

THE GRAPEVINE

Will the White Paper Bring Real Change?

In June the government published the *Care Matters: Time for Change* white paper. The aim is to tackle the problems with the current care system and improve outcomes for children in care.

The *Care Matters* white paper was the result of the *Care Matters* green paper consultation, which took place from October 2006 to January 2007. In it, the government acknowledges that children in care and young people leaving care still face significant disadvantages when compared to their peers. This white paper is an attempt to change that.

Some of the proposals in the white paper include:

- Piloting a veto for young people on leaving care before the age of 18
- Increased bursaries for care leavers going onto university
- The introduction of a 'virtual head teacher' in each local authority to champion the needs of children in care in their area
- Introduction of Children in Care Councils, so that children are consulted
- Pilots in the use of social pedagogy as a model for residential care
- The ability for social workers to place children in the best schools in their area
- Efforts to discourage school moves during years 10 and 11

There are far more plans and proposals in there - the document is around 150 pages long. Overall, many of the proposals appear to be positive and the Care Leavers' Association welcomes the move by government to make much-needed changes to the current care system.

However, the CLA believes that there is still more that could be done, particularly in terms of provision for young people leaving care and care leavers. This is an area that is relatively neglected in the white paper, although there are some proposed changes, such as

allowing young people to stay with foster carers until the age of 21.

The CLA believes that more support is needed for young people leaving care and that this support should continue for longer than it currently does. The transition from care to independence should be a far more smooth and gradual one, in order for young people to succeed as adults.

For instance, we believe that no young person should leave care before they turn 18. Local authorities should instead build good relationships with young people so that they do not want to leave before that age. Also, support should continue after the age of 21. The average age of leaving home, for all young people, is now 24, so that at least could be a starting point.

Most young people, even after they move out, have the option of returning home, or seeking help and advice from families if they are having problems. This should be the same for care leavers. If young people leave at 16, 18 or even 21 and feel that they are not ready to cope, they should be able to return to care and access further support.

There are also still far too many care leavers living in unsuitable accommodation: bed sits and hostels etc. The CLA wants to see National Leaving Care Accommodation Standards introduced in order to ensure that care leavers are placed in safe, secure and suitable accommodation in an area they want to live in.

Nevertheless, the white paper and the consultation preceding it has offered a crucial opportunity for care leavers to voice their opinion on what needs to change and also for some of these changes to be made. What is most important now is that the government ensures the proposals are made to work on the ground. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 made a lot of positive proposals but not all made it into practice. That should not happen here.

See our views on the White Paper [here](#).

What do you think? [Email](#) and tell us.

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GET IN TOUCH!

If you would like to comment on anything you have read in *The Grapevine*, or if you would like to submit a story or article yourself, then contact us:

By Post: Care Leavers' Association, St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester, M12 6FZ

By Email: grapevine@careleavers.com

General enquiries: 0161 275 9500 or email, info@careleavers.com



CLA Merchandise Now Available!
You can buy CLA mugs, fridge magnets and pin badges online now [here](#)



Recent Meetings

**'It's our History, It's Our Right:
Reclaiming Our Past'**

CLA launches it's new access to records campaign in Manchester

On Saturday 2nd June 2007, the CLA launched it's new campaign on access to childhood care records at Manchester Town Hall.

The three aims of the campaign are:

1. to promote awareness of care leavers' rights to access their care records
2. to promote awareness of why care records are important
3. to encourage best practice on accessing these vital documents

The meeting started at 2pm and was attended by care leavers from as far away as Newcastle and Oxford. Things started off with a round of introductions and a gen-

eral chat about where people were from and whether they had accessed their files.

Mary then gave a presentation where she talked about accessing her file and the hurdles she went through to get it. Jim talked about his Top Ten Tips for Accessing Records and this was followed by a Q&A session.

Julie Cookson, Data Compliance Officer for the Wirral kindly joined us for the meeting and she was one of our three experts, along with Jim Goddard and Mike Shelton, who offered individual surgery sessions to people who wanted to discuss their files in more depth.

