



Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter March 2023

Update on latest activities

The most important development at national level since the last ERSCAG newsletter was the announcement of the Budget, though its silence on the issue of adult social care was deafening! ERSCAG and others will have to step up their campaigning to make this a more important issue in the minds of our elected politicians and local and national policy makers. This silence about future social care funding is all the more surprising on studying a recent letter from Ealing Council to residents about the increase in Council tax for 2023/2024. They wrote *“around 60p in every £ that the council spends goes towards supporting older adults or people with disabilities and children in need of care.....social care continues to be the biggest bill that the council pays with costs rising every year as more people need support. We know we need to fix social care in the long term”*.

The same Council letter focused on the cost-of-living crisis for many Ealing residents. Thanks to earlier interventions by ERSCAG and others, Council staff have ensured a dedicated element of the council’s website addresses the particular needs of disabled people, as well as older people and families (see on for link).

Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG) exists to advocate for changes to the system, and to support the Council in its efforts to provide good adult social care. This month, that involved ERSCAG asking questions at the Health and Wellbeing Board about pay rates to domiciliary carers working across Borough boundaries, and expressing concern about the lack of detail provided regarding the funding and staffing required if the Council is to implement its well-received All-Age Learning Disability Strategy.

Campaigns – current or upcoming

As mentioned last month, a very important zoom event was convened to discuss the needs of carers. The testimony provided by several carers looking after family members was extremely powerful, and there was a lively discussion about how the needs of family and informal carers could be effectively met – see: <https://fb.watch/jotxZ9lhDF/>. And while we are talking of carers, the newsletter editor recently noticed that Bloom & Wild (florists) is actively supporting the Carers’ Trust (www.carers.org). Bloom and Wild (www.bloomandwild.com), in their deliveries, alert customers to the fact that there are *“7 million unpaid carers in the UK, many of whom give up their careers, their education, their ambitions and their free time to care wholeheartedly for someone they love”* and they promise that *“every time someone buys our Florists’ Pick, we’ll donate 15% of the profit to Carers Trust”*.

Age UK, Independent Age, the Centre for Ageing Better and the National Pensioners Convention have issued a consensus statement urging the creation of a Commissioner for Older People & Ageing. For more information and to sign up to the campaign – see <https://campaigns.independentage.org/page/124541/petition/1?ea.tracking.id=npc>

Last month the newsletter promoted the major demonstration organised in support of the NHS – if you were not able to attend you may be interested in this report from Keep Our NHS Public: *“What a fantastic day Saturday 11 March was. It was an incredibly lively and sometimes moving demonstration which including a tearful minute’s silence for Covid victims at the start. The demonstration was called to demand that the government act now to end the extreme crisis in the NHS, a crisis which is causing hundreds of unnecessary and preventable deaths every week.....the many thousands of protestors were addressed by politicians, leading trade unionists, strikers and campaigning groups ...”*.

There are no elections due locally for a while, but other parts of the country will be having Council and/or County Council elections in May. Remember that new arrangements now apply and the government has issued the following guidance for those supporting anyone voting at polling stations – [please make sure they bring photo ID for the local elections 4 May](#) – and reminds us that the deadline to register to vote is 17 April 2023. [Download voter ID resources](#)

Regarding democracy more locally, Ealing is holding a series of events open to the public under the title of Health and Care Residents’ Panels. Some will be virtual and some face-to-face. Diary dates: 4 April; 6 June; 8 August; 3 October; 5 December; & 6 February 2024.

Latest developments locally & nationally

Austerity and cost of living crisis

- Ealing Council has a range of cost-of-living advice on its website relevant to disabled people, older people, families and others (see reference earlier) for direct link see: https://www.ealing.gov.uk/costofliving?utm_campaign=Around%20Ealing%20Extra_%23149_27_October_2022&utm_source=emailCampaign&utm_content=&utm_medium=email;
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/feb/23/electricity-alive-cost-of-living-crisis-disabled-government-vulnerable>
- The British Institute of Human Rights has produced a number of videos on the cost-of-living crisis and human rights – sign up to their regular website on human rights issues of relevance to users of social care, carers, care-workers etc. info@bihr.org.uk

Budget

- Age UK report their “deep disappointment about the lack of money for care” - [read Caroline, our Charity Director’s, statement](#) . Elsewhere, however, they did note how they had been lobbying hard prior to the Budget on the unfairness of pre-payment meters; handed in a petition to the Chancellor with 31,186 signatures; secured a meeting with the Department of Health and Treasury where they spoke of older people’s experiences waiting for care; and gained huge coverage in national media about the effect of social care waiting lists on older people’s quality of life.
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/mar/15/hunts-disability-plans-put-1m-at-risk-of-losing-350-a-month-ifs-says>

Care homes

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/feb/28/not-shoved-miles-away-cumbrian-fight-to-keep-care-in-the-community> The article talks of a plan by local people *“to fashion the Abbey into a new care facility tailored to their needs. It would have 16 ‘independent living’ apartments with basic care backup, four rooms to be rented cheaply to domiciliary care workers to serve people in their homes, four step-down beds to assist with hospital discharge, and a kitchen and dining room for the whole community.”*
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/mar/01/matt-hancock-leaks-britain-covid-inquiry-care-home-deaths>

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/mar/08/cqc-accused-failing-to-keep-care-homes-safe> MyLondon news (8 March 2023) concentrates not so much on criticism of the Care Quality Commission itself but rather on its findings: “a total of 17 care homes in London are currently offering 'inadequate' care, a concerning new inspection of services has revealed. The latest research from the CQC reveals that the watchdog is to take enforcement action against some 250 centres across England.”

