



# Wise in 5: Dementia Strategies

Wise in 5 is a snapshot comparative guide to a public policy issue across the nations of the UK and Ireland. It helps you be PolicyWISE (Wales, Ireland, Scotland, England) in 5 (it takes just five minutes to read).

This briefing was published December 2025. It includes a summary of the latest policy developments across the nations, as well as related research from PolicyWISE, The Open University and PolicyWISE's university partners.

PolicyWISE creates neutral and constructive spaces for policy professionals and academics across the nations to develop relationships, respect and knowledge. We support and nurture a common culture of developing and sharing insight, knowledge, ideas and context from across the nations in a comparative and collaborative way.



|                     | Strategy published | Has an Older People's Commissioner | Including voices of people living with dementia in strategy | Funding research into prevention and cure |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| England             | Partially          | ▲                                  | ▲                                                           | +                                         |
| Northern Ireland    | +                  | +                                  | +                                                           | +                                         |
| Republic of Ireland | +                  | ▲                                  | +                                                           | +                                         |
| Scotland            | +                  | Proposed                           | +                                                           | +                                         |
| Wales               | +                  | +                                  | +                                                           | +                                         |
| Key                 | +<br>Yes           |                                    | ▲<br>No                                                     |                                           |

# Wise in 5: Dementia Strategies

## Overview

More than [900,000 people are believed to be living with dementia in the UK](#), projected to reach 1.4 million people by 2040. The total cost of care for people with dementia in the UK is £34.7billion and is set to rise sharply over the next two decades, to £94.1billion in 2040. These costs are made up of healthcare costs (costs to the NHS), social care costs (costs of homecare and residential care), and costs of unpaid care (provided by family members). [Research from the Republic of Ireland](#) found that 64,000 people are living with dementia in the ROI as of 2020, with the [overall cost of dementia care](#) in the nation reaching €1.69 billion per annum; almost half carried by family care.

Recognising the importance of international efforts in supporting people with dementia, the United Nations created the [Global Dementia Observatory knowledge exchange platform](#) which measures policy progress by collecting information on a global level about the prioritization given to dementia at ministry level. However, the UK is included as one entity with no references to separate governments. There is also the 2014 Declaration and Update on European national strategies: [National Dementia Strategies | Alzheimer Europe \(alzheimer-europe.org\)](#).

## Related research from The OU

The Open University has free resources for anyone wanting to know more about [Aging Well](#) and is running a campaign to encourage people to [Take Five to Age Well: Empowering the UK towards longer, healthier lives](#). PolicyWISE also published a recent [Wise in 5 on ageing well](#).

Research by The OU includes [Older Carers and Carers of People with Dementia: Improving and Developing Effective Support](#) which sets out the importance of always including carers' perspectives in service design and developments.

## Inter-governmental bodies

### British-Irish Council

In 2021 the BIC published a [Housing and Collaborative Spatial Planning: Creating an Inclusive Future Vision for our Ageing Populations – February 2021](#) which highlighted the opportunity to “look collectively at the challenges which we face in creating an inclusive future vision for our ageing population”.

### Reading Well for dementia

In 2024, Wales and England worked with The Reading Agency to launch [Reading Well for dementia](#), a booklist of titles that would support people with dementia, their carers, and their loved ones in understanding and navigating the condition. These books are available to borrow for free in libraries across the two nations, and available for purchase at a discounted rate through the scheme.



# Nation by Nation

## England

In 2012, the Conservative government committed to [identifying two-thirds of the English population who had dementia](#) by 2015. In 2015, the government laid out its [Challenge on Dementia](#) 2020, which sought to make England the world-leader in “dementia care, research and awareness” by 2020; this included increased research funding, and increased risk reduction and dementia-awareness efforts. Following this, in May 2022 the then-Health and Social Care Secretary [announced the development of a 10-year plan](#) to tackle dementia and boost funding into research to better understand neurodegenerative diseases. This included plans to work across government to boost the [£375 million already committed](#) and [increase spending on dementia research to £160 million a year](#) by 2024/2025. The plan was never fully finalised, with dementia instead being featured in the Major conditions strategy 2023, along with five other key contributors to ill-health and early mortality in England. It included commitments to improving overall national health, early diagnosis, person-centred care and commitment to research and digital innovations in healthcare.

