

Queen's Speech Debate Briefing: A Plan for the NHS and Social Care – 19 May 2021

This debate is taking place during Dementia Action Week (17-23 May). For more information on the contents of this briefing please contact Alex Osborne at alex.osborne@alzheimers.org.uk.

This briefing includes:

1. **Suggested Interventions**
2. **Background**
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4. **Dementia Research**

1. Suggested Interventions

- *Following the welcome mention of social care reform in the Queen's Speech, can the Minister now urgently confirm the Government's timetable for said reform?*
- *Will the Minister commit to ensuring that the Government's proposals for social care reform are attentive to the accessibility and quality of care, not just its cost?*
- *How will the Government's proposals for the sustainable improvement of adult social care address the Covid-19 pandemic's impact on a) people receiving care, b) carers, and c) the sector as a whole?*

2. Background

There are an estimated 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK, with this number set to rise to nearly 1.6 million by 2040.¹ Dementia is a progressive, long-term health condition with huge care costs attached. Due to the absence of meaningful medical treatments or a cure for dementia, people living with the condition and their loved ones rely on the social care system. **It has been estimated that at least 70% of care home residents and over 60% of home care recipients are people with dementia.**² As such, it's vital that the needs of people with dementia are front and centre in any potential social care reform.

The Covid-19 pandemic has devastated the lives of so many of those who rely on social care. It's estimated that 34,000 people with dementia lost their lives to Covid-19.³ **People with dementia and their families are struggling to get the person-centred care and support they need and deserve**, while decades of underfunding have led to a care system that's unfair, costly, and difficult to access.

Despite facing immense challenges, the NHS has operated well during the pandemic, while social care services faced untold devastation. Covid-19 has succeeded in getting the attention of the wider public of the desperate situation for people who rely on social care; the legacy of this pandemic must now be real reform. **While dementia isn't curable yet, the care system is.** Alzheimer's Society welcomes the mention of social care reform in the Queen's Speech, but is now **calling on the Government to provide a clear, budgeted plan for this reform, complete with timescales, as soon as possible. This reform must be attentive to the accessibility and quality of care as well as its cost.**

3. Social Care Reform - #CuretheCareSystem

People with dementia have been worst-hit by the pandemic, accounting for over a quarter of all Covid-19 deaths.⁴ Tens of thousands more have seen their condition deteriorate at an increased pace over the last 12 months due to limited support and social isolation brought on by repeated

¹ Wittenberg, Raphael et al. Projections of older people with dementia and costs of dementia care in the United Kingdom, 2019-2040. 2019. Care Policy and Evaluation Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science. https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/cpec_report_november_2019.pdf.

² Alzheimer's Society. Dementia UK: Update. 2014. https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/migrate/downloads/dementia_uk_update.pdf; <https://www.ukhca.co.uk/pdfs/UKHCADementiaStrategy201202final.pdf>.

³ Alzheimer's Society. Pandemic's toll: over 34,000 people with dementia dead; care home deaths third higher than thought. 2021. <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/news/2021-03-01/pandemics-toll-over-34000-people-dementia-dead-care-home-deaths-third-higher>.

⁴ González, Livingston et al. Impact and mortality of COVID-19 on people living with dementia: cross-country report. 2020. International Long Term Care Policy Network, Care Policy and Evaluation Centre, London School of Economics. <https://tccovid.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/International-report-on-the-impact-of-COVID-19-on-people-living-with-dementia-19-August-2020.pdf>.

lockdowns. **Family carers are also exhausted, with over 40% spending over 100 hours per week caring for a loved one living with dementia.**⁵ All of this has highlighted even further the urgent need for social care reform in the UK.

Alzheimer's Society knows that the right care and support services can make a huge difference to people. However, a lack of time and dementia-specific training among the care workforce means that people with dementia just aren't getting this care and support in their homes or in residential care. This inevitably leads to emergency hospital admissions, putting additional pressure on the NHS.

The central principle of social care must be that it focuses on what matters to people while acknowledging the importance of care that offers people choice and control; that supports the individual with choosing and setting their own goals; that recognises the importance of relationships to health and wellbeing; and that improves people's experiences of 'living well,' grounded in research.

With this in mind, **Alzheimer's Society is using this Dementia Action Week to call on the Governments of England, Wales, and Northern Ireland to commit to publishing a clear, budgeted plan for social care reform, complete with milestones, with reform underway this year.** We are also asking for reforms to be attentive not just to funding, but to improving access to care and the quality of care that people receive.

During his first speech as Prime Minister, Boris Johnson made a hugely welcome commitment to 'fix the crisis in social care once and for all,' citing 'a clear plan we have prepared to give every older person the dignity and security they deserve.' It was therefore disappointing to hear only 9 words on social care reform within the Queen's Speech. The Prime Minister can still keep his promise by making the legacy of the pandemic a long-awaited Government plan to **#CuretheCareSystem**.

4. Dementia Research

Dementia is one of the greatest healthcare challenges facing the UK, with a cost to the economy of £26bn per year.⁶ Without life-changing treatments, the number of people living with the condition is set to grow to a million people in the next five years. Considered alongside the tragic and disproportionate impact of the pandemic on people living with dementia, **there has there has never been a more critical time to invest in dementia research and social care.**

Government investment in research will be vital in driving the post-Covid-19 economic recovery: **every £1 of public or charity investment in medical research delivers a return equivalent to around 25p every year, forever.**⁷ Alzheimer's Society was pleased to see the 2019 Conservative Party manifesto commit to delivering the Dementia Moonshot, which would double funding for dementia research for each of the next 10 years. However, this pledge has not yet been realised.

The Queen's Speech also contained a welcome commitment to invest in research and development. **A decade of steady investment has built a foundation for the UK to be a world-leader in dementia research, but this can only be achieved with appropriate support from Government.** Additional funding could help us better understand the causes of dementia, providing hope for a cure in the future. This is why the Dementia Moonshot must be delivered as soon as possible.

⁵ Alzheimer's Society. 'Exhausted' family and friends spent 92 million extra hours caring for loved ones with dementia since lockdown. 2020. <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/news/2020-10-05/exhausted-family-and-friends-spent-92-million-extra-hours-caring-loved-ones>.

⁶ Alzheimer's Society. How many people have dementia and what is the cost of dementia care? 2019. <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-us/policy-and-influencing/dementia-scale-impact-numbers>.

⁷ British Journal of Family Medicine Every £1 invested in medical research returns 25p per year, forever. 2018. <https://www.bjfm.co.uk/every-1-pound-invested-in-medical-research-returns-25p-per-year-forever>.