House of Commons, Emma worked as a child protection social worker. She also served as Councillor for the Primrose Ward in South Tyneside, and was the lead member for adult social care. Emma is the first woman, and the first person to have been born within South Shields, to represent her constituency.



She has been a member of the House of Commons Environment Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee and the Work and Pensions Select Committee, until January she was Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Shadow Home Secretary. Emma is now a Shadow Minister in the Communities and Local Government team.

Kriss Akabussi

Kriss Kezie Uche Chukwu Duru Akabusi Mbe Ma – Biography

Kriss is famous for his achievements in athletics where his greatest individual triumph was his gold medal in the 1990 European Championships, beating David Hemery's 22-year-old British record for 400m hurdles which Kriss currently 23 years later still holds. He began his international athletics career in 1983 as a member of the 4x400 metre relay squad and will probably



always be remembered for helping Britain clinch the gold and beat the Americans in the World Championships 4x400 metre relay in Tokyo in 1991.

In 1992 as 3 times Olympic medallist, and a World, European and Commonwealth Champion, Kriss was awarded the MBE by Her Majesty the Queen in her birthday honours list, in recognition of his services to the country through athletics. His move into television and entertainment began when he presented THE BIG BREAKFAST. This was followed with a full time position as co-presenter with BBC's RECORD BREAKERS and various other children's programmes. Kriss is consulted today on a variety of radio programmes to discuss topics ranging from sport to business and is a regular contributor to SKY NEWS PAPERS Reviews.

Kriss is currently working on a two year MBA (Masters in Business Administration) program at Ashridge Business School, to augment his twenty plus years' experience gained through professional speaking, training, and facilitating presentations and workshops in the corporate

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arena where his marvelous personality and reputation as an engaging, inspiring and informative public speaker have made him a very popular and attractive advocate. He is also an accredited personal coach, having qualified at the Hudson Institute of Santa Barbara.

Kriss Akabusi was born in London in 1958 of Nigerian parents. He has four children, Ashanti, Shakira, Alannam, and Sakhile and currently lives in Bedfordshire where he can be found teeing off at the local golf clubs or avidly supporting his favourite football team West Ham United. He is the founder and chairperson of The Akabusi Charitable Trust (TACT) a charity that has two objectives. The first goal is to work with young people in the UK, NEET (not in education employment or training) by proving a short ten-week program of professional and personal development that ultimately aims to prepare them for the world of work. The second remit promotes the social and economic development of communities in poverty in Nigeria by working with local partners and NGO's, by funding projects in the areas of mental health education, and social enterprise, supporting sustainable projects that can make a real difference.

BOARD MEMBERS

Ian Gould



I often say, it's easier to say I'm a care-leaver than a survivor. Yet, both are WHO I AM. Born in the mid-50s, my earliest recollection is staring into a nurse's eyes. Having contracted polio, aged 2, disability would be another life strand. My lifelong passion for swimming, at the age of 16, led me to teaching swimming to children with disabilities in Switzerland, next door to a Christian community called Labri. Thus, 'distance travelled' has been a journey of faith too. Now a retired probation manager, I'm proud to play a small part alongside a big-hearted team of volunteers on yet another journey, simply because 'Every Child Leaving Care Matters (ECLCM)'. I do this whilst 'keeping the faith' alongside probation too.

My only fond childhood memories had been with foster parents who afforded a home to a baby boy, given up at birth. Remaining in their care until I was 5 when, sadly, my foster mum died, and I was returned to care. Remarkably, given changes to how many services are provided, this children's home is still run by Enfield Council. Whilst all our practical needs were met, I didn't know what it was to be loved, cuddled or to belong. I recall a few nice trips with people who seemed 'OK', prior to moving into their home.

Whilst there may have been odd moments of joy, I only recall four years of acute aloneness, brutalisation and physical/emotional harm. Despite (infrequent) social work visits my new foster parents presented as model carers. I regret not looking at my case records to see whether I was 'rescued' or 'dumped' as being 'beyond control'.

