

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Cyllid](#) ar [Cyllideb Ddrafft Llywodraeth Cymru 2025-26](#).

This response was submitted to the [Finance Committee](#) consultation on the [Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26](#).

WGDB25-26(6)43: Ymateb gan: Cymdeithas Alzheimer Cymru | Response from: Alzheimer's society

---



Peredur Owen Griffiths MS  
Chair, Senedd Finance Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN



By email: [SeneddFinance@Senedd.Wales](mailto:SeneddFinance@Senedd.Wales)

Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> November

Dear Chair,

Alzheimer's Society  
Rhan llawr 1 af/Part 1st Floor  
Ty Millgrove/Millgrove House,  
Parc Ty Glas, Llanishen,  
Caerdydd/Cardiff, CF14 5DU  
[alzheimers.org.uk](http://alzheimers.org.uk)

## Alzheimer's Society Response to the Senedd Finance Committee Consultation on Welsh Government Draft Budget proposals for 2025-26

Alzheimer's Society Cymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Finance Committee's consultation on the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2025-26 (the Draft Budget).

Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading dementia charity, working towards a world where dementia no longer devastates lives. We do this by giving help to those living with dementia today and providing hope for the future. We provide direct dementia support services, fund research, and campaign for change to improve the lives of people living with dementia in Wales, England, and Northern Ireland.

This year, Alzheimer's Society has commissioned wide-ranging evidence, referenced throughout this submission, that clearly demonstrates how taking action on dementia diagnosis and utilising effective, evidence-based existing treatments can generate cost savings and economic benefits, alleviating pressure on the health service. The new research therefore brings significant new evidence that the Welsh Government and Senedd Committees have not been able to consider in previous Budgets.

With the number of people living with dementia due to rise by 37% in Wales by 2040,<sup>1</sup> reduced capacity in healthcare services, and a social care system reliant on unpaid carers, Alzheimer's Society emphasises the need for Senedd Committees to pay particular attention to the needs of people living with dementia when scrutinising the Draft Budget, particularly in the context of an ageing population and ongoing pressures on the healthcare system.

---

<sup>1</sup> Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 1: Annual Costs of Dementia* (p 33).

## What, in your opinion, has been the impact of the Welsh Government's 2024-2025 Budget?

While the Budget allocation for health and social services in the 2024-5 Budget<sup>2</sup> was by far the largest, the evaluation of the Dementia Action Plan found that insufficient funding was leading to inadequate service provision for people living with dementia.<sup>3</sup>

### Implementing the Dementia Action Plan

Dementia is already the biggest killer in the UK,<sup>4</sup> and without urgent action, the cost of dementia in Wales is projected to increase from £2.27 billion to £4.62 billion by 2040.<sup>5</sup> This is due to the rising prevalence of dementia, due to an ageing population, and increases in the real-terms unit prices of care. With the pressure dementia exerts on the health and care system only set to increase, there is an urgent need for Welsh Government to proactively invest in the elements of dementia care that will reduce overall healthcare costs.

The £12 million in Welsh Government funding that is provided to Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) annually to implement the existing Dementia Action Plan is welcome but inadequate for a condition which will impact 1 in 3 of us in our lifetime.<sup>6</sup> Significant financial investment is needed to ensure that people living with dementia are diagnosed and properly supported in Wales and that services are cost effective.

### Improving diagnosis rates

The diagnosis rate in Wales is low at 56%.<sup>7</sup> Our evidence shows that increasing access to early and accurate diagnosis could bring significant benefits to people living with dementia, Welsh Government and the NHS. Currently, dementia is a major factor in healthcare system pressure.<sup>8</sup> Across the UK, people with dementia attend A&E almost a million times a year and account for one-in-six patients in hospital at any given time.<sup>9</sup>

Where people are diagnosed earlier and can take control of their condition, we see people being able to stay well for longer, in their own homes. This reduces unplanned hospital admissions, A&E attendances, and delays the need for expensive domiciliary care and care home admissions.<sup>10</sup> Scenario modelling shows that an early and accurate diagnosis and the treatment this can unlock could generate cost savings of between £8,000 and £44,900 per person.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government (2023). *Welsh Government Draft Budget Proposals 2024-25* (p 2).

