



Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter January 2024

Update on our latest activities

At the first Ealing Council meeting of the year related to social care (the Health and Well Being Board) questions were asked by Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG) about equipment supplies, increasing debt levels relating to social care charges, and consultations about palliative care provision in the Borough. A very exciting local development is the Council's success in securing funding to tackle health inequalities that will presumably also include a study of social care provision: [Ealing Borough Given Funding to Tackle Health Inequality](#)

ERSCAG members also hope to attend the next Health and Care Residents Forum meeting (6th February) which will look at community based palliative care and the future of co-production efforts on behalf of people who are older, have disabilities or long-term conditions.

Campaigns – current or upcoming

The start of the year seems to have kicked off numerous local and national campaigns - for example, Change.org has two petitions – one ([link](#)) challenges the government's decision to discontinue the Disability Cost of Living Payment citing the fact that disabled people are twice as likely to live in poverty compared to non-disabled people. A separate petition calls for the Minister of State for Disabled People to be made a permanent position. According to Scope, there are 13.9m disabled people in the UK, yet *“despite these numbers, we find ourselves without representation at ministerial level.”*

There are also two very important (virtual) meetings being organised in the near future:

- End Social Care Disgrace are organising a national public meeting (virtual) - **END THE EXPLOITATION OF MIGRANT CARE WORKERS** on Monday 5th February 6:30 – 8:00pm - to explore how care and support workers from overseas are financially exploited, harassed, intimidated and now threatened with separation from their families (see some of the media coverage of this topic in the 'staffing' segment later). To register: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0lcuiprTkrEtNtlhXraUk_7GTTRu26rfk7
- Inclusion London is organising a virtual meeting (9th February, 2:00-5:00pm) to look at tackling unfair social care charges: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEqf-6hrTkiH9JaECg1W-GHSXT5SegsoTm2>

Numerous other national groups are also busy campaigning. You could sign up for the Health and Social Care newsletters from the **National Pensioners Convention** (www.npcuk.org) and **Keep Our NHS Public (KONP)** is launching in this important election year [Our Vision for a](#)

[People's NHS](#). **Care Rights UK** (previously Residents and Relatives Association) reports: that “after three years of relentless lobbying by campaigners” the government has introduced legislation to bolster visiting access to care homes and hospitals, but they want the authorities to go further “[Never again - why we need the Care Supporters Bill](#)”. **Disability Rights UK** have asked people to sign their petition Tell Rishi Sunak: respond to the UN inquiry on disabled people’s rights! A United Nations report in 2016 found grave and systemic rights violations committed against disabled people in the UK, but new evidence shows that 2023 was worse than ever given the impact of austerity policies when “more than HALF of adults with disabilities said they struggle to pay their energy bills”.

Latest developments locally & nationally

Carers

For an uplifting article: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2024/jan/08/i-wouldnt-have-missed-it-for-the-world-10-things-i-learned-when-my-father-had-dementia>

Cost of living

- <https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2024/jan/08/england-deaths-inequality-poverty-austerity-covid-study-public-health>
- Around Ealing (Council magazine) has a January article “Ten ways low income households can get help”

READ MORE

Financing:

Councils are suffering from years of cuts, and that is then having an impact on their local residents: https://www.mylondon.news/news/north-london-news/government-urged-fix-adult-social-28463170?utm_source=my_london_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MyLondon+-+MyWestLondon+Newsletter_newsletter&utm_content=&utm_term=&ruid=360b59ac-4496-4078-84bb-9420e4f84f21 -This article reports that “Harrow Council (which is Conservative controlled) has urged the government to ‘fix adult social care’ as a growing demand has meant spiralling costs..... local authorities are ‘running out of road’ to plug the financial hole and without help more and more councils risk going bankrupt over the next few years”. Frances Ryan (disability activist and journalist) talks in this Guardian piece on the horror of “cash-starved” Bristol Council “warehousing” disabled people: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/jan/25/warehouse-disabled-people-bristol-city-council>

Reports/Research/Events

The IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research) launched the third interim report of its Commission on Health and Prosperity, *Healthy Places, Prosperous Lives* exploring the stark divide in health and wealth throughout the UK – see ([our website](#)) for a webinar, Monday 19th February (9:00-10.15am); and on 3rd February the West London Trades Union Club is showing the docudrama *Then Barbara Met Alan* about the origins of the disability rights movement, at 4:00pm: <https://wltuc.com/access>

Staffing

Several worrying media stories have appeared about care-workers –

- <https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/blogs/social-care-workforce-crisis#:~:text=The%20situation%20is%20dire.,remained%20above%20pre%20pandemic%20levels>) about the shortfall in recruitment;
- And/or the impact on this shortage of recent immigration rule changes https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/jan/20/send-the-aeroplane-to-come-and-get-us-mummy-the-children-barred-from-joining-their-mothers-in-britain?utm_source=pocket-newtab-en-gb.
- And/or about the harassment and abuse of care-workers - see UNISON statement: [Government must end exploitation in social care; a Guardian piece](#) <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/dec/19/modern-slavery-care-sector-england-brexit>; and a Panorama investigation: www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001t151

At the same time, the Department of Health and Social Care (in an Adult Social Care update in January) reports that government “has unveiled measures to reaffirm care work as a career, helping to recruit and retain talent by providing accredited qualifications, training and funded apprenticeships. For the first time, there will be a national care career structure (the [Care Workforce Pathway](#)), with defined roles and professional development. An accredited qualification (the [Care Certificate](#)) will be introduced to help recognise the work of 37,000 workers. Lastly, funding will be provided for apprenticeship places and digital training to embrace new technology.”

