



# EVERY CHILD



# LEAVING CARE MATTERS

Campaign Newsletter – A letter from the Chair

August 2018

## UPDATE & PROGRESS



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## OUR BOARD



We plod on.....As you may be aware Ben Ashcroft is currently unwell but is on the road to recovery and we wish him well. Delyth remains on maternity leave from her employment and will continue her 'sabbatical' from ECLCM until January of next year. The effectively leaves six of us to work on the campaign and we are doing our best though we'd like to do better.

We have agreed for a while to meet a little more frequently in an attempt to keep some momentum and we'll now meet every six weeks. The meetings for the coming months have been scheduled as follows

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> August - Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October - Monday 12<sup>th</sup> November - Monday 17<sup>th</sup> December

## SIR ALAN WOOD

As some of you may know we have been hoping to meet up with Sir Alan Wood who is the (relatively) newly appointed Chair of the Residential Care Leadership Board.

Obviously in this role – particularly once the Board has been brought together – we would anticipate he will hold considerable influence with the Government in passing on the children's views and becoming a champion for Good Residential care.

I'm happy to report that I've now met with Sir Alan (believe it or not in a 'Starbucks' (other coffee houses are available!) near St Helens during the course of him having a very busy day in the North West. We had a useful if necessarily short meeting discussing our aims and whilst it would be wrong for me to claim that he supports us (though he may well do so) I do feel that we had a very constructive first meeting and I hope that we will be able to meet again very soon to continue our conversation.

## STAYING CLOSE

As you are aware there are a number of Staying Close Pilots now operational in various parts of the country.

**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.

We have contacted all of them – though some have been more receptive to our approaches than others. We are keen to be involved in an attempt to influence how they progress in the hope that we can persuade those operating them to adopt as many of (if not all) the principles behind and incorporated in our CARING TEAMS document.

We must also acknowledge that our availability to visit the Pilots is severely limited. This is because they are spread around the country, we are all involved in our 'day jobs' and financing trips is a bit of a challenge to us.

I plan to discuss the following idea at our next Board Meeting but in lieu of that I'd like to ask a question please?

If you live near to one of the Pilots and would be willing to make personal contact with them on behalf of ECLCM please contact us through our website. I hope you'll understand that we would then need to 'vet' you in some way to ensure that we could satisfy the Pilot of your 'suitability' to represent the campaign before trying to introduce you.

Finally, on the Pilots I'm happy to say that I am in contact with Helen Grimes from DfE who has been wonderfully receptive to us working together to try to achieve the best outcomes from the Pilots; thanks Helen.

## CARE EXPERIENCED CONFERENCE

This conference is planned for 2019 and is being organised by, among others, two of our Board Denise Smalley and Delyth Edwards as well as two of the original founder-members of ECLCM Ian Dickson and Lisa Cherry (apologies if I've missed anyone obvious but I'm not personally involved).

I'm not going to write extensively about it in part because I don't have too many details but I would ask members of our campaign to check it out and support if you feel able to do so. ECLCM have been invited to have a presence at the conference and will be doing so.

To point you to what should be a good source of information their Twitter account states:

**"The Care Experience - Past, Present .. & Future?"** [@Careexpconf](#) Twitter account of the Care Experience Conference 2019 ([#careexpconf](#)). The conference is a coming together of care experienced people of all ages in Spring 2019.

## MP SUPPORT

Thanks, in part, to the continued efforts of our former Board Member, Ian Gould, we are pleased to say that the following MP's have now (at the time of writing, 6<sup>th</sup> August) openly declared their support for the campaign to allow all children over the age of eighteen the option to remain in their placement until they are (up to) twenty-one – as can those children placed in foster care. They are as follows:

1) Alan Johnson	29) Jim Shannon	57) Paul Scully
2) Albert Owen	30) Jo Johnson	58) Preet Gill
3) Alex Cunningham	31) Jo Stevens	59) Rachael Maskell
4) Andrew Gwynne	32) Jo Swinson	60) Richard Burgon
5) Andy McDonald	33) Joanne Platt	61) Rosie Duffield
6) Angela Eagle	34) Johnny Mercer	62) Rupa Huq
7) Bill Esterson	35) Jonathan Reynolds	63) Sarah Champion
8) Bob Blackman	36) Jonathan Roger	64) Sharon Hodgson
9) Cat Smith	37) Karen Lee	65) Stephen Twigg
10) Catherine McKinnell	38) Karen Lumley	66) Steve Double
11) Chris Law	39) Karl Turner	67) Steve Reed
12) Chris Williamson	40) Kate Green.	68) Thangam Debbonaire
13) Clive Lewis	41) Kate Osamor	69) Thelma. Walker
14) Craig Whittaker	42) Kerry McCarthy	70) Theresa Pearce
15) David Ames	43) Khalid Mahmood	71) Tim Farron
16) Debbie Abrahams	44) Laura Smith	72) Toby Perkins
17) Emma Hardy	45) Lilian Greenwood	73) Tom Brake
18) Emma Lewell-Buck	46) Liz McInnes	74) Tom Tugendhat
19) George Howarth	47) Louise Haigh	75) Tonia Antoniazzi

