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Mental Health in Older People



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Introduction

Social isolation is a recognised risk factor for poor mental health and is experienced by one million older people in the UK¹. Strengthening positive relationships in later life will help to promote mental health and wellbeing for all of us. Factors that contribute to social isolation and increased risk of mental health problems in older adults include²:

- Decline in social activity
- Deaths of friends and relatives
- Transportation and mobility problems
- Less support due to smaller family size and living alone

Amongst the over 65s the two most common mental health problems are depression and dementia.

Facts and Figure

Dementia

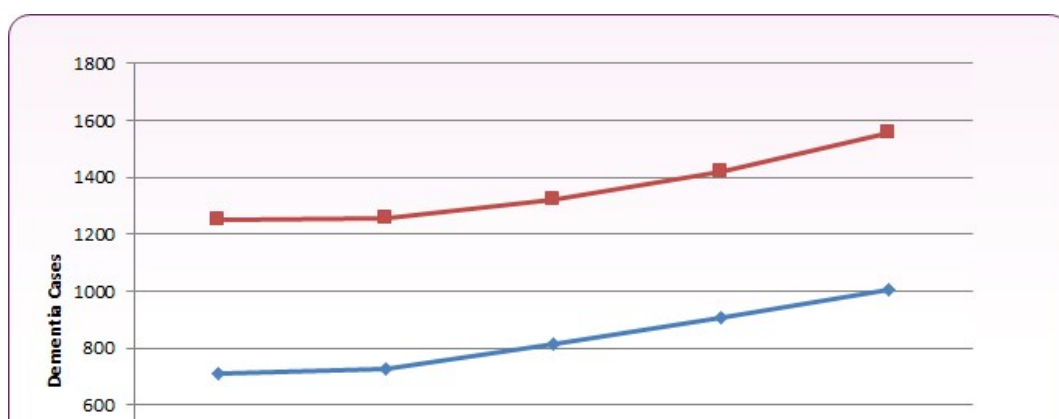
95% of people affected by dementia in the UK are over 65 and prevalence increases significantly with age³.

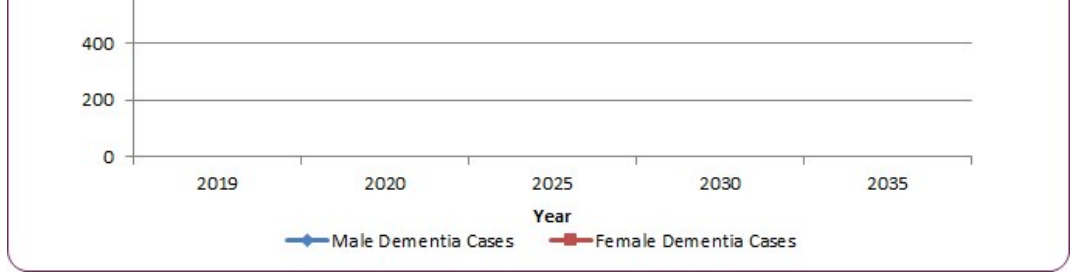
The needs of people with dementia and their carers already require high levels of health and social care input and this requirement will increase to meet the projected needs of this rapidly growing group. Family carers of people with dementia are often older and frail themselves with high levels of depression and physical illness and a diminished quality of life. Hence, dementia is now seen as an NHS priority area, and in 2009 a National Dementia Strategy was launched.

NHS Blackpool conducted a survey of local GPs in 2011, which suggested that there is a need to bring improvements across all levels of dementia care. It was highly evident that work was needed to contribute towards the development and implementation of local care pathways and education programmes that are tailored towards GPs needs and requirements, supporting recommendations set out in the National Dementia Strategy. All GPs in Blackpool have now been issued with a local Dementia Toolkit that outlines the support services available.

Dementia is the single most frequent cause of admission to care homes, and of the need for community care services for older people. The demographics of an ageing population indicate the number of people with dementia in Blackpool is predicted to rise to around 2,560 by 2035 (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Blackpool: Males and Females aged 65+ expected to have dementia (projected to 2035)





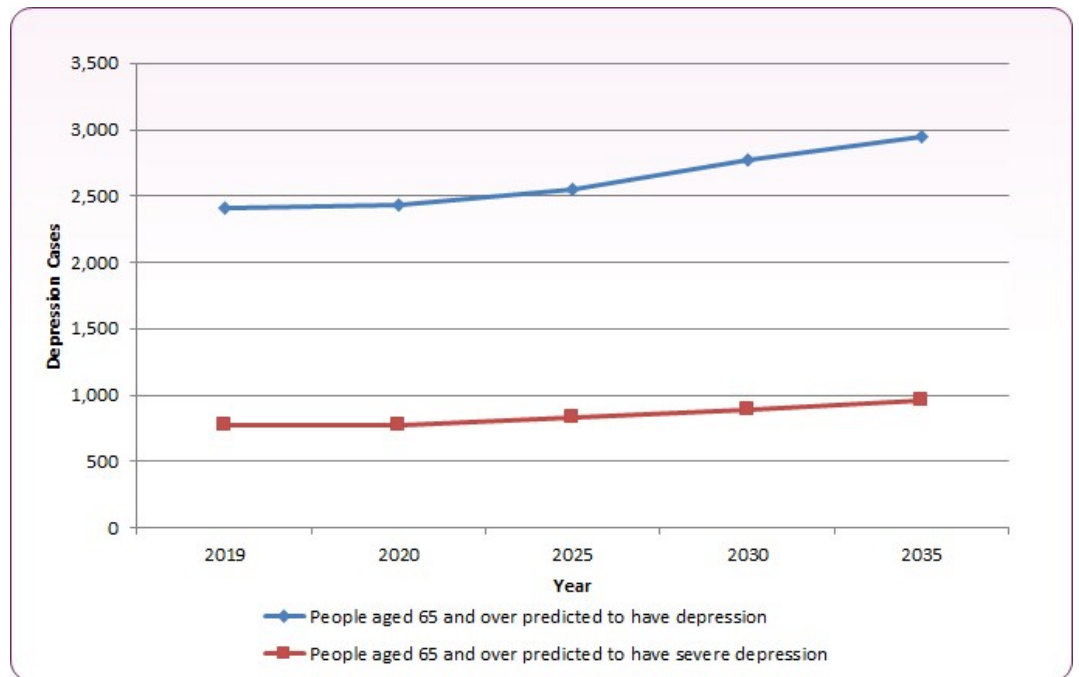
Source: POPPI

Depression

There are above average levels of depression requiring treatment in the over 65s.

In the UK depression affects 1 in 5 older people living in the community and 2 in 5 living in care homes⁴. As the population ages within Blackpool, the number of people affected by depression is expected to increase (Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Blackpool: Expected numbers of people 65+ with depression/severe depression (projected to 2035)



Source: POPPI

[1] A first report from the UK Inquiry into Mental Health and Wellbeing in later Life. Promoting mental health and wellbeing in later life. Mental Health Foundation. Age Concern


[2] Promoting Mental Health. Strategy and Action Plan 2003-2008. DH http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/promoting_mental_health.pdf

[3] <http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/download.php?fileID=2323>

[4] <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-statistics/older-people/>

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