



EVERY CHILD



LEAVING CARE MATTERS

Campaign Newsletter – A letter from the Chair

May 2018

UPDATE & PROGRESS



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POLITICS & STUFF!

The process continues!

In terms of M.P. support our list continues to grow though we are not going to include the complete list of those M.P.s' who have formally signed up as we are currently updating this and as is often the case with us time is our enemy. We will do so in the next newsletter but in the interim our message is, as ever, if you can find the time to contact your own M.P. to ask where they stand on the issue of righting the injustice of residential care leavers the option rightly afforded to their counterparts leaving foster care then we would be grateful. If you do get the opportunity (or realistically making the opportunity) to do this, then please do ask them to contact us to declare their support or at least make some form of public statement that we can record rather than misrepresent them. On a very positive note Hilary Benn M.P. has not only signed up very publicly but has also written to the Minister on our behalf asking what is being done about the situation – so we offer him a huge vote of thanks. The response was as one might expect not overly helpful but did acknowledge our part in the consultation concerning Staying Close.

I'm also pleased to say that Andy Burnham, as you know he is Mayor of Greater Manchester has also formally signed up and agreed to meet with us in June – he has an understandably busy schedule given some of the tragic events and subsequent publications of Enquiries in the region. We are very much looking forward to meeting Andy and particularly given some of the developments that we have become aware of in the region. This includes the exciting prospect of a Community Industry Company called "Roar" being involved with in delivering what appears to be a great programme for children in care and Care Leavers for Manchester City Council (as their proposal says, "Designed by Care Leavers for Looked After Children and Care Leavers". 'Roar' are, I'm almost embarrassed to say, new to us but as you would expect having become aware of them we have made contact and are exploring ways of supporting each other in our respective missions to work with and support Care Leavers.

I did have a meeting scheduled with Sir Alan Wood for 9th May but unfortunately, he has had to cancel that and I am awaiting another one from his team, I will be really interested to see and hear his perspective on Staying Put for residential care leavers given his new (ish) responsibilities in respect of the Residential Care Leadership Board. Equally, I will be fascinated to discover the membership of this board when it is populated and we will hope to engage with as many of them as its possible.

BOARD MEETINGS



As is so often the case when any group of people working together to is comprised entirely of volunteers and who have lives outside of their particular campaign we do have to negotiate changes and we believe that we have become quite adept at this whilst maintaining momentum. The last few months have seen more changes in the composition, but not commitment of our Board. Happily, in the four, plus, years of our existence we have always maintained continuity and focus by having evolution not radical change.

It may be easier if I remind people of who is now serving on the Board as well as those who have either changed role or left/joined the 'front line'.

As reported in the last Newsletter Ian Gould stepped down as Chair. Until the Board Meeting last month we had something of a hiatus whilst we considered various options. This had no impact on activity as we are all well versed in what is needed. At the Board Meeting in March it was proposed, seconded and unanimously voted that I should resume the role.

We had two nominations for Board membership.

Antony Corrigan, who as previously reported, had agreed to become an Ambassador for the campaign was, again unanimously elected to full Board Membership. The other nominee was Doug Johnson. Doug is a foster carer of many years standing who has supported the campaign from early days; his profile will be in the Board members section on our website. Doug (Twitter ID @teawhitenosugar) obviously knows more about Staying Put from a professional perspective than we do and like us can think of no acceptable reason why this should not be extended to children leaving residential placements.

Nikki Leddingham, having returned to the country (and more significantly front line social work practice) after a long period in the Middle East decided that she could no longer afford the massive time that she has spent managing our Twitter account and other Board commitments so made the absolutely understandable decision to step down but readily agreed to remain as an Ambassador with the door always open to a return to the Board at a future date.

Delyth Edwards continues to be away following the birth of her first child but we are hoping that her return will not be too far away,

Ben has been unwell for several months and as such not actively involved in the campaign. However, he is now feeling much better and as some of you will have seen is already regaining his reputation as a Twitter warrior! We hope and expect him to return to full Board membership imminently

Rob Gillespie, Jane Billows and Denise Smalley have soldiered on magnificently through all of these changes and we are grateful to them for guaranteeing continuity.

