



**Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter
May 2022**

Update on recent developments

Local elections: In our April “Election Special”, ERSCAG reported that candidates from all the parties responded positively to our lobbying efforts, so now we will focus on following up on the commitments made. The Council strengthened its Labour majority and at its first Cabinet meeting, looked at major new investments, including: “Increasing pay rates for homecare workers as part of a staged and affordable plan to achieve [London Living Wage](#) compliance.” (see Around Ealing News 11 May 2022 and [The full cabinet report is available on the council’s website](#), as are ward results and cabinet/officer appointments).

Speaking of democracy - ERSCAG is holding its Annual General Meeting (by zoom) on Monday 6 June at 2pm, at which point we will circulate our annual report on activities and elect a new committee. If you would like to get more involved, learn more about ERSCAG, or simply attend, and have not already received the link, contact the Secretary for details.

ERSCAG made a submission this month to the House of Lords Select Committee on Adult Social Care which has launched a first Inquiry entitled - **Lifting the veil: Removing the invisibility of adult social care**. ERSCAG’s submission argues that social care concerns are indeed largely invisible to the general public and, without more public scrutiny and campaigning, little change can be expected. Contact ERSCAG Secretary for a copy of the submission.

Campaigns – current or upcoming

Much recent campaigning (locally and nationally) focused on local government elections where those occurred. ERSCAG included in all its lobbying efforts a call for a **National Care Support and Independent Living Service** to complement the National Health Service. ERSCAG campaigned also with Inclusion London and others to ‘**Scrap Social Care Charges**’ demanding - no further cuts to social care; an investment in community support; more flexibility around Direct Payments; scrapping social care charges by at least 2024 and, in the meantime, freeze care charges in the 2023 council budget; and abolish debt recovery actions.

In the wake of these national efforts ERSCAG is now in discussion with **NaCSILS**, **Scrap Social Care Charging**, **Citizens London**, **Action on Disability**, and others about how to give effect to the various political commitments made locally. We also follow closely the work of other groups working on related topics (eg Act4Inclusion is organising workshops on co-production and Age UK's survey on the impact of the cost of living on people's lives).

As the House of Lords Inquiry implies (see above), the issue of social care is often very hidden from public scrutiny. ERSCAG hopes that the greater public attention given to social care during recent elections can be built upon - for example, by working alongside our colleagues in Ealing Save Our NHS (ESON) to distribute material at the **Hanwell Carnival (Saturday 18th June, 12-6pm)**. Please come along and chat to us on the ESON stall.

ERSCAG also welcomed two recent funding grants to other groups suggesting increased public awareness about social care users. The Hallmark Foundation has, for example, provided a grant to Social Care Future with a view *"to develop and seek investment in plans for a long-range campaign to bring about a marked, measurable improvement in the wellbeing of people with cause to draw on support to live their lives."* At the same time, a group of Disabled People's Organisations in London has secured funding to undertake a campaign to scrap care charges in London and is recruiting a Campaign Coordinator.

Latest developments nationally

Covid 19 Inquiry

- The public inquiry now being established will presumably be looking at issues such as <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/02/labour-says-government-refusal-to-publish-ppe-firms-contracts-reeks-of-cover-up> and successful legal cases - <https://www.itv.com/news/2022-04-27/discharging-patients-from-hospitals-to-care-homes-during-pandemic-unlawful>. For a fuller explanation of the court case see UK Human Rights blog (4.5.22) and *Gardner & Harris v Secretary of State for Health and Social Care & Ors* [2022] EWHC 976 (Admin).
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/08/the-guardian-view-on-the-covid-inquiry-looking-for-justice>
- ERSCAG and another 20,000 people/groups responded to the proposed Terms of Reference for the UK Covid-19 Inquiry: the chair's recommended changes to the Terms of Reference and a summary of the consultation responses, can be found at www.covid19.public-inquiry.uk along with future updates on the Inquiry's work.

