



## **Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter** **February 2023**

### **Update on latest activities**

ERSCAG asked several questions at the Scrutiny Panel (1<sup>st</sup> February) about care quality in Ealing care homes, the Council's Learning Disability Strategy, and the cost-of-living crisis (see on). We subsequently attended several meetings on 7 February – with the first formal meeting of the Ealing Health & Care Residents Forum; a very positive exchange with Louisa McDonald (the Council's Cost of Living Programme Lead); and feeding into a discussion on the experiences of Partnership involvement.

There have been some important measures taken by the Council regarding cost-of-living after ERSCAG had written to all Ealing Councillors and the three local MPs, noting: *“Many disabled people have essential utility charges that they cannot ‘economise’ or ‘cut back on.....We are hopeful, amongst other things, that the Disability Related Expenditures, which are discounted when computing how much people will be charged/reimbursed for their social care expenditures, will be treated particularly generously in this cost-of-living crisis.”* The meeting with Louisa McDonald was particularly important since it allowed ERSCAG to convey directly some of these same messages and we have since been informed that the Council has decided to pro-actively *“target a programme of outbound calling to residents who are in receipt of Council Tax reduction and also receive another disability related benefit”*. Staff are being recruited to assist in this project. The Council's website now also gives specific information about the help available to disabled people, alongside the information already geared to older people, and families needing cost of living advice.

### **Campaigns – current or upcoming**

The Labour Party's National Policy Forum is accepting submissions from its Constituency or Branch Labour Parties and affiliated organisations in the final formulation of its social care (and other) policies: deadline, 17 March. In an attempt to influence the passage of positive manifesto pledges from the Labour Party in time for the next general election, the national campaign group, End Social Care Disgrace, has prepared a useful summary of demands regarding the future of social care. At the local level, ERSCAG has asked members of Ealing-based CLPs to draw upon this useful resource: <https://nacsils.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ESCaD-summary-for-CLP-debate-on-National-Policy-Forum.pdf>

End Social Care Disgrace is holding a zoom meeting on March 20<sup>th</sup> 6.30-8pm on the important topic of CARERS, with speakers who have lived experience of family caring, from the Relatives and Residents Association/National Pensioners Convention, from the Archbishops' Commission on Re-Imagining Care, and John McDonnell MP – register at – <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlkfu6oqD0jGNPNfjPHiDVHAtOUqOOGzESC>

Age UK is busy campaigning on the same issue - in a recent blog, 'Cath' reported: *“ I'm 66, and I'm a retired nurse and midwife. For the last 3 years, I've cared for my 90-year-old Mum,*

*Jill, who is bedbound. When I suddenly lost my husband John, last March...I became the sole carer for my Mum....John looked after Mum if I needed to go anywhere, help lift her when we needed to, and he'd listen for her buzzer at night so I'd at least get to sleep. But now I'm on my own. After I lost John, I contacted adult social care to see if I could get some help. When I finally heard back, months later, they told me they couldn't get a care package in place for Mum because none of the care agencies had got the staff. All they said they can do is provide equipment that will help me move my Mum when I need to get her out of bed. This would make life a heck of a lot better, but that was months ago and I'm still waiting. Trying to arrange care for my Mum has been horrendously difficult. I've had to fight and chase for everything. It's never been easy."* Age UK urges people to ask the Chancellor in his budget to stop families waiting too long for social care: [sign Age UK's letter to the Chancellor](#)

If you are interested in taking to the streets, SOS-NHS is organising a national demonstration on Saturday 11 March: *"We're pleased to announce the assembly point for the SOS NHS national demonstration on Saturday 11 March. The march will now assemble at 12pm midday, at the northern most end (Euston end) of Tottenham Court Road opposite Warren Street Tube station, just around the corner from University College Hospital"*. Ealing Save Our NHS has indicated that the local meeting place will be at Ealing Broadway station at 11.30am.

