



Newsletter JANUARY 2026



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Some Good News for grey January days: Lancashire Care Home closures halted!



The Reform led Lancashire Council announced that they are not going to progress closing five care homes and up to five day centres - well not yet! The consultation into their future will continue until March. Councillor Azhar Ali, who leads the Independent Progressive Lancashire Group, said the decision showed "people power" had worked. Hundreds marched in Preston on 17th January to oppose the closures, including the newly elected General Secretary of Unison Andrea Egan who said the only people who stand to benefit from the closure of public care services are unaccountable private companies. She promised Unison backing.

Elsewhere not a lot changes!

This month a new report from the Committee of Public Accounts criticised the DWP for failing to improve on the particularly poor service that claimants of disability benefits receive which they highlighted 12 months ago. This can cause them to get into debt and push them into poverty. In 2024-25 only 51% of new Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claims were processed within 75 working days against the Department's target of 75%. The report notes that some people wait over a year to have their claims processed and the Department seems to have no plan for reducing processing times in the short term, seemingly pinning their hopes on distant digital solutions.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5901/cmselect/cmpubacc/1447/report.html>

Dispatches from the front line

Intrepid ESCaD and DPAC campaigner, content creator and advocate for people living with MS kicks off the year with the first of what we hope will be regular updates on Disability, Social Care, and the Reality behind the Headlines.



Over the past month, my work has focused on the widening gap between rhetoric and reality. I've covered the ongoing social care crisis, highlighting how chronic underfunding, workforce shortages, and rising eligibility thresholds are reducing independence, increasing risk, and leaving many disabled people without adequate support.

A significant part of this month's work has been unpacking the benefits system, particularly Universal Credit, LCWRA, PIP, and direct payments. I've shared clear, practical explanations of how these systems actually operate, because misinformation causes real harm. Disabled people and unpaid carers are routinely portrayed as a financial burden, despite saving the state billions



Jacque and John Hadfield could be spotted with the Manchester Reclaim Social Care banner and John Puntis drumming with the PCS Samba band

each year by filling gaps left by an under-resourced care system.

I've also challenged political and media narratives that frame disabled people, migrants, and those out of work as the cause of economic strain. These arguments ignore decades of policy failure, austerity, and deliberate under-investment and instead redirect frustration towards those with the least power to respond.

Throughout the month, I've grounded this work in lived experience. As an ambulatory wheelchair user, I've shared how policy decisions translate into everyday consequences, loss of care, financial insecurity, declining health, and isolation. I've also questioned "work-first" approaches that fail to account for fluctuating and invisible conditions, often pushing disabled people further into crisis rather than supporting meaningful participation.

This update is about clarity and accountability. Disabled people are not the problem. Unpaid carers are not a drain. The systems meant to support us are failing, and honest, informed conversation is long overdue. Change starts with informed voices. Please read, share, and challenge the narratives that harm disabled people. <https://wheeliemsadvocate.co.uk/and> and <https://www.instagram.com/wheeliemsadvocate/>

QUOTE of the month comes from Paul Ridley carer for his two disabled adult children, one of whom has severe autism and epilepsy

"If you don't shout out you don't get anything. If you shout too loud you are classed as a trouble maker".



Paul struggled in vain to get support over the Xmas/ New Year period when his autistic son's privately run day care facility was closed, leaving his son highly agitated by such a long break in his routine. In our carers group meeting this month Paul and others talked about how carers go to great lengths to put on a coping face not least because if you acknowledge how close you are to breaking point, you may trigger the safeguarding button and find people considering sending your loved one into an institution, often far away. Join our Carers working group to share experience and

ideas and campaign for a decent income and free, flexible support for carers. Next meeting is on 19th Feb at 11am. For Zoom links just email endsocialcaredisgrace@gmail.com

COMING UP NEXT MONTH:



END SOCIAL CARE DISGRACE CAMPAIGN

HIDDEN VOICES

PUBLIC ZOOM MEETING

THURSDAY 26th Feb. 6.30-8pm

JOIN US to shine a spotlight on the large number of disabled people who find it hard or impossible to speak up for themselves for various reasons. Explore how we can make sure that what they think, want and need is heard and taken into account in the planning and delivery of support with

- **Professor Sara Ryan:** Researcher and activist in learning disability, autism, experiences of exclusion and regulatory processes. Books include 'Justice for Laughing Boy Connor Sparrowhawk – A Death by Indifference' 2017, which is about her son and 'Critical Health and Learning Disabilities: An Exploration of Erasure and Social Murder' 2026
- **Anna Rose:** Campaigner with ESCaD, 'INQUEST' etc. whose adult son Marcus died through lack of oversight in residential care
- **Sean Dempsey:** Award winning Learning Disability Champion, advocate and trainer based on his own experience
- **Paul Ridley:** Campaigner and full time carer of two young adult, disabled children, whose son has severe autism. Recipient of the 2025 'All4Inclusion' Carer of the Year Award

REGISTER HERE

to receive the Zoom joining information

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/HkaGvZDuRbuaYeTHMxVUeg>

You are all most welcome to come along to our open, friendly working group meetings which are the engine room for building the campaign. They are all on Zoom. Email endsocialcaredisgrace@gmail.com or phone/text 07419295754 for more information