<sup>3</sup> QSR Research (2024). *Evaluation of the Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018 - 2022: Interim Report* (p 25-26).

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics (2022). *Death registration summary statistics, England, and Wales - Office for National Statistics*

<sup>5</sup> Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 1: Annual Costs of Dementia* (p 38).

<sup>6</sup> Office of Health Economics (2015). *Estimation of Future Cases of Dementia from Those Born in 2015*

<sup>7</sup> Welsh Government (2024). *General Practice Disease Registers: Interactive Dashboard*

<sup>8</sup> Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 2: Dementia's contribution to health metrics* (p 10).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Alzheimer's Society & Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 4: Impact of early Diagnosis and Treatment*

<sup>11</sup> Alzheimer's Society & Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 4: Impact of early Diagnosis and Treatment* (p 8).

## What action should the Welsh Government take to address the needs of people living in rural communities?

The lowest diagnosis rates are in the most rural health boards. According to Welsh Government data, the diagnosis rate in Powys Teaching Health Board is only 46.9% and in Hywel Dda is only 52.1%.<sup>12</sup> In comparison, the diagnosis rate in Cardiff and Vale University Health Board is the highest at 64.3%.<sup>13</sup>

There are significant barriers to diagnosing dementia, but these barriers are amplified for those living in rural communities. Barriers include limited access to memory clinics and specialist services due to geographical isolation, and shortage of local diagnostic resources, including community-based dementia-trained healthcare professionals. The barriers in rural communities can lead to difficulties obtaining a diagnosis due to a lack of specialised dementia services.<sup>14</sup>

The barriers to diagnosis, whilst not unique to rural communities, highlight the need to invest in diagnosis infrastructure to tackle the regional variation in diagnosis rates and resulting health inequalities.

## The Committee would like to focus on a number of other specific areas in the scrutiny of the Budget. Is the Welsh Government's approach to preventative spending represented in resource allocations?

The rise in the cost and prevalence of dementia represents a profound and growing whole-system challenge. With the prevalence of dementia in Wales projected to rise to 70,000 people by 2040,<sup>15</sup> the impact on the health and social care system will only increase. However, the response to dementia is inadequate, with a lack of funding nationally and locally to provide high-quality person-centred care and support throughout the dementia pathway.

### Preventing hospital admissions

There needs to be greater dedication of funding to secondary prevention, and given the low diagnosis rate of 56% in Wales,<sup>16</sup> it is clear that further investment is needed into this area. The lack of access to diagnosis in Wales drives unnecessary hospital admissions and costs - people with undiagnosed dementia are nearly three times as likely to go to A&E than a person without dementia,<sup>17</sup> with undiagnosed people with dementia attending A&E more than people with a diagnosis for mild, moderate and severe cohorts.<sup>18</sup> An early diagnosis also reduces the scale of healthcare utilisation across primary, hospital and community settings which increases as dementia severity progresses.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Welsh Government (2024). [General Practice Disease Registers: Interactive Dashboard](#)

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Roberts, Rhiannon. Windle, Gill. Story, Anna. (2023). [Dementia in rural settings: a scoping review exploring the personal experiences of people with dementia and their carers](#), Journal of Ageing and Society, Cambridge University Press

<sup>15</sup> Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). [The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 1: Annual Costs of Dementia](#) (p 33).

<sup>16</sup> Welsh Government (2024). [General Practice Disease Registers: Interactive Dashboard](#)

<sup>17</sup> Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). [The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 2: Dementia's contribution to health metrics](#) (p 11).

<sup>18</sup> Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). [The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 2: Dementia's contribution to health metrics](#) (p 10).

<sup>19</sup> Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). [The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 2: Dementia's contribution to health metrics](#) (p 11).

However, diagnosis and dementia-specific treatments are equivalent to just 1.4% of total dementia healthcare costs.<sup>20</sup> This needs to change. Additional funding for secondary prevention relating to dementia should be allocated to hiring more staff to diagnose dementia, and into more diagnostics, such as scanners.

