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PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland
**Evaluation of the
Day Care at Home Service**

August 2023

**Evaluation of the Alzheimer Society of Ireland's
Day Care at Home Service**

E. O Shea, M. Faherty, L. Somers, & S. Timmons Centre for
Gerontology and Rehabilitation University College Cork

BACKGROUND

There are approximately 64,000 people living with dementia in Ireland today, and this number is expected to double by 2045 to more than 150,000 people. The highest proportion of this will be women (approximately 92,000).

People living with dementia and their family carers can experience significant challenges, including limited individualised support. Attendance at day centres can help, but not everyone living with dementia may want to attend a day centre due to different factors.

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland's Day Care at Home (DCAH) service was developed during the COVID-19 Pandemic when traditional day services were temporarily closed. DCAH is a dementia-specific service delivered by trained care workers, who provide one-to-one, person-centred support to people living with dementia for a set number of hours every week.

- The main difference between Day Care At Home (DCAH) and more formal 'home help' type services, is that DCAH allows a care worker to work with a client on activities such as music-based sessions, arts & crafts, companionship and other activities of the client's choosing. Most importantly, it is the same care worker that comes to a client's home each week, which helps to build positive relationships over time.
- Both DCAH and traditional day centres offer support and provide care in the community. Traditional day centres provide group care, outside of the home, and is available across Ireland. DCAH is a unique initiative, provided to clients on a smaller scale.

This summary (and further full report) details the external evaluation of The Alzheimer Society of Ireland's Day Care At Home (DCAH) service which is still running post-pandemic, but with a reduced capacity as day centres have reopened.



KEY AIMS

There were a few questions that we aimed to answer as part of this evaluation:

What are the experiences and perspectives of service users on accessing and using the Day Care At Home (DCAH) service?

What are the experiences and perspectives of front-line staff and management on their professional needs, and the planning, provision, and sustainability of the service?




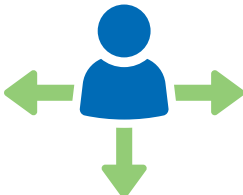
What do service users and service providers see as key areas for service development?

How do external stakeholders (i.e., General Practitioners, Public Health Nurses, Senior HSE officials) perceive the role, value, and potential impact of the DCAH service, within the current dementia support landscape?

Why do some people living with dementia and/or their family members/family carers choose not to use the Day Care At Home (DCAH) service, despite it being available to them.

WHAT WE DID

To answer these questions, we completed interviews with multiple stakeholders and home visits across Ireland to see DCAH in action.

Interviews (37 in total)						
						
ASI Management (14)		ASI Care Workers (7)		DCAH Clients (11)		External stakeholders (5)
DCAH Coordinators <hr/> (13)	ASI Senior Management <hr/> (1)			People living with dementia <hr/> (3)	Family carers <hr/> (8)	Primary Care Professionals <hr/> (3)
						HSE staff <hr/> (2)

Home Care Visits

(7 visits to clients' homes)

The research team were supported and guided by a Steering Committee and The ASI's Dementia Research Advisory Team. This included discussions on the overall work, how best to collect information from stakeholders, how to get more people to take part in the study and write up of findings.

WHAT WE FOUND

This work was carried out between March and July 2023. This evaluation found that stakeholders viewed the Day Care At Home (DCAH) services favourably, seeing it as unique, necessary, and beneficial for people affected by dementia. Key findings are outlined below with some illustrative quotes.

A The Day Care At Home (DCAH) service caters to a previously underserved group of people, for whom traditional day care centres are not practical, acceptable or beneficial.

"It adds values...It's meeting needs that no other service is meeting as it's very social-focused"

(Care Worker, no. 4)

"It is completely person-centred - it's the same carer coming in, and it's one to one"

(Coordinator, no. 2)

B The Day Care At Home (DCAH) service focuses on the needs of the person living with dementia and the primary carer. Their needs might differ, but both share a common need for psychosocial support.

"For them [family carers] to be able to get a break, that is the key to keeping people at home. This service is just as important, if not more important to some than a home help service"

(Coordinator, no. 5)



C Day Care At Home (DCAH) can support the person living with dementia to retain a sense of their own identity, considering their own individual likes and needs, and allow breaks for family carers.

