



Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter February 2026

Update on our latest activities

Committee members of Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG) met online with Carrie Deacon (Assistant Director of Connected Communities at Ealing Council) at which we raised several of our concerns about the ‘connectedness’ of Ealing Council policies as they relate, for example, to digital exclusion, the rationing of care, disabled access venues, the commissioning of resources and how to ensure that the voice of residents is genuinely heard and listened to, prior to decisions being made.

ERSCAG’s chair (Roy Willis) was offered a briefing on the Better Days project at which Council officers explained that they are trying to improve day care service by reducing travel times and also find under-used space in three residential homes. A quarterly Better Days newsletter (betterdays@ealing.gov.uk) provides “updates on the latest changes to adult day opportunities and activities run from Cowgate Day Centre and the Michael Flanders Resource Centre”. There is still concern that closing the Michael Flanders Centre is a backward step and a campaign to retain the Centre for other community uses or to require developers to provide an adequate alternative is likely.

Ealing Healthwatch released its report on the transition from an Ealing Careline service to Harrow Careline last year (<https://www.healthwatchealing.org.uk/report/2026-01-09/service-user-experience-careline>). ERSCAG welcomed a couple of the recommendations but was astonished at the claim that “*the transition from Ealing to Harrow caused very few operational issues*” given that we know at the time that the transition was anything but unproblematic. We will be following up with the Council.

More generally, we are keeping an eye on the future of Healthwatch given a government announcement - “*Most local Healthwatch branches expect to remain open and operational until at least March 2027 while this process moves through Parliament*”. The strategy supposedly aims to “*bring the patient voice in-house to simplify the system and reduce bureaucracy*.” Needless to say, ERSCAG likes plans to simplify systems and reduce bureaucracy, but fears any potential reduction of transparency or accountability.

ERSCAG sent condolences on the sudden death of Cllr Aysha Raza. As one of our members noted, Cllr Raza was : “an interesting, passionate, well-informed and amusing person”. [Sir Sadiq Khan and Local MP Join Tributes to Greenford Councillor](#) and a Book of Remembrance was established at Perceval House.

Campaigns – current or upcoming national campaigns and events

The Guardian reported - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/dec/19/disabled-people-in-england-betrayed-by-cuts-to-new-build-accessibility-targets> and people are

being encouraged to contact their local MPs to ask why all new-builds are not required to be accessible? You can find out who your MP is, and draft a letter to them via this link: <https://www.writetothem.com/?a=westminstermp>. Local Ealing Central and Acton MP (Rupa Huq) drew our attention also to a public consultation (closing on 10 March) on this very issue: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>.

The National Pensioners Convention is campaigning with Age International for a UN Convention on older people's rights – see their article [Click here to read the article](#) and <https://www.ageinternational.org.uk/policy-research/publications/lifting-everyone-up-why-a-un-convention-on-the-rights-of--older-persons-matters/the-campaign-for-a-convention-on-the-rights-of-older-persons/>

Silver Voices report that “*Long standing Silver Voices members will be aware of our campaign against the forced transition of traditional landlines to digital alternatives by the telecoms industry, led by BT. The Government has agreed voluntary guidelines with the industry but has shown little interest in ensuring they are being adhered to*”. An ERSCAG supporter has been in touch with James Murray (Ealing North) MP with concerns.

Latest developments – locally and nationally

Careworkers:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/feb/12/britain-care-system-promotes-modern-slavery-reform> - a piece by the new General Secretary of UNISON
- <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2026/feb/13/rachel-reeves-appoints-brian-bell-chief-economic-adviser-skills-shortages-social-care/> In the article it notes that Prof Brian Bell has previously argued “*stridently for better pay in social care. In an interview with the Guardian in 2023, when the Conservatives were still in power, he accused ministers of having “no interest” in the conditions faced by workers in the sector.*”

Direct Payments:

- The Independent Living Group (Community) plans a couple of webinars of interest in the near future – Have Direct Payments Failed (3 March, 2-3pm); and Flexibility in Direct Payments (23 March, 1.30-3.30) – check out: <https://ilgcommunity.com/events/>

Disability

- For Ealing's crackdown on Blue Badge fraud – see <https://www.facebook.com/share/1QopvjHzZb/> and the Ealing Times: https://www.ealingtimes.co.uk/news/25812484.crackdown-ealing-blue-badge-fraud-leaves-offenders-pocket/?ref=ebIn&nid=724&block=article_block_a&u=60d787a931362758191bbeade08cb9ec&date=010226. ERSCAG is following this debate routinely and believes that electronic Blue Badges may be in the pipeline as another way of reducing theft/fraud.
- Which? Magazine newsletter in February – reports “*A disability shouldn't be a block to banking. But our investigation uncovers a two-tier system, where some providers offer only lip service to inclusivity. We hear from struggling customers and name the banks going the extra mile to improve accessibility.*”

Funding and Finances

- [Ealing Council Leader Looks Ahead to the Coming Year](#) saying Borough finances solid but increased taxes and fees not ruled out.
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1wzyw3eexpo> reports on Tower Hamlets' experience of having introduced a no-charge system for homecare.

