

# Money for dementia spent on NHS 'other priorities'

*In March this year figures obtained under a Freedom of Information request revealed that most of the £150 million allocated to Primary Care Trusts for care for people with dementia was spent on meeting other 'local needs'. Almost £40 million of the first year's £50 million funding was soaked up by NHS deficits and bureaucracy.*

The £150 million was to fund the government's dementia strategy, which included respite breaks for elderly care-givers to prevent them reaching breaking point. Research by two charities, the Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Crossroads Care, showed that in 2009/10 less than a

quarter of the funds were spent as intended. Most PCTs spent just a fraction of the new funds on helping carers, while nine PCTs admitted that they did not spend a single penny of their allocation on such help.

Spent properly, the fund could have allowed 33,000 carers a three-hour break every week, or given 173,500 carers an annual week's holiday, according to the strategy's projections. What it means for caregivers themselves beggars description. The effects of long term caregiving for someone with dementia are equivalent to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, according to American psychiatrists, who refer to it as 'Caregiver syndrome'. When the caregivers are elderly spouses the

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Roy McGowan at work in the garden

## Fox inspection for spring gardens at Dorothea Court

Once spring arrived, occupants started getting the gardens in shape after the long winter. People could be seen in all the nooks and crannies of the gardens, weeding, planting and generally getting things ship shape. We had a visit from a fox who trotted through the gardens to inspect their work one midday! A newcomer to gardening, Roy McGowan decided to have a go at planting out a vegetable garden. He has been researching on the internet how to do it and has been rewarded by seeing a wonderful crop of potatoes and other veggies coming to life from the seeds he planted.

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stress is so great it takes an average of seven years off their lives.

A spokesman for the Department of Health said it was down to the local NHS to decide how to spend the money, in the light of local needs. The NHS Confederation PCT network, which represents the 150 PCTs, said the money had not been “ring-fenced” and that organisations had to balance their priorities. The charities say they believe the pattern will be repeated with the remaining £100 million funding allocated for 2010/11, following indications they have received from NHS primary care trusts (PCTs). According to a report published by an all-party parliamentary group, the lack of ring-fencing around the funding and the government’s failure to make the strategy a national priority for PCTs under the NHS framework meant there was no pressure on them to prioritise the dementia strategy.

Also in March this year, a National Council for Palliative Care survey found that 35% of PCTs could not identify where they had spent their share of £88m of funding to support the government’s end-of-life care strategy.

End-of-life care is clearly important to committed Christians who will be

looking more than ever for spiritual support and Christian care. According to Director of Housing and Care Services, Maureen Sim, at any one time some-thing like twenty ‘pilgrims’ will be receiving end of life care from Pilgrim Homes. They will include those in the final stages of dementia and will need extra resources in terms of care and staff training. Now a new practice is emerging where, in order to provide end-of-life care, Pilgrim Homes has to tender to contract with one PCT that has set a figure that is 20 percent below the real cost of care. Even completing the tender is a costly process, involving weeks of work costing around around £2,500 in personnel hours to work through the documents’ 700-odd pages. More worrying still, for some reason known only to itself, the PCT forbids ‘topping up’ by the individual or relatives.

The PCTs have made it clear where their priorities lay, and it seems that despite the last government’s attempt to end it, ageism still rules in the NHS. A comparison is with caring for a disabled younger person, where funding allows an hour to help them get up and dressed in the morning, but only 15 minutes is funded for an older person. Yet, despite the circumstances, we know that our God reigns, and He wants the best for His older saints.

**(Sources: Daily Telegraph, Alzheimers.org.uk, Guide-2-Care.)**