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**RTPI
Practice
Advice**

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DEMENTIA AND TOWN PLANNING

Creating better environments for people living
with dementia

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Introduction

How spatial planning can create better environments for people living with dementia

There are currently 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK. This is set to increase to 1 million by 2021 and to 2 million by 2051.¹ Evidence has shown that good quality housing and well-planned, enabling local environments can have a substantial impact on the quality of life of someone living with dementia, helping them to live well for longer and of course, town planning has a key role to play if health and social care policies are to succeed. If you get an area right for people with dementia, you get it right for older people, for young disabled people, for families with small children, and ultimately for everyone.

This practice note gives advice on how good planning can create better environments for people living with dementia. It summarises expert advice, outlines key planning and health policy and highlights good practice case studies. The policy context applies to England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland - the principles of good practice are applicable wherever you work. Alzheimer's Society has a wealth of information available www.alzheimers.org.uk.

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¹ Alzheimer's Society www.alzheimers.org.uk or www.alzscot.org

1. Dementia - impacts and equality

What is dementia?

Dementia refers to a set of symptoms that may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem solving or language. However a person living with dementia may also experience changes in their mood or behaviour. Dementia can also exacerbate the effects of physical impairments and sensory challenges of the disease are becoming more understood. Dementia is an umbrella term and is caused when the brain is damaged by diseases, such as Alzheimer's or a series of strokes. All types of dementia are progressive and each person will experience dementia in their own way. Whilst dementia is most common in older people, some people experience young-onset dementia.

Prevalence of dementia

Alzheimer's Society published information on the number of people with dementia in each local authority across the UK in 2013.² As you would expect the areas with the highest rates of dementia tend to be those with a high proportion of older people, often in rural and coastal areas. However, a House of Commons Library briefing³ has calculated an age-standardised prevalence for all parliamentary constituencies (if each constituency had an age structure in line with the English average) which shows higher rates of diagnosis in some urban areas of North West England than in other parts of the country. Alzheimer Scotland have more up to date results for Scotland and calculated the dementia rates for each local authority area in 2016.⁴ Two-thirds of people who have dementia are women.

Impact of dementia

The estimated cost of dementia to the UK economy is £26 billion a year,⁵ with an estimated 25 percent of all hospital beds occupied by people with dementia in 2013.⁶ People with dementia are going into residential care homes earlier, because their own homes are not designed to enable them to live independently and can be difficult to adapt to meet their needs. This is despite most

² www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=2496

³ <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN07007#fullreport>

⁴ www.alzscot.org/campaigning/statistics

⁵ www.alzheimers.org.uk/infographic

⁶ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/262139/Dementia.pdf

people with dementia saying they would prefer to stay in their own home for as long as possible.⁷ Staying in familiar surroundings with the right support can help people living with dementia continue to lead an active and independent life for longer. It also reduces the costs for health and social care. Ninety-five percent of the national housing stock is not fully accessible for older people and there are considerable challenges to retrofitting the existing stock to allow people to live independently as they age.⁸

Impact of the local environment

It is vital that people with dementia stay as active as they can - physically, mentally and socially. People with dementia need meaningful activities they enjoy, which can maintain their confidence. However, a survey by Alzheimer's Society found that 35 percent of people with dementia said they only go out once a week or less and 10 percent said once a month or less.⁹ The local environment is a fundamental factor contributing to the quality of life of older people, it can either be enabling or disabling. Having access to amenities like local shops, doctors, post offices and banks within easy, safe and comfortable walking distances contributes to people with dementia being able to live independent and fulfilling lives for longer. An increasing number of people living with dementia are employed, so this is also an issue for many employers. Access to green space and nature has particular benefits for people with dementia, including better mood, memory and communication and improved concentration. It is also important to consider the significant role that consistency and familiarity plays in giving people confidence and helping them to feel safe.

