



## Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter June 2023

### Update on latest activities

ERSCAG attended the national launch of the Fabian Society Study (see page 4) and a range of Ealing Council meetings (the Health and Wellbeing Board and Ealing Health & Care Residents Forum), as well as the – slightly more fun – distributing our leaflets at the Hanwell Carnival for its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary! Hopefully we will be at Acton Carnival and other local events over the summer too.

The new chair (Cllr Ben Wesson) of the Council's Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel kindly invited ERSCAG to join in the work of the Panel as a co-optee for the coming year. Whilst our limited resources prevented us taking up the offer – we were delighted, seeing this invitation as a signal that the Panel wants to give continued, and hopefully increased, priority to social care alongside its scrutiny of health provision in the Borough. Like his excellent predecessor before him (Cllr Dan Crawford), we hope to invite Cllr Wesson to a future event to hear directly from social care users about their concerns.

One of the many issues to raise at future Council events will be the funding of social care, so it was notable that the quarterly (May 2023) summary by the Ealing Advice Service ([www.ealingadvice.org](http://www.ealingadvice.org)) reported that one of the key issues brought to the attention of their case-workers was the “*over-zealous enforcement of care charges*”. Campaigners are hopeful that the Equality and Human Rights Commission, at the national level, may make care charging a future priority, and ERSCAG will push for the sharing of good practice at Council level. Our neighbouring Council, Hammersmith & Fulham Council, ended care charging entirely, and colleagues in (far-off!) Lewisham have been drawing on this experience with a recent report by its Lewisham Disabled People's Commission.

A meeting of our Direct Payment User Group was held (21 June) and we had a speaker from Inclusion London introducing their helpful new online tool to determine Disability Related Expenditures – see [Reduce your social care charges today](#) See also the conclusions of a court case where the judge [has ruled](#) (PDF) that Windsor and Maidenhead council behaved unlawfully by refusing to view activities the man attended as part of a social and life skills group as “disability-related” spending.

### Campaigns – current or upcoming

**End Social Care Disgrace** is organising an important virtual meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> July – following on from their very successful meeting held on carers. Under the title of End Social Care Disgrace: A Fair Deal for Disabled People, they have several MPs and people with lived experience speaking - to register, see <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlvcO2prTgiGt1iFdLACyXWU-RMwsNC9AFk>

**75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NHS:** on Saturday 1st July there will be a birthday celebration with speakers outside Ealing Hospital. The anniversary has also seen a number of new books – including “Fighting for Life: the twelve battles that made our NHS and the struggle for its future”, by Isabel Hardman; and “Our NHS: a history of Britain's best loved institution” by Andrew Seaton. The Daily Telegraph and Guardian both reviewed them, the latter reporting positively: “Harman is a meticulous journalist with a gift for storytelling” and describes the Seaton book as “more academic but still accessible survey of health service history”. The Telegraph additionally reviewed (positively) “Our Stories: 75 years of the

NHS from the people who built it, lived it and loved it” by Professor Stephanie Snow; and (negatively) “Why the NHS is being betrayed and how we can fight for it” by Dr Julia Patterson.

The Residents and Relatives Association are merging with the Rights for Residents campaign group to create “Care Rights UK” as a voice for people needing care ([www.carerightsuk.org](http://www.carerightsuk.org)) and Age UK reported on the new Carer's Leave Act that gives employees a new right to five days unpaid leave to care for older, disabled or seriously ill relatives or friends. For those juggling work with their responsibilities as a carer, this is a lifeline, but is unpaid.

## Latest developments locally & nationally

### Arts:

To start off with some positive news – check out the work of the Impact Theatre “*a not-for-profit day service which works with people with learning disabilities in the West London area through performing and creative arts.*” For exciting events in July, see website: [www.impacttheatre.co](http://www.impacttheatre.co)

### Austerity and cost of living crisis

- <https://www.aroundealing.com/news/free-mobile-data/> to help low income households
- Age UK asks people to share their energy bill experience: [share your experience here](#) and do not offer personal financial advice, but see their [website](#) or use their [free benefits calculator](#)
- A recent MENCAP Matters newsletter reported a family carer “*using torches instead of turning on lights in the house*” when faced with a hike in their monthly social care charges.

