



EVERY CHILD



LEAVING CARE MATTERS

Campaign Newsletter – A letter from the Chair

June 2019



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OUR BOARD



Our new Board has held its first meeting and whilst, understandably we could not manage 100% attendance at such short notice it was great to get together personally and or virtually. Going forward we will work our way through Mr Tuckman's stages of development. Happily, we are doing it out of order – not least because as we are forming storming and norming, we have no option but to keep performing.

It's also been great to have new and existing Ambassadors working diligently on promoting the campaign.

Interestingly and perhaps fortuitously we were afforded a great opportunity for many of us to meet at the Care Experience Conference held at Liverpool Hope University on the 26th April. There will be a short piece by one of our Board Members who is also part of the group who did such a great job in April – Delyth Edwards – in this Newsletter. Jane, Rob, Ben, Rachel, Delyth, Dee, Lisa-Marie, Terry and myself were all in attendance as was our amazing Ambassador Ian Gould and whilst time was obviously limited on such a busy day it was lovely to start putting names to faces and to meet many old friends and former stalwarts of the campaign.

We are delighted that our new members are such a diverse group with many being care experienced and all having a demonstrable history of fighting for care leavers. Some have already had the time to add their pen pictures to our website and others are in the process of condensing their lives to a few short sentences so please do check us out. Oddly I have just had a look and noticed an omission of my part! Not a very good example eh? On the day when, traditionally, many people retire I started a new job as the Deputy CEO of the Independent Children's Homes Association. Some may see this as being a conflict of interests – though prior to taking up this post I did raise it with all members of the Board and

was unanimously endorsed in taking up the position – I most certainly don't. I will be at ICHA for two years and already I have been afforded many opportunities to promote the ECLCM message – for which I am yet to find an Independent Provider who does not absolutely agree with the campaign – something evidenced perhaps in the fact that the ICHA Best Practice model for Care Leavers spells out promoting the option for young people to remain in their children's home up to the age of 21 and incorporating, 'verbatim', the CARINGTEAMS model. It has also afforded me to raise and have very willingly accepted a proposal at the planning group for the National Commissioning and Contracting Training Conferences (which is the largest gathering of Local Authority Commissioners and Providers in the country) that a workshop be organised by care experienced people. Dr Cat Hugman & Rose Devereux, from University of Cumbria & Liverpool Hope Universities respectively, will be delivering a workshop at the conference entitled '*How should care experience impact commissioning*?' and following in the esteemed footsteps of Lisa Cherry who last year made a keynote presentation on Creating Social Change. Hopefully by bringing those who have experience of being in care together with those who commission and provide care we can work together to creating the best of environments in which to offer it and encourage our politicians to legislate to make it possible.

In terms of the role of Board members we decided that given our influx of new and very welcome 'blood' there may be merit in identifying a deputy Chair of the campaign. This, we concluded should be considered more formally in a few months' time so that new members have time to become embedded before possibly identifying a suitable deputy, or indeed Chair, for the Board. As such we will make a decision toward the end of this year.

POLITICIANS

'*The road goes ever on and on*' – not my words but those of J. R. R. Tolkien in '*The Lord of the Rings*' and in one version '*The Hobbit*' – probably my favourite book of all time. Interestingly, Tolkien produced at least (from memory) three versions of this song that vary from conveying 'hope' to 'despair'. Sometimes it feels like this with our politicians and the journey that we began more than five long years ago to engage them sufficiently to bring about change in legislation to offer the same option to children leaving residential care as those afforded (technically, but some would say not in fact) to children leaving foster care i.e. the option to 'stay put'. Sounds simple doesn't it? But obviously not. Here we are with sore feet still on a road that goes "on and on", at times seemingly forever. Though not planned that way it has even been manifest in the walk that Ben made from Halifax to London a couple of years ago raising awareness of the campaign – and it did but at the end of the day it, like much of our effort achieved nothing tangible. So where do we go from here? Yes, we will and do implore all of those reading this Newsletter to write to, visit or in some way contact their own M.P. to ask him or her to support us. Ian Gould will maintain his relentless effort – another marathon in many ways to write personally to M.P.'s seeking their support but that too has had limited success.

Additionally, though we have agreed that we will 'mailshot' all M.P.'s periodically just to remind them that we are still here and children in care continue to fall off the cliff edge and out of care into goodness knows what.