20) Gordon Marsden	48) Lucy Allan	76) Vicky Foxcroft
21) Hilary Benn	49) Luke Pollard	77) Vince Cable
22) Holly Lynch	50) Marcus Fysh	78) Yvonne Fovargue
23) Ian Austin	51) Margot James	
24) Ian Mearns	52) Maria Eagle	
25) Ivan Lewis	53) Mike Amesbury	
26) Jeff Smith	54) Mike J. Wood	
27) Jenny Chapman	55) Naz Shah	
28) Jess Phillips	56) Norman Lamb	

Now, this is a pretty good number but a largely unimpressive number if we were thinking in terms of forcing or driving political change. We believe that the agenda to offer Staying Put to all children in care is a plan that the next Labour Government is agreed upon and this is great. However, if it's the case and with due respect to Mr Corbyn, et al we all know that as an opposition party it's sometimes easier to say what you will do than it turns out to be when you get into power; and that's the other question when will there be a Labour Government? Who knows? As such it is all the more important that we need to persuade MP's from all parties of the justice demanded by the campaign.

We also do well to remember a few things about this number:

- Good though it is, 78 MP's represents only 12% of all the MP's in the UK.
- Our list includes MP's from all parties and across the Home Nations so by no means all Labour MP's have 'signed up' (there are 229 of them, I think) and not all the above represent 'English' constituencies.
- Now as when and if this matter comes to a vote I imagine it will be exclusively 'English' constituency MP's who will vote (though I'm no constitutional expert!!)

Thus, the conclusion is that whilst progress in this area is good it's not yet significant in terms of bring a change. 326 MP's would be good enough I think, no matter where they represent or which Party they belong to. The 'missing' Labour MP's would be good too - this includes almost all of the Shadow Cabinet and Mr Corbyn.

We are a-political as a campaign so we welcome support for our actions from any MP, representing any Party in any constituency across the UK.

This is where you come in. Is your MP on that list above – the probability being that (s)he isn't, after all 88% of them aren't – if not please help us out.

Please contact YOUR MP and ask him/her if they support the campaign and if not why not please?

I hate to risk patronising but to make this easier I have drafted out a very short letter below that you can send to your MP.

The best way of doing it is to Google (other search engines are available, unless Google agrees to have ECLCM as their theme for a day!) your MP's name. You will then find a Parliamentary email address and postal address.

If you can use the email version then please think about copying and pasting this into an email and sending it.

*Dear*

***Ref: Every Child Leaving Care Matters Campaign***

*I am writing to you as my constituency MP to assure myself that you are supporting a campaign that is important to me. The ECLCM campaign has been going for 4½ years now since the very welcome announcement was made that 'Staying Put' was to be introduced for all children in foster care.*

*Unfortunately, or perhaps disgracefully, dependent on how passionate one is about such issues, children in residential care were excluded from this option. As an MP you won't need me to explain to you that, for a range of reasons (none of which are the child's fault), children in residential care tend to have more complex needs than children who successfully settle into a foster family.*

*The ECLCM campaign operates with no political affiliation, without funds and exclusively on the basis of having a very small group of volunteers. Despite this they have made considerable strides and established a reputation that has led to their inclusion in an advisory role in the Staying Close pilots – again you will be aware of these.*

*They, and as your constituent, I am asking for your public declaration of support for the extension of the option to remain in care until the age of twenty-one to all children in care. This can be done via Twitter or even, if you don't "do" Twitter by writing back to me and giving me permission to copy your letter of support to the campaign group. Additionally the campaign uses a petition to register and monitor support this can be found at [ECLCM Campaign](#) or via our website [www.ECLCM.org](http://www.ECLCM.org) where you can register your support.*

*Finally, thanks for taking a few minutes to read this – if you choose to respond positively to my request then be assured that those few minutes will have contributed to improving and possibly saving the lives of future Care Leavers many of whom commit suicide, enter prison, are detained in mental hotels or become homeless.*

*Sincerely*

Please do this for us and if you use Twitter then please say you've done it on Twitter – maybe just some thing like "I've just emailed my MP, **name**, asking for her /his support for #ECLCM.

This way we can track just how many MP's have been asked.

## AND FINALLY

Can everyone please keep going on Twitter using #ECLCM so that our limited efforts can be 'magnified'. As Board Members we simply run out of time to devote enough of it to devote to Twitter – our primary 'voice'. If we can search for the #ECLCM hashtag it enables us to retweet, like or respond so that we can hopefully generate a great deal of traffic and thus keep our campaign on track. Even just retweeting a relevant story with the #ECLCM hashtag would be great. We really need all of the help we can get even if you have only two minutes a day, or week to do this it really will make a difference.

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

**Ed Nixon**  
**ECLCM Chairman**



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