“It’s more to engage them in whatever their interests are, get them out for exercise, meditation, hand massage... It’s a person-by-person basis really”

(Care Worker, no. 1)

“For me, it’s a chance to go out meet pals and keep in contact with people”

(Family Carer, no. 3)

D People living with dementia and family carers were particularly satisfied with the Day Care At Home (DCAH) service, due to the positive relationships built with care workers over time.

“Myself and [ASI carer name], we are a great combination”

(Person with dementia, no. 2)

“[CW] gives her time...They get on great, she’s like a friend. The other girls, the home help girls, are great, but they’re so busy - they don’t have time.” (Family Carer, no. 6)

E Day Care At Home (DCAH) can make family care in the community more sustainable, i.e., by improving outcomes, including avoiding / delaying care home admission.

“If they [PwD] are in better form, then the carer is in better form. I mean if they’re happy after a session...they might be sleeping better, that means the carer is in better form, and the whole family unit is better”

(Care Worker, no. 3)



F The Day Care At Home (DCAH) service faces significant challenges relating to resources, waitlists and difficulties with recruiting staff around the country.

“We have a huge volume of referrals coming in, so people could be waiting months before we get to them because we only have a certain number of hours that are allocated by the HSE”
(Coordinator, no. 2)

“At the moment we’re trying to recruit carers, and it’s hard for us, competing against the private [care] companies. Everywhere is trying to recruit at the moment, you know”
(Coordinator, no. 6)

G In order to lobby for more resources, ASI management are capturing data about the Day Care At Home (DCAH) service, to show the magnitude of the need for the service, and to be as responsive as possible with the currently available resources.

“For them [family carers] to be able to get a break, that is the key to keeping people at home. This service is just as important, if not more important to some than a home help service”
(Coordinator, no. 5)