Legislation

- Despite extensive criticism, the Health and Care Bill has become an Act - see earlier ERSCAG newsletters; commentary by the British Institute on Human Rights

(www.bihhr.org.uk) & <https://www.ealingsaveournhs.org.uk/2022/04/health-care-bill-an-attack-on-the-nhs/>

- In the Queens Speech (10 May) – reference was made to reforming the Human Rights Act & a new British Bill of Rights that is bound to have some impact on equality rights. See also: Policy Exchange (Conservative think tank) **The Queen’s Speech and Health & Social Care Reform: What was *not* announced may be more significant than what was announced**; and the Womens Budget Group (20/5) also produced a gendered analysis of the Speech: [read our response](#)

Reports/reporting

- OFCOM produced a Digital Exclusion Report
Click here to read the full article
- The European Commissioner on Human Rights issued a report - Addressing the invisibility of women and girls with disabilities *“Often, women with disabilities are invisible and marginalised in society,.....the exclusion of women with disabilities from decision-making spaces has for a long time impoverished our societies. It masks the root causes of the discrimination they face, allows the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes, both concerning gender and disability, and leads to innumerable human rights violations”*. [Continue reading](#)
- This Guardian in an article on 1 May reports on a major study into local government funding – for full report see the [study by the Institute for Government thinktank](#)
- The Royal Statistical Society held a meeting on 18 May on the topic of Review of Social Care in the UK – see their website: www.rss.org.uk
- The Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/15/jeremy-hunt-ignored-nhs-staff-shortages-while-health-secretary>) reports that Jeremy Hunt MP and former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has published a book Zero: Eliminating Unnecessary Deaths in a Post-Pandemic NHS. Hunt said tackling the “chronic failure of workforce planning” was the most important task in relieving pressure on frontline service given that the situation was “very, very serious”, with doctors and nurses “run ragged by the intensity of work”.
- Social Care Future brought together people from more than 20 council areas that have said they want to use the Social Care Future vision to steer local change. *“We explored how commissioning needs to be done differently to be able to progress towards equal lives for all. Working with people who draw on social care, commissioners and support providers we came up with what this light look like - 'A Starter for ten' - 'Commissioning' for a better future. A starter for ten’*
- The Centre for Health & the Public Interest (www.chpi.org.uk) reports *“We are close to finalising our major research study with Warwick Business School and University College London into [the financial impact of COVID 19 on the UK Care Home sector.](#)”*
- The Chief Social Worker for Adults published her [annual report for 2021-22](#)

Staffing

- A slightly depressing read in The Times of 3 May entitled *“Workers prefer supermarket jobs to low-paid care services”* is compensated for by a more uplifting piece if you want to [read inspiring stories of recent Silver and Gold Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care award winners](#)
- London Citizens are looking to create a working group of carers to advise on, and engage with, their London Living Wage campaign – ask ERSCAG for contact details.

Sources of official advice/help

From the Department of Health and Social Care – *“The Government recently released guidance which outlines the measures that should continue to be followed by the adult social care sector in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To support its implementation and answer any queries care colleagues may have, webinars chaired by the Chief Nurse for Social Care, Deborah Sturdy have been added to Skills for Care's guidance pages. Slides & transcripts available”*.

ERSCAG expressed concern about the “discharge to assess” measure in the new Health and Care Act. For some guidance see [Leaving hospital to go home: patient leaflet](#)

Social care over the longer term

Speaking during Dementia Week (16-22 May) at an Alzheimers Society event, Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, promised that a government plan for dementia will be launched later this year: [Health Secretary announces 10-year Plan for dementia](#).

An upbeat discussion of the importance of scrapping social care charges can be found on the Facebook page of the Scotland Campaign Against the Care Tax where they have a brilliant cartoon guide “What are care charges and why Scotland should end them”. England still apparently has a way to go since they report: *“Campaigning against care charges has been ongoing since 2008 and the SNP have committed to abolishing care charges in the current parliament.”* Four of the five main parties in Scotland have apparently pledged to scrap charges.

More locally, Ealing Council is seeking input into its All-Age Learning Disability Strategy which will determine planning priorities for the Borough to run between 2022-2027. The consultation process can be found at: [New learning disability strategy | New learning disability strategy | Ealing Council](#)

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For more information, or copies of any of the ERSCAG papers mentioned here, contact ERSCAG Secretary maggiebeirne@googlemail.com or erscaginfo@gmail.com