



# EVERY CHILD LEAVING CARE MATTERS



Campaign Newsletter – A letter from the Chair

June 2016

EVERY CHILD LEAVING  
CARE MATTERS

PLEASE SIGN  
THE PETITION

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Hello, these Newsletters seem to come around rather more quickly than I can keep up with but in many ways that's a good thing as it means that we are working hard on the campaign – even though at times it must seem to our supporters that progress is painfully slow. For some time now we have appreciated that this was going to be more of a series of strategic victories leading to a successful outcome than a case of putting what we all feel is blindingly obvious as a case and a receptive government saying "Sorry, we'll right that injustice now." Having said that we are hopeful of real progress over the coming weeks and (few) months

## POLITICIANS

We have made virtually no tangible progress in encouraging more councils to 'sign up' to the 'ECLCM Motion' This is not because any have refused but rather as a consequence of us having little time available to lobby and then meet with them. That having been said Ian Gould has been working tirelessly with members in Sandwell and we are very hopeful that all of his good work will pay dividends very soon.

We have also been given a date – 15<sup>th</sup> July at Salford Quays - when we can meet with all of the Lead Members for Children in the North West. We hope to persuade those who have not yet 'signed' up to join their colleagues Cllr. Jean Carter from Warrington, Cllr. John Joseph Kelly from Sefton (you will remember that Cllr Nina Killen presented our motion to Sefton Council at the end of last year), Cllr Maureen Bateson from Blackburn with Darwen and Cllr

Matthew Tomlinson from Lancashire all of whom have been active supporters of the campaign.

Thanks to one of the campaigns Patron's Emma Lewell-Buck, Labour MP for South Shields and Shadow Minister for Communities and Local Government, we have been invited to run a 'Pop In day' in Westminster on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016. This will afford us an opportunity to be available to any MP who is interested enough to join us to talk about the campaign. Obviously we would hope that many who already support us will 'Pop In' but we are equally happy to engage with MP's who oppose us so that we can have one of those 'frank exchanges of views' that I sometimes hear about. We are hopeful that our other Patron, Kris Akabussi will also be able to be with us. The team have made a great effort and almost all of us will be there – in part thanks to Maggie Danesfahini of Resume who has made a contribution towards our transport costs – perhaps Richard

Branson would like to pay the balance of the Virgin Trains bill??

Thanks in large part to Jane (Billows) who put together packs and displays for our day at the wonderful Care Leavers Festival at Salford Quays in March of this year we are able to go supplied with information packs and one or two props for the day. Paula (Doherty) is slavishly and systematically writing to each and every MP to invite them to call in to see us on the day but supporters would be more than welcome to remind their own constituency MP's that we will be there so feel free to do so. As you would guess we will promote this event on Twitter (actually at a very low level we

have already started) nearer the time so please do help us out with Re-tweets if at all possible.

We anticipate a good day and it will be interesting to see if the recent poll conducted by ComRes commissioned by the Children's Services Development Group (CSDG) which found that 47% of 150 MPs questioned back the extension of the 'staying put' to children in residential care. See link below

<http://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/1156749/mps-back-raising-residential-care-leaving-age-to-21#sthash.oLA8KVp5.dpuf>

## Not Politicians..... but close

As well as having been invited to attend Westminster, Ian (Dickson) and I have been invited (on behalf of the campaign) to meet with Anne Longfield, the Children's Commissioner for England – this will be on 16th June. Well, I say invited and to be fair to Anne we were but we did 'badger' her a bit first. We are really pleased and grateful to have been given this opportunity to have some time within her busy schedule and whilst I may be wrong I have a sense that her views and ours are not a million miles apart.

We shall very soon be able to see if the same applies to our campaign and Sir Martin Narey's report which is scheduled to be delivered to the Prime Minister on 31st May (I am writing this newsletter on 29th May). Of course what no-one will ever know is what if any differences might exist between what Sir Martin submits and what, if anything emerges from 10 Downing Street. As we have already gone on record to say, on the basis of our communication with him, we believe that he has conducted this review with absolute integrity but obviously it is for government to publish and or agree with some, all or none of it. Nonetheless, it will mark a watershed in this campaign for good or ill and we can only hope that there is sufficient encouragement in the report for us to believe that what has already been a long campaign may have an end in sight rather than a need for us to continue long into the future.

