



Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group Newsletter
March 2025

Update on our latest activities

Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG) prepared a briefing to inform Ealing Healthwatch’s review of the work of the emergency Careline service withdrawn last year from Sheltered Housing and other local social care users. We believe that the transition from Ealing Careline (now closed) to a Harrow Careline service was badly handled, and it is important to monitor the current arrangements and ensure that all users have the service they need to keep them safe.

ERSCAG is also continuing to follow up on issues with local Councillors about the importance of hearing from all affected by Council policies. For example, Ealing Council is understandably happy about its move to create safer streets for school pupils – see [SCHOOL STREETS](#) – but has the potential impact of these decisions on disabled residents and their visitors (particularly carers and care-workers) also been considered?

ERSCAG also attended a regular meeting of the Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel – see [Agenda for Health and Adult Social Services Scrutiny Panel on Tuesday, 11 March 2025, 7.00 pm](#) – at which we asked questions about the future of daycare services in the Borough; and how was it that the findings of the Care Quality Commission (that the Council “requires improvement”) appear so different from the Local Government Association study which referred to “outstanding progress” having been made.

ERSCAG’s Direct Payment User Group held a virtual meeting (18 March) and discussed a range of common concerns – wheelchair repairs, disabled access, equality impact assessments etc. and how best to engage with the creation by the Council of a new Co Production Board on the topic of Direct Payments, and the importance of people with lived experience taking up the invitation to join the Board.

Campaigns – current or upcoming national campaigns and events

End Social Care Disgrace organised a public meeting on 13 March, entitled: “Resist; Rise Up; Reimagine”. Speakers included Jan Shortt, General Secretary of the National Pensioners Convention; Rachael Tomlinson, disabled activist and family carer; and Simon Duffy (director of Citizen network). For link see: <https://youtu.be/YSNAhTD89sQ>

The National Pensioners Convention are campaigning for the rights of women pensioners
[Click here to read the article](#)

Keep Our NHS Public (KONP) organised a protest outside Conway Hall in central London on 25 March when Wes Streeting, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, was due to discuss Labour’s plans to tackle England’s health and social care crisis with

Guardian politics editor Pippa Crerar. Supporters were encouraged to join them outside the venue, and the National Pensioners Convention promoted the gathering:

[Click here to read the article](#)

Latest developments locally and nationally

Benefit system:

A variety of press articles reported government plans to cut the benefits bill (and see on):

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/feb/08/labour-planning-radical-overhaul-of-benefit-system-as-rising-numbers-deemed-unfit-to-work>; for more about DWP changes - [Read more](#) ;

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/mar/17/how-far-will-starmer-risk-pushing-labour-mps-to-swallow-welfare-cuts>; <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/mar/17/benefit-cuts-will-push-more-people-into-poverty-warns-citizens-advice-boss>; <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/mar/18/liz-kendall-unveils-draastic-uk-benefits-cuts-to-fix-broken-system>; and an opinion piece by John McDonnell:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/25/government-progressive-spring-statement-rachel-reeves-economic-stability>. The National Pensioners Convention expressed grave concern about recent proposals – “Appalling welfare cuts will devastate the most vulnerable”:

[Click here to read the article](#) and the Women’s Budget Group issued this press release (26 March): [Read our full press release](#) and note “Frustratingly, there is nothing in the documents on the impact on carers or likely impact on people who may have to drop out of the workforce to pick up the care of people whose benefits have been cut – most of whom will be women.”

The Resolution Foundation finds that the poorest will be hardest hit - <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/mar/27/rachel-reeves-statement-poorest-500-a-year-worse-off-thinktank> and The Guardian carries a commentary arguing that this is a choice, not an economic necessity:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/24/the-guardian-view-on-rachel-reeves-spending-cuts-a-choice-not-an-economic-necessity>. The BBC provides the key points: [Spring Statement 2025: Key points at a glance](#)

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Carers:

Inclusion London and others wrote (23 March): “*The proposed welfare cuts will devastate unpaid carers too.... Many rely on Carer’s Allowance (already one of the lowest benefits) to survive while providing essential, unpaid care. Proposed changes could mean: Loss of Carer’s Allowance if the cared-for person loses their disability benefits; increased financial hardship as carers already struggle to afford essentials; more unpaid carers forced out of work due to lack of proper support... Carers save the UK economy £162 billion a year. They deserve support, not cuts!*” If you want to write to your local MP –

https://www.carersfacingcrisis.com/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR2WcJTMZMR2regjBG7tFWgmbmQK6vKAWUu5xy7i9LNbUw7S5i0ouVh8DvJk_aem_WUGEgiNL3AK2xnrXFXQm2w

Care workers:

- There are several aspects of the Employment Rights Bill now going through parliament that will affect care-workers and their employers
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/feb/16/nhs-britain-immigrants-dad>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2025/mar/03/labour-unveils-sick-pay-guarantee-for-13m-lowest-paid-workers>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/mar/20/social-care-sector-faces-collapse-as-nics-and-wage-rises-loom-providers-warn>

Digital Exclusion:

See National Pensioners Convention’s regular newsletter: [Click here to read the article](#)

Disability

Much of the discussion around the recent financial Spring Statement referred to benefit cuts and the impact of this, particularly on disabled people – for a range of such articles see:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/mar/12/keir-starmer-could-face-biggest-rebellion-over-disability-benefit-freeze>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/mar/13/former-shadow-chancellor-ed-balls-says-plans-to-cut-disability-benefits-wont-work>

- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/10/disabled-people-labour-benefits-system>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/16/starmer-to-drive-through-welfare-cuts-that-could-affect-uks-most-severely-disabled>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/17/labour-is-gaslighting-disabled-people-and-that-should-terrify-us-all>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/21/disability-cuts-family-labour-5bn>
- Keep Our NHS Public (KONP) gave this reaction:

Funding

Funding problems are not only being experienced by vulnerable individuals:

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/feb/13/macmillan-cancer-support-cuts-quarter-of-staff-and-scrap-hardship-scheme>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/feb/23/labour-revolution-local-government-seismic-straightforward>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/mar/22/government-plans-to-cut-pip-benefits-could-put-more-pressure-on-councils>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/mar/24/hospices-in-retreat-funding-crisis-squeezing-uk-palliative-care-providers>

Health

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/feb/13/sharp-rise-in-cancer-patients-in-england-waiting-months-for-treatment>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/mar/07/london-air-pollution-down-since-ulez-expansion-study>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/17/long-covid-pandemic-britain-power-lockdown-disease>

NHS:

Recent media articles have reported extensively on the decision to re-structure, and then abolish, NHS England. BBC coverage of developments around these changes were reported on [Read now](#); <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/mar/13/wes-streetings-high-stakes-abolition-of-nhs-england-will-cut-10000-jobs>. The Guardian had a comment piece on its abolition - <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/13/the-guardian-view-on-the-abolition-of-nhs-england-political-cover-for-a-funding-fight>; and for the response of Keep Our NHS Public (KONP) see: [Find our full response to the government's decision to abolish NHS England here](#). The think-tank Policy Exchange considered that the decision was a feather in their cap - [POLICY WIN: GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCE NHS ENGLAND TO BE ABOLISHED](#)

Reports/Events:

- Bright Blue think tank is holding a meeting on 1 May with Sir Stephen Timms MP in central London – contact Stephen@brightblue.org.uk - to discuss the recent DWP Green Paper on [Pathways to work](#)
- [New report: How Investing in Disabled People and Carers can solve the UK's Economic Challenges — THE DISABILITY POLICY CENTRE](#)
- Policy Exchange think tank has issued a report - [For Whose Benefit? Proposals to Reform Health and Disability Benefits & To Create a New Social Contract](#)
- The UN Committee on Economic and Social Rights is currently examining the UK and this provides an important international venue in which to pursue concerns about social care and health provision. Thus the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission ([Read full report here](#)) encouraged the UN to make numerous recommendations such as – of a freestanding offence where an individual, who has the care of another individual by virtue of being a care worker, ill-treats or wilfully neglects that individual; that human rights abuses in care settings are addressed immediately; that an updated Carers' strategy is introduced; that a proportional uplift to the Carer's Allowance is introduced with a relaxation of the earnings rules. The Just Fair submission to the UN incorporates

proposals by over 30 groups in England, but, despite earlier submissions, seems to have relatively little to recommend on social care - see <https://justfair.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Just-Fair-Submission-to-CESCR-Jan-2025.pdf>

- The National Pensioners Convention publicised the Centre for Ageing Better annual State of Ageing report [Click here to read the article](#)

Your Help Needed:

- Ealing Healthwatch is consulting on its work programme for the coming year. See their draft [Workplan for 25-26](#) asking people for their advice on priorities.

Sources of advice and help

When all else fails, it is possible to take a formal complaint about aspects of your social care package. The 6 March Local Government Ombudsman weekly newsletter reports on a successful complaint made about Ealing Council's services [London Borough of Ealing \(23 004 153\)](#) summarised as follows: *"the Council at fault for delaying the installation of a level access shower Ms X needs. The Council was also at fault for significant delay responding to Ms X's complaint. The Council has agreed to apologise, make payments to Ms X, and act to improve its services"*. In a later (27 March) edition the Ombudsman finds for the Council - [London Borough of Ealing \(24 014 138\)](#) – *"We will not investigate this complaint about the Council refusing Mr X a blue badge. The Council reached its decision properly. Mr X's concerns about the time taken are not significant enough in themselves to warrant investigation"*.

If you want to find out more about the move to digital landlines, see this article by the National Pensioners Convention [Click here to read the article](#), and if you belong to a Deaf and Disabled People's Organisation, your contribution to a survey by Lloyds Bank Foundation is encouraged: [Complete the survey](#)

Care Rights UK writes (14 March): *"This week one of our adviceline clients wrote a lovely testimony about the support they received. We supported them to understand their rights in a multidisciplinary team meeting to explore options for their wife's care following a section under the Mental Health Act. We are very grateful to everyone who allows us to share their story. Read more on our [website](#)."*

Social care over the longer term

ERSCAG believes we have to continue campaigning locally as well as nationally for change – making the Harrow Careline as good and as responsive as possible; keeping important daycare centres open for some of the most vulnerable people in the Borough; monitoring service provision; addressing assessment and debt problems; pursuing the needs of carers and care-workers as well as care-users. We complement these local agendas with submissions to national policy making bodies and parliamentary inquiries: a current concern is to learn more about and contribute usefully to the enquiry underway under the chairing of Baroness Louise Casey.

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

For more information contact ERSCAG Secretary

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Please get in touch if you need material in other formats