

Meeting	Care Scrutiny Committee
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Title	Dementia
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Member	Councillor Dafydd Meurig, Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report is submitted to the Care Scrutiny Committee for information and to raise awareness of Dementia, by providing Members with an overview of the work being done in Gwynedd to secure support and services for people living with Dementia.

2. Introduction

What is Dementia?

2.1 Dementia is a destructive illness, and it is more than just memory loss. It is a degenerative brain disease that restricts life and affects every part of an individual's physical, cognitive, emotional and social abilities¹.

2.2 Dementia is a progressive condition that worsens over time, and a person with dementia increasingly has to rely on carers as the condition develops. There is no cure, although there are treatments that can slow down the progression of some types of conditions in some cases.

Recognising the extent of the challenge

2.3 It is anticipated that the number of people being diagnosed with dementia will increase over time, and recent evidence shows that more young adults (under 65 years) are being diagnosed with dementia. Dementia has a substantial impact on individuals, their families and their friends, which leads to great pressure on statutory Health and Care services and the third sector.

2.4 Estimates suggest that over 45,000 people in Wales are currently living with dementia, and this figure is expected to exceed 55,000 by 2021. By 2055, it is estimated that over 100,000 people in Wales will be living with dementia.

1 Welsh Government (2016). Dementia: More than just memory loss.

2 Alzheimer's Society (2015), Diagnose or disempower? Receiving a diagnosis of dementia in Wales.

2.5 From the total of 45,000 people in Wales who are living with dementia, it is estimated that approximately two-thirds of them are living in the community, with the remaining one-third living in care or residential homes².

2.6 As people live longer, it is likely that the number of cases of dementia will increase. Figure 1 and Table 1 show the anticipated increase in the number of older people with dementia in north Wales of 72% between 2015 and 2035. However, a recent study suggests that the anticipated 'explosion' in the number of cases of dementia may be less serious than previously thought.

Figure 1: Number of people aged 65 and over anticipated to be living with dementia, north Wales and unitary authorities, 2015-2035.

Source: The Statistical Data Unit, Welsh Government; Daffodil

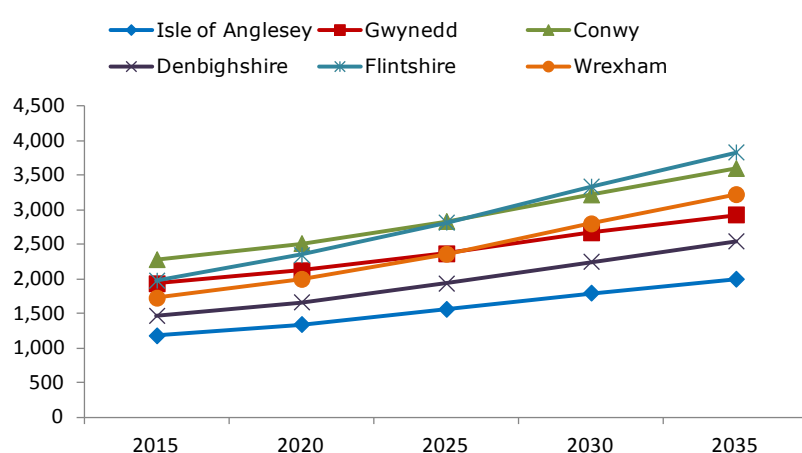


Table 1: Number of people aged 65 and over anticipated to be living with dementia, north Wales and unitary authorities, 2015-2035.

	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
BIPBC	10,530	11,951	13,839	16,039	18,094
Ynys Môn	1,174	1,338	1,557	1,792	1,993
Gwynedd	1,927	2,115	2,360	2,664	2,923
Conwy	2,276	2,509	2,828	3,212	3,594
Sir Ddinbych	1,463	1,659	1,929	2,245	2,541
Sir y Fflint	1,972	2,340	2,811	3,332	3,827
Wrecsam	1,719	1,991	2,354	2,793	3,216

Ffynhonnell: Llywodraeth Cymru, Daffodil

2.7 It is very difficult to obtain accurate data on the actual number of individuals who live with dementia or memory impairments in Gwynedd, since a great many of those who come to our attention have not received an assessment or an official diagnosis.

2.8 It can be challenging to secure support and care for individuals living with Dementia in Gwynedd, due to the high number of older people in the County and geographical issues. The Alzheimer's Society identifies challenges in supporting individuals with dementia in rural areas, where it is less likely that support services will be commissioned. Poor transport links exacerbates the difficulties in accessing support, and we know that carers are more likely to feel isolated and unsupported.

Impact on individuals, families and friends

2.9 Living with dementia can have a major emotional, social, psychological and practical impact on a person, their family and friends.