What we have decided is that it will be wise to elect a deputy chair so that, if further changes do occur and as explained earlier given the nature of our lives they surely will, we will manage continuity of effort a little better. We have then a strong Board but there is a massive amount of work to do and a very considerable time commitment including

- Managing and maintaining a media presence
- The internal working and administration of ECLCM – believe it or not, though we try not to be too bureaucratic, this can be challenging and most of the work falls to Jane.
- Campaigning with politicians
- Attendance at meetings and discussions with DfE and politicians offering us support
- Internal organisational requirements to keep the structure sound.
- Engaging, or in some cases trying to engage, with Staying Close Pilots around the country (almost none seem easily accessible to a team based largely in the North but that's another story!)

These are all really important things and testimony to the work of past and present Board members but they do take up lots of time. Please be patient with us and do feel free to offer any suggestions that you feel may help us do better.

STAYING CLOSE

Partly because of us having had a number of changes in personnel (more fully explained in the previous section 'Our Board') we have not done as well as we would have liked or perhaps should have in being 'on top of' the pilots. It must also be said, though that one or two have not been very responsive to our approaches. Having said that Jane and Doug have (or will have by the time this is published) been to see their allocated pilots and we have made positive engagements by telephone and email with several others. When we are as a Board 'up to strength' we will do our very best to do better.

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.

St Christopher's Fellowship Staying Close Project is one of eight Staying Close pilot projects that are currently in operation across the country. St Christopher's Project commenced September 2017 and is situated in Ealing, the project works with both Ealing Council and The London Borough of Hounslow and in Partnership with MAC-UK.



There are two aspects to the project; the project house which is a converted town house consisting of three two-bedroomed flats, with additional space on the top floor for a shared communal space and a spare bedroom for guests. The other aspect of the project is enabling and supporting any young person who wants to stay in touch with their children's home to do so.

The project is linked to five children's homes situated in the Hounslow and Ealing area; 2 charity run homes, 1 voluntary sector home and 2 local authority homes. All of which are within 15 minutes walking distance of the project house. Working with children's homes from different sectors is proving to be complex but is only one of many challenging areas that the project team are uncovering. The team are keen and enthused about finding solutions and new ways of working to overcome these challenges. All of the children's homes involved have created staying close rooms for the young people to use when needed, this change has involved statement of purpose being updated and approved by Ofsted.

The project has two full time frontline staff, Amaka Williams, Project Manager and Tyler De-Fretis, Life Skills Coach and 2 part time frontline staff via MAC-UK. Tyler is the participation lead and has been building relationships with the staff and young people in the linked children's home since November 2017. If a young person has indicated that they wish to stay in touch with the children's home the project house is, dependent upon the needs of the young person, one option, currently there are four young people involved with the house, one moved in in February, one is due to move imminently and the remaining two young people are completing the preparatory work with Tyler. Tyler is able to work with all the young people living in the five homes and is working in partnership with MAC-UK to ensure the young people are receiving appropriate support in preparing for adulthood. This work includes assessing how confident the young person is about living independently and developing a pathway plan. The pathway plan identifies the people that will be part of developing the long term sustainable relationships, education training or employment options and staying close arrangements.

Amaka is working with the young people to develop ways of logging their journey and capturing stories and the use of technology and social media is playing a key role in this. They are in the process of creating a young person led diary room, developing a staying close snap chat style app and also developing a safe and secure communication method to enable all young people to staying in touch after they have left the children's home.

At the heart of and central to all the work the project is doing is the young people involved, the project is very much a **co-production of service with young people**, they have written and own the mission statement for the project and are instrumental in leading how it develops in the future.

GOING FORWARD

Yes! Despite all the above we are still going forward even though we've had to overcome some bumpy patches. We have minimally 13,000+ people behind us so what choice could there be?

We will keep engaging with politicians as best we can as we know this is ultimately a political issue and that the solution can only be achieved if all politicians practice what so many seem to preach about this being a fair and just society that does not discriminate.

We will engage with the Staying Close Pilots and where we think appropriate do our best to influence them.

We will form new alliances where we think this will be helpful. We will also work to maintain those that we have already with groups and individuals with whom we share a common view in relation to equality for all Care Leavers.

We would also be more than happy to receive written contributions either for the Newsletter and or our Blog Spot so please don't just think it, write it. Our good friend Wayne (Twitter @wayne24536203) started writing, has captured the attention of thousands and continues to do so. He and indeed others did it, so can you

If you have any questions or observations, please feel free to contact any of us to share your view.



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Ed Nixon
ECLCM Chairman