



# EMPOWERING CHANGE

A National Strategy for Dementia in the Maltese Islands

2015-2023

Dementia-friendly version



PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT  
FOR RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY  
AND ACTIVE AGEING

*Empowering Change*  
A National Strategy for Dementia in the Maltese Islands  
2015-2023

Parliamentary Secretariat for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing

April 2015

Dementia-friendly version

ISBN:978-99957-858-2-6







# PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY'S FOREWORD

Dementia has significant health, social and economic significance to our country, since a high proportion of individuals with dementia are referred to acute hospital care, residential, long-term nursing and community care services.

The *National Strategy for Dementia* acts as a national voice for people living with dementia and their caregivers and family members. It underlies the Government's commitment to gain a better understanding of the impact of dementia on the Maltese population, and its pledge for immediate action in capacity building in dementia management and care services.

The series of objectives and recommendations included in the *National Strategy for Dementia* will surely bring us closer to improved levels of care for individuals with dementia, their caregivers and family members. Such proposals will stimulate discussion on what constitutes good and ethical practice in dementia management, alternative care, and purposeful training and research programmes in the dementia field.





# AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

One of the most important challenges facing the Maltese society is the increasing number of individuals with dementia – a condition usually characterised by gradual loss of memory, impaired communication skills and difficulties in performing daily-life activities. Dementia will inevitably bring about a significant demand not only on health care services but also on society as a whole as most of the care for individuals with dementia is provided by family members who act as main caregivers.

The aim of this booklet is to highlight a number of key recommendations included in the national dementia strategy document '*Empowering Change: A National Strategy for Dementia in the Maltese Islands (2015-2023)*'. It is designed taking a dementia-friendly approach so to encourage people with dementia to participate more fully in decisions that effect their lives.

*National Dementia Strategy Main Objective*

'enhancing the quality of life of individuals with dementia, their caregivers and family members'

# Increasing awareness and understanding of dementia

- Increasing awareness and knowledge on dementia would decrease stigma and fear
- People need to be informed of the risk and protective factors
- People need to recognise the early symptoms of dementia and seek professional advice
- Increased awareness is important in developing dementia-friendly communities where these individuals are welcomed to continue participating in daily life

## *Fact*

Dementia is not a natural part of ageing

## *Objectives*

Changing the perception of dementia

Encourage help-seeking

Provide guidance



## *Main recommendations*

- Develop educational campaigns providing information on risk factors, preventive measures and availability of support services
- Promote the work of non-governmental organisations working with individuals with dementia and their caregivers and family members
- Develop continuing information sessions targeting persons who come into close contact with individuals with dementia (e.g. public service providers)
- Strengthening the Dementia Helpline

# Dementia diagnosis and intervention

- The majority of individuals with dementia are not diagnosed early in the disease process
- Dementia can also occur at a young age
- Early diagnosis enhance the quality of life and limits institutionalisation
- Early diagnosis allows the individual to plan ahead and make personal choices for the future

*Dementia Helpline*



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## *Objectives*

Enhance diagnosis at an early stage

Provision of information on care and support services

Timely accessibility to care

## *Main recommendations*

- Promote the value of early diagnosis
- Develop and distribute information on the various aspects of dementia at the point of diagnosis and throughout the disease process
- Setting up of the Dementia Intervention Team to support individuals with dementia in the community
- Provide opportunities for training in primary care











# Workforce development

- Training of healthcare professionals is currently limited and not meeting the needs
- Having a trained workforce is instrumental in delivering high quality dementia care
- Collaboration between various professionals working in the health and social sector ensures a multidisciplinary approach to care
- Training of family caregivers of individuals with dementia has the potential to delay institutionalisation

## *Fact*

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia

## *Objectives*

Ensure that staff working with individuals with dementia has the necessary training

## *Main recommendations*

- Provide patient-centred care training to health professionals caring for individuals with dementia
- Provide training programmes for caregivers
- Support information technology platforms that facilitate online dementia training
- Provide continuous professional development programmes for skills updating
- Develop study units in various aspects of dementia management and care at tertiary level

# Improving dementia management and care

- There is no cure for the most common forms of dementia. The goal of anti-dementia medication is to delay disease progression
- Poor uncoordinated care contributes to increased rates of nursing home admissions in individuals with dementia
- Community services that are reliable, flexible and have a holistic approach enables individuals with dementia to remain active and independent for longer
- Palliative and end-of-life care preserves the dignity of the individual and maximizes the quality of life by providing the best level of comfort

## *Dementia Activity Centre*



21224461

## *Objectives*

- Provide the necessary anti-dementia medication
- Improvement in the delivery of dementia care
- Provide the necessary community support
- Implementation of dementia-friendly measures



## *Main recommendations*

- Ensure that individuals with dementia have access to medication and are reviewed regularly
- Establish research initiatives and training opportunities in non-pharmacological interventions
- Ensure that individuals with dementia have a care plan that addresses activities of daily living, promotes independent living and engagement in meaningful activities
- Ensure that caregivers and family members of individuals with dementia are involved in the decision-taking process
- Increase in the number of dementia day centres
- Provide training to staff working in day centres
- Increase in the availability of respite facilities for individuals with dementia
- Facilitate access to assistive technology
- Provide the necessary support to caregivers to continue working whilst providing care
- Availability of a dementia caregiver card
- Develop new long-term dementia units
- Implementation of dementia-friendly measures and design in long-term care settings
- Provide palliative and end-of-life care to individuals with dementia
- Ensure that residential and nursing homes accommodating individuals with dementia have the necessary quality standards

# Ethical approach to care

- Individuals with dementia and their caregivers face difficult decisions in all stages of the disease process
- Individuals with dementia should have the opportunity to make informed decisions about their care and treatment

## *Main recommendations*

- Provide access to training in ethical decision taking, respect for personhood and wellbeing
- Promote the use of advanced directives
- Provide individuals with dementia, their caregivers and family members with the necessary psychological support
- Promote a 'partners in care' approach
- Monitor and assess abuse in individuals with dementia







# Research

- Research on dementia currently receives minimal funding
- There is limited data on how dementia is affecting the Maltese society
- Research is essential for the planning, managing and distribution of health and social care resources

## *Main recommendations*

- Promote and support research initiatives in the field of dementia management and care
- Carry out research to assess unmet needs of community-dwelling older adults with dementia, their caregivers and family members
- Make dementia a research priority
- Facilitate access for individuals with dementia to participate in clinical trials







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[www.maltadementiasociety.org.mt](http://www.maltadementiasociety.org.mt)

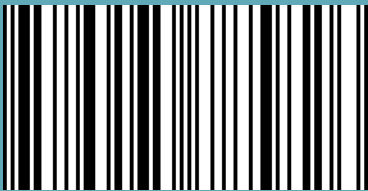
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