



## Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter

January 2023

### Update on latest activities

ERSCAG started off the year with a variety of meetings - we met with Ealing North MP James Murray; attended the latest meeting of the Council's Health and Well-Being Board; and met with the Strategic Director (Acting) for Adult Social Services & Public Health, Kerry Stevens. In these exchanges ERSCAG took up issues of the cost-of-living crisis, the application of the London Living Wage, the need for more choice and control over Direct Payment arrangements, the Better Care Fund, and the need to address longer term concerns in social care provision.

Our Direct Payment User Group (DPUG) fed into a survey about their experiences of Direct Payments and how the system could further enhance people's sense of control and autonomy. Also, thanks to input from members of the group, ERSCAG brought together some of the specifics about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on disabled people locally. People reported to us on the kinds of utility needs they have which are 'non-negotiable' – expenses such as *“charging wheelchairs, hoists, electric fans, eyegaze device, and profile bed (as well as) energy and heating for 4 care-workers for 24x7, laundry, and heating to prevent weakened muscles seizing up”*. ERSCAG believes that decision makers need to know the immediate problems created for disabled people by the cost-of-living increases, and they need to adapt their policies accordingly. (See on for related press articles on the topic).

### Campaigns – current or upcoming

The Relatives and Residents Association reported about their campaigning last year on the right to visit family members in care-homes and noted that this had resulted in 60+ MPs writing to the Government. They believe that their lobbying led to significant improvements to government visiting guidance (see [www.resrel.org/endisolationincare](http://www.resrel.org/endisolationincare)), including better access during outbreaks and relaxations on mask wearing. Local MP, Rupa Huq (Ealing Central & Acton) asked a question about visits to care homes and received this response: [Written Answers - Department of Health and Social Care: Care Homes: Visits](#)

End Social Care Disgrace (campaigning for the National Care, Support & Independent Living Service) held a fascinating seminar on 5 December outlining the current problems with social care, and what needs to be done. ERSCAG will be campaigning actively with them in the coming year to address the issues raised at the seminar:

<https://www.facebook.com/keepournhspublic/videos/1481038659087575>

Local Green Party activist, Kate Crossland, alerted ERSCAG to the Marie Curie campaign about poverty at the end of life. They have a petition calling for the state pension to be

extended to people with a terminal diagnosis who are under state pension age. Petition and more information here: <https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/policy/poverty>

The British Polio Fellowship got this response from government about the cost of living crisis <https://www.britishpolio.org.uk/post/minister-of-state-for-disabled-people-responds-to-open-letter?fbclid=IwAR2zU5q0EQLxkjo2pePCgH1MAWYBTF7UapQh3dOBFXUxqQ20XPmDCql0nYo>

[If you want to get out onto the streets to campaign for health and social care improvements, put Saturday 11 March in your diaries when SOS-NHS is organising a national demonstration.](#)

## Latest developments locally & nationally

### Austerity and cost of living crisis

An important BBC documentary is due to be shown on BBC 1 on Monday 30 January about the debt burden being faced by many disabled people. See also –

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/dec/14/dwp-debt-collector-energy-crisis-universal-credit-fuel-payments-gordon-brown>

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/nov/28/dwp-deducting-scotland-families-universal-credit-debt>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-64338770> - “Paramedics say that people are getting ill because they are unable to heat their homes”
- National Pensioners Convention article on: Heat or eat? **Click here to read the full article**
- <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/dec/06/martin-lewis-charity-highlights-mental-toll-of-cost-of-living-crisis>
- Local people can access the Ealing Council website for information on cost-of-living options – see [Cost of living: Need advice?](#)
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/dec/26/the-guardian-view-on-charities-and-the-cost-of-living-crisis-overwhelming-needs>
- An article in an Open Democracy blog talks of: [How austerity caused the NHS crisis](#)
- <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2023/jan/11/call-to-end-forced-installation-of-uk-prepayment-meters-after-millions-suffer-without-power>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/jan/22/energy-costs-disabled-people-cost-of-living-crisis>
- Age UK reports that 27,162 asked the government to introduce a discounted energy deal for those struggling to pay bills due to high energy use and/or lower incomes. They got wide-ranging media coverage including [The Guardian](#) and [The Express](#), and an immediate response [in The Express](#), from Business Secretary, Grant Shapps acknowledging their call ‘loud and clear’ and recognising older and disabled people’s energy needs. Age UK notes that Rishi Sunak, [confirmed at Prime Ministers Questions](#) that the government are considering introducing a social tariff (the discounted energy deal) and OFGEM (the energy regulator) said [they believe there is a case for a social tariff](#) being introduced.

### Covid

- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jan/15/britain-excess-death-rate-covid-nhs-cost-of-living>
- Regarding the supply of free PPE see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-ppe-to-health-and-social-care-sectors-extended>
- For the terms of reference & information on submissions to the national covid 19 inquiry, see the [UK Covid-19 Inquiry website](#).