In October 2024, the new Labour government announced the development of a 10-year health plan for England as part of [Change NHS](#). In January 2025, the government scrapped the previous government’s commitment to the dementia diagnosis target rate. In July 2025, the government announced [Fit for the Future](#), a 10-year health plan for England intended to support NHS functioning and improve quality of care. The new plan promises the following for people with dementia and their carers:

- The implementation of [new neighbourhood health centres](#) that offer multi-agency support is intended to shift care from hospitals to the community, and simplify multi-service navigation.
- A [£10 billion investment](#) on digital transformation in the NHS, including the extended development of the NHS App promises a “doctor in their pocket”, improving ease of access to appointments, advice, and prescription-management.
- A [‘My Carer’ tool](#) that offers carers and support networks access to an individual’s NHS App account. This will extend the digital capabilities already available to those managing healthcare for others, increasing support for unpaid carers.

The plan also highlights an increased focus on preventative action, with a shift [“from sickness to prevention”](#) including programmes such as a health reward scheme to incentivise health behav-

iours, a genomics population health service that offers early identification for common conditions, and increased mental health and obesity support. The [Tobacco and Vapes Bill 2028](#) will make it illegal for young people born in 2009 or later to purchase nicotine-related substances. Smoking is a major risk factor for later-life dementia.

## Wales

The Welsh Government has announced its intentions to be a [dementia friendly nation](#). In 2018, a [Dementia action plan](#) was published, originally intended to run until 2022. Following the outbreak of Covid-19, [the plan was reviewed](#) by the Welsh Government and the [appointed Dementia Oversight of Implementation and Impact Group](#), and provisions were expanded to support individuals with dementia during the pandemic and plans were revised to encompass issues that had become apparent during that period. In March 2025, a [progress update](#) was published, highlighting progress to date and areas for development.

In 2021, Improvement Cymru (part of NHS Wales) published an [All Wales Dementia Care Pathway of Standards](#). The pathway identified four key themes for care approaches “underpinned by kindness and understanding”: Accessibility, Responsiveness, Navigation and Partnerships & Relationships. In 2022, a [Dementia Friendly Hospital Charter for Wales](#) was introduced, highlighting best practice to support hospital patients with dementia. Supporting learning about dementia is also a key aim for the government, with Reading Well for Dementia (see above) being introduced in 2024, and Get There Together providing resources to help individuals navigate the health system, lessen anxiety around day-to-day tasks, and encourage people with dementia to engage with their community. [Get There Together](#) is also available as an app, which has the option to help people with dementia plan their day.

More broadly, the [Older People’s Commissioner for Wales](#) has highlighted the need for ongoing efforts to provide older people with the knowledge and support they need, feel safe at home and in the community, access fair treatment and recognition, make their voices heard and retain autonomy. The initial Dementia Action was produced following consultation with older people with dementia, and the Welsh government has affirmed an ongoing commitment to engaging with the voices of individuals with the condition.



# Nation by Nation

## Scotland

In December 2022 the Scottish Government set up a [National Conversation on Dementia](#) consultation process. The previous dementia Strategy had focused on the quality of care for people with dementia and their families, with a flexible and person-centred approach to support. In 2023, [Dementia Strategy for Scotland: Everyone's Story](#), a 10 year vision for change to be followed by rolling 2-year delivery plans with national and local oversight with the first being implemented in 2024-25. The strategy highlights six guiding principles, highlighting participation in one's own care and treatment, accountability of carers and services, non-discrimination, empowerment of individuals with dementia, and the retention of human rights while living with the condition.

In 2024, the [first 2-year delivery plan for the strategy](#) was released. The plan focusses on delivering digital resources and funding digital innovation in dementia care to improve the services offered to people with dementia and their carers and the knowledge base of service workers in line with [The Promoting Excellent Framework](#) for dementia in Scotland, including: challenging stigma around the condition; supporting overall brain health for people across the nation in line with the [Scottish Brain Health & Dementia Research Strategy](#); improving and tracking diagnostic and post-diagnostic support; creating resilient communities that can support individuals with dementia and their carers; improving the hospital experience for individuals with dementia; and improving the care experience for both paid and unpaid carers.

## Northern Ireland

In 2011, the Department of Health for Northern Ireland launched the [Regional strategy for improving dementia services in Northern Ireland](#). The strategy focused on some key areas for improvement: access to early diagnosis and support; access to supported living and assistive technologies; access to intermediate care; care in hospitals; care in care homes; and improving staff knowledge and quality of care. This policy is still in place as the guiding principles for dementia care in Northern Ireland. The charity [Dementia NI](#) informed PolicyWISE that the organisation felt current government strategy was out of date.

