

County Durham
Dementia Needs and Asset Assessment

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Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Aims and Objectives.....	3
Key Findings	3
Strengths and Assets.....	4
Conclusion.....	5
Recommendations	6

Executive Summary

Aims and Objectives

In response to the escalating significance of dementia care within County Durham, this Needs and Asset Assessment explores the multifaceted landscape of dementia, evaluating the prevailing needs, available resources, and potential avenues for enhancement. Dementia, a progressive neurological condition, presents a growing challenge not only for individuals directly affected but also for their invaluable network of carers and families. This report collates data as well as incorporates the voices of individuals living with dementia and their carers. Looking at key aspects such as prevalence rates, preventive measures, diagnostic processes, and the quality of care, this assessment aims to provide a foundation for targeted interventions and strategic planning. The ultimate objective is to create an environment where those affected by dementia can lead fulfilling lives, supported by a seamless network of services and resources.

Key Findings

- 1. Dementia OGIM Implementation:** County Durham's concerted effort towards dementia care is encapsulated in the Dementia Objectives, Goals, Initiatives, and Measures (OGIM) document. This multi-agency approach, developed in collaboration with statutory and voluntary partners, underscores a commitment to provide consistent, high-quality services for individuals with dementia and their carer's.
- 2. Patient and Carers Perceived Needs:** Feedback from twelve individuals revealed a generally positive perception of available dementia care resources. While a majority felt adequately informed, a subset expressed a need for more substantial emotional and psychological support. Noteworthy was the desire for increased one-on-one services and support groups.
- 3. Dementia Prevalence:** The recorded prevalence of dementia in County Durham for those aged 65 and above aligns closely with national and regional averages. Notably, the region ranks among the top two in effective diagnosis rates, signifying an efficient diagnostic process. However, this does pose a contradiction in the evidence as risk factors for the development of dementia are higher locally suggesting rates would be also. This therefore warrants further investigation for unmet need.
- 4. Preventative Measures:** County Durham grapples with higher rates of smoking and obesity compared to national averages, posing significant health risks for dementia. Addressing these modifiable factors is crucial in reducing dementia prevalence and improving overall well-being.
- 5. Diagnosing Well:** While County Durham maintains a dementia diagnosis rate similar to national and regional averages, the impact of the COVID-19

pandemic is evident, highlighting the need for sustained access to memory assessment services.

6. **Living Well:** The percentage of patients receiving dementia care plan reviews witnessed a notable decline in 2020/21 due to pandemic-related disruptions. Prior to this, County Durham's figures were in line with national trends, emphasising the importance of regular care plan reviews in ensuring holistic support.
7. **Supporting Well:** County Durham exhibits a commendable record in the quality rating of residential care and nursing beds for individuals aged 65 and over. The region also boasts a lower-than-average rate of emergency hospital admissions for dementia-related issues, signifying robust community-based care.
8. **Dying Well:** The mortality rate for individuals with dementia in County Durham closely mirrors national trends, reflecting a consistent approach to end-of-life care.

Strengths and Assets

1. **The Dementia Strategy Implementation Group** stands out as a cornerstone in fostering a coordinated and collaborative approach to dementia care in County Durham. The active involvement and steadfast commitment of this multi-agency partnership underscore their dedication to realising the objectives outlined in the OGIM. While this group serves as a valuable asset, there is potential for even greater impact with increased participation from additional partners, including primary care colleagues to encourage a more comprehensive and inclusive network for dementia care across the county.
2. **The Alzheimer's Society:** Serving as a vital hub for dementia care coordination, the Alzheimer's Society plays a pivotal role in providing accessible information, resources, and support services for individuals and their carers. This centralised resource aids in navigating the complex landscape of dementia care.
3. **Dementia-Friendly Communities:** County Durham's commitment to fostering dementia-friendly communities is a significant asset. These initiatives promote inclusivity, raise awareness, and implement environmental adaptations, reducing stigma and enhancing accessibility for individuals with dementia.
4. **Quality Residential Care:** The consistently high quality rating of residential care and nursing beds for individuals aged 65 and over in County Durham is commendable. This indicates a commitment to ensuring safe and dignified long-term care services for those who may require them.
5. **Engaged Stakeholders:** The active participation and dedication of a diverse range of stakeholders in the Dementia Strategy Implementation Group and other initiatives demonstrate a collective investment in the well-being of individuals living with dementia and their carers.
6. **County Durham Carers:** the organisation supports over 24,000 Carers across County Durham and Darlington. They offer a raft of bespoke services from a listening ear to debt advice.
7. **Family carers** emerge as a crucial asset in the landscape of dementia care in County Durham. Their commitment and pivotal role in providing support and

