

# The Contribution of Scotland's Allied Health Professionals to Post Diagnostic Support in Dementia – An Improvement Project

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## Background

Within Scotland there is a national commitment to improving post diagnostic support (Scottish Government 2013). This is also considered a priority area for the Allied Health Professionals (Scottish Government, 2013) and a piece of national scoping work was undertaken with five of the allied health professions (AHPs) including dietetics, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, podiatry and speech & language therapy in partnership with the Alzheimer Scotland Dementia Link Workers to enquire about the AHP contribution to post diagnostic support (Phase One).

A survey was completed with returns from 49 Alzheimer Scotland link workers and 147 allied health professionals in Scotland. What we found was some great post diagnostic work being delivered by allied health professionals however there was a desire and requirement for greater access to the rehabilitation skills of the allied health professionals during the post diagnostic stage of dementia

## What is important to you?

Integral to all of this work was to find out what was important to people living with dementia and their families. During Scotlands dementia awareness weeks we held range of 'AHP Blethers' in local communities providing an informal opportunity for the public to speak to us and for us to hear what is important to people living with dementia. (Hunter & Flannigan 2015). We were reminded of the importance of

- Relationships with family & friends
- Independence
- Engagement in valued activities
- Access to services when I need them
- Information to help me be independent
- Respected & treated with dignity



## Where now?

The national scoping exercise and the conversations with people living with dementia informed a piece of improvement work (Phase Two) with a focus on two initial aims

### 1. To increase understanding of the Allied Health Professional role in the Post Diagnostic Support period

In order to enable people to receive the right support at the right time to sustain personal resilience and the ability to live well with dementia.

### 2. To improve access to the AHP Services for the Dementia Link Workers for advice, assessment and interventions

To ensure the asset based approach of AHP Services across sectors is utilised effectively and consistently every time.

## Method

Project teams consisting of representation from each of the five AHP Services and the Alzheimer Scotland dementia link workers were established in two pilot sites, Dumfries & Galloway and Edinburgh. Areas for Improvement were agreed using Model for Improvement (Scottish Government 2020 Framework) and were as follows:

### 1. A Framework for Alzheimer Scotland Dementia Link Workers around areas where AHPs can contribute and how to access this.

This has been developed by the project teams and has been mapped to the 5 pillars (Alzheimer Scotland 2011) and "AHP Offer" ([www.alzscot.org/ahp](http://www.alzscot.org/ahp)).

