



Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter June 2022

Update on recent developments

Politics at the local level: ERSCAG wrote individually to all the Councillors recently (re)elected to Ealing Council and received several positive replies regarding their concerns around social care. Committees have been re-constituted and ERSCAG hopes to continue attending regular meetings of the Health & Adult Social Services Scrutiny Panel and the Health and Well-Being Board to monitor social care priorities. At the staffing level, we maintain regular correspondence, and our engagement with Ealing's three local MPs also continues – a meeting is planned in mid-July with James Murray (MP for Ealing North). MP Rupa Huq (Ealing Central & Acton) recently (25 May) responded to constituent concerns about social care and disability rights: *"I have long supported an immediate pay rise for NHS staff and carers (<https://twitter.com/RupaHuq/status/1347285606456549379>)".* Dr Huq's e-mail went on – *"More widely, I am disappointed that Ministers rejected amendments to the Health and Care Bill proposing a zero charge on disabled people between the ages of 18 and 40. A fair cap and charging system must provide essential support to older adults and working-age disabled adults, many of whom have lifelong conditions and who have to draw on social care support for their daily needs".*

Annual General Meeting:- ERSCAG held its second AGM by Zoom on 6 June and approved the group's annual report and financial statement (either/both available on request). The committee was largely re-elected though one member (Pat Maclean) has had to stand down and was thanked for her many contributions. The committee now consists of - Roy Willis (chair), Maggie Beirne (secretary), Mark Tilston (treasurer), Alex Cowan (chair of our Direct Payment User Group), Mike Geoghegan, Janet Mearns and David Scully. We are always looking for new people for the committee so if you would be interested in learning more, please get in touch with the Secretary.

ERSCAG attended a virtual summit of the **Reimagining Care Commission** on 14 June and sent written materials. The Commission, established by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, intends to *"develop a radical and inspiring vision, drawing on Christian theology and tradition, that reimagines care and support"*.

As last year, ERSCAG attended the **Hanwell Carnival** (18 June) and, thanks to their generosity, shared the Ealing Save Our NHS stall. We met several new people and have added them to our mailing list – welcome one and all! Please get in touch for more information or to comment on what you would like to see in future newsletters.

As reported in ERSCAG May newsletter, the consultation on the all-age Learning Disability Review by Ealing Social Services closed on 19th June. ERSCAG made a short submission suggesting that more consideration be given to the Digital Deficit, with people with learning

disabilities being left further behind as technology improves; the importance of co-production where service users, carers and care assessors and providers have equal power in the creation of care packages; and the need to coordinate consultations to get the best out of respondents.

Campaigns – current or upcoming

Concerns are ramping up about **social care users facing debt** as the cost of living steadily increases and is likely to disproportionately impact those on limited budgets already. Open Democracy (24 May newsletter), reported that *“Almost 90,000 people in England have fallen behind on costly care payments as the cost of living crisis deepens, and hundreds now face action from aggressive debt recovery agencies....Of the 87,421 adult social care users known to have missed at least one payment, 60,248 have been issued with a reminder or a warning notice. This latter figure equates to a quarter of all chargeable adult social care users, which includes those who are elderly or have a disability, across the 78 English councils that responded to Open Democracy’s Freedom of Information request. The real figure is likely to be even higher”*.

ERSCAG will be gathering information and following the situation locally, and the **BBC is planning a TV documentary** about people getting into debt over their social care needs. If you are affected, and want to discuss your personal situation, you can talk in confidence initially with the researcher at adam.eley@bbc.co.uk

Age UK (www.ageuk.org.uk) is also working actively on the cost-of-living crisis and produced a report on the basis of replies received in response to their call for evidence <http://email.ageuk.org.uk/c/12hZxhHo7TbrrswZyZCKSmiMQT>. See [The Independent](#) also; an Age UK campaign secured more than 6000 letters to MPs, demanding help for carers.

Relatives and Residents Association notes (10 June) that a *“cross-party coalition of MPs has joined our call for a new legal right to ensure people can maintain contact with their family across health and care settings”*. See also RRA [response](#) to the [cap on lifetime care costs](#).

A massive **Lobby of Parliament** “Time for Action on Social Care” is planned for Tuesday 19th July. Register your interest in attending [here](#) and [click here to share the news on Twitter](#) so as to spread the message that it is **#TimeForAction** on social care.

Latest developments nationally

Cost of living crisis

- See Age UK report above and also this interesting opinion piece by John Harris - <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/jun/01/the-decade-that-broke-britain-the-disastrous-decisions-that-left-millions-in-a-cost-of-living-crisis> with statistics such as: 30% of the 13 million people with disabilities in the UK – [3.8 million adults and 300,000 children](#) – live in poverty; with Universal Credit, the government removed the severe disability premium, depriving disabled adults who live on their own – or with only a young carer – of about £58 a week; since 2017, employment and support allowance – a benefit paid to people who have a disability or health condition that affects how much they can work – has been reduced by about [£30 a](#)

[week](#) for many new claimants; and sanctions (whereby people's benefits are stopped, often for minor alleged breaches), have meant that disabled people were up to [53% more likely](#) to have their payments docked than non-disabled people.

