

# Policy Brief

May 2017

## Palliative care need projected to rise by 42% in the next 25 years



### Key findings

- We undertook a study of palliative care need for the population of England and Wales, and projected this forward 25 years using official mortality forecasts.
- Our projections show that if recent trends in mortality continue, the number of people who may have palliative care needs will grow **out of proportion** to changes in population demographics in the next 25 years, meaning that **approximately 160,000 (42%)** more people per year will need palliative care.
- Deaths from dementia will almost **quadruple** if recent trends continue, with cancer deaths also projected to rise.

### Policy recommendations

- Palliative and end of life care services must adapt **now** in order to meet projected changes in need.
- To deliver the high quality personalised care which people prioritise at the end of life, more resources must be available for those living with advanced disease, and those approaching the end of life.

### Why is this research important?

Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life for patients and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness<sup>1</sup>. Need for palliative care can be estimated at a population level, based on the number of people dying from specific chronic diseases<sup>2</sup>.

Currently about 370,000 people per year need palliative care. However we know little about how palliative care need may change over the coming years, though demographic changes suggest palliative care need will rise.

### What did we do?

In this study, we calculated an estimate of palliative care need for the population of England and Wales, and applied this estimate to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) mortality projections for the next 25 years.<sup>3</sup> This produced an age and sex specific estimate of population palliative care need up to 2040.

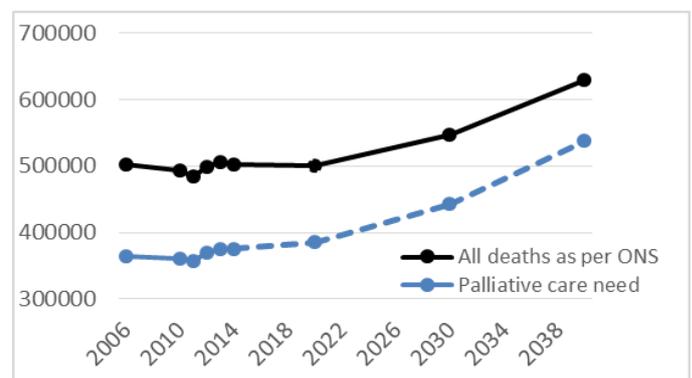
For our main projection, we calculated annual change in palliative care need from 2006 to 2014, and projected this annual change onto mortality forecasts.

### What did we find?

According to ONS projections, 25% more people will die each year by 2040 due to population changes.

We found that palliative care need will rise by much more than this. In our main projections, we found that between 42% and 47% more people each year will have palliative care needs by 2040, due to increases in chronic disease.

This amounts to an increase in need of at least 160,000 people per year by 2040.



When we looked at disease groups, we found that if recent trends continue, dementia deaths will almost quadruple by 2040.

## Policy Recommendations



The number of people who are likely to need palliative care will grow out of proportion to changes in population demographics in the next 25 years, and so there is an **urgent need** to transform health, social, and palliative care services to meet this projected growth.



Palliative care services need **greatly increased resources** over the next two decades to deal with this rising need.



Healthcare services must adapt now to meet these projected increased needs. All sectors should put greater focus on the **needs and preferences** of people at the end of life, particularly those dying from chronic and complex illnesses, such as dementia.



Specialist and non-specialist services need to be prepared to care for people for a longer duration as conditions with a **longer illness course** become more common.

### References

1. World Health Organisation Definition of Palliative Care. World Health Organisation; 2011
2. Murtagh FE, Bausewein C, Verne J, Groeneveld EI, Kaloki YE and Higginson IJ. How many people need palliative care? A study developing and comparing methods for population-based estimates. *Palliative medicine*. 2014; 28: 49-58.
3. National Population Projections, 2014-based Statistical Bulletin. Office of National Statistics; 2015.

*Note: The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of our funders.*

### Please reference the review as:

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