



EVERY CHILD LEAVING CARE MATTERS



Campaign Newsletter - A letter from the Chair

April 2019

EVERY CHILD LEAVING
CARE MATTERS

PLEASE SIGN
THE PETITION

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Politicians

The fact of the matter is that not many politicians in Westminster care very much about Care Leavers. So, it would seem anyway. Yes, we have slowly increased the numbers supporting the Campaign but this now stands at approximately 13% of those elected. Now call me presumptuous, if you will, but I can't believe that all the remaining 87% haven't heard of us. I know that those M.P.'s who support us receive this Newsletter may choose to share it with colleagues – if not I wonder why not? I'm also hopeful that our Patron, Emma-Lewell Buck, regularly raises the matter with colleagues.

Maybe I'm deluded or perhaps it's them. Do they think that all Care Leavers live happily ever after? Well, just in case they do can you please do all you can to meet with or at least email your M.P. to ask them if they know of and or are supporting the campaign to give all care leavers equality of opportunity at their 18th birthday? It is illegal to discriminate, and quite rightly too, on the basis of gender, race ethnicity, religion and a whole lot of other factors but not illegal to discriminate against those children in care who live in children's homes. Does that seem OK to you? Obviously not because you are receiving this Newsletter. Please ask your M.P. why they think it is OK. If they don't ask them to sign up to the campaign by simply getting in touch with us on Twitter at @rescaredo21 or simply state their support using the hashtag #ECLCM and ideally the Twitter handle for one of our Board Members. You really can make a massive difference for care leavers.

I know we've done this before but it is so important that I'm doing it again - below is a draft of a letter that you could send to your M.P. if you are minded to do so.

The following MP's have now (at the time of writing, April 2019) 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. Debbie Abrahams | 22. Rosie Duffield | 43. David Lammy | 64. Jess Phillips |
| 2. Lucy Allan | 23. Angela Eagle | 44. Chris Law | 65. Jo Platt |
| 3. Mike Amesbury | 24. Maria Eagle | 45. Karen Lee | 66. Luke Pollard |
| 4. David Amess | 25. Bill Esterson | 46. Emma Lewell-Buck | 67. Steve Reed |
| 5. Tonia Antoniazzi | 26. Tim Farron | 47. Clive Lewis | 68. Jonathan Reynolds |
| 6. Ian Austin | 27. Yvonne Fovargue | 48. Ivan Lewis | 69. Paul Scully |
| 7. Hilary Benn | 28. Vicky Foxcroft | 49. Holly Lynch | 70. Naz Shah |
| 8. Bob Blackman | 29. Marcus Fysh | 50. Khalid Mahmood | 71. Jim Shannon |
| 9. Tom Brake | 30. Sir Roger Gale | 51. Gordon Marsden | 72. Cat Smith |
| 10. Lyn Brown | 31. Preet Kaur Gill | 52. Rachael Maskell | 73. Jeff Smith |
| 11. Richard Burden | 32. Kate Green | 53. Kerry McCarthy | 74. Laura Smith |
| 12. Richard Burgon | 33. Lilian Greenwood | 54. Andy McDonald | 75. Jo Stevens |
| 13. Vince Cable | 34. Andrew Gwynne | 55. Liz McInnes | 76. Jo Swinson |
| 14. Sarah Champion | 35. Louise Haigh | 56. Catherine McKinnell | 77. Tom Tugendhat |
| 15. Jenny Chapman | 36. Emma Hardy | 57. Ian Mearns | 78. Karl Turner |
| 16. Bambos Charalambous | 37. Sharon Hodgson | 58. Johnny Mercer | 79. Stephen Twigg |
| 17. Alex Cunningham | 38. George Howarth | 59. Layla Moran | 80. Liz Twist |
| 18. Thangam Debbonaire | 39. Rupa Huq | 60. Kate Osamor | 81. Thelma Walker |
| 19. Emma Dent Coad | 40. Margot James | 61. Albert Owen | 82. Tom Watson |
| 20. Steve Double | 41. Joseph Johnson | 62. Teresa Pearce | 83. Craig Whittaker |
| 21. David Drew | 42. Norman Lamb | 63. Toby Perkins | 84. Chris Williamson |
| | | | 85. Mike Wood |

Staying Close Pilots

In March we were invited to DfE to meet with all of the Pilots who were marking their first year of operation. We were allocated a single place and I got to go which was kind of my Board colleagues.

Overall a good day and I must say that those present (Everyone except North Tyneside) was represented.