Returning to care, aged 10, the next few years were punctuated by fall-outs with house parents, schooling marred by bullying, and a lengthy hospitalisation. In fact, little could be described as good, needing only to survive and doing 'whatever it took' to do so were how I

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lived. Experiencing further abuse of an altogether different kind by a significant other, following well-intentioned actions of children services, my behaviour became 'unmanageable', leading to a placement with new young foster parents. I'm truly proud of my foster mum, who was awarded a BEM for her fostering – amongst many other things – and with whom I'm still in contact today.

My teenage years took many twists and turns, with me spending further periods in hospital, working abroad, being homeless and unemployed. It was not until my arrival in Bognor (aged 20) to work in yet another children's home, that the next phase of my life journey began. It was the resolute and unconditional love of a Christian family that broke-down entrenched and self-destructive behaviours, began a lengthy period of healing, forgiveness and personal/emotional development, and that brought me to the threshold of life-transforming circumstances. I went forward, undertaking 'A' levels and a University Degree, and a pathway into my life's vocation in probation.

Since then it has been a lifetime of learning and self-discovery, of 'becoming', and recognising that I was OK, good enough, worthy. I have loved my vocation and my proudest moment was Sandwell Probation and the Local Mental Health Trust receiving the Butler Trust award for Innovation in offender mental health. This was a truly fabulous and proud experience.

My path crossed with ECLCM in December 2013, during a time that I was actively campaigning against the privatisation of the probation service. I have no doubt that my 'Looked After', childhood experiences, and recovery had given me invaluable 'grounding' empathy for my life with Probation, and has also underpinned my passion, determination/commitment to do whatever is necessary to get 'Staying Close' right. Not least, because those 'looked after' 'leaving care' deserve the very best.

As for 2017, ECLCM have proved over recent years that YES WE CAN, and I firmly believe that this is a year for care leavers to look back and shout 'YES WE DID'.

Nikki Ledingham



Hello friends of #ECLCM I am Nikki Ledingham. I currently live in Qatar with my husband of nearly 25 years and we have two children, both boys. My youngest son is 19 years old and still lives at home. I say "he's not quite grown into adulthood yet" and needs a little more time to become independent.

I have been tweeting for a little over a year and was introduced to Twitter by the Director of Rotherham Children and Young Peoples Service. I am very proud to say that I am a registered social worker, working in the CYPS Duty and Assessment team in Rotherham and have been there for the last 5 years.

I am 1 year into a 2 year career break from my post and I do miss the daily challenges the role can often bring. However, I've not been able to rest whilst I've been out here as I am heavily involved with a group of Expat Women whose aim it is to increase social networks and prevent social isolation for Women in the Expat Community.

I am passionate about my job as a social worker and the people I work with. I particularly

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enjoy being able to build good relationships with the children and young people some of whom I have brought into the care system. I have some personal knowledge of what it is like being away from your main carer as I spent a short period “in care” myself as a young child.

When I look back I have fond memories of my time with the Foster Carer. Our family needed this service at that time and am very grateful for the care I received and the positive influences that are still with me today to make a difference to others.

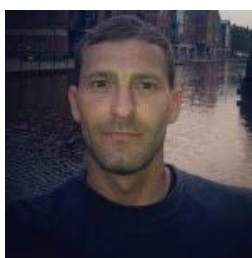
Having placed several children in both Foster Care settings and Residential Care settings I am acutely aware that some (although not all) young people had been harder to place and a Residential setting had been their ‘best match’. So, it came as a shock to learn that Young people placed in a Residential setting had not been included in the most recent legislation for the supportive provision of ‘Staying Put’ until age 21. I felt that I needed to become involved with the #ECLCM campaign, by using my voice to stand up for the social inequality.

Rob Gillespie



Rob Gillespie has worked within social care services for over 30 years, predominantly supporting children and adults who have autism and learning disabilities and their families. Rob is a qualified social worker and has worked within the public and independent sector and has a real sense of justice, he is also very passionate that all young people have equal rights and we support their development rather than hinder them. Rob has been a Board member of ECLCM since May 2015 but a consistent supporter of the campaign since it started.

