

# 20,000 reasons to take action on dementia

Will you make a manifesto commitment to support the 20,000 people with dementia in Northern Ireland in the run up to the Assembly elections?



‘I was still in my forties when I was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s. You can feel very isolated when you have dementia. I’m lucky as I have support from my family, staff at my supported housing scheme and Alzheimer’s Society. This has helped me to create a new, positive life. We need to fight for those who are yet to be diagnosed.’

*Liz Cunningham, 52, from Belfast.  
To read more of Liz’s story, please  
turn to the back page.*

# Isolated. Alone. Denied the health and social care they need.

This is still the experience of too many people with dementia and those who care for them right across Northern Ireland.

## What is dementia?

Dementia is a serious, complex and progressive condition caused by diseases of the brain for which we don't yet have a cure. It can impair a person's memory, and their ability to think things through, carry out everyday tasks and live independently.

People can live well with dementia if they have the information, support and skilled care they need. And if they receive a timely diagnosis – which is essential.

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Prospective candidates for the Northern Ireland Assembly elections can make a huge difference to the lives of people living with dementia in their local area.

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## Reasons to take action on dementia

### Too few people are getting the diagnosis they need.

There are around 20,000 people with dementia in Northern Ireland, but only three out of five (63%) have a formal diagnosis.

### Across the UK, £26 billion a year is spent on dementia.

Families and carers shoulder two thirds of that cost. Dementia is a health and care challenge we must address.

### Support services in the community are inadequate.

Millions of pounds of taxpayers' money is squandered when people with dementia are stranded in hospital as a result of this.

**People with dementia and carers are being denied their right to skilled dementia support.** They're left to cope alone, without adequate understanding of the condition and its effects.

## The Assembly Executive must act

Alzheimer's Society in Northern Ireland is calling for people with dementia to get a prompt diagnosis and support that helps them live well in every care setting, from diagnosis to the end of life.

Please urge your party to include action on dementia in its election manifesto and help take this commitment forward if you are elected.

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Show your constituents that you are ready to take action on dementia during the election campaign by displaying the poster overleaf in a prominent place.

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# ‘We need to fight for those who are yet to be diagnosed with dementia.’

Liz Cunningham is 52 and lives in Belfast. She was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s when she was 48.

“Before my diagnosis, I became very emotional. I was totally distraught. I couldn’t even form a sentence without crying – I thought I was going mad. So when the diagnosis came, I was initially relieved. But when realisation set in, I was devastated.

Most of the early signs of dementia are invisible and that’s what makes it particularly hard to diagnose. My doctor referred me to a specialist, who diagnosed me. I honestly don’t know what I would have done without her. It was so important to have someone there to deal with my concerns straight away.

Four years on, I realise how lucky I am and like to think I’m living proof that there is life after diagnosis. I have support from

my husband, family, Hemsworth Court supported housing scheme staff and Alzheimer’s Society, which has helped me through the tough times. I’ve managed to create a new, positive life that has made mine worth living.

But you can feel very isolated. There’s no cure for dementia. Everyone knows someone with it, so it’s important that people are educated about dementia and support the need for change. Planning for the future is important because more people are diagnosed each year and we have an ageing population.

I know that there will be no cure for me, but I think we need to fight for those who are yet to be diagnosed.”

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If you want more people like Liz to get the support they need, please urge your party to include an action on dementia in its election manifesto. Do share this leaflet with others concerned about dementia and visit [alzheimers.org.uk/campaign](https://alzheimers.org.uk/campaign) for more information.

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