



Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter June 2021

Update on recent developments

This past month, there has been intense public debate about three different care-related issues. For example, the government decided to introduce compulsory vaccinations for all front-line care home staff, with the implication that this might be extended to all care and NHS workers in the near future. There have been very mixed reactions to this decision. Those in receipt of social care, and often in very close physical contact with their Personal Assistants/carers, may well want the reassurance offered by mandatory vaccinations. Others may feel that such a move disregards the rights of workers and risks penalising PAs/carers.

The issue of compulsory vaccinations was also cited as a concern by care-home managers when discussing workforce shortages. As the retail & leisure sectors open up, the media has highlighted the continuing staffing shortfall in the care sector workforce. Shortages existed pre-pandemic, but local users are worried that covid, Brexit and government immigration policies might exacerbate the situation. Ealing Council is monitoring developments.

There has been quite a furore over government plans regarding access to our medical records and privacy concerns. Under pressure, government decided to extend the deadline until 1 September for anyone choosing to opt-out (see media coverage later). Hopefully much more information will be made available before then to allow for informed decision-making.

Locally - all of these issues have been discussed at the Council level (at meetings on 9th and 23rd June of the Scrutiny Panel & the Health and Well Being Board). ERSCAG continues to attend these meetings and has been in contact with the new Leader of the Council regarding the necessity of paying all carers working in Ealing at least the London Living Wage.

Sources of official advice/help in the time of coronavirus

All the most current national guidance can be found at www.gov.uk/coronavirus and there are specific Adult Social Care updates every week - [Sign up here for regular updates.](#) Ealing Council also provides local guidance – see www.ealing.gov.uk/coronavirus. The level of vaccination amongst domiciliary & residential care workers has improved dramatically but Ealing Council is actively encouraging a better take up and is keen to promote regular testing for those out-and-about to assess levels of community transmission (even for those with both vaccinations). Specialist advice is also available from the Ealing Advice Service (www.ealingadvice.org) on social care issues such as charging, assessments, support planning, care and support delivery etc. And, nationally, Age UK offers support to older carers: their free Advice Line is open 7 days a week, 8am-7pm on 0800 169 65 65. Or, for a friendly chat, try their Silver Line on 0800 4 70 80 90.

Campaigns – current or upcoming

One campaign that is now building up steam is action to end charging for social care. Many members of the public assume that social care, like healthcare, is provided free at the point of need, but this is not true. Inclusion London, and a range of other groups across the country, have come together as a “**Scrap Social Care Charging Coalition**”. Amongst other actions they intend to build on a successful legal case taken in December when the high courts ruled that Norfolk County Council had discriminated in its charging policies. Private Eye (1548, May/June 2021) reports “*Disabled people are preparing to challenge local authorities in the courts after one council was found to have acted unlawfully by hiking the amount they have to pay for care. Campaigners say the charges, which have been increasing quietly as councils try to balance the books after years of funding cuts, are a “tax on disability” because they force people to pay for essential support.*” ERSCAG intends to follow this up locally with requests to Ealing Council about their response to the Norfolk judgement.

An even more ambitious campaign to create a **National Care Support and Independent Living Service** (NaCSILS) is also building up steam. Keep Our NHS Public, Reclaim Our Futures Alliance and others, with support from the National Pensioners Convention, Women’s Budget Group, etc. have developed a sample resolution, postcards and leaflets. If you are a member of a trade union, a political party, or a voluntary organisation, you may want to get them to support this campaign? For more information contact nacsilservice@gmail.com ERSCAG hopes to distribute postcards at the various events organised to mark the NHS’s 73rd birthday (see Ealing Save Our NHS event on Saturday 3 July at Ealing Hospital -from noon to 1.30pm). When the NHS was established, it had been intended to create a complementary National Care Service; 73 years later we believe it is time to re-visit that vision.

Information and latest developments nationally

Care-homes

The latest regulations regarding care homes should be checked on the government website. Earlier concerns about care-homes were re-visited recently by Dominic Cummings in parliament:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/09/matt-hancock-was-warned-of-covid-care-home-risk-in-march-2020>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/10/matt-hancock-pledges-to-hand-over-advice-discharges-care-homes-covid>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/17/hancock-care-homes-health-secretary>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/16/dominic-cummings-key-claims-in-his-latest-attack-on-government>
- Look out for Ed Balls (former Labour minister) presenting a two-part BBC Two documentary on social care inc. care homes: **Ed Balls – Care in Crisis**.

Charging

Coverage of the “Scrap Social Care Charging Coalition” is given in a radio programme in the series ‘You and Yours’, with personal stories of the impact of cuts, and a presentation by Hammersmith & Fulham Council, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000wsxr>. See also, ‘File on Four’ on Radio 4 on <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000wrll>

Learning difficulties and autism

A new report has been issued (May 2021) by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS): (https://www.adass.org.uk/media/8647/adass-rapid-learning-review_ld-autism_may-2021_recs_v9.pdf) on the impact of the pandemic on adults with learning disabilities and / or autism, their family carers and service provision: a rapid learning review.

