



**Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter
November/December 2021**



Update on recent developments

Nationally, the most important recent development is the publication by the government of its long-promised White Paper on social care – “People at the Heart of Care: adult social care reform”. It is meant to offer a long-term vision of social care, and there are many positive principles and concepts encapsulated in the government’s vision – but relatively little change on offer. By virtue of it being a 10-year programme, it also says little about the current crisis facing social care nationally and locally. ERSCAG is preparing a commentary on the proposals and in the New Year will be bringing these to the attention of not only our elected leaders in the Council, Ealing MPs, and others interested in genuine social care reform.

ERSCAG attended a meeting of the Ealing Health & Adult Services Standing Scrutiny Panel (3 November) and will be meeting in the New Year with the Council Leader and other relevant Councillors on issues such as the financing of care, staffing levels, day-care arrangements, and the newly issued White Paper. We will be commenting on the fact that London Living Wage Week 2021 was celebrated (15-21 November) by the Council, though care-workers employed in Ealing via care agencies are not all yet paid the LLW.

ERSCAG made a short submission to an inquiry of the parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights into “protecting human rights in care settings”. Four questions were posed: What human rights issues need to be addressed in care settings? How effective are providers at respecting the human rights of people under their care? How effective are regulators in protecting residents from human rights breaches and in supporting patients and residents who make complaints about their care provider? And, what lessons need to be learned from the pandemic to prevent breaches of human rights legislation in the future? The Inquiry covers people living in residential care homes, hospitals and supported housing, as well as those receiving social care services in their own homes; publication of its report is imminent.

ERSCAG met Ealing Healthwatch (17 November) to discuss how improvements could be made to their consultation processes to ensure that they effectively reach all those who need to be involved & ensure that they fulfil their statutory duty to ‘represent the voice of the patient’.

Campaigns – current or upcoming

Act4Inclusion (formerly Reclaim Social Care) was officially (re)launched on 28 October with discussions on “Choice, Control and Independence”: see <https://youtu.be/hZbsOS7mvd0>

A number of groups are looking to draw on lived experiences of social care. For example, the national Relatives and Residents Association, which raised concerns about “the sustained attack on care home residents’ human rights”, wants to create a group made up of people with lived experience of using care services, either directly or as a relative/friend. The group will be informal, and the time commitment is entirely flexible with group members being contacted from time to time to share their experiences. For more information contact info@relres.org. Disability Rights UK also reported that the statutory Care Quality Commission (CQC) “*want to hear from disabled people or those with long term health conditions about how they are finding NHS and care services*” and have a page where people can write about their experiences. The CQC website is at: www.cqc.org.uk

The national campaign by Inclusion London, ERSCAG and many others to Scrap Social Care charging is being stepped up. The key demands of the campaign include: *(1) There must be a long-term funding solution for social care; social care must be put on the same footing as the NHS i.e. free at the point of use; (2) Reform of the law to give more power to disabled people and support inclusion. The law must guarantee disabled people the right to choose where and with whom we live, have access to all necessary support to live a normal life and access community activities like everybody else; (3) It is critically important to ensure that money is spent on services that disabled people of all ages want and need; (4) Local authorities should record the needs that they are currently unable to meet which will make it possible for the Government to work towards filling the gap; (5) Social care should be free at the point of use. It is completely unacceptable that people on means-tested benefits have to pay a significant proportion of their already small income for social care support. Charging for social care must be abolished (6) Reduce bureaucratic burden and enable disabled people to innovate. Reform must promote a radical change in the approach, ensuring that restrictions are removed so that people are truly able to self-direct their support and don't feel as though care is done to them.* Interestingly, the recent White Paper seems to reflect some of the concerns cited here, though it is highly questionable if the solutions on offer will really address the level of need, so this campaign is very timely.

Information and latest developments nationally

Covid & Vaccinations:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/10/care-homes-in-england-set-to-lose-50000-staff-as-covid-vaccine-becomes-mandatory>
- A government circular (19 November) says “Although vaccination as a condition of deployment in care homes is now fully in force - and will be extended to other health and care settings from April 2022 - not everyone can be vaccinated against COVID-19 for health reasons. If you work or volunteer in care homes, you must apply for official proof that, for medical reasons, you're unable to be vaccinated.”

