

THE GRAPEVINE

A Week for Care Leavers

**National Care Leavers' Week 2007 will run from Monday 22nd
October - Saturday 27th October**

Today (Monday 22nd October) is the start of National Care Leavers' Week 2007.

National Care Leavers' Week is an annual event, which started with a National Care Leavers' Day in 2002. The aim of the week is to raise awareness of the needs of care leavers and also to celebrate their achievements.

Each year there is a different theme and this year the focus is on extended transitions and the support that can help to make the transition to independence a smoother one. Events throughout the week will look particularly at the government's recent white paper, *Care Matters: Time for Change*.

This year, National Care Leavers' Week will centre around two major conferences/exhibitions. One will be held in London on Tuesday 23rd October and the other will be held in Leeds on Thursday 25th October. The CLA will be at both. We will be running a stall at each with the aim of raising awareness about the organisation and informing people about our work. If you are at either of the events, do come by the stall!

Several initiatives will also be launched this week: the What Makes the Difference project will be disseminating a number of new tools for Care Leaving Teams including the 'Preparation for Adult Life' accredited training materi-

als, the 'World of Work' CD ROM produced in association with the Who Cares? Trust and the Framework Tool designed with young people to assist Local Authorities in designing their Pledge for young people leaving care; the Bryn Melyn Group Foundation will be announcing a driver training bursary in the North West, providing for full driver training including advanced skills.

National Care Leavers' Week applies to all care leavers, young and old. It is a great chance to make people aware that people leaving care have specific needs and that these needs can extend beyond an arbitrary age, such as 21.

CLA member Elizabeth Kirby will be supporting this year's national care Leavers' Week all the way from Australia:

I have benefited greatly from being a member of the Care leavers Association and am indebted to the members for their share wisdom insights expertise about their experiences about being raised in care.

Although I live down under during care leaver's week, I will spend a few thoughtful moments thinking of the thousands of former children who have had similar and unique experiences in the care system.

E Kirby

To find out more about National Care Leavers' Week click [HERE](#).

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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'

On Saturday 6th October, we held our second access to records campaign meeting.

The meeting was held at the DSC Charity Centre in London, near Euston train station.

We got a good turn-out for the meeting and several people had travelled all the way from the north west of the country just to be there!

We started the meeting by going round the room and getting to know who everybody was, then Victoria introduced the campaign and it's aims, followed by a bit of history about the need for the campaign from Jim.

Next, there was a dvd of Mary, one of our members, speaking about her file and reading excerpts from it. As always, Mary's presentation raised a lot of laughs! This was followed by Ten Top Tips on how to access your file from Jim.

After the tips, we opened the meeting up so that people could chat about their own experiences and their own files. Then, there was the opportunity for people to get one-on-one advice on their individual files from Jim and Mike.

It was a great meeting and people got really involved in the discussions. The next meeting is in Manchester on 3rd November 2007. Do get in touch if you are interested in coming along.



NEWS & UPDATES

Media Round-Up

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

6 July 2007 - Paul Barber (Only Fools and Horses) recalls what care was like during the 1950's

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6274906.stm>

August 2007, Jim Goddard and Mary Clear were interviewed by Radio 4. Unfortunately, it is not available on the 'Listen Again' section.

August 2007 - Victoria Hull spoke to a researcher for the Channel 4 website about the needs of young people leaving care.

<http://www.channel4.com/health/microsites/F/family/21st/care.html>

19th October 2007 - Chris Simpson promotes the needs of care leavers locally.

Chris spoke to the Grantham Journal about the local campaigning he plans to do during National Care Leavers' Week.

<http://www.granthamjournal.co.uk/news/Information-for-care-leavers.3395939.jp>

Did you know?...

You can donate to CLA when you sell on



Click [HERE](#) for more info.

The CLA website received over 45,000 hits in June. Here are your top pages:

1. [Forum](#)
2. [Newsletter Extra](#)
3. [Newsletter Archive](#)
4. [Green Paper](#)

CLA on Facebook

The CLA now has two group pages on Facebook, the social networking website.

Visit them here: [Facebook](#)

CLA Membership Renewals

Membership renewals were sent out in August. Thanks to everyone who has already renewed. If you would like to be a member of the CLA, you can join or renew online: [Membership](#)

CareleaversReunited is growing all the time. We currently have 2467 users and 1063 homes.

Haven't logged on recently? Do so now!

www.careleaversreunited.org

2007 MEETING DATES

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

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

Summer is usually a quiet time for most organisations, but that was not the case for us this year. This means that this newsletter is a bit later than usual, so apologies for that!

In August, I launched the second phase of our access to records campaign research, which means that we have now written to over 180 local authorities across the UK to find out about their practices regarding access to records. At the moment I am in the process of collating all the responses and in the next couple of months we will make the information available on the website. That way, you can check how your local authority is doing and maybe even write to them to let them know how important this issue is. More information about the campaign is available on our website. Click [here](#) to see it.

