Jersey Care Commission

Beyond the Hospital: **Strengthening Jersey's Community Care**

Chief Inspector of the Jersey Care Commission

The Jersey Care Commission regulates and inspects care services for adults and children delivered by the Government of Jersey, Parishes, private providers, and the voluntary sector. Through more than 115 inspections each year, the Commission holds a unique vantage point: observing, inspecting and evaluating care across the entire system. Through regulatory engagement, the Commission gains insight into the experience of providers, care workers, families, and people receiving care. This engagement informs our assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, and emerging risks across Jersey's social care system today. that informs our assessment of strengths, weaknesses, and emerging risks across the state of Jersey's social care today.

It is now over three years since the Jersey Care Commission published its opinion paper ***Addressing challenges and risks in social care (2022)***. That report highlighted key risks with the potential to impact outcomes and quality of care:

1. Continuing care staff vacancies
2. Increasing demand on local care services
3. Reports from care providers that workforce shortages are resulting in a decrease in the care market's capacity and capability to respond to growing demands. Workforce shortages impacted the sector's capacity and capability. These risks remain. Yet public concerns about healthcare often focus heavily on the Jersey General Hospital, staffing challenges, service availability and waiting times. While these issues are real and significant, hospital care represents only a fraction of the total care delivered across the island. Most care takes place in homes, care homes and community settings, where many of Jersey's most vulnerable residents rely on everyday support to maintain dignity, independence and wellbeing.

These community services form the essential foundation of Jersey's health and social care system, yet they are frequently undervalued in public debate and policy decisions. Each part of the system is vital. This paper outlines the risks that remain in social care and the practical steps needed to address them.

A Changing Island with Growing Needs

Jersey's demographic pressures are accelerating. With the population now estimated at 104,540, the number of residents aged 65 and over increased by 12% in the past year alone. The old-age dependency ratio has risen from 23.1% in 2014 to 30.1% in 2024.

For the Commission, these figures directly reflect the pressures observed through inspection and registration activity. Every review, every complaint and every regulatory intervention demonstrates that community and social care providers are supporting people with increasingly complex needs at increasing scale.

A resilient social care sector is essential not only for individual wellbeing but also for the sustainability of the whole health system. When community care is under-supported or under-resourced, the impact is immediate:

- Hospital admissions rise
- Discharges are delayed
- Costs continue to escalate for the public purse

Quality, Safety, and the Role of Regulation

Since formal regulation was introduced in 2019, Jersey's care sector has shown resilience and a strong commitment to improvement. Regulation has created a safer, more consistent framework that supports providers and protects the public. Through inspections, investigations and ongoing engagement, the Commission sees daily how much care workers contribute, often quietly and without recognition.

However, our regulatory findings also highlight areas of vulnerability. People are particularly at risk when inviting a carer into their home. With an estimated 1,600 islanders living with dementia and more than 14,000 experiencing multi-morbidity, the importance of regulated care; police checks, training, accountability, oversight cannot be overstated. Public Health Jersey reports that 33,080 individuals are registered with at least one long-term condition and 14,195 (around 14%) live with two or more chronic conditions.

These figures reinforce the continued need for modern regulation, which is future focused, and ensures consistent standards and public confidence.

Dementia: A Growing and Urgent Priority

The recently published Dementia Strategy for Jersey (2024–2029) projects a 52% increase in dementia cases by 2043, underscoring the scale of the challenge ahead. The Commission warmly welcomes the Government's Joined Up Public Infrastructure Framework for an Ageing Population, a forward looking initiative due by January 2026 that aims to embed age friendly planning across Jersey's town centres, public spaces, transport networks, and neighbourhoods.

As of the end of 2024:

895
islanders on the GP dementia register

Average age
82

63%
were woman

Of all deaths, dementia accounted for
10%

Our inspections regularly observe the increasing complexity of dementia related care. Jersey urgently needs more specialist services, therapeutically designed environments, and a workforce equipped with enhanced skills.

