



Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter **July/August 2023**

Update on latest activities

Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG) made a short submission in July to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) urging them, when examining the UK government's compliance with the UN Convention, to ask probing questions about social care.

Much closer to home (!), we attended meetings of the Council's Health and Well Being Board, the Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel (13 July), and the Ealing Health and Care Residents Forum (8 August). Questions were asked about recruitment and retention of staff, backlogs in care assessments, co-production (defined in a recent British Institute of Human Rights newsletter late July/early August as "*Co-production is when service-providers work alongside people accessing or trying to access services to ensure the service best meets everyone's needs*"), and digital exclusion (see on to campaigning and NPC. At the Residents Forum, useful material was shared about end-of-life treatments (see on)

Members of ERSCAG and its Direct Payment User Group (DPUG) attended sessions run by Inclusion London (9 August) about reducing social care charges, and their Chatbot is available for Direct Payment people to use. A very useful meeting was held (14 July) with Council and NHS staff to discuss improved collaboration in terms of communications with Direct Payment and Continuing Healthcare users.

Enjoying the brief summer sunshine, ERSCAG was invited by Ealing Save Our NHS, along with other community groups and campaigners, to speak at the demo (1 July) held outside of Ealing Hospital to mark the 75th NHS birthday; and we distributed our leaflets at the Acton Carnival.

For any party-political activists attending party conferences this Autumn, please see final section – social care needs to move up the political agenda. Many of our exchanges with politicians say "*we do not hear about social care on the doorsteps*" and explains why the issue does not get the political and financial priority it requires.

Campaigns – current or upcoming

End Social Care Disgrace campaign has organised a series of meetings looking at different aspects of social care. Earlier editions covered the needs of carers and the most recent 10 July event was a Fair Deal for Disabled People - for recordings of all events - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCye1RMNnY-jzs5mAkfROI0Q>

Campaign for Real Care <https://www.beingtheboss.co.uk/the-campaign-for-real-care/> are campaigning for signatories to support their [Charter for the Right To Wellbeing](#)

The Future Social Care Coalition

seems to be primarily aimed at addressing concerns of

the care workforce but also addresses the need for longer term change: *“Care has long been the forgotten service...(we) bring together employers, politicians who know about the sector and the biggest care union to make a powerful case for change. Care needs urgent and lasting reform. Paying dedicated staff who look after our elderly and vulnerable relatives a proper wage would start to transform care into a service fit for the future.”*

Amnesty International (UK) is launching a brand-new Disabled People’s Human Rights Network. **“On Saturday 23 September 2023, we want to bring together disabled people and human rights activists to talk about what disability justice means to us, and to celebrate the long history of disabled people fighting for their rights”.** For more info and/or to register for the event, contact activism@amnesty.org.uk

The National Pensioners Convention (NPC) is working actively on the issue of digital exclusion with a working party and regular newsletters - npcdigitalnews@gmail.com. The NPC is also one of many groups campaigning actively against the threat of railway ticket offices being closed – a measure which is bound to create problems for older and disabled people. A march on Downing Street is being organised on the 31st August 2023: <https://www.rmt.org.uk/campaigns/rail/save-ticket-offices/>. The NPC is also listed as a supporter for the march ‘**Celebrating 50 years of the London Freedom Pass**’ on the 23rd September – gather at Southwark Park at 11am to hear from the NPC, trade union leaders and politicians about the need for these vital travel concessions for older and disabled people to be protected – for info contact Peter Walker (07715749373) or peter@vistaevents.co.uk

Ealing Council’s Scrutiny Panel received a report at its July meeting on the proposed closure of some 31 mental health beds in Ealing Hospital. Ealing Save Our NHS (ESON) has long campaigned against the loss of acute mental health beds for the under 65s in Ealing – with a 1000 strong petition, media work, and close liaison with campaign groups across North-West London area to challenge this major loss of services and the lack of appropriate engagement with those likely to be directly affected. The impact on carers is inestimable. ERSCAG has pledged its support to the campaign and will keep monitoring developments.

Last but not least: a [national petition to link care and support worker pay to NHS banding](#)

Latest developments locally & nationally

Numerous articles and reports that have accumulated over the summer period, so if you have only limited time, this first one interestingly covers many general topics: https://theconversation.com/how-did-the-social-care-system-end-up-in-crisis-and-how-can-it-be-fixed-expert-ganda-208920?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20July%205%202023%20-%202673426991&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20July%205%202023%20-%202673426991+CID_24d1c6ee14ff18381fe5e30b6ffd63f7&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=How%20did%20the%20social%20care%20system%20end%20up%20in%20crisis%20and%20how%20can%20it%20be%20fixed%20Expert%20QA

Austerity and cost of living crisis

- https://www.mylondon.news/news/uk-world-news/dwp-cost-living-payments-still-27357547?utm_source=mylondon_newsletter&utm_campaign=mywestlondon_newsletter2&utm_medium=email Lists the DWP & cost of living payments still to come this year.