Ben Ashcroft



Ben Ashcroft has been a child and young person in Care. He was moved 51 times and had 33 convictions by 17 years old before turning his life around. Ben has worked on local, National and European projects with Children in Care. He has worked as an ISW for a year with Children and young people with complex and challenging behaviours. In 2013 he became a published author. Ben has a passion to promote complex and vital issues of youth justice and protection of our most vulnerable groups of children and young people.

Ben started the conversation around ResCareTo21 and is a founding member of ECLCM.

Denise (Dee) Smalley



Denise qualified as a social worker in 2004 and for most of this time has worked with teenagers in care and supported foster carers in their important role. Prior to this Denise worked for a number of years for the NHS supporting adults with learning and physical disabilities and with older people. In 2014 Denise was awarded a BSc (Hons) in Health and Social Care Practice (Child & Adolescent Mental Health) and since then has developed her experience and skills in the therapeutic support of young people and adults.

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More recently Denise has been working with an adoption charity supporting adults affected by adoption, largely supporting adopted adults and birth mums. Over her time working with young people in care Denise has seen the positive difference that meaningful relationships and careful support into independence can make to young people transitioning into adulthood. She has also seen up close the consequences of service cuts and lack of resources that face growing numbers of young people in, and leaving care. Like all on the ECLCM board Denise would like to see the Government commit to ensuring that young people leaving care have the support they need, when they need it.

It seems common sense to afford young people in residential care, equal opportunities to those in foster care. Often young people in residential care will have experienced more frequent moves and as result greater instability through their childhood and adolescence. It does not make sense to offer less support and stability to these young people, knowing what we do about the impact of adverse childhood experiences on longer term outcomes. We must get it right for this small but important group of young people. Denise has supported the ECLCMs team since 2013 and is proud to have recently been asked to join the board.

Delyth Edwards – information to be added

Jane Billows



Jane worked for Sefton Local Authority Children's Services department for over 25 years in various supporting roles to the social work teams. Jane is the Board's administrator.

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ECLCM Ambassadors

Ed Nixon



I am a social worker who has worked with children and their families for over forty years. Initially I worked for a Local Authority (Sefton MBC) as social worker, Senior Social Worker and then Area Manager leading a fieldwork team covering everything to do with Children and Families social work. Before leaving the Local Authority, after 27 years, I had become Service Manager for Looked After Children managing everything from Children's homes to Adoption with Fostering, Leaving Care and a team working to avoid children coming

into care as part of my brief.

I then transferred across to the 'Dark Side' – as the Group Operations Manager and subsequently CEO for an independent provider where we eventually delivered residential child care, fostering, education and therapeutic services to children with a whole spectrum of needs. Everything was judged to be 'Outstanding' or 'Good' by Ofsted and not yet 'Good Enough' by me and my colleagues. I was made redundant in 2015 after a change of ownership and I would say (well I would wouldn't I?) of ethos too.

Since then I have worked independently supporting residential and fostering providers and undertaking commissions from (variously) the Independent Children's Homes Association, the National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care and 'Action for Children'.

I have been involved in ECLCM since day 1 and plan to be there on whatever day it is that we achieve the right for all children in residential care to 'Stay Put' if they so choose.

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Every Child Leaving Care Matters campaign: Submission to the Children's Home Review. (November 2015)

'Every Child Leaving Care Matters' (ECLCM) is a campaign group formed in December 2013 in response to the then Children and Families Bill which was proposing to introduce the right for young people placed in foster placements to remain with their carers until they are 21 years of age. This provision excluded the 12% or so of young people placed in residential care and other settings. The campaign has one single aim - to gain these full 'Staying Put' rights for all care leavers, irrespective of their placement so that they may remain in their final placement until they attain at least the age of 21. ECLCM want the Children and Families Act 2014 to be amended to enable this to happen, and for all such placements to be fully funded by central government and not added to the financial burden of individual local authorities. The campaign is not sponsored or affiliated to any political or other group, is not funded and is managed entirely by volunteers.

ECLCM believe that the provision, commissioning and management of residential care (and indeed the 'care system') needs in many respects to go "back to basics". We identify 24 vital areas for attention that must be addressed if the care of other people's children by the state is to improve significantly.