The average per person annual cost of mild dementia is almost £29,000, increasing to approximately £81,000 for severe dementia.<sup>21</sup> Through interventions like AChE inhibitors (inexpensive existing treatments for dementia) which can delay the progression of Alzheimer's symptoms, there is potential to generate cost savings.<sup>22</sup> This is because these treatments can not only enhance quality of life and independence, but also help people stay in the milder stages of dementia for longer (reducing the need for expensive care, with social and unpaid care costs increasing for moderate and severe cohorts).<sup>23</sup> However, these treatments rely on people getting an early and accurate dementia diagnosis, and for many people living with dementia in Wales, this is not the case.

### **Reducing reliance on social care**

Early diagnosis and person-centred treatment and support could also delay expensive care home admissions and enable people to stay in their home for longer.<sup>24</sup> Cost modelling for England suggests that Local Authorities could save an estimated £38,000 per year for every person for whom they can successfully delay nursing home admission, with people living with dementia able to save an estimated £10,100 in their lifetime if diagnosed early enough to access treatment at a point where it can have the maximum impact.<sup>25</sup>

### **How should the Welsh Government prioritise its resources to tackle NHS waiting lists for planned and non-urgent NHS treatments. Do you think the Welsh Government has a robust plan to address this issue?**

The evaluation of the Dementia Action Plan specifically states that work should continue to reduce waiting times for assessment and diagnosis of dementia, and to increase referrals from primary care into specialist dementia services.<sup>26</sup> Respondents to engagement work on the DAP evaluation complained of “problems accessing GPs for initial appointments and then having to wait long periods amounting to several months for assessments and diagnoses, which delayed treatment and appropriate support.”<sup>27</sup>

On average a dementia diagnosis takes 3.5 years from the onset of symptoms.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, 36% of people surveyed in Wales waited for more than six months for a diagnosis following an initial

---

<sup>20</sup> Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 1: Annual Costs of Dementia* (p 11).

<sup>21</sup> Alzheimer's Society & Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 4: Impact of early Diagnosis and Treatment* (p 10).

<sup>22</sup> Alzheimer's Society & Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 4: Impact of early Diagnosis and Treatment* (p 10).

<sup>23</sup> Alzheimer's Society & Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 4: Impact of early Diagnosis and Treatment* (p 8-10).

<sup>24</sup> Alzheimer's Society & Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 4: Impact of early Diagnosis and Treatment* (p 8).

<sup>25</sup> Alzheimer's Society & Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 4: Impact of early Diagnosis and Treatment* (p 19).

<sup>26</sup> QSR Research (2024). *Evaluation of the Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018 - 2022: Interim Report* (p 84).

<sup>27</sup> QSR Research (2024). *Evaluation of the Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018 - 2022: Interim Report* (p 46).

<sup>28</sup> Aldus CF, Arthur A, Dennington-Price A et al (2020). *Undiagnosed dementia in primary care: a record linkage study*, National Institute for Health Research, Vol. 8, Iss. 20. (p 65).

visit to the GP.<sup>29</sup> The national target is to deliver a preliminary diagnosis at 12-weeks from the point of referral as included in the Dementia Action Plan.<sup>30</sup>

## Is the Welsh Government providing adequate support to the public sector to enable it to be innovative and forward looking through things like workforce planning? / Has there been adequate investment from the Welsh Government in basic public sector infrastructure?

With the cost of dementia related healthcare in Wales projected to increase from £396 million in 2024 to £721 million by 2040,<sup>31</sup> it is vital to increase investment in the specialist diagnostic workforce to enhance diagnostic capacity.

Despite research highlighting the importance of an early and accurate diagnosis, diagnostic tests and imaging are estimated to represent only 1.1% of total spend on healthcare for people with dementia.<sup>32</sup> In addition, it is anticipated that unpaid care and social care account for 50% and 40% of the total cost spent on dementia in 2024 respectively.<sup>33</sup>

There are a very limited number of Positron Emission Tomography – Computed Tomography (PET) scanners in Wales,<sup>34</sup> with 0.73 PET scanners per million people. This is less than the rest of the UK and the recommended allowance of approximately 1 scanner per million population.<sup>35</sup>

While the Welsh Government announced £25 million investment to improve diagnosis infrastructure and availability of PET-CT scanners in September 2021,<sup>36</sup> with prevalence on the rise, we need to see continued investment in diagnosis infrastructure and workforce to ensure people can get the early and accurate diagnosis they need. This should include specific investment in CT and MRI scanning capacity for dementia diagnosis.

