



# EVERY CHILD



# LEAVING CARE MATTERS

Campaign Newsletter – A letter from the Chair

December 2019

EVERY CHILD LEAVING  
CARE MATTERS

PLEASE SIGN  
THE PETITION

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## OUR BOARD



It's been a complicated summer. Our board remains a little 'fluid'. Sadly, due to personal commitments both Dee and Doug have had to resign though as with previous board Members their commitment to children in care and those who have left care remains steadfast. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the both for being such friends and allies in our campaign and to wish them well for the future. We will of course remain in touch with each other.

Our ability to meet together has been hampered somewhat by our geographical diversity but with the help of Skype we have more or less been able to 'get together' – though we're hoping that our next meeting might find most of us sitting in the same room for once. We had to abort a meeting in July because we simply couldn't get sufficient numbers so we reconvened for late August and again in October and got back on track – although it has meant that this Newsletter is, not unusually, a little late.

We have also had a very kind offer of assistance from Thomas Keaney. Some of you may have read the blog he contributed to our website 'The one that got away'. If you haven't read it, I implore you to do so. Thomas and I met at the CEP Conference in April – though we had followed each other on Twitter for some time. We arranged to meet on my next trip to London and I thoroughly enjoyed doing so in a bar in London, near Euston Station. We talked so much that we only managed one beer but it was a great time. Thomas obviously supports the campaign and was keen to do something tangible. We met again in Liverpool a few weeks ago so that I could fully brief him on the campaign and he

could ensure that it is something that he would like to support. The conversation picked up from where we had left it previously and we were both reassured that working together can definitely bring more to the table. We have discussed Thomas' kind and generous offer at the Board and we are delighted that he too will now (formally) join us as an Ambassador. It's great having someone in our circle who is London based as so many things remain London-centric and we're not always able to make them so as and when Thomas has time to do so he will be an invaluable member of the team. Talking about blogs please do look at two that one of our new Board members, Rachel has written for us too. They are equally inspiring in my opinion. Also don't forget if you would like to write a blog for us please do so and send it in.

No doubt we will take a little time to settle into working together as a Board but we will get there. Once settled in I have given notice to colleagues that I think we should consider identifying a Vice Chair for the ECLCM Board. There is a danger that we could become a bit of a one-man band and I will not be around for ever so it would be good to consider others who may be willing to take on additional responsibility (might even get the Newsletters out more frequently).

## POLITICIANS

I appreciate that the country is plagued by 'Brexit' and the general election presently – there's a familiar tale -but like so many other crucial issues affecting us the whole question of children seems, like so many others to have been largely cast aside. I wonder how many children have fallen out of care during the three years, three Governments (maybe another yet to come?) and countless changes in the Civil Service demanded by the all-consuming behemoth that is Brexit?

I found it interesting that after the formation of the most recent (as I type this draft on 9<sup>th</sup> September I am forced to accept that 'most recent' may be inaccurate by the time the final version is read) the appointment of the Children's Minister, Kemi Baddenoach, was among the last to be announced. This is, of course, not unusual but I wonder if it reflects the thinking of Prime Ministers when it comes to children in need and in care in the British Government (Please note this is not meant as an insult to those in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland – some of whom clearly do afford a high priority to children in and leaving care on a 'National' level)

I, of course, wrote to Ms Baddenoach congratulating her on her appointment and to her great credit she had the courtesy to reply to me, see attached, unfortunately I guess I won't be meeting with her any time soon as she has now gone on Maternity leave. We, of course wish her well in this regard but am I the only person who thinks it's strange that a Prime Minister would make a ministerial appointment knowing that the appointee was going to go off on maternity leave before Parliament even re-convened?

Nonetheless, we now have a new Minister, Michele Donelan. I know social media isn't everything but I am heartened to know that Ms Donelan has shown some measure of interest to our campaign on social media. I choose to take this as a positive sign and I have written to her, too, asking if there is a possibility of us arranging a meeting as and when she has the time.

Our good friend and ECLCM ambassador, Ian Gould, has been seeking to arrange a meeting with Labour's Steve McCabe, Chair of the APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, and negotiations are at an advanced stage to arrange a mutually convenient time and location.

Members of Parliament formally signed up to support the campaign has been a little fluid given the addition of a couple and resignation from his role as an MP of a supporter, Joe Johnson – The Prime Minister's brother, who will I'm certain still be asking his sibling if he has any awareness of what it might mean to be a care leaver.