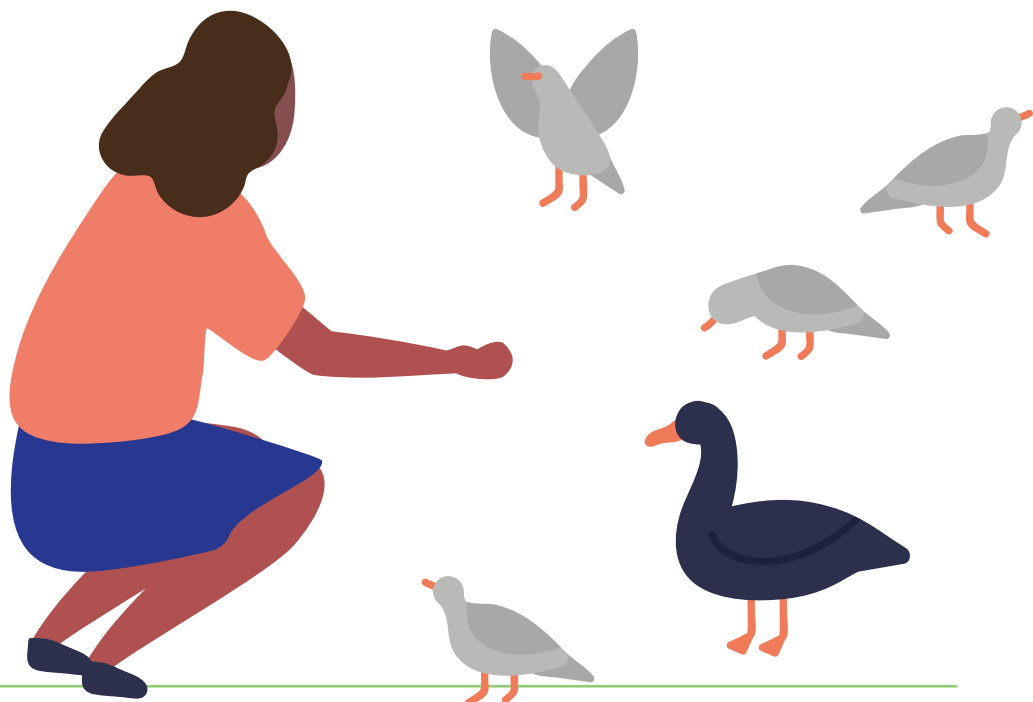
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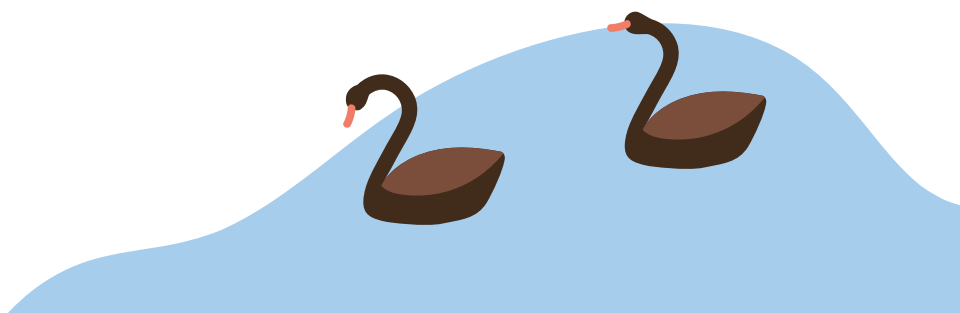
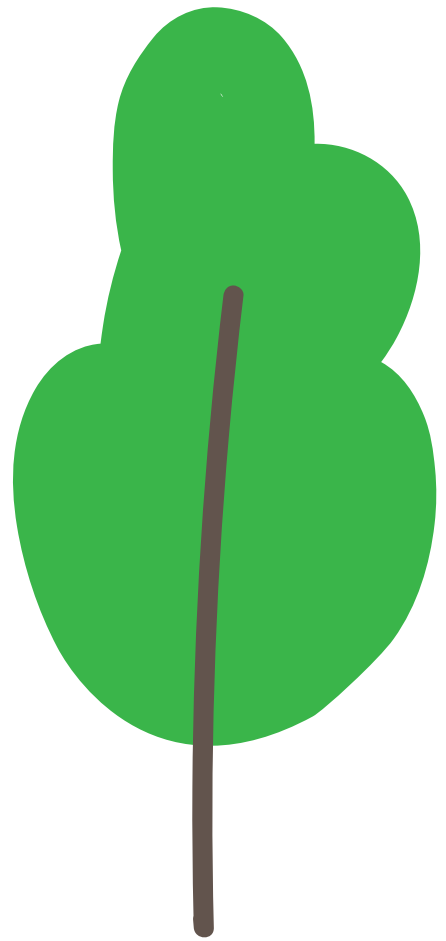
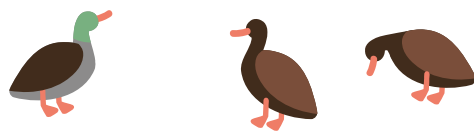


Conclusions

CONCLUSIONS

- Day Care at Home (DCAH) is a unique service, that adds value to dementia care / support nationally, and is widely seen as positive across all stakeholders who took part in this research. This service offers people living with dementia opportunities for positive social interactions and engagement in meaningful activities in their homes and local communities.
- Day Care at Home (DCAH) offers much needed relief for the family carer who benefits from improved mood, increased socialisation, and reduced isolation. When the family carer has the chance to have a true mental break (supported through DCAH), the person living with dementia also benefits from having a family carer who is well rested both physically and mentally.
- Demand is growing for this service, resulting in long waitlists and unfair access opportunities. The current number of hours of Day Care At Home (DCAH) that The ASI can offer is insufficient to meet the demand that exists in communities across Ireland. Coordinators report that many families seeking help are in dire need of support.
- Recruiting new staff may be a challenge, but the main barrier to expanding the service is funding. Increased funding is urgently needed to sustain and grow this service, to meet the demand across the country.







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The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is a national service delivery and advocacy organisation. It is person centred, rights based and grassroots led with the voice of the person living with dementia and their carer at its core.

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The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Helpline is open six days a week
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