Clearly careful consideration should be given to the design and location of housing for older people; whether this is mainstream housing, bungalows, step free apartments, sheltered housing, extra care, retirement or residential care homes. If it is located in community hubs within a 5-10 minute walk of local shops and services,¹⁰ this will again allow people living with dementia the ability to live well and remain independent for longer. Research by Age UK Brighton and Hove with the University of Brighton has found that the design of homes, blocks of flats and sheltered housing is not always conducive to encouraging public interaction.¹¹

The location of extra care housing also has implications for the resident's family and carers. Edge of town development, badly served by public transport can cause issues for staff who are often low paid and can work unsociable hours. All the things that planners try to provide in well planned places are particularly important for people living with dementia.

⁷ www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/news_article.php?newsID=2065

⁸ www.insidehousing.co.uk/journals/2014/10/24/k/h/a/for-future-living_Oct2014.pdf

⁹ www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?downloadID=1236

¹⁰ www.idgo.ac.uk/about_idgo/docs/NfL-FL.pdf

¹¹ www.brighton.ac.uk/ssparc/research-projects/older-people-wellbeing-and-participation.aspx

Equality

Age, disability and gender are protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 in England, Wales and Scotland. The Act is supported by the Public Sector Equality Duty¹² which requires public authorities to promote equality amongst people from protected groups by: removing or minimising disadvantages; taking steps to meet their needs where they are different from the needs of other people; and encouraging participation in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low. The aim of the duty is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the day-to-day business of public authorities. In Northern Ireland there are similar legal protections and responsibilities for public authorities.¹³ Given the complex needs of people living with dementia the provision of housing, planning and other services need to be carefully considered within the context of equality legislation.

2. Dementia Friendly Communities

In 2013 Alzheimer's Society and Dementia Action Alliance launched a recognition process¹⁴ which enables communities to be publically acknowledged for their work towards becoming dementia friendly, by ensuring the right local structure is in place, focusing plans on a number of locally identified areas and developing a strong voice for people with dementia. Ten characteristics of a dementia friendly community were identified. They include: shaping communities around the views of people with dementia and their carers, appropriate transport, and easy to navigate physical environments. The scheme has demonstrated that small changes can make a big difference. There are currently over 215 registered communities working to become dementia friendly. 'BSI PAS1365: A code of practice for dementia-friendly communities'¹⁵ provides more detailed guidance and structure around what 'dementia-friendly' looks like and what the key areas for action are in working to achieve a dementia-friendly community. There is a role for planners to ensure that their work complements and assists area's aiming to become dementia friendly.

¹² www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty

¹³ www.equalityni.org/Footer-Links/Legislation

¹⁴ www.alzheimers.org.uk/dementiafriendlycommunities

¹⁵ <http://shop.bsigroup.com/forms/PASs/PAS-1365-2015/>

Dementia Friendly East Lothian¹⁶ (DFEL) takes a community development approach to building dementia friendly communities, putting the experience of people living with dementia at the forefront. Local authorities, health boards and other public bodies have a major role in realising the vision. The approach is based on assets based community development, in which 'the community is rich in resources from goods and services to social networks; it is where normal life happens..... if we want to support people to have a quality of life, live independently and age in place, it is to the community we must look'. The role of planning in creating the right type of communities has been recognised in East Lothian, but not fully realised. A well-designed high street, housing development or transport network that supports inclusive and active travel and community space makes a significant contribution to staying active and connected. These are good places for everyone, including people with dementia.

3. Improving the local environment

Planners have a significant impact on the accessibility of the built environment for people living with dementia through their role in the design and maintenance of public spaces and in the decisions and policies they make for an area. Planners should involve people with dementia on advising on new developments. Taking the opportunity to 'walk the patch' - spending time with people with dementia in their local area is a powerful way of understanding the issues they face and ensuring that places are designed in an inclusive way.

