

EVERY CHILD LEAVING CARE MATTERS

Campaign Newsletter - A letter from the Chair

February 2016

EVERY CHILD LEAVING
CARE MATTERS

PLEASE SIGN
THE PETITION

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POLITICIANS

Our campaign continues to draw support from a number of councils. We are very pleased to note that Blackburn with Darwen can now be added to the list of those who have passed the 'ECLCM' motion. We particularly wish to thank Cllrs Maureen Bateson, Julie Gunn and Pat McFall for steering this through. That is four councils so far and there has yet to be a vote or even a dissenting voice as in each case the motion has been passed unanimously. Additionally we have had a very constructive meeting with Councillor Matthew Tomlinson from Lancashire County Council. Matthew is the lead member for children's services and also chairs the regional group for all lead members stretching from Cumbria to Cheshire East. Not only has Matthew publicly stated his support for the campaign and arranged that the motion be put to Council he has also arranged to invite us to speak at the forum of all the lead members. This is a great opportunity for us as the greatest restriction on us spreading the word across Councils has been our time to go to see them. This will give us access to



many Councils at the same time. Ian and Ed have also been able to visit the corporate parenting board of Bury Council where we were able to make a presentation to them invoking them to put a motion in that borough, though as yet we have heard no further news.

Maintaining a political theme Ian and Ed were able to arrange a meeting with Emma Lewell-Buck, the MP for South Shields; Emma was extremely supportive of the campaign and has agreed to promote it within the Commons and hopefully co-ordinate a group of MPs who offer support. This will certainly include Sarah Champion the MP for Rotherham who has also stood strong for the campaign. We are pleased to say that Emma has also agreed to be a patron of the campaign and we have another invitation pending.

We attended the APPG for looked after children in December where, despite the 'audience' being primarily foster children past and present, foster carers and related professionals there was overwhelming support for all children being given the option to stay put until twenty-one. Bill Esterson, another great and longstanding supporter is the chair of that APPG and will report its conclusions on.

Martin Narey

Ben met with Martin Narey early in the January and more recently Ian and Ed met with him for the second time to discuss possible ways forward that both sides would find acceptable. I think it's fair to say that Martin's position is not so far away from our campaign as some might think and we will continue to work as closely as we can with him in an effort to find solutions. It has been good to note the massive

response to Martin's work which will we hope mean that he has the best chance of coming up with a review that does residential child care justice and in relation to staying put a recommendation that will be acceptable to most if not all parties including the government. We have also been pleased to note some of the positive comments that Martin has made in social media about the quality of residential care.

ACADEMICS



We have been humbled by the response of many of the leading academics in the country who have signed an open letter designed to be sent to the press encouraging government to allow and fund staying put for all care leavers. The disappointment has been that though we have offered this letter to The Guardian, the Telegraph, the Times, and the Independent none have yet agreed publish. We can only hope that they will rethink this in the very near future. It seems rather disparaging of them to ignore over 10000 signatories but, perhaps as importantly, most of the leading academicians

in the fields of social work and social policy. If we cannot get the letter published in the press we shall of course publish it ourselves and will rely on you, our membership to comment on why it has not been more widely circulated.

BOARD MEMBERSHIP



Despite the growing momentum and plentiful good news about the campaign recently we know that we need to be prepared for this to be a long struggle if that's what it takes to achieve our aim. We also acknowledge that our Board is insufficiently strong to drive forward a growing and increasingly complex agenda without additional support. We would, therefore, like to use this newsletter as an invitation to anybody who feels that they may have the time energy and commitment to consider joining our board. We fully appreciate that we are rather northwest centric but this is not by design and we would like to expand our board membership and activity to others around the country who could participate in meeting via Skype or other similar communication tools. If you feel that you can commit to "attending" a meeting on a two monthly basis, contribute to report writing and ideally have a good knowledge of the care system either as a care experienced person or professional then please do contact us. It is incredibly hard work at times but well worth it we think

CARE LEAVERS STORIES

In promoting the campaign and seeking to raise the public awareness of the reality of care we are seeking to collect 'care leavers' stories'. Our hope is to have care leavers write to us with their experiences of care – be they good or bad. We can then (anonymously) create a series of vignettes for publication on our

website and elsewhere if possible. Please don't think that we only want the stories of bad experiences – although we will willingly receive and use these – we also wish to celebrate the great achievements of care leavers and the dedication of some of the carers, foster or residential, that we know exists alongside

sometimes poor or even abusive practice. We appreciate that this can be painful for some to do but hope that we can add to the few stories that we already have.



EVENTS



Manchester
Metropolitan
University

We have been invited to give another two presentations in the next month the first at Manchester Metropolitan University is at the kind invitation of Ffion Evans

who is a senior lecturer there (another long term supporter) is to an audience of university staff, students, local authority personnel and other professionals and the second is a Children's Society event at the People's History Museum in Salford Quays on the 16th March. Rod Kippen, from the Children's Society (but also a well-respected children's advocate and children's rights officer has asked us to take part in the day which is being run to celebrate, discuss and look to the future for young people (16+) in the northwest. This will afford us a great opportunity not only to join in the celebration of achievements – which are all too often overlooked but

also to point out how much better things may be if all care leavers had the option to stay put.

It is certainly gratifying that our (your) campaign has become sufficiently recognised to have organisations like the Children's Society and Care Leavers Association wishing to work with us or inviting us to work alongside them in the interests of care leavers but we still have a great deal to do. We continue to try to engage others in the 'field' to work together on this campaign and use us, if you will to assist them in any way that we can. We absolutely believe in working together putting aside any differences that may exist or may have existed in our common cause.



Finally an apology for this newsletter being late. It is entirely my fault due to a fairly busy schedule and poor organisational skills. Thank you again for all your support and remember that the more signatures and activists that we can involve the sooner we can hope that all care leavers will have the opportunity to 'stay put';

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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