



Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter **January 2026**

Update on our latest activities

Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG) launched the new year with an early meeting with Kerry Stevens (Strategic Director of Adult Social Services & Public Health). The meeting covered a range of issues – community equipment; digital switchover; Blue Badges/CPZs/School Exclusion Zones and access for care-users and others; day-centre provision; staffing levels for Direct Payments team. We followed up in writing with specific examples of problems that social care users faced regarding community equipment provision and communications (accessible website, digital exclusion etc) which Kerry offered to pursue on our behalf. Arising from this session, a follow up meeting with Carrie Deacon (Assistant Director of Connected Communities) is planned; and a briefing on the Better Days project has been offered to ERSCAG's chair.

The Ealing Care Co-op held its annual meeting (13 January) and showed the film about disabled campaigners succeeding in bringing an end to social care charging (see October ERSCAG newsletter and <https://vimeo.com/1124827034>). The Care Co-op is campaigning for the appointment of a Councillor with responsibility for developing co-ops.

ERSCAG attended the Health and Adult Social Services Scrutiny Panel – (29 January) – and raised questions about the NHS re-organisation; the need to monitor the social care market where we are hearing of examples of reduced provision and financial instability; and when will the Panel be discussing the future of Ealing Healthwatch and its report into the transition from an Ealing Careline to a Harrow Careline service.

Several regular meetings have been cancelled as a result of the ongoing re-organisation of the NHS (launch due 1 April). Thus, the Health and Well Being Board meetings of October and January 2026 were cancelled and the Ealing Health and Well Being Residents' Forum is "*on hold until the ongoing restructure has been completed*". Concerned that the creation of much-enlarged Integrated Care Boards (to serve 4.5m people across NW and Central London) might reduce transparency and accountability for social care issues, ERSCAG will be monitoring these developments closely.

Campaigns – current or upcoming national campaigns and events

Hidden Voices – a public online meeting - is being organised by End Social Care Disgrace to shine a spotlight on the large number of disabled people who find it hard or impossible to speak up for themselves for various reasons and explore how we can make sure that what they think, want and need is heard and taken into account in the planning and delivery of support. Experts and those with lived experience of learning disabilities and/or autism will gather (virtually) on Thursday 26th February, 6.30-8pm. To register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/HkaGvZDuRbuaYeTHMxVUJeg>

The National Pensioners Convention are supporting a 1 million signature campaign for Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) - [Click here to read the article](#) and an article in the online My London (13 January) reports: “*More than 50,000 people have now signed a petition to protect [London's Freedom Pass](#) from "cruel" cuts*”.

Latest developments – locally and nationally

Careworkers:

In its [Conclusions for the UK](#), the European Committee of Social Rights made a number of findings for 2025 including concern at the lack of coverage by health and safety regulations for domestic and self-employed workers.

Direct Payments

- Think Personal Act Local ran a webinar (27 January) on the topic of Direct Payments & the global majority: “*Global majority refers to people who are black, Asian, brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and/or have been racialised as ‘ethnic minorities’, and represent approximately 80% of the world’s population. In this webinar, you will hear from those with lived experience... and show how culturally nuanced care can create greater choice, control, safety, and dignity.*” [Webinar: Unlocking the power of Direct Payments for the global majority - TLAP](#)
- Bringing Us Together regularly arrange workshops for individual employers and those receiving Direct Payments – most recently on 7th January (no recording available) which was focused on “Care Charges and Disability Related Expenditures”. Contact karen@bringingustogether.org.uk for details on future such events.

Disability

- <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/minister-rejects-pleas-from-disabled-peers-for-national-wheelchair-and-equipment-strategy/>
- Inclusion London will be running Disability Equality Training for Deaf and Disabled Peoples’ Organisations and Disabled Activists – 11 March, 10-1pm. The workshop (online) will “*look at the basic principles of disability equality and the social model of disability.*” For more information contact: [Book now](#)

Funding

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/dec/08/local-authorities-england-and-wales-warn-finances-breaking-point> and if you think that the charity sector can pick up the slack see - <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/dec/31/the-guardian-view-on-hard-times-for-britains-charities-struggling-to-do-more-with-less>
- [Ealing Council Leader Looks Ahead to the Coming Year](#) Says borough finances solid but increased taxes and fees not ruled out.
- Spending is expected to increase on ADHD, but funding to private providers is rising threefold: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2026/jan/12/nhs-england-overspending-adhd-millions-under-regulated-private-clinics>

Legislation:

- The employment rights legislation (discussed in previous newsletters) became law (Employment Rights Act) in December 2025 - <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3737>
- British Institute for Human Rights (www.bihhr.org.uk) reports that the new [Mental Health Act passed into law in December 2025](#), with new legal duties to respect, protect and fulfil human rights on independent providers of S117 aftercare services. BIHR also offer a three-part online human rights training course aimed at staff working in public bodies & service providers delivering mental health support in the community.

Reports/Events:

- Carnegie UK launch [Life in the UK data dashboard](#) on 26 January tho’ no easy search function to attitudes to/experiences of social care?

