



## **SPECIAL ELECTION ISSUE – Ealing Local Government Elections**

The monthly newsletter from Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG) is not due until the end of the month, but – given the importance of social care in the work of local Councils - we decided to bring forward this April issue to alert local readers to the upcoming local government elections (5 May 2022). The next issue will return to normal!

### **Social care demands**

ERSCAG has written individually to over 150 local candidates asking them, if elected, to promote the following policies:

1. End charging for all non-residential social care users or at least ensure a freeze on charging in this coming year and cancel, or offer a moratorium, on existing care charge debts
2. A policy of Independent Living which requires the Council to work closely with disabled and older people who receive social care packages in the design and delivery of the service
3. Ensure that Ealing, as a London Living Wage employer, pays ALL care workers the LLW and considers how else to support these key workers (eg social housing provision etc)
4. Ensure that promised government resources aimed at social care are ring-fenced to that end: ensuring recruitment, retention, and training for care workers; short breaks for informal carers; day-care provision, supporting advocacy by local community groups etc.
5. Challenge where possible the privatisation of social care by promoting not-for-profit and co-operative arrangements - placing people, not profit, at the heart of the service.

Our emails/ letters explained that more than 3500 Ealing residents are currently in receipt of non-residential social care packages, but their situation, and that of their family members, and the workforce catering to their needs, are largely 'invisible' to the general public. Yet social care constitutes an important percentage of the Council's budget and its work programme, so it is important that our elected representatives are fully informed of the needs and concerns of the residential, domiciliary and day-care sector.

### **Responses to date**

Letters and emails were only sent out over the holiday weekend so it would be unfair to expect many responses immediately. Nevertheless we have given a short note below of several individual responses received, with links to websites for the different parties, so that readers can research for themselves what commitments are being made, and ideally follow up within their own wards.

**Conservatives:** A local candidate for Hanger Hill ward, Fabio Conti, who is an outgoing Councillor active on health and social care issues, replied to an individual ERSCAG member's letter along the following lines: (1) agreeing in principle with the concerns about charging but *"we would need to look into the detail of this"*; (2) *"I completely agree, it is so important for the Council to work closely with people in receipt of social care to ensure that the service is designed to meet their needs"*, and particularly mentioned the needs of people without digital access; (3) *"Agree on the London Living Wage being paid to all care workers"*; (4) Agreed *"It is vital that Government resources aimed for social care are used for that purpose and therefore ring fenced"* and mentioned the importance of respite support for informal carers in particular; and (5) agreed *"people should be at the heart of the services being provided and the Council need to ensure a user centred approach with the providers"*. His fellow candidate in the ward (Gregory Stafford) concurred. There is nothing specific on social care in any promotional material received to date from the party, but for more information voters may want to check out the website: [www.ealingconservatives.org.uk](http://www.ealingconservatives.org.uk)

**Green Party:** Dr Kate Crossland of the Green Party, candidate for Hanwell Broadway, wrote in response to our ERSCAG demands that *"On behalf of all of us, I can confirm we will absolutely commit to promoting the policies you outline"*. And more specifically (1) on charging *"we would certainly support this, and we would be very keen to understand what is happening in Hammersmith as such a close neighbour. The cost-of-living crisis gives an impetus for action on existing debts. It would be interesting to know the financial costs of chasing these debts, versus what is actually recovered."* Regarding (2) independent living: *"yes, and we have been hearing that voluntary and charitable organisations feel they need more voice within design and delivery of Council services too"*; (3) on the London Living Wage and other support for care workers – *"yes, we must push for this. Key worker support comes up in other areas too, such as teaching staff retention and needs looking at across the Borough"*; (4) regarding other services for carers etc *"yes- I am concerned about the closure of services because of the pandemic; particularly respite and day care. These are such an important part of allowing carers to continue in their role"*; and on (5) challenging privatisation and placing people not profit at the heart of the care service, *"just a big YES to this!"* [www.ealinggreenparty.org.uk](http://www.ealinggreenparty.org.uk)

