



Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group

July/August 2026 newsletter

Update on our latest activities

Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG) held one of its regular meetings (6 August) with local MP - James Murray of Ealing North. We congratulated him on his return to the Treasury (see page 4) and briefed him on local developments with Ealing Cabinet changes, proposed changes to daycare provision, the suggestion of an audit of Blue Badge places, the creation of an inter-departmental 'access group', and concerns around diminishing opportunities for advocacy. At the national level, we raised concerns about the NHS Bill and the creation of massive Integrated Care Boards with limited Council representation and the potential loss of voice for residents/users/patients and informed him of our efforts around the Casey Commission (see on). Two ERSCAG committee members, in their private capacity, and given their role on Ealing's Co-Production Boards, met with Cllr Paul Driscoll to brief him on his new Cabinet portfolio of Healthy Equal Lives.

Campaigns – current or upcoming national campaigns and events

Silver Voices (www.silvervoices.co.uk) has a petition against the loss of Freeview TV: *"This would mean that TV would only be available by purchasing super-fast broadband, discriminating directly against low-income households, those who struggle with modern technology, and those in remote areas without access to reliable broadband."* The Green Paper (31 August deadline) can be found on <https://us.list-manage.com/EYzApZ3ETmA?e=cad402e9a3&c2id=5e64566a9d085222042bf28afb0094e7> and the Silver Voices petition can be found on https://us.list-manage.com/_gdBdGctVgV?e=cad402e9a3&c2id=5e64566a9d085222042bf28afb0094e7.

A local petition is being organised to Save the Michael Flanders Centre. This debate mirrors the threat to, and reduction in, daycare services elsewhere - <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/jun/28/labour-makerfield-voter-closures-day-centres-andy-burnham>. The article argues that *"a perception of day centres as the epitome of unfashionable "building-based care"* has led instead to councils granting people personal budgets to buy their own support. In 2018, ITV News found that the number of adult day centres – including facilities for older people – had dropped by [41% across England since 2010](#). Back in 2012, the learning-disability charity Mencap found that since 2009 *"almost one in three councils [had closed day services of all kinds, charging was becoming much more common, and, for all the official promises of new models of care, one in four learning-disabled people who responded to its survey now spent less than one hour outside their home every day"](#)*.

Latest developments – locally and nationally

Carers

- Care Rights UK www.carerightsuk.org reports a new government Unpaid Carers Action Plan whose aim is help unpaid carers be *"recognised earlier, connected to support services more easily, and better supported in their health, education & employment"*.

- Sue Yeandle writes about “Carers’ Organisations and their impact” - <https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/monobook-aa/book/9781447334958/9781447334958.xml>
- https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/aug/04/older-people-help-family-care-reform?CMP=opinionuk_email

Disability

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2026/jul/08/disability-benefits-not-fit-for-purpose-timms-review>
- David Turner who wrote Disability: A History of Resistance writes a blog on the subject <https://theconversation.com/todays-arguments-about-disability-benefits-have-been-raging-for-500-years-285633>
- A disability equality training workshop in Ealing (18 July) “looked at stereotypes, learned about the social model of disability and discussed appropriate vocabulary. The attendees at West London Trade Union Club went home with lists they had compiled of actions their organisations could take to become more disability friendly” – equality@wltuc.com

Funding and finances

- Around Ealing (Summer 2026) reports that 28.1% of the Council’s annual budget is spent on “adult and public health services” that is support for mental health, learning disabilities, older people, and independent living.
- An Ealing Times article (16 July) reports on a study claiming that “Ealing spends less on adult social care than any council in London” – spending £478 per adult, 24% below the England-wide average”. <https://www.ealingtimes.co.uk/news/26285247.ealing-responds-label-lowest-london-social-care-spend/>