- On ageing and ageism: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/dec/07/the-guardian-view-on-ageing-research-our-lives-have-more-distinct-phases-than-we-thought> and Law Pod UK latest episode: [Tackling Ageism](#)
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002pfdl> (towards the end c.2 hours 45 minutes in) there is an interview with Michael Maslinski, who wrote: *What Would Maggie Do?: A Triumph of Love on a Journey Through Dementia*. He moved into a care home with his wife and tells a positive story but also reports on the rigid, rule bound procedures which he describes as serving the system not serving the individual.
- Resolution Foundation is organising a conference on Tuesday 10 February (and publishing a book) “Unsung Britain: a portrait of the country’s poorer half”. In the promotional material they note: “*This work sheds new light on how the shape, size and age of lower-income families are evolving...We examine the types of paid jobs they do, and the kind of unpaid work they carry out, as families navigate the wider pressures of rising ill-health and disability in an ageing society, and their knock-on effects on caring responsibilities*”. [Unsung Britain Final Conference • Resolution Foundation](#)
- To read the ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ of assisted dying (legislation still going through parliament) – check out either or both: *Do Not Go Gentle: the case against assisted dying* by Kathleen Stock arguing that it will change society’s attitude towards the vulnerable; and *Or A Better Death: The case for assisted dying* by Jonathan Romain, including a pioneering section to “meaningful ceremonies at the time of an assisted death”.
- Care Rights UK (promoting the rights of older people in care – www.carerightsuk.org) has responded to the Care Quality Commission’s assessment framework consultation ([more](#)). Amongst various recommendations they emphasised (a) that assessments should measure how well services promote wellbeing, dignity and outcomes, not just whether tasks were completed; and (b) the importance of prioritising lived experience – see [Our Vision for Social Care](#)

Your Help Needed

[National Commission calls for evidence on the regulation of AI in healthcare](#)

Sources of advice and help

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman LGO@public.govdelivery.com issues a weekly report on complaints received - several reported on in January relate specifically to Ealing:

- [London Borough of Ealing \(25 001 789\)](#) Summary: “*Ms X complained the Council delayed completing her occupational therapy assessment. She also complained of poor communication. We find the Council at fault for its delay in completing Ms X’s occupational therapy assessment and for communicating poorly with Ms X. The Council’s actions caused Ms X frustration and uncertainty, and she was put to time and trouble... The Council has agreed to apologise to Ms X and make a symbolic payment of £250. It has also agreed to make a service improvement*”
- [London Borough of Ealing \(24 019 385\)](#) Summary: “*Mr X complains the Council did not complete a review of late Mr Y’s care plan and wrongly decided Mr Y should pay for his care. Mr X says this caused avoidable distress and financial loss to him and his family. We find the Council at fault which caused injustice. The Council has agreed to complete a backdated financial assessment and provide a written apology.*”
- [London Borough of Ealing \(24 016 356\)](#) Summary: “The Council was at fault for the delay in assessing Ms X’s needs, producing a support plan and in arranging

an Occupational Therapy assessment. This caused Ms X frustration and uncertainty and meant she was without support to meet her needs. The Council has agreed to apologise, complete Ms X's support plan and make a payment to Ms X to acknowledge the injustice caused. It will also issue guidance to officers”.

- [London Borough of Ealing \(25 010 257\)](#) Summary: “*We upheld Mrs X’s complaint about the Council’s decision to refuse her Blue Badge application. The Council agreed to resolve the complaint by completing a review with information provided at appeal.*” This latter case was also covered in local press Ealing Today [Ealing Council Apologises for Mishandling Blue Badge Application](#)

Social care over the longer term

Given the local government elections (May 2026) ERSCAG has written to all the political parties currently represented on Ealing Council, hoping that their local manifestos will address social care. As soon as we know which candidates are standing for election, we will contact individual candidates. Nearer the time we will also develop a series of questions that people may want to ask about social care when they attend local hustings or are approached by candidates seeking their votes. We have argued that all the manifestos will should include some or all of the following: For **care-users**: speed up the care assessment process; give adequate support to Direct Payment users; create an access group; develop more supported living options; provide adequate and suitable daycare provision; and ensure that the equality and co-production requirements of care users are considered from the outset. For **carers**: more support is needed by increasing take up of carer assessments; benefit advice and financial support along with advocacy services; extending the provision of short breaks; privileging access in CPZs and School Exclusion Zones; perhaps nominating Ealing as a “Borough for Carers” to show visible commitment to this hidden constituency? For **care-workers**: Ealing should provide the London Living Wage to ALL care-workers (not just domiciliary care workers as now); privilege access to CPZ/School Exclusion Zones; and ensure that training, supervision & career progression are included in its procurement policies.

Most social care policy is determined nationally rather than locally. In particular ERSCAG’s demand that social care be free at the point of need (like medical care) can only happen with a change of national policy. In campaigning to this end, we have useful papers produced by End Social Care Disgrace: Funding Transformation in Adult Social Care and Support and is developing a policy framework on ‘non profits’ in social care – for more information check the www.endsocialcaredisgrace.org

Groups like Social Care Future also regularly run events talking about the future of social care – for example, a free webinar entitled “The glue that binds - moving public mindsets about the future of adult social care” – see their website: www.socialcarefuture.org.uk

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

For more information contact ERSCAG Secretary

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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ealingreclaimsocialcareactiongroup/>

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