

EVERY CHILD LEAVING CARE MATTERS

Campaign Newsletter – A letter from the Chair

October 2015

UPDATE & PROGRESS

Things seem to be picking up pace for our campaign. In this issue of the newsletter I am hopeful that we can point to a number of developments in and around ECLCM which all of our supporters and members will find helpful.

EVERY CHILD LEAVING
CARE MATTERS

PLEASE SIGN
THE PETITION

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NUMBERS

At the time of writing we have recently broken through 9200 signatures on the campaign. This is backed up by over 150 full members of the campaign. We are confident that as our efficiency improves on issues like getting a newsletter out both of these figures will increase exponentially.

POLITICIANS AND LOBBYING

I hope that everybody in receipt of this newsletter will have picked up on the fantastic work of Warrington Council. Counsellor Jean Carter (a long-term supporter of the campaign managed to guide through a motion at full council on seventh of September

“That the Council call on the Government to amend the Children and Families Act 2014 to enable children in care to stay under the care of the local authority until 21years of age. Currently children in care who are with foster carers can 'Stay put' until 21 years but children in residential care at the latest 18 years and sometimes these children leave at 16 yrs or 17 yrs. By the nature of these vulnerable children and young people who sometimes have very complex needs, they are being discriminated against by Government. This should be funded and acted upon urgently. As Corporate parents we have a moral obligation to ensure that all 'our children' have the best services and support that we as a Local Authority can give" (Verbatim).”

Both Ian Dickson and I had been invited to the present at the council meeting and were delighted that Jean's motion received unanimous support. A special mention must also be given to Councillor Bob Barr who was one of several counsellors speaking in favour of the motion. Like Jean, Bob has been a long term and vociferous supporter of the campaign. For those of you who don't know Jean or Bob (and I recommend that you do) Jean is a Labour Councillor whilst Bob represents Liberal Democrats



Councillor Jean Carter and Ian

The news of Warrington is historic decision appears to have spurred on other councils and as a team we are in discussion with four additional councils with a view to them taking a similar motion to their elected members

In the short to medium term once we have enough councils on board we hope that this may prove to be an irresistible pressure on those MPs who does far have not openly supported the campaign and of assistance to others such as Bill Esterson, George Haworth Craig Whittaker and Holly Lynch who have championed the cause in Westminster. As you would expect we have already made an initial attempt to contact Mr Corbyn and will do so again once he has allowed the dust to settle. I have also sent a message to Tim Farron. Previous and innumerable attempts at correspondence with the Conservative Party still await a response.

BOARD MEETINGS



Given we are all volunteers and rather geographically spread it's always been a little difficult to establish a strong structure for all meetings. However we have now set a timetable to meet on a bimonthly basis in Liverpool initially, but thereafter possibly 'on the road'. Each meeting will consider, among other business, the contents of the next newsletter and Ian Dickson has agreed to act as editor which will mean more frequent updates and almost certainly better quality than I have managed over the last few months! I apologise that we have been tardy on getting regular Newsletters out for some time and hopefully this will improve matters considerably. We have also been blessed by an additional volunteer, Jane Billows, who has offered to act as Administrator to the campaign – a role which will be invaluable to us going forward given our collective admin skills on the Board are probably in a minus number!

Still on the subject of board meetings we were delighted that Jim Goddard and David Graham of the Care Leavers Association agreed to join us at our most recent meeting on 15th of September, it was our great pleasure to welcome them and an even greater pleasure for us all to appreciate just how much common ground the ECLCM campaign has with the Care Leavers Association – although naturally we respect that their agenda is far more developed and extensive than is ours albeit there is a mass of common ground in our thinking. Jim and David have been invited to attend any or all of our board meetings in future.

We are also delighted that we have received two separate offers from care leavers who are now very successful in their own fields. One has offered some sponsorship for the campaign that will enable us to try to produce some literature (perhaps hard copies of leaflets/pamphlets etc.) and other materials which will enable us to broaden our message. We will of course (and this has been fully understood and accepted) remain entirely independent and our sponsor has no expectation of grace and favour as a result of her generosity.

The other option we have received is from a care lever who has very considerable skills in marketing – self-evidently this is something that we don't have! Again this can only enhance our chances of achieving what remains our single unifying goal of establishing the option of 'staying put' for all those in residential care.

EVENTS

Unfortunately the conference that was due to be held in Saint James' Park Newcastle has had to be cancelled due to a lack of take-up. This is a great pity for CLA who had put in so much work in yet again trying to highlight the plight of care leavers. It is also a much less significant disappointment for the campaign as we were due to open proceedings.

We will however still be playing an integral part in an event organised by Bradford College on 20th October when we will share the stage with colleagues from CLA among others.

Although we obviously have very limited financial means please do let us know if you are organising an event at which you would like us to participate and we will do all that we can to be there.

LAMING ENQUIRY

In large part thanks to Ian we have made a submission to the enquiry in the name of ECLCM. Ian produced an extremely thorough and hard hitting submission in our name and we are very grateful to him for that. The man who sometimes describes himself as being in the 'engine room' is actually a machine himself who works tirelessly for this campaign and who deserves admiration from all those reading this newsletter and far beyond.



EXPANSION OF MEMBERSHIP

We still hope to expand our membership to enable us to offer an ever increasing platform for the ECLCM campaign to remain at the forefront of seeking equality and justice for residential care leavers in gaining equal 'Staying Put' rights. We are conscious that purely by chance we are more active in the north of England, particularly Greater Manchester and Merseyside. We hope to explore the potential for establishing 'cluster groups' all around the country to represent an increasing membership which is genuinely nationwide. Ben and Kev are currently considering how they may be able to set up such groups in the West Yorkshire and North Wales area where they are based. Please contact us if you wish to set up an ECLCM group where you may live. These are our main aims for the immediate future, and of course we will continue to maintain a presence on social media such as 'Twitter' and 'Facebook' to keep the campaign in the public eye.



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

Ed Nixon
ECLCM Chairman