



# Dementia Together NI

## Inside this issue:

- Welcome from the Minister
- Meet the Team
- What is happening in Dementia Together NI?



### Welcome from the Minister

I am pleased to be introducing this first edition of the **Dementia Together NI** Newsletter.

Enabling people to live well with dementia is one of the greatest challenges that we face in health and social care at present and into the future. It is estimated that there are currently 20,000 people living with dementia in Northern Ireland and this number is expected to rise to 60,000 over the next thirty years.

When Minister Poots launched the strategy '*Improving Dementia Services in Northern Ireland*' back in 2011, he acknowledged that we need to work together to improve understanding of dementia in wider society and reduce stigma and isolation. We need to be able to deliver benefits in primary and secondary prevention and support people living with dementia to maintain their independence and live well with the condition for as long as possible. I know that my predecessor had great pleasure in announcing, in September 2014, a joint initiative between the Atlantic Philanthropies and the NI Executive that will facilitate delivery of many of the key actions laid down in the Northern Ireland strategy.

I am encouraged by achievements to date. Diagnosis rates here are among the best in the UK and recent investments in the development of memory clinics, memory services and research along with the development of Dementia Friendly Communities and training initiatives are contributing significantly to the delivery of better care, support and information to people living with dementia and their carers.

There is more to be done however, and over the next two years, the Dementia Together NI Project Team will seek to promote greater understanding and awareness of dementia across the whole of the community, enhance the quality of services through improved training opportunities and develop effective, person-centred care and support services.

I would like to wish the team well for the future and look forward to receiving regular updates on progress through the newsletter.

**Jim Wells MLA,  
Health Minister.**

## Meet the Team



Top Row (L-R) Martin McCrory, Eleanor Ross, Nichola Cullen, Lorna Conn  
Bottom Row (L-R) Seamus McErlean, Fiona McCann, Teresa McGarvey

Welcome to the **Dementia Together NI** Newsletter and the new Team.

We were delighted back in September, when the Minister announced a substantial funding package (through the Delivering Social Change Initiative), to assist with the delivery of many of the key recommendations set out in the regional Dementia Strategy.

In the three and a half years since the launch of the strategy, a regional implementation group, with members from across the statutory, voluntary and academic sectors, and people living with dementia and carers has been working hard to achieve the objectives of the strategy. The announcement of this new funding is both timely and appreciated to advance work in this important area.

Through the Newsletter, we look forward to being able to update all our readers on a quarterly basis, not just about the work of the project but also about other key developments within dementia care.

We hope you will enjoy reading the Newsletter and we would welcome any comments or feedback you may have.

*Eleanor Ross*

**Nurse Consultant**  
**PHA**

*Seamus McErlean*

**Social Care Commissioning Lead**  
**HSCB**



**Lorna Conn—  
Project Manager**

### **Meet the Team**

Hello I am **Lorna Conn**, the manager of the **Dementia Together** team. Demographics indicate that the number of people in NI living with dementia will triple over the next 35 years. This will present a

significant challenge to health and social care in the future.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to lead the project team in this very exciting and worthwhile venture. We have a real opportunity to improve the quality of life of people with dementia and their carers through improved information and awareness of dementia; enhanced training for staff and carers and the development of more innovative and person centred support services. Four project officers will be responsible for the three distinct yet connected areas of work. I'm looking forward to updating you on our progress in subsequent editions of our newsletter.

*Kind regards Lorna*

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**Martin McCrory—**  
**Project Officer**

My area of responsibility is '**Awareness Raising, Information and Support**'. Research has indicated the presence of stigmatising attitudes and misunderstanding regarding dementia and has highlighted the need to increase awareness of dementia amongst the general public, health and social care workers and public services. Often people affected by dementia and their carers can find it hard to access high quality information when and how they need it.

My role will be to:-

- Develop an NI website for dementia with all the relevant information in one place including information and directories of support services and training
- Develop printed information to go alongside the website for those unable to access information online
- Develop the role of dementia navigators in all Trusts.
- Launch a public campaign, looking at the symptoms of dementia, challenging stigma and decreasing the risk factors associated with some forms of dementia

If you feel you would like to contribute to any of these areas please contact me using the details below, I would love to hear from you!

*Kind Regards Martin*

Email—[martin.mccrory@hscni.net](mailto:martin.mccrory@hscni.net)

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**Nichola Cullen—  
Project Officer**

My work stream will focus on '**Delirium**'. This condition has serious implications for the patient and can be distressing for their family members/carers, and due to the nature of its symptoms places additional pressures on the healthcare service provision.

In order to address this, we need to have appropriate systems in place to enable timely and accurate diagnosis within the hospital environment, which in turn will make the patient's journey more reflective of their individual needs.

I will work collaboratively with all five HSC Trusts and service user representatives to

- Increase awareness of the impact of delirium among healthcare professionals, family members and carers
- Agree an 'At risk' criteria and screening tool for identification and diagnosis of delirium
- Agree an assessment tool and management care pathway for those patients diagnosed with delirium (locality reflective)
- Support family and carers with appropriate information and enhance the patient's recovery

I am working with the PHA Safety Forum to complete this Quality Improvement work.

If you feel that you would like to assist me in progressing this work please contact me at the details below.

*Kind Regards Nichola*

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**Teresa McGarvey—  
Project Officer**

I will take forward the remit for **Training and Development**. It is widely acknowledged that dementia specific training and education is vital to ensure frontline staff have the skills, knowledge and awareness to respond appropriately and support carers to continue to care for people with a dementia.

My role will be to:-

- Hold focus groups with training providers, universities, colleges, staff within the statutory and community/voluntary sector as well carers and people with a dementia
- Develop a directory of training for staff, employers and carers
- Extend provision and support to carers through training
- Develop a Knowledge and Skills Framework for all health and social care staff
- Establish a Dementia Champions Support Network

I would welcome contributions and ideas from anyone who is interested in becoming involved in this aspect of the project.

*Best Wishes Teresa*

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Fiona McCann—Project  
Officer

My area of focus will be **‘Respite/Short Breaks and Support to Carers’**. Caring for someone with dementia can be emotionally and physically demanding. While family care givers play a vital role in the support of people with dementia research carried out by the Alzheimer’s Society found that 52% of those who care for people with dementia are not getting sufficient support to enable them to carry out their caring role. To better understand how to address carers’ unmet need for respite/short breaks,

I will be:

- Carrying out focus groups, interviews and questionnaires to gather the views and opinions of carers of people with dementia and people with dementia themselves on current and future Respite/Short Break provision.
- Developing a number of pilot respite/short break projects that will run for an 18 month period.
- On completion and evaluation of the projects, recommendations will be made to take successful projects forward into the future.
- Developing a directory of services on regional respite/short break provision.

If you would like to be involved in any way please feel free to contact me.

*Kind Regards Fiona*

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## Would you like to be included in future issues?

We hope you have enjoyed this introduction to the very exciting project and can see the very real and positive developments planned to support all those affected by a dementia. As our name suggests, we want to work together with all organisations and people affected by a dementia to allow those with a dementia to live well with the condition and have a voice. We want this newsletter to be a place where we can update you on our work but also to share great work happening around the region from other organisations and groups.

To this end, we want to hear from you! Have you any information / activities / good news stories on services development or are you someone affected by a dementia and want to share your story? If so, please contact Martin using the details enclosed and we will try to include these in our upcoming issues!