

How is the council coping with the elderly

by Councillor Paul Edie



Scotland is faced with steep rises in numbers of older people. A 20% increase in over 85s is projected over the next five years. This figure is significant because your prospects of becoming frail dramatically increase when you reach 85 years of age. The numbers of people with dementia also increases with age. About 20% of people aged over 85 can expect to have some form of dementia with the figure rising to about 30% of over 90s.

What are we doing to address this situation? This week, Edinburgh City Council's Health, Social Care and Housing Committee discussed the National Dementia Strategy. Over the years we have developed a number of services to help support people with dementia. The thrust of public policy at present is to try and support people in their own homes for as long as possible. This is because that is what people tell us they want but, in the main, it also makes financial sense. To that end, we have recently reformed our home care system making it more responsive to the needs of service users and we have invested heavily in telecare to make best use of technology to support people in their own homes . In the last three years we have increased day care provision in parts of the city where there were not adequate amounts of service and invested in respite services to allow carers a much needed break from the stresses of caring. We know that carer breakdown is one of the principal factors in avoidable admission to care homes.

For people whose situation has deteriorated to the extent that they can no longer be looked after in their own homes, we have

also built three new care homes and there is another currently being built. These have been designed to be dementia-friendly with small units, internal secure gardens and wandering routes.

As a politician faced with steep rises in the number of people needing our services and with budgets which are shrinking I can say that continuing to provide good quality services for everyone who needs them is going to be challenging. But playing a difficult hand as skilfully as you can is what being in power is all about.

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