

Alzheimer's Society Briefing Note

Why must Government Make Dementia a Priority?

- Almost 1 million people are currently living with dementia in the UK, and we expect this to rise to 1.4 million by 2040, due to our ageing population.
- Dementia costs the UK economy £42bn per year, rising to more than £90bn by 2040.
- 1 in 3 people born today will develop dementia in their lifetime.
- Dementia is the leading cause of death in the UK, according to figures from the ONS.

Diagnosis

What's the situation?

- More than 1 in 3 people living with dementia in England are undiagnosed, below even the frankly unambitious target of 66.7%.
- There is significant regional variation in diagnosis rates. In England, diagnosis rates vary across upper-tier local authority areas by more than 40%.
- Awareness of dementia is not reflective of the scale of prevalence, with polling suggesting that only 60% of UK adults realise that dementia is a cause of death.

We want to see:

- Adoption of a new, more ambitious dementia diagnosis rate target by Ministers.
- Reduction in barriers to diagnosis through commitment from Government to better training for healthcare professionals, and funding for public awareness campaigns.
- Increasing quality and quantity of dementia diagnosis data collection and publication.

Social Care

What's the situation?

- 70% of residents of older age care homes in England have dementia, and 60% of those receiving care in their own homes.

- Someone with dementia spends an average of £100,000 on their care over their lifetime.
- Only 45% care staff are currently recorded as having any level of training in dementia.

We want to see:

- A long-term social care workforce strategy, with social care staff required to undertake dementia training mapped to the Dementia Training Standards Framework or equivalent.
- A sustainable funding model for quality personalised care, which pools the risk of care costs and is centred on achieving affordable care for everyone living with dementia.

New Treatments for Dementia

What's the situation?

- Recent breakthroughs mean there are now drugs for the first time that can slow the progression of early-stage Alzheimer's disease. Two drugs (lecanemab and donanemab) were recently licensed in the UK, but will not be available on the NHS due to their cost. Another drug is being appraised by regulators, with dozens more in the pipeline.
- Tens of thousands of people in the UK could benefit from these new drugs, however the system is not yet ready to deliver them due to lack of early and accurate diagnosis.

We want to see:

- A satisfactory plan published by NHS England and the Department for Health and Social Care to get the system ready to deliver new treatments for dementia.
- We are not campaigning for the clinical approval of any specific new drug, rather for preparing the system as a whole for the drugs of the future.