



Diagnosing Well in Stockton

Stockton Memory Service is a multi-disciplinary team and manages all aspects of a person's dementia diagnosis. The service is co-located with the Social Care Older People's Mental Health Team.

- Working with partners from health, social care, voluntary and community sectors - Stockton Memory Service is a key partner of the LiveWell Dementia Hub (the Hub) and offers appointments there.
- Flexible referral system and choice of appointment venue - Everyone who is referred to the Memory service can have an assessment. The service prides itself on being very responsive to need, sometimes even organizing same-day assessments in a choice of venues or patient's own homes.
- Minimising delays in the diagnosis process – Stockton Memory Service have arrangements with South Tees Radiology Department allowing patients to receive a CT scan during any working day and without appointment. In addition GPs in the area can diagnose dementia in appropriate cases.
- Post-diagnosis support - After a diagnosis the Memory Service provides group based Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) for 8 sessions at different venues including the Hub. The Memory services also work with Age UK Teesside which provides a follow-on 22 week course of Maintenance CST.
- Support for carers - A carer's assessment is offered by the Memory Service or, if the patient prefers, by another local support service. The Memory Service also works with partners to deliver regular Carers' Education Sessions and public talks to help support carers.
- Reaching out to local communities - In Stockton-On-Tees the diagnosis rate among people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities is lower than expected when compared to prevalence estimates. To address this, the Memory Service is identifying the most appropriate way of providing memory services for people from BAME communities via focus groups with local BAME groups.

What does the pathway look like?

The Memory Service uses Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHSFT Dementia Care Pathway. The Dementia care pathway enables person-centred services based on the most current evidence. Early assessment and diagnosis is a key component of the TEVV clinical pathway for Dementia. The pathway includes assessment, diagnosis, post-diagnostic support, CST, medication and a needs-led care plan for non-pharmacological interventions.

Involving service users

Stockton Memory Service uses the 'Friends and Family Test' to improve by reviewing and understanding the experiences of patients and carers. The Memory Service also works with the Dementia Voices Stockton project to receive feedback from patients and carers. The Memory Service is provided in line with the Care Programme Approach. Service users are given choice over appointment location and after diagnosis an appointment is made for service users to raise any questions.

Capacity and Demand

Activity planning matches appointments efficiently to referrals so people are seen within 28 days. The challenge is ever increasing caseload via new diagnoses (an excellent local diagnosis rate) and appointments for existing patients who need medication reviews. The service is piloting a new post to review those patients and mitigate this issue. Two peripatetic nurses are available across the area that can help level demand. The service has very low DNA rates because of assessments it completes in people's homes. This valuable whole person assessment outweighs the extra travelling.

Referrals and Scanning

The Memory Service receives referrals from GPs, partner agencies and elsewhere in the Trust. Referral protocols and standard approaches to carrying out the assessment have helped to shorten the diagnostic process by not only indicating suitability for assessment, but actually supporting the diagnosing clinician with information prior to meeting the patient.

Following initial assessments, when further assessment is needed in clinic and a CT scan is indicated, extra training means the assessing nurse can refer for the CT scan. Patients can then attend drop in clinics at the hospital to have the scan completed with results available in 4 days, accessed electronically. This allows diagnostic appointments to quickly follow initial assessment.

Communication and Education

Diagnosis results go to GPs using standard letters which include ICD10 codes. There is also a standard discharge letter. The memory service provides various specialist training opportunities for team members and awareness training is available for all. Initiatives like Dementia Friendly Stockton mean Dementia Friends training is quite prevalent, and the Memory Service has a newsletter. The Intensive Community Liaison Service (ICLS) delivers training to care homes. They focus on non-pharmacological interventions based on their intervention toolkit.

Innovations

ICLS is open 7 days from 8am to 8pm and focusses on keeping people in their own homes by working with the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) and a Care Coordinator using a single electronic care record. The young onset service is now also integrated. Staff work within "cells" to enhance capacity, avoid silos and provide cover. Daily cell huddles facilitate peer review and reflective practice. Psychologists attend the huddles and more psychology support is requested where needed.