

# Call to give dementia patients cash for care

Chris Smyth Health Editor

All dementia patients must be given a share of a £2.4 billion NHS fund to subsidise unfair care costs, MPs have said.

A cross-party group of 68 MPs said that dementia can no longer be left to a failing social care system and demanded a chunk of a £20 billion NHS budget boost to help sufferers.

Every dementia patient should be entitled to a personal budget of thousands of pounds a year to spend on carers, home adaptations or the higher care home fees charged to those with

the disease, they said. Such patients are charged about 15 per cent more for care because they are considered harder to look after, and the MPs said NHS funds should make up the difference.

Campaigners have long noted that while people with cancer have their treatment costs met by the NHS, those with dementia fend for themselves as council-run social care is cut back.

Conservative MPs including Andrea Jenkyns, Sir David Amess and Mark Prisk joined Labour MPs such as Rachel Maskell and Rosie Cooper, as well as Heidi Allen of Change UK, the Liberal

Democrat former health minister Norman Lamb, and Caroline Lucas of the Greens in writing an open letter to Matt Hancock, the health secretary, that is published today.

They say: "The NHS is committed to the principle of access based on clinical need, not an individual's ability to pay. We back the Alzheimer's Society's proposal of a dementia fund... available to individuals post-diagnosis, to enable their continued independence in the community for as long as possible."

Social care reforms promised in 2017 have not been published and the MPs

write that using NHS cash would "break the deadlock" as politicians decide the future of the system.

The Alzheimer's Society proposes that anyone in England with a dementia diagnosis — about 420,000 people — should be given money to keep them out of A&E. It could be spent on anything a GP agreed would help.

Jeremy Hughes, chief executive of the charity, said: "Decades of underfunding have left people with dementia struggling with a system that is unfair and unsustainable. The injustice of people battling to get care, on top of

battling the devastating effects of dementia can't go on."

The charity says the fund could help pay for itself by cutting the £400 million annual cost of emergency hospital admissions for dementia patients.

A spokeswoman for NHS England said: "There has been major progress on diagnosing dementia over the past few years, exceeding the goal set for the NHS. The NHS long-term plan prioritises further improvements in dementia care, with GPs being given additional support to spot the tell-tale signs of dementia and provide additional help."

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