[COVID-19 medical exemptions guidance](#)

Funding:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/nov/17/englands-poorest-oaps-face-same-care-costs-as-wealthier-elderly-analysts-suggest>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/nov/19/promises-boris-johnson-social-care-hs2> Polly Toynbee reflects on the political problem underlying social care reform: “social care consumes *more than 40%* of English local authority spending, yet only 2% of their voters use it at any one time. Everyone hopes not to need it, few understand its fiendish complexity”

Racial Equality

The Ealing Race Equality Commission has deferred the publication of its report until the New Year. Will they comment on whether the Council has already, or should, sign up to the social care workplace race equality standard initiative (see also DHSC circular of 29 October).

Reports

If you missed the excellent two-part BBC series entitled “Inside the Care Crisis with Ed Balls” see www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0011gny and/or the recent Panorama programme on the role of equity finance in the residential care sector.

Staffing:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/nov/03/ministers-launch-tv-ad-campaign-to-tackle-care-worker-shortage>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/nov/16/give-social-care-workers-1000-bonus-to-protect-nhs-ministers-urged>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/nov/17/carers-enable-us-to-live-not-just-exist-a-personal-care-employer-on-life-without-eu-workers> - A website PA Pool “which matches disabled people with PAs” reported that: “Last year, we had 460 PAs join from Poland, and this year we’ve only had 36.” If you are concerned about these care workforce shortages, you may want to sign the following petition: https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/594747?fbclid=IwAR2vjV4YwUNFDET0vCEAj9wu_pF_PVruLC7WJ0gexkXiCgo1kkiJpg8-lUg
- Ealing LLW campaign see https://www.aroundealing.com/news/living-wage-week-2021/?utm_campaign=Around%20Ealing%20Extra_%23101_11%20November%202021&utm_source=emailCampaign&utm_content=&utm_medium=email
- Citizens UK published [New research](#) showing that 56% of care workers skip meals due to low pay.

Sources of official advice/help

Current official guidance about covid can be found at www.gov.uk/coronavirus. The Department of Health & Social Care also issues regular updates about adult social care – to join their mailing list see news@dhsc-mail.co.uk At the Ealing level, the Council also offers a lot of guidance – see www.ealing.gov.uk/coronavirus and/or www.ealingtogether.org

If, in the lead-up to Christmas, you are concerned about your own vulnerability to scams – or those you care for - check out advice <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/scams-fraud/support-for-scam-victims/> or the Citizens Advice Bureau <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/banking/banking-security-and-fraud/>

Social care over the longer term

After several newsletter issues querying when these long-promised reforms from government were coming, we have had a couple of initiatives in reasonably quick succession.

The Health and Care Bill that is currently going through parliament says relatively little about social care but could have a dramatic impact on it as government moves ever closer towards privatisation of health provision (and indeed potentially to more integration of health and social care provision?). Government then introduced a Health & Social Care Levy in a September document entitled “Building Back Better Our Plan for Health and Social Care”. While initially trumpeted as the long-awaited response to the (10 year old) proposals from Sir Andrew Dilnot, and as a great advance, the plans – despite their title – dealt largely with funding questions only. Moreover, even these appeared to unravel when the details were unveiled in the Budget and Spending Review at the end of October. And on 1 December the government issued its long-term vision “People at the Heart of Care: adult social reform”. At first sight it reads well (in that it offers a positive vision of those in receipt of social care being able to exercise choice and control over their own lives) but it seems only to tinker at the edges when major change is needed. Social care is in genuine crisis, both in the short and long term, and this White Paper does not seem to recognise that.

At the same time, the Welsh government seems to be moving ahead more radically. In the context of negotiating the “Co-operation Agreement 2021 between the Labour Government and Plaid Cymru”, both partners made progressive commitments on social care prior to the Welsh Senedd (Assembly) elections in May. The Welsh Labour government then made a number of commitments on social care for the next 5 years including the setting up of “*an expert group to support our shared ambition to create a National Care Service, free at the point of need, continuing as a public service. We will agree an implementation plan by the end of 2023.*” Past ERSCAG newsletters reported on similar discussions underway in Scotland.

This level of ambition does not appear in the White Paper which is looking at the future of social care in England, so this means there is a lot of work ahead for campaign groups like the Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG) in the year(s) ahead. In the meantime, may we wish all our members, supporters, and readers the warmest of season’s greetings.



Follow Us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) at [Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action](#) and join our Facebook group [Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group](#). For more information, or copies of any of the ERSCAG papers mentioned here, can be requested from Secretary (maggiibeirne@googlemail.com) or erscaginfo@gmail.com