

The charity *for dementia* and Admiral Nursing DIRECT respond to the National Audit Office Report on Dementia Services

The interim report, issued 13th January 2010 by the National Audit Office (NAO) on Improving Dementia Services in England, presents a damning indictment on the lack of delivery and leadership of the Department of Health's National Dementia Strategy launched almost a year ago.

for dementia and Admiral Nurses support the NAO view that little has changed 'on the ground' for people with dementia and their carers.

The NAO Report highlights many weaknesses in the delivery structure based on the original targets of increasing awareness, earlier diagnosis and access to treatment, and improved education for care home staff.

- Many people are still unaware of dementia, its causes, risk factors and the preventative measures that could be taken.
- Still only one-third of people with dementia are formally diagnosed, thus preventing them from receiving valuable treatment and help that may be available.
- A year on and care staff are still awaiting a clear educational pathway to improve the quality of care and understanding of this illness.

This is a major disappointment not only for the 700,000 people living with dementia, who have a right to be cared for by care staff who understand their diagnosis and needs, but also to for their carers and families whose expectations have been raised and so far dashed.

The NAO Report identifies some examples of good practice around the country and questions why aren't these being promoted for others to follow so they may be tailored to their own locality? Why is every local team spending a huge amount of precious funds – and losing valuable time – by developing their own systems?

With the NAO, *for dementia* and Admiral Nursing DIRECT call once again for the National Dementia Strategy to be made a government priority which it already is in the daily lives of increasing numbers of families. Investment and leadership from the centre are sorely lacking.

Today 1 in 4 people over the age of 65 will die with dementia and 17,000 people under 65 are diagnosed with dementia in the UK every year. These numbers are increasing steadily year-on-year.

At **Admiral Nursing DIRECT** (0845 257 9406) the number of calls for help and advice has risen sharply since the strategy was launched. Anecdotal evidence from callers suggests that services are deeply fragmented and disjointed, and vary hugely across the country. All people affected by dementia should have access to the same level of help and support from local services, irrespective of where they live.

The Admiral Nursing DIRECT helpline is helping to fill those gaps; and the 75 Admiral Nurses currently in post across 16 Health Trusts in England and Wales are providing the expertise to support not only people with dementia and their carers, but also the other health and care professionals working with families affected by this life-changing and devastating disease.

ENDS/

More information at www.fordementia.org.uk

More media information from Kirsty Marrins, for dementia 020 7874 7203
or from Rhonda Smith at Minerva 01264-710428 / 07887-714957