In Bradford the Face it Together group (FIT) is wholly led by people with dementia. They have provided feedback on signage and accessibility, advised on a hospital refurbishment and planning the Westfield Shopping Centre. The Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project (DEEP) has published a guide on involving people with dementia as members of steering or advisory groups.¹⁷

Orientation and familiarity both contribute to an accessible environment for people with dementia, as does a reduction in unnecessary clutter and potentially disorienting visual and auditory stimuli.

¹⁶ <http://dfel.org.uk/>

¹⁷ <http://dementiavoices.org.uk/2016/03/involving-people-with-dementia-as-members-of-steering-or-advisory-groups/>

Planners should consult people with dementia, asking them to explain how they make decisions about where to go and how clearly they understand the environment. Unsurprisingly, environments that are viewed by people with dementia as accessible also tend to be easier to navigate and more pleasant for everyone.

Walkability Assessment for Healthy Ageing¹⁸ was a pilot study conducted in 2014 as part of Belfast's successful application to become a World Health Organization (WHO) age-friendly city. It developed an assessment tool to gauge how accessible the built environment is for older people. It demonstrates a way of engaging with older people to gain their opinions and use their experience to assess the walking environment in their area. As part of the pilot eight walks were conducted, which included two groups of residents living with dementia in supported housing. The report includes useful age-friendly walkability assessment questionnaires for parks and local streets and pavements.

Councils and other public bodies could conduct an audit of their customer facing premises to ensure that they are as accessible as possible to people with dementia. Innovations in Dementia have a basic audit tool for assessing how to make buildings easier for people with dementia.¹⁹ There are also opportunities to become involved in Dementia Friendly Communities.

Age UK Enfield worked with Enfield Council to explore the potential for their Dementia Hub in Edmonton, North London. A workshop explored the current use of the building and how it can be improved to support a hub for dementia advice and services. It brought together diverse perspectives including Age UK staff, an occupational therapist, service users and carers.²⁰

¹⁸ www.belfasthealthycities.com/news/walkability-assessment-healthy-ageing-report-assesses-accessibility-older-people-city

¹⁹ www.innovationsindementia.org.uk/HowToDoAnAudit.pdf

²⁰ www.theglasshouse.org.uk/project/designing-for-dementia-with-age-uk-enfield/#1470145920510-2a5e01a7-6b6ae435-0b97

4. Urban design

Good urban design is essential for improving the ability of people living with dementia to live well:²¹

- **Familiar environment** - functions of places and buildings are obvious, any changes are small scale and incremental;
- **Legible environment** - a hierarchy of street types, which are short and fairly narrow. Clear signs at decision points;
- **Distinctive environment** - a variety of landmarks, with architectural features in a variety of styles and materials. There is a variety of practical features, e.g. trees and street furniture;
- **Accessible environment** - land uses are mixed with shops and services within a 5-10 minute walk from housing. Entrances to places are obvious and easy to use and conform to disabled access regulations;
- **Comfortable environment** - open space is well defined with toilets, seating, shelter and good lighting. Background and traffic noise should be minimised through planting and fencing. Street clutter is minimal to not impede walking or distract attention;
- **Safe environment** - footpaths are wide, flat and non-slip, development is orientated to avoid creating dark shadows or bright glare.

The Place Standard²² is a tool developed by the Scottish Government, NHS Health Scotland and Architecture and Design Scotland. It is designed to help people talk about how they feel about their place. It is being used by local authorities as a framework for consultation on development, however it could easily be used by people with dementia and their carers to evaluate their local environment.

