Dementia Post-diagnostic Support in Primary Care

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Introduction

Focus on Dementia, a national dementia improvement programme, is working with three GP cluster sites from April 2017 to September 2020 to improve primary care responses to dementia diagnosis and post-diagnostic support. The main aim is to explore whether relocating dementia expertise from community mental health into primary care will make dementia support at the point of diagnosis more accessible and a positive experience for individuals and families.

Background

Whilst Scotland has made great strides with its dementia strategies,[1, 2] there remains work to do to ensure post-diagnostic support, such as Alzheimer Scotland's 5 Pillars model,[3] is delivered timeously to individuals and is of consistently high quality.

Diagnosis of dementia is currently largely made by psychiatry specialists. People often receive a formal diagnosis once their dementia is considerably progressed making it difficult to maximise the transformational potential of post-diagnostic support.

Method

To inform the initiative, Focus on Dementia listened to people with dementia, carers, practitioners and national partners on the experience of receiving and delivering post-diagnostic support. The three sites were chosen through an open application process and we then held a series of educational workshops on dementia and quality improvement methodology.

Using the Model for Improvement,[4] each site developed its own driver diagram (see Figure 1 for overall programme example) and measurement plan, and are carrying out Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycles to support implementation of change ideas and capture data.
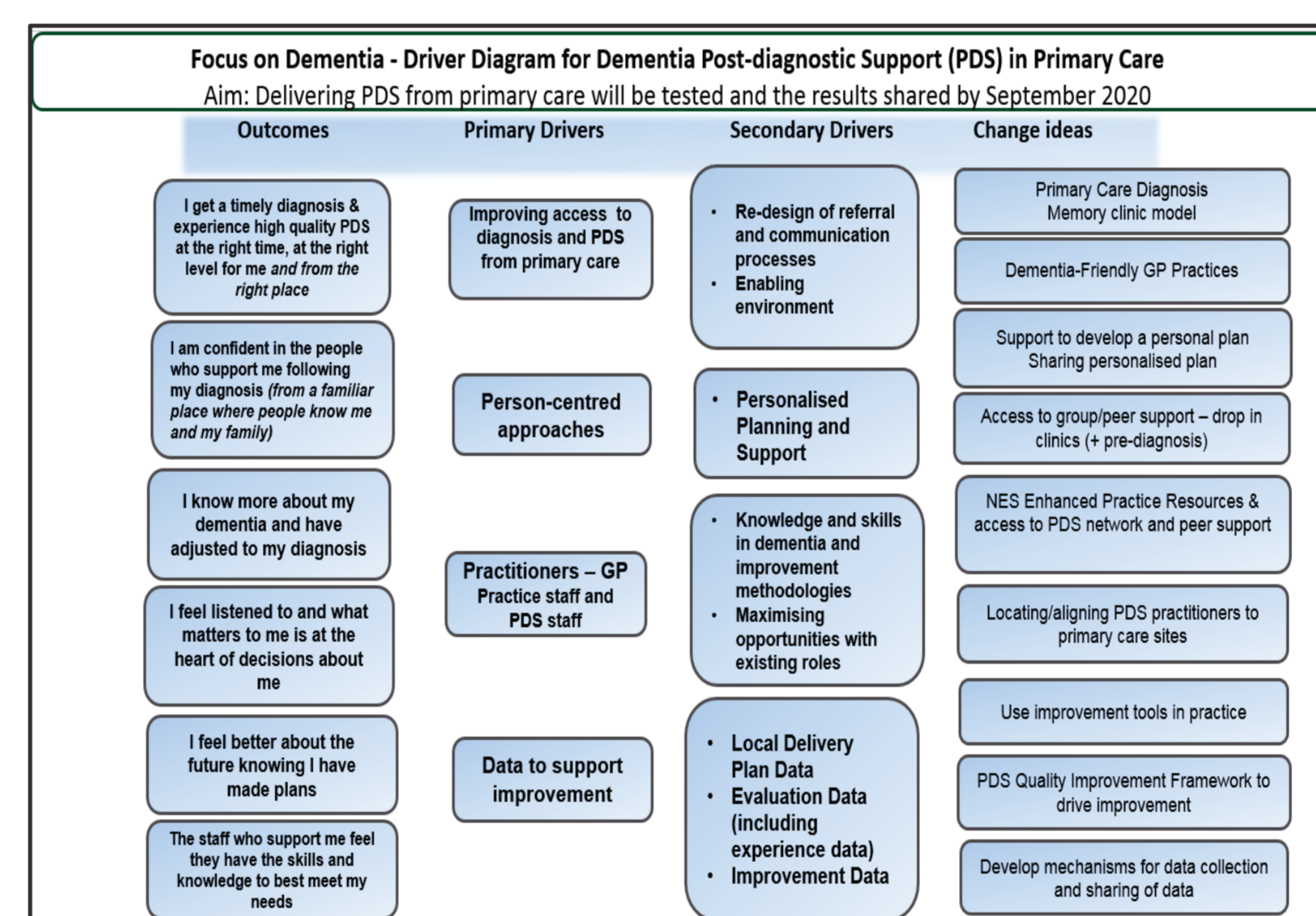

Figure 1: Driver diagram for overall programme

Results

At March 2019, the sites are supporting over 100 people. Findings so far from the three GP cluster sites include the following:

East Edinburgh

- Improved key information summary (KIS) completion; 50% of referrals had either a KIS created or information added.
- Earlier uptake of assessment for diagnosis.