1. Equality and individuality of ALL children

ECLCM believe that all care settings and the decision making processes related to children in the care system need to start from a recognition that all children are equal, and all children need to have their needs and aspirations addressed as individuals. Policies such as 'Staying Put', and the different sets of regulations that govern the management and regulation of foster care and residential care treat children in care settings differently and as part of groups based on their placement not on their individual and unique need. This discriminates against children and young people and is unacceptable. Irrespective of placement, all children and young people are people of equal worth and equally frightened and vulnerable. The best interests of each child are paramount. All need to be treated and regarded as individuals, and their needs addressed and met individually. ECLCM see little evidence of this happening for every looked after child as local authorities are cash strapped and poorly supported by government.

2. Consultation with young people about their care and future

ECLCM are frequently told by the care leavers who support and participate in the campaign that children and young people in the care system are still not being appropriately consulted with or listened to about the decisions that are being made about them in the lives. There is overwhelming evidence nationally of placing authorities and providers failing to attach sufficient weight to young people's opinions or overriding their views in spite of the requirements enshrined in legislation that they should do so.

3. Multiple moves of children in care

In spite of years of promises to reduce/eliminate unnecessary moves within care, which often critically disrupt relationships and fracture local links and any sense of belonging for young people in the care system, looked after children still experience multiple moves, some almost as a routine part of the "care experience". A massive majority of children and young people have two and more changes of placement during their care careers. This suggests either that the assessment of the children's needs

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and the capacity of a particular selected placement are seriously flawed, or that placement selection is influenced by factors other than meeting their needs. This is potentially so damaging and needs to be urgently addressed.

4. Failure by planners and regulators to consider and factor in the impact on young people and placements of a young person's cumulative care experience

Children in the care system are people, and their lives cannot be reduced to or addressed as placement 'chunks'. It is repeatedly recognised by research and practice that children in the care system are affected by the cumulative experience of all their placements, and the cumulative effects of all previous placements impact on their current one. The inability to reflect this is a weakness of the current Ofsted regulatory system and of social workers and placing authorities in planning and resourcing support for placements and young people. This can lead to even more stress on placements, placement breakdowns and moves for young people. The impact that multiple previous placements can have on the success of placements in residential care is real for the children and needs to be an active consideration in care planning and provision of support to the children and to their carers. ECLCM would like to see the number of placements children and young people placed by individual local authorities have form part of Ofsted judgements, such that a local authority could have their quality judgement downgraded if they are found to have a high number of moves per annum of young people in their care.

5. Separating siblings in care.

Siblings in the care system are still being split to facilitate placement rather than because of sibling rivalry/safeguarding issues. Larger families are still being split and some siblings being fostered as others are placed in residential placements. This is resource and convenience- led, and not always based on the needs or wishes of the children and young people or their families. This can cause irreparable damage to future family relationships and needs to be given far greater priority in planning and provision of care placements.

6. Lack of therapeutic input to children across the care system.

In spite of care plans that recognise the need for therapy, a large percentage of young people in the care system still do not receive any qualified one-to-one work/therapy. Time alone cannot heal emotional wounds. The provision of therapy to young people placed within the care system needs to be better monitored and given a higher priority.

7. Lack of clinical supervision and recognised basic standard for individual and group therapy for children and young people in care.

Related to point 6 above, the availability of therapeutic support and intervention either via CAMHS services or independently commissioned therapists is essential to meet the emotional needs of children and young people placed in residential settings. This should include the provision of individual and/or group therapy. ECLCM believe that children's homes should provide a therapeutic environment which is supported and potentially clinically supervised by a suitably qualified and accredited professional. The Review should consider establishing a basic national standard of therapeutic support for children in care.

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8. Criminalising children in care.

There is overwhelming evidence that children and young people are still being criminalised and receive an accelerated entry into the juvenile justice system whilst in foster and residential care. This is often as a consequence of 'normal' adolescent behaviour rather than criminal behaviour and reflective of the inadequate responses to behavioural challenge on the part of the carers and care system rather than the children. There need to be clear arrangements in place in care settings to ensure this does not happen, including appropriately trained and experienced carers in sufficient number and with sufficient support provided throughout at any time of the day or night including weekends and bank holidays.