## How is evidence and data driving Welsh Government priority-setting and budget allocations, and is this approach clear?

Presently we have very little data on dementia in Wales. Though the General Practice Disease Registers interactive dashboard contains some data on dementia prevalence<sup>37</sup>, it only covers an annual report of national prevalence, accompanied by breakdowns by Local Health Board, with no data on dementia type. Unfortunately, this is not sufficiently detailed to support service improvement. We are pleased that Welsh Government have committed to publishing more data, but this has been very slow in progressing.<sup>38</sup>

It is important to enhance data collection around diagnosis pathways, including waiting times. The collection of more detailed data would help to increase understanding of the barriers and delays to diagnosis by allowing providers to accurately track service user journeys across

---

<sup>29</sup> Government Social Research (2023). *Evaluation of the Dementia Action Plan 2018-2022: Interim Report Summary* (p 3).

<sup>30</sup> Welsh Government (2018). *Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018-2022* (p 43).

<sup>31</sup> Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 1: Annual Costs of Dementia* (p 38).

<sup>32</sup> Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 1: Annual Costs of Dementia* (p 64).

<sup>33</sup> Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 1: Annual Costs of Dementia* (p 37).

<sup>34</sup> NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee (2024). *Positron Emission Tomography (PET), Commissioning Policy: CP50* (p 8).

<sup>35</sup> NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee (2024). *Positron Emission Tomography (PET), Commissioning Policy: CP50* (p 9).

<sup>36</sup> Welsh Government (2021). *Welsh Government to invest nearly £25m in four new digital scanners to cut waiting times and meet service demand*

<sup>37</sup> Welsh Government (2024). *General Practice Disease Registers: Interactive Dashboard*

<sup>38</sup> Senedd Cymru (2023). *Written Question WQ88972 (e)*

multiple parts of the system. More data would also help to identify where improvements can be made to service provision and clinical outcomes through targeted intervention. To enable service improvement, data publication needs to be happening monthly with information provided on how many people have been diagnosed with different types of dementia, as well as on the severity of the person's dementia at diagnosis. We'd also like to see more data published on dementia waiting times in Wales.

## What are the key opportunities for the Welsh Government to invest in supporting an economy and public services that better deliver against the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?

There are key opportunities for the Welsh Government to invest in supporting the social care system and support for unpaid carers as part of the commitment to developing a healthier Wales under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.<sup>39</sup>

### Social Care

Social care is vital to meet the needs of people living with dementia, helping people who draw upon it to remain independent in the setting of their choice for longer. The provision of high-quality care within a suitably funded social care system leads to better outcomes, while helping to reduce demand on frontline NHS services, including unnecessary hospital admission and delays to transfer of care.<sup>40</sup>

However, many social care staff are not given the specialist knowledge and skills to effectively support someone living with dementia and the provision of care can be too transactional, driven by time and task rather than connection, purpose, or genuine outcomes.<sup>41</sup> There is also no specific data available on levels of dementia training among social care staff in Wales.<sup>42</sup>

When asked what would best help to improve the lives of people living with dementia, 65% of people with dementia and their carers we surveyed said more care workers skilled in caring for those with dementia,<sup>43</sup> with less than four in 10 satisfied with the support available for people living with dementia.<sup>44</sup> For people living with dementia to have access to the best possible care, Welsh Government should ensure that all social care workers have mandatory high quality dementia training. A total of 48% of the social care workforce also report needing more training to progress their career.<sup>45</sup> More broadly, it is important to tackle the high number of unfilled vacancies in the social care system, and the associated reliance on agency staff.<sup>46</sup>

The Welsh Government's Rebalancing Care and Support Programme towards developing a National Care and Support Service will also be key to developing a healthier Wales for future generations. A National Care and Support Service will be vital for people living with dementia

---

<sup>39</sup> Welsh Government (2015). *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: the essentials*

<sup>40</sup> Senedd Finance Committee (2024). *Finance Committee Summary Engagement Report: Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26* (p 13).

