



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

Update on recent developments

There have been amazing changes nationally since our last (July/August) newsletter – we have a King and an entirely new Cabinet. Therese Coffey is now the deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Health and Social. She has immediately declared a mantra of “ABCD - ambulances, backlogs, care, doctors and dentistry.” See on for discussion of some of the electoral campaign pledges.

Tragically, a man in his 80s using a mobility scooter was murdered in Greenford. We do not know if this was a disability hate crime, but it concentrates minds as ERSCAG engages with our elected representatives and Council staff to try and ensure that all Ealing residents, who might be considered ‘vulnerable’ for whatever reason, feel safe and secure in their own homes and when travelling around. In this context, ERSCAG posed questions about disability hate crime, as well as the impact of rising utility costs (and their impact on discounted Disability Related Expenditures), at the recent Health & Wellbeing Board meeting of 7 September.

Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG) has launched its website with updates on our activities and many more resources – with contact details of national and local groups working on social care, an extensive bibliography of reports and documentation, and easy access to ERSCAG’s past newsletters and submissions.

There has been some re-organisation across a variety of national campaign groups: End Social Care Disgrace is the new name for those campaigning for a National Care Support and Independent Living Service; Act4Inclusion (previously Reclaim Social Care) is re-organising around a new vision; and Health Campaigns Together (HCT) will be pooling resources with Keep Our NHS Public (KONP).

Campaigns – current or upcoming

Party political conference season: Campaigners for a National Care Support and Independent Living Service (NaCSILS) will lobby the Autumn conferences. Ealing’s Labour Councillors and MPs were alerted to a variety of fringe meetings at the September Labour Party Conference addressing social care, and ERSCAG will keep an eye on any important commitments made at the various party conferences.

Please consider signing the petition which is posted on the KONP website and ERSCAG Facebook page <https://keepournhspublic.com/petition-social-care/> demanding social care free at the point of use, more choice for people needing care, better working conditions for care workers, and support for unpaid carers.

Disability activists have expressed concerns about the roll-out of *artificial intelligence* into the social care sector. Whilst it can bring enormous advances, they are also worried that it is being promoted as a “cheap” means of achieving “independent living” for disabled people and facilitating hospital discharges. For the link to the relevant NHS A.I. hub, see - <https://transform.england.nhs.uk/ai-lab/ai-lab-programmes/the-national-strategy-for-ai-in-health-and-social-care/#:~:text=Developing%20an%20AI%20strategy%20for%20health%20and%20care&text=The%20NHS%20AI%20Lab%20is,the%20skills%20to%20use%20it> and for more material see <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/assistive-tech-joint-venture-could-transform-lives/>

If you are *an older person interested in active campaigning*, Age UK has a very active team – see www.ageuk.org.uk/campaigns. Over the last few weeks alone, they asked people to advise on priorities for the incoming Prime Minister, promoted Twitter to contact MPs regularly, prepared a letter to Liz Truss about spiralling bills....

On 14 September, the Disability Poverty Campaign Group (disabled people led) with the backing of the Disability Benefits Consortium (100 major charities and related organisations) wrote to the new Prime Minister to call her attention “*to the devastating and intensifying levels of poverty faced by disabled people in the UK*”. The letter draws attention to the Office of National Statistics August report showing that 4 in10 disabled people are cutting back on food and essentials.

The Independent Living Group is having a formal launch on 4 October – in the meantime they have an active Facebook page where users can share advice about their role as employers – www.independentlivinggroup.com; or email support@independentlivinggroup.com. They recently advised on ERSCAG’s Sian Vasey Best Practice Guide for recruiting and employing Personal Assistants (see www.erscag.org.uk)

Latest developments nationally

Cost of living crisis

In face of extensive media coverage of this issue, and the new ‘mini-budget’ statement made on 23 September, this newsletter will only list a few items of possible interest:

- From Age UK (mid September) you can estimate your utility bill based on the energy used via [Money Saving Expert’s calculator](#). with more information on discounts and the Energy Bill Support Scheme found [on our website](#).
- Did you know that “*if you or someone in your family has complex disabilities you can sign up for free to the Thames Water Priority Services Register*” you can apply by 0800 980 8800 or:

[Sign up now](#)

- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/articles/whatactionsarepeopletakingbecauseoftherisingcostofliving/2022-08-05> .