Your Help Needed:

Several consultation processes are underway currently seeking input:

- In Ealing, the NHS is developing an overall plan for adult mental health services in North West London and seeks [Your views on mental health services in NW London :: North West London ICS \(nwlondonicb.nhs.uk\)](#)
- A survey is being conducted into the experiences of patients in North-West London who have used Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services - to complete the survey, just click on the link <https://bit.ly/3GYFQRL>
- And another short survey is being carried out by Care Rights UK (see reference to their campaigning earlier in this newsletter). They want to hear about people’s experiences of care - [You can complete the survey via this link](#)
- Alternatively, you may want to join a Patients’ Forum that works with the London Ambulance Service. Their primary role is to represent patients and the public and influence ambulance services and their commissioners to improve services, based on the needs identified by service users: <http://www.patientsforumlas.net>

Sources of advice and help

Ealing Council is intending to extend its Direct Payment provision in coming months – in line with its commitment to listening to the voice of the user, and to the principle of co-production - and ERSCAG awaits final decisions. One crucial element, if Direct Payments are to deliver genuine advances, is the importance of supporting Direct Payment Users. In that context, we note interesting workshops being offered on this topic by Bringing Us Together – “Starting on the Wednesday 24th January we will be running a short course of three workshops for individual employers and those receiving Direct Payments. These workshops are FREE as they are fully funded by Skills for Care and will be recorded for those who are interested and are not able to make the live workshops.” For more info: tony@bringingustogether.org.uk Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) organised a Direct Payment Summit (in November 2023) see [Direct Payments Summit](#) – report due later this year.

In a measure to address the issue of digital exclusion which disproportionately affects older and disabled people, as well as those on low incomes, Ealing Council has a programme of recycling computers -

More generally, in terms of advice and support – and if you are not getting satisfactory answers to any complaints or concerns that are worrying you - you might want to approach your local ward Councillor, your MP, and/or your Assembly Member. Just recently ERSCAG asked our local London Assembly Member (Dr Onkar Sahota) to raise a question about Blue Badge thefts which was tabled on 21st December 2023 <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/blue-badge-theft> .

In serious situations, you may need to complain to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (www.lgo.org.uk). For recent complaints upheld against Ealing Council see their bulletin (4th January) at [London Borough of Ealing \(23 003 422\)](#) – which was reported in the local press and was summarised by the Ombudsman as follows: *“Mr B complained the Council proposed increasing his father’s care contributions and it repeatedly failed to respond to his correspondence when he asked for clarification about the costs. He also says the Council has failed to resolve the issue of the additional costs for his father’s incontinence pull up pads. The Council was at fault for its delays in responding to Mr B’s correspondence and its complaints handling. It also delayed dealing with the issue of the incontinence pull up pads. The Council has agreed to our recommendations to address the injustice caused by fault.”*

Social care over the longer term

A report out this month from The Health Foundation sets out a vision - [Social care funding reform in England - The Health Foundation](#) – arguing that *“meaningful social care reform will require additional government spending. But, if it chooses to, the next government can afford to provide better, fairer, and more generous support to older and disabled people”* (our emphasis). There are important elections in May (Mayoral and London Assembly) and a general election later in the year. Campaigners need to make the economic arguments (see useful resources in - [Carenomics Report - Future Social Care Coalition](#) and the Women’s Budget Group’s argument about [why tax cuts would be bad news for women](#)).

But we also need to push social care further up the political agenda - why is it that our politicians often say that they do not hear about social care when they are out canvassing? Given the large number of people who are in receipt of social care, or care-workers, or carers, ERSCAG believes that this is an issue of great concern to many voters but it is largely an ‘invisible’ issue to many of our elected officials. Several polls are worth recounting to any politicians looking for your votes over the next few months! For example [Majority in Britain want care services brought into public hands, survey finds | Morning Star](#) ; [‘Shaming’ level of misery caused by UK social care uncovered by major survey | Social care | The Guardian](#); & [Public satisfaction with the NHS and social care in 2022 | The King's Fund](#)

ERSCAG will work with colleagues in End Social Care Disgrace to meet with different political parties – one meeting is already being planned with the Liberal Democrats’ policy team, thanks to assistance from Ealing Councillor Athena Zissimos. Maybe you, or a group you are involved with, will be meeting with candidates – please consider asking them about their vision for social care. We will use this newsletter over the next few months to report on what other groups are planning. For example, London Citizens are organising an event on 25th April to meet with leading mayoral candidates. The Labour Social Work Group is currently evolving its manifesto, and we assume many other groups will be doing something similar. Ideas and input to our ERSCAG planning most welcome from newsletter readers!

[Check out our website - www.erscag.org.uk](http://www.erscag.org.uk)
and join our Facebook group [Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group](#).
For more information contact ERSCAG Secretary
maggiebeirne@googlemail.com or erscaginfo@gmail.com