People had plenty to talk about, so the official meeting ran on until 5pm and then everyone moved to a nearby pub afterwards to continue chatting.

Some photos from the meeting are below, To see more, visit our online [photo gallery](#).

The next campaign meeting will be held in London on 6th October. [Email](#) us for more details.



NEWS & UPDATES

Media Round-Up

(To read any story on full, click on its title)

18/07/07 [Community Care Report on Access to Records](#) - Lauren Revans reports on the situation for adult care leavers who attempt to access the records for their time on care. With details about the CLA's current campaign.

18/07/07 [Julia Feast on the Long-Term Impacts of Care](#) - In Community Care's Front Line Focus, Julia Feast highlights the fact that a childhood spent in care can impact on life well beyond the age of 21.

04/07/07 [CLA Response to the White Paper](#) - Victoria Hull wrote into the Society Guardian to give the CLA's response to their piece on the White Paper.

11/06/07 - [Care Leavers' Access to Records is Variable](#) - the CLA's campaign research is reported on the Family Law Week website

04/06/07 - [CLA Survey Reveals Highly Variable Records Access Services](#) - A report on Community Care's website about the CLA's research for the current 'It's Our History, It's Our Right' campaign.

Did you know?...

You can donate to CLA when you sell on



Click [HERE](#) for more info.

The CLA website received over 37,000 hits in June. Here are your top pages:

1. [Forum](#)
2. [Home page](#)
3. [Green Paper Summary](#)
4. [Newsletter Extra](#)

CLA Membership Renewals

CLA membership renewal letters will soon be sent out to all members, please keep a look out for them.

Thank you to everyone who has already renewed.



Visit from Australia

Over the last six weeks, Elizabeth, one of our members from Australia has been travelling around the UK visiting friends and family. Elizabeth visited the office in Manchester and met with Jim whilst over here. All the best to Elizabeth for a safe trip back to Oz!

Congratulations!

Nadia Khan, care leaver, graduated from Cambridge last month after four years of hard work. Well done Nadia!

'It's Our History, It's Our Right: Reclaiming Our Past'
Photo Gallery Updated

Click [HERE](#) to view

CareleaversReunited is growing all the time. We currently have 2241 users and 1008 homes.

Haven't logged on recently? Do so now!

www.careleaversreunited.org

2007 MEETING DATES

6 October - London
Access to Records

3 November - Manchester
(AGM)

Meetings are held between 2-4pm. If you would like venue details for any meeting please contact the office

0161 275 9500 info@careleavers.org

NEWS & UPDATES

CLA Volunteer Award Winners

CLA volunteers have had a busy time in the last couple of months.

In May, Mary Clear, who has been a member of the CLA Exec for five years now, won the Hidden Heroine award at the Yorkshire Women of Achievement Awards.

Mary is a very active member of the CLA. She has been the Treasurer for a number of years, is a member of the fundraising sub-committee and is a website manager for the [CareleaversReunited](#) website. In fact, Mary was actually the person who came up with [Care-leaversreunited](#) in the first place and she still checks it every night to welcome new members.

In June, Vivienne, who has volunteered in the CLA office since February won the Manchester Student



Mary



Vivienne

Volunteer of the Year Award. Vivienne has been an enthusiastic and committed member of the volunteer team since she started and has worked hard to build up the CLA's campaign databases.

Congratulations to both Mary and Vivienne and also thanks for all their hard work!



Anita's Ebay Success!

Over the last few months Anita has been running an [Ebay](#) shop (buy2care) on to raise money for the CLA. She was very successful and in may, she donated £400 to the CLA. Thanks to Anita for her hard work

Sadly, Anita Cobb resigned from the Executive Committee earlier this month. However she remains a member of the CLA and we hope to see her at our open meetings.

NDW Comment

Victoria Hull, the CLA's National Development Worker gives us a quick run-down of what she's been up to in the last few months

The last couple of months, in fact the last six or seven, months have been pretty hectic ones for the CLA.