**Dementia:** a series of articles which might be of interest

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/dec/28/dementia-patients-in-england-facing-national-crisis-in-care-safety>

- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/dec/29/neglect-loved-one-care-home-visiting-ban-dementia>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/dec/30/dementia-village-in-warwick-is-a-pioneer-in-person-centred-care>

#### Privatisation:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jan/07/revealed-nhs-trusts-tell-patients-they-can-go-private-and-jump-hospital-queues>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jan/17/owner-of-uk-care-home-group-paid-himself-21m-despite-safety-concerns>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jan/23/nhs-tories-privately-funded-healthcare> consists of an article by Gordon Brown warning about a two-tier NHS

#### Reports

- For a report highlighting the Impact of Social Care on Mental Health and Wellbeing, see <https://www.imagineer.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-Impact-of-Social-Care-Report-Bringing-Us-Together-final-version.pdf>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/dec/05/nhs-older-patients-trapped-beds-deterioration-fear-infection>
- [The House of Lords Adult Social Care Committee published a report in December 2022 – “A gloriously ordinary life: a spotlight on adult social care”](#) see below.
- [The think-tank Resolution Foundation issued a report \(4 January 2023\) entitled: Costly differences – living standards for working age people with disabilities - see <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/costly-differences/#:~:text=Key%20findings,ago%2C%20but%20still%20hugely%20significant.>](#)
- Radio 4, in its You and Yours programme of 18 January, addressed: The Adult Social Care Crisis – will it ever get fixed? <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001h41k>

#### Staffing

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-64025830> This reports on a study by the charity, [Community Integrated Care](#), which found that “a care worker in England is paid on average £8,000 a year less than NHS staff with the same skills”
- <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/money/other/care-home-had-right-to-sack-staff-who-refused-covid-jab-tribunal-rules/ar-AA15eiBV>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/dec/20/ive-never-seen-the-nhs-pushed-so-hard-its-not-the-system-thats-breaking-now-its-the-people> - an article by “The Secret Consultant”
- If you want to sign a petition calling for upgrading the pay and status of care workers, click on <https://chng.it/2hgZjk4pXy>, **they are 5000 short of the 150,000 target (at time of writing)**

#### Your Help is needed:

- Locally, Ealing Council has extended the deadline for consultation around its draft Local Plan until 8 February - [Our future is in your hands](#)
- Ealing Save Our NHS advertised a survey being carried out by NHS North West London on the closure of in-patient mental health beds <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/735239Z>

### Sources of advice/help

The ERSCAG website lists many local and national groups that can provide advice on social care issues and a few specifics have arisen recently:

- **Do you need to protect your Blue Badge against thieves** – a local member recommends <https://bluebadgeprotector.co.uk> .

- **Do you need employment advice:** check out the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service website on [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) .
- **Other sources of local advice** – ERSCAG members have recently been in touch with both the Ealing Equality Council ([www.wlec.net](http://www.wlec.net); 020 8231 2575) and the Ealing Advice Service ([www.ealingadvice.org](http://www.ealingadvice.org) or 0300 012 5464) and have recommended them to others.
- **Or are you interested in Shared Lives:** government describes this as an approach where an adult or young person, who needs long term support, is matched with a carefully approved Shared Lives carer. Together, the person needing support and the carer share the carer’s family and community life. **Read 'Improving outcomes through Shared Lives'**

## Social care over the longer term

A House of Lords committee on Adult Social Care issued a report (December 2022) – “A gloriously ordinary life: spotlight on adult social care” ( see <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/ldadultsoc/99/9902.htm>) urging that adult social care be made a national imperative by: delivering realistic, predictable and long-term funding; delivering a properly resourced plan for supporting a highly valued workforce, building skills and remedying low pay; establishing a powerful Commissioner for Care and Support to strengthen the voice and identity of the sector; finally and fully implementing the principles of the Care Act 2014, rooted in wellbeing, choice, and control; and ensuring that the voice of social care is loud and clear within Integrated Care Systems. The report insists that people who draw on social care have the same choice and control over their lives as everybody else by: enabling disabled people and older adults a genuine choice as to who supports them, simplifying the recruitment of personal assistants, and making access to direct payments easier; providing accessible housing and assistive technology to achieve independent living; working with social care staff to promote the skills to co-produce care; and enabling people to determine who supports them, and what relationship they want with their family and friends. Reference is also made to the need to care for unpaid carers.

Several of the same principles, and measures, were also included in the report of the commission established by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York entitled “Re-imagining Care” (see: [www.churchofengland.org/about/archbishops-commissions/reimagining-care-commission](http://www.churchofengland.org/about/archbishops-commissions/reimagining-care-commission) The press statement accompanying this report called for: a National Care Covenant to set out the responsibilities of everyone involved in care and support: individuals, families, communities and local and national government. It talks of the values that should underpin the system that needs ‘re-designing’ and notes that *“Piecemeal tinkering with the existing system will not produce the desired result. We need a radical redesign of the system to make it simple, consistent and person-centred”*.

[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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