²¹ Adapted from Neighbourhoods for Life: Designing dementia-friendly outdoor environments

www.idgo.ac.uk/about_idgo/docs/NfL-FL.pdf

²² www.placestandard.scot/#

5. Housing design

Good, carefully considered design is even more important inside the home, whether this is a family home, extra care housing, residential care or nursing care. Often small changes can be enough to help someone living with dementia to be more independent by providing an environment that is clearly defined, easy to navigate, and feels safe. Whilst the internal layout of buildings is usually beyond the scope of the role of planners, it is still worth being aware of the key principles of good design, which include:²³

- **Safe environment** – avoid trip hazards, provide handrails and good lighting;
- **Visual clues** – clear signage, sightlines and routes around the building; Clearly defined rooms – so the activities that take place there can be easily understood;
- **Interior design** – avoid reflective surfaces and confusing patterns. Use age and culturally appropriate designs;
- **Noise** – reduce noise through location of activities and soundproofing. Provide quiet areas as people with dementia can be hyper-sensitive to noise;
- **Natural light or stronger artificial light** – many people with dementia have visual impairment or problems interpreting what they see;
- **Outside space** – access to safe outside space, with good views from inside the building as daily exposure to daylight improves health.

These features of good design reflect the Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI)²⁴ principles, which are based on ten key design criteria. Many are recognisable from good design generally, but they have particular relevance to older persons' housing which needs to be able to adapt over time to meet changing needs.

There are a number of checklists and audit tools available to help assess the appropriateness of accommodation for people living with dementia. The England 2015 Building Regulations M4 (2) 'accessible, adaptable dwellings'²⁵ now incorporates the majority of the Lifetime Homes Standard.²⁶ It is a requirement in Wales and Northern Ireland for new publicly funded homes to comply with the Standard. The University of Stirling Dementia Services Development Centre offers an audit service, which leads to an independent certification.

²³ This list is not exhaustive and has been adapted from <http://dementia.stir.ac.uk/design/good-practice-design-dementia-and-sight-loss>

²⁴ www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design_building/HAPPI/

²⁵ www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-and-use-of-buildings-approved-document-m

²⁶ www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/pages/about-us.html

Limewood, in the town of Stafford has been independently audited by the University of Stirling and accredited with a gold award for its design. It is a specialist dementia care home with 59 bedrooms. It includes an innovative dementia hub; the High Street - a 1950s internal street scene with a pub, cinema based on the local Stafford Picture house, and a hairdressers and barbers. It was built by The Wrekin Housing Trust, in partnership with Staffordshire County Council and Galliford Try.²⁷

A more ambitious development that is internationally recognised as best practice in dementia care is in the Netherlands.

Opened in 2009, Hogeweyk,²⁸ Netherlands is a specially designed village with 23 houses for 152 people living with dementia. The residents all need nursing home facilities and live in houses differentiated by lifestyle. Hogeweyk offers seven different lifestyles: Goois (upper class), homey, Christian, artisan, Indonesian and cultural. The residents manage their own households, together with a stable team of staff members. The village has streets, squares, gardens and a park where the residents move around independently, but in a safe environment. Just like any other village Hogeweyk offers a selection of facilities, like a restaurant, supermarket and a theatre. These facilities can be used by both Hogeweyk residents and people from the surrounding area.

6. Planning and health policy

England

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in England²⁹ recognises that the “planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities” (Section 8). It also states, “local planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community”. The supporting National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) goes on to say, “the

²⁷ <http://dementia.stir.ac.uk/design/audit-and-accreditation/award-winning-buildings>

²⁸ <http://hogeweyk.dementiavillage.com/en/>

²⁹ <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/>

need to provide housing for older people is critical given the projected increase in the households aged 65 and over Plan makers will need to consider the size, location and quality of dwellings needed in the future for older people”.

The Health and Social Care Act (2012) required the creation of Health and Wellbeing Boards³⁰ to plan how to best meet the needs of the local population. Local public health services are now commissioned by local authorities, giving greater opportunity for integration across different departments.