9. Poor preparation for Independence for all children in care.

Care leavers tell ECLCM, Ofsted reports echo, and research with care leavers reflects that young people are still poorly prepared for living and coping in semi-independent living when they leave care. They remain emotionally and practically unprepared for living in the community. The "Pathway Plans" that are supposed to address this are very frequently inadequate. This remains an urgent area for attention if young people leaving care are to have any chance to succeed.

10. Inconsistent behaviour management and use of restraint across the care system.

There is no single accredited and effective school of behaviour management or restrictive physical intervention across residential and foster placements in England which are mandatory for care providers to follow, fully backed by law, include clear stipulated methods, minimum staffing requirements and clear quality control/monitoring/safeguards to ensure children are not mistreated in care. Young people are often blamed and sometimes moved as a consequence of incidents that could have been managed successfully if carers were sufficiently trained, monitored and supported. ECLCM believe that this is a serious area which the Review should address.

11. Poor recognition of critical importance of positive professional relationships.

The most powerful tool those working with children and young people have at their disposal to influence positive change and accelerate the healing process is positive professional relationships. ECLCM believe that positive professional relationships between carers and children and young people are still paid scant regard in routine practice. Children and young people are moved around, requiring them to cease contact with significant people from their past. The 'system' does not recognise, promote or safeguard such relationships throughout the young person's care career. This can affect young people profoundly and requires attention.

12. Contact with siblings and significant others.

Linked to point 5 in this submission, contacts with siblings and families are not afforded sufficient importance in the lives of young people in the care system. Kinship care also appears, in too many cases, to be seen by social workers as a 'poor relation' of foster/residential care. ECLCM look to the Review to address this failing in the system.

13. Failure to recognise importance of home community of looked after children.

Young people are still being moved to placements long distances from their home base for reasons other than risk posed by family and others if they remain in their own community. This may suit the

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needs of placing authorities but again is potentially damaging for children and young people and should not happen without very clear reason following assessment.

14. Poor access to independent advocacy and transparent complaints systems for looked after children across the care system.

ECLCM believe that it remains rare to find access to independent advocacy and transparent complaints systems for children and young people which do not depend on carers/staff in placement and/or local authority social workers to access. Truly transparent and independent advocacy and complaints procedures are still not routine for all children and young people in the care system. This places children and young people in care settings in a very vulnerable position and needs early attention.

15. Multiple changes in social workers for looked after children.

Young people still face constantly changing social workers during their care career, adding to their difficulties in trusting those with authority and officialdom. For children and young people for whom trust and relationships are key issues, this remains unacceptable.

16. Cost over quality in commissioning services

ECLCM recognise that there are real pressures on resources available to local authorities as central government introduce policies such as 'Staying Put' or the 'Care leavers' Charter' but don't fund them adequately. However, we remain concerned that in recent years commissioning of residential and fostering provision appears to be increasingly based on cost to the placing authority and not on quality of care provided to children and young people. Young people's assessed needs do not appear to be matched in many cases with providers able to meet those needs. ECLCM contend that this is failing to treat each child and young person as an individual of worth and needs to be addressed.

17. Inadequate regulation, inspection and quality monitoring systems for foster care and children's homes.

Young people in care settings and care leavers tell ECLCM that they are still not appropriately consulted or their views properly considered and taken into account by the regulatory systems in force in care settings. Ofsted inspections still do not actively involve young people from care and are NOT child centred. In spite of their claims, they often measure short term outputs not outcomes for young people in the care system. Not all young people in placements are consulted during inspections or during monthly monitoring visits, and young people are rarely "tracked", visited or spoken with individually across their care career and following leaving care. "Quality of care" is measured in 'chunks' based solely on current placement. Inspection and regulation remain irrelevant for many looked after children. Similarly, "Regulation 44" visits still do not involve or consult young people effectively. ECLCM believe that the Review should address regulation/quality assurance in care settings.

