

2024 Councillor Briefing

Alzheimer's Society

Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading dementia charity, working across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. We are working towards a world where dementia no longer devastates lives. We do this by campaigning for and influencing change, funding research to find treatments and a cure, and supporting people living with dementia through a variety of local and national services.

To find services near you: [Find support near you | Alzheimer's Society \(alzheimers.org.uk\)](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

About dementia

Dementia is the UK's biggest killer, and 1 in 3 people born today will develop dementia. However, only a third of those affected will receive a diagnosis. Dementia is a progressive condition which can have a devastating impact on individuals, their loved ones and the health and care systems. Without a diagnosis, people living with dementia are unable to access the right support and care, will likely struggle with dementia symptoms and face preventable deterioration in their condition including being more prone to crises.

Four key points to know about dementia:

1. People can live well with dementia. Everyone experiences dementia in their own way. Until Dementia Modifying Treatments become available, and we find a cure, support and treatments are available to help with symptoms and managing daily life. This includes cognitive stimulation therapies and keeping active. As dementia is progressive, it is important that people receive an early diagnosis to ensure they receive the right person-centred support from local health and social care agencies at the right time.
2. Dementia is not a natural part of ageing. It is a progressive, long-term health condition that affects the brain. Memory problems are one of several symptoms that people with dementia may experience. Others include difficulties with planning, problem-solving, communication, and sometimes changes in mood or behaviour. The specialist treatment they receive, the support from friends and family, and their surroundings can have a significant impact.
3. Dementia is caused by diseases of the brain. Dementia is an umbrella term for diseases that affect the brain, and no two types of dementia are the same. Over 200 different types of dementia diseases have currently been identified with Alzheimer's disease accounting for almost 50% of diagnosis.

4. Dementia is not just about losing your memory. Dementia can also affect the way people think, speak, perceive things, feel, and behave. Symptoms of dementia gradually get worse over time. How quickly this happens varies from person to person, with some people staying independent for years.

Join our dedicated Councillor Network

As a Councillor, you play a crucial role in improving the lives of people living with dementia. Our Councillor Network is a fantastic way to learn more about dementia, how it affects people in your area and what you can do as an elected representative to create positive change in your Council.

The Councillor Network provides access to bespoke webinars, briefings and newsletters which will keep you up to date with the latest data and evidence, policy developments, actions you can take, and support we can offer.

As a member, you will receive regular updates useful to your role as a local Councillor and our dedicated Local Systems Influencing Officers will support you in your work to make dementia a priority.

[Join Alzheimer's Society's Councillor Network | Alzheimer's Society \(alzheimers.org.uk\)](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

Supporting residents living with dementia

Despite its prevalence, only 4 in 10 people living with dementia feel that social care considers dementia a priority. Here's how you can prioritise dementia for residents in your locality:

- Challenge your local authority to set an ambitious dementia diagnosis rate target. Doing so is vital for access to new innovative treatments that are on the horizon and quality personalised care which enables independent living.
- Make dementia a priority by ensuring your council has a dedicated dementia strategy and action plan that has been co-produced with local people living with dementia.
- Work closely with your local Integrated Care System to ensure a well-integrated and resourced system which is prepared to offer quality care and new treatments.
- Work with cabinet members to ensure that people living with dementia are considered when planning and developing the local area. Dementia affects every aspect of a person's life. The impact of poor transport and housing isolates and excludes people living with dementia from their communities. Every elected representative has a part to play to remove barriers which prevents the local area from being fully inclusive and accessible.
- Improve provision and availability of post-diagnostic support. There is currently huge variation in dementia care, and [insufficient support for people living with dementia increases their vulnerability to crises](#).
- Addressing unpaid care. Carers shoulder immense mental and financial burdens, and many struggle without adequate support. Alarming, between a quarter and half of carers in the UK report experiencing symptoms of poor mental health. Carers need local

authorities to exercise their responsibility to carry out carer's needs assessments so they can access the support they require including respite care. We have new data on the economic costs of this that we could be happy to share with you.

How we can support you to help your residents

The Local Systems Influencing Team at Alzheimer's Society can help you in a variety of ways:

- We can share our expertise to input into the development of dementia strategies and action plans that serve the needs of the community based on our evidence-based Local Dementia Strategy Toolkit recommendations.
- We provide resources, expert advice, and local intelligence, translating national policy recommendations into locally relevant actions.
- We can share data, reports, briefings, and information on dementia to you and your team, and are happy to present recommendations tailored to your local authority area.
- We can provide a range of dementia statistics for your local authority area.
- We can work with you to write council motions or conduct scrutiny reviews.
- We can deliver informative presentations or Dementia Friends sessions for Councillors.
- We can share examples of best practice as suggestions for improvement.
- We can connect you with local people living with dementia and help facilitate the involvement of these experts by experience in co-production and co-design through our Dementia Voice network.