### Carers:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/may/30/my-father-had-dementia-and-i-was-his-caregiver-heres-what-i-wish-i-had-known>
- [https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jun/05/social-care-jeremy-hunt-unpaid-carers?CMP=Share\\_AndroidApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jun/05/social-care-jeremy-hunt-unpaid-carers?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other)
- Shared Lives Week and Learning Disabilities Week are being nationally celebrated this month and to mark this locally, Around Ealing carried an interview about the experience of being a part of Shared Lives: [Becoming a carer](#). See also <https://www.shareandcare.co.uk/>
- Government Minister for Social Care, Helen Whately, held a reception at No.10 Downing Street for unpaid carers to mark [Carers Week](#), (5-11 June), at which she announced a cross-government roundtable focusing on carer support, said: “*Over four million people in England are unpaid carers. Carers Week is a time to focus on their huge efforts, show appreciation, and focus on what more we can do to support people caring for loved ones.*” [Cross-government action announced to champion carers](#)

### Covid 19 Inquiry:

- The public sessions of the national inquiry are starting, with extensive press coverage: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/may/29/cabinet-office-may-take-legal-action-to-deny-covid-inquiry-lady-hallett-boris-johnson-material>; and also <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/devastated-family-covid-pandemic-deaths-b2356758.html>.
- And on the first major topic – the level of preparedness in advance of Covid 19, see - <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jun/01/covid-inquiry-economic-austerity-george-osborne> and <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jun/20/david-cameron-covid-boris-johnson-britain-pandemic-chancellor>. This latter article refers to a King's Fund report from 2015 which states that the NHS, under the Cameron-Osborne regime, suffered the [lowest annual average real increase](#) in spending since it was founded in 1948. As former health secretary Jeremy Hunt [admitted last year](#), [Cuts to social care](#) also “went too far”. When you adjust for an [ageing and growing population](#), as esteemed professor of epidemiology Sir Michael Marmot puts it, NHS spending actually went down.

- It is likely that ‘new’ facts will emerge as further submissions are made to the Inquiry – for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/may/31/black-people-england-wales-more-likely-issued-pandemic-fines-police-study> and <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jun/01/covid-inquiry-uk-sick-pay-tuc-pandemic-financial-support-union>. Open Democracy (<https://www.opendemocracy.net/>) reports: *“The UK government knew as early as September 2020 that its desire to free up hospital beds in the early stages of the pandemic had been “to the detriment” of care homes ... (This is) one of a number of explosive admissions in a highly secret Covid “lessons learnt” review document that was released tonight following a two-year transparency battle”.*

#### Reports/Research:

- [https://neweconomics.org/2023/05/new-economics-podcast-a-crisis-of-caregiving?link\\_id=12&can\\_id=d3bd97e91bdba42f0e54a2597f98c4de&source=email-news-from-nef-energy-guarantee-soci](https://neweconomics.org/2023/05/new-economics-podcast-a-crisis-of-caregiving?link_id=12&can_id=d3bd97e91bdba42f0e54a2597f98c4de&source=email-news-from-nef-energy-guarantee-soci)
- Bristol University hosted a webinar (31 May): *“Social care should be an essential part of the country’s infrastructure that enables everyone, including people who need support, to live full lives, with service users leading the change”.*
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/01/noel-glynn-ted-brown-homophobic-abuse-care-home-croydon-london>
- ADASS report (21 June) – the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services reports *“A record NHS backlog, rising mental health needs, support around domestic abuse of people with care and support needs, and carer breakdown, means most councils are not confident they can offer the minimum social care support in their communities required by law”.* See: <https://www.adass.org.uk/adass-spring-survey-2023-final-report-and-press-release>
- Healthwatch: A plan has been agreed by Healthwatch England *“setting out how (they) will work to ensure people’s experiences help improve care”* see [‘Our future focus’](#).
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/26/britons-earlier-deaths-linked-to-nhs-underinvestment-study> A study by a major King’s Fund report finds Britons more likely to die of biggest killer diseases than in many other richer countries.
- [Protected characteristics by disability status, England and Wales: Census 2021 - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#) Fascinating cross-references of census data by disability and race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, and a link also to [disability trends by age and sex](#)

#### Staffing

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/06/ministers-seek-volunteer-social-care-army-to-speed-up-hospital-discharges>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/22/over-half-of-uk-doctors-have-seen-or-suffered-verbal-or-physical-abuse-survey> Survey shows abuse of UK doctors by patients with accounts of being spat at and having hair pulled as delays for care cause frustration.