Where we have been encouraged is in the content of Lord Laming's review. It would be pointless for me to try to summarise it here but as has been evidenced in social media over the last days and weeks there is a great deal of encouragement in its content. Perhaps very little that was entirely surprising to those of us in and near to the care system but it has been a re-telling and positive re-framing of the familiar themes around the unnecessary and avoidable criminalisation of children in care.

## BOARD MEETING



As you are aware from the previous Newsletter we have extended the Board and we were able to have a good meeting a few weeks ago – joined by Paula and Ian (Gould) via Skype (absolutely nothing to do with me, which may be why it worked so well). The other great thing about the meeting is that we were hosted and joined by three colleagues who work in Sefton. The meeting was held at 'Our Place' in Waterloo, Liverpool and we were joined by Jo(anne) Kenyon, David Fairclough and Jo(anne) Lee all of whom work supporting Children in Care and

Care Leavers supported by the Venus Project and Sefton MBC. It was great to be joined by folk who are actively involved in working with care leavers and we hope that we may be able to receive and accept invitations from other groups who would be willing to provide us with a room (and ideally a coffee and biscuits as provided by 'Our Place'!) somewhere in the North West to have other board meetings. We would, of course, be happy to repeat what we did in Our Place and have our hosts sit in and participate in the meeting. One of the things to come out of the meeting at Our Place is that we hope that we may have some young people's contributions to our next newsletter offering their views on the option for ALL children to stay put until they are aged twenty-one. The 'Jo's and David' hope to send us something for inclusion in our next newsletter.

On this subject please do feel free to send us any written pieces that you would like us to include in future Newsletters. Anything related to your own care experience, views of the care system, your experience as a social worker or other professional on why you think 'staying put' should be an option for all care leavers not just those in foster care. It could also be a piece on how 'staying put' has or has not worked as hoped for a child in foster care – we know, for example that realistically this is not always an unconditional offer for all foster children – often on the basis of cost – which many Local Authorities tell us they simply cannot afford. In the interest of balance we would also be happy to hear from anyone who feels that extending the option of 'staying put' to children in residential care would be wrong. Should you wish to contribute but feel that you need to preserve your anonymity we will, of course respect that.

If you do feel able to host a board meeting then the next few dates are:

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2015 at 6.30pm

Wednesday 21 September 2016 at 6.30am

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016 at 6.30pm

## CARE LEAVERS STORIES

Slowly but surely we are building up a number of care leaver stories which we will collate and publish in due course. Please do keep sending these to us. It doesn't matter whether they are positive experiences or not – all are equally relevant to not only this campaign but the fight to improve the experience of children in care more generally.

The reports referred to earlier do seem to suggest that what we suspected is true and that, taken as a whole the experience of being in care is only marginally better than it was forty years ago. This seems such a tragedy as, if anything, we have a much greater body of knowledge on how to bring about improvements, offer therapeutic support and enable care leavers to be as 'amazing' as can be any other adult but (largely on the basis of cost it seems to us) this still tends to be

the exception rather than the rule. There are many organisations trying very hard to 'give care leavers a voice' – with varying degrees of success. What we want to do is to offer a platform for care leavers own stories to be told in their words and collated into a book. As yet we don't know how we will go about getting this published but, as ever, we will find a way.



The next couple of months will, we feel be very significant for our campaign as Sir Martin Narey's review is published and everyone digests and analyses what Lord Laming's report has offered. As we head off to meetings in London with Anne Longfield, (hopefully lots of) MP's in Westminster on 5<sup>th</sup> July and the Children's Lead Persons in Manchester on 15<sup>th</sup> July we will need all the strength that your fantastic support brings. Please, then, stay active on social media and encourage people to sign the petition. It is the most tangible of our 'weapons' and the greater the number of signatories, the stronger will be our position to negotiate and hopefully persuade those of influence to right the injustice of a partial right to stay put and to make it affordable for all care leavers by providing government ring-fenced money. In our view the Children and Families Bill and Mr Cameron's speeches contain fine words but little of substance to say how we will bring about change – let's make it happen

Ed Nixon  
ECLCM Chairman



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