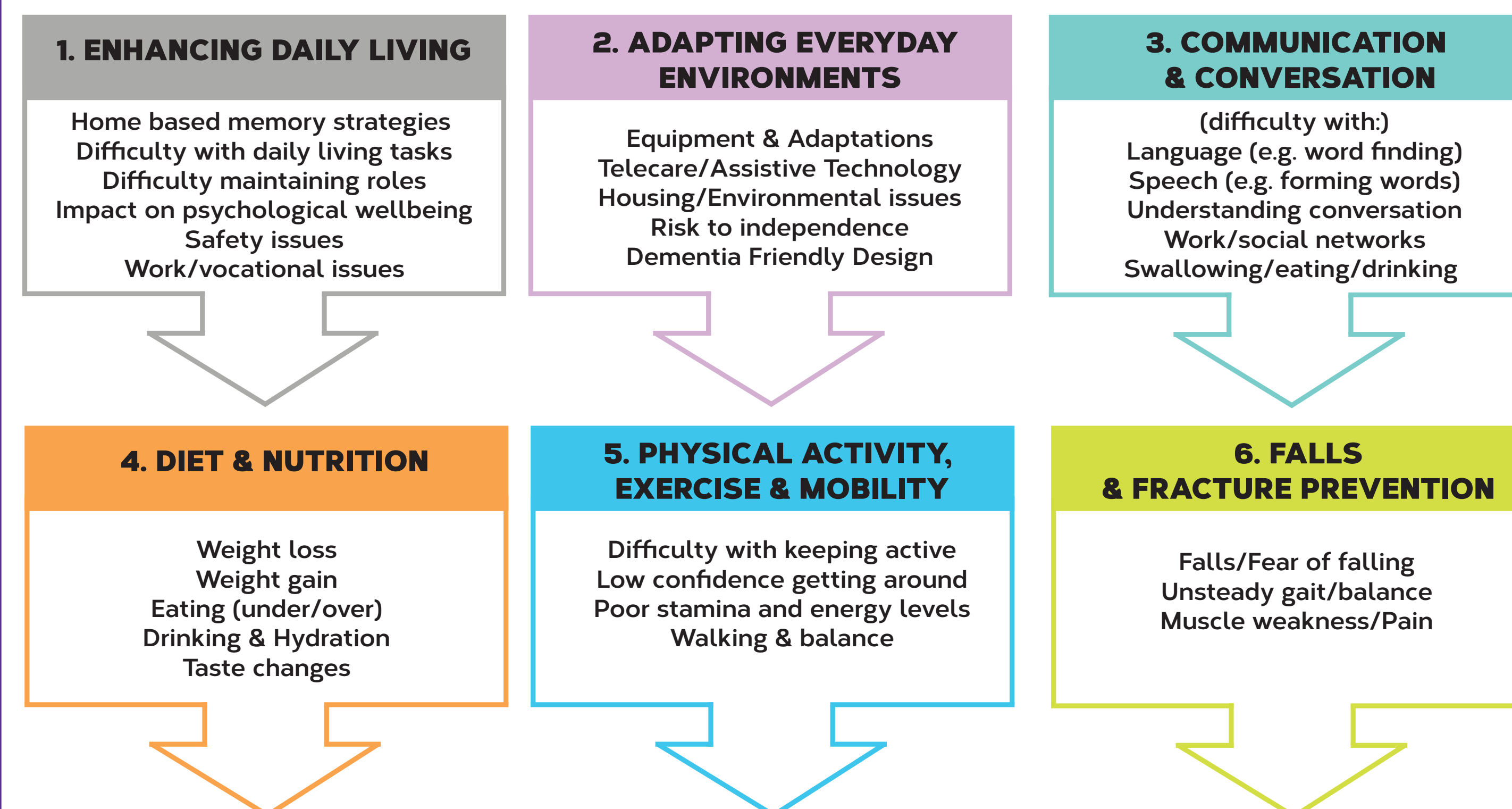
### 2. Accessible AHP related Self Management information the Alzheimer Scotland Dementia Link Workers can provide to people with dementia and carers

### 3. Increased understanding of roles for the Alzheimer Scotland Dementia Link Workers and the allied health professionals in Scotland



## Outcomes to date

Testing of the Framework using PDSA cycles is still in the early stages however data is being collected on how often the Alzheimer Scotland dementia link workers are accessing each of the AHP services. Data is also being collected on any self-management information provided for each AHP service. Initial findings are that the Framework has been well received. Outlined below is the draft framework.



Scoping of self management resources across Scotland has uncovered various levels of information in different formats. This has been collated onto an online platform for the Dementia Link Workers in the project teams

*"Having this platform enables link workers to access relevant information from one place which is not only time efficient, but also enables us to access self management information from a range of allied health professionals, which is something we have never had before. This also ensures that the information we provide people engaged with the post diagnostic support service is up to date and consistent across the post diagnostic support service."*

Project team members have increased their understanding of roles, and are sharing this within their wider teams. An example of this can be found on the Let's Talk About Dementia' Blog: [www.alzscot.org/elephant](http://www.alzscot.org/elephant)

## What Next

This project is only in the early stages but has demonstrated that bringing together a group of committed practitioners and sharing skills, integrating improvement methodology can support the transformation taking place in Scotland with regard to the contribution of allied health professionals to post diagnostic support.

We hope to take the learning from this work and build on it in our new AHP dementia policy in Scotland called Connecting People, Connecting Support which is due for publication this Autumn.

Stay Connected #AHPDementia

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