I have not included the sample letter to your MP in this issue of the Newsletter as I'm sure that you probably all know it verbatim by now but if anyone does want to write to their MP and needs help please just get in touch with us. There may be many new MP's in the next two weeks so off we go!

## FINANCE



You will know that since we began this campaign in December 2013 it has been entirely self-financed. This remains the case but frankly as we have grown our expenses

have become something of an issue at times – particularly in regard to travel expenses – trains to London aren't cheap!

We have decided, therefore that we will open a page on 'Just Giving'.

Our aspiration will be to raise £1000.00 and if successful the appeal will end. As and when this money is spent and accounted for we may repeat the exercise but not before we have 'gone' public explaining where, when and on what the money has been spent. It has already reached over £500 thanks to the amazing generosity of our supporters – thanks you!!

Further information can be found at [https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/ed-nixon-1?utm\\_id=66&utm\\_term=8mMYV3XPQ](https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/ed-nixon-1?utm_id=66&utm_term=8mMYV3XPQ)

## ECLCM WEBSITE



Many of you will know that since we started our website we have been fortunate enough to have had the free services of a wonderful man called Chris Doyle. Unfortunately, Chris has now ceased trading but typical of the man he thought of us and arranged for another equally wonderful man, Andy Powell ([andy@andy-powell.net](mailto:andy@andy-powell.net)) to take on the management of the eclcm.org website.

Andy, like Chris is offering his services for free – which leaves us full of gratitude so if any of you are thinking of setting up something where you need a website expert then please do keep him in mind and give him your business.

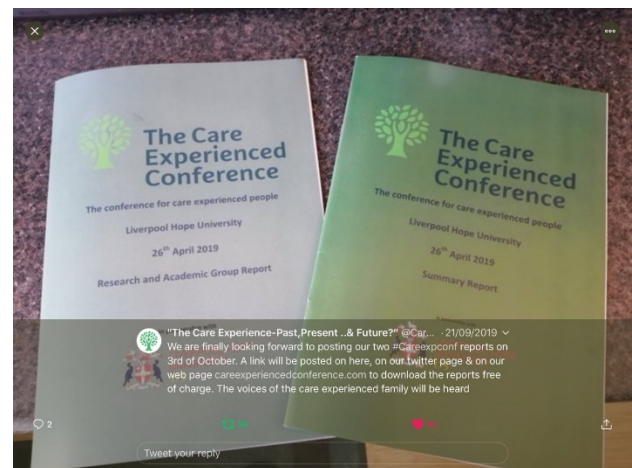
## THE #BIGCONVOY



Had I managed to write this Newsletter sooner I had fully intended to promote the #BigConvoy which was organised by one of our new Board Members, Terry Galloway.

However it's now been and gone but that does not make it any the less a great adventure and considerable achievement for all of those who put together a day out for Care Leavers at Alton Towers – well done.

## CARE EXPERIENCED PEOPLE CONFERENCE



As many. Of you will be aware this conference occurred earlier this year and those organising it have now produced their report.

This can be found on their website

<https://www.careexperiencedconference.com>

## BRANCHING OUT



We were approached by Staffordshire University to deliver a day of 'awareness raising' about Care and Care Leavers to second year Nursing Students. This presented us with a small challenge but a massive opportunity so it was a 'no-brainer' in accepting their kind invitation.

The students will be specialising in children's nursing and it became apparent that many or all of them knew little about the care system – although clearly they are not alone in this. Obviously in their professional lives they will encounter many children on the 'cusp' of or in care and the University has had the foresight to ensure that the students have some knowledge of the 'systems' in which these children are engaged. I really wish other educational 'centres' (at whatever level, from secondary to Higher education) would think along the same lines and do more to help their students have access to information that may help them, but

more particularly the children that they will encounter.

We delivered a whole day on 16<sup>th</sup> October – not without some trepidation but with great optimism. I think it went well but to know the truth of that I'd love some of the participants to perhaps write something for our next Newsletter.

If other centres of learning would be interested in us coming to do something similar please let us know and we will do what we can to help – though maybe we should wait for some feedback on our first effort before offering to do it again.