Mental Health

- Worrying news: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2026/aug/03/nhs-mental-health-trust-plans-25m-in-cuts-to-jobs-and-services> but there is some good local news in Ealing Today (23 July) – “A pioneering NHS initiative in Ealing Borough is transforming the way mental health care is delivered to older residents in care homes — improving wellbeing while saving the local health system more than £1.2 million..... The Care Home In-reach Liaison Service (CHILS), run by West London NHS Trust, supports 32 care homes across the borough....by bringing clinical support directly into care homes, the service helps residents receive treatment in familiar surroundings, reducing distress and avoiding unnecessary hospital admissions”.
- Autumn programme of free courses and workshops on well-being for Ealing residents <https://www.westlondon.nhs.uk/our-services/adult/mental-health-services/recovery-college>

Reports/Events:

- End Social Care Disgrace organised another excellent webinar (18 June), on the topic of ‘Hidden Voices: Older People’ - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svOdSUVOtCM>
- <https://thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/resources/webinar-developing-an-individual-service-fund-isf-offer/>
- Healthwatch Ealing has issued its annual report for 2025/26: for copies contact info@healthwatch.org.uk; 0203 886 0830 “Our team has been hard at work during these uncertain times for our organisation. Despite that, we have worked hard to deliver for the people of Ealing, and we feel that that is reflected in our report.”
- The Council of Europe (CoE) Human Rights Commissioner reports (16 July) on the importance of safeguarding the dignity and rights of older persons in long-term care homes: “This month, I began engaging with CoE governments regarding the situation of older persons in long-term care facilities. My visits to Bulgaria, France and Romania have already revealed striking common threads: a lack of capital investment, deeply undervalued staff and a shortage of medical specialisation (geriatrics).”
- For an update on Ealing’s provision of end-of-life services, see: <https://www.westandnorthlondon.icb.nhs.uk/news-and-updates/news/adult-community-specialist-palliative-care-north-west-london-update-july-2026>

- The Tablet weekly magazine (8 August) carries an editorial on “The ethics of social care” arguing that Baroness Casey (see on) “*cannot shirk the difficult moral and philosophical questions about what a reformed care system should be trying to achieve*”.
- Ealing Council issued its 4 year plan (2026-2030) with a mission to “*enable every person to live a healthy and happy life and end the unfair inequalities*” by various means including “*enabling more people to live independently, at home, supported by strong community-based services and enhanced support for unpaid carers*”. One of three over-arching values asserts: “*Every resident should have real control over their own lives and.... should be able to take part fully in community life and local decision making*”.

https://www.ealing.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/21555/council_plan_2026-30.pdf

Your Help Needed – Check cover email about an important new research project looking at the food and drink needs of older adults living at home (QoL@bsms.ac.uk)

Sources of advice and help

Various options for securing help canvassed in earlier newsletters include the following:

- (i) Your local Councillor: to get contact details, check out Council website https://maps.ealing.gov.uk/Webreports/Cluster/Cluster_MyCouncillor.html;
- (ii) Your local MP: to check who that is, your postcode will be sufficient (<https://www.parliament.uk/>). MPs can pursue both individual and wider policy concerns. Rupa Huq (Ealing Central & Acton) recently (30 June) asked a question about strategic lawsuits being used to deter her constituents “*exercising their long-standing constitutional right to have their voices heard*”. (iii) If you have tried to pursue a complaint with the Council but not had a satisfactory answer – consider approaching the Local Government Ombudsman (www.lgo.org.uk). –

Independent Age (www.independentage.org; helpline@independentage.org; or 0800 319 6789) produces a series of useful booklets, for example on carer benefits etc.

