

## **Dementia Strategy 2026-2036**

### **Consultation response summary**

#### **April 2026**

Age Cymru is the leading national charity working to improve the lives of all older people in Wales. We believe older people should be able to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, have adequate income, access to high quality services and the opportunity to shape their own future. We seek to provide a strong voice for all older people in Wales and to raise awareness of the issues of importance to them.

Overall, earlier diagnosis is the most vital change we wish to see. Getting an early and accurate diagnosis enables people living with dementia to plan better for the future. A diagnosis enables access to care, support, and symptomatic treatment, which helps people to better manage their condition and live independently at home for longer. Feedback from our Dementia Advocacy services and wider engagement highlights how confusion around diagnosis and stages around dementia is poorly communicated, which affects families' ability to plan later life well, so while earlier diagnosis is most vital, better communication is also needed.

We support the principles included in the strategy but would question whether aims can be turned into positive outcomes for people living with dementia without additional resourcing for services. For example, the strategy acknowledges that success is predicated on understanding what community assets exist and how they can be utilised. Wales has made progress in providing a network of community connector services across Wales that can help people living with dementia and their families, but these only work if the community assets exist to refer and signpost people on to. Wider than the dementia strategy, many community groups are struggling to secure funding to continue their community work. Befriending, social groups, luncheon clubs and others are struggling with rising costs. The fragility of third sector and community support should be considered in pathway planning and service commissioning.

People living with dementia are at increased risk of abuse and neglect and this section lacks a focus in this area. It is important that training and guidance considers spotting signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect for people living with dementia. As neglect can happen because of carer burn-out, it is vital that carers are offered information, advice and support at every contact to reduce the risk of neglect.

We support the recognition in the strategy that Welsh Language provision is vital for people living with dementia. As written, contract terms would include this as a 'should.' To ensure that vital provision is there this should be changed to a 'must.'

We appreciate the recognition in the strategy that using the right language and good communication vastly improve the care experience and we would like to see more detail included in the strategy developments around this. Unpaid older carer identification is a known issue and a lack of this hinders carers getting access to the help they are entitled to aimed at having a good quality of life alongside caring. Without increased recognition of the vital role carers play and why they need earlier access to information and advice, issues can escalate and result in huge personal cost to the carer and the cared for.

The language used around diagnosis is not always clear enough that a diagnosis of dementia means living with a life limiting and terminal illness. Each dementia journey is different. For some this means a rapid decline and so including discussions on end-of-life care early is vital.

A 2024 report from Marie Curie found that found that people who died from dementia or Alzheimer's disease were less likely to have been in receipt of care from palliative care specialists in the last three months of life. Improving pathways to palliative care vastly improves the experience for families of those living with dementia and so should be embedded in care planning pathways.

It is essential that dementia training becomes mandatory through the Dementia Strategy to ensure consistency and give families and carers confidence that their loved on will receive safe, compassionate care from trusted professionals. The recent announcement of a Social Care Academy for Wales is a good opportunity to embed mandatory training appropriate to the wide social care workforce's needs. This development should be informed by those with lived experience.

The evaluation of the former dementia plan identified governance as an area that required strengthening. The governance structures included in the draft strategy remain similar to former governance so it remains unclear from the draft strategy whether there is sufficient strength to drive improvement. It would be helpful to have timeframes included for the frequency of meetings that the Ministerial Board and the Advisory Board will have, and whether monitoring of attendance and involvement will form part of monitoring arrangements.

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