On 12 October, Bringing Us Together is organising the first of a series of workshops. The first (virtual) one explains “*the cost of living crisis resources that disabled people can rely on to cope with current crisis*” – 2-4pm. For more information, contact tony@bringingustogether.org.uk

Covid 19 and long term impact

- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/15/covid-britain-politicians-pandemic-protective-measures>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/aug/29/horrible-winter-lies-ahead-next-pm-inherit-nhs-knees-crisis>

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/sep/07/therese-coffey-considers-paying-care-homes-in-england-to-free-hospital-beds>

Reports/reporting/events

- British Geriatrics Society, whose tagline is “improving healthcare for older people”, issued a report (August 2022) - Bringing Hospital Care Home (see website www.bgs.org.uk)
- On 25 August, Policy Exchange, the conservative think-tank, issued a report on health and social care entitled “What do we want from next Prime Minister?” It is largely focused on health but amongst other recommendations calls for the introduction “of a long-term workforce plan for the social care workforce, with redesigned remuneration structures and career progression. Within this workforce plan unveil a ‘My Year in Care’ scheme, modelled on the Duke of Edinburgh Award and National Service, giving school leavers 12-month placements in care prior to further education or employment.”
- <https://www.thenews.coop/164355/sector/health/care-co-ops-and-the-common-good-can-we-protect-our-health-from-the-profit-motive/>
- The United Nations is seeking input into a study “Reimagining services for people with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community” (deadline 14 October) <https://www.facebook.com/100024404689232/posts/pfbid0dhjN9MYPDrBzHiVcvQe5ZnSfibaBew583oSBMKgJuWebzbtviF84g8u5Nx9Xr4GI/?sfnsn=scwspmo>
- World Mental Health Day is marked on October 10th
- And in November -



Staffing

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/aug/21/staffing-crisis-leaves-many-english-care-home-residents-basic-needs-unmet>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/22/the-guardian-view-on-the-social-care-recruitment-crisis-pay-staff-what-they-are-worth>
- <https://tinyurl.com/LondonCitizensStrategy> London Citizens is running a campaign to pay the London Living Wage to all care-workers; an in-person planning session is being organised in East London on 28 September.

Sources of advice/help

Relatives and Residents in August updated their newsletter recipients about human rights campaigning and noted that they have extended the hours of their helpline. “We offer an evening surgery on Thursdays at 6pm-8pm. Pass on the details to anyone who might need advice or support with a care issue: 0207 359 8136; helpline@relres.org; Webchat at www.relres.org; 9.30am - 1pm Monday to Friday; 6pm-8pm Thursday”.

Regular information is available from a variety of government websites: see, for example, the Office of National Statistics website (www.ons.gov.uk) or the generic government website (www.gov.uk). More recently the following may be of interest:

- An article in ‘Around Ealing’ (summer issue) suggests that “if you would like to find out if your home is eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant, contact Council’s social services” on 020 8825 8000.
- A new Travel in Ealing Charter has also been launched setting out how the Council will work with residents to improve local transport projects

Active travel charter launched

Social care over the longer term

The national Covid-19 Inquiry has finalised its Terms of Reference and is already underway. ERSCAG will be making a submission and making it more widely available once submitted (watch out for it on www.erscag.org.uk). We reported in the past on the People's Covid Inquiry which will presumably also be feeding its important findings into the formal Inquiry now it is established - [To find out more about the People's Covid Inquiry click here.](#)

With the election of a new Prime Minister – Liz Truss - and with a view as to what to expect in future, some of you may be interested in the commitments made. Firstly, looking backwards, the BBC issued a fact-check story on the comments made (6 September) about social care by Boris Johnson when leaving Downing Street <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/62806217>. Having promised to “*fix the crisis in social care once and for all*” in December 2019, the BBC noted that the government had indeed set a ceiling to lifetime care costs but “*this long-awaited reform of funding does not fix other problems in the sector - such as the shortage of care workers. The latest figures, from July 2022, show that the number of vacancies are now 165,000, up 55,000 from 2020/21; and research in May 2022 estimated that 500,000 adults in England were waiting for social care, up from 294,000 a year ago.*”

Looking forward, the leadership electoral campaign did not appear to focus very much on social care, but the following commitments were made, and we can all monitor the extent to which they are met over the next few years:

- <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2022/08/23/liz-truss-rishi-sunak-tory-leadership-hustings-birmingham-live/> where the now Prime Minister said “*I would spend that money in social care....I believe it should go into local authorities to deal with the very real issues in social care....So put the money into social care, free up more space in the NHS and empower the frontline in the NHS.... the lack of local decision-making (is) what people are telling me is the problem, rather than a lack of funding.*”
- The Times (25 August) reports: Alarm over Liz Truss raid on NHS; the plan to divert £10bn into social care will mean cuts and long waits for patients, warn health chiefs “*I still would spend the money. I would just take it out of general taxation rather than raising national insurance. But I would spend that money in social care*”.
- The Guardian claims that this is a matter of little more than robbing-Peter-to-pay-Paul: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/aug/24/liz-truss-plan-to-divert-nhs-funds-to-social-care>

Future newsletters will continue to report on what our local and national politicians are doing to end the current social care disgrace and improve the lives of social care users, their carers and care workers.

[Check out our website - www.erscag.org.uk](http://www.erscag.org.uk)

Follow Us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) at [Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action](#) and join our Facebook group [Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group](#).

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