Social care over the longer term

Despite summer normally being quite quiet, it is a matter of “all change” in terms of government responsibilities for health and social care. Andy Burnham has come to his office with lots of very positive signals about what he intends to do on social care as Prime Minister. He has appointed Yvette Cooper as Secretary of State and Dame Diana Ruth Johnson DBE, MP for Kingston upon Hull North, as the Minister of State for Social Care. Local MP James Murray has been appointed Financial Secretary to the Treasury and another local MP - Deirdre Costigan - also has a new government role: <https://www.ealing.news/news/new-government-role-for-ealing-southall-mp-deirdre-costigan/>

There has been extensive media coverage given to social care in recent weeks: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/jul/21/the-guardian-view-on-social-care-reform-andy-burnham-is-right-this-issue-must-be-gripped>; <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2026/jul/27/andy-burnham-vows-to-use-his-political-capital-to-fix-social-care-system>; <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2026/jul/27/andy-burnham-cross-party-agreement-social-care>; with a BBC Radio 4 (29 July) morning programme including Baroness Casey - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002zhrk?partner=uk.co.bbc&origin=share-mobile>; and a Newscast programme - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0p137g6>. Reference is also made to the relevance of social care reform to the ‘assisted dying’ debate (see page 2 re: local palliative care services): <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2026/jul/29/assisted-dying-debate-end-of-life-care-reform-andy-burnham>

The formal government announcement about social care reform can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-sets-out-new-path-to-fix-social-care-together-29-july-2026?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications-topic&utm_source=6fa6c5df-af40-430d-8ab0-6b57b3fd289c&utm_content=weekly; and a fascinating article by John Lister about the challenges awaiting the Prime Minister can be found at: <https://lowdownnhs.info/social-care/why-the-community-care-challenge-is-so-hard-for-burnham-to-solve/>

But of course, the question is – will anything change beyond the names of those in charge? After more than twenty formal reviews of social care since Andy Burnham last held government responsibility in this area, we now have the Casey Review. The Prime Minister immediately asked Baroness Casey to speed up the timing of her final report into the reform of social care and endorsed her desire to develop a much wider public debate about next steps. Louise Casey has inaugurated The Big Conversation (<https://caseycommission.co.uk/bigconversation/take-part/>) where she wants to hear from as many as possible – for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2026/jul/29/you-have-to-sit-quietly-until-you-die-the-families-failed-by-englands-social-care-system>. ERSCAG has already engaged online in addition to preparing an earlier submission. End Social Care Disgrace (www.endsocialcaredisgrace.org) has similarly made a lengthy submission

Though Baroness Casey and others have argued that we should first focus on the values and principles we want to see in any reform of our social care system, the question of funding and the role of privatised social care has also been the subject of numerous articles recently. See John Lister article mentioned earlier as well as: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/jul/24/my-generation-scared-care-tax-andy-burnham-ageing-well>; and economist Mariana Mazzucato writing that “*The government’s new public interest test – asking whether a service can be delivered in-house before large contracts are outsourced – is promising*”. However, Robert Jenrick (Reform UK) seeks to drop the “social value” criterion from procurement practices <https://us.list-manage.com/QwaD2GnVVdY?e=659beecd72&c2id=c2b9dc1dad50de0867b211c31ca423b5> and his party proposes to cut the welfare bill and disability benefits by £50m <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cz977nxww1jo>. Simultaneously, a poll (The Week, 8 August) claims that 73% of Labour members say government should spend more on social care through higher taxes (either general taxation or higher earners only).

So what can you do? Firstly, please engage directly in The Big Conversation (<https://caseycommission.co.uk/bigconversation/take-part/>). Secondly if you are active in a political party, check if there are motions going to the Autumn party-political conferences that need support. We know of motions on social care submitted to the Labour Party conference (26-30 September in Liverpool) and a fringe meeting co-hosted with the New Statesman on 27 September will address www.freehomecare.org.uk. Are you active in the Conservatives (conference: 4-7 October, Birmingham) or the Greens (2-4 October) or Liberal Democrats (19-22 September), the latter both in Brighton? Whichever party you belong to or support, ask them for cross-party solidarity on this vital topic.

Check out our website - www.erscag.org.uk

For more information contact ERSCAG Secretary

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

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