Privacy of health data

There was extensive media coverage of this question (see page 1 of this newsletter), for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/06/why-are-there-calls-for-a-pause-to-patient-data-sharing-scheme>; a Financial Times piece by Camilla Cavendish (12/13 June) headlined “*Privacy must come before profit if we are to benefit from NHS data*”; and <https://your-data-matters.service.nhs.uk/>. Ealing Save Our NHS (ESON) circulated the following two useful links: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/ournhs/imagine-hancocks-gp-data-grab-is-not-about-saving-lives/>, and from MedConfidential with information about how to ‘opt out’ <https://medconfidential.org/2021/press-release-governments-new-draft-data-strategy-for-health-boils-down-to-data-saves-lives-so-were-going-to-sell-it/> And see different concerns raised by Polly Toynbee (11 June), backing the system but seeking “cast-iron assurances”: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/11/nhs-patient-data-sharing-plan-covid-vaccine>

Rights of care-workers

- A Times piece (2 June) reports that Home Secretary Priti Patel is considering making foreign health workers pay the full cost of their visa ending discounts: [Henry Zeffman](#)
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/08/staff-burnout-in-health-and-social-care-putting-safety-at-risk-say-mps>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/09/boris-johnson-urged-to-axe-deadline-for-eu-citizens-to-apply-to-stay-in-uk>

Vaccination take up:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/02/uk-rights-watchdog-endorses-compulsory-covid-jobs-for-care-home-staff> though the Equality and Human Rights Commission also noted some of the economic difficulties facing care workers.
- The Guardian (5 June) reported on the successful efforts to address vaccine hesitancy and noted that “*vaccine uptake more than tripled among black British and Asian communities between February and April*” and that improved take-up “*is a direct result of the work NHS teams have done with local communities and ...previously hesitant groups, increasingly convinced that the vaccine is the right decision.*”
- The government announcement circulated on 17 June reads: “*Following an [extensive public consultation](#) with thousands of care staff, residents and families, from October 2021 (subject to parliamentary approval and a 16 week grace period), [people working in CQC-registered care homes must have two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine](#), unless they have a medical exemption.....Those coming into care homes to do other work, for example healthcare workers, tradespeople, hairdressers and beauticians, and CQC inspectors, will also have to follow the new regulations, unless they are likewise medically exempt. A further consultation will be launched on whether to extend this new requirement to other health and social care settings and will also consider inclusion of the flu vaccine*”.

Social care over the longer term

At the time of writing, there is a flurry of media speculation about when government might issue its long-term proposals for social care.

The Andrew Marr Show (BBC TV, 20 June) heard from Sir Ed Davey, leader of the Liberal Democrats, & Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, about some of the needs <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000x8wq/the-andrew-marr-show-20062021>. The same evening, panellists on the Westminster Hour on Radio 4 spoke of imminent discussions between the PM and the Chancellor, with a 'plan in motion' by the summer <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000x60j>. The next day BBC reported along similar lines: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-57552287> with additional reporting by Laura Kuenssberg <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-57553392>; and the Daily Mail carried pieces by Jeremy Hunt, former government minister for health and social care <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-9706701/JEREMY-HUNT-die-moment-party-social-care-fees.html#newcomment>

On 21 June, in a strategic and timely intervention, a range of social care organisations urged ministers to publish long-awaited plans to overhaul how the sector in England is funded. <https://socialcarefuture.blog/2021/06/21/start-reform-of-social-care-now-open-letter-to-the-prime-minister-chancellor-of-the-exchequer-secretary-of-state-for-health-social-care-from-social-care-leaders/> However, the well-publicised meeting supposedly due on 22 June between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of Exchequer to finalise government plans did not occur. Unfortunately the on/off nature of the meeting also led to media speculation as to the real costs of the reforms, and exorbitant financial estimates began to be bandied around. This speculation runs counter to the detailed financial modelling work done by reliable commentators such as the Kings Fund and others (see previous newsletters). For example, Sir Andrew Dilnot was interviewed by Radio 4's Today programme (21 June) where he again spelled out the detailed and sound financial basis for his reform proposals.

Just the week before (14 June), Paul Johnson, the director of the Institute of Fiscal Studies was arguing for a better discussion of the finances of social care reform: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/14/understood-taxes-better-vote-fairer-taxlab> He argued that the urgent [need for social care](#) requires a better conversation on taxes to avoid constant repetition of past experiences that *"any tax proposed to pay for it gets condemned as a 'death tax' or 'tax on homes'"*.

And if you are looking for international parallels, there is an article about care provision in the United States (Time Magazine 21-28 June 2021) – "Elder Care Grows Up". The conclusion – which might apply to the UK as well – relates to the impact of covid 19 on users of social care and *"Now the question is if the political will can meet this moment"*.

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