**Labour** The Ealing Labour party manifesto suggests that candidates might be supportive of our demands, for example, the manifesto refers to: the need to pay the LLW *"to every care worker in Ealing"*; *"a mutual and cooperative approach to commissioning care"*; more supported accommodation, affordable housing and investment in home adaptations; the need to tackle huge health inequalities across Ealing; and the need for a campaign *"for a long term settlement and a national care service that ensures everyone has the care that they need"*. ERSCAG wrote that members would be holding all elected Labour Councillors to account against these commitments but also noted that one important omission from the manifesto was the need for more financial help for those being charged for domiciliary social care. A Labour party candidate for Ealing Common (Jags Sanghera) wrote: *"If there is one thing the pandemic has taught us is the value of social care and the importance of valuing those that work within the sector. It has indeed been very tough on a number of fronts and I am glad that you have picked up on some of the key pledges within our manifesto and yes we should be held accountable..... I agree with you that we need to do all we can, not just to influence national government policy, but also to ensure those in our community that are most in need are taken care of as we all begin to feel the effects of a cost of living crisis on a scale not seen for decades.....I hope that we will be able to pick up on this conversation after the election."* [www.ealinglabour.com](http://www.ealinglabour.com)

**Liberal Democrats** The local Liberal Democrat party manifesto suggests it also might support many of the concerns raised by ERSCAG: for example: *"The Tory government is not fixing the immediate social care crisis despite raising taxes by £5.4bn a year. Nationally, long term waiting lists*

have almost quadrupled, millions of hours of necessary homecare are not being delivered, care homes are closing, and 60,000 staff (who earn on average just £9 per hour) have quit the sector between April and October 2021. We want a better deal for unpaid care workers who do an incredible job looking after loved ones in our community. We support the national Lib Dem team's call on the government to raise the Carer's Allowance by £1000 a year. We value the Council's children's adults and specialist social care teams and seek to remunerate them properly to reduce staff shortages. Moreover, we support efforts to raise wages in the Ealing care sector to tackle the current staffing crisis with over 100,000 vacancies in England's social care workforce. We will support local providers of care homes in Ealing struggling to cope with the impact of the covid pandemic". In its letters to Liberal Democrat candidates, ERSCAG however noted that, as with Labour, an important omission from the manifesto was the need for more financial help for those being charged for domiciliary social care. We believe that social care, like medical care, should be free at the point of need. We also drew the attention of candidates to the practice in Hammersmith & Fulham of ending charging which, given forthcoming cost of living increases likely to hurt disabled and elderly people particularly hard, is a very welcome move. ([www.ealinglibdems.org.uk](http://www.ealinglibdems.org.uk))

**Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition** - David Hofman responded to the ERSCAG email on behalf of all TUSC candidates by reporting that for their coalition "the key issue in this election is whether Ealing Council is going to make a stand against austerity.....Ealing now receives only 36p for every £1 received in 2010. Further cutbacks in central government funding are on the way..... TUSC want a properly funded social care system, with democratic oversight and full involvement of users, carers and their families. All provision must be on the basis of need, and the profit motive must be completely removed.....We demand that the funding stolen by the Tories from the local community over the last 12 years be returned forthwith. The council should use its reserves and borrowing powers to set a needs-based budget in the meantime, while initiating a borough-wide campaign to increase pressure on the government." ([www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk))

## **NEXT STEPS**

If you are an Ealing resident, please consider writing to candidates in your ward/or speaking with canvassers when they come to the door about social care. Social care is often a very 'invisible' issue and potential future Councillors need to be informed of the lived reality of the people they represent. If you do not know your ward – see [www.whocanivotefor.co.uk](http://www.whocanivotefor.co.uk) and [Council elections 5 May 2022 | Ealing Council](http://www.ealinglibdems.org.uk/council-elections-5-may-2022) will give you details of all the declared candidates in each ward. If you want help with email addresses contact ERSCAG; and for more encouragement, see Inclusion London's great election toolkit at: <https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/campaigns-and-policy/how-to-campaign/may-2022-local-election-toolkit/>

