

Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Annual Report 2022-2023

Committee: The following people served as ERSCAG's committee throughout this period: Maggie Beirne (secretary), Alex Cowan (chair of Direct Payment User Group), Mike Geoghegan, Janet Mearns, David Scully, Mark Tilston (treasurer) and Roy Willis (chair). Pat McLean stood down at the last AGM. Committee meetings are held monthly (by zoom).

Local Ealing interventions – policy

1. ERSCAG has 'virtually' attended the meetings of the Ealing Health & Adult Social Services Standing Scrutiny Panel and the Ealing Health and Wellbeing Board (the two Council committees directly concerned with social care).
2. We have met with senior Council staff working on adult social care, the recently appointed Cost-of-Living Programme Lead, and the Operations Manager of Ealing Healthwatch.
3. We have contributed to a Council survey looking at the operation of Direct Payments and publicised a major Carers' Surveys.
4. ERSCAG has attended public meetings (virtually and in person) of the Ealing Health and Care Residents Panel which was newly established this year; followed the work of the Citizens Tribunal on health inequalities; and invited the chair of the Ealing Care Co-op to speak to the committee about their work.
5. Regular meetings have been held of our Direct Payment User Group with speakers from Action on Disability (to discuss scrapping social care charges), Alan Hiscutt (on a Council survey into Direct Payments) and Sham Baig who heads up the Council's Direct Payments team.

In all of these meetings – either directly and/or by way of follow-up correspondence, we have pursued a range of issues: the importance of listening to the voice of lived experience; the need for support to counter the cost of living impact on people in receipt of social care; effective implementation of an agreed Learning Disability Strategy; the quality control of care-homes; the continuing provision of PPE to care workers & social care users; the nature of partnership boards etc.

Local Ealing campaigning and outreach:

1. ERSCAG continued to issue a monthly newsletter (200+ recipients)
2. We launched a new website thanks to great assistance from Rob Logan (www.erscag.org.uk); and re-issued & distributed our promotional leaflets to local GP surgeries, libraries, carnivals etc.
3. We also developed a short leaflet on the work of our Direct Payment User Group (DPUG) which was circulated to all DPUG users by the Council.
4. ERSCAG welcomed the 'vote of confidence' accorded us when it was made a financial beneficiary of the decision by SAGE (the Senior Action Group Ealing) to close down.
5. We speak at events when invited (eg the AGM of the Hanwell Village Conservation Area), and as part of a Labour-controlled Council, and with three Labour MPs, ERSCAG has used campaign materials (developed for use at the party's National Policy Forum) with local Constituency Labour Party groups & adapted them for use with other parties.

National interventions

- 1) ERSCAG keeps in touch with all three Ealing MPs on a regular basis ie Rupa Huq (Ealing Central & Acton), Virendra Sharma (Ealing Southall) and James Murray (Ealing North and Shadow Financial Secretary to the Treasury). The last initiated in 2020 a series of regular meetings with ERSCAG to

alert him to local and national developments in relation to social care and these have proved very useful to us when trying to emphasise the political importance to be given the issue.

- 2) ERSCAG has made submissions to parliamentary or other official studies – the Archbishops' Commission on Social Care (June 2022); Fabian Society Inquiry on social care (July); Cost of Living Tips (August); Covid 19 Inquiry (November). We regularly monitor parliamentary debates and other reports in order to influence debates about the long-term future of social care.
- 3) We are also affiliated to End Social Care Disgrace (ESCaD) which is a campaign seeking the creation of a National Care and Independent Living Service and participates actively in their efforts to engage with policy makers. Two very successful virtual events were organised by ESCaD, with one a fringe-meeting at the Labour Party Conference and the other on the topic of unpaid carers (March 2023).
- 4) ERSCAG maintains links with many active groups such as Inclusion London, WinVisible, Action on Disability, the Independent Living Group etc. ESCaD's work in preparing material for the Labour Party's National Policy Forum was pursued at national and local level, as well as allowing us to lobby other political representatives about the priority accorded to social care.

Individual queries

ERSCAG has neither the skills nor the capacity to act on behalf of individual social care users, though we have on occasion been able to signpost people onwards, and several members have found our interventions helpful when escalating their concerns. We are greatly helped in pursuing this work by the lived experience of ERSCAG's Direct Payment User Group which meets every couple of months to exchange their experiences and – on occasion – to hear from invited speakers. Concerns raised at the meeting have been actively pursued by ERSCAG in its meetings with Council staff/Councillors/MPs etc (see earlier). They include for example: local problems created by disability hate crime; the need for a disability-specific element to the Council cost of living website; the need for financially generous interpretations to be given to calculating Disability Related Expenditures in a cost of living crisis; the problems created for oxygen supplies in a utility crisis, etc. This practical experience has helped ERSCAG secure successes in terms of having the Council - better signpost help available in the cost of living crisis to disabled people; improve its outreach to social care recipients in need; extend the network of care workers receiving the Real (London) Living Wage (though there are still some gaps); and ERSCAG has also encouraged Healthwatch to report more regularly on social care in tandem with its health remit.

Future plans

ERSCAG expects in 2023/2024 to:

- 1) continue campaigning – particularly in the run up to parliamentary elections due in 2024 - for the creation of a National Care and Independent Living Service, an end to charging for domiciliary social care, support for carers, and the London Living Wage for all care-workers.
- 2) Many positive commitments were made by Ealing Councillors in the context of local government elections last year, and ERSCAG will need to maintain its scrutiny & lobbying efforts to this end.
- 3) To improve our outreach, we aim to increase our social media efforts, and seek more creative ways for getting coverage in local media inc. radio.
- 4) We will continue to make formal submissions as and when appropriate, and we look forward to responding to the Fabian Society study and the national Covid-19 Inquiry in due course.

We will seek to extend our support base by maintaining our regular newsletters and building upon our cooperative efforts with local and national campaigns to improve the provision of social care.



Finance Report 2022-23

Submitted to Annual General Meeting
5 June 2023 by
ERSCAG Treasurer - Mark Tilston

Balance brought forward from 17th May 2022		+ £1124.81
Zoom subscription	<i>Prepaid by Maggie Beirne</i>	- 143.88
Website maintenance	" " " "	- 115.06
Website Design Balance	<i>Robert A Campbell</i>	- 300.00
Leaflets	<i>E P Design</i>	- 98.80
		- £657.74
SAGE closing-down donation		+ £700.00
Balance carried forward to 10th May 2023		+ £1167.07