

Dementia Care and Provision for the Elderly in Wales

PORTFOLIO



This portfolio explores key initiatives and empirical research relating to dementia care and provision for older adults in Wales.

Introduction to Dementia

What is Dementia?

A syndrome linked with continuous decline of brain functioning (NHS, 2023).

What is the importance of Dementia in Wales?

In 2022, dementia was the leading cause (11.5%) of deaths (ONS, 2022). Dementia caused death for approximately 65,000 individuals (ONS, 2022).

What is the Current Prevalence of Dementia Wales?

Approximately 44,006 individuals over the age of 65 were affected by dementia in Wales in 2025.

Of these 44,006 individuals,

Around 62% were female.

Around 38% were male.

57.2% of people displaying symptoms were diagnosed.

18,830 were undiagnosed.

Symptoms of Dementia involve issues with:

- Memory loss
- Thinking speed
- Mood
- Movement
- Mental sharpness & quickness
- Judgement
- Understanding
- Daily tasks

(NHS, 2023).



Part One:
**Dementia Care Initiatives and Provision in
Wales**

**Exploring key initiatives that shape dementia
care for the elderly in Wales.**

Overview of Dementia Initiatives in Wales

- Social support is essential for older adults with dementia (Pakstis et al., 2018).
- Support promotes psychological benefits by reducing depressive symptoms, improving quality of life, and self-esteem (Leung et al., 2014).

Initiatives have been undertaken around the world to promote social inclusion for individuals with dementia (Shannon et al., 2018).

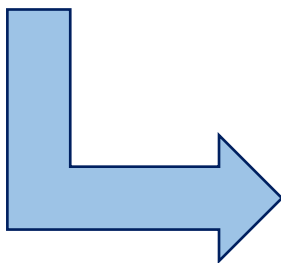
Community based initiatives benefit both the individual and caregivers:

They increase social contact, overall enjoyment, and support, while lowering stress levels (Thijssen et al., 2021).



Initiatives to Support Individuals with Dementia in Wales include:

- Dementia Choirs (e.g. Musical Memories Choir; Dementia Hwb, 2026).
- Dementia Cafés and Support Groups (e.g. Forget-Me-Not Dementia Day Clubs; Dementia Hwb, 2026, and Sunflower Café; Dementia Hwb, 2026).
- Community Hubs and Activity Centres (e.g. Swansea Dementia Hwb, and Dementia Friendly Cardiff).



Dementia-friendly communities (DFCs) are a UK policy initiative that aim to support and increase social inclusion of individuals with dementia (Heward et al., 2016).

Dementia Choirs

Dementia choirs are a dementia-friendly initiative that employ a fun, friendly environment to bring individuals with dementia and their family and friends together to sing a variety of songs (BPS, n.d.). Research shows that group singing produces positive outcomes (Davidson & Fedele, 2011).

Examples in Wales:

- Singing for the Brain groups (Alzheimer's Society, n.d.)
- Forget-Me-Not Chorus
- Musical Memories Choir
- Cradle Choir



Benefits of Dementia Choirs:

- Effective approach to enhance wellbeing and social connections for older adults with cognitive decline (Schurig et al., 2026).
- Dementia choirs allow caregivers to join (Mabire et al., 2022), thus they have the potential to decrease distress in informal dementia caregivers (Tamburri et al., 2025).
- They increase confidence, enjoyment, consistency and learning for people with dementia (Mabire et al., 2022).
- Attitudes of choir volunteers shift from negative stigma associated with dementia (Mabire et al., 2022).
- Increase group cohesion and sense of closeness (Mabire et al., 2022).

Dementia choirs help reduce isolation and improve quality of life for both people with dementia and caregivers (Pentikäinen et al., 2021; Sheets et al., 2020). They also reduce depression symptoms, improving emotional well-being (Baker et al., 2022).

Dementia Cafés

Dementia Cafés provide an opportunity for socialisation, learning about other dementia services, and trying something new (Alzheimer's Society, n.d.). They are informal support groups that allow a variety of individuals, including those with dementia, family members, volunteers and professionals, to discuss personal experiences (BPS, n.d.). Research shows that such places contribute significantly to psychosocial well-being (Protoolis et al., 2022).



Based around Wales, in:

- Cardiff
- Tenby (Memory Café)
- Caerphilly
- Torfaen

Dementia cafés allow social support, provision of information about dementia and cognitive decline, and promote a sense of belonging, improving well-being (Greenwood et al., 2017; Innes et al., 2021).

Benefits:

- Peer support, socialisation and enjoyment (Greenwood et al., 2017).
- Improved mood and quality of life (De Luca et al., 2021).
- Added sense of routine and normality (Greenwood et al., 2017), which is essential (Huizenga et al., 2023).
- Decreased caregiver burden (De Luca et al., 2021).
- Provision of information (Greenwood et al., 2017).

Community Hubs & Activity Centres

Community hubs offer information and activities for individuals concerned about their memory, people with dementia or with a family member with a diagnosis, and carers (Bridgend Dementia Hub, n.d.).