In its monthly bulletin, the British Institute for Human Rights reported on legal action being taken to urge an investigation into failings by the Department of Work and Pensions. It is alleged that Jodey Whiting died by suicide in 2017 after her disability payments were stopped on the grounds that she had missed a work capability assessment. Despite receiving disability benefits for more than 10 years, and her assertion that she had not received a letter from the DWP about the assessment, the decision to stop her benefits was only overturned five weeks after her death. For more information see: [Leigh Day](#)

To mark Dignity Action Day (1<sup>st</sup> February), the February bulletin of the National Pensioners Convention set out a number of their key demands, including - *"we want to have a National Care Service, providing high-quality, fully-funded care for all, free at the point of need, and working alongside the NHS"*.

Good news on the campaign front: Disability activists lobbied alongside MENCAP (which made this one of their campaign priorities) to ensure that the Minimum Income Guarantee and the Personal Expenses Allowance would both be increased in line with inflation <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-care-charging-for-local-authorities-2023-to-2024/social-care-charging-for-care-and-support-local-authority-circular-lacdhsc20231>

## **Latest developments locally & nationally**

### **Austerity and cost of living crisis**

- Extensive publicity was secured for a BBC investigation into the debt crisis created for those in receipt of social care – see BBC Breakfast, its news channel and Radio 4 (on 22 February) <https://twitter.com/i/status/1628383935247024135>; <https://twitter.com/i/status/1628383935247024135>; & <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-64668729>. See also: <https://www.facebook.com/100024404689232/posts/pfbid0iuo7749V6upnHvnLgdyWdG7g2A4jif8PwmwMZhcdogEB6foNcDa2H4ut9owJEvYkl/?sfnsn=scwspmo>

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils/household-support-fund-final-guidance-for-county-councils-and-unitary-authorities-in-england> The guidance refers to the particular needs of disabled people - *“Authorities should also consider providing support to disabled people in their area. Disabled people in particular may be facing acute challenges due to the disproportionate impact that rising costs bring for the additional services they need in order to manage their conditions, remain independent and avoid becoming socially isolated. For example, some disabled people may have increased utility bills due to the usage of equipment, aids or adaptations associated with their disability. They may also have additional heating, water or transport costs. Authorities are therefore encouraged to explore ways in which this group may be supported and must record the total value of awards granted to disabled people”*.
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/feb/01/uk-benefit-changes-have-pushed-people-into-dead-end-low-paid-jobs-says-ifs>
- MyLondon (online journal) reports on “Fears that Ealing Council’s plans will ‘squeeze out’ poorer residents from the area” [Read more](#)

### Covid

- For the terms of reference & information on submissions to the national covid 19 inquiry, see the [UK Covid-19 Inquiry website](#).
- Rupa Huq, local MP for Ealing Central and Acton, has recently asked several questions about research into the nature of long covid, its impact on people’s health, and the potential merits of additional funding into long covid – see - [Written Answers - Department of Health and Social Care: Long Covid: Research](#) and [Written Answers - Department of Health and Social Care: Long Covid: Research](#)

### Reports

- See posters developed by National Pensioners Convention to mark National Dignity Day - [Click here to read the full article](#)
- The National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) and its School for Social Care Research (SSCR) carried a recent blog – *“In our review of the literature on adult social care we have found that councillors tend to be peripheral at best, with only a handful of papers or reports placing councillors centre stage. We think this is an important gap and we have been looking to address it through the NIHR SSCR-funded [Councillors and Care research project](#). Specifically, we are interested in exactly how councillors might help shape adult social care and make a positive difference for those people receiving services and their carers.”*  
<https://www.sscr.nihr.ac.uk/three-ways-for-councillors-to-shape-adult-social-care/>

