



Choices for people with learning disabilities

News Release

Immediate

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National Charity Calls For Action On Down's Dementia

A leading charity has backed calls for a national response to the growing number of people with Down's syndrome who have dementia.

There are 40,000 people in the UK with Down's syndrome, and experts say up to half of those in their 50s may have Alzheimer's disease, as they are prone to the condition earlier than others.

Self Unlimited – the charity for people with learning disabilities - wants the issue to be given more prominence in national plans for dementia care. Campaigners say the issue was barely mentioned in the Government's latest green paper on the subject.

The charity, whose headquarters are in Leicestershire, provides services to people with learning disabilities across England, including special units for people with dementia, and is planning to build more as part of a national restructuring of services over the next three years.

But it says the growth in cases of dementia among people with Down's syndrome needs more recognition by policymakers and more funding from Government. Lack of funding for specialist services in this area can mean that younger adults with learning disabilities who develop dementia are placed in older people's homes due to financial pressures as opposed to this being an appropriate solution to their needs.

Self Unlimited led a Lottery-funded research project which concluded in supporting the assertion that there needs to be specialist approaches to providing care to this especially vulnerable group of people.

Patrick Wallace, Self Unlimited's chief executive, said: "This is a significant issue that deserves greater recognition. Providing the right kind of care for the growing number of people with Down's syndrome developing dementia is a challenge for everyone in this sector. It's an important part of our plans to provide services that meet the individual needs of people with learning disabilities. So, of course, we would love to see more attention, and more investment, in this area."

Care services minister Phil Hope has been reported as saying the green paper did look at the problem, and that plans to redesign the care system would benefit people with Down's syndrome as much as any other group.

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