

THE GRAPEVINE

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

CLA launches a campaign on access to records

On Saturday 2nd June, the Care Leavers' Association (CLA), will launch a new campaign on access to records.

This is one of the most important issues for our members. Accessing records can provide vital information about the past, answer questions about a person's childhood and help them to piece together their time in care. Care leavers have a legal right to access these records, yet many remain unaware of that right. We want to let them know about it.

Across the country, the service that local authorities provide to care leavers trying to get hold of their files differs widely. We want to engage in a dialogue with access to records officers to encourage best practice.

Often, there is confusion over what information can be accessed and what can not, both amongst professional and care leavers. We want to help make things clearer.

Our campaign, entitled 'It's Our History, It's Our right: Reclaiming Our Past' has three aims:

- To raise awareness of care leavers' rights to access their records from their time in care
- To raise awareness of why these records are important
- To encourage best practice amongst professionals on dealing with access to records requests

The campaign launch will be held at Manchester Town Hall and will include:

- Top Ten Tips for accessing records
- Presentations by some of our members about what accessing their files meant to them
- One-to-one sessions to help individuals to access their own files
- A discussion and question and answer session

The event is free and all care leavers are welcome. If you would like to come along, it would really help if you could let us know in advance by emailing info@careleavers.com or telephoning 0161 275 9500



Will, Mary, Anita and others display the campaign banner proudly in Birmingham
Look out for our banner coming to a city near you!

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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

Recent Meetings

5 May 2007, Birmingham

On the first Saturday in May we held our first Birmingham meeting.

The day started with an Executive Committee meeting in the morning, where various management issues were taken care of and we discussed various plans for the year, including the access to records campaign and our fundraising strategy.

In the afternoon we were joined by other care leavers for the main meeting. People talked about their experiences both in and since care. A lot of the talk was about Access to records and the different experiences that People had, had.

The meeting finished at 4pm and afterwards, many of us moved onto a local coffee shop to carry on chatting.

The next meeting will be held in Manchester on Saturday 2nd June, in Manchester.

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.

It is open to all care leavers -do come along and say hello! Feel free to bring a friend or family member along with you, if you prefer.

More photos of meetings can be seen here:
[Photo Gallery](#)

NEWS & UPDATES

Media Round-Up

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

23/042007 - [CLR Website on Community Care online](#)

In April the *CareleaversReunited* site reached 2000 users. This significant benchmark in the history of the site was covered by Community Care's website.

23/04/2007 - [Rainer reports 1/6 care leavers in unsafe accommodation](#)

Simeon Brody, Community Care reports on Rainer's findings about the accommodation that young care leavers are placed in.

10 May 2007 - [GP-style Social care practices will go ahead](#)

Amy Taylor, Community Care, reports on Beverley Hughes' announcement that the pilot of social care practices for care service will go ahead, despite scepticism amongst many professionals.

Did you know?...

You can donate to CLA when you sell on



Click [HERE](#) for more info.

CLA wins BT Computer!

Earlier this year CLA made a bid to BT Community Connections for a new computer and a year's free internet access. Last month we found out that we had been successful. The new NEC computer will help enable more people to work out of the office at the same time on different projects.

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.

Online Photo Galleries 2005-7

Updated

Click [HERE](#) to view

CareleaversReunited is growing all the time. We currently have **2067 users** and **958 homes**.

Haven't logged on recently? Do so now!

www.careleaversreunited.org

2007 MEETING DATES

2 June - Manchester *Campaign Launch* 2.30-4.30pm

6 October - London

4 August - Manchester

3 November - Manchester (AGM)

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

0161 275 9500 info@careleavers.org

Knowing Me, Knowing You

The Grapevine Questionnaire

This month we quiz Phil Frampton, long-standing member of CLA and author of *The Golly in the Cupboard*

■ **Name:** Phil Frampton

■ **Profession:** Freelance Writer

■ **Placement type when in care:**

15 years in 5 Residential homes,
2 years in 2 Foster placements and 1
year in a Bed-sit