Nithsdale (Gillbrae Practice)

- 58% increase in staff confidence following dementia training session.
- 60% increase in diagnosis recording since implementation of dementia clinic.

Shetland

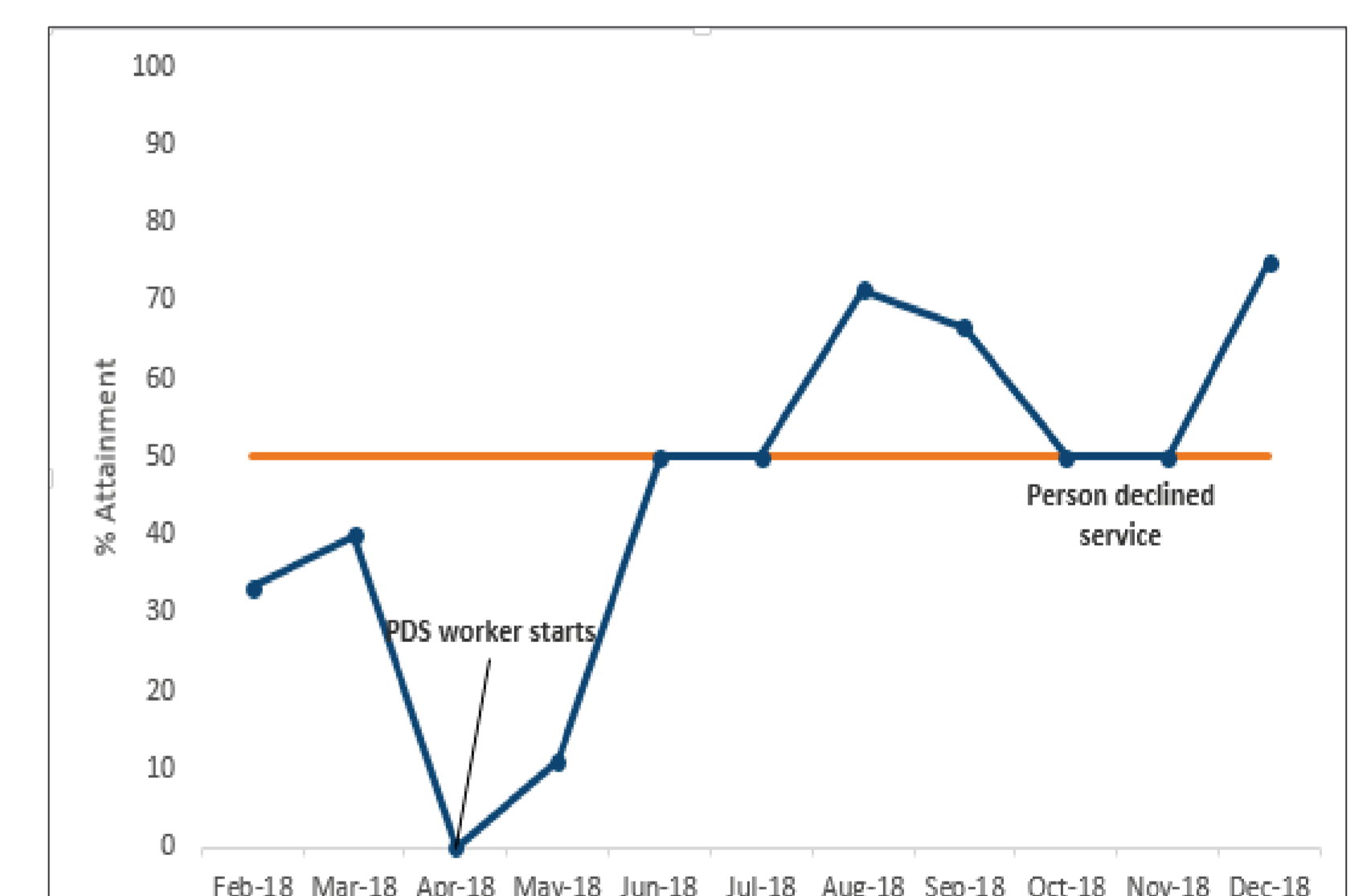- 40% increase in uptake of post-diagnostic support (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Increase in uptake of post-diagnostic support in Shetland as a result of improvements

Conclusions

Interim findings indicate that it is possible to offer and deliver high quality post-diagnostic support from primary care:

- People can be referred earlier for diagnosis when pre and post-dementia diagnosis support is accessible from primary care.
- There is quicker access to and uptake of post-diagnostic support when it is aligned to primary care.
- Qualitative feedback indicates that accessing post-diagnostic support from primary care is a positive experience for individuals.
- The remaining 18 months of the programme will be crucial for further quantative and qualitative data collection to capture the full impact of the initiative.

References:

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4. Langley GJ, Moen RD, Nolan KM, Nolan TW, Norman CL, Provost LP. The Improvement Guide: A Practical Approach to Enhancing Organizational Performance. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons; 2009.