



EVERY CHILD



LEAVING CARE MATTERS

Campaign Newsletter – A letter from the Chair

December 2019

EVERY CHILD LEAVING
CARE MATTERS

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THE PETITION

In this Issue

- Christmas greetings from the Every Child Leaving Matters campaign.

This is not so much a newsletter more a short message to update and thank you all for being there for us.

It has been a difficult year for the campaign – but not so difficult as it has been for the country faced with the seemingly interminable arguments about the ‘B word’.

As I start to write we are on the eve of the General Election. I guess I should have waited to start this but unexpectedly a small amount of my time has become available and it seems to me that this communication is more important than any of the other things that I could do to utilise it.

Whatever the election brings it seems unlikely that it will bring about any great hope for care leavers in respect of the aims of our campaign.

Both leading parties made reference to a review of the care system. This would be welcomed though we are (no more than any of you reading this) acutely aware that politicians promises in manifestos do not always translate into action once they have our votes in the bag. Has there ever been such a mistrust of politicians in this country? I can't remember one. Nonetheless and in good faith we will hope that they are true to their word. The problem with a review of course is that it takes a very long time to actually lead to action. In terms of [@rescaredo21](#) there has been no promise forthcoming from any party to end the discrimination against residential care leavers. This seems entirely wrong to me. In the previous Labour Party Manifesto it was there is black and white that they would extend the option to ‘stay put’ to all care leavers. Despite trying to contact senior members of the Labour party to clarify this we failed – or rather they failed to respond to us.

To whoever wins the election I say this, **“review of the care system or not you can change legislation to end the discrimination created by a partial right to ‘stay put’ immediately, what’s to review about that decision?”**

Once the dust has settled, we will review our list of MP’s supporting the campaign. Some of our supporters have stood down, others may have lost their seats and yet other new MP’s will have been targeted by us or our supporters during their search for votes and be willing to sign up. This is the third General Election since we began ECLCM and there is a sense in which we have to start all over again with our lobbying activities. Que sera, sera.

Having been critical of politicians it's time to look at ourselves. We, the Board of ECLCM, have fallen short this year in my opinion. We have undergone a number of changes of membership; had members, for a range of reasons, unavailable to take on tasks or even attend meetings but the fact is that we have not worked hard enough and that needs to change. We will be meeting in January to regroup and re-focus. There will be changes and there need to be.

A quick mention of thanks is owed to our followers (and others) who have contributed to our Just Giving page (set up to offset some of our travel expenses going forward). Again, as I write we have raised a little over £600 of the £1000 that we would like to set aside to cover travel costs. Thanks to all those of you who have generously donated.

Things have been happening this year which have been good. The CEP conference took place and we were and have been happy to offer our support through this newsletter and other means. We have no knowledge about what that 'movement' will be doing going forward other than what is in the public domain.

At long last there has been some light thrown on the scandal of Unregulated (and Unregistered) homes. This is in very large part thanks to the BBC and particularly wonderful journalists like Sally Chesworth, Ed Thomas and Noel Titherage. All care leavers and children in the process of leaving care have a great deal to thank these folk and their teams for the exposures they have presented on TV. How sad that it has taken journalists to get some response when the 'profession' has known about these places for years. In both my working and personal 'lives' I have been very actively involved in many formal and informal discussions about shining a light on the current, wholly unacceptable situation. We must not confuse unregulated homes with children's homes. A Children's home is an entity that is registered with and inspected by OfSTED; if it's not registered with OfSTED then it's not a children's home.

Let's not demonise all Unregulated homes though. There are some excellent homes providing good quality care to children and young people; their problem is that if they are providing 'care' then they are operating illegally. We have to find a way of bringing the best of the currently unregulated services into the sector whilst eliminating the worst of them which I believe to be supporting a range of illegal services exploiting the most vulnerable of people.

On this subject I must refer to the current 'Staying Close' pilots which are funded by DfE as part of the Innovation Programme and which ECLCM have some role. It has been suggested that the pilots are 'unregulated homes. These pilots are the subject of microscopic scrutiny by the DfE, the placing LA's – some are operated by LA's – and or the charities who are operating them. I suppose that technically they are unregistered but as Pilots, subject to national review, I think that's acceptable. Funding for the pilots expires – as I understand it – next Spring and one hopes that the evaluation will be public.

I have noticed a number of other 'Staying Close' models being created by LA's but as yet haven't found the time to explore these. Obviously, it shows some willing to 'plug the gap' but will always be second best to the option of 'Staying Put' being on the table.

What for next year?

Well the first thing I would like are some more good news stories and features that we could use on our website. We have a few but far too few to represent the great things that are happening for some children in residential or other forms of care. We have an ever-increasing number of children entering the care system and that represents a large number of children with huge potential. Some realise if many others don't let's celebrate those who do whilst we work to improve the chances of those who could but aren't offered the right opportunities.

We can't take our thousands of feet off the 'MP pedal'. Regardless of who forms the next Government please book some time with your new M.P. and tell her/him why they **must** support ECLCM and how to do so (they are almost all going to be on Twitter) so ask them to tweet to me or the @rescareto21 account and say so. It doesn't matter what Party they represent we will accept support from any M.P. who is willing to give it. We need more than 325 to form a majority and I don't care which party they come from. Currently we have less than 90 and this will fall as explained earlier. There's work to do and if you leave it to someone else to do, we will fail, please contact your M.P.

I'm planning another attempt at retiring from work next March and so long as it's more successful than the last abject failure I hope to have more time to devote to the campaign with a re-invigorated Board firing on all cylinders.

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and thank you to you all and to the thousands of children in care who you have it in your power to help.

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



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