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**To: social affairs/health/finance editors**

## **Unpaid carers bear the true cost of dementia in Scotland.**

[Dementia 2010](#), the latest report from the Alzheimer's Research Trust, estimates that dementia currently costs in the region of £23 billion to the UK. However, much of this cost is hidden, born by countless unpaid carers supporting people with dementia at home. The number of people with dementia in the UK is estimated to be 821,884, representing 1.3% of the UK population: raising the number of people in Scotland with the illness to **73,000**. The report also highlights the significant disparity between the true cost of dementia and research spending allocated to it, particularly when compared to illnesses such as cancer, heart disease and stroke.

Rebecca Wood, Chief Executive of the Alzheimer's Research Trust, said, "The true impact of dementia – affecting 820,000 people throughout the UK and 73,000 in Scotland, costing us £23 billion per year – has been ignored for too long. The UK's dementia crisis is worse than we feared. This report shows that dementia is the greatest medical challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Sadly, combined government and charitable research spend on dementia is 12 times lower than that for cancer. As the general election approaches, political parties need to explain how they will increase dementia research funding and end years of neglect."

The breakdown of the £23 billion cost is startling. Health care only accounts for approximately 5%, while social care consumes 40%. The hours of care provided by those not paid - often spouses, children and other family members - accounts for 55%: £12.4 billion in total. A total which only tallies those hours at the rate of the current minimum wage. For every £1 million in care costs: £129,269 is spent on cancer research; £73,153 on heart disease research; £8,745 on stroke research and just £4,882 on dementia research.

Henry Simmons, Chief Executive of Alzheimer Scotland, said, "We greatly support this work by the Alzheimer's Research Trust. The *Dementia 2010* report makes for difficult but unsurprising reading. Unpaid carers provide an incredible amount of support, both to people with dementia and to the economy, which is hugely to their credit. Indeed, by saving the state some £12 billion per year, it is impossible to see how we would cope without the help that they provide. That is why it is vital that we provide appropriate and flexible support to those

carers, and future carers, from the point of diagnosis onwards.”

“Alzheimer Scotland believes that no-one should feel that they have to cope with dementia on their own. We have called upon the Scottish Government to provide a Change Fund of £15 million per year over the next 5 years, to assist local authorities and NHS boards to unlock and redirect resources into early intervention and personalised support for people with dementia and their carers. This includes a strategic commitment to delivering specialist support for people with dementia and their carers, including home care, overnight care at home, flexible and regular short-breaks. Regard for the health and well being of carers is vital. People with dementia and their carers must be given greater control over the support that they receive.”

**ENDS**

### **Contact Details**

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### **Note for Editor:**

Dementia affects 73,000 people in Scotland.

Alzheimer’s disease is the main form of dementia. The second most common is vascular dementia. As yet there is no cure.

Alzheimer Scotland’s manifesto, ‘Words into Action on Dementia’, which calls for the £15 million Change Fund can be read here - <http://www.alzscot.org/pages/policy/dementia-manifesto.htm>

**Alzheimer Scotland** is Scotland’s foremost voluntary organisation working for people with dementia and their carers. It:

- 1 speaks out for the rights and concerns of people with dementia and their carers;
- 2 operates services on over 60 sites throughout Scotland providing practical services such as day, evening and weekend centres, home care and befriending and carers’ support services;
- 3 provides the 24 hour national freephone Dementia Helpline **(0808 808 3000)**;
- 4 provides the website **www.alzscot.org**;
- 5 supports a network of over 40 carers’ support groups;
- 6 provides information to carers, professionals and people with dementia;
- 7 publishes leaflets, booklets, reports and a quarterly newsletter keeping carers and professionals up-to-date
- 8 has a research programme.

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