I was particularly pleased to see three (very eloquent and delightful young people there and they participated fully throughout the day during which 2 of the 3 made presentations about what was good and what could be improved in their Staying Close experience).

I was given plenty of time to speak, ask questions and contribute at every stage of the meeting. I was also able to talk to each of the pilots within and out with the formal agenda. FYI I did ask the question if anyone in the room disagreed that Staying Put should be available to all Care Leavers - no-one did and asserted that it should be. The exceptions were the DfE representatives who for obvious reasons couldn't respond publicly (too political an issue) but privately I think it's fair to say they probably have no issue with our campaign.

Do any of the pilots look like CARINGTEAMS?

Yes, Bristol. It's remarkably close – they have even partnered up with a local firm of architects and has a one-bedroomed 'pod' purpose built and put into their garden. Fully self-contained but within yards of the children's home. The architects have raised with Bristol the possibility of creating social housing as a move on for children who are ready to move on from the pod. The LA have made a positive response to this and they are now discussing with a group of SW LA's to extend such practice across the region.

Do any of the pilots incorporate most aspects of CARINGTEAMS aside from the proximity to children's home?

Yes, mostly

What's not there?

As you all know we would want existing staff to continue to be available as support given the nature of relationships. Most pilots involve a new place of residence set up as a Staying Close option this involves some or many new staff supporting but actually many of the placements appear to have kept former staff involved. In fact N Lincs have used some of the funding to free up former key workers from children's home to deliver support by 'back-filling' some/all of their hours with new children's home staff.

What did young people present think about CARINGTEAMS?

They all liked the idea in principle but each one of them said that he/she would not have wished to stay in their children's home but preferred to move on to something that gave them a little more independence and time away from a group of other children.

All said that they do keep in touch with the children's home and that they find this helpful they also said that they know they are welcome back to visit (or in one case stay over if they ever wish) at pretty much any time they like.

Will funding for pilots continue? In the short term yes but given Brexit fiasco there can be no long term guarantees for anything!

Clearly these pilots are not Staying Put – they were never going to be but all have merit and the results thus far (based on the voices of children/young people and some other measures such as criminality, NEET etc are very positive. I am not saying that everything is good but it would be hard to criticise the attitude and commitment that I witnessed on the day and it was underscored by those young people there. We continue to engage with the Staying Close Pilots as best we can though our ability to do so remains challenged by cost and time.

Our message remains the same – please incorporate as much of the CARINGTEAMS theme as is possible and desired by the young people for whom you are caring. Some seem closer to this than others but perhaps that's in the nature of a Pilot programme. They are to be reviewed in February 2020 and hopefully we can have a role to play in that review of that process.

Of course, we'd love to engage with Mr. Zahawi too, but thus far he seems determined not to enter into any dialogue with us at any level – the offer remains open.

Our Board



This has, arguably, been the most exciting time for the ECLCM Board since the original group first started the campaign.

At our last Board Meeting we decided that we needed some additional help and indeed invigorating! As such we came up with a plan to seek to recruit new members to the Board and or Ambassadors. The response was (almost literally) overwhelming.

We have produced Job Descriptions for both Board members and Ambassadors for the campaign. It just occurs to me as I type that we should and will make these available on our website just as a matter of general interest.

Rather than take you through the whole process I can just announce (with some glee) that we now have the following new Board Members (I have confined myself to listing their names as you will soon be able to read their profiles on our website if you wish

Dr Fiona Cust

Lisa-Marie Graham

Steven Hawksworth

Terry Galloway

Anne-Marie Hayes

Rachel Springford

What's more we have two fantastic new Ambassadors

Julie Warren-Sykes and Annie Bishop.

Some are Care Leavers whilst others aren't but rather like the pre-existing Board and Ambassadors all share a passion to improve outcomes for Care Leavers.

We are so pleased to have this amazing team as we have work to do and plenty of it and by sharing the load a little more widely we hope to get more done and therefore get closer to the reality rather than dream of giving all children leaving their placement at eighteen the option to remain – regardless of the nature of that placement.

Care Experienced People Conference

Liverpool Hope University – Friday 26th April 2019

Just a reminder that this event is due very soon I know and understand why it's been massively oversubscribed but some of us will be there to support the event and if you're going please come and say hello to us – we have a stand somewhere.

One Stop Social Convention

In January One Stop Social hosted the first Work and Care Together Event in London. The event was aimed at giving social work and care professionals the chance to network and attend engaging training workshops, the theme of the event was education, collaboration and innovation.

