Dementia Plan
Year 1 Report
Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust
Year 1 Dementia Plan Report

Dementia is set to be the 21st century’s biggest healthcare challenge. At the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust, we are working towards improving the experience for people living with dementia who use our services, as well as considering the impact it will have on our workforce.

There are many strategic drivers to this work, including the recently launched Welsh Government Dementia Plan 2018-22, which focuses on key areas for improvement. We are also aware of the links our dementia plan need to have with other wider work such as The Ageing Well in Wales Strategy, and Alzheimer’s Society’s Dementia Friends initiative.

Our vision is that by 2020 we will be an organisation that responds to both the clinical and emotional needs of people living with dementia, their carers and families. We will be more dementia aware with a skilled and effective workforce. We will deliver a better quality service with improved service user experiences and outcomes.

Having been awarded Dementia Friendly Community status by the Alzheimer’s Society in 2017, we launched our 3 year Dementia Plan in October 2017, committing the organisation to become an organisation that responds to both the clinical and emotional needs of people living with dementia, their carers and families.

The successful launch of the plan was met with praise from people living with dementia and partner organisations. Sue Phelps, Country Director for the Alzheimer’s Society supports our work that “plays a pivotal and direct role in helping to support people affected by dementia and supporting the creation of a dementia-friendly Wales. The Trust’s continuous commitment to working towards becoming a dementia-friendly community is to be commended.”

While there is still much work to do and this achievement indicates the start of our journey towards being dementia friendly.
Written in consultation with partner organisations and people living with dementia and their carers, the plan challenges WAST to deliver against 5 ‘Best Practice Aims’

1. Deliver person centred care that supports the patient living with dementia.
2. Develop a skilled and effective workforce able to champion compassionate person centred care and recognise the early signs of dementia.
3. Modernise our approaches to communicating by seeking and acting on feedback from people living with dementia and their carers to improve the quality of service we provide.
4. Become dementia friendly organisations with environments and processes that cause no avoidable harm to patients living with dementia.
5. Develop effective partnerships with local agencies (police, fire, health, social care, and third sector) to improve care and outcomes.

The experiences of people living with dementia continue to influence the plan and the way that we develop services to be more dementia friendly. Engaging with people living with dementia is key to understanding and breaking down any barriers that people have when they access and use our services.

Engagement and patient experiences

Over the last year, we met with a range of groups and spoke with nearly 150 people living with dementia and their carers. We educated people about our range of Trust services and how to access them, and captured expectations and experiences. The main themes from feedback include issues with calling 999 and communicating over the phone; how we provide a timely response; and how we involve carers. Examples of individual feedback have included:

“You ask too many questions”
“You need to have patience with me”
“I want a nice caring voice at the end of the phone”
“I want respect, kindness and compassion – that’s the most important thing”
It is well known that Carers provide a valuable role and that their involvement when they access our services is key to both the patient’s improved health and a positive experience. Our engagement work shows that we need to undertake more work with carers of people living with dementia, it is also clear that some people who are carers are living with dementia themselves.

“
My Husband is my carer and he was having heart attack as he was driving. I was in passenger seat. My husband wanted to drive me home, but I insisted he stop and call 999. Ambulance service were great after I said I have dementia. There was a lot of questions and it was confusing.
“

“My husbands carer was poorly and called 999, my husband with dementia had to go in to hospital with her. The handover was so poor (re communication around the needs of the husband) that he wandered off and she was anxious about him.

“
Allow my carer to be present as I get agitated
“
Our promises to you
When you need us, we promise to:

- Get to a life threatening emergency as quickly as possible
- Provide the best response and care for your needs, with staff who have the right skills
- Be kind, helpful and treat you with dignity and respect
- Be professional and courteous, involve you in decisions, explain what we are doing and why
- Be calm, compassionate and have patience
- Be considerate of your specific needs from the moment we answer your call (e.g. if you have dementia, if you are a carer, have disabilities, different conditions, are in pain or are frail)
- Provide good information and communication if you have a sensory loss (including hearing and sight loss) and support you if you have mobility issues
- We will only take you to hospital if we really need to
- Recognise the signs of people with dementia, and their needs
- Make sure you get the right response for your needs if you fall
- Respect you and your family’s wishes during difficult and emotional times