care to individuals with dementia contribute significantly to the well-being of the affected individuals. The dedication and resilience shown by carers amplify the community's ability to provide holistic care.

8. **Durham County Council's Dementia Friendly Status** supports the journey towards creating a dementia-friendly community in County Durham. The council's active participation and commitment to dementia-friendly initiatives underscore its role as a leader in promoting inclusivity and understanding. Through various programs, awareness campaigns, and community adaptations, Durham County Council has significantly contributed to reducing stigma and enhancing accessibility for individuals living with dementia.
9. **The integration of technology and digital solutions** emerges as a pivotal asset in advancing dementia care in County Durham. Embracing innovative technological approaches has the potential to revolutionise the landscape of support services and enhance the quality of life for individuals living with dementia.
10. **The presence of Admiral Nurses** stands as a beacon of specialised and compassionate support within County Durham's dementia care landscape. These highly trained professionals play a pivotal role in providing expert guidance and assistance to both individuals with dementia and their families. Admiral Nurses, with their unique skill set and deep understanding of dementia, contribute significantly to enhancing the overall quality of care. Their specialized knowledge, coupled with a person-centred approach, ensures that families navigating the complexities of dementia receive tailored and empathetic support.

Conclusion

The needs and asset assessment of dementia care in County Durham offers a comprehensive view of the current landscape, revealing both areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. The overarching conclusion is one of communication between stakeholders and to our community. Harnessing strengths through a collaborative effort involving professionals, community organisations, and carers, significant strides have and will continue to be made in providing quality support and services to individuals living with dementia. Working together we can build a future where individuals with dementia and their carers receive the highest standard of care, ensuring they lead fulfilling lives within their communities.

Recommendations

- 1. Enhance Dementia Training for Healthcare Professionals:** Conduct a comprehensive training needs analysis to identify gaps in dementia training for healthcare professionals including social care staff and extended to professional and family carers also. Consolidate all current training offers into one place to support ongoing education to ensure healthcare providers stay updated with the latest advancements in dementia care.
- 2. Promote Awareness of Healthy Lifestyles and Risk Reduction:** Launch a public health campaign to raise awareness about modifiable risk factors for dementia. Encourage the adoption of healthy lifestyles, including regular exercise, balanced nutrition, and social engagement. Offer educational resources and support for individuals to implement risk reduction strategies.
- 3. Facilitate Collaboration and Partnerships:** Organise networking events and forums to facilitate collaboration among healthcare providers, primary care, social services, and community organisations. Strengthen referral pathways specifically between primary care and further organisations will create an integrated support network for individuals with dementia and their carers.
- 4. Highlight Carer Support Programs:** Enhance existing support programs for carers by promotion and awareness raising of them to patients, carers and professionals. Addressing the diverse emotional, physical, and practical needs of carers to ensure they receive comprehensive support throughout their caregiving journey.
- 5. Implement Robust Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:** Establish a structured system for regular monitoring and evaluation of dementia services. Gather feedback from individuals with dementia, their carers, and stakeholders to assess service effectiveness. Use this data to drive continuous improvement and refinement of service provision.
- 6. Encourage Dementia Research and Innovation:** Resources and support for dementia research, with a focus on prevention, early intervention, and improving quality of life. Foster partnerships with research institutions and industry to promote innovation in dementia care, including the integration of cutting-edge technologies.
- 7. The development of extra care provision** dedicated to individuals with dementia. Providing a specialised environment that fosters independence while offering the necessary support for individuals with dementia. Investing in and expanding extra care options can significantly improve the quality of life for those affected by dementia, promoting autonomy and well-being within a safe, secure and supportive living arrangement.