### Staffing -

- [Minibus Drivers Wanted at Ealing Community Transport](#)
- New Economics Foundation report – A Care Workforce for Britain, arguing for better pay, working conditions, training and qualifications for the care workforce:  
[https://click.actionnetwork.org/ss/c/c511-KAjM3jU\\_4OIFtitbbbOQTljOsOL7rY07vQd5ck0KTGljNzWI80rp\\_qw5tuD2Ops4rmAPIXKj8iCtZqOOMbSLdCHLHAqYx7oiGQa8N6cwFpJKuQudmc0A8Xv3GVMtAPN5nYyE\\_ymvU-1liU1-EWs4E2fHO8EC3-48SbyHxCkEk-FiPfUYGZ8VZuhBJlniVAXnNO2M2JiFZAaCy-TeeNlBq\\_-iIB32vMhrhdFgorlDRJLoy6dm-VDvlHEk7jA9PMqSaVJbnQ7pFnHC5819NA9u-2Qd6rOC3ghFA2r3C8PsrcDQn\\_-GicBdOlX7T42BQLSugclE-](https://click.actionnetwork.org/ss/c/c511-KAjM3jU_4OIFtitbbbOQTljOsOL7rY07vQd5ck0KTGljNzWI80rp_qw5tuD2Ops4rmAPIXKj8iCtZqOOMbSLdCHLHAqYx7oiGQa8N6cwFpJKuQudmc0A8Xv3GVMtAPN5nYyE_ymvU-1liU1-EWs4E2fHO8EC3-48SbyHxCkEk-FiPfUYGZ8VZuhBJlniVAXnNO2M2JiFZAaCy-TeeNlBq_-iIB32vMhrhdFgorlDRJLoy6dm-VDvlHEk7jA9PMqSaVJbnQ7pFnHC5819NA9u-2Qd6rOC3ghFA2r3C8PsrcDQn_-GicBdOlX7T42BQLSugclE-)

[F97Jh\\_LOztJhcfqaefLzysbu8EUbXl3ZD6Xn4A1KBGuqimiWFD0f4lajjBsHA-hmUJsmr34UnDw/3te/HddFwet\\_TrSjHJ8\\_f6xu-w/h2/JfWZu5GR9eTFsz3SI8YbhD24KjXVBW4n4xHg7OoCu3A](https://www.dhsc.gov.uk/news/2017/02/09/bridging-the-gap-improving-the-hospital-to-home-care-journey)

- The Department of Health and Social Care issues a regular bulletin and on 9 February, under the title of “Bridging the Gap: improving the hospital to home care journey” a senior manager working in residential and nursing care in a new blog “shares her thoughts on how care colleagues can provide solutions to hospital discharge pressures and support admission avoidance strategies. This includes the re-design of traditional residential and nursing care provision, using the lessons from the past to inform the future.” **Visit the DHSC Social Care blog to find out more**
- In its campaign for the London Living Wage for the social care workforce, Citizens UK is convening a meeting of leaders from chapters across London at the end of April to strategise about the next phase of the project. To be put in touch with local London Citizens groups contact - ella.rechter@citizensuk.org

#### Your Help is needed:

Ealing Council has established a Community Review Panel “to help shape and advise on Ealing Council’s planning projects” and is looking for new members To apply please email [ealing@frame-projects.co.uk](mailto:ealing@frame-projects.co.uk) or call Frame Projects on 020 8164 9980.

### Sources of advice/help

An ERSCAG supporter recently alerted us to the Nimbus Card (£15 for 3 years) “*The Access Card (sometimes referred to as the CredAbility Card or a Nimbus Card) is a card like no other; we translate your disability/impairment into symbols that highlight the barriers you face and the reasonable adjustments you might need. Think of it as a Disability Passport. This then informs providers quickly and discreetly about the support you need and may gain you access to things like concessionary ticket prices and complex reasonable adjustments without having to go into loads of personal detail.*” <https://www.accesscard.online/>

For voluntary groups with specific advice – see for example, Age UK [on Age UK’s website](http://www.ageuk.org.uk), or you can call their [advice line](tel:08001696565) for free on 0800 169 65 65; or sign up for the regular newsletter of the Stroke Association [keepingintouch@stroke-email.org.uk](mailto:keepingintouch@stroke-email.org.uk)

Locally, Ealing Council has a cost of living support resource for older people, and now, for disabled people – with information about the Priority Services Register (for those eligible, vital to keep utility supplies going in times of austerity), disability benefits, Taxicards etc. [https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201320/cost\\_of\\_living\\_support\\_and\\_advice/3159/help\\_for\\_disabled\\_people](https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201320/cost_of_living_support_and_advice/3159/help_for_disabled_people)

### Social care over the longer term

Nothing much to report under this heading this month – ERSCAG is looking forward hopefully to the Budget (due March 15<sup>th</sup>) and the results of the Fabian Society study into social care?

[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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