I also started preparation for this year's Annual General Meeting in August and requested all membership renewals. If you haven't already renewed your membership, you can do so by filling in the form at the back of the newsletter. Your support really makes the difference to our work!

September involved quite a bit of travelling. I attended a meeting with the Scrutiny Committee at Portsmouth Local Council and gave them our views on best practice in leaving care provision. I also highlighted for them some of the areas where provision is lacking at the moment generally.

Later in the month, I attended a workshop in North Lincolnshire, the aim of which was to try to come up with an innovative way to address the needs of care leavers through new media. As a result of this workshop, the council will be launching a pilot project.

At the beginning of October, we held our second access to records campaign meeting in London. It was a great turn-out and you can read more about it on page 1. The next meeting will be in Manchester on 3rd November. This is

the AGM. All care leavers are welcome to attend the first part of the meeting, from 2pm-3.30pm, but only members will be able to vote in the last part of the meeting. If you are planning to come along, or want more information, please email info@careleavers.org



I have also done several training sessions this month, one at Bradford University and one at Manchester Metropolitan university. These are really good for raising the profile of the CLA and getting across the experiences of care leavers to future social workers and therefore, hopefully influencing practice.

This week, I will be in London and Leeds promoting the CLA during national care Leavers' Week. If you are around, do come and say hello.

Hopefully I will see plenty of you at the AGM!

Victoria

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.

Revisiting the Past

In June, CLA member Elizabeth Kirby visited from Australia and visited her old children's homes. She tells *The Grapevine* how that felt.

When I visited the home, I felt an over whelming emotion of how could my childhood memories of the place could be so misguided.

The large children's home complex grounds, looked beautiful picturesque and peaceful. As I walked through the delightful, pleasant grounds, observing with my adult eyes the open spaces, it gave me a warm feeling of freedom as it appears today. Such a stark contrast and very different to how it actually was in my mind from the ages of 9 to 12 years old when I lived there under what I thought were under oppressed conditions.

I felt that I had to internalise and keep my real true feelings under control, as already my perception was that I had to be good..

My memories and recollections from childhood were that it was very regimented and institutional. Living there, from my perspective it was a frightening place and I lived in fearful anxiety. I did not want to live there. There were strict routines and rules to follow.

The photo below represents what I looked like at the beginning of the darkest period of my residential care history where it all began, the sexual abuse.



I had four permanent placements in different types of settings and towns villages in Lincolnshire, shortly following my birth to 16 years old..

This was my worse placement from my point of view. It was a horrible environment because it had

such negative impact on my emotional well being in my opinion.

It seemed within the local community, or the impression I got, was that to be child in care residing at Holmeleigh you were thought of as causing and being trouble. I felt trapped and oppressed.

Going inside this my former home, looking at and accessing the building maintained in its current form and state, was very therapeutic for me. There was a sense of presence, that I'd been there.

I am no longer that vulnerable child, so dependent on others. I have become a strong, resilient person. It was a meaningful, healing experience to have access and look inside. I have benefited and put my past in the past tense and put in perspective the then and now..

Below is a picture of me, taken this year, in the same doorway:



Elizabeth Kirby

Meeting My MP

Chris Simpson, exec member, meets his local MP to discuss the work of the CLA

I phoned the office of my local MP, Quentin Davies and after some discussion, arranged an appointment to meet him several weeks later.

The secretary asked me what it was about and I explained that I was a member of the committee, for the CLA, a national charity run by care leavers for care leavers. I went on to explain that I wanted to meet him to show him who I was and tell him all about us. I briefly explained the fact that I had spent nearly all my childhood in care and was passionate about the rights of care leavers. The secretary was very encouraging and instantly set up an appointment to see Mr Davies.

I felt quite proud of myself. After all I had never arranged an appointment to see my local MP before. I had only seen his face on the cover of the local journal campaigning for local issues over the years, but I had never met him and he wouldn't know me.

After the initial euphoria, I then began to think about what I was going to say to him to grab his attention and get listen him to me! I pondered this for some weeks and then just before my meeting with him I felt I would use the passion I have for the subject and with some prepared notes and bullet points. This would make sure I didn't loose direction, ramble, and ensure I said all I wanted to say during the meeting and had no regrets about things I wished I raised with him afterwards. This was the best decision I made. I wrote down topics I wanted to raise and then numbered them in order of which I felt was the most important.

The day of the meeting, I was a bit nervous. In fact, I was very nervous and was constantly going over things again and again. Then I thought, 'he's probably going to be just as nervous as me'. After all, he would be meeting me for the first time as well. That somewhat relaxed me, after all I am a care leaver and I can do anything.

I left my house in plenty of time for my appointment, as I was still unfortunately still on crutches after a recent knee operation. I went into the entrance of the local council offices cafe where I made my grand entrance on crutches up several steps, only to be met by some tall gentleman saying, 'are you here to see the local MP?', to which I responded that I was indeed.

I was behind a couple who spent some time with Quentin so I was around 20 minutes late going in. I spent this time going through things one last time. His assistant was very nice and I began to relax more and I decided that I was going to enjoy the experience, which I did.

