



Regional Operations & Service Development Division Briefing

Living well with dementia: a national dementia strategy

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<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/SocialCare/Deliveringadultsocialcare/Olderpeople/NationalDementiaStrategy/index.htm>

1 Introduction

This is the first national dementia strategy for England, developed following extensive consultation with people with dementia and carers. It is a five year strategy which aims to achieve significant improvements in three key areas: public awareness, earlier diagnosis and support, and higher quality care. Implementation will be supported over the first two years by £150 million, allocated via Primary Care Trusts.

2 Context

The number of people living with dementia in England is approximately 570,000. This is expected to double over the next 30 years as a result of the ageing population. One in twenty people aged 65 and over has dementia, rising to one in five of those aged 80 and over, and one in three of those aged 95 and over.

The starting point is variable in different parts of the country, depending on the historical level of investment in services and support for people with dementia. The strategy acknowledges this difference and recognises that some parts of the country may not achieve all aspects of the strategy within five years. All areas are expected to make significant progress.

The strategy is not only about 'dementia services'. Most people with dementia are not in touch with specialist dementia services but do need information, advice

and access to generic services. There is therefore significant emphasis on ensuring that people with dementia and their carers can use 'universal services'.

3 Key themes

a) Improving awareness

The aim is to improve both public and professional understanding of dementia and to tackle the stigma associated with the illness. This will focus on:

- Prevention of dementia (especially vascular dementia) by promoting healthy lifestyles
- Reducing social isolation and discrimination
- Combating the belief that the symptoms of dementia are an inevitable part of ageing
- Emphasising the benefits of early diagnosis and intervention

b) Early diagnosis and support

By improving awareness amongst both the public and professionals, it is hoped that more people will seek help at an earlier stage of dementia and that they will receive a positive response. It is not intended that GPs will diagnose dementia but that they will have sufficient skills and knowledge to know which people to refer to specialist early intervention and diagnosis services (or memory services). It is equally important that early diagnosis is followed by early support. The strategy relies on evidence that early provision of support at home can reduce later admissions to care homes by 22%.

Important features of the early diagnosis and support services will include:

- Information and advice
- Dementia advisers (a new role to be piloted) as a single point of contact to signpost people to appropriate sources of advice, support and care
- Opportunities for peer support for people with dementia and carers

c) Better services and support

The strategy acknowledges that the care and support of people with dementia in care homes and, in particular, in general hospitals can be very poor. It proposes a senior clinician in every hospital and staff member in each care home to lead on dementia; specialist liaison teams to support staff in hospitals and care homes; better access to intermediate care; and further consideration of different housing models and the use of telecare. However the main focus of this part of the strategy is on supporting people to stay living in their own homes with a personalised support service. Some elements of this comprehensive service include:

- Reliable, flexible home care with staff who have knowledge of dementia

- Peer support groups
- Social activities, short breaks and day services
- Respite breaks
- Independent advocacy

4 Implementation

Since people with dementia use most parts of the health and social care system, the strategy emphasises the importance of integration with other relevant policy and service developments, in particular the personalisation of social care. Workforce development (of both the generalist and specialist workforce), joint commissioning strategies by PCTs and local authorities, inspection and regulation by the Care Quality Commission, and a new research programme are seen as some of the key levers for change.

At a national level, there will be a programme board to oversee and support implementation of the strategy. This will provide web-based materials (especially about specific services such as memory clinics) and opportunities to share good practice, as well as collating new data to monitor progress in each area. This approach to support will be tested in a small number of areas across the country.

At a regional level, there will be regional support teams which will provide advice and support to local health and social services. They will target this support on areas that need particular help but will also make links with other health and social care initiatives, specifically the implementation of the NHS Review and Putting People First.

The main responsibility for implementation lies at a local level with PCTs, local authorities and their statutory and non-statutory partners. The strategy includes a guide to commissioning outcomes for people with dementia and their families. There is significant emphasis on the role of the voluntary and community sector in delivering the strategy.

5 Implications for Age Concerns

The anticipated growth in the number of people living with dementia will mean that all Age Concerns will increasingly see more people with dementia and their families in need of services and support. All will need to consider how services such as information and advice can be tailored to meet the needs of people with dementia.

The implementation of the national dementia strategy presents potential opportunities for Age Concerns as both service providers and older people's representatives. Age Concerns may want to consolidate or develop services and may wish to consider some of the following actions:

- Identify and meet the lead commissioner for the dementia strategy in the PCT/local authority to discuss early plans and Age Concern's potential contribution.
- Discuss with the local mental health trust their plans for development to respond to the strategy and how Age Concern can support this.
- Discuss joint service development with the local branch of the Alzheimer's Society.
- Promoting healthy ageing activities as a key element of prevention of dementia and of maintaining health while living with dementia.
- Consider whether they have any premises which may be appropriate to host a memory service on a sessional basis.
- Develop proposals for providing some or all of the following services: information and advice as part of the early support following diagnosis, peer support through initiatives such as dementia cafés, practical support at home for people with dementia and their carers, independent advocacy services.
- Consider how the views of people with dementia and carers can be captured and shared with commissioners and statutory service providers.
- Consider whether there is scope to develop Age Concern dementia care advisors, as a constant source of reference for people with dementia and their carers.

6 Conclusion

The national dementia strategy has received broad support and there has been a significant increase in discussion of dementia as a result of celebrities talking about their experiences.

Age Concern has been closely involved in the development of the strategy and there have been strong indications that support for implementation from Age Concern will be welcomed. Many Age Concerns' existing services and approach chime with the aims of the strategy. Further service development may need expanded partnership working with statutory and non-statutory providers to ensure that people with dementia experience 'joined-up' services and to assist commissioners in planning comprehensive developments.

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