If you need transport to a planned appointment:

- We will make every effort to get you to your appointment on time, and take you home
- Allow a family member/carer to travel with you if you are unable to travel on your own

If you have a carer, we will:

- Treat them equally and keep them informed of what’s happening
- Include your carer in any discussions and respect their views
- Allow your carer to accompany you

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Our Behaviours:

- I will be kind, caring and compassionate
- I will ask and listen
- I will be honest and open with myself and others
- Our best, together, we can be better
- I will own my decisions
Our Promises to Older People

In 2016 the Trust launched its Promises to Older People, which highlight what people want when they access any of our services. 2 of the promises relate directly to Dementia and Carers. A 2017 review of how patient’s experiences measured against the promises gave the following feedback.

Regarding the promise “Recognise the signs of people with dementia, and their needs”, consideration and a calming approach were important to patients…

- Overall the Promises are fine. However, why not use a system whereby you can identify patients who perhaps have communication difficulties – dementia, learning difficulties etc.
- “They spoke to my gran like she was a human being - caring but in no way patronising, despite her hearing problems and confusion.”
- “I would like to express my thanks to G and his colleague from the Porthcawl response team who attended my Mam last night for the way they treated her she is a frail 89 year old who has dementia and she was very frightened. She has a fear of hospitals and was very resistant to going to hospital, they reassured her and were exceptionally kind and patient with her helping her to come to the right decision and go to hospital. Which turned out to be the right call as she suffered a tachycardia episode while in A&E.”
- “My elderly mother, who suffers from Dementia and who had a fall. The crew were fantastic as soon as they set foot in my parents’ house, they were both friendly but most of all calming for my mother.”

Regarding the promise “Be considerate of your specific needs from the moment we answer your call (e.g. if you have dementia, if you are a carer)”, patients appreciated and wanted good care, clear information and consideration from call handlers…

- “Very helpful and informative on the telephone. Paramedics are very caring and efficient and prepare patient ready if they need to go into the ambulance.”
- “The lack of over the phone reassurance while waiting was terrifying.”

Dementia Friendly Communities

We have developed good relationships with a range of local partners including the Ageing Well in Wales Team and Dementia Friendly Community Coordinators from the Alzheimer’s Society. This has allowed us to engage widely with other people and organisations looking to create more dementia friendly communities. We are involved with different Steering Groups across Wales including Cardiff, Pontypridd, Maerdy, Pontardawe, Swansea, and Merthyr Tydfil.
Training and Awareness
The Good Work: Dementia Learning and Developing Framework, advocates that staff training and awareness is required to improve knowledge and skills around dementia. Dementia Friends sessions have been delivered to new staff on their arrival into the trust, as well as ad hoc sessions to different staff groups. The plan commits us to 75% of staff receiving dementia awareness training by 2018 and 100% by 2020. Further work is required to create opportunities for more comprehensive learning around dementia, as well as links with Health Boards and other partners to share learning.

For our Joint Emergency Services Commitment, we are working with Police and Fire and Rescue services in South Wales on joint training opportunities for call centre staff. This comes as all emergency services have signed up to the Emergency Services Commitment on Dementia in Wales.

Information and resources
An intranet page has been created which holds:

- Important documents and resources, ranging from government papers to resources from other Ambulance Trusts
- Instructions on how to download the Pre-Hospital Communication App, a tool which can be helpful when communicating with someone with additional communication needs
- A link to the Trust’s patient story videos around dementia. First-hand accounts from people living with dementia about their experiences or expectations of the services

We have developed ‘A Guide to Communicating with People Living with Dementia’ for our range of staff and volunteers. This is an A5 bilingual leaflet based on what people living with dementia and their carers have told us over the last year. It includes helpful hints and tips on engaging and communicating, including why it’s important to embrace their reality and respond to their feelings and emotions.

New Dementia Taskforce
To guide the implementation and development of our Dementia Plan, a Dementia Taskforce has been established with its first formal gathering in June 2018. Consisting of Dementia Champions, staff with an interest in the subject and a range of partners and patient representatives, the Taskforce will drive forward the last 2 years of the plan.

By 2020, our plan challenges us to be a more dementia friendly organisation and as such, we should see an improvement in the areas highlighted as leading to a poor patient experience and an increase in the number of staff who have received training.