Since the end of May, I have been in London almost every other week. This has been for a variety of things: a presentation at the 'All parliamentary group for children in care and care leavers'; a meeting with David Kidney MP and Earl Listowel to discuss the work of the CLA, attendance at various conferences and the DSC Charity Fair, an Exec meeting, a campaign working day and a meeting with one of our funders.

Back up north, I've also been busy. I ran a training session with a group of Barnardo's foster carers on preparing

young people for leaving care, I met with the Manchester Barnardo's Leaving Care team, with an independent organisation providing housing for care leavers and also attended a graduation ceremony for care leavers at Salford university.

One of my main priorities for June and July has been working on our access to records campaign. We have now received responses from most of the local authorities we surveyed and over the next few months we will be extending that survey. Keep an eye out for updates! There will also be some important stuff going on regarding our campaign at National Care Leavers' Week in October.

There are plenty more activities planned for August and September, so there's no slowing down planned either!



CLA Office Gets Connected!

We reported last time that the CLA was awarded a BT Community Connections Award back in April this year. We received the new computer in June, along with the software and one year's free Internet access.

Mike Shelton, member of the Exec, volunteered in the office for two days to set up the new PC, load the software and network all our computers.

We now have 3 computers up and running in the office on one network. This is great for when we have working meetings or for when volunteers are in the office.

Thanks Mike!



Spread the word!

If you know other care leavers who might enjoy being a member of the CLA, or joining [CareleaversReunited](#), let them know about us! Promotional cards are available from the office, for an easy way to spread the word.

Knowing Me, Knowing You

The Grapevine Questionnaire

This month we quiz Barbara Clarke, long-standing member of CLA

Profession: Retired. I worked mostly with animals during my working life.

Placement type when in care: every type from babyhood--- including hospitals, nurseries, residential, fostered, adopted for five years then back into care. I spent three months with my own mother aged seven then I was rescued and never saw her again.

Who, or what has had the greatest influence on your life? ANIMALS. I had no family, so after

leaving school at 15 I went straight into farm and kennel work. I had so many moves that my education had slumped to nil by my last foster home. They had four dogs and that was when I realized I had a way with dogs in particular, so I worked with animals in many situations. I tried working in London with no pet and just could not cope without a dog to love.

There had been a former schoolteacher who had always taken an interest in me and when the adoption broke down she was the only person to keep in touch with me. Every move I had she followed and wrote to me.

There had also been a master at one of the Children's Society Homes who took an interest in me, but the general policy in those days was 'boarding out', which meant fostering. I resented being forced to leave the home where he was in charge and each time I was sent away, I would play up hoping to be sent back to the home. I did keep in touch with my teacher for many years and until her death we remained good friends. If not for her I really would have felt so abandoned when sent back into care, especially as the CS denied all contact with my adoptive nan.

I am angry that they deliberately cut off that contact and it was several years before I found my adoptive nan just the once before she died.

Books, Art and Music have also been precious to me. I also loved horses and especially the beautiful Arabians. If I had been wealthy I would have had an Arabian Stud farm, it was my dream. Those creatures are so magnificent and beautiful.

What three words best describe you? It depends who is doing the describing! My grandchildren would say I am bossy. Passionate about things depending where I was/am in my life. Down to earth, honest, blunt, caring, very impulsive—loads more than three words.

What is your favourite film? Picnic at Hanging Rock, Secrets and Lies, Death in Venice

What has been your greatest achievement?

Depends: bringing up our own children, being a caring Nana, breeding champion cairn terriers, maybe trying to help care leavers although not sure how successful that has been

Some will say that is no achievement but considering my poor start in life with no one to really love me, no surviving siblings and no family to care about me, I haven't done so badly.

Who do you most admire? My husband and my best friends.

What is your idea of happiness? It used to be Scottish dancing. I love dog breeding and showing, playing my favourite music, reading a good book and having good friends with similar interests. Music is life-blood and I love early music.

What has been the greatest lesson life has taught you so far? That even if I lived forever there would be so much to learn. Parenting is so important and precious. Children need to come into a world only when they will be within a loving caring family and not at risk of abuse or neglect. I would wish that as children develop they were taught about relationships and to love and respect themselves and others.