Scotland

Scottish Planning Policy states that “the planning system should identify a generous supply of land for each housing market area...maintaining at least a five year supply of effective housing land at all times”. It should be informed by a robust housing need and demand assessment (HNDA). As part of the HNDA, “local authorities are required to consider the need for specialist provision that covers accessible and adapted housing, wheelchair housing and supported accommodation, including care homes and sheltered housing. This supports independent living for elderly people and those with a disability. Where a need is identified, planning authorities should prepare policies to support the delivery of appropriate housing and consider allocating specific sites”. The HNDA should include a detailed survey and analysis of older people, their housing tenure, population projections and a breakdown of older people’s disabilities including those with dementia. One of the priority proposals in the draft Scotland National Dementia Strategy 2016-19³¹ is to work collaboratively with Integrated Joint Boards to support locality planning giving attention to the broader housing and accommodation needs of people with dementia; and to supporting social inclusion including issues around transport.

Wales

Planning Policy in Wales³² seeks to ensure that “new housing and residential environments are well designed..... and make a significant contribution to promoting community regeneration and improving the quality of life”. It states that “local authorities should promote ‘barrier-free’ housing developments, for example built to Lifetime Homes standards”.

Local authorities should adopt a corporate approach, involving housing and planning representatives in the public and private sectors, and their communities in preparing and co-

³⁰ www.local.gov.uk/health/-/journal_content/56/10180/3510973/ARTICLE

³¹ www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Services/Mental-Health/Dementia/March

³² <http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/ppw/?lang=en>

ordinating development plans and local housing strategies.

Technical Advice Note 12: Design,³³ promotes ‘The needs of disabled people, children and older people should be given particular attention and in the interests of inclusive design should be considered at the outset’.

Well-being of Future Generations Act³⁴ is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales through working towards seven interconnected, sustainable, well-being goals, including a healthier Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities. The Act requires public bodies to make sure that they take account of the impact they could have on people living in Wales in the future, including older people and people with disabilities.

Northern Ireland

Improving health and wellbeing is one of the core planning principles of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS).³⁵ It calls for local authorities to ‘contribute positively to health and well-being through safeguarding and facilitating quality open space, sport and outdoor recreation; providing for safe and secure age-friendly environments; and supporting the delivery of homes to meet the full range of housing needs, contributing to balanced communities’.

7. Local authority policy

Many local authorities now make provision for healthy living and liveability, however in adopted plans there is so far little specific mention of dementia.

Delivering a healthy city is a strategic objective of The Plymouth Plan 2011-2031. Policy 8: Addressing health inequalities and supporting healthy lifestyles,³⁶ includes an ambition to become a dementia friendly city in recognition of the fact that over 3,130 over-65s were living with dementia in 2014, a number that is predicted to increase to 4,850 by 2030. The Plymouth Plan Area Assessments and their

³³ <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160504-technical-advice-note-12-en.pdf>

³⁴ <http://thewaleswewant.co.uk/about/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015>

³⁵ www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/spps.htm

³⁶ www.theplymouthplan.co.uk/policy/so-4/p-8

subsequent updates will assess whether Plymouth's communities have access to the services they require, including enabling people with dementia to be able to live as normal a life as possible by ensuring that their needs are considered in all walks of life.

Worcestershire County Council is leading by developing a draft Planning for Health Supplementary Planning Document that covers age-friendly environments and dementia.

The Strategic Planning team and Directorate of Public Health at Worcestershire County Council and representatives from the planning teams from the three South Worcestershire Councils (Malvern Hills, Wychavon and Worcester City) have drafted and circulated for consultation a Planning for Health Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This draft SPD aims to provide guidance when planning for and creating healthier developments. Separate sections dedicated to 'age friendly environments and dementia' give specific urban design advice to create local areas that meet the needs of people living with dementia. The SPD was initiated by the councils' cooperation on the technical research paper 'Planning for Health in Worcestershire'³⁷ and associated workshops that considered how the health challenges in the county might be tackled jointly through the planning system and public health.

