

Dementia patients charged up to 40% extra by care homes

By **Sophie Borland**
Health Editor

DEMENTIA patients are being charged 40 per cent more by care homes than those without the condition, a leading charity has warned.

The are forced to pay a 'dementia premium' even though they do not necessarily receive any extra care, the Alzheimer's Society said.

Research by the charity found a number of care homes and home help agencies are automatically increasing their fees for dementia patients, regardless of their personal needs.

Patients without dementia pay between £26,000 and £41,600 a year for a care home, depending on location and facilities. Those with the condition pay a minimum of £33,800 a year, rising to £62,400 for the most expensive homes.

Meanwhile, a patient without demen-

'At the mercy of a broken system'

tia pays £18 to £20 an hour for home care costs, but this rises to between £20 and £25 if they have the condition.

One patient who had been living in a care home for months found their fees were suddenly increased by £3,000 a year after they were diagnosed with dementia. This was despite the fact that they received little extra support as they were in the early stages of the condition.

The Alzheimer's Society carried out research on up to 30 care homes and home care providers, asking them how much they charged for dementia patients and those without the condition respectively.

On average, they charged between 20 and 25 per cent more for dementia patients, but one unnamed care home was charging 40 per cent more.

Although it was only a snap-

shot survey, the charity believes many providers are slapping on a 'dementia premium'.

Around 850,000 people in the UK are estimated to be living with dementia, although the true numbers may be higher as many are undiagnosed.

Figures also show that around 70 per cent of patients living in care homes and 60 per cent of those requiring home care have the condition.

Regardless of whether they need more care than other patients, the Alzheimer's Society said it is wrong for them to

be paying out of their own pockets rather than being funded by the state.

The charity pointed out that patients with cancer, heart disease or any other major health condition are treated free on the NHS. But dementia patients who require long-term social care must pay themselves.

Jeremy Hughes, chief executive of the Alzheimer's Society, said: 'People with dementia are at the mercy of a broken system, paying up to 40 per cent more for their care simply because they developed dementia. The

financial and emotional toll this takes on some of the most vulnerable people in society is fundamentally unfair.

'Quality dementia care requires time and training and can't be done on the cheap, but these additional costs should be covered by the state, instead of forcing families to sell their homes and spend their life savings just to get the care they need.'

'People with dementia have a right to care, but the hefty price tag it comes with can mean they are denied that right.'

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Marie Watson: Bungalow had to be sold

Bill soared by £3,000 a year

JOAN Watson was charged an extra £3,000 a year for her mother's care home fees after she was diagnosed with dementia.

Her father Len already had dementia and was being looked after in a care home in Bournemouth.

Her mother Marie also moved into the home after a fall and a few months later was diagnosed with dementia.

The care home then told Mrs Watson it would cost her an extra £3,000 to provide specialist dementia care for her mother, even though she was in the early stages.

She had to sell her parents' bungalow to foot the bill.

She has since moved them to a cheaper home nearby but the bill for both parents is £62,4000 a year.

She said: 'The fees ate up my parents' £100,000 life savings in about a year, so we've had to sell their home to give us enough for a few more years. If we got through all that too, I don't know what would happen.'