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Louise Arnold and Lucy Fullard
Parent and Carer Alliance C.I.C.,
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25 May 2022

Dear Louise & Lucy

I'd like to put on record how invaluable has been the support we have had from the Parent and Carer Alliance (the 'Alliance') in our research programme and more particularly in the programme to bring about meaningful change in the way Health and Social Services authorities address their statutory duties to support disabled children and their families.

The Alliance – through its methodologically rigorous consultation process – was a significant source of data for our qualitative survey of the experiences of parent carers in their interactions with English Children's Services authorities. The resulting 2021 research report 'Institutionalising Parent Carer Blame' has had (and continues to have) a major impact – both in terms of the mainstream media coverage it has attracted and in the responses we have had from statutory policy makers and non-statutory opinion shapers.

The report called for significant changes, not only to the statutory policy guidance issued by the Department for Education but also for change at the 'coalface' – where parents first interact with officials of Children's Services' departments. In order to bring about meaningful change, we realise that simply amending national policy guidance (which is an outcome we will probably achieve) may do very little to change the actual experiences of families. The current phase of the programme is therefore to support independent parent carer organisations to have meaningful conversations with the Senior Strategic Teams within Children's Services authorities. To do this we need to mobilise key individuals and organisations in the 151 English council areas. In this endeavour, the Alliance has played a crucial role. It has facilitated a number of webinars where we have discussed the implementation process with parent carers and parent carer organisations – such that the Alliance is now acting as the de facto hub for communication with these with these groups

and individuals. Without its involvement this crucial phase of implementation would not be practicable.

In doing this the Alliance is leading the way in demonstrating how local groups can engage in practical and meaningful conversations with their councils. The Alliance – through its experience of working with councils – is developing and sharing a blue print that explains how councils can make meaningful changes without having to contemplate major structural upheaval and all the organisational turbulence that this invariably causes.

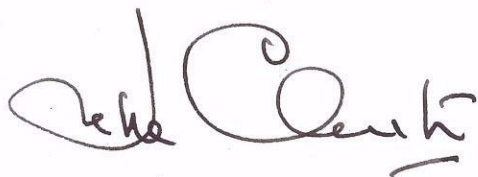
In this respect, the Alliance actions (and its record of these) can be seen as a pilot / demonstration model of how to effect positive change. It is mapping (and critiquing) current care pathways within a cooperating Children's Services authority, discussing its findings and proposals with the council's Strategic Team – and then feeding back to the wider group on what works and what does not work.

We are also proposing, in collaboration with the Alliance, a wider training programme so that frontline Children's Services workers can be upskilled to deal with the new approach to addressing the needs of disabled children and their families. It is intended that this programme will incorporate case studies and the testimonies of parent carers. The Alliance will be crucial in obtaining this material and also in developing plans to roll out such a programme.

I hope that I have given an illustration of the vital role being played by the Alliance in bringing about meaningful change for the hundreds of thousands of families with disabled children.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be a further help.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luke Clements', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Luke Clements
Cerebra Professor of Law and Social Justice.