

## DEMENTIA SELECT COMMITTEE

### Feedback from Dementia Services Development Centre talk on the topic of 'Wandering' – 15<sup>th</sup> November 4-5.30pm - Matt Hinds-Aldrich, Dave Ivatt and Kevin Harris

1. Sue Frampton attended along with Mr Steve Manion.
2. A presentation/talk was given by three members of Kent Search and Rescue (KSAR) which is a voluntary organisation that started in East Kent more than 10 years ago and now operates Kent-wide, funded by donations and small grants.
3. The organisation takes an average of 35 calls per year for missing persons in Kent including children, though the proportion of calls for dementia patients is increasing.
4. Due to their workload, the Police do not prioritise missing persons unless classed as vulnerable (practice varies between Police Forces) but Kent Police notify KSAR who 'mobilise' their volunteers immediately. (In 2009 UK Police spent £350 million on missing persons and data from Sussex for 2006/7 indicates a £5 million spend or £1,000 per missing person. KSAR have no Kent data.)
5. It is estimated that between 15 and 60% of dementia patients 'wander' and the distinction was drawn between 'going for a walk' and 'going for a walk and not knowing where you are'.
6. The 'problem' can be communication with a carer, i.e. the carer does not know where the person with dementia is and their worries and concerns about them are uppermost.
7. There are other issues around wandering such as: the level of activity a person has access to and needing to escape from some form of abuse.
8. The issues of stigma and prejudice associated with dementia were raised. For example, carers who report a person with dementia as missing often will not mention dementia at first, for fear of being thought inadequate carers, or, if the person lives alone, of the person being put in residential care. A second example was used of the sometimes less than sympathetic view that (often younger) police officers have of elderly wanderers.
9. KSAR has in the past been reactive but they are trying to be more proactive – going out and giving talks, helping to improve awareness, and they are running a campaign called Safe and Sound (leaflet attached).
10. There are various types of assistive technology, which were not necessarily advocated by KSAR, which could include low-tech options like locks and chains (which themselves could pose a fire or other hazard), alarmed panic bars, behavioural solutions like moving a persons coat and shoes away from

the door (though this does not always work!) or hanging a curtain to obscure the door (which could again pose a hazard or cause confusion in the situation of a fire). There are also pressure sensitive mats to alert carers of a person moving around/out of the house, and these can be linked to Telecare. Door alarms can sound a warning or be linked to text messages to carers. Radio Frequency Identification can be used (such as GPS and 'electronic tags', though wrist-watches and other types of 'device' can be used. Older people's mobile phones are currently being trialled in Kent & Medway and medical jewellery is being trialled in Torbay.

11. There are ethical concerns and some of these measures are considered to be a breach of a person's human rights. They are no substitute for quality care and attention.
12. Statistics show that there is an 8 month lag between first reports of a person wandering, and their being placed in a care home.
13. KSAR consider that the 'way forward' is a more joined-up approach to dementia care with better communication between all the involved organisations.
14. KSAR's Safe and Sound Campaign recommends simple measures (which make a big difference when a person goes missing) including taking a regular head-and-shoulders photo of the cared-for person and keeping a filled in Life History Questionnaire (Penny – Director of the Dementia Services Development Centre, suggested this could be kept in a small container in a fridge in case it is ever needed). These simple measures can save precious time and allow searchers to get out immediately in the event a person goes missing, particularly as speed is of the essence and the likelihood of a person dying is much reduced if they are located in the first 24 hours.
15. KSAR feed statistics (on missing persons) to various, including international databases. ISRID (online) contains data on search and rescue and this has a section on dementia.
16. KSAR, by talking to carers and using 'essential information' are often able to target the places where people who wander are likely to be. Once a person is found, a 'return interview' is carried out and it was stressed that this was often better carried out by a person not seen to be 'in authority'.
17. This talk was part of a series being held at Christ Church University, Dementia Services Development Centre.