



Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter **May 2024**

**ERSCAG's Annual General Meeting will be held virtually
on Monday 3rd June, 2-3.30.**

If you would like to attend or be more actively involved, contact ERSCAG Secretary (p. 4)

Update on our latest activities

Since our last newsletter, the date of the general election has been announced (4 July) and a variety of actions that people concerned about social care might want to take over the next few weeks are suggested throughout and in the final section of this newsletter.

In the meantime, Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG) has had a busy few weeks' campaigning against the decision taken by the Council to close Ealing Careline. After the public meeting (24 April) organised by ERSCAG with ACORN and the Campaign for Action in Sheltered Housing (CASH) - see <https://ealing.news/news/residents-meet-councillors-to-raise-concern-over-ealing-council-scraping-of-in-house-careline-service/> ERSCAG tried - largely unsuccessfully - to have the issue discussed at the Health and Well Being Board meeting (8 May) and the Health and Adult Social Services Scrutiny Panel (16 May). ERSCAG is keeping up the pressure on its concerns about this decision and has additional opportunities now that there has been a Cabinet reshuffle [Ealing Council Cabinet Reshuffle Announced](#) and a general election has been announced (assuming local politicians will be out seeking support from Ealing residents for their respective parties). Our Careline concerns are being raised with the new portfolio holders (Cllr Knewstub for health and Cllr Brett for housing) and others.

We are not sure what interpretation to place on the fact that the Liberal Democrats on Ealing Council (the 'official opposition') have also recently announced that one of their number will have a special responsibility for ensuring that the Council is truthful and transparent - Ealing Today [Lib Dems Add Honesty Role to Shadow Cabinet](#)

Campaigns - current or upcoming national campaigns

In the last newsletter, we reported that UNISON has stepped up its campaigning for a National Care Service - see <https://www.unison.org.uk/news/2024/02/prospective-mps-urged-to-back-new-national-care-service/> and sign their petition at:

▶ [Sign the petition for a national care service](#)

ERSCAG assumes that UNISON will be pursuing this issue actively in the general election campaign so, if you have any links, do encourage them to keep social care centre-stage.

Your voice does count! A member wrote that he emailed Radio 4 and was subsequently invited to participate in a 'You and Yours' programme on the subject of personal debt. And last week ERSCAG emailed Radio 4's Today programme merely to congratulate them on the

high priority given to social care in an early interview of senior politicians and – perhaps coincidentally? – this was followed up two days later by an excellent and detailed fifteen minutes expose of the need for reform of social care (listen - 1hr 10mins in): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001zlv7?partner=uk.co.bbc&origin=share-mobile> .

London Citizens held an Accountability session in the run up to the Mayoral and Assembly elections, and on 25 April, Sadiq Khan committed (amongst other things) to - back Citizens UK national campaign for a living wage for social care workers, which they estimate could lead to 188,000 social care workers in London being guaranteed at least the Real Living Wage; and of immediate local interest “to secure our Community Land Trust sites with [London CLT](#) in Shadwell, [Greenwich](#) and [Ealing](#)”.

Latest developments locally & nationally

Carers:

- ERSCAG’s April newsletter reported on the problem of carers falling into debt because of over-payment mistakes caused in part by the complexity and lack of generosity in the rules. Ask anyone campaigning for your vote “*what will you do to address this problem of debt repayment caused in large part by restrictive rules?*” See for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/may/16/ministers-knew-about-carers-allowance-problems-three-years-ago-report-reveals>
- In Ealing more attention is being given to carers with a Carers’ Co-Production Board being constituted (see on), and free weekly coffee mornings for carers. For more info on short breaks/one-off grants etc for (unpaid) carers, contact: info@ealingcarers.org.uk

Cost of Living:

- ERSCAG’s April newsletter reported that a record 6.7 million people in Britain are in financial difficulty and already it is obvious that the cost of living will be a key issue of the election campaign. In Ealing, we hear from advice services that in relation to care contributions “*some of the bills are in the tens of thousands of pounds and Ealing Council are pretty ruthless chasing these up.*” As Council Tax-payers we are probably keen for the Council to monitor any mis-use of public funds, but is this the case here? Ask potential candidates looking for your vote “*what will you do to assist those on care packages because of age or disability to ease their burden?*”
- Check out the Ealing Council website – www.ealing.gov.uk/costofliving which has special sections addressing the needs of older people and disabled people.
- For information on **A Gendered Response to the Cost of Living Crisis? Lessons from Abroad** see the work of Women’s Budget Group – www.wbg.org.uk

Financing:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/mar/13/uk-healthcare-private-equity-cancer-treatment-services> “*Our research at the Centre for Health and the Public Interest shows that around £1.5bn is taken out of the care home sector each year in the form of different types of returns to shareholders and investors. Even during the pandemic... a number of private care home companies continued their focus on profit-making, with 122 of them paying out dividend payments totalling £120m during the first yearall this while many of the staff in those homes worked longer hours and received no extra pay.*”
- And for more discussion of the impact of marketisation on the NHS and social care see <https://lowdownnhs.info/private-providers/private-equity-the-new-face-of-privatisation/>; and/or https://www.transformingsociety.co.uk/2024/02/29/the-hidden-human-costs-of-the-uks-failing-market-for-home-care/?utm_source=Bristol+University+Press%2F
- And some good news! Tower Hamlets Council has agreed “to introduce free community care from April 2025, which will apply to people eligible for community care and support under

the Care Act 2014.” The timetable has been somewhat delayed but the direction of travel is very welcome indeed. Clear political leadership by the Council – when will others follow?