- Ealing Today reports [Ealing Council Proposes Maximum Council Tax Rise](#) and in Ealing Council's 'newsletter' there is more news about the Council's budget: [Watch video](#)
- Relevant to the care of children and young people rather than Adult Social Care, this article highlights problems that arise in the care sector when the profit motive predominates: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2026/feb/04/private-child-social-care-providers-in-england-pushed-out-for-profiteering>. Ealing Today newsletter (19 February) reports: [Ealing Council Raises Over £15 Million from School Street Fines](#) which sounds like good financial news, but does this then 'trump' the need for flexibility in access that ERSCAG has argued for on behalf of care-users/carers/careworkers?
- Carers allowance scandal: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2026/feb/04/dwp-chief-accused-of-overseeing-culture-of-complacency-that-led-to-carers-allowance-scandal> and subsequently: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2026/feb/09/dwp-peter-schofield-to-step-down-carers-allowance-scandal>
- For those finance whiz-kids amongst this newsletter's readership, recent circulars from the Department for Health and Social Care should be of particular interest – see: [Social care charging for local authorities: 2026 to 2027](#) and [Better Care Fund framework 2026 to 2027](#) – and if you come to any conclusions do contact ERSCAG with your thoughts!

Reports/Events:

- A Compass report [Care is a Societal Challenge: Purpose Before Process](#) argues “for systemic overhaul in the care sector, including oversight moved to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and impetus primarily placed in Local Authority Social Services Departments”.
- Contact - npcdigitalnews@gmail.com - if you would like to join the mailing list for the National Pensioners Convention's Digital Working Party – regular bulletins consider digital inclusion and exclusion; the digital switchover etc.
- A regular newsletter (14 February - [published a new update](#)) updates people on the services available in relation “the improvements being made to adult specialist palliative and end-of-life care across north west London.” These updates highlight “access to care, stronger hospice at home services, improved outpatient support, new Enhanced End-of-Life Care beds in every Borough, with resident engagement starting from April 2026, a stronger workforce, and a single 24/7 advice line launching in September 2026”.
- The new General Secretary of UNISON, Andrea Egan, writes in her first interview for UNISON's The Activist: “I will make sure that we are challenging the Labour government on the issues that matter most to our members – such as public funding, social care” Ms Egan is an ex residential care worker and qualified social worker, very much in favour of a new National Care Service - so an interesting ally in future campaigning?
- <https://copni.org/news/articles/new-report-warns-health-and-social-care-system-is-failing-older-people> - from the Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland – “Voices of Concern: The Reality of Health and Social Care for Older People in N.I.”

Your Help Needed

Social Care Future is developing an independent public record of how those who require care and support experience accessing health and social care. They want to know about communications; advice/rights/ information; staff attitudes; assessments and reviews; and financing. [The Big Check in - Share your experience of Health and Social Care 2026](#). See also earlier 10 March deadline for consultation on disability access to public buildings.

Sources of advice and help

Care Rights UK offers online support – for example citing the case of Jared who had Alzheimers and who wanted to keep a live-in care package. Find out [more](#). MENCAP also has an advice line tel: 0808 808 1111; helpline@mencap.org.uk Silver Voices – an

independent organisation campaigning for senior citizens – is happy to get membership enquiries: www.silvervoices.co.uk/join-us

Social care over the longer term

Ealing Council has 70 councillors and currently is Labour controlled, with 58 Labour councillors, 7 Liberal Democrat, 4 Conservative and 1 Independent. The 7 May local government elections provide an opportunity for local people to raise any concerns they have about social care provision in the Borough, and to urge the need for a greater priority to be given to this agenda. ERSCAG has now met informally with some of the candidates who have indicated their interest in social care issues and Ealing Community Independents have informed us that they intend to take on board in their forthcoming party political manifesto ALL the requests we made of all political parties.

We have argued that all manifestos 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.

It will also be important to check out the national policies being pursued by local people seeking election. Thus, Silver Voices – a non party political group - nevertheless felt it necessary to draw urgent attention to Reform’s proposal to get rid of the Equality Act. As the newsletter explains, for older people, this could mean: NHS managers would be able to deny lifesaving interventions for people based solely on age; employers would be able to sack older workers with impunity; private companies could refuse to provide goods and services to older people because it was not as profitable; the requirement on authorities to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ would be seriously weakened. Silver Voices concludes: *“Make sure in upcoming elections that Reform UK candidates are asked to justify their position on age discrimination, and if you are a Reform UK member, do lobby your party HQ against this irrational and ill-thought-out policy.”*

As soon as we know which candidates are standing for election, we will contact individual candidates more systematically. Nearer the time we will also develop a series of questions that people may want to ask about national and local policies on social care when they attend local hustings or are approached by candidates seeking their votes.

[Check out our website - www.erscag.org.uk](http://www.erscag.org.uk)
For more information contact ERSCAG Secretary
maggiebeirne@googlemail.com or erscaginfo@gmail.com
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ealingreclaimsocialcareactiongroup/>
Please get in touch if you need material in other formats.