ECLCM were invited, as one of 20 exhibitors, to participate in the event. Our thanks go to Matt Hughes, One Stop Social for this opportunity, and to Elena Jones for looking after us at the event.

Ed Nixon and Jane Billows travelled to London, on a very, very early train, and set up the ECLCM stand. For the next six hours a constant stream of professionals working within the sector visited the stand, most were not aware of the campaign but more importantly were not aware of the inequality in the current legislation regarding opportunities for young people leaving care. 100% of the people after visiting our stand agreed with the ECLCM campaign and the majority were able to sign our petition on the day. We saw the petition reach over 14000 signatories during the day. Thank you to all continued supporters of the campaign and for all new supporters who joined us at the event. We clearly have more work to do to raise awareness and promote the campaign, please let us know of any events which we could attend to continue to raise support for ECLCM.

Further information about the event and the day can be found at <https://www.onestopsocial.co.uk/first-london-convention/>

The Care Leavers Covenant

Have you heard of this? Have you read it? What do you think of it? Do you think it will help? You can see it in action by downloading their App (it's free, thank goodness) and looking at the content, particularly check out the 'Offers'. I would be really pleased if you could let us know. Write a blog or a piece for the next Newsletter if you will. Just at the moment it is being heralded by Government as a massive step forward. Is it? Or is it 'baby steps'? Perhaps no steps at all? Of course, we have opinion(s) in our group but at this stage I'd just love to gather some information from a wider audience to use in meetings that I and others attend.

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.

Ben's walk from Halifax to Edinburgh

This is being undertaken independent of ECLCM but he will be raising awareness of the campaign along the way – though his primary focus is to raise awareness about mental health issues. He'll be walking in September and may pass through a town near you. Go say hello, give him a piggy back or something – I know he's very partial to a Tuna pasta Bake or a Corned Beef Hash Volcano with erupting baked beans!!

CSDG (Children's Services Development Group)

As part of my other (working life) I attended a meeting where the Children's Services Development Group gave a presentation by Andrew Isaacs focussing on Transitions from Care.

Andrew explained that the CSDG is a collective (who appear to have the ear of some, at least, politicians - my insertion) that is looking at transitions from care.

He referred to (CSDG's) The State of Children's Services report (2018/2019) which has produced a series of recommendations.

In terms of 'Transitions', Andrew suggested that all of the available data suggests that we don't manage the transition from care very well, going on to cite the range of statistics related to Care Leavers that are now all too familiar and 'static' over many years. He said that the CSDG will be taking this on as their next project and will include in their work:

- The current (stated) obligations of LAs to provide support beyond 18
- National govt policy commitments in respect of care leavers

And will deliver an:

Analysis of:

- LA funding and spending on Care Leavers
- Review of data on outcomes for care leavers
- Ofsted data on the quality of outcomes for care leavers

They will be surveying LA 'Leads' to better understand their experiences of transitions and this will include:

They also intend to interview:

- Campaign organisations
- LA's
- Care Leavers

All at the meeting were invited to leave their details if they were willing to take part in a telephone interview (I 'signed up' and have now given a preliminary interview). I would suggest that if you are in any of the above categories then contact them and ask to be interviewed. (Though I have to admit when I just 'Googled' it I couldn't get onto their website)

Finance

Since we started our campaign, we have never sought for our actions to be anything other than voluntary and self-funded. I am though giving early notification that we have decided to discuss finance at our next Board Meeting.

Going forward we will, of course continue to offer all of our work voluntarily but frankly the cost of travel – especially as so many events are in London – is becoming rather burdensome. We may decide to try to raise some funding to be spent **exclusively** on travel expenses.

Before we even do so I thought it appropriate to invite our wider membership – all of you – the opportunity to voice an opinion on this matter. You could email via the website or post on Twitter if you have an opinion and feel free to use my Twitter account to do so if it helps to keep any comments – pro or against – focussed in one place.

Obviously as are yet to discuss it I have no idea of how we might go about it should we decide to do so.

..... and finally

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

Ed Nixon
ECLCM Chairman



Letter to MP

Dear

Ref; Every Child Leaving Care Matters Campaign

I am writing to you as my constituency M.P. to assure myself that you are supporting a campaign that is important to me. The ECLCM campaign has been going for 5 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 M.P. 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.

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 saving the lives of future Care Leavers many of whom commit suicide, enter prison, are detained in mental hotels or become homeless.

Sincerely