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I was ushered into a small room and I was met by Quentin with a smile and a firm handshake. I introduced myself as Christopher Simpson from the Care Leavers' Association. I prepared myself with my notes, past *Grapevine* issues, and Care Leavers' Association pamphlets. Thanks for those Victoria!

I started by telling Quentin something about myself: I entered into full time foster care when I was around four years old, but had come to the attention of the social

services some years before that. I gave him a brief overview of my foster 'career', so to speak. Then I finished by saying that when I left care in 1987 I left with £5.80 and a pep talk from a social worker which was not very good. I had been left without any support or aftercare. I then told him that I had always been fighting for the rights of people in care, or care leavers. Speaking out in my life whenever the subject came up. I explained that I have also spoken to potential foster parents about what it was like to live in care.

I told Quentin that I had become aware of the CLA in 2003, when there was a care leavers' week on the BBC and that I had joined sometime after that.

I then gave him the history of the Care Leavers' Association: when we were formed; the fact that we have charity status now and have CLA and a CLR websites both up and running and expanding into different areas.

I told Quentin about our aims and ambitions for the future, which he was interested in, especially the Access To Records campaign.

I said that access to my records was very important to me as it enabled me to access some of the facts that some people would rather be forgotten, or not talked about, or completely glossed over by people with a vested interest. Quentin agreed!

I said we, CLA, often go down to parliament to take part in the debate concerning people leaving care. Quentin said that the government was active in this area to try and improve the life chances of care leavers.

I told him about our purpose, our mission and our vision, which again he agreed with.

I finished the meeting by giving him several issues of the *Grapevine*, a National Care Leavers' Week 2006 booklet, some credit size cards, and some Care Leavers' Association pamphlets.

He finished by thanking me for coming and said if there were any issues that I wanted him to raise then I was to contact him without hesitation.

During the whole presentation I gave to him he constantly asked questions and gave his opinion on myself and the CLA. He was very complimentary on both.

We finished the meeting by having our photograph taken together and then we shook hands and I thanked him for seeing me.

As I left the offices I thanked his assistant and I noticed that I had been speaking to him for around half an hour so I DID ENJOY it after all and I felt I had made some difference.



In Memoriam

Patricia Bradburn

Some of you who have been members of the CLA for a few years now will have known Patricia. She was a very supportive and friendly member to everyone who came across her. I know that she was also good friends, in particular, with Babs Clark. Unfortunately, Patricia died recently of a brain tumour. She had only known about this for a few weeks, so it was very sudden. She was 63.

For me, it was very sad news. Patricia had been a very encouraging member of the CLA for the last few years. I remember seeing her at our 2005 Annual General Meeting, when she visited with her husband John. We had a good meeting and Patricia was very positive about what we were

doing. Most of all, I remember Patricia taking part in a number of debates and discussions on our Discussion Forum on the CLA website.

There were about half a dozen of us who used to engage in some quite lively discussions on the Forum. Sometimes we would disagree and sometimes we would agree, but it was always good fun and interesting. What I most remember about Patricia was that she was always welcoming towards anyone who posted, no matter what their views. She helped to make those discussions a safe and rewarding experience for all of us. I'll miss her and I know that other members of the CLA will too. Our best wishes and commiserations go out to her husband John.

Care Leavers' Corner

One person's thoughts on discovering the *CareleaversReunited* website

Seeing others accounts of life at Clements Hall has been strangely reassuring.

I believe I was at Clements Hall on two occasions, once when I was around 5 years old and then when I was about 6. My mother had adopted me in Birmingham and I had gone there because she was unable to have me home through some marital and/or housing difficulties so needed me to be cared for at Clements Hall.

Mimi was the lady in charge, assisted by a Sister Gertrude who I recall syringing my ears with a glass syringe. I have warm memories of Mimi and Gertie.

There was an old tram in the grounds that we used to play on and I cut my finger on one of the broken glass windows of the tram. There was also a tall Yew tree at the front of the house that was so good for climbing. The geese there were so noisy and frightening.

On Sundays, I recall sitting in a nearby field watching the trains go by on a raised embankment. There was a boy in my dormitory who used to wet the bed.

Other children made fun of him. There was also a conservatory at the front of the house where in the summer we would have meals sitting on long wooden benches.

I remember my dormitory and my bed was next to the door. I also recall on one occasion having terrible diarrhoea and feeling so embarrassed at both the noise of using a chamberpot in the dormitory and then the awful smell it left. I then silently crept along the landing with the chamber and emptied it down the sink in the bathroom to avoid making a noise!!!! I hate to think of what it was like for the next person who used the sink. I do not recall being told off or punished at the time. Ever since though I have a dread of making a noise or disturbing people.

What is amazing about having discovered this website is that I never knew that Clements Hall was a home for children in care.

CareleaversReunited User

**How did you feel when you found *CareleaversReunited* for the first time?
Have you met up with people from your old home through the website?
If you have a story, send it in. We would love to hear it!**

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.