

Activities 2004-2005

The CLA became a registered charity in November 2005. This was a great step in the development of the organisation. Our new charity number is 1111988.

Access to Records

One of our key objectives is to actively promote and enable individual care leavers to gain access to files held on them, as permitted under the 1998 Data Protection Act. If you check the [Access to Files](#) section of this website, you can see that we already have information on care leavers' rights to access their files, as well as a database of the access to files contacts for each of the different regions throughout England. We also have half-a-dozen case studies from care leavers who have accessed their files, in case you are thinking of doing it yourself and want to know about some of the things that can happen.

We are running an ongoing campaign called ['It's Our History, It's Our Right: Reclaiming Our Past'](#), which aims to:

Promote awareness of care leavers' rights to access their files

Promote awareness of the importance of these personal records to care leavers

Promote best practice on accessing these vital documents amongst professionals working in this area.

We also have an access to records quality mark, the [CLEARmark](#), which is available to local authorities and voluntary agencies who can meet the required standards. The CLEARmark was designed entirely by care leavers, to reflect what they thought would be a good basic standard access to records service. The CLEARmark will be assessed and monitored entirely by care leavers.

We believe that there is a lot of knowledge about accessing files amongst our members already, and by sharing this knowledge and our experiences we can help each other. If you have any stories about accessing your files, then we would love to have them so that we could put them on the website with the others. (We won't print your real name if you don't want us to.)

Development of the Careleaversreunited Website

Since the [Careleaversreunited](#) website went 'live' (from 19th September 2003), we have had 4416 care leavers join the site and 1453 care homes have been registered. This is a great result, especially since we have not had funding to market or publicise the website widely. We have also had people starting to link up through the site. For example, three of care leavers who were brought up by nuns in Knolle Park, in Liverpool (though they didn't know each other whilst in care), have already

been in touch. Other links have also been developed. As the site grows, we hope that there will be many more of these kind of links.

All of the above has been achieved with relatively little publicity. However, we did launch a small publicity campaign through press releases to the mass media in late 2003, which enjoyed quite a lot of success. We had an article in the Bradford Telegraph and Argus (28 November 2003), an article in The Guardian (3 December 2003), and we were interviewed by Radio Norfolk (5 December 2003), The Big Issue and 'Children Now'.

The administration of the sites (checking of homes and responding to most queries and issues that arise) is done by Mary, Jim and Victoria Hull.

In the summer of 2009 we will be launching a 'new look' [CareleaversReunited](#). We are in the process of redeveloping it and integrating it into the CLA's main website. Once it has been relaunched [CareleaversReunited](#) will have lots more additional features, along the lines of other social networking websites. We also hope it will be much easier to use, more interactive and more secure.

Executive and Annual General Meeting

November 20th 2004

We held a Conference and an Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 20 November 2004 at the St Thomas Centre. At the AGM, we looked back over the events of the previous year and made plans for the year ahead. The year 2003/4 saw a lot of developments within the CLA, including the establishment of a head office base and the employment of a full-time National Development Worker. In looking to the year ahead, as well as developing the websites and our access to files expertise, we also agreed to continue work on developing our leaving care guide and to enter into discussions with the Association of Child Abuse Lawyers (ACAL) about collaborative work on the legal issues surrounding care leavers bringing cases of past abuse to court.

We also elected a new Executive Committee, whose details can be viewed under the 'Contacts' section of this site, and agreed the following objectives:

To work in partnership with other agencies to address the negative stereotyping of care leavers by the media.

To provide internet-based information services to care leavers.

To respond to requests for training and advice by service providers to children in and leaving care.

To improve care services for care leavers and children in care.

To actively promote and enable individual care leavers to gain access to files held

on them, as permitted under the 1998 Data Protection Act.

If you think you can help us to fulfil these objectives, do get in touch.

Activities 2006

Jim's Marathon Madness



On 10th September 2006, Jim Goddard, Secretary of the CLA, ran in the Robin Hood Nottingham Marathon to raise money for the association. All the money he raised (over £1,000 in total) will go towards proving services for care leavers and working for positive change on their behalf.

If you are thinking of taking part in a sponsored event and would like to do so on the behalf of the care Leavers' Association, visit our [Get Involved](#) section for more information.

CLA Website

During 2006, the CLA website saw a number of changes. We added new sections to the website, including one on Leaving Care, which currently consists of advice on accessing education and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, as well as links to other useful sites. We plan to continue to add to this section over the coming year.