■ **Who, or what has had the greatest influence on your life?**

Karl Marx and Leon Trotsky

■ **What three words best describe you?**

Bolshie, More Intelligent Than I Know and Fun-loving

■ **What is your favourite film?**

Bring Back Orphanages

■ **What has been your greatest achievement?**

Singing "Hit the Road Jack" on stage (however, the composer Ray Charles dropped dead the following day)

■ **Who do you most admire?**

Care leavers who fight to improve the world

■ **What is your idea of happiness?**

A Democratic Socialist World

■ **What has been the greatest lesson life has taught you so far?**

To follow your dreams

■ **If you could change just one thing about care services, what would it be?**

Bring back modern versions of traditional children's homes but, like Kinder Haus in Berlin with well educated staff and elected young people's councils with powers to overrule management.



Phil Frampton, with his daughters

Project Round-Up

Access to Records Campaign

The access to records campaign will launch on June 2nd in Manchester (see front page for more details).

We hope as many care leavers as possible will come along, both to find out more about accessing their own files but also to help us highlight just how important this issue is.

We have had promotional material prepared for the campaign and we will be aiming to visit as many parts of the country as possible with our banner. Look out for it in a town near you!

If you would like to get involved in helping to publicise this campaign, we would appreciate your help. Contact the office on 0161 275 9500 or by emailing info@careleavers.com.



Volunteers

The CLA currently has three volunteers helping with it's projects from the office.

We are currently looking for more volunteers to help with the following:

- Book-keeping
- Campaign distribution
- Office administration
- Web development
- Fundraising

For some of the projects it would be necessary to have volunteers who could come into the office, in

central Manchester. However, there are other ways to volunteer. For instance, we need help to administrate our websites and this could be done by someone from home.

Also, we are always looking for people to help promote the CLA at the local level. Just putting up our flyers in community centres or handing out our cards, is a great way to help.

If you would like to volunteer, or to find out more information, please contact Victoria Hull at the office.

A Care Leavers' Voice

David Wood reflects on his leaving care experiences after attending the CLA's presentation at parliament

May the 9th 2007 was a really good day for care leavers both young and old, for care leavers voices were heard again in parliament. Also, for me, an older care leaver, it was humbling to meet with and to listen to so many people with a shared experience of leaving care and to meet with younger care leavers who have yet to leave the care system. The CLA presentation to an All Party Parliamentary Group was very well attended and my only criticism was that the CLA did not inform the media of the event or encourage people to drag their MP's along. My MP, Colin Breed, gladly came and allowed me to have a photo taken with him on the Commons Terrace.

Colin Breed MP has been a long supporter of care leaver's issues. In 2003 . He introduced me to Baroness Liz Barker who, after listening to my story about access to files, contacted BAAF and the CLA and agreed in 2005 to take the plight of care leaver's to the House of Lords. This was the very first time care leavers

had been considered in the House of Lords. It was a major step forward for our cause.

The CLA has moved the campaign forward again with their presentation in parliament, and after listening to some of the young people voice their fears and concerns for their futures to the Lords and MP's present, I was almost drawn to tears as I remembered my own time when I was became too old to stay in the children's home. My heart goes out to those young people because I know what they might face. This is what happened to me.

At sixteen, while taking a bath, my children's home manager burst into the room and with out any ceremony told me that I was too old to remain in the children's home. I was embarrassed at being seen naked in the bath and I screamed at him to get out. But he was not giving me any consideration and no choices about where I was going to live. Instead I was told I had to move out of the home I had known for the past three years and move into a hostel in

Paddington, London. He threatened me by saying that if I didn't go to the hostel I would be placed in a borstal. My home was in Surrey and was surrounded by leafy lanes and fields. I had already left school and was working in a local engineering factory. I had visited London occasionally during my earlier life but there was no way I wanted to live there. Yet, within a week I was living in the most dreadful house I had ever seen and was sharing it, four to a room, with teenagers who were all on probation. I had done nothing wrong and I was not in trouble with the law. I couldn't understand why I had to live with a bunch of criminals. Needless to say, within a week I had got into two fights, my watch and half my cloths were stolen and when I complained to the manager of the house I was told not to make trouble - or else. In the third week someone tried to knife me and decided I had to leave.