If you could change just one thing about care services, what would it be? Teach society to look after their own children. If we could look after our own children so that the state does not have to take children it would be better. I do think that in situations where going into care is the only solution for a child, then we do still need good residential homes and well-paid and trained staff. Foster carers need to be valued and supported and long term fostering preferable to adoption.

Adoption is a loss of identity and I know that for so many adult adoptees, that loss of identity shatters their world. They should not ever lose their real identity or knowledge about their natural family.

I seriously believe that proper training of social workers is vital because their decisions affect so many lives forever. I believe mature people need to be recruited into social work, preferably those who have raised children of their own and have life experiences. I believe if young people go into social work they may not have enough life experience to really understand the results of their decisions. Many social workers are reviled because of wrong decisions that often have had such detrimental impact on children's lives. Social workers must learn from past mistakes.

Also to listen to the children. And LOVE THEM.

Lessons to Learn from the Continent?

CLA member, Stephen Norman, compares the care system in the UK with that in Germany

A 2003 DfES report estimated that there were "60,800 looked after Children" in the UK, out of a population of 63 million. In Germany, the figure of looked after children (LAC) was at "82,000" in 2004, out of a population of 82 million. Therefore, both countries have a very similar percentage of LAC. Both countries are members of the European Union, and UK and German politics work in very similar ways.

However, each country has different methods of caring for and different results in outcomes for LAC. In the UK, the preference is to place children with a foster family. Residential care homes tend to be used only when foster placements have continually broken down. In Germany, the trend is the opposite. Over sixty per cent of children live in residential care, with fostering seen as a last resort.

The approach in Germany is more pedagogical. A university diploma in social pedagogy is the preferred qualification for residential care workers; over 90% of staff have specialist qualifications. In the UK, many residential workers are unqualified.

The nature of children's homes in Germany also differs from that of homes in the UK. Young residents receive one-on-one support from teams of professional educators, social workers and pedagogues, whose job it is to nurture the development of these children.

The difference in outcomes for looked after children between the two countries is stark. An estimated 3/4 of LAC in Germany pass the General Certificate of Education taken at 16 and 95% go on to vocational training. In the UK, 57% leave care without any qualifications. Only 2% of Germany's LAC under 16 are out of school; 12% of LAC in the UK are out of school. In Germany, less than 1/4 of those over 16 are unemployed or not in education, in the UK it is 55%. In the UK, 60% of young offenders and 27% of the adult prison population have been through the care system. Children in care in Germany commit far fewer offences.

It seems then, that there are things that the UK could learn from the German system. The UK government has begun to look at the care systems in countries like Germany. Some of the lessons learned are reflected in the government's *Care Matters* white paper. There are plans provide more training for foster carers and to appoint virtual head teachers to champion the education of children in care. There are also proposals to extend the age of leaving care.

Extract from an essay by Stephen Norman

What do you think? Could the UK benefit from adapting a pedagogical model? [Email](#) us. And let us know.

Care Leavers' Corner

Dream House for Sale

A Poem by Pat Taylor

I was looking through the morning paper like a lot of us do every day,
When I saw an ad that caught my eye and this is what it had to say.

One dream house for sale, it's a bargain for nothing down and there's no closing costs for the dreams I've lost when the girl I loved left town.

There are five rooms, a bath on an acre of land and a nursery painted pink and blue, a baby's little white high chair and it's almost all brand new

There's a sad old dog and picket fence around a yard that's full of weeds, why! Just one look and it's easy to see a little love is all that it needs.

The only thing wrong with this house of mine is the black cloud that hangs above, I guess it's there to keep out the sunshine since mine was a house without love.

I guess that's all there is to tell about a boy whose love had failed, just four words tell the rest of this story

Dream House For Sale

Books about Care

The following books have recently been written by care leavers and published:

[*Pin Down*](#), by Teresa Cooper

[*Foster Kid*](#), by Paul Barber (Denzil from Only Fools and Horses)

Have you read any of these books? Why not [send](#) us a review.

Calling People from Eastry!