We also added a newsletter archive, so that people can download past copies of our newsletter, The Grapevine . The CLA website also hosts an on-line discussion forum. This can be read by anyone, but only members of the CLA are permitted to post on there. This is to maintain the security of the forum and also to ensure that discussions remain relevant. If you would like to become a member of the CLA and join in the discussions, please visit the [Membership](#) page.

Leaving Care Lobbying



On 25th of January 2006, Victoria and Jim went to London and met up with Tim Farron MP at the House of Commons. Tim Farron is a Liberal Democrat MP and is the party's Youth Affairs Spokesperson.

The CLA, through its Executive, has a well-developed knowledge in the area of Access to Childhood Care Files. The CLA website now contains a host of information on this topic, from the legal aspects of accessing files to stories from care leavers who have already been through the process. The [Access to Records](#) section of the website also hosts the only national database of Access to Records Officers in the UK, which makes it easier for people to identify exactly who to contact to retrieve their file. During 2006, the organization produced an Access to Childhood Care Files guide, containing detailed, yet comprehensive information on the Data Protection Act, which is available free-of-charge to care leavers. If you

would like a copy of the guide, please contact the office:

Leaving Care Guide

During early 2006, the CLA took part in a joint project, along with organisations such as A National Voice, The Who Cares? Trust, the Children's Legal Centre and the Office of Children's Rights director, to put together a ten-point guide to leaving care. The 'Starter for Ten' guide was launched in June 2006 and can be found on the website of the Children's Rights Director: <http://www.rights4me.org>.

At the end of 2006, the CLA launched a monthly E-newsletter, *The Grapevine*, to replace the existing quarterly paper newsletter. The E-newsletter is now sent out to all registered users of the [Careleaversreunited](#) website as well as all of our members, which allows us to reach out to 1000s more care leavers.

Activities 2007

We launched the training and consultancy aspect of our work in late 2006 and during the first half of 2007, it has really taken off. Over the past 9 months, we have worked with Bradford University, Salford University, Manchester Metropolitan University, BAAF, Community Care Live! and Barnardo's.

We feel that this is important work, as it allows the experiences and views of adults who have lived through the care system to influence current and future professionals working with children in care and care leavers.

To read more about our work in this area, or to enquire about our services, visit our [Training and Consultancy](#) page.

In October 2006, the UK government published a [Green Paper](#) on children in and leaving care. The CLA, in consultation with its members and other care leavers, took part in the consultation on the Green Paper. You can read our official response [here](#).

In the summer of 2007, a [White Paper \(Care Matters: Time for Change\)](#) was published as a result of the consultation and in November 2007, the [Children and Young Person's Bill](#) was introduced into the House of Lords in order to fulfill the recommendations of the White Paper. Over the coming months, the CLA will be lobbying on the bill to promote the needs of young people leaving care and care leavers.



In June 2007, we launched our national campaign on access to records. The campaign will run, in several stages, over the next few years and aims to:

- Promote awareness of care leavers' rights to access their files
- Promote awareness of the importance of these personal records to care leavers
- Promote best practice on accessing these vital documents amongst professionals working in this area.

The campaign has already featured in the press, including [Community Care](#) and on the Family Law Week website. To read more about the campaign, visit the '[It's Our History...](#)' section.

Activities 2008

On a day-to-day basis, we provide advice and information to care leavers on relevant issues, such as how to access their child care files. We offer advice and training to professionals working with care leavers. Also, we campaign for improved services for care leavers and young people currently in care and to combat negative social stereotypes of people in and from care. You can view our Mission Statement [here](#). We operate through a variety of media, including our own websites.

Our main activities for 2008, as agreed at our AGM in November 2007 and at our Executive Strategy Weekend on 2nd February 2008, are:

- Continuing our Access to Records campaign, '[It's Our History, It's Our Right: Reclaiming Our Past](#)'
- Launching an Access to Records kitemark for local authorities and voluntary organisations
- Campaigning on the Children and Young Person's Bill
- Re-developing the CLA's two websites: www.careleavers.org and www.careleaversreunited.org
- Extending our training and consultancy work, in order to ensure care leavers' voices are at the heart of current practice and policy
- Holding a one-week sponsored cycle event around the North West and South East, in order to raise funds for and awareness of the CLA