Your Help Needed

- The Council’s Adult Services newsletter of Spring 2024 seeks input into shaping Ealing’s Adult Social Care Homecare Services – if you are receiving care (for yourself or a family member), what works well and what could be improved? Deadline 7 June - see survey at: www.surveymonkey.com/r/EalingHomecare
- [The Council is also looking for people who want to engage in their Co-Production Boards \(on autism, mental health and wellbeing; \(unpaid\) carers; learning disabilities; physical disabilities and sensory impairments\).](#) *“If you would like to join one of the boards mentioned, or have any questions about how to get involved, e-mail [BeInvolved ASC@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:BeInvolved_ASC@ealing.gov.uk)”*
- A series of “town hall” meetings – Your Voice Your Town events - were held throughout May (with one still due for Perivale on 2nd June). *“If people can’t attend the event but want to stay in touch”* they are encouraged to complete: <https://forms.office.com/e/kdWJA0uc59>
- A national consultation is underway on the topic of the NHS constitution – [NHS Constitution: 10 year review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). The online survey (deadline 25 June 2024) can be accessed on: <https://consultations.dhsc.gov.uk/660d21db9ecc4223dd0174bf>

Sources of advice and help

The next Ealing Health and Care Residents Forum was to be held on 4 June (4-6pm) but has been cancelled because of the general election being announced.

If you have a serious complaint about social care provision, you may want to approach the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. They (www.lgo.org.uk) publicise decisions on a weekly basis and their May bulletins reported on cases from Ealing and neighbouring Harrow, now supporting Ealing Adult Social Care users in place of the 24/7 emergency service previously provided by Ealing Careline. In [London Borough of Ealing \(23 010 991\)](#), the Ombudsman summary reads: *“Ms X complains the Council has overcharged her late father for the care he received.... (the Council) needs to apologise and reduce to charges to one call a day. It also needs to improve its working practices to prevent similar problems from happening again”*. In another complaint, [London Borough of Harrow \(23 007 812\)](#), the Ombudsman summary relates: *“Mr X complained the Council is not providing his brother with adequate transport to the day centre and enough care ...The Council is at fault for not properly considering the reasons Mr X provided about the unsuitability of the care package”*.

Often legal action seems like another option when all else fails. A recent newsletter from the British Institute for Human Rights (1 May, www.bih.org.uk) reports on a case taken on behalf of a person living in a specialist care home for adults with learning and physical disabilities. *“He had lived there for 29 years and lawyers said the decision to close the home without a consultation or impact assessment could be a breach of Adrian's human rights. The lawyer wrote to the charity running the home, who agreed to keep the home open while they ran a consultation and impact assessment. This meant Adrian and other residents would be able to have their voices heard in a decision that would have a big impact on their lives”*.

Digital Exclusion is a problem for many social care users – the Council is providing [Help to get online](#) and the National Pensioners Convention is campaigning on the issue at a national level

- [Click here to read the full article](#) Elsewhere on the Ealing Council website there is [Local support for those living with dementia](#).

Social care over the longer term

The General Election has been called for 4 July. The following deadlines apply: parliamentary candidates must be nominated by June 7; voters must register to vote by June 18 (www.gov.uk/register-to-vote) or register for a postal vote by June 19; and June 26 is the deadline for applying for a proxy vote (to have someone vote on your behalf) AND/OR to apply for a voter ID certificate if you do not have a valid form of photo ID.

Social care is rarely amongst the priority concerns of candidates and yet it touches the lives of so many voters. Please consider: (a) studying the literature and manifestos of the different political parties (see on); (b) organising or attending election hustings; (c) contacting candidates for your constituency; (d) talking to canvassers who come to your door (or who will be at local events – eg Hanwell Carnival on 15 June!); (e) using social media fora to put across your concerns....

Manifestos have not all been produced yet, but if you want to read up on what the different parties have said previously about social care, check: Conservatives (in government) said: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper>; Greens: <https://policy.greenparty.org.uk/policy/social-welfare/>; Labour: <https://labourlist.org/2023/10/labour-national-policy-forum-final-document-summary-policy-manifesto-party-conference/#four>; and Liberal Democrats: [Our plan for social care - Liberal Democrats \(libdems.org.uk\)](https://www.libdems.org.uk/our-plan-for-social-care).

Have your questions ready (see some throughout this newsletter):

- If they talk of the economy: ask them to consider the way poor social care provision is a drag on people's lives, on productivity, and on the country's economy.
- If they talk about the importance of the NHS, you could tell candidates that - <https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/may/17/hospitals-struggle-as-social-care-crisis-cancels-out-funding-boost-nhs-report-says> and that the number of delayed discharges, with people stuck in hospital for more than three weeks awaiting care provision, has risen 15% on pre-covid levels.

But ideally encourage them to understand the importance of social care on its own merits given the independence it offers to older and disabled people, and ask them what they would do to push for long-term solutions to the crisis in social care. If at all possible, get candidates and their supporters to listen to this fascinating 15-minute interview with Professor Andrew Dilnot on Radio 4's Today programme which explains that change MUST and CAN happen: Dilnot explains that reform is not prohibitively expensive or even that difficult, if tackled with enough energy and political will! <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/h5g8i03rikqoe6buk7ioy/Social-Care.m4a?rlkey=qiksueshfkv59b1zra1h7bvaf&dl=0>

[Check out our website - www.erscag.org.uk](http://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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