The following MP's have now (at the time of writing, June 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:

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|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 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 |

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| 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 |

FINANCE

Not a common heading for this Newsletter I'm pleased to say. However, there is something that we need to bring to your attention. As you are aware, save for a small amount of money that we raised at the time of Ben's walk to London (to cover accommodation and travel expenses for him and from which a small residue of approximately £300 was left over which we have spent on things like badges and the occasional trip to London) we have never had any money in our campaign. This was deliberate on our part and we have politely refused offers of money on innumerable occasions to fend off any suggestions that we are less than independent and beholden to no-one. This means that we have covered all of our costs from our personal funds be that train tickets, publicity materials such as badges, display boards, stationery or whatever. However, at the last Board meeting we discussed the possibility of raising some money as train tickets to London at about £100 return, materials such as those already mentioned and sundry expenses incurred can become rather personally draining. We decided to ponder on this for a while but will make a decision at the next meeting on whether to find a way of transparently raising and accounting for anything we raise are considered. Will we continue if we decide not to set up a 'fighting fund'? Of course we will so this is not something around which the future of ECLCM will depend but we would welcome any views or observations that supporters hold in the interim.

THE CARE LEAVERS COVENANT

As I write (02.06.19) I am about to prepare for a meeting tomorrow with Matthew Gordon the Chief Executive at Spectra, Delivery Partner for the Care Leaver Covenant. As anyone who read the last Newsletter will know I have misgivings about the likely positive impact of the Care Leaver Covenant. I have had brief exchanges with Matthew about this as we have passed each other in different meetings. To his great credit, I think, when we met at the Care Experienced Conference he suggested that we meet to talk about the Covenant and although it has taken a little time to coincide times when we are both available I am grateful to him for arranging to come to meet with me in Liverpool tomorrow. Commonly those with whom we have differences seem to avoid us like the plague. I will, of course be representing ECLCM views, which may or may not coincide with my own. Unfortunately, my appeal in the last Newsletter has not brought forward any responses but we did have a chance to discuss the Covenant at our Board meeting so I do have some things to say. This is not to say that there is no longer an open invitation to anyone to share their views with us and please feel free to do so.

CARE EXPERIENCED PEOPLE CONFERENCE



Over 250 people attended the Care Experience Conference held at Liverpool Hope University on the 26th April. The delegates consisted of care experienced people of all ages and professionals. More information about the conference can be found at

<https://www.careexperiencedconference.com/conference>.

The ECLCM stand (hosted by Jane and Rob) was busy, receiving lots of attention throughout the day and delegates wanting additional information about the campaign. We managed to gain new supporters and further signatures for the petition. But most importantly, we made delegates, some who had not heard about us, aware of the campaign.

Delyth Edwards



STAYING CLOSE PILOTS

The Board discussed the pilots in our last meeting and acknowledged that we have not (simply as a result of lack of our time and or a less than enthusiastic responses) been able to establish contact with all the Pilots as we would have wished.

Each pilot had been previously assigned a Board member liaison, however it was acknowledged that work with the pilots had been inconsistent and intermittent. It was agreed that moving forward the Board should aim for a more consistent approach to the pilots and that the single issue – staying put – and equality for all young people leaving care should be reinforced in our liaison with the pilots.

Contact details for the pilots was discussed and it was agreed that these would be shared between our members to try to ensure that we do all that we can to make and sustain contact as we have managed with a couple but not all of the Pilots.

Of note, perhaps, in the current debate around the increasing visible emergence of unregistered and unregulated homes (which we regard with severe consternation and concern) we do note that none of the Pilots are registered but all are subject to high levels of oversight by DfE and scrutiny at a high level. Obviously as Pilots their future is yet to be determined and whilst the Board would prefer to see more (or in a few cases) or some of the elements of CARING TEAMS we must also recognise that some of the young people (all of those present at the first review) living in them have said that what they have suits them better than would a model based on CARING TEAMS and it would be hypocritical of us when we are talking about children leaving care to have options presented to them if we were to deny them an option that they say that they prefer. Clearly leaving care is absolutely unique and personal journey and provided young people are offered an **informed** choice then we will support that choice.

Staying Close Pilots Projects: Break Charity, Bristol City Council, Fair Ways, North East Lincolnshire Council, North Tyneside Council, Portsmouth City Council, St Christopher's Fellowship, Suffolk County Council.

BEN'S WALK FROM HALIFAX TO EDINBURGH

Some of you may be aware that Ben has been indisposed recently so it's not possible to update on plans for his latest journey but hopefully we can do so in our next Newsletter and before he sets off!

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

