



AN BORD SLÁINTE LÁR TÍRE
MIDLAND HEALTH BOARD

Dementia Working Group, Midland Health Board

Progress Report

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Introduction

In August 2002, the Midland Health Board working group on dementia commissioned a piece of research to obtain an overview of what staff perceived as the most pressing needs for the delivery of a quality dementia service, and to investigate some possible solutions to the current difficulties.

A series of focus groups were run over two months, consulting staff from both residential and community care settings. A full report of the findings can be found in the document "Consultation Process with Staff within the Midland Health Board on the Needs of Older People with Dementia", which is available from Anna de Siún, Clinical Audit and Research.

A number of recommendations for change were made, which have been grouped as either long-term or short-term goals. The working group has focused on implementing as many recommendations as possible in order to relieve the pressure staff are currently under in trying to provide as high a quality service as possible. Although the final report was signed off as recently as May 22nd, a number of actions have already been taken to implement staff recommendations for change.

The aim of the current document is to give a summary of the recommendations for change received from staff, and to indicate, where appropriate, current action within the board relating to each recommendation.

Recommendations for change – Long-term solutions

- **Recommendation:** Building of dementia specific units, attached to current care centres.
- **Current Action:**
 - Expert advice has been sought in relation to the best design for dementia specific units from Mary Drury of the Dementia Services Information and Development Centre in James's Hospital.
 - Members of the working group have visited the Seven Oaks dementia specific unit in Derry as a model of best practice.
 - An area suitable for a 6-8 bed dementia specific unit has been identified in St. Vincent's Hospital, Mountmellick. Plans have been drawn up and €250,000 funding has been approved. However, this does not cover all building costs or the costs of staffing the unit, therefore work has not yet started. Management have met with staff, who give their support to a dementia specific unit. A secure sensory garden has recently been opened, which will be suitable for people with dementia. The garden was built with funds from the patients benefit fund.
- **Recommendation:** Building of facilities to improve occupational therapy available to patients in Shaen Hospital.
- **Current Action:** None, awaiting funds.
- **Recommendation:** Need for staff to be more aware of special needs of person with dementia.
- **Current Action:** The implementation of a number of recommendations (e.g. training and education, formalised information sharing) should lead to this overall goal.

- **Recommendation:** Home respite service to be implemented.
- **Current Action:** A home respite service has been implemented in the Longford/Westmeath area in conjunction with the Alzheimer Society and the Midland Health Board. The Health Board has provided the funding for this initiative, which is administered by the Alzheimer society. People looking to utilise the service can self refer to the society, or referrals are given from Public Health Nurses or the Carer Co-ordinator.

A group has been formed who are currently working on initiating a similar service in Shinrone, Co. Offaly.

- **Recommendation:** Similar facilities to the day hospital run by Psychiatry for Later Life in Portlaoise and Mullingar developed in the Longford and Offaly areas.
- **Current Action:** An issue of availability of funds, no current action.
- **Recommendation:** Additional information and education for families of people with dementia.

Current Action: Currently a thirteen week training programme is being run specifically for carers in the Longford/Westmeath Community Care Area. The programme has a module dedicated to issues around Alzheimer's Disease, such as definition and causes of Alzheimer's, signs and symptoms, progression of the disease, managing challenging behaviour and care options. Other modules on the course also relate to dementia, including diet, communication and interpersonal skills. Ongoing links between the community dietician for older persons and the carer co-ordinator has led to the provision of information sessions to carers in the community advising on nutrition and feeding for clients with dementia.

As there is no carer co-ordinator post for the Laois/Offaly area, a group has recently been formed, led by Health Promotion, to investigate the feasibility of establishing this training programme in the Laois/Offaly Community Care Area. The first health action zone being focused on is the

Mountmellick area, while it is planned to focus next on the Birr/Banagher area.

Also, nutrition education sessions have been identified for carers in the home. Written information leaflets '*Nutrition & Dementia for Carers*' have been developed.

- **Recommendation:** A network of support services for carers of people with dementia
 - developing closer links with voluntary groups
 - innovative approaches to helping carers cope with stress
 - counselling services etc.
- **Current Action:** The Board is continuing to maintain and develop the strong links with organisations such as Dementia Services Information and Development Centre (DSIDC) in James' Hospital, the Alzheimer Society and the Carers Society. As mentioned previously the Board has worked closely with DSIDC in terms of expert advice on the design of dementia specific units. Education sessions, run by this organisation, have been carried out in various locations across both community care areas. More recently we have been working together to distribute the DSIDC newsletter to staff who expressed an interest in keeping abreast of current news and developments related to dementia and dementia care.

Further links with the Alzheimer Society of Ireland have been developed, with a representative from the society sitting on the working group. Joint projects have included training and the development of new services (e.g. the development of a home respite service, and the mini-bus scheme in Longford). Again, it has been agreed that the Board will assist in distributing the Alzheimer Society newsletter to staff who have an interest in current news, events and developments in the area of dementia.

Links with the Carers Association are very strong in the Longford/Westmeath Community Care Area, where the carer co-ordinator

works with this organisation on the recruitment of carers for the training programme, the facilitation of information days and running carer clinics across the two counties.

