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## Media Release

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### Patients tell RUH staff what it's like to have dementia

Staff at the RUH have been given a remarkable and moving insight into what it's like to live with dementia. At an event at the hospital, called 'Seeing it My Way – living with dementia'

86 year old Alan Ruttley from Bath said: "I have no discomfort and there are no obvious signs that I have this condition, and yet I live with the consequences every day."

"I love traveling by car or by train. Sadly both pleasures have been affected by my illness. I can't travel unescorted through London as I get nervous. One daughter lives in Plymouth, the other in Norfolk so it can be difficult for me, and I get very resentful.

Alan, along with Brigid Griffiths, who also has the condition, talked to over 120 staff at the RUH to give them a deeper understanding of the needs of those living with the condition.

Mrs Griffiths said: "I'd like hospital signs to be big and bold. I can't read very easily now. I have to ask people a number of times. Also, I don't want to be asked to lie down in bed. It's not that sort of illness."

She added: "When I was finally diagnosed with dementia and told I couldn't drive my car, I was very cross. I would like people to have not just knowledge of the condition, but a deeper appreciation of dementia – of how the person is feeling."

Tim Mason, who is a full-time carer for his mother, Esther Mason, 92, believes it's vital to involve carers in decisions as all too often they can be neglected. He said: "I am not here to kick nursing care but carers can be so useful. I can provide security to my mother, companionship and reassurance. I have time and patience. Let us carers help you do an even better job."

At any one time around 25 per cent of RUH inpatients have dementia at one level or another. Whilst these patients may have been admitted to the RUH for other reasons, their dementia can make time spent as a patient even more distressing.

The South West has the largest proportion of older people in the country, and the longest life expectancy. Latest figures show that 76,000 people in the region are living with dementia and this is likely to increase by 50 per cent over the next 15 years.

RUH consultant geriatrician, Dr Chris Dyer, also spoke at the event. He said: "There is something very powerful about hearing directly from people with dementia and from their carers. Coming to hospital can be frightening and confusing for a patient with dementia. This session will help us develop a greater understanding of how patients are feeling, and their needs.

"We are also being told by carers they would like us to involve them in the care planning of our patients. They are a great resource we could and should use. They are hugely knowledgeable, have a special interest in the individual and are often on-hand and available to help staff."

The dementia event also provided an opportunity to showcase areas of excellence, including the RUH Dementia Charter which was introduced last year. The Charter Mark Standards for RUH Patients with Dementia was the first such scheme of its kind in the UK. It provided a 'gold standard' for staff to ensure care for people with dementia on all adult wards, not just those specifically for older people, is the very best it can be.

## **ENDS**

### **Note to Editors:**

#### **Pictures**

**Two pictures will be included with email of this press release.**

**Pic 1 L-R: Theresa Hegarty, head of patient experience RUH, Alan Ruttley, Alan's partner Lyn Juffernholz (correct),**

**Pic 2 L-R: Theresa Hegarty, head of patient experience RUH, chats with dementia sufferer, Alan Ruttley**

### **Background**

In November 2008 the South West Strategic Health Authority hosted the region's first-ever Dementia Summit, bringing together leading national experts and local people living with dementia, including families and carers, to help shape the future of care.

This led to the formation of a unique Dementia Partnership, made up of representatives from health, social care, the Alzheimer's Society and carer representatives, to take forward a vision for better, more integrated services tailored to individual need and delivered when and where people need them, in line with the national strategy.

A detailed review was carried out to assess the quality of dementia services across the region, highlighting areas of excellence as well as identifying where improvements are necessary.

Local councils and Primary Care Trusts throughout the South West are now working closely together and each community has a plan to develop improved services for people with dementia and their carers.

People have highlighted the importance of getting good information, support from their GP and access to an early diagnosis.

As a result of this review, the Partnership has committed to:

- Join up services across health and social care so that people receive more co-ordinated support;
- Achieve better consistency of services across the region, so that people in all areas have equal access to high quality care and support;
- Learn from areas of best practice already taking place. There are many success stories in the South West and examples of excellent care and support which can be shared and copied more widely.

For more information see [www.alzheimers.org.uk/remembertheperson](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/remembertheperson)

