



## **Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter** **September 2024**

### **Update on our latest activities**

Local by-elections: Just when you thought 'election season' was over - if you live in South Acton, Hanger Hill or Northolt Mandeville wards, note that there are by-elections due on 10 October because three former Councillors (one Tory, two Labour) were elected to parliament. So, if you are in any of these three wards, don't forget to check which candidates are standing for election - [List of Candidates Published for Ealing Borough By-elections](#) - talk to canvassers about the importance of social care and be sure to bring appropriate ID to your voting centre on the day! If you are not sure which ward you live in, check [on the council's website](#).

Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG) attended the Council's Health and Adult Social Services Scrutiny Panel (5 September) and the Health and Well Being Board (12 September), and raised questions about the closure of Ealing Careline; future monitoring of the service and its impact on social care assessments; the importance of engaging effectively with service users and future priorities of Healthwatch Ealing. We are also directly pursuing correspondence, and regular meetings, with Councillors and Council staff on these issues.

Ealing Council staff attended a recent meeting of ERSCAG's Direct Payment User Group to seek feedback on service provision at the national level ERSCAG wrote to Stephen Kinnock MP – both as a former Ealing resident (!), and as the new Minister for Social Care. See final section for more government/parliamentary news.

### **Campaigns – current or upcoming national campaigns**

Age UK and others are marking the International Day of Older People on 1<sup>st</sup> October and their current campaign is focused on fuel winter payments for pensioners – see:

<https://campaigns.ageuk.org.uk/page/154268/petition/1?ea.tracking.id=Website>

On 7 October – between 2-4pm - a lobby of parliament is being organised about the winter fuel allowance by the National Pensioners Convention, Age UK, Unite the Union and others. Will your MP support and attend the event?

Care Rights UK is a charity which writes *"in the aftermath of the general election, we're ensuring that we don't stop pushing social care to the top of the agenda"*. To find out more - [support the campaign](#), or consider becoming a trustee – *"we're a small charity, punching above its weight, can you help us to maintain and increase our reach and impact"*. Find out more [here](#).

The British Polio Fellowship are encouraging polio survivors, and their carers, to write to their MPs about an event in parliament on 23 October 2024 (World Polio Day, the next day - 24 October): <https://www.britishpolio.org.uk/letter-to-mp#:~:text=Letter%20to%20your%20local%20MP.%20The%20letter%20reads:>

## Latest developments locally & nationally

### Careworkers:

- [Ealing becomes a Living Wage Place](#) The Council reports: *Ealing is the first Borough in West London to be officially recognised as a Living Wage Place* “. Many of our local care workers are already on the London Living Wage but not all – check out this website for the benefits available to employers if they secure accreditation.

### Disability:

- Open Democracy carried a long feature article (5 September) arguing for real change for disabled people - [Disabled people don't need another inquiry. We need change](#)
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0jr91tq> - A BBC radio podcast talking of the 40-year olds who are in bed by 5pm!

### Events

- The final report of the IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research) Commission on Health and Prosperity was launched on 18 September; see [OUR GREATEST ASSET](#)
- An international online conference is being organised on 10 October by OWN-Europe on the topic of “Ageism and sexism in old age: The need for a new narrative on ageing” To be kept informed about this conference, please REGISTER your interest by clicking [HERE](#)
- Locally, the next meeting of the Ealing Health and Care Residents Forum is meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> October (4-6pm) at Perceval House and online; agenda includes an update on Ealing’s Health and Well Being strategy.

### Funding

- <https://www.thetimes.com/business-money/economics/article/its-time-to-be-honest-about-the-funding-of-social-care-2dqzbg7c> - Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies writes “*Not extending the scope of the welfare state to insure against the cost of social care is a bigger choice. It’s a choice that our welfare state should not do exactly what it was set up to do, to provide social insurance to protect people from risks that they cannot insure themselves..... If we, to our collective shame, are never going to find the political will to finance social care for some of our most vulnerable citizens, as it seems increasingly obvious that we are not, then it’s much less cruel simply to say so*”.
- The Women’s Budget Group has prepared a document in advance of the Autumn Budget – [Read our consultation response](#)

### Media articles and Reports

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/aug/30/alarm-at-failure-to-inspect-60-of-england-homecare-providers-in-four-years-or-longer>
- The UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended (23 August 2024) that the UK government “*take effective measures to address structural inequalities and discriminatory barriers in social determinants of health... improve the health outcomes and ensure the accessibility and availability of culturally acceptable and gender responsive quality health-care services for persons belonging to ethnic minorities*”. For the full report – [Read the Concluding Observations of the UN CERD](#)
- <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/opinion/columnists/social-care-needs-to-be-at-the-heart-of-nhs-reforms-4782756> - “*Social care needs to be at the centre of those (NHS) reforms. At the moment, the cart is being put before the horse and it is only piling more pressure on the NHS*”.
- Ealing Save Our NHS reports (5 September): “*July’s figures for bed occupancy show an average of 92%, with North West London at 93.2% and our local Trust at 94.6%. The primary reason for this, is as we know a lack of adequate community and social care to support discharge, which has a knock on effect on A&E waits etc.*”
- <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/sep/12/keir-starmer-vows-to-face-down-loud-opposition-to-fix-nhs> & <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/sep/12/keir-starmer-nhs-offering>