18. 'Placement bias' – Assumption that family based care is the better option for all young people when initial placements are considered

ECLCM consider that government policy has led child care practice into a generally accepted belief that family placement is invariably the best option for children needing care. ECLCM take the view that this should be based upon and led by the child's assessed needs and wishes. We recognise that the view that 'family placement is best' is not the view of all looked after children, many of whom prefer the different care environment provided by residential care. ECLCM ask that the Review reflect

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that a child's initial placement in a residential setting may indeed sometimes be a better option than foster care.

19. Different quality standards being used for children placed in different care settings

Different quality standards are being used to monitor the quality of care for children and young people placed in residential and foster care. Given these are the same children with the same needs, aspirations and fears, ECLCM cannot see why they are regarded differently. ECLCM expect the Review to consider the disparities in these two sets of standards. We suggest that the introduction of a set of single national child care standards to cover all children's care settings be considered.

20. Poor and inconsistent mental health support and provision for looked after children and young care leavers.

CAMHS support and mental health services for children and young people in the care system are recognised by most professionals to be inadequate. Research shows that many children and young people in all care settings have significant mental health issues that profoundly affect their ability to engage in a fulfilling and happy life and places them at significant risk. ECLCM want the Review to address the serious lack of mental health support for these young people.

21. Quality of individual aftercare support workers for young care leavers.

The training, qualification experience, numbers, availability and accessibility of pathway plan/personal advisors is inconsistent and inadequate nationally to meet the demands of their work with young care leavers. The provision is simply unable to address the needs of young care leavers. Those providing aftercare support need to be sufficiently resourced, trained, experienced, supported and employed in sufficient numbers to be able to address this vital area of need. ECLCM ask that the Review urgently address this area.

22. Quality of housing, accommodation and practical support for young people leaving care.

The percentage of young care leavers represented in every disadvantage statistic - custody, homelessness, mental health, teenage pregnancy, suicide, etc. is disproportionately high as support to this vulnerable group nowhere near approaches demand. ECLCM recognise that no matter how good the care provided to children and young people whilst they are in care, the likelihood of young people failing when they leave care is massively increased if there are inadequate arrangements and resources in place to continue to support them through the transition into adulthood. ECLCM contend that any review of residential (and indeed foster) care must include reference to aftercare support and provision by all departments of government and the local authority that impact on care leavers if it is to be meaningful.

23. 'Emergency' or 'crisis' placements

Studies show that a significant percentage of all residential placements continue to be made as 'emergencies'. This practice is unacceptable on the part of both placing local authorities making the referrals and of the care providers, be they the local authorities themselves or independent providers of fostering or residential placements. Care providers may precipitate the 'crisis' by issuing 'notice' that a placement must end 'forthwith'. In some cases, when children are missing, as soon as the child returns the provider insists that the placement be terminated. These practices are potentially very damaging to vulnerable young people. Crisis or 'emergency' placements are rarely successful and by definition tend not to be planned and matched to the child's assessed needs.

EVERY CHILD LEAVING CARE MATTERS

24. Discriminatory leaving care policies - "Staying Put" for young care leavers.

ECLCM firmly believe that young people from all care placements are still required to leave their care settings at best when they reach 18 and often earlier. Many are ill prepared emotionally or practically to cope. In spite of 'Staying Put', many local authorities are not offering extended care in foster care to age 21 because of inadequate funding or provision. Young people in residential care and other care settings are excluded from 'Staying Put' rights by discriminatory legislation. ECLCM argue that only centrally government funded Staying Put aftercare support for ALL care leavers to age 21, enshrined in legislation and including a 'right of return' for young people who may have ill advisedly left care at or before 18, will address the crippling disadvantages faced by care leavers and reflected in national statistics. The ECLCM campaign firmly believe that this change is required if young care leavers are to be given a fair chance of sustaining the positive relationships that enable personal growth safely and support the safe transition into adulthood.

The ECLCM campaign team want to see these issues addressed by Sir Martin Narey in his Children Home Review. However, we take the view that it is neither possible nor sensible to seek to review children's homes without looking at the wider issues that impact on looked after children, their carers and care leavers.