These priorities align closely with the Case for Prevention set out in the Annual Director of Public Health Report 2024, which emphasises proactive measures to reduce future health pressures and improve quality of life. By combining infrastructure planning, preventive strategies, and expanded specialist capacity, Jersey can create a system that supports dignity, independence, and wellbeing in later life.

Workforce: The Foundation of Everything

Workforce capacity remains one of the most significant challenges to quality and safety. Vacancy rates and turnover across social care remain high, with smaller providers struggling most to recruit and retain staff.

Although Government of Jersey health and care employment increased by 4.6% in 2024, growth in one part of the system does not automatically create system resilience. Without coordinated, island-wide workforce planning, Jersey risks fragmented development that does not meet rising need.

The island currently has 1,335 regulated beds across elderly care, mental health respite, and disability services. However, our inspections demonstrate that without the right number of trained staff, bed numbers alone are misleading. Providers cannot plan confidently for the future without clarity on workforce sustainability, pay structures, training access, and career pathways.

Implications for Government and System Leaders

Drawing on regulatory evidence and sector engagement, the Commission has identified the following key priority areas requiring continued strategic planning and delivery by government, private and voluntary sector partners:

1. **The Right Bed Numbers and the Right Bed Mix**

   Using demographic and health data to model the future need for residential, nursing, respite, dementia, and specialist beds. Develop a long-term island-wide plan that ensures capacity and adaptability across all care settings.

2. **An Island-wide Workforce Strategy**

   Develop and implement a comprehensive Island wide workforce plan covering recruitment, training, continuing professional development, and structured career pathways. Prioritise advanced dementia training and specialist competencies.

3. **Expand Dementia Capacity and Specialist Support**

   Increase dementia-friendly beds, support therapeutic design in care homes and continue to grow specialist community services that enable people to remain safely at home for longer.

4. **Embed Technology to Support Safe, Effective Care at Home**

   Promote and invest in digital monitoring, assistive technology and tools that enhance independence. Establish a publicly accessible “technology showcase home” to increase awareness and early adoption.

5. **Use Data to Drive Future Planning**

   Utilise population and epidemiological data to predict system needs over 1, 5, and 10 years. Support evidence-based planning for future bed capacity, service models and workforce requirements.

The Commission's Commitment Going Forward

Recognising the increasing pressures facing Jersey's care system, the Commission will continue to develop our regulatory approach to support improvements in the quality and resilience of care provided:

- We will ensure that settings supporting people living with dementia and those receiving complex care at home, ensuring dignity, safety, and compassion remain central to our work.
- We will modernise our adult care standards, with a focus on person-centred care, innovation, dementia-capable environments and appropriate use of technology.
- We will expand our engagement with islanders receiving care, families, carers and frontline care workers to ensure lived experience shapes regulatory judgements and priorities.
- We will work with Dementia Jersey and sector partners to embed best practice for staff, with a particular focus on staff competencies (including dementia training and complex care skills), development and career progression.

Conclusion

While the hospital often dominates public attention and political debate, the Commission's experience makes clear that the greatest volume of care and many of the greatest pressures exist outside Jersey General Hospital walls. Social care is a cornerstone of Jersey's health and stability. The Commission's regulatory oversight provides a clear, evidence based picture of a sector that is dedicated and resilient, but under strain.

We welcome the Government's joined Up Public Infrastructure Framework for an Ageing Population and the emphasis on prevention in the Annual Director of Public Health Report 2024 as well as Jerseys Dementia Strategy (2024-2029). These forward looking strategies complement our recommendations by promoting age friendly environments and proactive health measures, ensuring that care and infrastructure work together to support dignity, independence, and wellbeing in later life. By embedding preventive approaches alongside infrastructure planning and workforce development, Jersey can reduce future health pressures and create a system that is robust, compassionate and future ready one capable of meeting the needs of today's population and generations to come.

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