



## **Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter** **August 2025**

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

As our Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG) newsletter was being issued last month we learnt that NRS – the major community equipment provider serving the Borough of Ealing – was going into liquidation and we referred readers to the latest national news <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn72mpz0zzeo>, and in due course were able to direct supporters to the Council's website [Daily living equipment | Daily living equipment | Ealing Council](#). Since then, Kerry Stevens (Strategic Director Adult Social Services and Public Health) offered ERSCAG a briefing about NRS's problems and the Council's success in fairly quickly re-contracting with the previous equipment provider – Medequip.

So far, we are unaware of any negative impact on users of community equipment but would urge people to contact the Council (contact centre: 020 8825 8000) directly if there are any issues. In the short term, we urged the Council both to contact directly all NRS users to explain the change, since website notifications will be insufficient to allay concerns, and to push Medequip to establish a user-group – for longer term see page 4!

A second major change underway over these summer months – with both local and national relevance - was the government announcement about closing Healthwatch England – see <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/response/2025-06-28/government-plans-around-future-healthwatch>. Our last newsletter urged people to engage with the local consultation and Healthwatch Ealing wrote (31 July) *“As you may know, the Government has announced plans to close Healthwatch England, with community engagement responsibilities expected to transfer to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and Local Authorities. This shift presents both a challenge and a powerful opportunity: there is currently no defined model for how this work will be carried out. We believe this is the right moment to create a better way forward, one that puts communities at the centre of preventative care, decision-making and service improvement. .... Stakeholder Survey (for professionals and partners): [Complete the stakeholder survey](#) Public Survey (for residents, carers and service users): [Complete the Public Survey](#)*

ERSCAG also met with Cllr Polly Knewstub (portfolio of Healthy, Equal Lives) to discuss a range of issues around community equipment, Healthwatch changes, Careline, CPZ/School Exclusion Zones and Blue/White Badges, and the need for a cross-cutting Council ACCESS group to ensure effective access for all residents across issues of health/social care/transport/housing/planning etc.

## Campaigns – current or upcoming national campaigns and events

As the parliamentary recess comes to an end, readers may want to re-acquaint themselves with concerns around the Welfare Bill? Ealing Advice Service have noted that there are a range of very useful briefings available from groups such as DRUK (Disability Rights UK [www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)). Maybe of most use, and minimal jargon, are the National Mencap Easy Read guides: <https://www.mencap.org.uk/easyread/benefit-changes-easy-read> And in the Lords the Second Reading opens (12 September) on the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill [https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3774?mc\\_cid=6e43f5c618&mc\\_eid=926bd64a48](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3774?mc_cid=6e43f5c618&mc_eid=926bd64a48)

More locally, Council elections will take place in May 2026, and candidates have already been seen out canvassing, and party-political manifestos are being revised. If you are active in a political party locally – or have occasion to meet candidates out looking for your support – please use any opportunity to push social care up the political agenda. Explain your concerns about lack of funding, staff shortages, or other care concerns and urge that party manifestos establish clear and ambitious goals for change in the coming four years.

## Latest developments – locally and nationally

### Carers:

- Ealing Council is currently seeking to implement its Carers' Strategy (2004-2009) - if you are a carer, it may be worth reviewing and seeing how well we are all doing? [https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201084/caring\\_for\\_someone/3493/carers\\_strategy](https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201084/caring_for_someone/3493/carers_strategy)

### Care workers:

- The Kings Fund think tank carried a [recent blog](#), where Senior Fellow for Social Care Simon Bottery highlights “*how overseas recruitment offered short-term relief but didn't fix poor pay, tough conditions or the shrinking domestic workforce. With 111,000 vacancies still unfilled, the pressure is far from over*”.

### Conferences

Dr Chris Whitty (of Covid fame!) spoke to the Gresham Society (23 June) about public health improvements and talked of the need for social and economic improvements for disabled and elderly people which would include better social care services, housing, and equipment. He argued that family support, domiciliary care, day care and GP care all add to an improved quality of life for older people and those with disabilities.

### Disability

- The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission has developed a series of webinars on Spotify including one relating to disability rights: [Episode 5. Disability & human rights](#)

### Finances

A factor bound to arise in the May 2026 local elections is the question of Council financing: see <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/aug/08/london-councils-to-lose-millions-in-funding-despite-high-poverty-levels>; and <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/aug/08/mansion-fair-council-tax-local-authorities-angela-rayner>

### Reports/Events:

- Care Rights UK did an oral submission to the parliamentary covid inquiry – see [here](#). The Covid Inquiry module devoted to social care ran between 30 June and 31 July. For ERSCAG's own submission to the inquiry back in 2022 see - <http://erscag.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/erscag-submission-to-covid-19-national-inquiry.pdf>

## Sources of advice and help

15 September is the deadline for action if you qualify for, but want to opt out, of the Winter Fuel payment – for more info, see Which magazine [Winter Fuel Payment opt-out deadline](#). If you use Telecare, or know someone who does, you should contact your landline provider to find out what to do in time for the digital switchover underway: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Qklcdq7PQo> And/or if you are caring for someone with Alzheimers you may find it useful to watch a video “four mistakes not to make”: <https://youtu.be/ymp2SgFhNtw?si=H8xpZZr4hfmz01lg>