- [Nursing home held not to be a public authority for the purposes of an Article 2 claim](#) – despite being funded and accredited by public authorities, the courts decided in this case that the nursing home could not be challenged under the European Convention
- [Stronger Communities for Better Health | Coalition for Personalised Care \(communitycatalysts.co.uk\)](#)
- The Department of Health & Social Care issued a letter covering winter issues and resilience as they affect care-users, the care workforce and carers  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-winter-letter-2024-to-2025/adult-social-care-winter-letter-2024-to-2025>
- Do you want to know how Australia handles this? An ERSCAG supporter was there recently and sent this link about the budget intentions of the government there:  
<https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-mark-butler-mp/media/budget-2024-25-investing-in-quality-aged-care>

### Your Help Needed:

The Equality Commission is consulting nationally on its Strategic Plan 2025-2028 until 3 October. You can [Fill in the survey](#), call on 0161 829 8100 or email [correspondence@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:correspondence@equalityhumanrights.com). And a local questionnaire (closing date 6 October) seeks our feedback on Ealing's pharmacy services – check out: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Ealing2025PNAPublic>. Finally, after being lucky in the parliamentary draw, Rupa Huq, Ealing Central and Acton MP, is looking for suggestions from her constituents about possible Private Members Bill she could propose for future legislation?

### Sources of advice and help

The most recent (Summer) issue of the Adult Social Care quarterly bulletin produced by Ealing Council has a range of useful articles about falls prevention; digital financial assessments forms; digital inclusion programmes; support for unpaid carers; and World Dementia Awareness month (September). Local contact details for Dementia Concern are also provided (0208 568 4448; [enquiries@dementiaconcern.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@dementiaconcern.co.uk); [www.dementiaconcern.co.uk](http://www.dementiaconcern.co.uk))

Are you a Direct Payment user? In which case you may be interested in the workshops being offered by 'Being the Boss'. For more info on a series of free online zoom sessions - for example PA recruitment, interviews, contracts – Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2024; Care planning for main carer/guardian – Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024; Personal Health Budgets – Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025; Better working with the local authority – building confidence for meetings and reviews (the 'care net') – Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025 and Staying Well Whilst Being the Boss – Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025 – contact [karen@bringingustogether.org.uk](mailto:karen@bringingustogether.org.uk). All the workshops are being recorded.

### Social care over the longer term

The season of party-political conferences is nearly over with the key remaining one that of the Conservatives (29 September- 2 October). There seemed to be relatively few fringe meetings devoted specifically to social care, but the Liberal Dems gave a lot of media coverage to the topic. It may therefore prove very positive that the chairing of the parliamentary Health and Social Care Select Committee is going to Layla Moran of the Liberal Democrats: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/81/health-and-social-care-committee/news/202816/layla-moran-elected-as-chair-of-health-and-social-care-committee/> Having an Opposition parliamentarian in the chair of such a key committee could prove vital in holding the new government to account to meet its pre-election commitments.

Other parliamentary appointments of relevance to social care include - Sarah Owen MP (Women and Equalities) and Ruth Cadbury MP (Transport), who were elected as chairs of their respective Select Committees – and Stephen Kinnock is the new Minister for Social Care.

The focus of the new government on the NHS ought to mean a priority being accorded to reform of social care, but the signs so far are somewhat mixed. Already, for example, a major new contribution to the debate has been prepared by Lord Darzi [Independent Investigation of the National Health Service in England](#) - the conclusions of which would argue for a social care system fit for purpose. Keep Our NHS Public (KONP) has already prepared a first reaction - <https://keepournhspublic.com/darzi-report-will-government-write-wrong-prescription/> noting the need for a National Care Support and Independent Living Service.

The final report of the Commission on Health and Prosperity – Our Greatest Asset (see earlier) - is also timely. On the positive side, this extensive study talks of the vital importance to society and our economic well-being of good health and social care provision. However, it also seems to give relatively little attention to questions of rights, autonomy and the inherent dignity of all – regardless of their capacity to contribute directly to the economy. There is little if anything about social care per se, though earlier articles from IPPR are very interesting <https://www.ippr.org/articles/social-care-free-at-the-point-of-need>. The Times, blogging on the IPPR launch, reported Wes Streeting, the Secretary of State as saying that his ability to improve the social care system is “*virtually non-existent....What shocked me in the last couple of months, despite being the secretary of state for social care, my line of sight into the social care system is really not very clear at all. The levers I have available to pull to drive improvement are virtually non-existent, and when I was asked what can I do to help the system to do X or Y or Z, the response I got was, ‘Oh well we can send a letter out to the system’.*”

Elsewhere there has been talk of creating a Royal Commission but there is great fear that this would only put reform of social care on the long finger (see Open Democracy article mentioned earlier). Speedy action is required so it is perhaps disappointing to read: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/sep/22/wes-streeting-yet-to-meet-pledge-to-hold-cross-party-talks-on-social-care-crisis>. Others have also expressed concern about the single-minded focus on the economy as the reason for improving health outcomes. For example, many disabled people want barriers to their employment tackled but the media/political discussion about disability benefits can degenerate into treating disabled people as ‘scroungers’ or even ‘fraudsters’, but the government’s own website – [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) – records the level of disability benefits fraud as very very low.

Let us hope that the Autumn Budget (due on 30 October) will reveal some positive messages about government’s determination both to reform and effectively fund social care provision?

[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](mailto:maggiebeirne@googlemail.com) or [erscaginfo@gmail.com](mailto:erscaginfo@gmail.com)