<sup>41</sup> All-Party Parliamentary Group on Dementia (2022). *Workforce Matters: Putting people affected by dementia at the heart of care*. (p 43).

<sup>42</sup> Alzheimer's Society (2024). *Because we're human too: Why dementia training for care workers matters, and how to deliver it* (p 13).

<sup>43</sup> Alzheimer's Society & Walnut (2024). *Personal Experiences of the Dementia Journey – The True Picture* (p 41).

<sup>44</sup> Alzheimer's Society & Walnut (2024). *Personal Experiences of the Dementia Journey – The True Picture* (p 43).

<sup>45</sup> Social Care Wales (2024). *'Have Your Say' Workforce Survey 2024: Summary of responses from care workers* (p 4).

<sup>46</sup> Social Care Wales (2022). *Social Care Workforce 2022* (p 15-16).

and their carers, although it is important that ongoing development is not delayed and that any resulting national social care workforce is adequately funded to provide high-quality care for people living with dementia.

## Unpaid Carers

The proportion of people reporting delays in identification as unpaid carers (36% reporting waiting for more than 3-years),<sup>47</sup> and the lack of effective Carers Needs Assessments<sup>48</sup> highlights that the needs of carers are not met despite the vital role that they play in the healthcare system.

With more than 10% of the population providing unpaid care in Wales,<sup>49</sup> the cost of dementia related unpaid care is projected to increase from £1.09 billion in 2024 to £1.99 billion by 2040.<sup>50</sup> Demand for unpaid care due to increase by 40% in the same period.<sup>51</sup>

Welsh Government must ensure adequate funding and support is available, including the availability of dementia-specific respite care.

## Recommendations

It is vital for dementia diagnosis and services to be appropriately funded throughout the next Budgetary period and for dementia to be prioritised in spending decisions to reflect the rising prevalence of the condition and the costs associated with it.

Despite evidence around their effectiveness, there is underinvestment in interventions to meet the needs of people living with dementia. This includes access to an early and accurate diagnosis, post-diagnosis care and treatment and person-centred social care.

Recommendations:

1. Welsh Government and the NHS in Wales must commit to improving dementia diagnosis to unlock potential cost savings and reduce the burden on the NHS.
  - a. A new Dementia Action Plan which commits to bold targets on diagnosis and is accompanied by increased funding to support full, effective, and consistent delivery.
  - b. Workforce planning for an NHS which has capacity to diagnose patients now, and is sustainable for increasing future demand.
  - c. Investment in diagnostic tools, particularly Positron Emission Tomography – Computed Tomography (PET-CT) and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanners with particular focus on access in rural areas.
  - d. Data publication monthly with information provided on how many people have been diagnosed with different types of dementia, as well as on the severity of the person's dementia at diagnosis. We'd also like to see more data published on dementia waiting times in Wales.

---

<sup>47</sup> Carers Wales (2024). *Track the Act: Monitoring how the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 is affecting unpaid carers* (p 6).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Office of National Statistics (2021). *Unpaid care, England, and Wales: Census 2021*

<sup>50</sup> Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 1: Annual Costs of Dementia* (p 38).

<sup>51</sup> Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). *The Economic Impact of Dementia - Module 1: Annual Costs of Dementia* (p 66).

2. Welsh Government, working with Regional Partnership Boards must ensure that everyone living with dementia has the care they need by:
  - a. The introduction of mandatory dementia training for the social care workforce, supported by adequate funding to improve the quality of care for people living with dementia.
  - b. Tackle the high number of unfilled vacancies in the social care system, and the associated reliance on agency staff.
  - c. Supporting unpaid carers, ensuring adequate funding and support is available, including the availability of dementia-specific respite care.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Committee's consultation as part of the Budgetary process and please get in touch if you have any questions about our evidence.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer Keen

**Head of Policy, Alzheimer's Society**

Email: [REDACTED]