I took what little possessions and money I had, stole £10 off the kid who tried to knife me and headed for my social services offices a few miles away in Merton. When I got there the later that day I told them what had happened and pleaded with them to find somewhere else for me to live. But they insisted that I return to the hostel while they promised to look for somewhere else. I angrily refused and tried to leave. After a scuffle with one of the social workers as he tried to lock me into a room, I escaped and found myself, a few hours later, hiding on Wimbledon Common.

I was scared, cold and hungry. To me the future was very bleak and all I could see was deep flaming anger and burning rage within for all those in authority and especially with my so-called social workers. For a week I lived under an umbrella, and at night crept under a bush, wrapping myself in an old army great-coat. And every night, surrounded by the strange sounds of darkness and as quietly as I dared, I cried myself to sleep.

Once, I was stopped in the street by a policeman who wanted to know who I was. I lied and got away with it. I told him I was look for somewhere to stay. He suggested I go to the local Salvation Army for a bed but when I got there they didn't have any room, although they did give me something to eat. Later, I walked around for hours and eventually found myself on Wimbledon Broadway, desperate for food, hoping the rain would hold off and thinking I would soon have to go back to my umbrella on the common. I think by now my clothes and skin must have been crawling, although I did try to wash in the sinks at the local toilets. I came across a YMCA with a sign outside saying, "coffee served here". I was as scruffy as hell but I went in anyway and with my last few coins I got a hot drink. I was sixteen and a half years old and I was so alone.

Sitting in the corner of the room was very tall, thin man dressed in a dark pin stripped suit and sporting a thick, RAF type moustache and greying hair. He came over to my table and introduced himself as the YMCA manager. Sitting himself down opposite me he asked me my name and where I was from. I was scared of telling him the truth but he had a severe but kindly look about him and I was desperate to talk to someone. I began speaking, slowly at first, and then it all came rushing out in a great torrent of words and tears. He listened quietly to me and ordered more coffee and

biscuits. For almost an hour I poured my heart out to him and he hardly spoke a word. My coffee went cold.

He spoke with a strong, posh voice and did not try to talk down to me or make any judgements one way or another about what I had said. He simple asked me if I was hungry and told me I could have a meal and a room for the night but we would have to decide about the future in the morning. The night came and for the first time in over a week I sank into a warm, comfortable oblivion and slept the sleep of the dead. There were no dreams or nightmares and that night, for a few hours at least, time stood still. The morning came and after breakfast I sat in his office and listened to him phoning my local social services. I was already looking toward the door and windows, planning my escape. He reassured me that nothing was going to happen until he has spoken to my social worker who arrived half an hour later accompanied by a policeman. My social worker insisted that I return to the hostel in Paddington because there was no one else who could take responsibility for me. But the YMCA manager said I could stay there and he would guarantee to be my temporary guardian. It was agreed, social services would pay for my room and food and I would look for work so I could eventually pay my own way. The policemen and the social worker left, but not without telling me that this was my last chance and I had better behave, (*the bastards*). I had, for the immediate future, somewhere to stay.

I am sorry to say he is no longer with us but that YMCA managers name was, Walter J Saunders, and I will never forget him for he saved me and gave me a new beginning.

I still see some of the people who were living there at the time and with whom I became friends, although it took a long time for me to come out of my shell and become sociable. They used to tell me off for being scruffy and smelly and to go and get a bath but they took me under their wing and taught me how to behave and how to play bridge. Someone, a Greek, taught me how to play guitar and I was in a band for five years. They were all a little older than me but I learned to trust them and they gave me some much needed friendship. Some of which has lasted more than thirty five years. I have never before spoken in this detail of the time I left care. It is such a traumatic memory for me that it is hard to express what happened in words other than rage and anger. But I have learned over the years that rage and anger will not help you achieve your goals. So I have mellowed a little and tried to push the negative memories to one side. Sometimes, though, they come to the surface. It is because of my experience that I wage a personable battle for all those in care. Myself, the CLA, BAAF and many others are working hard behind the scenes for the rights of all those in and out of care. For me the struggle will never end so I will fight with all the heart felt passion I can muster to improve conditions for all future care leavers.

David Wood, CLA Member

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.