- Age UK issued a publication (July 2023): [Tackling the Cost of Living Crisis for Older People](#).
- Ealing Council offers a one-stop website supporting people to find help and advice from local organisations : https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201320/cost_of_living_support_and_advice
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jul/05/austerity-has-led-to-nhs-quality-of-care-deteriorating-across-the-board-study-finds>

Carers:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jul/31/families-caring-for-dementia-patients-in-uk-reaching-crisis-point-says-charity>
- BBC News reports (7 August) “Families of people with complex medical needs are warning the NHS system that funds their care at home is struggling to provide sufficient support” <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-66058222>
- Ealing Council is providing one-off Carers’ Grants of £150 each. See their website: https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201084/caring_for_someone/850/what_support_is_there_for_carers/2
- The Rowntree Foundation issued a report entitled “The Caring Penalty” (18 July) arguing that “unpaid carers provide an invaluable service to society but they shoulder a financial penalty in doing so. This [REDACTED] report looks at the financial impact of unpaid care and how policies can help mitigate that”.

Reports/Research:

- Healthwatch Ealing issued its annual report (2022-2023) [here](#) with news about the “6,148 people who shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care; the 339 people came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost of living crisis; and nine reports about the improvements local people want to see in their health and social care services.”
- https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/the-uk-care-crisis-explained/?utm_source=oD%20Daily%20SEGMENT&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Tory%20MP%20facing%20investigation%20over%20register%20of%20interests&_kx=btgjj2frmkuaAghnYybeWUI0ex1jvKW9qN8KctZVd9yo%3D.YjCYwm Open Democracy explains the UK care crisis and carries a series of articles including: a video series, “our piece by Nadia Whittome MP on the need for a National Care Service like the NHS”.

Staffing:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/27/uk-risks-becoming-reliant-on-overseas-care-workers-report-warns>, but a Tory party initiative seems to be aimed at reducing the opportunity for recruiting overseas care workers: <https://leftfootforward.us16.list-manage.com/track/click?u=65b47e7ed535f89a2113322cd&id=25e3c9d942&e=367ea0174a>
- <https://leftfootforward.org/2021/11/56-of-care-workers-skip-meals-due-to-low-pay/>
- The Department of Health and Social Care has launched a [consultation on statutory learning disability and autism training](#). More information can be found [here](#).
- New data from Skills for Care, shows that between 2022 - 2023, “the job vacancy rate decreased to 9.9%, or around 152,000 on any given day; international recruitment is also on the rise in the care sector, with around 70,000 people recruited from abroad into direct care provision roles. Government has unveiled a £600 million package to help with recruitment and retention in social care”. [Helen Whately, Minister for Social Care](#), has written to local authorities and care providers about preparations for winter.
- A BBC ‘File on Four’ investigation <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-66260064.amp> found that “The number of modern slavery cases reported within the UK care industry has more than doubled in the past year”.
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jul/11/900000-older-people-ae-lack-of-nhs-care-at-home> and see a BBC-Wales investigation of a 96 year old in a hospital bed for 11 months because homecare could not be found www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001pc98

Sources of advice and help

If you have a complaint about social care provision and have not had a satisfactory response from those concerned, you may want to check out the website of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (www.lgo.org.uk). The office produces a weekly update about investigations. Two academic articles in April by Prof Robert Thomas noted that the LGO “has become accustomed to addressing the underlying structural root causes of fault – organisational, institutional and cultural – rather than just their surface consequences for complainants”. Or have you considered contacting your local MP? Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) - asked a Parliamentary Question (13 July) on the topic (see earlier) of railway ticket office closures: “Mr Speaker, you yourself said that this news has been most unwelcome for the elderly, disabled and blind. Was an impact equality assessment carried out?”

Locally, Ealing Advice Service (www.ealingadvice.org), in their most recent quarterly report found that of the 130 responses provided by service-users - 29% reported an increase in benefits, 95% said their situation had improved, 92% stated that their stress levels had improved, and 81% reported improved confidence in dealing with such issues in future.

As noted earlier, the Ealing Health and Care Residents Forum circulated material on end-of-life issues, and an item in The Guardian comments on the ‘postcode lottery’ experienced in services: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jul/13/nhs-end-of-life-care-in-england-variable-and-inequitable-says-watchdog>. Independent Age provides booklets eg ‘Planning for the end of life’ and ‘Coping with Bereavement’ – see advice@independentage.org; or 0800 319 6789; or www.independentage.org

Stroke Association also provides free information packs - how to reduce the risk of a stroke; next steps after a stroke, and supporting a stroke survivor – see **Helpline**, which is open six days a week on **0303 3033 100**, or **email**.

Social care over the longer term

If you missed the report prepared for ADASS (Association of Directors of Adult Social Services) earlier this year (April), it is very worthwhile to chase up as a future ‘roadmap’ - <https://www.adass.org.uk/time-to-act-to-save-social-care-in-england>

Are you planning to attend (or do you know of others planning to attend) any party-political conferences this coming Autumn? Is social care on the agenda and what can be done to make the issue more visible and a political priority for our elected politicians? Please speak up for social care wherever you can - Lib Dems 23-26 September in Bournemouth; Conservatives 1-4 October in Manchester; Greens 6-8 October in Brighton; and Labour 8-11 October in Liverpool. For ideas on influencing public opinion, check Social Care Futures <https://socialcarefuture.org.uk/publications/> Building upon a paper prepared previously by ERSCAG, End Social Care Disgrace (<https://endsocialcaredisgrace.org/website>), is preparing a note making the ECONOMIC argument for major reforms of social care provision and hopes to discuss this with participants at many of these events – **look out for their stalls/leaflets!**

Check out our website - www.erscag.org.uk
and join our Facebook group **Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group**.
For more information contact ERSCAG Secretary
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