



# EVERY CHILD



# LEAVING CARE MATTERS

Campaign Newsletter – A letter from the Chair

April 2021

EVERY CHILD LEAVING  
CARE MATTERS

PLEASE SIGN  
THE PETITION

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## ECLCM BOARD



One of the sad things about our Board is that inevitably people leave – generally it must be said for reasons that have nothing to do with their commitment to ECLCM but as a result of personal or professional demands that mean commitment to the responsibilities of Board Membership are too much to take on.

This time we are losing two stalwart members of the Board for very different but equally exciting reasons.

Delyth, I hope she won't mind me saying this, is due to have a new baby imminently. Cancel that. Roughly speaking at the time this was being drafted Delyth's beautiful daughter was joined by a baby brother. As far as we know mother and new campaigner doing well! We wish her and her lovely family every joy in the future and we know that she'll remain out there beating our drum and who knows perhaps she might return one day.

Rachel has become an Ofsted inspector. What a journey from child in care to an Ofsted inspector, congratulations have already been made. Rachel would happily have continued on the Board, but Ofsted thought that there could be a conflict of interest and we obviously respect that – not least given the encouragement of some very senior members of the Ofsted team who have been great in their quiet but invaluable support for the campaign on social media.

Happily, we are expecting Fiona to be able to re-join us soon after time away for personal reasons. Additionally, we are in the process of introducing a prospective Board member to the team and are very hopeful that he will be joining us imminently after sitting in to observe at our next meeting.

In terms of our 'personnel' those of you who follow Twitter will have seen that our wonderful Ambassador – does anyone tweet more than him? – Ian Gould is back after a short break from Twitter.

It's fantastic to have Ian up and running again. The man is a one-off and we are proud to have him – as we are with all our Ambassadors 'batting' and battling for ECLCM.

Talking of battling we would like to offer a very Public 'Thank you' to Bill (Esterson) and Emma (Lewell-Buck) our patrons who we're hoping to meet with (virtually of course) very soon to discuss our strategy going forward. A little more about politicians will follow later in this Newsletter.

### THE CARE REVIEW

So, here we are. There is a Care Review as promised – but is it as in needed?

There are actually a whole series of reviews that have been announced like a rainstorm in a desert after years of drought.

I'll try to get their various titles right.

- [The Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#)
- [The Competition and Markets Authority \(CMA\) examination into children's social care provision.](#)
- [An inquiry by the House of Commons education select committee into children in care homes.](#)
- [The All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked after Children and Care Leavers' spotlight inquiry into England's care system.](#)
- [The House of Lords vulnerable children inquiry.](#)
- The [Childhood Commission](#) launched by the children's commissioner for England

This, I think at the time of writing (25<sup>th</sup> March), is accurate but who knows what may happen in the next days, weeks or months – there may be even more to consider.

Mr Josh MacAlister is the Chair of the first of these. Not someone with a social care background. The review is scheduled to be completed within a twelve to fifteen month time-scale – is this at all realistic? The Scottish Review took years – though it has generally been welcomed as a success. The 'Experts by Experience Group' has been identified – not without acrimony in that community which is no surprise given the speed at which the selections were made, and the process followed – as far as anyone actually knows what that process was. Given the plan to complete within 12 - 15 months and the proposal that the EbE group will meet bi-monthly then one wonders if this group will have a real opportunity to contribute, influence, guide the review. The Government have made it clear – (well it was more of an exposé actually) – that there will be no additional funding for this review to draw on in making recommendations. I have actually not heard a word from Boris Johnson on this review – a massive contrast to Nicola Sturgeon's 'ownership' of and participation in the Scottish Review. Then again, I haven't heard Keir Starmer or other political leaders talking about it either.

One of the problems that we now face, and this may have been orchestrated or merely an amazing coincidence is that we have all of the above 'calling for evidence'; asking for submissions, setting up consultation groups and the like but those of us and there will be thousands have only so much time and it is a big ask. Personally, I have decided to try to create a generic response that will be relevant to each of these. This is, not least because I believe that there should be only one review and it should be all encompassing. The risk is that if they are not inter-related then they could come up with diverse recommendations which would leave us pretty well as now with a fractured system. Conversely, of course, if we go down a conspiracy theorist route, it could be that. By design they are all related and it is just that no-one has told us that this is the case.