## **OTHER APRIL NEWS**

### **Interesting recent press articles/reports/events**

- <https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/wbg-full-response-to-the-spring-statement-2022/>
- Inclusion London had an event on April 14<sup>th</sup> on the issue of legal challenges to social care charging (hopefully a report will follow in subsequent ERSCAG newsletters)
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/apr/06/the-guardian-view-on-tax-and-social-care-an-honesty-deficit>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/apr/07/uk-foi-transparency-laws-are-being-undermined-warn-journalists>
- [400,000 disabled people lose out on help to cut energy costs](https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/campaigns-and-policy/how-to-campaign/may-2022-local-election-toolkit/)

- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/apr/08/health-inequalities-uk-poverty-life-death> - article by Michael Marmot, chair of Marmot Review report (February 2010).
- Radix, a 'radical centre' think-tank organised a fascinating online event on 20 April "What social care is and how it can be fixed" ([www.radixuk.org](http://www.radixuk.org))
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/apr/11/gp-numbers-in-england-down-every-year-since-2015-pledge-to-raise-them>; <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/apr/11/england-ambulance-service-failing-patients-paramedics-nhs-999-calls>; <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/apr/20/nhs-waiting-lists-drive-more-britons-to-pay-for-medical-treatment> all commenting on different aspects of the NHS.
- Inclusion London which promotes equality for deaf and disabled people has posted on their website useful information on "Cost of Living Crisis: get help with energy and care costs" [https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/disability-in-london/coronavirus-updates-and-information/ddpo-organisational-support/delivering-advice-services/cost-of-living-crisis-get-help-with-energy-and-care-costs/?utm\\_source=DDPO+staff&utm\\_campaign=da5192d3c4-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_09\\_17\\_01\\_40\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_bbb54d0fe1-da5192d3c4-247666677&fbclid=IwAR23zHBCDDhV7xeA0q4hY2zFkWvC1KFBGcpfCiOgRtdb5AqUkHAsqU1JWo](https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/disability-in-london/coronavirus-updates-and-information/ddpo-organisational-support/delivering-advice-services/cost-of-living-crisis-get-help-with-energy-and-care-costs/?utm_source=DDPO+staff&utm_campaign=da5192d3c4-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_09_17_01_40_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_bbb54d0fe1-da5192d3c4-247666677&fbclid=IwAR23zHBCDDhV7xeA0q4hY2zFkWvC1KFBGcpfCiOgRtdb5AqUkHAsqU1JWo)

#### National campaigns underway:

- NaCSILS – the campaign for a National Care Support and Independent Living Service – is complementing the work of local groups organising around local government elections with postcards, Facebook, Twitter and background briefings about the importance of addressing social care – see [www.nacsils.co.uk](http://www.nacsils.co.uk)
- Keep Our NHS ran a campaign to counter charging for testing – a particular concern for those in receipt of social care, which ERSCAG has also raised with the Council. Change.org is running a similar national petition campaign ([Please sign the petition here](#))
- Age UK wrote on 7 April to thank the 12,000 people who, over a 48-hour period, had written to their MPs about the cap on care charges. The campaign was unsuccessful so the thank you email writes: *"I'm bitterly disappointed. Changing how the cap on care costs works has made it unfair. Those with low and modest wealth are going to be the most affected, and over 4 in 5 older people won't see any benefit from the care cap. The Prime Minister made a promise to fix care and he is now failing to live up to his word"*.
- Relatives and Residents Association want to raise their profile and encourage people to respond to their survey by the end of April: [short survey](#): a £50 voucher is up for grabs too!

#### Official initiatives:

- The House of Lords has issued a call for evidence about the 'invisibility' of social care and what needs to be done. ERSCAG will be responding – for further information see [Call for Evidence - Committees - UK Parliament](#)
- If you want more government information on the current situation – see a recent Department of Health and Social Care blog with its *"reminder to visit [Transforming Social Care](#), the one stop shop for anyone keen to learn more about the future of social care in England"*; or *"the Government has a [long-term vision](#) putting people and families at the heart of services"*.

**Follow Us on Facebook and Twitter at [Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action](#) and join our Facebook group [Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group](#). For more information, or copies of any of the ERSCAG papers mentioned here, contact ERSCAG Secretary [maggiebeirne@googlemail.com](mailto:maggiebeirne@googlemail.com) or [erscaginfo@gmail.com](mailto:erscaginfo@gmail.com)**