Examples in Wales:

- Swansea Dementia Hwb –
A central support hub for support, guidance and activities.
- Bridgend Dementia Hub –
A prominent point for support, and social activity sessions.
- Dementia Friendly Cardiff –
City-wide initiative with an aim to make Cardiff more supportive for people living with dementia.

Benefits:

- Such initiatives foster social inclusion (Shannon et al., 2018).
- Learning more about dementia (Dementia Hwb, n.d.).
- Provide valuable advice, support and guidance to individuals with dementia and those who care for them (South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, 2024).
- Raise awareness of dementia, reducing stigma (Hung et al., 2021).
- Improve physical and social abilities in individuals (Söderhamn et al., 2014).
- Activities may enhance health and well-being (Söderhamn et al., 2014).

Events include:

- Community cafés
- Coffee mornings
- Support hubs
- Art sessions
- Physical activities

(Dementia Hub Bridgend, n.d.).

Community hubs and activity centres play a key role in improving quality of life by reducing isolation (Pentikäinen et al., 2021; Sheets et al., 2020). They also help individuals remain active within their communities (Clarke et al., 2016).



Impact of Initiatives on Dementia Care

Community-based initiatives play an important role in supporting individuals living with dementia and those who care for them (South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, 2024). By focusing on social and emotional support, these services may complement general healthcare provision.

Main Impacts

Supporting Independence:

Community-focused dementia initiatives promote independence, control, choice, and allow individuals to feel active in their community (Clarke et al., 2016). They also increase confidence (Yates et al., 2019).

Social group activities, as well as community support hubs, are essential for this.

Supporting Carers:

Offers emotional support and decreases stress (Thijssen et al., 2021).

Provides peer support, and the creation of peer networks (Thijssen et al., 2021).

Cafés and support hubs are beneficial for this, such as Memory Café.

Improving Quality of Life:

Reduces depression, improving mood (Baker et al., 2022).

Encourages social interaction and social inclusion (Heward et al., 2016).

Dementia choirs and cafés are advantageous for social contact, including Forget-Me-Not Chorus.

Strengths:

Accessible community support and guidance, through the use of dementia hubs.

Promotes inclusion, reducing stigma (Hung et al., 2021).

Supports a number of individuals, such as, carers, and those with dementia, in a variety of different ways, such as socially, emotionally, and physically.

Limitations:

Limited funding & resources (Cardiff & Vale Regional Partnership Board, n.d.) – many local initiatives are run on restricted funding, for cafés and events.

Lower diagnosis rates – In 2025, approximately 42% of individuals with dementia were undiagnosed (StatsWales, 2025). Therefore, less people access the available services.

Part Two

Empirical Research

Examining empirical evidence on the impact of dementia on individuals, families, and caregivers, exploring various aspects of well-being, social activity and interactions.

Dementia is a disorder of the brain that affects an individual's cognitive abilities over time, including memory, judgement, language, attention, and planning (Arvanitakis & Bennett, 2019). This disorder can impact individuals diagnosed with dementia, their families, and caregivers (Aminzadeh et al., 2007), in a variety of ways, such as socially, financially (Wimo et al., 2013), physically, and mentally. This essay will explore the role of dementia in influencing the well-being of individuals with dementia, their family members, and caregivers.

At the earlier stages, most individuals believe that little about their general self-identity changes, but observe that some qualities do change (Caddell & Clare, 2011). However, at the later stages, dementia significantly impacts an individual's sense of self-identity (Cohen-Mansfield et al., 2000). These studies suggest that the progression of dementia is gradual; however, the course of dementia may be variable and may depend on individual differences (Melis et al., 2019). When changes in personality traits as a consequence of dementia are observed, this can lead to anger, sadness, and a loss of self-esteem (Scott, 2021). Alternatively, Batra et al. (2015) suggest that cognitive impairments, including memory loss, linked to moderate to severe dementia do not necessarily result in a loss of identity. They show that individuals with dementia demonstrate awareness of their social roles in relation to certain social relationships (Batra et al., 2015), indicating that such individuals with moderate to severe dementia remain knowledgeable of who they are to an extent. These studies demonstrate the ways in which dementia can impact how people with dementia identify themselves, despite conflicting findings suggesting that identity may be more resilient than assumed (Batra et al., 2015).

Dementia can significantly reduce social contact, essentially isolating the individual; therefore, it is essential for individuals with dementia to feel connected and have a sense of belonging, for example, through relationships with family, friends and their community (Huizenga et al., 2023). This supports Social Identity Theory, which emphasises the importance of group membership for personal identity (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019) and well-being (Jetten et al., 2012). Additionally, social interactions are very important for individuals with dementia (Knecht & Rodriguez, 2025). Interactions such as walking, dancing, sharing life experiences, and singing, that occur in an individual's personal home, or a care home, during organised activities or support services, can significantly benefit individuals with dementia (Knecht & Rodriguez, 2025). Social contact can help to alleviate some of the challenges they face in their daily lives, including changes in perceptual abilities, and relationship dynamics (Huizenga et al., 2023). Dementia-friendly initiatives can increase social inclusion of those with dementia, aiming to increase social interactions and awareness (Heward et al., 2016). However, the effectiveness of these initiatives may vary depending on accessibility and individual participation.