A 4-6 hour training course on stress management is also offered to carers in the Longford/Westmeath area. The training offers them the opportunity to participate in workshops, and to learn how to recognise the signs and symptoms of stress. The working group previously mentioned is looking at establishing this training programme in Laois/Offaly.

A carer support group was piloted by Psychiatry for Later Life in the Laois area, which commenced week ending June 20th and has now finished. The group provided psychological and emotional support for carers. Following the Laois pilot, the service is to be rolled out on an on-going basis with a view to extending the service throughout both counties. An assessment of the service has been carried out and a report is to be published shortly. The service is available for carers who come through the Psychiatry for Later Life services. Groups will be facilitated by two of the following: Community Mental Health Nurse, Social Worker, Occupational Therapist or Day Hospital Nurse.

- **Recommendation:** Increase medical back-up available to care centres.
- **Current Action:** This recommendation is not directly linked with dementia services, though it greatly effects the delivery of a quality dementia service. However, further investigation into why there is such disparity between medical services available to each care centre and resources available before solutions can begin to be implemented.
- **Recommendation:** Investigation whether the FAS/Alzheimer Society mini-bus scheme currently being run in Longford would be feasible elsewhere in the Board.
- **Current Action:** The mini-bus scheme, which is run in partnership with the MHB, FAS and the Alzheimer Society, continues to operate in

Longford. At this time there are no plans to extend the scheme to other areas.

- **Recommendation:** Identification of training needs of GPs in terms of dementia, and determining the boundaries of responsibility of the GP in relation to the person with dementia.
- **Current Action:** Since the introduction of a consultant led service in Psychiatry for Later Life (introduced in 1999 in Laois/Offaly and 2001 in Longford/Westmeath), educational sessions have been held with GPs and other health personnel through the county clinical society meetings. This forum can be utilised for further information sharing on dementia.

The information and education session which are to be run for practice nurses (which is outlined later in this report) will also help determine the boundaries of responsibility in primary care in relation to the person with dementia.

- **Recommendation:** Further research into the effects of ageism and how it can best be combated.
- **Current Action:** Age and Opportunity have devised a two and a half hour workshop that seeks to:
 - raise ageism awareness among participants
 - challenge myths and stereotypes about ageing and older people
 - demonstrate the personal, cultural and structural effects of ageism
 - encourage participants to reflect how ageism might be countered in their workplace or community.

These workshops are to be delivered to community groups in each of the four counties within the MHB region, two of which have already been run. Also, a workshop was delivered to members of senior management and staff in the MHB in January 2004.

- **Recommendation:** Investigate the feasibility of a case manager to improve co-ordination of services.
- **Current Action:** The Project Team on Integrated Care are currently exploring models of best practice and developing, in conjunction with staff, how best to progress in this area. A report is expected to be published in June 2004.

- **Recommendation:** Additional staff in all areas.
- **Current Action:** None

Recommendations for change – Short-term solutions

- **Recommendation:** Development of a training package, which could be rolled out to all staff working with people with dementia within the Board.
 - Distribution of available material e.g. DSIDC Newsletter to ensure staff can keep up-to-date with current news and research.
- **Current Action:** A separate subgroup of the working group on dementia has been formed specifically to deal with the issue of training and education. Two main training components have been identified. The first is the provision of information sessions for all staff aimed at providing knowledge and information about the importance of dementia care. This module is to be delivered in partnership with the Alzheimer Society, supported by the DSIDC.

A pilot training programme was rolled out to staff in Riada House, Tullamore in April 2003. The programme was developed by Pat O'Doherty (Senior Speech and Language Therapist) and Markie Walsh (CNM2). Areas covered included communication and swallowing (SLT department), nutritional care (community dietetic department), clinical diagnosis of dementia and its management (Psychiatry for Later Life) and nursing care. Pre- and post- talk evaluation forms were given out to staff, and these are to be evaluated at a later date.

The second component will involve the delivery of a training package by multi-disciplinary staff within the MHB, initially in community nursing units. It is envisaged that this training will eventually be delivered to community health professionals and in the acute setting. To this end a two day training/education programme was run on the 2nd and 3rd of September. The main body of the training was delivered by Dr Graham Stokes, a leading neuro-psychologist specialising in dementia care. The training focused on different aspects of challenging behaviours, with sessions on: 'A Restricted Understanding of Challenging Behaviour', 'The Person-Centred Model of Dementia', 'The Culture and Design of Care Environments', 'Common

Triggers and Explanations', 'Framing Problem Behaviours as Positive Needs'.

The afternoon of the second day was organised with a number of breakout sessions run by dementia specialists in the fields of Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and Dietetics. Pre and post evaluation forms have been carried out, and data from these are currently being collated. A full report on the education day is expected in March 2004.

Following on from this day, the training subgroup are currently putting together a multidisciplinary package of training, involving Psychiatry for Later Life, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Dietetics and Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development. The training package is to be rolled out initially to all nine care centres in the Board's area.

