



**Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group  
Festive Edition - November/December 2024**

This edition is a combination of our November/December newsletters and a short 2024 end-of-year review.

**Campaigning in 2024**

2024 was a busy campaigning year on several counts for ERSCAG. On the political front, there were London Mayoral and Assembly elections (2 May); general elections (4 July); and several Ealing by-elections (10 October). For each of these events, ERSCAG newsletters reminded people of the importance of voting; how to find out about local candidates; and the practicalities involved (including deadlines for registration/ID requirements etc). An Election Special was issued mid-June to inform voters on the key social care commitments made in the different political party manifestos, and BBC Radio London gave us a platform on the topic.

A major concern for Ealing residents related to the closure of Ealing Careline on 1 April – the 24/7 responder emergency service offered to many elderly or disabled residents, especially those in Sheltered Housing. Despite several meetings with relevant Councillors, a public meeting (24 April), and the pursuit of formal complaints, we cannot record much success. The Council took what ERSCAG considers to be precipitate action, without adequate consultation, in an attempt to save costs. Hopefully subsequent reviews of the decision will at least suggest some learning for the future?

Our monthly newsletters have provided links for a wide variety of local and national campaign efforts. For example, there were petitions relating to the Careline closure (see above and February-May newsletters); links to Change.org petitions; lobbying of the UN Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities (March); UNISON's campaign for a National Care Service (May); concerns around digital exclusion (March) and chat-bots (May); carer campaigns (April and May); and social care efforts by the British Institute for Human Rights and JustFair (July/August). And every newsletter provided the

latest media reporting on topics such as carers, care-workers, cost-of-living, disability, local government social care financing, etc.

### **Public meetings/events/reports in 2024**

The monthly newsletters also report on meetings planned or reports issued and ERSCAG itself was directly involved in organising two public meetings along with our national colleagues at End Social Care Disgrace. One was on the topic of “The Exploitation of Migrant Care-workers” and was held virtually on 5 February; and an in-person meeting was organised in parliament (18 November) to discuss the future of social care.

ERSCAG made a formal submission (4 December) to the parliamentary Health and Social Care Select Committee (chaired by Layla Moran, Lib Dem MP) which is holding an inquiry into “Adult Social Care Reform: The Cost of Inaction”. Copies of the submission were circulated widely to Ealing MPs and local decision-makers.

ERSCAG newsletters publicised reports such as those produced by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) – Healthy Places, Prosperous Lives - by its Commission on Health and Prosperity (January); others by the King’s Fund; and the introduction by Ealing Council of quarterly Adult Social Care bulletins. Professor (and disability activist) Tom Shakespeare delivered the Craigmyle Lecture on the topic of “Make a level path for my feet: disability equality, and love” (19 November) and we marked annual events such as Disability History Month (December).

### **Signposting and Scrutiny in 2024**

Every newsletter has carried information about local or national consultations that would benefit from input: ‘Your Help is needed’ is a regular standing item. Most also provided signposting to official channels of assistance (MPs, Ward Councillors, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, Equality Commission etc) and local advice centres such as the Ealing Advice Centre, the Ealing Law Centre etc.

Reference is also made frequently to one or more of the very wide range of voluntary non-governmental groups who work actively on social care eg Age UK, Alheimers Society, Being the Boss, Care Rights UK, Carers UK, Disability Rights UK, Inclusion London, Keep Our NHS Public, London Citizens, MENCAP, National Pensioners’ Convention, Silver Voices, Social Care Future, We Own It, Women’s Budget Group, etc.

Throughout the year, ERSCAG organised regular meetings with local Ealing MPs or attended a variety of venues – such as the Health and Adult Social Services Scrutiny Panel, the Health and WellBeing Board, and the Health and Care Residents Forum – to raise the social care concerns of local people. A whole series of issues have been pursued in these fora: the theft of Blue Badges; equipment supplies; charging and debt collection; palliative care provision; the closure of Careline (see above); social care assessments and the future priorities of Ealing Healthwatch. A running concern has been how to work with the Council to ensure that the transition from Partnership Boards to Co-Production Boards properly implements the stated commitment to the principle of co-production. Meetings in early December 2024 are planned by the Council to showcase the work of the Older Adults Partnership Board, and separately the Physical Disability, Sensory Impairment and Long term Conditions Partnership Board.

Every newsletter carries a section on “Social care over the longer term” where ERSCAG explores how to influence national and local policy making. Just recently, for example, at our request, one of our local MPs raised concerns with the DWP about government language around disability benefits. Sometimes the language might, quite erroneously, give the impression that there is a risk of fraud when DWP statistics themselves show that disability benefit fraud is extremely low. Indeed, a West London online article reported (3 December) *“New map shows areas where less than half of disabled people are claiming vital benefits”*.

### **November/December news – possible reading for the holiday season?**

- Assisted Dying debate: This was clearly a very intense debate in parliament over the last few weeks. ERSCAG takes no position on the issue but notes the legal arguments made on the UK Human Rights blog arguing both that the proposals run foul of the European Convention on Human Rights, and that they do not! See: UK Human Rights Blog at [events@1cor.com](mailto:events@1cor.com) Another article focuses on the situation of hospices which have gained more publicity in the wake of the debate: *“recently, most hospices have moved from in-patient units to a [“hospice at home” model](#) – ....But they are also facing “the worst funding crisis in two decades”, with [one in five hospices](#) cutting their services, according to [research](#) by Hospice UK.”*
- If you are interested in planning better palliative care services in North West London there is a public consultation underway until 24 February 2025. The NHS writes it wants to hear our views *“on these proposed improvements, which focus on compassionate, accessible care for residents across our area...please visit [www.nwlondonicb.nhs.uk/cspc](http://www.nwlondonicb.nhs.uk/cspc) to find out further information and how you can get involved”*.

- Several media articles over the last month or so talk generally of social care: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/nov/06/adult-social-care-in-england-needs-urgent-help-from-ministers-say-bosses>; with a BBC piece on 17 November: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c2074jm21g2o>; and on 3 December - <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/dec/03/the-guardian-view-on-social-care-reformers-must-reclaim-the-initiative>
- Other media articles covered issues of local government financing. <https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/debate-state-social-care-england-and-case-comprehensive-social> provides a link to a Local Government Association report (10 October) to a House of Lords debate. See also: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/nov/17/britain-austerity-labour-uk-economy-councils>
- Local support services were promoted from the Ealing Today newsletters, for example: [Dementia Concern to Host Dinner Dance at Trailfinders](#) and [Free Dementia Clinics Being Held at Nationwide Ealing](#)
- Carers were the focus of an article in The Guardian (14 November) - <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/nov/14/unpaid-carers-risk-prosecution-unwittingly-breaching-benefit-rules-dwp>; and VIP support for carers was very evident in the Good Morning Britain interview (22 November) with Kate Garraway - [Naughty Boy and Kate Garraway highlight the importance of ...](#)
- UNISON is encouraging its members to distribute a survey to migrant workers in their branches: [migrant care worker survey](#)
- If you did not already read enough analysis of the impact of the budget on social care you might be interested in the Womens Budget Group – and a panel on *Women’s Contributions to Economic Growth – Is the Government Missing a Trick?* [here](#). “In our blog, we’ve unpacked the [budget’s implications for women](#), explored how [underfunding social care](#) harms both women and the economy, and outlined why the [Employment Bill](#) must tackle workplace inequalities”.
- Liam Conlon MP is busy campaigning around the theft of Blue Badges and the impact this has on their users: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0k8l2fz>

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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