In March 2018, the [Regional Dementia Care Pathway was introduced in Northern Ireland](#). The pathway

implements and builds upon the 2011 government strategy, laying the foundations for people with dementia's journey through healthcare and the wider care system. The pathway is built upon four core values: enabled experience and inclusion in one's own treatment; early intervention; personalisation and recognition of individual needs; and integrated service responses. Dementia NI expressed concerns that individuals diagnosed privately are not automatically integrated onto the pathway once they leave private care, and cross-organisational communication need to be improved in order to safeguard the needs of individuals with dementia. In May 2024, Queen's University Belfast hosted the [Regional Dementia Services Project Board Northern Ireland](#), to identify and advise the Northern Ireland Assembly on key need for individuals with dementia and areas of improvement for dementia care in Northern Ireland. In March 2025, a new Commissioner for Older People, Siobhan Casey, was appointed. As of August 2025, Casey is consulting with older people in Northern Ireland to determine priorities for action, and in the meantime the 2022-2024 priorities (including tackling ageism and improving health and social care) remain in place.

The short report, [A People-First Approach to Skills for Social Care](#), summarises findings from an investigation conducted by the All-Party Group (APG) on Skills of the Northern Ireland Assembly, supported by The Open University in Ireland as Secretariat. Informed by the APG's scrutiny of skill gaps, workforce development, and their impact on economic growth and societal wellbeing, this report reflects cross-party consensus on the urgent reforms necessary to strengthen Northern Ireland's social care sector.

## Republic of Ireland

The Republic of Ireland published its first National Dementia Strategy in December 2014, and its most recent update was in 2020. The strategy is underpinned by the principles within the National Framework for the Integrated Prevention and Management of Chronic Disease in Ireland 2020-2025, and has awareness and understanding of dementia, timely diagnosis and intervention, integrated services and support, and training and education as its core areas of focus. As part of its commitments to increasing awareness and education around dementia, the Government launched [understandtogether.ie](#), which has education resources about the condition, as well as support and guidance on how to access services and care.

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The [stated aim of the strategy](#) is to: “improve dementia care so that people with dementia can live well for as long as possible, can ultimately die with comfort and dignity, and can have services and supports delivered in the best way possible.”

In the 2023 budget, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform announced a new national dementia strategy and €2.1million investment in specialist day centres. In May 2023, the Health Service Executive Enhanced Community Care Programme launched [a new Model of Care for Dementia](#), focused on autonomy retention, person-centred approaches and timely treatment. The guide states that it exists within a wider attempt to tackle key health challenges within the wider health system and create services that enable older people to retain their independence as they age.

## Wise up – 5 policy points to take away

Five key points from what we've learnt above, which could be considered as part of further policy development and delivery in any or all of the nations.

1. The number of people living with dementia is increasing globally, along with greater awareness of the costs to health, social care, and unpaid family care.
2. At present, England is the only nation within the nations of the UK and Republic of Ireland that does not have a dedicated dementia action plan. Integrating dementia into a broader healthcare approach may have its benefits, but as the decision is so recent, its strengths and weaknesses remain to be seen.
3. There is a need for more comparative policy research that explores the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to dementia care across the UK and Republic of Ireland. Cross-nation collaboration would allow for knowledge-sharing that would improve research and outcomes for people with dementia and their families.
4. While other countries have resources in place to raise awareness and increase understanding of dementia as a condition, Scotland is the only nation that explicitly seeks to tackle stigma around dementia. Challenging the narrative around what people with dementia are capable of will facilitate greater autonomy and dignity for those living with the condition.
5. In developing strategies to support people with dementia, there are opportunities to consider cross-national learning as recognised by the British-Irish Council. The anticipated strategies are an important moment to integrate people's lived experience with research and academic learning to build stronger policy.



PolicyWISE

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1. **Space:** We create and maintain neutral but constructive spaces for policy professionals and academics across the nations to **develop relationships, respect and knowledge.**
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3. **Solutions:** We help governments focus on evidence-informed policy solutions for citizens and communities across the nations, informed by comparative and collaborative research and methods.

The Open University has been awarded £1m in funding from Dangoor Education to establish and run PolicyWISE. The funding has supported the launch of PolicyWISE in 2023 and our development over the following four years.



### Our offer

**PolicyWISE** works cross-nation on comparative research and knowledge exchange which will change and improve how governments and academics work together in and across nations to solve policy challenges.

#### Rapid Response Capability

We work at pace to support policy analysis, development, and consideration.

#### Comparative and Collaborative Analysis & Understanding

We are a partner of choice for collaborative and comparative projects, and we work across The Open University's four nations.

#### Wise in 5

The only regular snapshot comparative guide to public policy issues across the nations of the UK and Ireland.

#### Training

Utilising our distinct focus and skills we deliver impactful and dynamic training for any audience interested in learning how a comparative policy analysis and knowledge exchange can benefit their work.

**Dewi Knight, Director**

### Get in Touch



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