When Mr MacAlister's appointment was announced, and he came onto Twitter on 17<sup>th</sup> January we immediately got in touch and said that we would want the opportunity to engage. To be fair we had a response on 19<sup>th</sup> January including "...Josh will start full time from March, but he's really keen to hear from ECLCM as part of the work of the review. I've logged the information you've provided about EMCLM (sic) as part of our Call for Advice and I've got you on our list to keep updated on the work of

the review as we get up and running, so you'll be hearing more about how to engage and feed in views beyond the call for advice shortly". So far we've heard nothing.

The following video has been created by Dr Donna Peach, a friend and long-term supporter, of ECLCM <https://youtu.be/cE54hsVd9dM> Is it reasonable, fair and accurate – it seems so. I can only suggest that if you have time it's well worth a listen.

### POLITICIANS

Despite what you might consider a rather light tone in the preceding section – I have my personal views – as do each and every member of the ECLCM Board but we are apolitical and always have been and need to remain that way. We do, however, suggest that you listen to this video (<https://t.co/IXcDWtECh7?amp=1>) of Lord Mike Watson in a speech to his fellow peers on the matter of Unregulated Children's Homes. As you may know the Government is planning to establish a new set of regulations to cover some – presumably the better examples of – Unregulated children's homes. Our views on this area of activity is clear and has been stated before. If a child is 'in care' and placed in residential accommodation then that accommodation is or should be a children's home subject to the Children's Homes Regulations and Quality Standards, 2015 – not a newly created set of Minimum Standards which is what is proposed. Views. As Lord Watson suggests this is actually a license for children leaving care to do so at 16 not 18, this would be a backward step and in my view wholly wrong. Far from @Rescareto21. Could we find ourselves campaigning for @Rescareto18?!

Thanks to our patron Bill Esterson I had the chance to engage in a constituency meeting with Kate Green MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education. I have to say I was disappointed that she did not seem particularly au fait with ECLCM but to her credit she set up a second meeting with Tulip Sidi, the Shadow Children's Minister which allowed both of them to be briefed on the campaign and its objectives. We were delighted when subsequently Tulip very publicly signed up as a supporter of the campaign on Twitter but a little disappointed that, as yet, Kate has not done so despite her encouraging responses in the meeting.

### STAYING CLOSE PILOTS

We continue to follow the progress of the Staying Close pilots and are very grateful to the pilots that continue to provide updates and let us know how they are progressing.

It was very pleasing to hear, from the Department for Education that the pilots will continue to receive funding through 2021/22.

Pilot evaluation reports are now available at [Children's Social Care Innovation Programme: insights and evaluation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/childrens-social-care-innovation-programme-insights-and-evaluation) for all eight pilots.

### WESTMINSTER WORKSHOP

We have been offered the opportunity to be part of a Parliament Campaign Workshop for People with Lived Experience of Care and their Supporters to take place in Westminster on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> April at 4.00pm. Further details can be found via the link below.

This is exclusively due to the kindness of Career Matters (<https://www.career-matters.org>) and specifically their CEO, Hannah Kirkbride. Hannah operates this company and in particular Project Thrive, to provide opportunities for employment, education and training for Care Leavers. As a member of their Advisory Board I am fortunate enough to make a tiny contribution to their amazing work with the NHS and other partners. There is much in common with their and our goals and Hannah has generously suggested that (although she has done all the work and organising) that we jointly open this event. In principle we all know how to lobby parliament I guess but speaking from our own ECLCM campaign perspective it's not at all that easy to achieve and we're hoping that this event will give us and others who sign up some hints/clues/shortcuts to making a real difference when fighting what we consider to be injustices. Given the current Care Review will may all need every bit of help we can get in finding a way to be heard.

Further information and details of how to book onto the event can be found via the link below.  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/parliament-campaigning-workshop-tickets-147092368233>

**AND SO ...**

We just carry on as best we can. We know that, understandably, through the pandemic the country has been somewhat preoccupied and that is fine. What we must not forget is that, pandemics or not, children continue to be evicted from care at 18 and this is simply not acceptable. As a group we have been trying to keep the campaign in people's minds and hopefully have achieved that. We are still here, not very active perhaps but not going away either. As ever we would welcome suggestions of how we can make more impact, contributions to our website <https://eclcm.org> by letting us have your thoughts/blogs etc.

We all seem to have a better chance than before of escaping from perpetual lockdowns that to the enormous number of key and support workers who have just got on no matter what they have had to endure. When we do emerge ECLCM will still be there because so will the children that our current regulations and legislation let down. Those who are in care living with a literal time bomb that they know will explode on or before their 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

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