Reports

- The Womens Budget Group produced a number of briefing papers in advance of the budget, see for example: <https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/spring-budget-2023-social-care-and-gender/>
- ERSCAG has not yet learnt of any revised publication date for the Fabian Society study on social care, but notes this article in the Disability News Service, which would be of grave concern if accurate - <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/labour-linked-inquiry-set-to-rule-out-scraping-care-charges/>
- [The geographic divide in health, disability, and unpaid care: Census 2021](#) This interactive article explores links between health, disability, and unpaid care across England and Wales using data from Census 2021. It allows users to select a local authority to see how it compares to the national picture in England or Wales.
- For reports from the North West London Integrated Care Board about community based palliative and end-of- life care see [View the final Engagement Outcome Report; View the Summary Engagement Outcome Report](#)

Staffing

- https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/mar/17/government-to-cut-250m-from-social-care-workforce-funding-in-england-report-says?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other
- Regular workshops (most recently on the topic of “Values Based Recruitment”) are organised by Skills for Care – see www.skillsforcare.org.uk
- For government advice and help on extending the available workforce – see [International recruitment fund for the adult social care sector](#)
- <https://ealing.news/news/northolt-care-agency-criticised-by-coronor-over-death-of-elderly-client/> - which comments on the importance of training for domiciliary care agency staff

Statistics:

The government issues regularly monthly statistics relevant to social care, see for example [Adult social care in England, monthly statistics: March 2023; Adult social care in England statistics: background quality and methodology](#); with information on a range of topics including infection control measures, COVID-19 vaccinations, flu vaccinations and testing for COVID-19 in adult social care settings. There are also important statistical reports produced by the Office of National Statistics – for example - [Unpaid care by age, sex and deprivation, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Your Help is needed:

- Ealing’s Citizens' Tribunal meeting, hosted with partners from the NHS and Public Health, will hold a first session on the topic of addressing health disparities. The discussion will centre on the actions taken to meet the health-related demands made by the Racial Equality Commission, with a particular emphasis on Ealing’s most vulnerable communities. To attend [CITIZENS' TRIBUNAL -PRIORITY HEALTH Tickets, Tue 28 Mar 2023 at 18:00 | Eventbrite](#)

Sources of advice/help

- [More Support Available Locally for the Blind and Partially Sighted](#) – an article in Ealing Today
- The Stroke Association issues a monthly Stroke Support Newsletter – for more information check their helpline - **0303 303 3100**

- Digital skills: in Ealing a fund has been established to help fight digital exclusion – with local groups able to apply for monies to spend on IT equipment –
- DIGITAL FUND
- On the same topic, the National Pensioners Convention produces a regular newsletter on digital issues: <https://www.npcuk.org/post/connections-for-all-4>
 - **If you need help and are not sure who to turn to, check out your local MP. In a recent newsletter from Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton), she wrote: “I have been busy on the issue of the jewel in our nation’s crown our beloved NHS. Last week in Parliament I asked about health inequalities – be these the disproportionate death toll experienced during covid or life expectancy gap between richest and poorest the government is in denial (see below). I have also done a street stall with Ealing Save Our NHS and attended Keir Starmer’s International Women’s Day Event in Parliament with local nurse Brenda who looked after my late mum and dad at Clayponds Hospital”.**
 - Ealing Council notified its boroughwide multi-faiths forum of a number of local events of possible interest – for example, “Brentford FC Community Sports Trust is delighted to announce that we are launching a brand new weekly multi-sports session, specifically for adults with a disability. These sessions will take place every Tuesday between 11.00am – 12.30pm at Gunnersbury Park Sports Hub. The first session will be on 18th April. To book email ctribe@brentfordfcst.com or phone: 07561 605507”.
 - Social Care Future organised a zoom workshop on 23rd March on the topic of “Using the Law”. “As part of a bigger project with legal charity Access Social Care we are planning to run a series of zoom workshops to explore increasing people power by using the law. The focus of this first workshop will be to talk about some of the challenges people face in Social Care where they feel unsure about their rights and the laws that protect those rights. We want your input here, so that we make sure we are focusing on the issues that matter. ..”. For further such workshops contact admin@in-control.org.uk

Social care over the longer term

Last month we noted under this rubric: “Nothing much to report under this heading this month – ERSCAG is looking forward hopefully to the Budget and the results of the Fabian Society study into social care”. The first definitely took place but left more questions than answers, and we still await the Fabian Study. In the meantime, ERSCAG will be developing its thinking about its campaigning goals (short and long term) – please feel free to contact us if you have any suggestions to offer or want to join in the campaign to make adult social care really deliver for everyone who needs it.

[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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