Ealing Council is producing a new digital magazine to report on, and provide advice, about the health of the Borough: [READ MAGAZINE](#) and, though the summer is probably about to disappear, Ealing Today’s early August edition had a useful piece about [Caring Through the Heat](#)

A “Better Days” project newsletter is to be produced quarterly by the Council with the first edition appearing in July 2025 where readers “*can expect to find useful information about the changes we are making to Ealing council’s adult day services – the Cowgate Service and the Michael Flanders Service*”. For more info, contact [betterdays@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:betterdays@ealing.gov.uk)

## Social care over the longer term

The end of the summer will presumably see a return to debate around the government’s [10 Year Health Plan for England](#) which is largely about the future of the National Health Service but clearly will have consequences for the provision of social care too.

For a variety of commentaries, see <https://keepournhspublic.com/nhs-ten-year-health-plan-risks-long-term-damage-not-recovery-but-managed-decline-say-campaigners/>; <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jul/03/labour-government-nhs-1948-10-year-plan-ai-neighbourhood-care-patients>; and the Kings Fund series of helpful guides such as “a [free on-demand webinar](#) featuring expert analysis; a [new podcast episode](#) breaking down the big themes; and the [latest long read](#): Truly fit for the future? The 10 Year Health Plan explained”. While some critiques are quite negative - [The NHS 10-year plan: Brave New World or digital exclusion? – Left-Horizons](#) – other groups have willingly claimed some ‘ownership’ of ideas in the Plan – see for example the Progressive Insider (31 July) reporting that “*The [final report](#) from the IPPR Commission on Health and Prosperity, launched by Wes Streeting in 2024, has been recognised as the plan’s most influential blueprint*”.

Of course ERSCAG’s immediate concerns relate to the implications of this 10 Year NHS plan for social care – see a blog (4 July) by Chief Nurse Deborah Sturdy about the relevance of the Health Plan for social care - [The 10 Year Health Plan and the role for social care – Social care](#); and a briefing from Care Rights UK [here](#). The latter notes “*The implications of this plan on social care have been highly anticipated - and largely still remain to be seen. Interestingly, despite the fact that social care will be fundamental to delivering on big thematic shifts that the (Ten Year NHS) plan sets out, such as delivering care more locally and focussing on prevention, there are disappointingly few mentions of social care throughout. This is likely due to reliance on the Casey Commission to prescribe the way forward for social care in due course.*”

But can the Casey Commission deliver? Silver Voices ([www.silvervoices.co.uk](http://www.silvervoices.co.uk)) in a members' briefing (36/25 dated 13 August) seems very concerned: *"Social care reform is at a crossroads, but the signpost is blank in all directions. We have the ludicrous situation in England where the Casey Commission has been charged with setting out "the plan for how to implement a national care service", reporting next year, but with no explanation from the Government on what they actually mean by a "national care service"! This could be anything from a stand-alone national body on par with the NHS, to the current failing model, run mainly by local authorities, with a few national performance indicators and minimum standards added on. Meanwhile the other nations in the UK are struggling with their own versions of a national care service, blighted by chronic underfunding, a dysfunctional market, rising demand and party politics. Labour had no excuse for being so vague in its 2024 manifesto as it already had a longstanding policy developed by the Gordon Brown Government. Before being defeated in the 2010 election, Labour passed legislation to create a national care service "on par with the NHS" and extend free social care to all older and disabled people, including those in residential care. The victorious Coalition government repealed this legislation". After an interesting discussion of the situation in the devolved nations, Silver Voices conclude "In summary, social care is in a state of collapse throughout the UK and is crying out for political direction from the Westminster Government. While respecting devolution, we need some consistent principles to be applied across the UK, with the central taxation funding to match, in the same way that the NHS operates across our islands. While he has much to say on almost everything else, the responsible Secretary of State, Wes Streeting, has gone missing in action on social care."*

Addressing an alternative vision of providing social care at the local level, End Social Care Disgrace held a meeting (22 July) reported on previously, but now to be seen on YouTube [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cmmanyb\\_S7M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cmmanyb_S7M). The meeting addressed the issue of co-operatives and micro-enterprises set up on community development principles to provide social care to local people and contrasting this with the rigid care packages often available from private care agencies. There was discussion of the funding, support, training and management needed to set up and sustain these small enterprises, how to work with the Care Quality Commission, and how to protect vulnerable people from forms of abuse.

This debate about alternative forms of social care provision, the article mentioned in July's newsletter about public/private service provision [Ting Xu: The Legal Fiction of State Neutrality: Rethinking Accountability in Disability Home Adaptations](#), and the collapse of key providers like NRS (see earlier) require close study of the questions around the future financial and structural arrangements around social care.

**Check out our website - [www.erscag.org.uk](http://www.erscag.org.uk)**  
**For more information contact ERSCAG Secretary**  
**[maggiebeirne@googlemail.com](mailto:maggiebeirne@googlemail.com) or [erscaginfo@gmail.com](mailto:erscaginfo@gmail.com)**  
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