

Alzheimer's Society Party Conference Briefing 2024

If you would like to take any action to support our work, please get in touch at public.affairs@alzheimers.org.uk. Our team would be happy to help and provide any additional information you may need, including constituency-level information on dementia where possible.

Dementia is the biggest health and social care challenge we face; it is the UK's biggest killer.

Key statistics on dementia:

- **Almost a million people in the UK have dementia**, with this number expected to rise to 1.4 million by 2040¹.
- New Alzheimer's Society research has found **that dementia costs the UK economy £42bn per year. We estimate that this will rise to more than £90bn by 2040 unless action is taken.**²
- **1 in 6 hospital beds are currently occupied by someone with dementia.** By 2040, 1 in 4 hospital beds will be occupied by someone with dementia³.
- **The costs of dementia rise significantly as the condition progresses.** The annual, per person cost for mild dementia is £28,700 compared to £80,500 for severe dementia, driven by increasing need for more complex social and unpaid care⁴.
- **More than a third of people living with dementia across the UK do not have a diagnosis**⁵. On top of this, those who do get a diagnosis live with dementia for an average of 3.5 years before receiving it⁶.
- Despite people living with dementia accounting for about 60% of individuals receiving care at home in the UK⁷ and 70% of residents in older age residential care in England⁸, **only 45% of care workers currently receive any form of dementia-specific training**⁹.
- Many with dementia rely upon the social care system. However, **the costs of social care can be catastrophic – an individual with dementia spends an average of around £100,000 on care**¹⁰.

Why should dementia be made a priority now?

Dementia is a whole system challenge, and with prevalence on the rise, the pressure dementia puts on health and social care services will only increase. **This is why dementia is a key barometer for the success of health and care reform, and why it must be made a political priority.**

- The Chief Medical Officer's latest annual report specifically highlighted the importance of early diagnosis, which helps to avoid early or unnecessary admission to a care home or hospital and can provide substantial savings on long-term costs¹¹.
- This is reflected in recent Alzheimer's Society research, which found that **people with undiagnosed dementia, on average, attend A&E 1.5 times per year.** This is more than people

¹ Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). [The Economic Impact of Dementia](#)

² Ibid

³ Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). The economic impact of dementia – [Module 2: Dementia's contribution to health metrics.](#)

⁴ Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). [The Economic Impact of Dementia](#)

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Aldus et al (2020). [Undiagnosed dementia in primary care: a record linkage study.](#)

⁷ UKHCA/Homecare Association (2015). [Dementia and Homecare: Driving Quality and Innovation](#), p.8.

⁸ Wittenberg, R (2018). [The Costs of Dementia in England](#), Int J Geriatric Psychiatry, Vol 34

⁹ Skills for Care (2023). [The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England](#), P141.

¹⁰ Alzheimer's Society (2018). [Dementia – the true cost: Fixing the care crisis](#)

¹¹ Chief Medical Officer (2023). [Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report 2023: Health in an Ageing Society](#), P145.

with mild, moderate and severe dementia, and three times as often as people without dementia but with similar conditions¹².

- Despite this, the UK spends a comparatively small amount on dementia diagnosis and treatment, at just 1.4% of total dementia healthcare spend. **By contrast, a third of dementia healthcare costs are generated by inpatient stays in hospital¹³.**
- **Over 100 new treatments for dementia are in clinical trials.** However, the UK is not in a position to benefit from these ground-breaking new treatments. Diagnoses are neither early or accurate enough with infrastructure and workforce lacking capacity to roll out new treatments.
- **With increasing prevalence, the need for social care and unpaid care is set to increase by 43% by 2040¹⁴.** We need to ensure that our social care system can cope with this demand.

Alzheimer's Society calls:

- **Everyone living with dementia should be able to access an early, accurate diagnosis,** including information on the type of dementia they have. This must be supported by the regular publication and collection of national and local diagnosis rate data.
- **Bold, ambitious and achievable new diagnosis rate targets must be set** by Government and health systems.
- **We need UK healthcare systems to publish plans on how they will deliver new disease-modifying treatments for dementia at scale.** These plans must include investment in the diagnostic infrastructure and skilled workforce that will be required to identify eligible patients.
- **Each nation should develop and implement a long-term social care workforce strategy** to ensure we have enough of the right people with the right skills to provide high quality care.
- **It should be mandatory for all care staff to undertake high quality dementia training,** mapped to the Dementia Training Standards Framework, or an equivalent standard. This recommendation is reflected in Skills for Care's July 2024 Workforce Strategy and NHSE's Getting It Right First time (GIRFT) 'RightCare dementia scenario'.
- **A sustainable social care funding model is required** to ensure quality, personalised care is accessible to everyone living with dementia. **Improved support should also be offered to unpaid carers** through proactively offered needs assessments and access to dementia-specific respite care.

¹² Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). The economic impact of dementia – [Module 2: Dementia's contribution to health metrics](#).

¹³ Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). [The Economic Impact of Dementia](#)

¹⁴ Ibid