8. Partnership working

Planning needs to be integrated and effective partnerships need to be developed with care and service providers including social care; housing providers; health and well-being boards; NHS Trusts; and public health authorities. Health and well-being boards are responsible for encouraging integrated working on health and wellbeing issues, including the development of Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies (JHWS), and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA). The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) recommends that local authorities identify a single point of contact for older people's housing. One new approach is the 'Healthy New Towns'³⁸ initiative, where the NHS in England is working with ten housing developments to rethink how health and care services can be

³⁷ www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20015/planning_policy_and_strategy

³⁸ www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/innovation/healthy-new-towns/

delivered and the health of communities can be improved through the built environment.

The Brighton and Hove City Council Housing Strategy 2015³⁹ is a key chapter of the Community Strategy and a fundamental piece of evidence to support the City Plan and Local Housing Investment Plan. With a projected significant increase in the number of older people in the city the strategy includes policies to remodel sheltered housing to ensure that it supports the right people and improves social networks and wellbeing. The strategy also aims to ensure that adaptations are done at the right time to support people to stay in their homes when they want to, and - most significantly - ensure that new developments are built to 'dementia friendly' standards.

In Angus, Scotland a small rural project is proving very successful, with partners working collaboratively to achieve greater collaborative delivery of outcomes which are beneficial to the whole community.

Angus Council is working in partnership with Historic Environment Scotland to fund a five year Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme to enhance the appearance of Kirriemuir Conservation Area. During this time, a conservation area appraisal and management plan was produced to analyse the area's special character and a programme of works was undertaken to improve the built fabric and public realm. The regeneration scheme sits alongside work being undertaken by the Dementia Friendly Kirriemuir Project, a three-year programme funded by the Life Changes Trust. The Council gave planning permission for a change of use and approved the lease of derelict land in Kirriemuir to develop a dementia friendly garden with a rent of £1.00 per year. The garden will be a safe, friendly, outdoor space that people living with dementia, their carers and family, as well as members of the local community can enjoy and help to maintain. These projects have also reduced clutter within the public realm and provide a sympathetic approach to meeting the needs of both the historic built environment and those living in the area, particularly people living with dementia.

³⁹ www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-strategy-2015

9. Further information

RTPI policy and research

- Future Proofing Society www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1025151/rtpi_planning_horizons_2_future-proofing_society_june_2014.pdf
- Promoting Healthy Cities www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1119385/rtpi_promoting_healthy_cities.pdf

Information and advice

- Alzheimer's Society www.alzheimers.org.uk
- Alzheimer Scotland www.alzscot.org
- Dementia friendly communities: guidance for councils, Local Government Association and Innovations in Dementia. www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/7058797/L15-238+Dementia+friendly+communities+guidance+for+councils/7acaa658-329e-4aa1-bdff-ef6a286dd373
- PAS1365 Code of Practice for Dementia-Friendly Communities. British Standards Institution. www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=2136
- BS 8300 Code of Practice: Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people <http://shop.bsigroup.com/ProductDetail/?pid=00000000030217421>
- Local dementia prevalence data by local authority, clinical commissioning group and parliamentary constituency have been compiled by Alzheimer's Society www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=2496
- Planning for older people's housing: the shock of the new – Planning Advisory Service www.pas.gov.uk/2721/-/journal_content/56/332612/7501554/ARTICLE
- Designing dementia-friendly outdoor environments, Oxford Brookes University www.idgo.ac.uk/about_idgo/docs/NfL-FL.pdf
- DEEP – Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project <http://dementiavoices.org.uk/>
- Innovations in Housing and Dementia, Housing LIN www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingandDementia/
- How to do an access audit: making buildings easier for people with dementia, Innovations in Dementia www.innovationsindementia.org.uk/HowToDoAnAudit.pdf
- Dementia Services Development Centre <http://dementia.stir.ac.uk/>
- Wandering in Familiar Places www.wanderinginfamiliarspaces.com/
- Dementia and Sensory Challenges www.lifechangestrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/Leaflet.pdf



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The Orders of St John Care Trust

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