

## **Committee: Health and Wellbeing Board Community Subgroup**

**Date: 27 July 2021**

## **Subject: Summary of the Report on the Effects of the Pandemic on People Affected By Dementia in Merton**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

To brief Members on the impact and issues that Covid-19 has had on people in Merton living with dementia and their carers/families.

For Members to consider how they can take action across the system to better support people living with dementia and their carers.

### **Context**

People living with dementia and their carers have been disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. National research by the Alzheimer's Society<sup>1</sup> highlights that ¼ of people who died from Coronavirus during the first wave had a diagnosis of dementia. People with dementia were also not identified as 'clinically extremely vulnerable' during the first wave. The research found 46% of people with dementia reported poorer mental health and 82% of respondents (people with dementia and their carers) reported noticing a deterioration of symptoms. Carers reported greater caring responsibilities during Covid-19, as services were closed, with 95% of respondents reporting that caring during the pandemic had a negative impact on their physical and mental health.

### **Merton Dementia Action Alliance and hearing the voice of people with dementia**

Merton achieved 'Working towards dementia friendly community' status in 2018 and has worked to grow its Dementia Action Alliance to over 130 members. A key ongoing priority is ensuring the voice of people living with dementia and their carers is heard. As services worked towards recovery in Summer/Autumn 2020 we wanted to ensure that locally we understood the impact that Covid-19 had on people with dementia and their carers and to think of how DAA Members and services across the system can better support them going forward. This was part of a larger piece of research work across the Council that looked at a number of groups that national research has shown have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19 including BAME communities, older people and people with learning disabilities.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Worst Hit, Dementia during Coronavirus' (2020) available at [Worst-hit-Dementia-during-coronavirus-report.pdf \(alzheimers.org.uk\)](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/resources/reports/worst-hit-dementia-during-coronavirus-report.pdf)

## **Local Research Work on Dementia**

For the older person's work-stream we asked a number of voluntary sector partners (Age UK Merton, Carers Support Merton, Wimbledon Guild) to develop case studies reporting on the issues they had seen and the experience of local people during Covid-19. We also asked the Alzheimer's Society to carry out a survey of people living with dementia and carers to ascertain their views and understand the issues. The research findings from this survey are provided in the attached report.

## **Importance of Findings Feeding into Strategic Recovery Plans**

It is vital that the insights from this research and from other partners feed into the strategic recovery plans and response of Merton Council and partner agencies to Covid-19. This includes consideration of findings within the response to the 'Your Merton' consultation; and the refresh of the Local Health and Care Plan for the Merton Health and Care Together Board. It is also important to communicate findings and consider how we will respond within existing strategies and plans, such as the Carers Strategy Action Plan and Dementia Action Alliance Action Plan. Finally consideration of findings can be addressed within commissioning intentions, such as the re-commissioning of community dementia services. We will work to ensure this takes place across the system. As national policy transitions into 'living with Covid-19' it is also important that the voice of people living with dementia as well as older people more widely continues to be heard and any new or continuing impacts of Covid-19 are considered and responded to locally.

## **How the Health and Wellbeing Community Sub Group and Merton's Dementia Action Alliance (DAA) can better support people living with dementia and their carers.**

Recommendations in the report can be used to consider how existing services can better support people living with dementia, what the gaps may be and how we can all take action to address the disproportionate impact that Covid-19 has had on people living with dementia and their families and carers.

## **CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

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