
DEMENTIA BRIEFING

To: Thanet Health and Wellbeing Board – 11 June 2015

From: Colin Thompson, Consultant in Public Health

Subject: Dementia briefing

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: Dementia predominantly affects older people and has a devastating impact on the citizens who develop it and the families who care for them. There are a number of types of dementia that include Alzheimer's and Vascular Dementia, which are caused by different diseases of the brain. Obtaining an early diagnosis can help to improve the quality of life for the individual and their family. There has been an extensive improvement in the diagnosis rate in Thanet over the last twelve months, although there is still considerable progress to be made.

For Information

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Dementia is a global term used to describe a range of neurological disorders characterised by a decline in intellectual and other mental functions. It can affect people of any age, but is most common in older people and age is the greatest risk factor for dementia.
- 1.2 Dementia affects one in fourteen people over the age of 65 and one in six over the age of 80. However, dementia is not restricted to elderly people: there are 15,000 people under the age of 65 with dementia in the UK, although this figure is likely to be an underestimate.
- 1.3 There are a number of types of dementia which are caused by different diseases of the brain. These different types of dementia are associated with different risk factors. The most common type is Alzheimer's disease, affecting about 62% of those with dementia. Vascular dementia (17%) is the next most common forms as well as mixed presentations. About 10% of people with dementia have both Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia.
- 1.4 Obtaining an early diagnosis enables a person with dementia and their family to receive help in understanding and adjusting to the diagnosis and to prepare for the future in an appropriate way. This might include making legal and financial arrangements, changes to living arrangements, and finding out about aids and services that will enhance quality of life for people with dementia and their family and friends. Early diagnosis can allow the individual to have an active role in decision making and planning for the future while families can educate themselves about the disease and learn effective ways of interacting with the person with dementia. There is evidence that the currently available medications for Alzheimer's disease may be more beneficial if given early in the disease process. These medications can help to maintain daily function and quality of life as well as stabilise cognitive decline in some

people. Early diagnosis allows for prompt access to medications and medical attention.

2.0 The Current Situation

- 2.1 There have been considerable improvements in the diagnosis rate over the last twelve months. The CCG's diagnosis rate in April 2014 was 40.38% of the expected prevalence and this had risen to 48.27% in March 2015. There was an expectation that CCGs would have achieved a diagnosis rate of 67% by April 2015, but Thanet CCG expects to achieve this by March 2016. There has been good engagement from the practices to achieve this improvement. A large proportion of the increase which has been delivered during the last twelve months has been achieved by the data harmonisation of GP practice data. Further work is required during 2015/16 to increase diagnosis of people in nursing homes.
- 2.2 There is now an active dementia action alliance established in Thanet with representatives from a number of statutory and voluntary sector organisations. During the recent dementia awareness week, Age UK hosted a dementia awareness day which was attended by a number of organisations able to provide help and support to people with dementia and their families. The day also included other events, such as reminiscence groups and dancing and singing.
- 2.3 There are also a number of other organisations providing support to people with dementia and their families. East Kent Independent Dementia Support (EKIDs) provide a number of dementia cafes where people with dementia and their carers can obtain support and advice and also meet other people who have dementia or care for someone with dementia.
- 2.4 There are a number of Cogs clubs running in Thanet. This is a programme of activity and stimulation designed for people with mild to moderate dementia and is based on cognitive stimulation therapy (CST) which is recommended by NICE as a non-drug related treatment for memory problems.
- 2.5 Sunshine Saturday is a dementia intergenerational project which takes place at Age UK in Margate every Saturday morning. This brings together younger and older people to share experiences and participate in activities and is very well attended. A successful intergenerational project was also run with the Marlowe Academy.
- 2.6 Dementia friends sessions have been delivered to a number of different groups across Thanet, including to a local cubs group.
- 2.7 Forget Me Nots are a group of people with dementia who are supported by the Kent and Medway Partnership Trust (KMPT) and work to raise awareness of dementia. They have also established a national profile, including taking part in the House of Lords consultation on the Mental Health Act. A number of the group have also contributed to a book, 'Welcome to our World' which is a collection of life stories before a diagnosis of dementia, as well as thoughts on living with dementia.
- 2.8 Thanet CCG also recently commissioned dementia awareness sessions for GP administration staff. The sessions were supported by the voluntary sector and members of the 'Forget Me Nots' and were very well received by the participants. A further session is planned in September.
- 2.9 A second edition of Dementia Focus has recently been published. This is a Kent wide publication which aims to showcase some of the good practice which is taking place across the county.

3.0 Recommendation

3.1 Board members are asked to note the briefing paper.

4.0 Background Papers

4.1 None

5.0 Contact details

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