

Justice Committee

Demand-led policing: service of first and last resort

Written submission from Alzheimer Scotland

Introduction

Alzheimer Scotland is Scotland's leading dementia voluntary organisation. We work to improve the lives of everyone affected by dementia through our campaigning work nationally and locally and through facilitating the involvement of people living with dementia to ensure their views and experiences are heard. We provide specialist and personalised services to people living with dementia, their families and carers in over 60 locations and offer information and support through our 24 hour freephone Dementia Helpline, our website (www.alzscot.org) and our wide range of publications.

Alzheimer Scotland welcomes the opportunity to discuss 'demand-led policing as a service of first and last resort' with the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee and I hope that our contribution will be useful. This paper is intended to serve as an introduction to that discussion from Alzheimer Scotland.

Human Rights

Alzheimer Scotland takes a human rights based approach to dementia, which recognises the rights of people with dementia to participate as equal citizens in our society. For many people with dementia, this will mean receiving support in order to enable that participation. People with dementia are entitled, as anyone is, to choice and control over their lives, to retain their dignity and to be treated with respect.

This approach leads us to practice and advocate risk enablement: people with dementia are as entitled as anyone else to take actions that may put them at risk when they are aware of that risk and the risk is proportionate.

Maintaining Independence

Dementia affects different people in different ways and the experience is subjective¹. People's environment and the social and community supports they have will have an impact on how dementia is experienced – as well as the person's own psychology and the symptoms of the disease they have.

The right supports mean that people with dementia can maintain their independence for longer, retaining the cognitive and physical abilities to navigate their environment. We know that it is important to identify as early as possible what is needed, and that quality support following a diagnosis² reduces the need for more intervention as the illness progresses. Furthermore, planning for future care and decision-making early on means that when more care is needed as dementia progresses, the appropriate

¹ See http://www.alzscot.org/information_and_resources/information_sheet/1748_what_is_dementia for more information

² http://www.alzscot.org/campaigning/five_pillars

supports are more likely to be put in place, reducing stress and distress and ensuring people are in a situation that suits their needs, thus reducing the likelihood of a situation where police support might be required. The Scottish Government has guaranteed post-diagnostic support for everyone diagnosed with dementia since 2013, and we are working hard with relevant partners to make sure that this guarantee is a reality.

Working with the Police

We know that people with dementia can, however, become vulnerable. Alzheimer Scotland works with the police and other partners to develop solutions to prevent this, but also to respond to situations where someone does need help.

Alzheimer Scotland is delighted to have worked with police across Scotland as partners on several Dementia Friendly Community³ initiatives, and to have supported many members of the police to become Dementia Friends⁴. These initiatives encourage a proactive approach from the whole community to supporting people with dementia to remain a valued part of that community, and to live as independently as possible.

Over recent months, we have been working with Police Scotland and other stakeholders on the development of a system that can use social media in a safe way to support a search for someone with dementia who has gone missing. This work is still in development. We have also liaised with police in many areas about use of the 'Herbert Protocol' – a system adopted by many UK police forces whereby someone supporting a person with dementia gather all the information that would help the police on a form, ready to hand straight over to police should they be called in event of someone going missing.

I hope this introduction to our position on these issues is helpful, and I look forward to discussing further with committee members.

Amy Dalrymple
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³ http://www.alzscot.org/dementia_friendly_communities

⁴ <http://www.dementiafriendsscotland.org/>