Moreover, dementia can severely impact an individual's physical health. However, Brett et al. (2016) highlight the positive impact of physical activity on various aspects of health and well-being, including mood, cognition, mobility, and irritability for individuals with dementia in care homes. Wright (2018) further supports the benefits of physical activity due to its ability to increase social connections, and support the delicate identities of individuals with dementia. These studies show the

importance of physical activity in improving overall well-being and quality of life, although it may be difficult for some individuals with dementia to carry out physical activity. For example, research demonstrates that when experiencing serious mental health issues, individuals are less likely to exercise (Scott & Happell, 2011).

Continuing from this, dementia can influence the emotional and mental well-being of individuals with dementia, impacting both physical and mental health, consistent with the Biopsychosocial Model, which highlights the interaction between biological, psychological, and social factors.

A number of interpersonal factors can worsen this, for instance, increased levels of carer emotional expression is associated with poorer psychological outcomes for individuals with dementia over time (Safavi et al., 2023). For example, high levels of caregiver emotional expression and critical comments can result in increased anxiety and depression, while low emotional expression limits this (Safavi et al., 2023). This study highlights the significance of caregiver relationships when caring for an individual with dementia. Also, a strong social network and reduced depression or anxiety symptoms appear to mediate the relationship between social participation and psychological well-being (Choi et al., 2025). This indicates that reduced mental health issues, in combination with a robust social network, can increase social participation, which is established as essential for individuals with dementia, and overall psychological well-being (Choi et al., 2025). Thus, with the appropriate environment and social relationships, individuals with dementia can limit their likelihood of developing mental health issues.

Overall well-being and perceived quality of life in individuals with dementia is dependent on quality of social relationships with caregivers, family members and their involvement (Woods, 2012). Knecht & Rodriguez (2025) suggest that consistent social contact besides a carer is essential. In addition, depression is considered a determining factor of quality of life, however, cognitive decline is not necessarily a predictor (Woods, 2012). Thus, with the right support, both socially and physically, an individual with dementia has the opportunity to thrive and feel comfortable within their environment.

Beyond the individual, dementia can also impact family members, such as spouses. For instance, throughout the course of dementia, many changes to marital relationships, roles, and intimacy occur (Evans & Lee, 2013). Also, a marital partner of an individual with dementia may experience a loss of their partner's identity and their marriage (Evans & Lee, 2013). When caring for a marital partner with dementia, it can be particularly difficult to maintain the romantic connection, adjust to each change, and cope overall (Clark et al., 2017). Thus, having a partner develop dementia can be challenging, especially if caregiving is involved.

Individuals caring for a family member with dementia can experience negative emotional and social well-being, and low financial funding (Lindeza et al., 2024). Children of a young parent with early onset dementia can find it difficult to cope with the disease's characteristics, pre-death grief, and lack of public awareness and understanding of early dementia and support services (Sikes & Hall, 2018). It can often result in feeling isolated and ignored (Sikes & Hall, 2018). Alternatively, caring

for a family member with dementia can be rewarding, while simultaneously strengthening personal relationships (Lindeza et al., 2024).

In addition, dementia can affect caregivers in a number of ways. A close relationship between an individual with dementia and their carer appears to be predictive of caregiver mental health and psychological well-being (Fauth et al., 2012). Increased closeness predicts stronger mental health and lower depression in caregivers (Fauth et al., 2012). This may be explained by Attachment Theory, as emotional closeness can influence psychological outcomes (Nelis et al., 2014).

The stress experienced by caregivers, also referred to as 'caregivers' burden', can be linked to certain types of dementia. When caring for an individual with frontotemporal dementia, the caregiver is likely to experience relationship changes, depression, and caregivers' burden, which appears to increase as disease severity increases (Mioshi et al., 2013).

However, if a caregiver has poor mental well-being, there are numerous interventions to improve this, including those targeted at social support, such as peer support, group counselling, health education, mindfulness-based stress reduction, multicomponent interventions and individual therapy (Yuan et al., 2025). These social support interventions have proven to be effective at reducing caregivers' burden, anxiety, depression, and at improving coping skills (Yuan et al., 2025). This study reviewed literature, and although it produced valuable findings, some of the interventions had limited empirical evidence, including health education, and mindfulness-based stress reduction, potentially reducing their generalisability.

In conclusion, dementia can impact many people, including the diagnosed individual, their family members, and their caregivers, in a number of ways, such as psychological well-being, social participation and inclusion, and cognitive functioning. However, while dementia has extensive negative impacts, the extent of these effects varies depending on social support, personal resilience, and care quality, highlighting the importance of tailored interventions. It is important to understand the role dementia plays in the daily lives of those with the disease, and the people around them, to create effective support and interventions.

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