

Briefing for the Petitions Committee

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 13 Medi 2016
Petitions Committee | 13 September 2016

Petition number: P-05-697

Petition title: 45000 Reasons Wales Needs a Dementia Strategy

Text of petition: This petition was submitted by the Alzheimer's Society, having collected 5,861 signatures on an alternative e-petitions website.

We call on the Welsh Government to commit to a dementia strategy that improves the lives of people living with dementia in Wales.

There are currently 45,000 people estimated to be living with dementia in Wales, less than 50% of whom have received a formal diagnosis. Receiving a diagnosis of dementia empowers people to make decisions about the care and support they receive; it opens the door to accessing services and, where necessary, medication.

However, even those who have received a diagnosis have most likely not received the information and support that they need in order to live well with dementia. 1 in 10 people with dementia in Wales did not receive any support at all in the first year after their diagnosis, leaving them to deal with their diagnosis alone. People living with dementia in Wales are less likely to receive a diagnosis, and are less likely to have access to post-diagnosis support than those living in the rest of the UK. This has to change.

We want the Welsh Government to develop a dementia strategy for Wales, one that demonstrates a commitment to improving diagnosis rates, and ensures the access to local services and the quality of care that people living with dementia deserve.

Background

According to Alzheimer's Society, one in five people in Wales has a close family member or friend with dementia. Approximately [45,000 people in Wales are currently living with dementia](#), and this figure is predicted to rise steadily over the next decades.

Wales has the lowest rate of dementia diagnosis of all the UK nations. The [latest figures](#) (2015) show that only 43.4% of people living with dementia in Wales have a diagnosis. Diagnosis rates vary across Wales, from 49.5% in Cardiff and the Vale University Health Board, to 37.2% in Hywel Dda University Health Board.

Alzheimer's Society [states](#) that people living with dementia in Wales are less likely to receive a diagnosis and less likely to have access to post-diagnosis support than the rest of the UK. Its [research](#) found that only 58% of people with dementia say they are living well.

Alzheimer's Society welcomed the Welsh Government's recent commitment to a dementia strategic plan (see below), stating there is an urgent need for a new strategy that has clear lines of accountability and adequate resourcing. However, it has highlighted areas in which it would like the Welsh Government to go further, claiming that a diagnosis target of 50% does not go far enough. It wants to see a commitment to **increase diagnosis to at least 75% in each health board by 2021**, with the health boards committing to an annual minimum increase of 5% in the diagnosis rate for their area. Alzheimer's Society also points out that the plans to increase the number of dementia support workers would only equate to around 30 posts, whereas it believes over 300 support workers are needed. It wants to see access to a dementia adviser or similar professional available for all people diagnosed with dementia, to ensure they receive meaningful post-diagnosis support.

For further information see our key issues article: [The escalating dementia challenge](#) (May 2016).

Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government published the [National Dementia Vision for Wales](#) in 2011.

In April 2015 the [Welsh Government announced](#) its ambition for Wales to become a 'dementia friendly nation'. **It set a target to increase diagnosis rates to 50%**, and announced £1m of funding, which included money for 32 new primary care support workers, and four additional primary care link nurses to provide training for staff.

In February 2016 the Welsh Government launched the [ACT NOW to reduce your risk of developing dementia campaign](#), to raise public awareness of the steps people can take to reduce their risk. It suggests that healthier living may reduce dementia risk by 60%.

The Welsh Government also consulted on a new three-year [Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan](#), which highlights dementia as a key priority. The Delivery Plan includes a commitment to produce a new dementia strategic plan by December 2016. **The Minister's paper to the Committee confirms that a strategic plan for dementia will be introduced for the**

period 2017–19, and that a task and finish group (which will include Alzheimer’s Society Cymru) will be established to develop the strategy.

The latest [NHS Outcomes Framework \(2016–17\)](#) contains new measures on dementia training. The Welsh Government will now monitor the percentage of NHS employed staff trained to an appropriate level of dementia care who are in contact with the public, against a new target of 75% of the workforce.

National Assembly for Wales action

There has been a number of recent Plenary debates and questions relating to this issue. On [5 July 2016](#), the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport, Vaughan Gething AM, stated that the Welsh Government expects to have the new dementia strategic action plan ‘by the end of this calendar year’.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.