## STAYING CLOSE PILOTS

I understand that there is some disquiet among certain places about the status of all of the Pilots being 'unregistered' and or 'unregulated' placements at a time when this subject has quite correctly been a cause of great concern. Whilst I cannot totally allay that concern perhaps it will be helpful if I go into the background without trying to explain the whole debate. Correctly the media – written, broadcast and even social media has recently been highlighting some of the risks that can be inherent in the apparent (almost indisputable, but unproven) growth of this type of accommodation being used by Local Authorities to place children in the process of leaving or who have left care. There can be no doubt that there are those operating in this sector who are running 'homes' that are quite appalling and little more than a rather poor roof over people's heads (and others, no doubt who offer excellent services and support). The key issue here is that in many ways such resources simply go under the radar – not only of OfSTED but the police and any of the other safeguarding agencies. Clearly this is not the case for any of the Pilots. They are all working under the direct oversight of DfE under constant scrutiny under the terms of their Innovation Fund status.

Having said this and this is unrelated we are, as a campaign still disappointed at the level of communication that exists. We plan to re-allocate the various Pilots within our team and try again to engage with all if they are willing to do so.

**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.

## UNREGULATED AND UNREGISTERED HOMES.

I don't intend to say too much on this subject but it has been in the BBC News and Newsnight consistently over recent weeks and months and looks likely to remain so.

Just a little clarification first. These placements are not Children's Homes – though many look like and are (understandably) considered to be so by agencies such as the Police. The reason why they can't be considered to be children's homes is because they are neither registered or inspected by OfSTED – or indeed any other independent agency.

They do however have many Care Leavers living in them – placed by their Local Authority. More alarmingly there is ample evidence to suggest that children under the age of 16 have also been 'placed' in unregulated and therefore unregistered provision. Now there are, no doubt some excellent providers in this area but there are undoubtedly also many who are not and who are exploiting children and young people or minimally not doing anything to prevent them from being exploited. You may have seen, heard or read items on BBC news, radio programmes, on the BBC website or other outlets where it is clear that vulnerable children and young people are left pretty well to their own devices in appalling



conditions and from there sometimes drawn into criminal activity and, or exploitation such as 'County Lines' or sexual exploitation.

From an ECLCM perspective we would, of course wish to be satisfied that these children were, when still in care, given an option to consider remaining in their children's home but the issue is much wider than that. Professionally the debate about such 'resources' is, thankfully being had but in the interim, there can be no doubt that some children are being failed. This is simply not good enough. As a campaign ECLCM remains unaffiliated politically (not that anything much other than Brexit appears to be discussed these days) and will remain so but we would ask that you ask questions about why children are being placed in unregulated homes of your local politicians or other decision makers in your locality. Part of the problem is that because these facilities are not registered, we cannot know where they are or indeed who they are, who is caring for the children and young people, if they have been vetted and DBS checked. Would this be good enough for your child?

ECLCM are actively involved in discussions with the Police, media and anyone else who might choose to engage with us on this matter. Our view in response to the rhetorical(?) question is that absolutely placement in an unregistered provision would not be and is not good enough for our children. As such it is not acceptable for any children.

## AND FINALLY

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

Realistically I can't see us getting out a Christmas Newsletter – though I will try.

Given the General Election on 12<sup>th</sup> December we will have many new M.P.'s to chase up and your help will be essential if we are to make an impact. We know that our list of M.P. signatories to the campaign will diminish so can't afford to stand still. It's now been six years since we started this campaign. If it takes six more then so be it but we'd rather it didn't so please do get to your new (or 'new-old' M.P. and ask them to find a minute to sign up to this campaign.

I'd also love some good news stories – we have a couple coming out soon – the work of a great young man in care who I can only refer to as 'K' who is making music like a professional – as you will find once we have his link up on our website.

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





2019-0030085KBPO

**Kemi Badenoch MP**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

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tel: 0370 000 2288 [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)

Ed Nixon  
Every Child Leaving Care Matters

By email: [ed.nixon1@outlook.com](mailto:ed.nixon1@outlook.com)

Dear Ed,

29th Aug 2017

Thank you for your kind email of 29 July, congratulating me on my appointment and inviting me to meet with you.

It is a huge privilege to be able to serve as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families and to make a positive difference to issues close to my heart. Education has always been a key priority for me and I look forward to working with the ministerial team at the Department for Education to deliver a world-class education for all children and young people in England that will enable them to achieve their full potential.

I would like to thank you for your commitment to helping children and young people leaving residential care, and for your work with the department.

Thank you for your kind invitation to meet. As you may be aware, Parliament is currently in recess, and my office is in the process of working on my diary. I am grateful for your patience while this happens and will be in touch in due course if I am able to meet with you.

Yours sincerely,

*Kemi Badenoch*

**Kemi Badenoch MP**  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families