

## **Westminster Hall Debate on 'Addressing deterioration in people with long-term conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic' - Thursday 10 March 2022, 13:30**

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### **1. Deterioration for people with dementia during the Covid-19 pandemic**

The 900,000 people living with dementia in the UK have been worst hit by COVID-19. During the first wave of the pandemic, **people with dementia accounted for more than a quarter of all COVID-19 related deaths in England and Wales.**<sup>1</sup>

While dementia is a progressive condition, meaning it always gets worse over time, the rate of deterioration that we have seen has significantly increased since the pandemic began. **An Alzheimer's Society survey on the effects of lockdown for people with dementia found that 82% of people reported a deterioration in their symptoms.**<sup>2</sup>

This increased rate of deterioration for people with dementia has occurred for reasons including **changes to community rehabilitation services, a lack of social contact, and reductions in referrals to memory services and frequency of care plan reviews.**<sup>3</sup>

**From January 2020 to January 2022, dementia diagnosis rates in England dropped from 67.6% to 61.6%.**<sup>4</sup> This means that more people with dementia are living without access to the support services they need to manage their condition.

### **2. Dementia and rehabilitation**

As dementia is a complex condition, someone with dementia will require a range of community rehabilitation services to maintain their abilities for as long as possible. Services that were not suspended typically moved online during the pandemic, posing challenges for people with dementia who may not be confident or comfortable using digital methods to access services. **Social contact is also vital for people with dementia, as it ensures they can practice and maintain their use of cognitive and communication skills.**

Many people living with dementia won't be able to recover the skills that they have lost, but rehabilitation services can help them to preserve skills that they're on the verge of losing and live well with the skills they have. For example, our support line heard from people who lost their ability to speak due to social isolation. Support from speech and language therapists can help people regain baseline abilities, reducing need for social care.

With charities representing people with long-term conditions and organisations representing allied health professionals, we recently launched [\*Moving Forward Stronger\*](#), highlighting the deterioration that people with different conditions have experienced during the pandemic. To ensure people with dementia can counteract some of this deterioration, we called for **a fully-funded rehabilitation strategy, which provides them with substantial intervention and ongoing support from professionals in secondary and community care.**

This strategy must consider the needs of informal carers, who are essential to people with dementia's rehabilitation, and provide the resources which local authorities and Integrated Care Systems need to deliver their own plans at a local level.

<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics. Deaths involving Covid-19, England and Wales. 2020. [Deaths involving COVID-19, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk).

<sup>2</sup> Alzheimer's Society. Lockdown isolation causes shocking levels of decline for people with dementia. 2020. <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/news/2020-07-30/lockdown-isolation-causes-shocking-levels-decline-people-dementia-who-are-rapidly>.

<sup>3</sup> NHS Digital. Recorded Dementia Diagnoses. 2020. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/recorded-dementia-diagnoses>.

<sup>4</sup> Alzheimer's Society. Alzheimer's Society comment on how coronavirus is affecting dementia assessment and diagnosis. 2020. <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/news/2020-08-10/coronavirus-affecting-dementia-assessment-diagnosis>.