- Or regarding care-home top-up fees, check out the opening story on You and Yours radio programme of 20 June <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0018g5h>

Covid 19

- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jun/03/why-did-covid-disappear-from-our-collective-consciousness-so-quickly>;
- [Record two million people in the UK have long Covid | News | The Times](#)
- Washington Post: "How Long-Covid could change the way we think about disability" https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/06/06/long-covid-disability-advocacy/?utm_campaign=wp_post_most&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nl_most&carta-url=https%3A%2F%2Fs2.washingtonpost.com%2Fcar-ln-tr%2F3707d16%2F629e25b9956121755aa95f02%2F596b9c2fae7e8a44e7da9ca1%2F9%2F70%2F629e25b9956121755aa95f02
- For Inquiry into official response to covid, see www.covid19.public-inquiry.uk
- The Queens Award for Voluntary Service, seen as an MBE for organisations & groups, was awarded to two local groups: see [Southall Community Alliance Receives The Queen's Award \(Ealing Today\)](#) and on www.ealing.gov.uk - "Two local charities that played a key role in providing support during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic have been recognised with a coveted national award for volunteering services to the community. The Charity of William Hobbayne and Southall Community Alliance have both received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service".

Legislation

- ERSCAG's attention was recently drawn by Winvisible to an Ombudsman ruling in relation to Ealing: <https://winvisibleblog.wordpress.com/2019/06/20/disabled-mum-won-vs-ealing-refusal-of-support-for-son/>
- Plans to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights are on the government's agenda again. The Director of Bright Blue, a liberal Conservative think-tank, argues in a Times' article why the government should think again: [The Times](#)

Reports/reporting/events

- North-West London Integrated Care System issues an "Adult community-based specialist palliative care review programme newsletter". To be added to their mailing list, contact nhsnwlcg.endoflife@nhs.net
- A virtual conference on the topic of "Financing Social Care" was organised on 16 June by the London School of Economics with Andrew Dilnot and other experts – see <https://www.lse.ac.uk/lse-player>.
- For a free on-line event (21 July): Social Care Future: Valuing the role of the charity sector in social care research - see <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/valuing-the-role-of-the-charity-sector-in-social-care-research-tickets-353601691177>

Staffing

- As noted in ERSCAG's May newsletter, West London Citizens are looking to create a working group of paid carers to advise on, and engage with, their London Living Wage campaign – please ask ERSCAG for contact details.
- See several recent press articles on NHS staff shortages and challenges: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/31/criminal-acts-of-violence-at-uk-gp-surgeries-almost-double-in-five-years>; [GP shortage leaves doctors in some](#)

[areas with 2,500 patients | News | The Times;](#)
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/jun/22/2022-hardest-year-in-living-memory-to-enter-uk-medical-school>

- Ealing Council also issues regular bulletins about work opportunities (www.workealing.com)

Your Help Needed

- Action on Disability are carrying out a research campaign exploring the effect of social care charging for disabled people and aim to “*speak with as many disabled people who access social care about their opinions/stories*” especially in Ealing. Contact ERSCAG Secretary or AOD directly on www.aod.org.uk

Sources of official advice/help

Regular information is available from a variety of government websites. See for example a lot of useful information on the ONS website at: Coronavirus (COVID-19) latest insights - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk); or the www.gov.uk site. In a recent government announcement, they mark the theme of this year’s Carers Week (6-12 June) as 'Making caring visible, valued and supported' and claim that *it is “an opportunity to pay tribute to unpaid carers for all they are doing to support the loved ones in their lives, but also raise awareness of the networks and resources they can access to stay happy and healthy.”*

Social care over the longer term

As noted earlier regarding Ealing Councillors, political consensus around the importance of developing some long-term responses to social care seems to be on a steady increase. ERSCAG has also found an increasing interest amongst the public about the need to radically re-think service provision. The parliamentary summer recess (21 July) means more government measures are unlikely for a while, but for an interesting personal commentary on proposals to date, see [A reality check on proposed social care reform](#)

In Scotland, consensus seems even further advanced. A full page spread in The Herald (4 June 2022) carries a series of articles under the title “*Politicians make their case on how to meet the challenges facing social care*”. The Cooperation Agreement negotiated by the SNP and Greens committed to a National Care Service. Though other parties challenge this organisational proposal (for different reasons), they all seem to agree on the need to make improvements – for care-users and for carers (paid and unpaid). Reference is frequently made to the need to have a system delivered on the basis of need, not one’s ability to pay; to improved pay and conditions for carers; a rights-based and person-centred model of care; driving up the quality of care provided; and the need to provide support to unpaid carers.

Our website is currently under construction at www.erscag.org.uk

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and join our Facebook group [Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group](#).

For more information, or copies of any of the ERSCAG papers mentioned here,
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