#### Your Help is needed:

Inclusion London alerted us to this Guardian survey: [Disability in England: how have you been affected by the rise in social care? | Social care | The Guardian](#)

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) has issued a call for evidence (deadline 1 August). UN committees examine the UK government’s compliance with its international obligations and made a number of disability related recommendations back in 2016 – see the original report [here](#). Organisations can submit written evidence by 1 August 2023 or can share evidence in-person as part of the oral briefing on 28 August 2023. If you would like more information on this, please contact the UNCRPD Secretariat on [ohchr-crpd@un.org](mailto:ohchr-crpd@un.org).

A government consultation on [Visiting in care homes, hospitals and hospices](#) ends on 16 August.

## Sources of advice/help

A series of items of local interest: do you want to learn more about being a community champion - [https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201321/volunteering/3108/community\\_champions](https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201321/volunteering/3108/community_champions) or [What Does a Local Councillor Actually Do?; Our A&Es are busy – please look after yourself in this weather](#); and the NRS is replacing Medequip providing equipment locally but the contact details remain the same – you can call NRS Customer Services on 0300 100 0253.

## Social care over the longer term

As noted in ERSCAG's May newsletter *"It will be interesting to see what all the main political parties agree as part of their policy positions at their conferences later this year and in the lead up to the elections next year"*. So far, we are aware of some party conference dates (Lib Dems 23-26 September in Bournemouth; Conservatives 1-4 October in Manchester; and Labour 8-11 October in Liverpool).

Presumably the Conservative Party position on long term funding for care can be assessed on the basis of the most recent government response to a parliamentary committee:

[Click here to read the response in full](#)

A recent article about Lib Dem party leader, Ed Davey, says he is "putting care at the centre of the Lib Dems' agenda": <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/may/16/we-didnt-show-we-cared-enough-we-wont-make-that-mistake-twice-ed-davey-on-love-loss-and-the-lib-dems> )

Wes Streeting, Labour party Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when asked about the NHS on its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary said: *"It requires three big shifts: from an excessive focus on hospital care to more focus on neighbourhood and community services; from an analogue to service to one that embraces the technological revolution; and from sickness to prevention. If it does all three things, it will be an NHS fit for the future"*. It is difficult to meet these objectives without very serious investment in social care, and this point will be reiterated by ERSCAG and others in coming months.

A key to *some* of the specifics of future Labour Party policy can be found in the Fabian Society report <https://fabians.org.uk/publication/support-guaranteed/> (launched on 8 June), commissioned by the trade union UNISON - see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-65839730>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYdkSeE0klo> (to watch the formal launch on YouTube); <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/08/labour-unveils-plan-to-fix-social-care-better-pay-and-free-short-term-support>; and commentator Polly Toynbee writes about the political choices to be made - [https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jun/08/labour-tory-social-care-crisis-public-funds?CMP=Share\\_AndroidApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jun/08/labour-tory-social-care-crisis-public-funds?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other). ERSCAG still has to comment in detail, but welcomes the commitments to supporting co-production, extending rights, investing in skills and improving pay and conditions of the workforce, supporting carers, and creating a common 'brand' of a National Care Service alongside the NHS with less of a national postcode lottery. Like others, however, ERSCAG is very concerned about a number of the study's failures: to reflect the urgency of the change needed; to give detail on principles like co-production; and, in particular, to make bold proposals about funding. We need a social care service that is publicly funded and free at the point of use and will continue to campaign to that end.

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

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and join our Facebook group [Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group](#).

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