2.10 The condition affects each individual differently. For some people, the impact of the disease can be seen immediately. For many others, dementia causes a slow and painful deterioration and can lead to the loss of everything that matters to them. Dementia has a number of side-effects, with the majority of people experiencing memory problems. In turn, this leads to loss of self-respect, confidence, independence and self-control. Dementia has an impact on social roles and relationships, the ability to undertake activities or interests and daily skills such as self-care, cooking and driving. Individuals may also experience communication difficulties and lose the ability to make specific decisions about their lives. The condition can lead to a change in an individual's personality, and can cause them to exhibit challenging behaviour towards themselves and others.

2.11 Dementia affects the families and friends of individuals who live with the condition. Caring for someone living with dementia can place great strain upon carers, and it is essential to support them in their caring role.

The Welsh Language

2.12 For Welsh speakers living with Dementia, receiving care and support in their mother tongue or the language of their choice is a matter of clinical need.

National Context

2.13 The vision contained in the Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018-2022 is "for Wales to be a dementia friendly nation that recognises the rights of people with dementia to feel valued and to live as independently as possible in their communities." The Adults, Health and Well-being Department is committed to fulfilling the requirements of the plan and reports back to the Dementia Delivery Assurance and Implementation Group in regard to successes and barriers.

2.14 Dementia has been established as a specific theme within the national programme for Ageing Well in Wales. One of the aims of the programme is to "make Wales a dementia supportive nation by building and promoting dementia supportive communities." Our vision as a Council is to support all the people of Gwynedd to thrive and live full lives in our community, in a county which is one of the best counties to live in. It is a priority in the Council plan to ensure that we will have care services which help people to live their lives in the manner of their choosing.

3. Support and Services in Gwynedd.

3.1 Our vision is to provide timely information, advice and support to individuals with dementia in Gwynedd. A range of support is available to individuals diagnosed with Dementia, from information and community support as the early signs of the condition emerge, to mainstream services such as domiciliary care and day care, to specialist intensive care during the final stages.

Improving awareness and understanding of Dementia

3.2 The DementiaGO scheme provides training to raise awareness of Dementia Friends, and promotes Dementia-friendly communities. The development of unique Virtual Reality technology has helped to raise awareness of dementia. This bilingual technology is the first of its kind in Wales, and the VR effectively conveys the feelings of bewilderment that someone with dementia would experience, and the voices that they would hear.

Living as well as possible for as long as possible with dementia

3.3 It is very important for people living with dementia to remain in their own homes for as long as possible, and to receive support to remain safe and secure at home. Many people rely on their families and friends for support, and there is a need to ensure that these carers are given reasonable breaks from their caring roles so that they are able to continue as carers, and have lives of their own beyond the caring role.

3.4 Funding from the Welsh Government Integrated Care Fund has been used to enhance the 'Dementia Connect' support provided by the Alzheimer's Society. This service provides a simple point of contact which puts service users and their carers in touch with practical support to empower them to cope with the condition and remain active within their communities. The Dementia Connect service provides support to individuals who are yet to receive a diagnosis, in addition to those who have received a diagnosis of dementia. There are five elements to the service: support over the telephone, regular calls to keep in touch, specialist community support, volunteer support to enable individuals to continue to be a part of the community, and self-management. In addition, the Alzheimer's Society provides courses for carers, families and friends of individuals with a diagnosis of Dementia, in order to support them to understand and cope with the condition, to provide support, care and information on legal and financial matters.

3.5 DementiaGo is a valuable service that supports people living with severe conditions such as Dementia and Parkinson's disease. The Team has recently introduced a new project called "A Minute to Move" which is a programme of light physical exercises for Council care home residents. The programme of various activities leads up to an annual competitive sports week between the care homes.

3.6 The 'Galwch Draw' service was set up using ICF funding and is focussed on providing support for individuals living with dementia and their carers, by offering respite and short breaks to support those individuals and their carers in participants' homes.

3.7 ICF funding has also enabled us to appoint Dementia support workers as part of the Community Resource Teams, in order to support individuals with dementia and their carers to remain independent in their communities.

3.8 Specialist day care provision for individuals with dementia has been established on a joint basis with the Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board in the Llŷn and Bangor areas, to provide respite for carers and clinical support in order to monitor the individual's health.

3.9 It is acknowledged that it will not always be possible for people to remain in their own homes. Gwynedd is eager to ensure that people with dementia receive the most suitable care as locally as possible. Specialist dementia care units have been established in a number of Gwynedd Council residential homes, and one particular residential home is dedicated to providing care for individuals with dementia (Plas Maesincla). In addition to long-term support, these units also offer temporary support which provides respite for carers. Specialist units have already been set up in Llys Cadfan, Bryn Blodau, Plas Hafan and Plas Hedd residential homes. Plans are afoot for further developments in Hafod Mawddach in the next financial year.

4 Next steps

4.1 We will maintain our commitment to fulfilling the requirements of the Dementia Action Plan for Wales by working together with individuals, their families and friends, and our partners in the third sector and the Health Board.

4.2 We rely on temporary funding to support many of the developments in care provision for individuals with dementia. The challenge will be to secure long-term funding to ensure the sustainability and continued development of these services.