CareleaversReunited member Doug is looking for people who lived in Eastry Homes, especially those who lived there in the 1960s.

He is writing about his time in care there and wants to hear other people's stories too.

You can contact him by email:

dougterry_3@hotmail.com

Get Involved!

We know that all people have different interests and want to be involved in CLA in different ways. Some people are more interested in newsletters than meetings, some people want to help fundraise and others might want to share their stories.

Fill in this short form, send it back to us and let us know what your interests are!

Name:

Town:

Contact details:

<input type="checkbox"/>	I would like to be a local contact
<input type="checkbox"/>	I would like to volunteer for the CLA
<input type="checkbox"/>	I would like to give out leaflets
<input type="checkbox"/>	I would like to write for the newsletter
<input type="checkbox"/>	I can help to organise a fundraising event
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have skills to offer a small campaigning organisation
<input type="checkbox"/>	I would like to come to meetings
<input type="checkbox"/>	I would like to make a donation (please see below for details)
<input type="checkbox"/>	I would like to take part in a 'history of care' project

.....

If you simply don't have the time to get actively involved in the CLA, but you still want to support our work, you could think about making a donation.

All donations will go towards helping the CLA to keep going and to running our projects and campaigns. Here are some of the ways your donation could help:

- £5** Will pay for one info pack for schools and colleges
- £10** Will keep our little printer going for 1 month
- £20** Will keep the telephone line going for a month
- £50** Will hire a room for a local meeting
- £100** Will buy 1000 campaign leaflets
- £400** Will enable us to send an Access to Records Guide to every Social Services department in the country, to help towards building good practice in this area.

There are lots of ways that you can make a donation:

- Standing Order (see page 9 for details)
- Online through our [Justgiving](#) page,
- Through the post

Whatever you choose to donate, whether £2 or £200, will be a great help and will go towards providing services for care leavers, running our projects and working for change to the current system.

Why Not Become a Member?

Any care leaver, over the age of 18, can be a member of the CLA. Non-care leavers and organisations can also join as supporters. It's simple, just fill in the form below and return it to us.

Your Personal Details:	Telephone:
Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss/Other:.....	Email:
Forename:	Profession:
Surname:	Where did you hear about us?
Address:
..... Postcode:	Date of Birth:
<input type="checkbox"/> The CLA will keep in touch with you with new newsletters & other information about our work. Please tick if you do NOT want to receive this.	

Annual Membership (please tick the category that applies to you):
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Member (care leaver waged/unwaged): £5/£2
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Supporter: £25 (someone who supports our work but is not a care leaver)
<input type="checkbox"/> Group Supporter: £50
<input type="checkbox"/> I am a care leaver. I can't afford the membership fee, but still want to join the CLA
I wish to make an additional donation of £
Total payment enclosed £

The CLA keeps membership fees for care leavers low on purpose, to make it easy for any care leaver to join. However, as a charity, we do need funds to keep running. If you do feel that you can pay for membership, that's great. If you would like to make a further donation, whatever you feel you can give will be a great help.

If you want to set up a standing order so that your membership fee is paid automatically each year, or if you want to set up a standing order donation, you can use the form below.

Standing Order Membership
Donating to the CLA by standing order is a great way to give regular support. It helps us to budget more effectively and cuts down on our administrative costs. This gives us more time to devote to our projects, services and campaigns. Just a small amount per month can make a real difference.
I would like to make a monthly/quarterly/annual gift of £.....
Please provide your bank details below:
To the manager of Bank,
Bank Address
..... Sort code A/c No
Please pay the above amount to: Care Leavers' Association, A/c No 65095940, at The Co-operative bank Plc (08-92-99), Kings Valley, Yew Street, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 2JU
Start date: Signed: Date:

Gift Aid Declaration
Please tick the box above if you would like the CLA to reclaim the tax that you have paid on your donations to us since 30th November 2005 and on any future donations.
NB: You must have paid an amount of income and/or capital gains tax (in the UK) equal to the tax that will be claimed (currently 28p for every £1 you give)

Thank you for your support.

Please return this form to: Care Leavers' Association, St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester, M12 6FZ.