An area highlighted in the main report was that no consultation had been carried out with GPs, though this group of professionals are often the first point of contact for people with a dementia. Therefore, it was decided to run an education session specifically for GPs. An education evening was held in the Tullamore court hotel on Tuesday 21st October 2003. The session was chaired by Dr Kevin O'Flanagan, and presentations were made by Dr Sabina Fahy and Dr Michéal O'Cuill. Thirty three GPs and twelve nurses attended the session.

It has been agreed with the Alzheimer's Society and DSIDC in James's Hospital that the MHB will distribute their newsletters to staff groups who took part in the focus groups i.e. residential care centres and health centres. It is envisaged that this will give those with an interest in the area the opportunity to keep abreast of current developments.

- **Recommendation:** Subvention of additional respite beds in the Dementia Specific Unit in Laurel Lodge, Longford. Similar beds would need to be subvented in Laois/Offaly.
- **Current Action:** In the Longford/Westmeath community care area, negotiations have been completed for a day care respite place in Newbrook Nursing Home, Mullingar. The Midland Health Board are providing funding for this bed, which will be maintained by the Alzheimer society, who work closely with the liaison Public Health Nurse.

Similarly a respite bed for people with dementia is available and being used in Shinrone nursing home, Co. Offaly. This bed, again funded by the Midland Health Board, is being administered by the Alzheimer Society in conjunction with the admissions and discharge team.

- **Recommendation:** More co-ordinated approach to application for housing grants and definition of this area of responsibility.
- **Current Action:** A forum bringing together representatives from the four county councils is currently being planned. It is envisaged that the difficulties identified in both the 'Action Plan for Dementia' from the NCAOP the more local 'Report on a Consultation Process' can be explored at the forum. This will also be an ideal opportunity for discussing the best referral route for people seeking to apply for housing grants.
- **Recommendation:** A focus on changes in both residential and community settings to help reduce the number of acute hospital admissions (e.g. flexible mealtimes and availability of finger food and drinks throughout the day in residential care, increased home supports).
- **Current Action:** 'Multidisciplinary nutrition teams' have been set up in 4 care centres for older people in MHB, to address food provision and feeding practices aiming to develop food and nutrition policies at ward and catering level. A further two teams will be in place by year end.

- **Recommendation:** Formalised information-sharing structures for care attendants.
 - The use of the carer diary, published by the Alzheimer Society, which could be used to increase the amount of knowledge available on a patient's behaviour patterns, likes and dislikes etc. when the patient is first admitted.
 - Formal reporting sessions with both nurses and care attendants each morning and evening in all care centres.
 - **Current Action:** A promise has been given by the Alzheimer Society to provide carer diaries.

It is envisaged that the formulation of standard reporting sessions/procedures will be developed and implemented as part of practice development, and will be under the auspices of the Practice Development Unit.

- **Recommendation:** Formalised information-sharing structures for catering staff on daily nutritional intake of dementia patients.
- **Current Action:** A joint programme between MHB and AIT (Athlone Institute of Technology) has been established in 2002/2003. Two 13 weeks modules have taken place for chefs from acute and residential settings in MHB. Additional two 4 week consolidation modules have been carried out to address specific nutritional needs, menu planning and altered food consistencies for patients with dementia. The aim of the courses is to give all chefs the knowledge and skills to implement new menus in care centres to ensure that nutrient dense food is provided to all patients.
- **Recommendation:** Development of an integrated, multi-disciplinary, assessment/referral form.
- **Current Action:** Again, the integrated care programme group are currently looking at developing this.

- **Recommendation:** Defining responsibility for the diagnosis of dementia and development of guidelines for informing families of diagnosis.
- **Current Action:** Within the MHB region there are 104 General Practitioners. Within these General Practitioner units, there are 70 Practice Nurses working. As a first step to meeting the above recommendation, it has been decided that education and information sessions for Practice Nurses working with GPs will be facilitated by Dr S Fahy for the Laois/Offaly area and Dr. M O'Cuill for the Longford/Westmeath area. The information sessions will be organised and co-ordinated by both the Practice Development Facilitator for Older People and the Professional Development Facilitator for Practice Nurses. It is envisaged that the first of the information sessions for the Practice Nurses will be held in the autumn of 2003.
- **Recommendation:** Formal guidelines for the type of information and encouragement for involvement to be given to family members on the transfer of a loved one from the home to a residential care setting in all care centres.
- **Current Action:** It is intended that this recommendation will be met utilising the newly established working group for policies, procedures and guidelines for older persons.
- **Recommendation:** Working in partnership with the Alzheimer society to increase distribution of their recently published information packs for carers.
- **Current Action:** It has been agreed that a number of these information packs will be sent to the office of the general manager for Laois/Offaly, who will then co-ordinate with the carer co-ordinator for them to be distributed.

- **Recommendation:** Provision of rummage rooms/rummage boxes in all care centres.
- **Current Action:** The training will include information around the provision of rummage boxes/rooms.

- **Recommendation:** A social worker for older persons needed.
- **Current Action:** Provision has been made in the service plan for the appointment of a social worker for older people.